



Progress Report Fall 2014

Since the previous progress report, the Bedford Historical Society (BHS) in Bedford, NH, has made significant progress toward its goal to preserve and rehabilitate the former Stevens-Buswell School for use as a community center. The building, which was built in 1921 and enlarged in 1938, is owned by the Town of Bedford. However, the BHS signed a lease for the historic memorial building in September 2010 and began its rehabilitation. The plans for the future Stevens-Buswell Community Center were developed by Eric Palson of Sheerr McCrystal Palson Architecture, who presented the master plan to the town in August 2010.

Once the lease was signed, the BHS began working to stabilize the building (Phase 1 of the three phase project) in October 2010. The building received a new roof; the mold was remediated; and the asbestos was removed. The installation of new basement windows in January 2011 completed this initial phase.

In 2011, future partitions were framed, and the electrical wiring was installed throughout the building. During 2012 and 2013, work continued in the basement where the base for the future elevator and plumbing underneath the floor were completed.

More carpentry was undertaken in 2014 in preparation for the installation of the heating and cooling system. All of the Phase 2 ductwork was completed upstairs on the main floor and in a significant part of the lower level, which will be rehabilitated in Phase 3. Discussion is currently underway for the donation of furnaces for Phase 2. Plumbing that will provide service to the main floor has been done. Thanks to a generous donation from Skillings and Sons, the well pump has been replaced and an inside water storage tank has been added to the building.

The next major project will be the installation of insulation and ceiling tiles on the main floor. The BHS has received a grant of \$7,000 from the Ann De Nicola Trust toward the \$13,000 estimate for this work. In addition, the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources awarded the BHS a Conservation License Plate Grant of \$4,350 for the restoration of the interior pine bead board wainscot to its original varnished surface. It is estimated that this will cost \$10,000 to complete the work on both the main and lower levels.

Vision for the Future Community Center

Members of the Friends of the Stevens-Buswell Community Center committee of the BHS eagerly look forward to opening the building for use by members of the community. The need for a community center has been discussed in master plans for the Town of Bedford as very little meeting space currently exists for organizations in town. In addition, the original Stevens-Buswell School was named to honor the memory of two men (Willis A. Stevens and Frank A. Buswell) who died while serving their country during World War I. Therefore, the Stevens-Buswell Community Center will become a permanent veterans' memorial here in town as well.

Bedford has more than 30 active organizations that need places to meet, sponsor lectures, and hold workshops. Older residents, in particular, need a place to gather and share common interests on a regular basis, although our younger residents also will take part in activities in the building during and after school. Educational programs and cultural events will be a primary focus of the community center. For example, the BHS envisions courses will be held for older adults and events will be given by performing youths and professionals. The BHS also plans to establish a research library where the public will be able to do genealogical and historical research.

The Stevens-Buswell Community Center will be a unique asset that will enhance the quality of life in Bedford for both young and old, including our children, our grandchildren, and our senior citizens.

The BHS is actively seeking donations and grants that will help bring the dream of a community center to completion. No gift is too small, but significant gifts are encouraged for community recognition. Please let us know what you are able to do to help the Society open this historic memorial building as a community center as soon as possible.

Susan Tufts-Moore