



## President's Overview



Do you remember my column of a year ago when I quoted from one of our old *Registers*?

*About the winter of 1715; the snow fell to*

*an unusual depth, with much of drift, causing great distress to the then thinly settled inhabitants; among the number was a Widow, living in a one story house with her children, who had buildings situated on the road to Charlestown, called milk row, so deeply covered with snow that it could not be found for many days, until discovered by the smoke issuing from above the snow bank; her small stock of fuel was exhausted, and some of her furniture was also burnt to keep them from suffering, before the snow could be removed.*

Do you have an interesting experience from our winter, exactly 300 years later? If so, send it to me, and I'll create a file at the Society. In the spirit of the play, "Letters to Medford," think of it as a memo to the future. Perhaps in 2115 or 2315, someone will be interested in reading our quaint recollections of another winter in which "the snow fell to an unusual depth, with much drift." You can email me at [jwa02155@yahoo.com](mailto:jwa02155@yahoo.com) or write c/o MHSM.

Progress continues at MHSM. In spite of threatening weather, Susan Fedo and

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### Longtime Volunteer Archivist

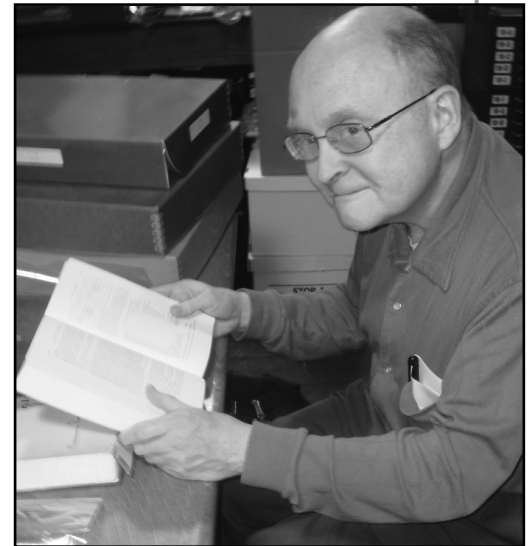
*interview by David Fedo*

Visitors to the Medford Historical Society and Museum on Sunday afternoons will often find archivist Michael Bradford, a seasoned volunteer, available to answer their questions on all things Medford, past and present. Michael has been a member of the MHSM since 1982, and in the ensuing years, has served at various times as curator, librarian and treasurer of the organization.

A native of Winthrop, and a resident of West Medford since 1957, Michael graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts from Northeastern University and a Master of Science in Library Science from Simmons College. He was employed as a Ranger for the National Park Service from 1986 to his retirement in 2012, mostly serving as a guide to Boston's popular Freedom Trail and the Charlestown Navy Yard. Of his volunteer work, Michael, perched at a cluttered table in the crowded second floor of the MHSM building at 10 Governors Avenue, says simply: "I like meeting people, and I enjoy looking things up." I caught up with Michael Bradford on a wintry Sunday afternoon in late January, 2015.

**DAVID:** *What led you to become associated with the Medford Historical Society?*

**MICHAEL:** That's an interesting question. During our country's Bicentennial celebration in 1976, members of the MHSM held some membership drives outside its building on Governors Avenue. I expressed some interest, and later the longtime president of the Society, Dr. Joseph Valeriani, asked if I wished to get involved,



and even offered me a key to the building. I've been here ever since because I love all things historical.

**DAVID:** *What do visitors to the MHSM want to know about Medford's history?*

**MICHAEL:** A major interest of Medford's residents is, *What is the history of my Medford house?* It's fun to do this research because, obviously, houses matter to their owners. Of course, the resources of the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds can be helpful, but I can usually trace the housing histories too, and pretty quickly. Next are inquiries about the genealogies of *families and individuals from the public at large*—these are very common, too. And finally, there are a myriad of questions about *Medford's historical figures*—about the abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, for example, and about James Lord Pierpont, the composer of "Jingle Bells," and questions about the chronology of Medford's business and industrial progress over the centuries, and more—including inquiries about our collection of Civil War photographs.

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## Michael Bradford Interview *continued*

**DAVID:** *Why is Medford important to the history of Massachusetts?*

**MICHAEL:** Of course there is Paul Revere and his famous ride. But Medford was one of a special group of the first settlements and towns in what would become Massachusetts in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Then later, in 1660, Medford's 500 acres were divided up for the prominent local families, including the Brooks, the Wymans, the Wades, the Bradshaws, the Bradleys and the Tufts, among others. And much later, in 1755, Medford was awarded what were called the "Charlestown Woodlots," which greatly expanded the geographical size of the original Medford to both the north and south sides of the Mystic River. Medford is also known for its famous rum, its shipbuilding (a total of 568 ships built from 1803 to 1873), and brick manufacturing too. Medford bricks were used to construct the third renovation of Fort Independence in Boston's Castle Island. Tufts University is also here in Medford. And there is much, much more, including the fact that Medford has been the home of artists and writers including the novelist Paul Theroux and poet John Ciardi.

**DAVID:** *How would you characterize the collection of the Medford Historical Society and Museum?*

**MICHAEL:** We have a very rich collection of historical documents and artifacts. Everyone knows about the 3,600 Civil War photographs even though Medford was not the site of any Civil War action. But we have other extraordinary papers, books, journals and physical objects which reflect on our history very well. For example, we have in our possession the original 19<sup>th</sup> century inventory of one of what were then the four Medford taverns, this one called the Blanchard Tavern. The inventory consisted of silverware and three mahogany tables which, at the time, were very expensive. This was a prosperous place!

## President's Overview *continued*

her volunteers soldiered on with the Valentine's Day Tea, and we had good attendance, lots of tea, good food and a great time! Inside this issue, you'll find pictures from our event celebrating Howard Johnson's Restaurants, which spread from Quincy to all of New England, and finally nationwide. Thanks to a grant from the Medford Arts Council, we are expanding our outreach into the public schools. You'll find an article by Allison Andrews about that as well.

I want to thank the volunteers (Luke Pomorski, Kyna Hamill, Robert Crooks, Brenda Breed, Brandon Czaja, and David Fedo) who cleared the snow from our walkways at 10 Governors Avenue. Also thanks to our tenants at the Peter Tufts House (Devon, Mira, and Sarah) who had to deal with a very difficult sidewalk. Finally, many thanks to everyone who contributed to our Annual Appeal which totaled a bit over \$2800. This is a little less than last year, so please chip in if you can, and put us over the top!

And we also hold a fascinating ship's log which recounts a 19<sup>th</sup> century voyage from Boston to Calcutta. This is a treasure of detail about what crossing an ocean was like during the times.

**DAVID:** *I understand that you have traveled to Staffordshire, England and visited the locale of the town of Meadford, likely the birthplace and home of Matthew Cradock who is known as the founder of Medford. What did you find?*

**MICHAEL:** What I found was that Meadford is part of a larger city called Stone. The clay pits in Staffordshire might have attracted the attention of Matthew Cradock, and of course clay pits were also found in our Medford. Clay later became important for providing the binding qualities that were so important in brickmaking.

**DAVID:** *I know that you have a special interest in the story of Native Americans in early Medford history, and that the MHSM has a number of artifacts in its collection. Can you elaborate on that?*

**MICHAEL:** Yes, this is true. The Native Americans, who had settled in the area many, many years before the British colonized the area, were called the Mystic Indians and were a branch of the tribe identified as the Pawtuckets. The last of Medford's Native Americans seems to have died around 1820. I have come to admire their "cycle of living"—their planting and harvesting of corn, which was a staple in their diet, the way they constructed and lived in palisaded forts, and their hunting skills, mostly of deer. The MHSM's collection includes fine examples of soapstone bowls, grinding tools and more. As I have said earlier, this place—the Medford Historical Society and Museum—is a great showplace of our city's past.

**DAVID:** *Thanks very much, Michael!*

## Alternative Ways to Support MHSM

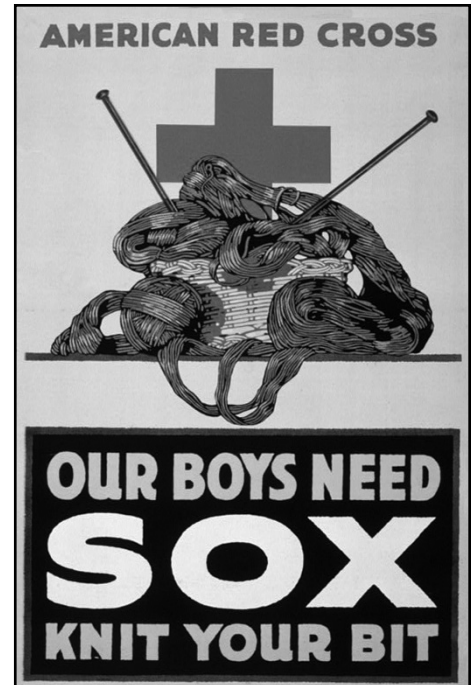


### SMILE at Amazon.com supports MHSM

We strongly support shopping at local establishments whenever possible, whether it be for books, hardware, or gifts. When we support local businesses, they can support us. But when you do shop for things that aren't available locally consider using Amazon. If you decide to shop there, first go to [SMILE.AMAZON.COM](http://SMILE.AMAZON.COM) and register your support for the Medford Historical Society. One half of one percent of your purchases will come back to us as a rebate. When you do buy at Amazon, it will help MHSM.

**Employer and Company Matching Gifts** Many companies will match gifts dollar for dollar or, in some cases, even more. A number of members have taken advantage of this opportunity and we thank you! .

**Life Memberships** This is a great way to support MHSM, and it will also stop those letters asking you to renew! Life memberships are available at \$300 for an individual and \$400 for a family membership. You can find a membership form on the MHSM website, [www.medfordhistorical.org](http://www.medfordhistorical.org).



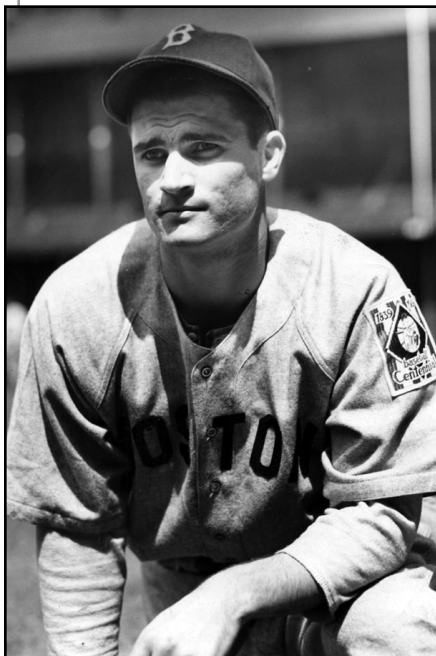
(top left) Bobby Doerr played with the Sox from 1937–1951 and participated in the spring trainings at Tufts. He played 2nd base, and was inducted into Baseball Hall of Fame in 1986. (top right) The players gave blood at the Red Cross on the second day of spring training in 1943.

## When the Red Sox Held Spring Training in Medford

by Jay Hurd

On January 14, 1942, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the Commissioner of Major League Baseball, wrote a letter to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and asked whether or not baseball ought to be played while the United States was at war with Japan and Germany. President Roosevelt's response became known as the "green light" letter – he wanted baseball to be played.

Constraints came with the green light. Joseph B. Eastman, Director of the Office of Defense, asked Landis that major league baseball restrict travel, particularly by rail; railways were needed for the transport of troops and military supplies. Landis ordered that all major league teams conduct spring training "north of the Mason-Dixon Line and east of the Mississippi, as close as possible to their base of operations."



(left) Joe Cronin was the player-manager for the 1943 Red Sox. He was at Tufts in 1943 and 1944.

The Boston Red Sox, as did the other teams, heeded the mandate and, in 1943, decided to hold spring training in Medford, at Tufts University. The Tufts facilities were a few miles from Fenway Park and the Kenmore Hotel, where the Sox players were housed. The first day of training was March 22. On March 23, to do service for their country, the team visited the area headquarters of the American Red Cross to give blood. Mel Webb of the *Boston Globe* reported that on March 27 a crowd of 1,000 Medford citizens and Tufts students watched practice and "made off with practice balls fouled off toward the railroad tracks."

On March 17, 1944, the Red Sox returned to Tufts for preseason practice. Harold Kaese of the *Boston Globe* reported that "The Red Sox began spring training at the Tufts' College cage yesterday [March 17] with the same zest I used to show when sitting down to practice a piano lesson." The Sox closed spring training with exhibition games in Baltimore, versus the Orioles, and in Boston versus the Braves. By 1945, the Red Sox held spring training in Atlantic City, NJ and after the war, in 1946, the Sox commenced spring training in Sarasota, FL.

### Sources:

Boston Baseball History <http://www.bostonbaseballhistory.com/red-sox-spring-training-during-world-war-ii/> Published by Herb Crehan, February 27, 2013.

Fountain, Charles. *Under the March Sun: The Story of Spring Training*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

## Savannah-Medford Connections

by John Anderson

Medford, Massachusetts and Savannah, Georgia have a long-standing disagreement about who “owns” the song “Jingle Bells.” Both sides in this ongoing civil war claim that the song was written in their city and both have historic plaques. According to Wikipedia, the song’s composer, James Pierpont, was born in Massachusetts to a Unitarian abolitionist family, moved to Medford in the late 1840s and moved again to Savannah shortly before the Civil War. He served the Confederate cause during the war and is buried at Laurel Grove, a segregated cemetery in Savannah. The question is, did he write the song before or after he moved to Savannah? MHSM scholars and historians have researched this controversial issue which went viral just before Christmas this year. I’ve been promised a detailed article on “Jingle Bells” and Mr. Pierpont in time for Christmas next year. In the meantime, just ask yourself this: Do they have sleigh rides



*James Lord Pierpont wrote "Jingle Bells" in 1850 at the Simpson Tavern on Salem Street. The song was inspired by popular 19th century sleigh races which passed in front of that building.*

in Savannah? Can you picture a horse drawn sleigh scooting along under palmetto trees? Really.

Just before Christmas 2014, Heather and I were in Savannah for a few days, and we decided to visit Laurel Grove Cemetery to search for John Pierpont’s grave.

Laurel Grove Cemetery appears to have been mostly filled a number of years ago, and it looks a bit run down. We entered through the northern gate. In the past, the southern part of the cemetery was reserved for blacks, the north for whites. The large, so-called Live Oak trees (not really oaks) draped in Spanish moss give the place an eerie feeling which would be quite spooky after dark.

If you like visiting cemeteries, this is the place for you. Many of the monuments have elaborate statuary and heart-rending Victorian sentimental inscriptions. A mother writes of her daughter who died at twenty-one: “She was the flower that scents the morn, but withers in the rising day...How short the race my child has run, cut down in all her bloom. Her course but yesterday begun, now finished in the tomb.”

Thanks to excellent signage, we found the Pierpont gravesite easily. Actually, it’s the Purse family gravesite. For his second marriage, James Pierpont did well, marrying the daughter of Thomas Purse, Mayor of Savannah. James is buried near his second wife and two children who predeceased him.

Pierpont’s allegiance to the Confederate cause is clear. A small marker next this gravestone attests to his service to the Confederacy. He lies adjacent to his brother-in-law, Thomas Purse Jr., whose gravestone states “Killed at the Battle of Mannassas Plains,

*The James Pierpont gravesite includes his Confederate Iron Cross “God Our Vindicator”.*





July 21, 1861.” Thomas, Jr. was two months away from his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Graveyards often tell sad stories, and it was certainly a difficult time for James Pierpont’s wife, Eliza. In 1860, the year before her brother’s death, she lost a sister Ella in January at age 15, her infant son James Jr. in May, aged 8 months, and her mother, also named Eliza, in October.

After we took some photos of the gravesite, we thought we were done with Medford connections. We noticed signs for Juliette Gordon Low, the founder of the Girl Scouts of America, also from a Savannah family. Her birthplace is now a house museum. We decided to pay our respects and quickly found her family plot, actually the Gordon family plot of her parents. Imagine our surprise when we found a memorial to “Samuel Crocker Lawrence, born Medford Massachusetts 9/12/1888, died Savannah 1/29/1961.”

The gravestones told us that the patriarch of the family, William Washington Gordon served both with the CSA and later the USA as a “Member of the Military and Naval Commission for the transfer of Puerto Rico from Spain to the U.S.”

Samuel Crocker Lawrence married William

Washington Gordon’s granddaughter, Margaret (Juliette’s niece). I later found that the marriage was noted in the 1921 alumni magazines of both Harvard and Yale because Samuel was a Harvard graduate (1910) and Margaret’s father was Yale class of 1886.

Back in Medford, we discovered that the Samuel Lawrence buried in Savannah is the grandson of our famous Samuel Lawrence, first Mayor of Medford.

In January, Heather and I discovered more about James Pierpont. Walking around Yale University, we saw the name “James Pierpont” carved above a doorway. I was surprised to learn that this James Pierpont founded Yale in 1701. His descendants include the wife of Jonathan Edwards, the famous Puritan minister, John Pierpont (J. P.) Morgan, the financier, and Medford’s James Pierpont!

All these connections between elite families must reflect the fact that the population of the U.S. in 1840 was 17 million, about 1/20<sup>th</sup> of the population today. And with social stratification stronger in those days, it’s hardly surprising that the elite families went to the same schools, mingled socially, and married into each other’s families. So, perhaps it’s not all that surprising to find Medford connections in unexpected places.

## Our Medford

*by Allison Andrews*

A number of new projects and ideas are showing up on the education front. This spring we are excited about *Our Medford*, a local history text currently in development for the third grade classrooms.

The author of *Our Medford* is Michael Coates, third grade teacher at the Brooks School and a Medford native. Mike has been incorporating local history-related activities into his teaching for a long time. His vision is an illustrated narrative that follows the Medford Public Schools Social Studies Learning Standards. The third grade teachers appreciate the importance of the city’s rich history but have been lacking a grade-appropriate teaching resource. *Our Medford* should fill that need. The Medford School Department is following the project with interest.

The draft is on schedule to be ready at the end of February. A team of MHSM volunteers will edit and provide layout. We hope to have it printed at the Vocational School, in an effort to further partner with the Medford Schools (and contain costs!). The goal is to publish and distribute copies to the classes this year in the late spring, otherwise in September.

An online version of *Our Medford* will be available on the MHSM website. Included will be activity pages and craft project instructions which can be downloaded and printed individually as needed by the teachers and anyone else who would like them. The online format will make updates and additions easy and even interactive - teachers will be invited to sub-

mit their projects for sharing with each other.

*Our Medford* will be a welcome addition and foundation to the third grade introduction to local history, and it will complement other MHSM education programming like the annual “Local History through Artifacts” presentations for third graders coming up soon. Some new project initiatives have come from MHSM member volunteers, including a historic newscast now in the works (think of your local TV reporter interviewing Paul Revere about his fateful ride) and classroom activity boxes of costumes and props for teachers to borrow. Ongoing projects include historical walking tours of the school neighborhoods and classroom posters of the Andrews Middle School’s mural—a colorful depiction of Medford’s past and present connections to the Mystic River and a teaching tool in itself.

We are thankful to the Medford Arts Council for supporting our outreach to Medford’s younger citizens by making projects like *Our Medford* possible.

*This program is supported in part by a grant from the Medford Arts Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.*



**Volunteer Opportunity: Presentation Assistant** for the Medford History through Artifacts program. Help our Presenter with display set-up and interact with the third-graders as they view original artifacts and try out reproduction tools and objects from daily life in the 19th-20th centuries. For more information please contact Allison Andrews via the Contact page on the MHSM website.

## Winter at MHSM



*In spite of all the snow and cold, the MHSM Valentines Tea fundraiser was held on February 8th and it was a warm and happy success. The raffle offered many choices and surprises. (left) Valentine Tea guests wait to see if they hold the lucky number as Barbara Kerr announces the raffle winners. (above) Don and Mary Jansiewicz decide on where to place their bid. Special thanks to volunteers: Elizabeth Desisto, Charlene Carle, Suzanne Ezekiel, Sue Sterling, John Anderson, Heather Champigny, Dorothy Eckstein, Mary and Don Jansiewicz, Joan Quigley, Beth Hayes, Allison Andrews, Kyna Hamill, Ruth Roper, Susan and David Fedo, and Barbara Kerr.*



*(lower right) 2015 has been a record-setting winter. (right) Kyna Hamill poses after clearing snow on Governors Avenue after yet another storm. We'd like to thank all the volunteers who also helped to shovel the walkway at MHSM in January and February: Luke Pomorski, Kyna Hamill, Robert Crooks, Brenda Breed, Brandon Czaja and David Fedo.*



*Anthony Sammarco's lecture on January 22nd, featured his latest book, The History of Howard Johnson's with an audience happy to reminisce about the place the orange roofed empire held in their lives. Mr. Sanmarco (left) is seen here with boardmember Jay Hurd (right).*



## Be Sure to Join Us for Upcoming Events at MHSM

**Discovering Immigrant Voices through House History Research, Lecture by Marian Pierre Louis, Wednesday, March 25, 7:00 PM, 10 Governors Avenue**

The history of a house can also be the history of those who lived in it.

Two-family and multi-family homes often provide a look into the stories of the waves of immigrants that have passed through a city in different generations. In this lecture, house historian Marian Pierre-Louis will discuss different types of housing and all the secrets they can reveal with special emphasis on the immigrant history of Medford. This lecture will also include some basics of house history research.

Marian Pierre-Louis is a House Historian and Professional Genealogist who focuses on New England research. In recent years she has been turning her attention to educational outreach through the use of New Media—webinars, internet broadcasts and video.

**The Myth of the Black Confederate Soldier Wednesday, April 8, 7:00 PM, Author Lecture by Kevin Levin, 10 Governors Avenue**

The subject of black Confederates is one of the most divisive and misunderstood subjects within the field of Civil War history. A recent scandal involving a fourth grade Virginia history textbook that included a reference to thousands of black Confederate soldiers serving in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia is not only a reflection of how

pervasive this particular narrative has become, but it also demonstrates the challenges and dangers of using the Internet as a research tool. This talk will explore the evolution of the black Confederate narrative over past twenty five years and look closely at the most popular stories that can be found on countless sites on the Internet.

Kevin M. Levin teaches history at Gann Academy in Waltham, MA. He is the author of *Remembering the Battle of the Crater: War as Murder* as well as numerous essays that have appeared in academic journals, popular magazines and newspapers. He can be found online at Civil War Memory, <http://cwmemory.com>.

**Mrs. Jack – Art Collector, Muse, Mentor, and Mascot: Isabella Stewart Gardner and the Boston Red Sox, Lecture by Jay Hurd, Tuesday, May, 5, 7:00 PM, at the**



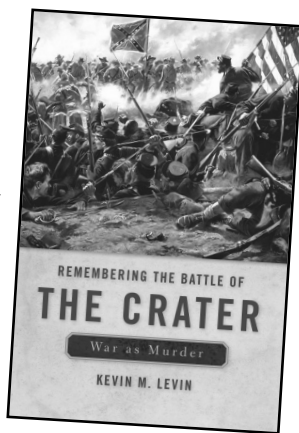
**Medford Public Library, a joint program with the Library and Community Read**

In 1912, the Red Sox defeated the New York Giants to win the World Series. In December of that same year Mrs. Isabella Stewart Gardner, also known as Mrs. Jack, attended a concert at Boston's Symphony Hall. She arrived "with a white band bound round her head and on it the words 'Oh you Red Sox' in red letters." The *Town Topics* reported that "It looks as if the woman had gone crazy." This is one of many stories – some of which were true – attached to Mrs. Gardner during her life in Boston as muse and mentor for artists, writers, musicians, and athletes. Acquisition of art (her competitive world) and an unbridled zest for life drove her to the design and construction of her own Venetian Palazzo Barbaro, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Please join us as Jay Hurd, MHSM Board member, reviews the life of Isabella Stewart Gardner and her connection to sports as well as the arts.

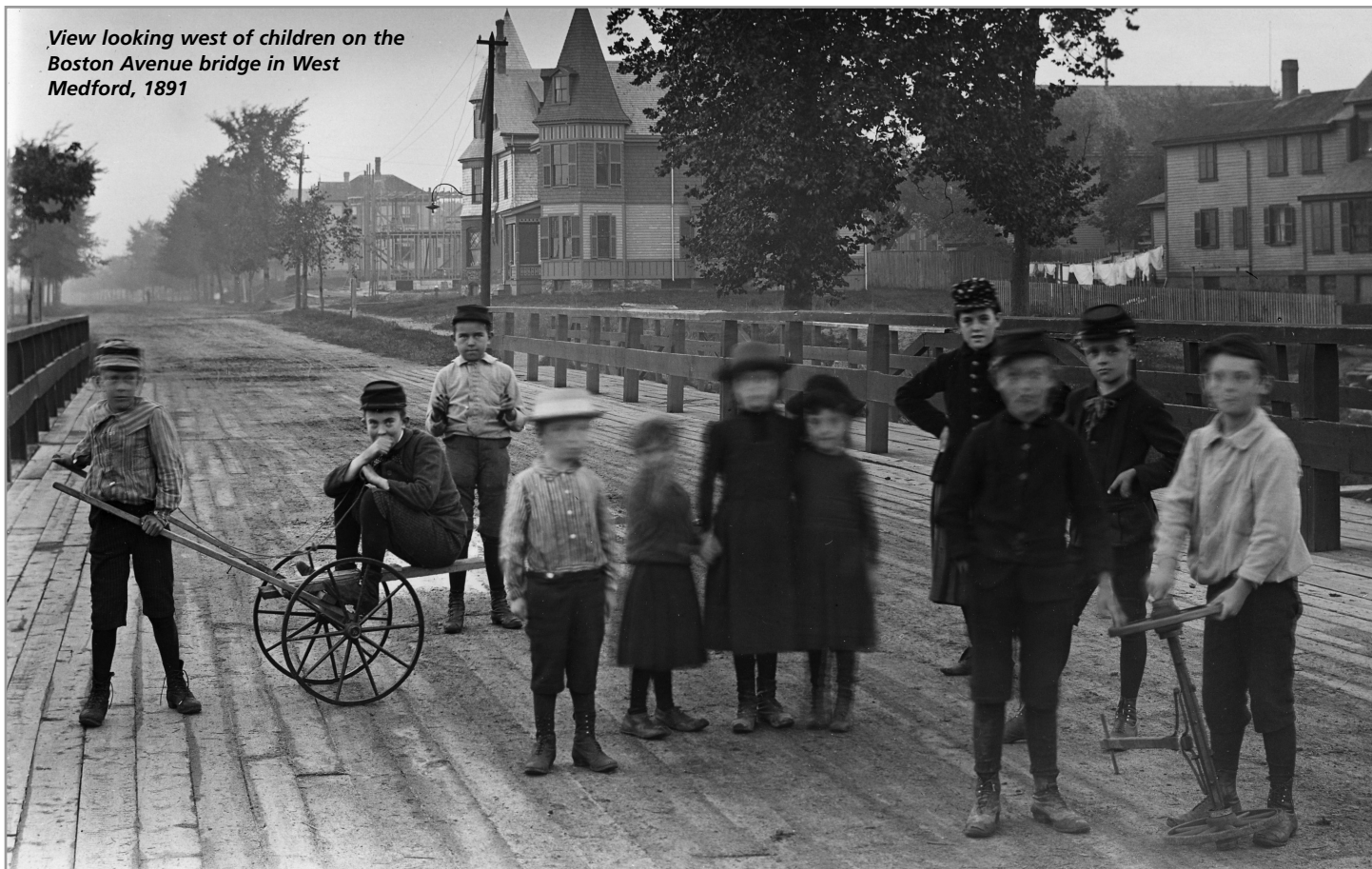
Jay Hurd, member of the Society for American Baseball Research, retired from Harvard University where he worked as Preservation Review Librarian for Widener Library. He is a fan of the Boston Red Sox.

**Stories in Black, White and Red: The Eternal Residents of Cross Street Cemetery with local historian Dee Morris Sunday, May 17, at 2:00 PM at Oak Grove Cemetery**

Explore Medford's 2nd oldest cemetery on Sunday, May 17, at 2pm! The Cross Street Cemetery, founded in 1816, was located in the ship building area off Riverside Ave. It is the eternal resting place of a free black family, the Revalyons, and their white neighbors who created a closely-knit neighborhood from the 1820s -1860s. This burying ground was relocated to Oak Grove Cemetery in 1958 during the construction of I-93 in 1958. The event, part of the "Hidden Treasures" weekend celebration sponsored by the Freedom's Way Heritage Area, promises a lively look at the life stories of a remarkable band of diverse residents. Meet at the Cross Street Section of Oak Grove Cemetery. Maps will be posted at both Cemetery entrances to this charming walled section.



*View looking west of children on the  
Boston Avenue bridge in West  
Medford, 1891*



***Your Medford Historical Society Newsletter***

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