



## President's Overview



As I'm writing on the first day of March, I just heard that the last day of February was the coldest day of the month! We've always complained about the weather. See inside for "100 Years Ago at the Society." And, as we continue to do today, they also wrote about Medford happenings a hundred years or more before their time.

## Historic Preservation Efforts in Medford

Preservation and protection efforts are currently underway at three sites – the Brooks Estate, the Paul Curtis House (also known as Grandfather's House) at 114 South Street, and the Peter Tufts House on Riverside Avenue. These projects need our help in different ways.

The Paul Curtis House, dating from 1802, is associated with a number of historic Medford citizens (see Wikipedia for a quick overview). It was purchased by Tufts University in 1976 as housing for the Provost. Its Greek Revival facade faces the Mystic River on a spacious lot. In December 2013, after over 35 years of stewardship, Tufts University divided the lot in two and sold both the house and the newly separated side lot to a developer. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but the designation does not provide any restrictions on the property owner. The developer plans to resell the Curtis House and build a two-family house on the side lot.

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*View of Cradock Bridge from the east about 1890.*

## Why is it the "Cradock" Bridge?

*by David Fedo*

**Reconstructing the Cradock Bridge.** Medford residents hearing about the upcoming reconstruction of the venerable Cradock Bridge, the city's historic span originally built in 1637 as the first toll bridge in New England, may be wondering how work on this \$12.7 million project, scheduled to begin this spring and continue for two years, will affect traffic in and out of Medford Square. As Medfordites know, the bridge, now certified as "structurally deficient," funnels heavy traffic over the Mystic River in and out of the Square on a very busy Main Street, near the ramps leading to and from Route 16.

In a late January open forum, officials from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and local politicians insisted that, because of careful planning, the impact of the labor on the flow of traffic would be minimal. Drivers, of course, will wait and see if this is true.

**The Name "Cradock."** But some Medford citizens, interested in history, may be asking one other question: *Why the name Cradock Bridge? Who, or what, was "Cradock"?*

The short answer is that the name of the bridge is derived from Matthew Cradock, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century English merchant and entrepreneur (he was called an "adventurer") who, although never having himself crossed the Atlantic to New England, was instrumental in establishing a presence by early settlers in the colony that would become first "Mistick," and then "Meadford," and finally our Medford. The original toll bridge, partially rebuilt in 1808, was transformed into and renamed the Cradock Bridge, in Matthew Cradock's honor, in 1880. A third span was added in 1907.

As an aside, don't be misled by the double-naming of the historic Peter Tufts House on Riverside Avenue. A sign on the lawn refers to the Tufts

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## President's Message *continued*

The developer must get approvals from the Medford Conservation Commission because part of the property is within 200 feet of the river. Additionally, he has voluntarily agreed to appear before the Medford Historic Commission to discuss his plans for the property. The Commission has no official control over what he decides to build on the new lot. A number of citizens including Sharon



## PETER TUFTS HOUSE PROJECT DAY

**Saturday, April 12, 9:30 am until 4:30 pm**  
**Come for half a day or all day.**

The house has been cleared out, but after 30 years of tenancy, there's some work to do!

Projects include:

- Wallpaper removal: As an historic house, we'll be photographing rooms before the wallpaper is taken down and we'll save a sample of whatever is removed.
- Wash floors and woodwork with Murphy's oil soap.
- Scrub bathroom – use grout cleaner on floor and wall tiles.
- Vacuum fireplaces and clean out the many cubby holes and closets. Who knows what you may find?
- Wash windows. Remove old shades and associated hardware and brackets.
- Outside – rake, prune, mow, and move Hosta beds which are banked too high against the house.

Email [rhayw12345@aol.com](mailto:rhayw12345@aol.com) or call 781-241-7253 to sign up.

Guzik, MHSM member and former Vice President, are working to protect the interests of the property, the neighbors, and the community. For more information, she can be reached at [sguzik@com-cast.net](mailto:sguzik@com-cast.net). This situation is developing very quickly, so don't delay.

The Brooks Estate is owned by the City of Medford. It is operated by a citizens group (M-BELT) through a committee partly elected by the M-BELT membership and partly appointed by the Mayor and the City Council. Since 1998, this all-volunteer group has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to incrementally improve the property. At this point a large infusion of capital is needed to finish the job by improving the access road and turning the badly deteriorating carriage house into a function facility. To do this, the Brooks Estate group has provided detailed planning documents and asked the City Council to approve a \$3.5 million bond issue. As explained in the business plan, the investment will make the property self-sustaining and provide revenue to pay back the bonds without burdening the taxpayers. The City Council is still studying the plan and approval is far from certain. If you would like to be involved, visit the website [BrooksEstate.org](http://BrooksEstate.org) and send an email to [BrooksEstate@aol.com](mailto:BrooksEstate@aol.com) asking to be kept in the loop. This is also a situation that is developing quickly.

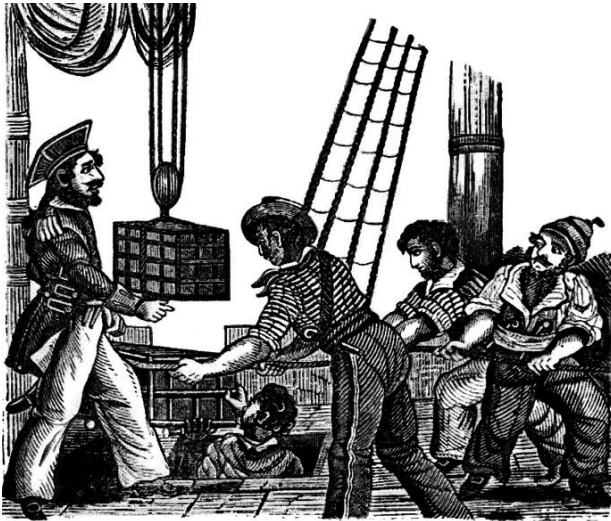
**Historic Cradock Bridge** There has been a bridge across the Mystic at the site of the Cradock Bridge since 1637. Now it is only a local bridge connecting Medford Square to Mystic Avenue and South Medford. At one time it was the only road between Boston and the North Shore, New Hampshire, and Maine. The local papers have recently reported on the proposed reconstruction of the Cradock Bridge for later this year. While this will certainly cause disruption, the finished product will be a great improvement. The stone facing on the west side will be restored so that it matches the east side. In this issue David Fedo has written an article about the history of the bridge and its namesake, Matthew Cradock.

**Our New Strategic Plan** After a lot of work, we now have a Strategic Plan for the next three years! Our new Board members, Susan and David Fedo spearheaded the effort. In the next few months, the Board will be starting specific projects, and we'll be looking for volunteers. There's a link to the plan on the home page of our website, or you can call me at 781-395-5138 to request a hard copy.

**Peter Tufts House Update** Finally, I want to update you on MHSM's efforts at the Peter Tufts House. Since our last report, the Peter Tufts House Committee has been very busy. Beth Hayes, chair, and the committee have compiled a list of work needed for the house and are working hard to secure grants to support our efforts. The house is in good structural condition, but after decades of tenancy, some deferred maintenance issues need to be addressed. As homeowners know, this is always complicated and expensive! Since this is a National Historic Landmark, special care must be taken not to "over-improve" by destroying the historic fabric. We are planning an open house in the early summer. In the meantime, we have scheduled a day for volunteers to help clean up the house. Please consider adopting a project at the Peter Tufts House!

The work day is in April. See the box on this page for details.

—John Anderson



House as the Cradock House as well, but although the Tufts House was built in 1668-1669 on land once owned by Matthew Cradock, there is no concrete evidence that Cradock had anything to do with that brick dwelling.

A more complete answer to the question of the bridge and Matthew Cradock, however, requires a look back into the first half of the often tumultuous 17<sup>th</sup> century, both in England and in the new American settlements. Research on this topic comes from various documents posted on the Web and from the extraordinary archives of the Medford Historical Society and Museum, located on Governors Avenue.

**The Early Background of and Context for Matthew Cradock.** Matthew Cradock, who in 1628 would become the first Governor of the economically powerful Massachusetts Bay Company, was born in Staffordshire, England, a county in the West Midlands. The date of his birth has not been definitively determined, although at least one scholar has speculated that it occurred in 1590. His father, who may also have been named Matthew, was a cleric; his mother's name was Dorothy Greenbaum. The younger Matthew Cradock was married twice: first to Damaris Wyn of Shrewsbury with whom he had a daughter, Damaris, and second, after the death of his first wife, to Rebecca Jordan with whom he had three children, none of whom apparently survived. Cradock, a devout Puritan and active politically as an anti-Crown Parliamentarian, died in 1641. The death occurred just a year before England's devastating Civil War between the Royalists of King Charles I and the mostly Puritan-led forces of an aggrieved Parliament. Charles and his partisans lost the War, and in 1649 he was tried for "high treason and other crimes," found guilty, and summarily beheaded. Four years later, in 1653, Oliver Cromwell was installed as the "Lord Protector" of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, with decidedly mixed results.

It is interesting to note that, although we have no official birth date for Matthew Cradock, his life partly

overlaps with the lives of other 17<sup>th</sup>-century notables, including the British immigrant-to-the-colonies and minister John Harvard (1607-1638); John Endecott (1588-1665), the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; and the great English poet John Milton (1608-1674). Another perspective may help set the context: William Shakespeare had died in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1616, at the age of 52; the Pilgrims arrived in what would become Plymouth in 1620; Governor John Winthrop built a house in 1637 on the grounds of what much later would be Medford's Isaac Royall Estate; and decades later the terrifying London plague raged in 1665, to be followed by the destructive London fire the next year, in 1666.

**Matthew Cradock, Businessman Par Excellence.** In his busy and productive life, Matthew Cradock excelled in the sphere of business and trade, and his name will forever be associated with the formidable Massachusetts Bay Company, "an organization of Puritan businessmen," that established and secured colonies in the New World. "By the end of the 1630s," wrote Robert Brenner in the book *Merchants and Revolution* (2003), "he stood at the center of the largest trading business involved in the Americas."

Cradock's rise seems to have happened quickly. He was an apprentice to a major London shipping firm. In 1628, according to the *National Biography, Volume 12*, Cradock bought 2000 pounds worth of stocks in the East India Company, which had received its Royal Charter from Queen Elizabeth in 1600. The New World was opening up to risk-takers looking to make a profit. And Cradock was on his way. As Sidney Lee in the *National Biography* wrote:

*When the company [Massachusetts Bay Company] for colonizing Massachusetts was formed (4 March 1627-8), Cradock, who subscribed largely to the funds, was chosen the first governor on May 13 1628. He was very zealous in the performance of his duties; sent John Endicott [Endecott] to represent the company in the colony, and in a letter to Endicott dated 16 Feb. 1628-9, 'from my house in St. Swithen's Lane, near London Stone, 'warned the colonists against the peaceful advances of the Indians, and recommended them to employ themselves in building ships. In 1629 the government perceived signs of prosperity in the Massachusetts [Bay] Company, and Cradock, a strong parliamentarian, was resolved that Charles I should take no share of the profits. He therefore recommended the transference of the headquarters of the company to New England. John Winthrop was elected governor in his [Cradock's] place, and sailed to Massachusetts at the close of 1629.*

*Cradock, who took leave of the emigrants off the Isle of Wight, remained behind to assist the company in England, but sent servants and agents and secured a plantation for himself at Medford. 'On the east side of Mistick river is Mr. Cradock's plantation, where he hath impaled a park, where he keeps his cattle till he*

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can store it with deer. Here likewise he is at charge of building ships. The last year one was upon the stocks of a hundred tons. That being finished, they are to build one twice the burden.' In 1630 Cradock and others petitioned the council for permission to export provisions freely to the colonists, who were represented as being in great straits from want of food and the attacks of the Indians, 29 Sept. 1630. Six letters written by Cradock to Winthrop in 1636 show the value attached to Cradock's advice and monetary aid.

In one letter Cradock promises 50 pounds to the projected Harvard College.

Ultimately, according to one writer, "His business and trading empire encompassed at least 18 ships and extended from the West Indies and North America to Europe and the Near East. He was a dominant figure in the tobacco trade." As another observer declared in *The First Bostonians*, "More than anyone else, Cradock recognized that the ships sent to New England needed to be much larger, carrying settlers in parties numbering at least twice as many as the passengers on the *Mayflower*. Cattle had to make the journey too, numbering at least one hundred head. They had to travel with the first colonists in order to achieve a rapid reproduction of an English diet on the other side of the Atlantic."

**Cradock and the Founding of Medford.** The invaluable book, *Medford on the Mystic* (1980), by Carl and Alan Seaburg, presents a vivid picture of the land that would become Matthew Cradock's "plantation" in the new settlement:

*Early one summer morning in 1629 three young men, the Sprague brothers, just arrived in Salem from old England, set off on foot to explore the countryside. With some friends they took the old Indian path across the Saugus plains into Malden, then to the edge of the area we call the Middlesex Fells, and down the wooded descent into the present Medford Square. They were making for the ford that crossed the Mystic River just west of [today's] Medford Square.*

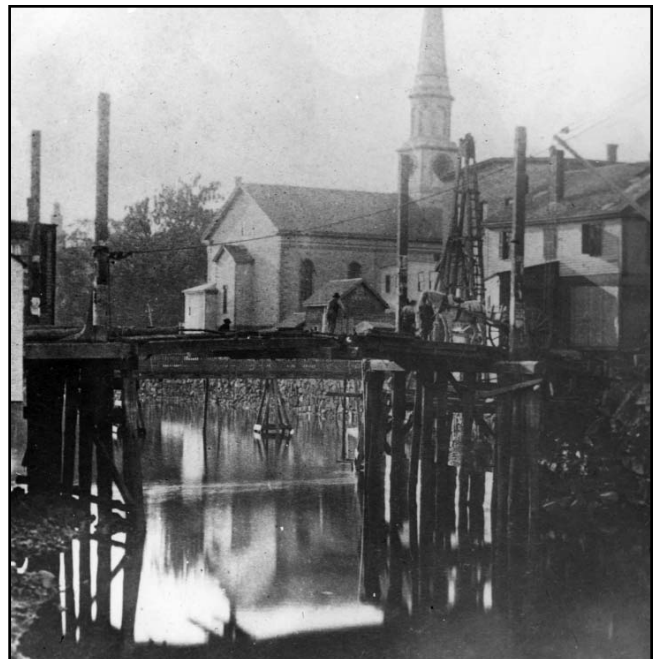
*Striding through a country of 'stately timbers,' they noted good tall oaks for ships' masts, mixed with walnut, elm, and plenty of pines. Goodly woods, but fine open lands too, yearly burnt by the Indians to keep them clear. They saw salt marshes that promised fine hay. By afternoon they reached the ford, where the river was shallow enough for crossing. The party splashed across the Mystic and continued on the Indian footpath up present-day Winter Hill and then down to Charlestown peninsula.*

*The men sent over by the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company, Matthew Cradock, London merchant and dedicated Puritan, had not yet staked out a 'plantation' for him on the land near the ford. That would happen the next year, 1630, when his successor as governor, John Winthrop, and the thousand folks in the Winthrop fleet reached Salem. . . .*

*Of the many employees Cradock sent over to conduct his business, some went to Marblehead, some to Ipswich, some to Agawam, some even went to Kennebunk, but a small contingent settled on land in Medford which later was formally granted to Cradock by the government. As one of the principal investors in the Company, Cradock was entitled to 200 acres for every fifty pounds invested. That he had invested far more than that was evident by the amount of land granted him in Medford alone. On the East it was bounded by land of others near Malden River, on the South by the Mystic River, on the West by the Mystic Lakes, and on the North by the highland of the Fells. Most of the present-day Medford north of the river belonged to Cradock. . . .*

*As a trading venture of Cradock, operated by his agents, the workers engaged in subsistence farming, fishing, and ship building. For these activities, the plantation's location on the broad tidal Mystic River was ideal. With roads being only paths through the woods, the river became the major thoroughfare for travel. It was as important then as the railroad, the streetcar lines, and the superhighways were to be later. Cradock's men worked out of a house and 'Great Barn' located in the Medford Square area. It was called Meadford House or Mistick House. The Great Barn was one hundred or more feet in length and had a lean-to attached. It was taken down in 1722.*

*Since Cradock never came to New England, he depended on agents to manage his interests. . . . For some years Cradock's people traded with the Indians for furs and skins. The farmers raised corn and a variety of other produce. They built stone walls and tended their stock. The cattle roamed free but each was marked with its owner's name. They were marketed in Boston. Swine were also kept. Mowing-ground*



**Dismantling an earlier wooden bridge that was replaced by today's masonry structure. The wooden steeple in the background is the former home of St Joseph's Church.**

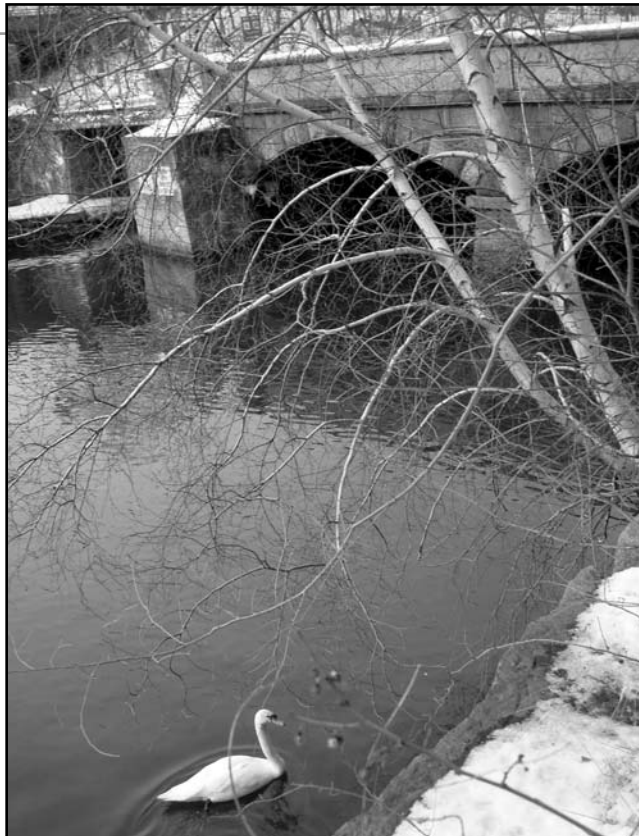
and tillaged fields were fenced. The fishing business was profitable.

A key additional point, according to Henry E. Walker in an article in the 1930 *Medford Historical Register* (Volume 33), was that the government of the so-called “plantation” was eventually stationed permanently in New England (an outcome Cradock sought vigorously), and not in England. Walker called it a “momentous movement,” and added: “Cradock’s act, ‘conceived by himself,’ may be considered the very first step in the long series of events which produced the United States of America.”

**But What About That Bridge?** By all accounts, the first bridge in Medford, constructed of wood and called the Medford or Mystic Bridge, was built across the Mystic River, as reported earlier, in 1637. “It went up where the present Cradock Bridge now spans the river,” according to the Seaburgs, which means it was located where the current bridge on Main Street leads in and out of Medford Square. The structure was not then named after Matthew Cradock. As noted before, the bridge charged tolls to those seeking a crossing. There had also been a ford which crossed the river and which, according to author Anthony Mitchell Sammarco in his book *Images of America: Medford* (1999), “was located at the rear of what is now the Medford Cooperative Bank” (currently Brookline Bank).

The Seaburgs also say that the original bridge, most likely built at the request of one of Cradock’s agents, was slightly more than 154 feet long and 10 feet wide, more than twice as long as the current Cradock Bridge. The bridge at the time had to be longer than today, according to the Seaburgs, “to reach high land on either side.” However, Rev. Charles Brooks, in his pioneering book, *History of the Town of Medford* (1855), notes that the original bridge was, in fact, quite “primitive” and “exceedingly rude and dangerously frail.” Be that as it may, it wasn’t until 1787 that a second bridge was constructed across the Mystic River. Again, the Seaburgs: “So for nearly 150 years all traffic north of the river, unless they chose to ford the river or take ferries, had to use this bridge to get in and out of Boston.” Today, there are now a total of 29 bridges standing in Medford.

Although the earlier bridge turned out to be critical for most people trying to travel to and from Boston, the Seaburgs reported that “some people thought it shouldn’t have been built at all as it was a hindrance to boats



**above:** Cradock Bridge seen on a recent snowy winter day.  
**below:** A system of locks at the bridge compensated for the water levels in the Mystic at low tide before a dam was built downstream.

trying to go beyond it upriver.” But the bridge, then and in its later incarnations, survived and has faithfully served Medford’s many generations. Given what we know of the steadfast character of Matthew Cradock, the name “Cradock” in the Cradock Bridge somehow seems fitting.

**Cradock’s Other Activities; His Death.** History shows that Cradock was involved in many responsibilities that were quite apart from his business interests in Medford and in the American colonies. Indeed, it was a life that seemed crowded with engagements involving English politics and religion. As a loyal Puritan, he had what appears to be a leading voice in Parliament, and he was vigorously opposed to King Charles I and his policies. He also called for “radical reforms” in the Church of England, according to Kenneth Andrews in his book *Ships, Money, and Politics* (1991). During squabbles between the King and Parliament, which would eventually lead to a Civil War, Cradock died “in the midst of his parliamentary labors, on 27 May 1641” (*National Biography*).

Matthew Cradock, who would be cited in one of the scrapbooks in possession of the Medford Historical Society and Museum as “the father of Medford,” had left behind a will dated November 9, 1640. In it, Cradock reserved 40 pounds for “the poor of St. Peter-le-Poor in Broad Street,” which was a local parish church established centuries earlier.

**The Upcoming Bridge Work.** Work on the Cradock Bridge will not be insignificant. During the reconstruction,

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two southbound lanes of Main Street which cross the span will stay open. A temporary bridge will apparently carry traffic northward. According to reports, flooding from the Mystic River, which at times has troubled communities in West Medford, East Arlington and parts of Winchester, are projected to be addressed by engineers. Medford Rep. Paul Donato calls the reconstruction plan “tremendous.”

## One Hundred Years Ago at the Society & Museum

by John Anderson

It's always a pleasure to look through the *Historical Registers* that the Society published from 1898 to 1943 to learn what our members thought was interesting and important throughout those years.

Looking back a century, the 1914 *Registers* cover a wide range of topics, and I've summarized several favorites here.

### So, You Think This is a Bad Winter

From the April 1914 edition, there's an article titled “Medford Weather.”

*We live in a region having a variable climate, and the same season in different years shows either great change or extremes of temperature. January, 1913, had a very light snow-fall, and has been put on record as remarkably warm. The night of January 12, 1914, with high wind brought a drop in temperature and frozen water pipes that will not soon be forgotten... Today, February 12, 1914, Boston is experiencing the coldest day for eighteen years. New England is the coldest section of the country, and the thermometers in our city have registered from 11 to 16 below, and a Boston paper gives credit for 23 degrees below, probably in the out-lying districts.*

The article goes on to mention the pleasure of sleigh riding but also the problem of being house-bound by poor traveling conditions:

*For days the ground has been covered with a few inches of well-packed snow, furnishing ideal sleighing on the streets and the creaking of the teams gives evidence that it is winter in earnest. Travel by steam or electric car lines has been impeded by great drifts of deep, level snow [and] we have been housed up until roads or sidewalks could be broken out.*

The author concludes with a “worse weather in times long past” story:

*Old-fashioned New England winters are so often spoke of it may not be amiss to refer to an account of one in our town nearly two hundred years ago The first occurrence worthy of notice is the great change of climate in the winters of that period to those of more modern years, especially in the quantities of snow. About the winter of 1715; the snow fell to an unusual*

Renovating—or in this case, rescuing—a bridge is hardly a romantic enterprise, but when one strolls along the walking paths overlooking the Mystic River and the bridge, on a mid-February afternoon, with this winter's snow still holding to the frozen landscape and the swans and ducks entertaining passersby, it is hard not to stop and feel a touch of nostalgia and appreciation for Matthew Cradock, and for the history of the bridge named after him so many years ago.

*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 situate 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.*

### A Steamboat Passes Over Medford!

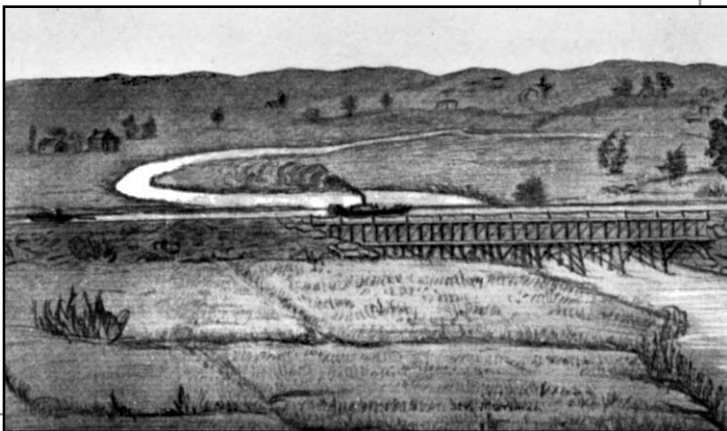
When we think about shipbuilding in Medford, we usually think of clipper ships. When we imagine the Middlesex Canal, we picture small boats propelled by poles, sails, or horse drawn towlines.

I was fascinated to read “Medford Steamboat Days” in the October 1914 *Register*, written by Moses Mann, a founder of the Society.

Before focusing on Medford's first steamboat, the article reviewed early commercial steamboat history in the Boston area. Ocean-going steamboats began passenger service in Massachusetts Bay in 1817. These were very early days for steam power. The first two ventures connected Boston to the North Shore and South Shore but failed commercially, and the boats were either scrapped or lost at sea.

The *Merrimack* went into service in 1818 as the third steamboat in the Boston area and the first in

*This illustration is from the October 1914 Historical Register. The “Canal Aqueduct at Medford” refers to the crossing of the Mystic at today's Boston Avenue. No provenance is provided so it is possibly conjectural.*



Medford. At 12 feet wide and 50 feet long, it was designed for the canal and Merrimack River. It could travel from Concord, New Hampshire down the Merrimack and through the canal to Boston. Mr. Mann believed the ship was built locally, possibly in Medford. Mr. Mann interviewed a lady who remembered it passing through Medford when she was a young girl. It was memorable for its loud noise and smoke. The engines burned wood, supplemented by tar, which would have made a nasty, acrid smoke. According to the Captain's log, the first journey up the Merrimack River included a three-day layover in Concord. The steamboat, novel at the time, took New Hampshire dignitaries including the Governor, his Council, and members of the General Court on river excursions.

Although the *Merrimack's* route went through Medford, Mr. Mann points out a surprising fact: "It may seem incredible today that a steam boat should traverse the entire length of Medford territory (greater than now) without floating in either the river or the lake. But this was the case...though today no trace of water remains in its course of nearly five miles through old Medford town." As depicted in the illustration, the Canal passed through Medford near Boston Avenue, but rather than joining the Mystic River, it actually went over the river in an aqueduct. It finally reached sea level by means of a series of locks in Malden, and then entered the harbor in Charlestown. Thus, a boatman on the Mystic River would actually look up to see a steamboat pass overhead!

Mr. Mann does not say how long the steamboat service continued, but it seems to have been short-lived. He speculates that the wake of the stern-wheeler may have damaged the banks of the canal. The Boston and Lowell railroad soon followed which doomed the entire canal enterprise.

But steam power was far from dead in Medford. Mr. Mann recollects from personal memory that as late as 1874, steam tugboats pulled barges of coal and lumber up the Mystic. They went as far as Auburn Street (the present bridge at Whole Foods) delivering lumber for construction of some of the first houses along Boston Avenue.

In the larger world, steamboats went on to dominate both river and ocean commerce, rendering Medford's clipper ships and all other commercial sailing ships obsolete.

## Our Year's Work (1913-14)

In the July 1914 issue, Secretary Eliza Gill summarizes the year. Some things sound similar to what we do today although I would love to know what the "refreshments" were that she mentions:

*The season of 1913-14 has been unusual, in that the February meeting was omitted on account of a very severe snowstorm. At the annual one in January, for the election of officers, no paper was given. At this time, and also at opening and closing meetings, light refreshments were served, and social intercourse added to the pleasures of the evening as the various papers were discussed*

*informally by little groups, and friend met friend with happy reminiscences.*

Other things have evolved in the last 100 years. Medford related history was not the only thing discussed during the 1913-14 season; some of the topics were a bit far afield. In today's well-travelled world, with the History Channel and travel related cable television, it's less likely we'd be scheduling these lectures:

*October 20 we were indebted to Rosewell B. Lawrence for the charming account of his summer in Great Britain...All enjoyed his account of visits to the land of Dickens and trips to quaint London inns, and the recital of a canoe trip on the Thames. November 17 John Albree...gave a most interesting paper upon "Books and Other Things"...exhibiting a collection of books selected at random from his own library... December 15 Rev. Frank I. Paradise of Grace Church, Medford, gave a happy, informal talk (illustrated with pictures) on "Switzerland; A Model Democracy." March 16 Mrs. Ruth Dame-Coolidge graciously entertained our Society with a paper on the "Rise of the Gothic Cathedral."*

## Smelt Fishing in Medford

One hundred years ago, many of Medford's brooks were already enclosed in culverts and mostly forgotten, ignored, and degraded. This prompted an article in the July 1914 issue about the loss of smelt fishing in the formerly free flowing, fertile brooks. At one time, smelts were so plentiful they could be caught bare-handed. The two principal smelt brooks were Meetinghouse and Whitmore. In 1855, Caleb Swan wrote:

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***Smelt Brook disappears into a culvert near Lawrence Road and Lincoln Road. No smelts here!***



*In April, immense numbers of smelts come up from the river and creek into the [Meeting-house] brook. They are taken in scoop-nets by the boys, early in the morning, in great quantities. They are a very sweet and delicious fish [of] long and slender shape and bright silvery sides; 6 to 8 inches long, and 6 to 10 weigh a pound....*

In 2014, only fragments of these brooks remain above ground. Whitmore Brooks still runs in the Fells, disappearing into a culvert near the gate at the intersection of Playstead Road and Winthrop Street. On Google

Maps, there's another brook in the Fells, parallel to Lincoln Road, labeled "Smelt Brook." It also enters a culvert and disappears under Lawrence Road. It probably emerges from a culvert as Meetinghouse Brook (as identified by the MWRA) before entering the Mystic River just upstream of the Winthrop Street bridge. There's a small footbridge that crosses the brook as you walk along the Mystic from Winthrop Street towards the Condon Shell area. It's hard to imagine it's the same brook where Caleb Swan could scoop out smelts with his bare hands.

## MHSM Programs and Events – Spring 2014



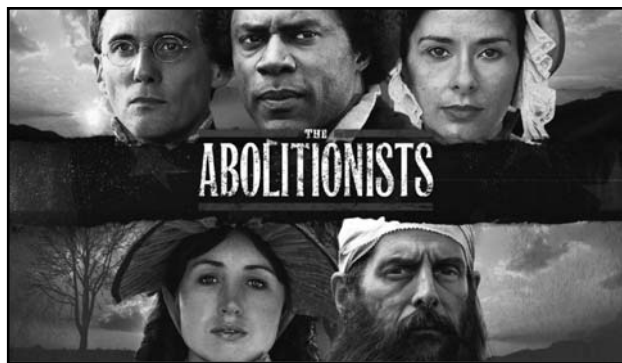
**Wednesday, March 26 | 7:00 PM "Clock Talk and Appraisal"** Bob Frishman who founded Bell-Time Clocks in 1992 has repaired over 7000 clocks and sold more than 1600 vintage timepieces. In this lecture, Mr. Frishman will introduce the art and history of clocks and spend some time appraising your pieces at the end. Email us in advance if you would like to bring a clock ([kynahamill@yahoo.com](mailto:kynahamill@yahoo.com)). Check out Bell-Time Antique and Sales online at <http://www.bell-time.com>. Free for MHSM Members; \$5 for non-members. Medford Historical Society & Museum, 10 Governors Ave.

**Saturday, April 5 | 1:00-3:00 PM "Antique Appraisal Afternoon"** Do you ever wonder what that little chair in the corner of your garage is worth? Dust off your precious objects and bring them in to be appraised by professional appraisers from Kaminski Auctions of Beverly. This is a fundraiser for the Medford Historical Society & Museum. Appraisal costs are \$10 for each item or \$25 for three (three items maximum). Check or cash only. No jewelry, coins, stamps or books. If you have large furniture, you can bring a photo and perhaps a drawer. Refreshments available. General admission is free. Medford Historical Society & Museum, 10 Governors Ave.

**Wednesday, April 16 | 7:00 PM "Paul Revere's Midnight Ride": The Myth and the Man** Just in

time for Patriot's Day, we have a lecture titled "Paul Revere's Midnight Ride: The Myth and the Man" on Wednesday, April 16 at 7:00 PM. All of Medford knows that Revere stopped in the Square during his famous ride. Mr. Frank Rigg, a former Director of the Paul Revere House in the North End and retired curator of the JFK Library, will speak about the legacy of Revere's historic ride including how Longfellow's poem has mythologized the history of the famous incident. A reception will follow. Free. Medford Historical Society & Museum, 10 Governors Ave.

**Monday, April 28 | 7:00 PM The Abolitionists: A Documentary Screening and Discussion** Hosted by Liz Ammons, Harriet H. Fay Professor of Literature, Tufts University. "The Abolitionists" vividly brings to life the struggles of the men and women who led the battle to end slavery. Clips from the documentary will be shown followed by a discussion. This is the first of four films to be screened during 2014 as part of the Medford Public Library's Created Equal grant, funded by the NEH and The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. This screening is co-sponsored by the Medford Public Library and the Medford Historical Society & Museum and part of the "Tracing Our Faces" community project. Free. Medford Public Library 111 High Street.



**Saturday, May 10 | 6:30 PM MHSM Annual Meeting and Members Reception** Reception at 6:30pm with election to begin at 7:00pm. All members welcome. Medford Historical Society & Museum, 10 Governors Ave. For more information on the Medford Historical Society & Museum, visit [www.medfordhistorical.org](http://www.medfordhistorical.org).



# Graceworks and Girl Scouts Visit the Medford Historical Society & Museum

by Allison Andrews

Kindergarteners from Graceworks had just learned “Over the River and Through the Wood”; they knew about “grandfather’s house” nearby; and on the day before Thanksgiving they visited MHSM for a look at what life in Medford was like for Lydia Maria Child when she wrote her famous song.

The young visitors viewed selected objects from the museum’s 19th-century collections. There were toys like dolls and an abacus, curious olden-days household items like a flatiron and a tin foot-warmer, and even a set of porcelain window-shutter knobs rescued from Lydia Maria Child’s house on High Street before it was torn down.

Many people recognize Child as a writer and anti-slavery activist, but few know that in 1826, she was also the editor of *The Juvenile Miscellany*, America’s first magazine for children.

More recently, Girl Scouts from Troop 71205 have begun a newspaper clipping project, selecting articles and advertisements of interest from the 1928 *Medford Mercury* to create a miscellany file. As they learned, the times were rife with auto accidents and purse-snatchings, the Candy Land Store opened a new location on Salem Street, and an airport was proposed for Medford following Amelia Earhart’s recent visit to the city. The

Girl and Boy Scouts made the news with their combined fund drive seeking to raise an impressive \$7,500. The newspapers themselves are crumbling, but they are preserved on microfiche and can be viewed at the Medford Public Library.

Troop members are also conducting oral history interviews with Medford seniors which will eventually be shared with MHSM and the public.

MHSM works to expand its educational outreach efforts. The “Medford History Through Artifacts” presentations, offered free to all Medford third grade classes, are now in their fifth year. A grant from the Medford Arts Council is providing funding to produce an activity book and online teacher resources in support of the presentations.

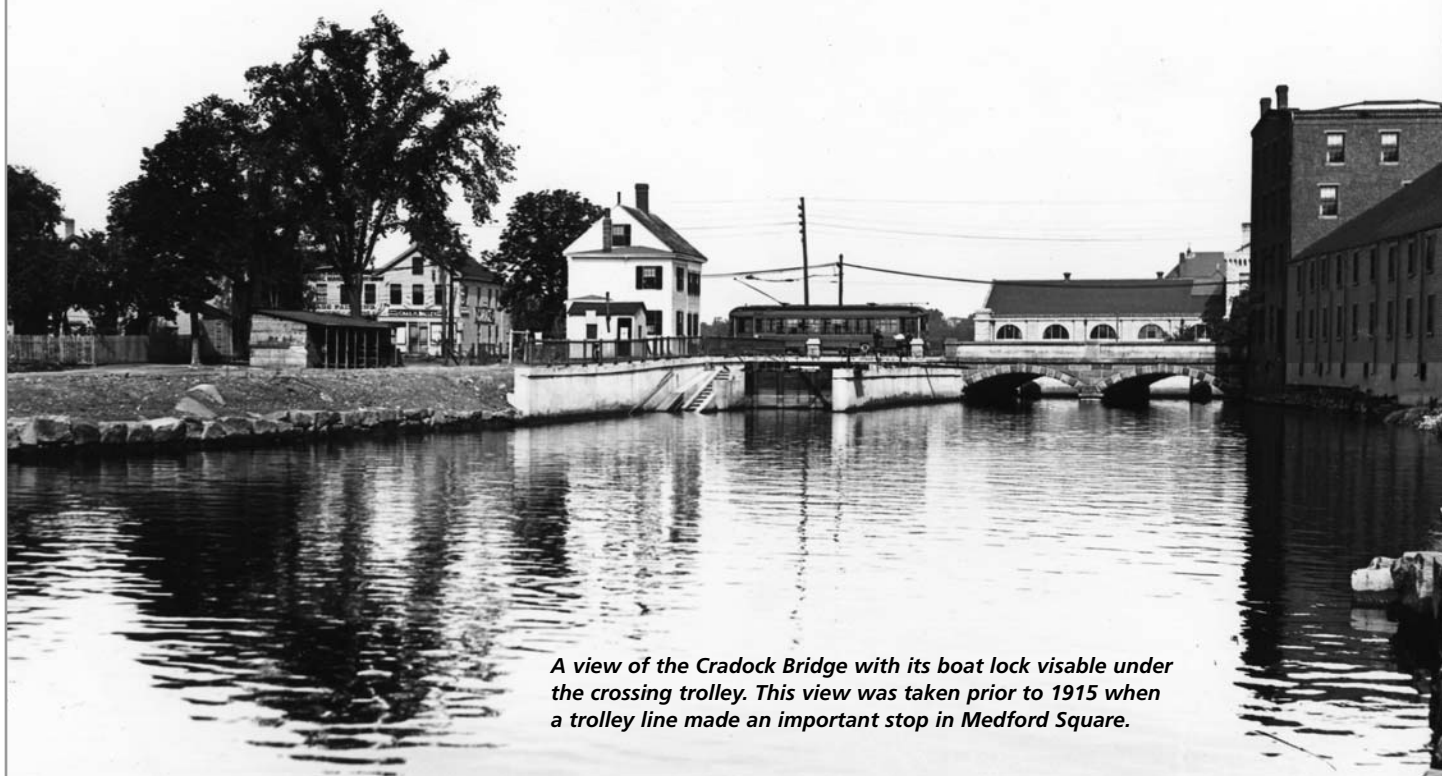
**below and right: Girl Scouts with troop leader Caren Sarno search the 1928 Medford Mercury for items of interest. In the photo below in the background at right, the diorama under glass is a scale model of Medford Square in 1855.**



**below: Girl Scouts from Troop 71205 hold a page from the 1928 Medford Mercury, announcing that year’s Boy and Girl Scout fund drive**



## ***See inside for more about the Cradock Bridge***



*A view of the Cradock Bridge with its boat lock visible under the crossing trolley. This view was taken prior to 1915 when a trolley line made an important stop in Medford Square.*

## ***Your Medford Historical Society Newsletter***

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