



## President's Column: Medford and the U.S. Camel Corps

by John Anderson

During the last year, I've been working with the "Tuesday Team". These volunteers include Charlotte Swartz, Sandy Law-



rence, Heather Champigny, Sue Gerould and Martha Reagan. We are reviewing all our files of photographs, newspaper clippings, articles,

and documents stored in the second floor Reference Area. Our goal is to ensure that the 10,000 or more pieces of paper and photographs are filed accurately and cataloged electronically. We want all researchers to have easy access to this material. For me, one of the greatest challenges of this work is the temptation to study the contents of an interesting file rather than just verify that the catalog describes it correctly. I sometimes must keep pursuing an interesting subject on my own time. For example, the rest of this column is what I learned about the Medford built USS Supply.

Shipbuilding was a major Medford industry from 1803 to 1873. Over 500 ships were built in yards stretching from the railroad bridge near Boston Avenue to the present location of Hormel Stadium. Some of less known facts:

- This was something every school-boy and schoolgirl was expected to

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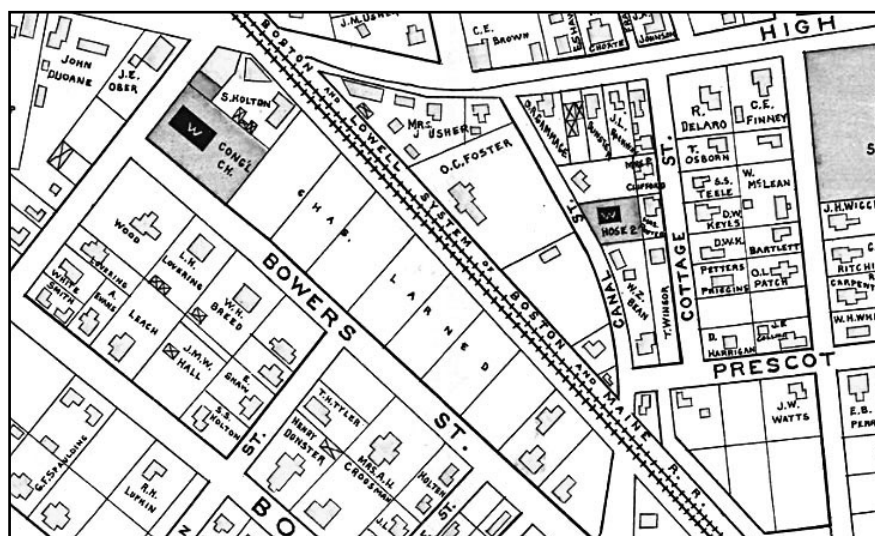
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*Detail from the 1889 George H. Walker Co. Atlas of Middlesex County showing the Bean's house at the corner of Canal Street and Prescott Street. There is an error in the map; note that only the house at the corner was owned by the Beans, not the other buildings next to it along Canal Street.*

## The Beans of Canal Street

by Will Tenney

While researching houses for the MHSM Historical House Marker Program, I sometimes uncover stories about some of the interesting people who, over the years, have lived in the houses. What follows is such a story!

On April 7, 1885, a house at the corner of Canal and Prescott Streets in West Medford was sold to Mary Bean and her husband William Z. Bean for \$2500. The then five-year old house was originally built by Samuel S. Holton for one of his daughters. Mr. Holton, a Boston boot and shoe dealer, was a major player in the development of West Medford in the 1870s and 1880s.

### **So, who were the Beans of Canal Street?**

Mary Bean, in whose name the property was held, was born Mary Driscoll on October 12, 1857 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. Her parents, Jeremiah Driscoll and Mary Jane

Fiske, were an interracial couple. Jeremiah was most likely of white heritage as he was from Ireland. Jeremiah Driscoll is a very common Irish name: for example, there were six Jeremiah Driscoll's in the 1860 Boston Directory, eight in 1865, and 11 in 1870. Jeremiah's wife, Mary Jane Fiske, was born September 12, 1835, to James Fiske and Hannah Carpenter, both of Black heritage.

On November 14, 1853, Mary Jane Fiske, (Mary Bean's mother), married Jeremiah Driscoll at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The Rev. D. Fitzgerald officiated. Jeremiah and Mary Jane's three children were all baptized by Rev. Fitzgerald at St. Paul's: Margaret on Feb 5, 1855; Maria on Oct 14, 1856; and Mary on Oct 12, 1857.

What occurred between Jeremiah and his wife Mary Jane isn't clear, but something dramat-

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ic happened: either Driscoll died, she left him, or they divorced. In any case, on June 13, 1864, Mary Jane Driscoll arrived in Boston from Halifax aboard the "S.S. Commerce" with two of her daughters, Margaret (age 9) and Mary (age 5). Within two months, Mary Jane Driscoll married for a second time on August 11, 1864. Thomas Pritchett, her new husband, a porter of interracial heritage originally from New York, was living in Cambridge with two children of his own from his first marriage. Mary Jane's daughters Margaret and Mary grew up in the blended Pritchett household in Cambridge. On August 4, 1866, the third Driscoll sister, 9-year-old Maria, left Prince Edward Island travelling to Boston alone on the steamer "Alhambra." She was met by her grandparents James and Hannah Fiske and lived with them for several years on Columbia Street in Cambridge.

On October 23, 1882, young Mary Driscoll married William Zachariah Bean. They were married by the Reverend Edward M. Gushee, rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Cambridge.

William Z. Bean was born on January 24, 1850, to Zachariah and Elizabeth Bean then living on Cross Street in Boston's North End. William's father Zachariah Bean was a freeman of Black heritage born about 1814 in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Various records list him as "ship steward," "mariner," and "stevedore." Zachariah may have been of interracial heritage as he is listed variously as Black, "mixed-race," and even sometimes as white. As a member of a ship's crew, Zachariah traveled to England and on December 28, 1848 he married white Irish-born Elizabeth Doyle at St. Barnabas Church in Liverpool. Elizabeth Doyle, from County Wexford in Ireland, was illiterate, signing the marriage register only with an "X" as "her mark."

Zachariah Bean was listed on his 1848 marriage register as "Ship Steward." Not a sailor, stewards functioned as servants on board. His father Jeremiah Bean (William's grandfather), on the other hand, was listed as "Pilot." And here is where the family history gets more interesting!

Jeremiah Bean, Zachariah's father, and William's grandfather, lived in St. Mary's County, Maryland, right at the point where the Potomac River runs through Washington, DC and joins the Chesapeake Bay. Living in St. Mary's County on the Chesapeake, Jeremiah would have known the waters well. Pilots guided boats through potentially treacherous waters, shoals, sand bars, etc., on their way from the open ocean to points inland such as Baltimore and Washington. As a Black man in the early 1800's, getting a job as a pilot responsible for the safe passage of goods and passengers would have been very rare. But on January 17, 1816, the General Assembly of the State of Maryland passed a special law titled "Chapter 101. An act for the benefit of Jeremiah Rymen, alias

Jeremiah Bean." The wording of this law is especially interesting:

*"BE IT ENACTED by the General Assembly of Maryland, That the board of examiners constituted by the act entitled, an act to establish pilots and to regulate their fees, passed at November session eighteen hundred and three, be and they are hereby authorized and directed to grant to Jeremiah Rymen, alias Jeremiah Bean, of Saint Mary's county, a free man of colour, a license as a pilot; provided they shall believe him of sufficient ability skill and experience, notwithstanding the said Jeremiah Rymen, alias Jeremiah Bean is a man of colour."*

The state legislature passing this special law granting Jeremiah Bean a license as a pilot is a magnificent tribute to the intellect and skill of the man. He must have known by heart the ever-changing waters, tides, shoals, sandbars, rocks, twists and turns of the Chesapeake better than any of the white pilots. Although Maryland was ostensibly a slave state, unlike most other states in the South, it was home to a large population of free Blacks.

After their 1848 marriage in Liverpool, Zachariah brought Elizabeth to the US, settling in Boston. Just a little more than a year after their marriage, their first-born child, William Zachariah Bean, was born in Boston on January 24, 1850. At least nine children were born to the couple and most survived into adulthood despite the dreadful living conditions the family often endured. By 1852, the family was living in a tiny house on West Center Street (now renamed Anderson) on Beacon Hill in Boston. In the 1853 Boston Directory, Zachariah is listed as living at 8 Sears Place off West Center (Anderson, between Phillips and Revere). This was a very narrow alley with ten 300 square foot houses crammed together.

The family seems to have worked hard and scraped together enough money to buy their own small house in Charlestown. On May 29, 1856, Zachariah Bean bought a 405 square-foot building on a narrow 6-foot passageway leading northwest from Belmont Street up a steep hill to the edge of the Catholic Burying Ground. Like Sears Place on Beacon Hill, there were several small houses clustered on either side of a narrow passageway. What makes this tiny piece of property so interesting is the following description in the deed of the new buyer's rights: "with all the privileges to the same belonging, particularly the right to use the said passageway & the Privy at the end of it next the Catholic Burying Ground; also the right at all times to take water from the well in said Passage way." The idea of the privy being at the top of the hill and the source of well water 50- or 60-feet down hill is a little distressing, to be sure. The four or six little houses on this passageway all sharing one well and privy suggests a level of poverty endured by the Beans. By 1865 there were eight children living in the house, one of their children having died in 1861.

As a note of interest, all the other property owners in this vicinity appear to have been Irish.

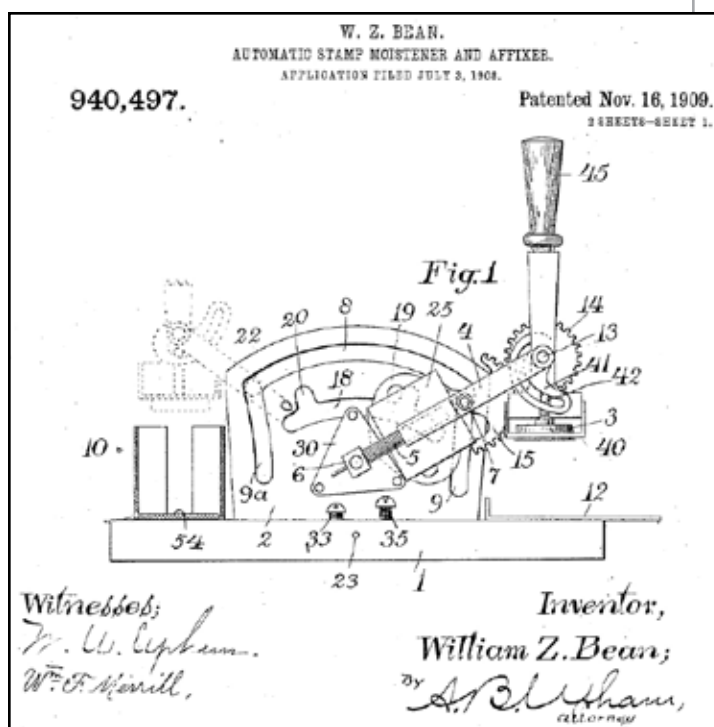
During the Civil War, on February 26, 1862 Zachariah Bean enlisted in Boston with the U.S. Navy and served three months as a "landsman." His occupation was listed as "cook" and he was described as "negro." As a landsman, he would not have had the same duties as a sailor. He served on the "*San Jacinto*," a steam-powered frigate. On March 16, 1862, he entered a naval hospital and was later transferred on March 27, 1862, to the Chelsea Naval Hospital. He was suffering from "adynamia" (lack of strength or vigor) and was discharged from the Navy, after only two months, on April 24, 1862. The 1865 Massachusetts Census listed Zachariah as Black, Elizabeth as white, and all the children as "mixed race." The 1870 U.S. Census however lists everyone as white. There is no precise understanding of this change in the census reporting but perhaps Zachariah was not home that day or the census-taker assumed his race in this heavily Irish American neighborhood or perhaps it was because the family was fair-skinned. William Z's brother, Jeremiah N. Bean, once he was on his own, was always listed in the census records as white as was his wife and children.

In 1868, the Bean family moved from the Belmont Street passageway house to a slightly larger place (629 square feet) on Neals Court near Sullivan Square in Charlestown. This, too, was a narrow passageway surrounded by ten tiny dwellings. Perhaps the Beans either liked or could only afford these passageway properties. The neighbors again seem to all be Irish. The Beans kept the Belmont Street property until 1886 when the Bean's son, William, sold the little house and land adjacent to the Catholic Cemetery to the Archbishop of Boston who, in turn, sold it to the city.

In 1870, William Z. Bean was 20 years old and listed on the census as "machinist." It is difficult to determine for whom he worked or where he got his education and training. What information we do have suggests he was working with machines in the leather industry (leather-cutting machinery, saddle-making equipment, shoe-making machines, etc.), mostly in Boston, but later also in Winchester and Lexington. Like his grandfather Jeremiah, William was very bright. From 1883 to 1909 he invented or co-invented several machines and registered at least seven patents. Patents registered under his name include:

- No. 282,602 August 7, 1883. Nailing Machine.*
- No. 282,603 August 7, 1883. Nail.*
- No. 389,632 September 18, 1888. Nailing Machine.*
- No. 391,773 October 30, 1888. Nail.*
- No. 905,124 November 24, 1908. Eyeletting Machine.*
- No. 923,757 June 1, 1909. Attachment for Turning Tapered Work or Balls.*
- No. 940,497 November 16, 1909. Automatic Stamp Moistener and Affixer.*

On May 23, 1878, William Z. Bean married Margaret J. Wheatland, the interracial daughter of Simeon J. Wheatland. Wheatland was of interracial heritage,



**William Z. Bean's patent drawing for the Automatic Stamp Moistener and Affixer he invented in 1909.**

white and East Indies Islander, and was married to Sarah P. Simonds (white) in Salem. William had been living at Neal's Court in Charlestown with his parents and siblings. After his marriage in the 1880 Boston Directory, he is listed as living in a boarding house at 33 Bowdoin Street. It appears that William and his young wife, Margaret, lived separately. While he worked and lived in Boston, she lived in a boarding-house in Salem until she passed away from consumption (TB) on May 12, 1880.

William next appears in the 1881 Boston directory living at 13 Cambridge Street near Bowdoin Street. That same year, his mother Elizabeth Bean moved out of Neal's Court to 47 Allston Street in Charlestown. What caused the Beans to move from Neal's Court is impossible to know, but something cataclysmic took place within the family. The 1880 U.S. Census lists Zachariah Bean as living on Rainsford Isle in Boston Harbor and listed as a "pauper." Rainsford Isle was the location of Boston's almshouse, a veteran's hospital, and the quarantine hospital. Exactly which of these Zachariah was consigned to is not known. Zachariah died on August 23, 1882. The Boston death records list him as "colored" and his death due to senility and "diarrhoea." His residence was given as Rainsford Isle but the place of death was 47 Allston Street in Charlestown. It appears that he went home to his family to die. After Zachariah's death in 1882, his widow, Elizabeth, received a pension from the Navy for his service to the Union during the Civil War.

Two months later, on October 23, 1882, William married again, to Mary Driscoll in Cambridge. The newlyweds moved to 47 Allston Street in Charlestown

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to live with his mother. By this time, William was listed as a "foreman" and working for J. F. Stone & Company, machinists at 370 Atlantic Avenue in Boston. While working there he got his first two patents registered. It was while they lived on Allston Street that William and Mary's first son, William Wendell Bean, was born on February 1, 1884. With space probably being tight, William, Mary, and their baby moved to Cambridge to live with Mary's mother and stepfather (Mary Jane Driscoll and Thomas Pritchett) at 34 Hubbard Avenue near Porter Square.

While William was working in the boot and shoe-making machinery business in Boston, he may have met the Holtons of West Medford. They were also in the boot and shoe business in Boston. In 1885 Bean may have learned from them that they had a house to sell in West Medford. Mary Bean bought the house on Canal Street in West Medford on April 7, 1885. It was heavily mortgaged to the sellers, so the Beans only had to put down \$300. This was a good deal for the young and growing family. Mary Bean was expecting when they moved in and their second son, Horace V. Bean, was born on October 15, 1885.

In the mid 1880s, the Beans were among the first African American families to move to West Medford. The 1880 Census shows almost no Blacks living in Medford – twelve living east of Forest Street and north of the river; six living south and west of the river; and only one living west of Forest Street and north of the river. In the 1880 Census, there was a total of nineteen Blacks living in Medford. The one Black person living in West Medford was a James H. Godfrey, 14 years old, and a servant to the Abel H. Coffin family on High Street near Allston Street.

William Z. Bean seems to have done very well for himself and his family. He joined the Sons of Veterans, the successor of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). He was elected Captain of the General S. C. Lawrence Camp, the Medford Chapter, on December 13, 1894. He served in this capacity for two years and on January 31, 1896. He retired from the position and, according to the *Boston Globe*, was awarded "a handsome regulation sword and belt. Past Captain C. H., Hillman made the presentation. "Capt. Bean was taken by surprise but responded with considerable feeling." The *National Tribune* in Washington D.C., a Black-oriented newspaper, reported on February 13, 1896: "General S. C. Lawrence Camp 54 observed its 10th anniversary last week in Grand Army Hall, Medford. ... One of the most pleasing events of the evening was the presentation by Post Capt. Hillman, in behalf of the Camp members, of a beautiful regulation sword and belt of the Order to Capt. William Z. Bean, the retiring Captain."

An interesting article also appeared in *The Colored American: A National Negro Newspaper* in Washington, D.C. on August 29, 1903.

#### *MRS. SCOTT'S JAUNT*

*Mrs. E. D. Scott, of 903 Ninth street north-east, accompanied by her daughter, Miss Marion T. Scott, arrived home last Sunday morning after a most delightful visit to Massachusetts. As it is a number of years since Mrs. Scott has visited Cambridge, her home, her welcome by old friends was indeed a happy one. The first two weeks she was the guest of Miss Eva Lewis, of Grant street after which she joined a party on a cruise of two weeks in the yacht, Scotia, belonging to Mr. and Mrs. William Z. Bean, of West Medford. After a most delightful cruise, Mrs. Scott returned to Cambridge, remaining two weeks longer to complete engagements.*

*Miss Marion Scott was the guest of Mrs. William Z. Bean. By the many and varied courtesies shown her in West Medford, Boston, and Cambridge her visit was a very happy one.*

*Master Paul D. Scott is in the city and will return to Cambridge to resume school duties early in September.*

No further information is currently available about the yacht *Scotia* We do not know when Bean acquired or sold it, where he kept it, where the two-week cruise went, or what the boat looked like. But William was certainly doing well!

Other family members lived at 34 Canal Street at various times. In the 1910 U.S. Census, Mary Bean's widowed mother, Mary Jane [Driscoll] Pritchett, was living with them, as was a nephew, Melville M. Foster, the son of Mary Bean's older sister, Maria [Driscoll]. In the 1920 U.S. Census Mary Bean's mother was still living with them. The Beans lived at 34 Canal Street from 1885 until their deaths in 1925. William Z. Bean died on July 27, 1925 and Mary Bean on February 3, 1926. Their son William W. lived there a few years beyond his parent's deaths. Their other son, Horace V. Bean, became a bookkeeper with a Boston firm, married, and moved to Lynn where he passed away in 1914 from typhoid fever.

In June 1929, William W. Bean obtained a second mortgage on the house. Like so many others in the early 1930s, the Great Depression appears to have gotten ahead of William W. as he failed to pay property taxes to the City of Medford. The city put a lien on the property, repossessed it and eventually sold it on December 30, 1932 for taxes due (\$105.31). It was sold to an Annie M. Kelley of Dorchester, but Ms. Kelley also did not pay, and once again the City became the owner of the property. On January 9, 1933, the Medford Savings Bank foreclosed on the outstanding mortgage from 1890. The house was then sold at auction to the Medford Savings Bank. On January 13, 1933, the Medford Savings Bank sold the property, thus ending 48 years of ownership and residency by the Beans of Canal Street.

# Historical Markers and Correcting History

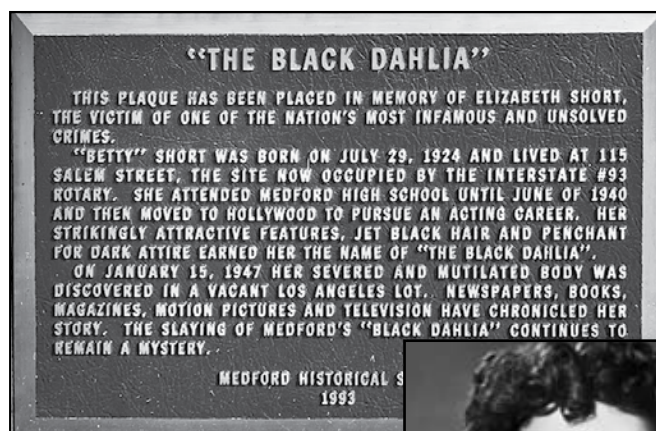
by Kyna Hamill

Perhaps you have stumbled upon one of them: made of bronze, affixed to stone at the front of a building, or at an obscure location explaining - with great confidence - episodes in the history and people of our town, Medford, Massachusetts. Did you believe it because it was written in bronze?

The value of historical markers extends far beyond mere signposts. They hold a unique significance in preserving and sharing the rich local history that has shaped Medford for centuries. Each marker in the city that operates as a link to Medford's past was posted during the late 1980s and early 1990s by the then Board of the Medford Historical Society. The original purpose of MHS was to collect and preserve the history of this historic city, to correct the myths that had grown up over the years, to build a historical library, to collect the artifacts of local history, and to celebrate historical anniversaries. The problem is, new insights have been discovered, and some of the information on the markers needs to be updated because it is now incorrect. So, what do we do?

Historical markers in Medford distill complex historical narratives into concise, informative texts that are accessible to residents, students, and visitors as starting points to the history of the city. Yet, they can provide only snapshots of the remarkable and complex individuals, events, and unique developments of the city's heritage. Beyond their educational role, these markers contribute to Medford's sense of identity and pride. Local originating narratives such as "Jingle Bells" and "Over the River" commemorate figures who lived in our town, but they don't tell the whole story. Medford residents find a shared connection through their history, but what do we do when the stories need to be changed or corrected?

Medford Historical Society & Museum today has inventoried 12 plaques in the city that tell stories of "Grandfather's House," "Jingle Bells," "The Peter Tufts House," "The Slave Wall," "The Royall House & Slave Quarters," "General Samuel Crocker Lawrence," "Elizabeth Short - The Black Dahlia," "The Mystic Congre-



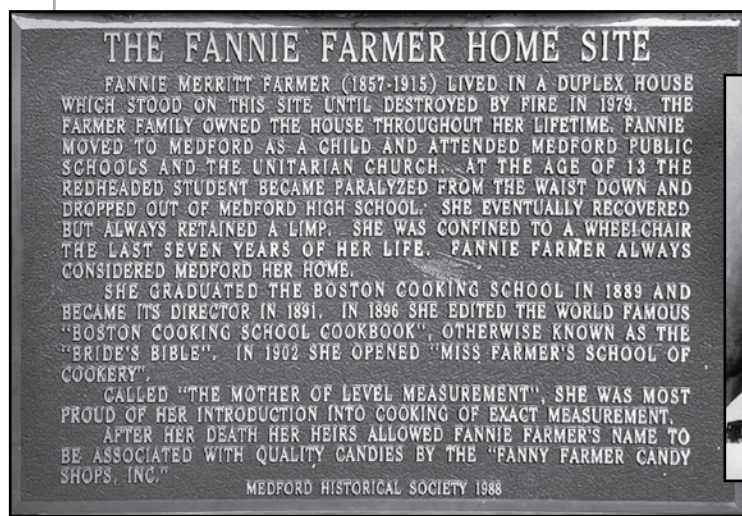
gational Church Bell," "The Sarah Bradlee Fulton House," "Fannie Farmer Home Site," "Medford Run Distilleries," and "Amelia Earhart."

The presence of these historical markers encourages the preservation of historical sites, structures, and memory of place. However, do the markers continue to encourage ongoing dialogue about the people and events? Do they still prompt questions, inspire research, and invite discussions about the past's relevance to the present? Or have they become monuments to a history that is fixed in stone and in some cases incorrect?

Of the list above, researchers and historians have identified the following as having inaccurate information, or have entirely incorrect details: "Grandfather's House," "Jingle Bells," "The Slave Wall," "The Royall House & Slave Quarters," and "Amelia Earhart." There could be more.

These markers contribute profoundly to the fabric of the community, enriching the experiences of both residents and visitors. The Medford Historical Society & Museum will be discussing how to make changes to be as sure as possible that markers pass on correct history, and we welcome your input.

Send us a message on our Facebook messenger, or email us at [medfordhistorical02155@gmail.com](mailto:medfordhistorical02155@gmail.com); we'd like to hear what you think.



## U.S. Camel Corps *continued*

know. Medford ships routinely sailed to China, India and everywhere in between. The following question was found on an 1858 examination paper given to all public-school students: "Through what oceans, and near what islands and capes, will a ship pass in going from Boston to Canton?" (If you'd like to see other questions from this test, see our Spring 2012 Newsletter, available on our website under the tab "News.")

- While very profitable, these voyages took many months and were very dangerous. We have a book *"Old Ships and Ship-Building Days in Medford"* that catalogs all the ships built in Medford and their disposition, if known. Many were wrecked or abandoned. The entry for Eagle Wing ends with: "Sailed from Boston February 11, 1865 for Bombay and was never heard from." Clipper ships had crews of 30 to 50, so there were many families whose son, husband, or brother sailed off and simply disappeared – hence the architectural term "widow's walk."
- Some ships have very unusual histories. A few years ago, I learned that a Medford-built ship wound up in the Confederate Navy. The SS Enoch Train was captured by Confederates and converted to an ironclad. She engaged in two naval battles inflicting some damage on Union ships before running aground and being set afire by Union gunfire. (See the Spring 2016 Newsletter on our website for details.)

My latest diversion has led me to discover another connection to the Confederacy as well as some unusual sea faring passengers.

### The Adventures of the USS Supply and the Camel Project

In 1846 the SS Crusader was built for a Boston merchant. It was then purchased and renamed USS Supply by the Navy for use in the Mexican War of 1846-1848. She was intended as a supply ship but was armed, nonetheless.

Immediately after her war service, the Supply embarked on an exploratory expedition to the Middle East. Commanding Officer F. W. Lynch's report is full of details and observations. For example, the River Jordan, the Dead Sea, and Biblical sites, including Bethlehem, were included in his report. He also mentions that camels were used as pack animals on land. (This document may be found on the Naval History and Heritage Command website.) Our presence in the region was not new. We fought two wars in the early 19th century against the "Barbary States" to stop their practice of capturing merchant ships and holding them for ransom. What I did not learn was the specific reason for this Supply's expedition though I suspect it was simply a reconnaissance mission to check on the status of European colonization in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Supply was used in a variety of expeditions during her time. In 1849, the Supply supported the Gold Rush migration. She then visited Japan in support of Matthew Perry's expedition. Perhaps she should have been named Manifest Destiny instead of Supply!

Meanwhile back in North America, the use of draft animals to transport supplies in the desert remained a long-standing problem. Horses were not very hardy and mules, while hardy, were difficult to manage. ("Stubborn as a mule!") Camels were suggested

as early as 1836, by Army Lieutenant George Crosman:

"For strength in carrying burdens, for patient endurance of labor, and privation of food, water & rest, and in some respects speed also, the camel and dromedary ... are unrivaled among animals. The ordinary loads for camels are from seven to nine hundred pounds each, and with these they can travel from thirty to forty miles a day, for many days in succession. They will go without water, and with but little food, for six or eight days, or it is said even longer. Their feet are alike well suited ... and they require no shoeing."

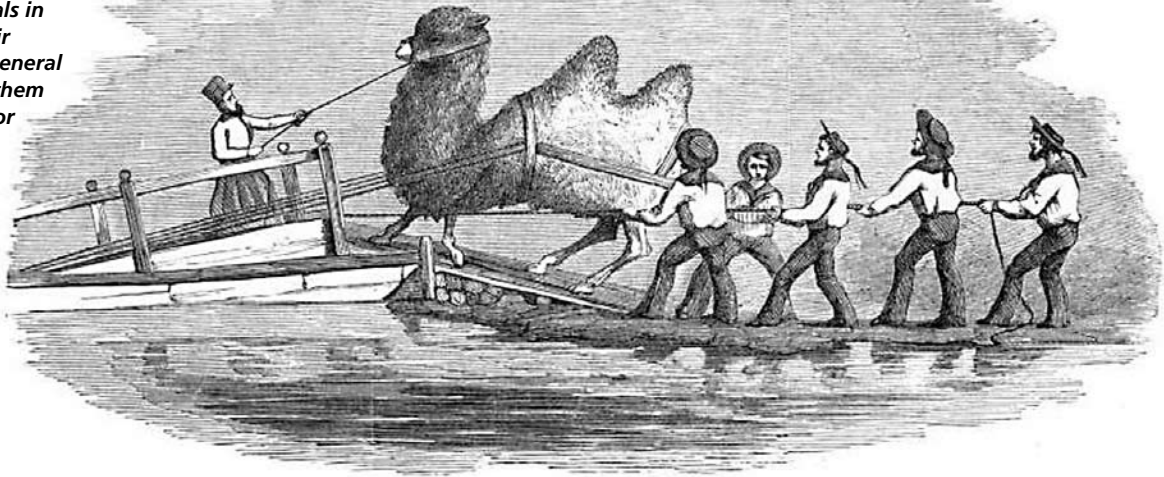
The idea went nowhere until 1847, when Crosman, now a Major, and Major Henry Wayne from the Quartermaster Department made a formal proposal to the War Department and Congress. The War Department was not interested, but the idea attracted the attention of Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi. (Yes, that Jefferson Davis!) Davis had no success in getting an appropriation until 1853 when he was appointed Secretary of War. (How ironic is that?) The impetus for the project was the desire to quickly absorb the new desert territories taken in the Mexican American War.

Lieutenant Porter (who later became Union Rear Admiral Porter) was ordered to cooperate with the army and use the USS Supply to, somehow, import camels. Remember that nobody in the US knew anything about camels. In June 1855, the Supply sailed from New York. Major Wayne had gone ahead to Europe to consult with British and French officers about how to transport and care for camels on a ship. Wayne joined Porter and the Supply in Italy. To hone their camel husbandry skills while they headed further east, they procured two camels in Tunis. As this was all happening in the middle of the Crimean War which pitted Russia against France, Great Britain, Sardinia, and Turkey, it only added to the excitement of the journey. To interview British officers about camels, Porter and Wayne had to travel close to the front. One British officer said camels were better than "the best English horses." By February 1856, after visiting Turkey, Greece and Egypt, Porter and Wayne managed to secure 33 camels and set sail for home. After the 87-day passage to Indianola, Texas, 34 camels were delivered on May 10. During the trip, five camels died but six were born! Major Wayne led the camels to their new home at Camp Verde, near San Antonio.

Porter sailed from Texas after only 6 weeks because the Army now decided they wanted more camels. This time Porter engaged an advance agent. As a result 8 camel drivers and 44 camels were ready for loading when the Supply arrived in Smyrna, Greece in November of 1856. Three camels died on route but the remaining 41 arrived in Texas in February 1857. I'll return to the voyages of the Supply, but first let's see how the Camel Corps did.

In 1857, the U.S. was building a road from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Los Angeles. Former Navy Lieutenant Edward Beale won the contract. Twenty-five camels joined the mule train to be used as pack animals, carrying 600 pounds apiece. Beale praised the endurance and load bearing of the camels. He said he would rather have one camel than four mules. Arriving in L.A., the camels garnered a lot of attention. According to an article on the National Parks website: "When these exotic beasts pulled an express wagon into Los Angeles in December 1857, a newspaper headline read 'The camels are coming.' Their approach made quite a stir among the native popula-

**A shipment of 41 camels arrived in Texas from Greece in 1857 to supply the U.S. Cavalry with a unique type of draft animal to meet the challenges of moving materials in the desert. Their strength, and general stamina made them ideally suited for the task.**



tion, most of whom had never seen the like. The article told how camels were content to forage on cactus, could 'live well where domestic animals would die', and could pull a load over a mountain where mules balked." (Hopefully, seeing the camels was a distraction for the Angelinos. L.A. was a wild place at the time and full of people tossed out of San Francisco for bad behavior. There was almost open warfare between the Hispanics and the Anglos.)

Based on Beale's report, Major Floyd recommended that Congress authorize the purchase of 1000 camels. Congress never acted on this request. By now, the country was a few years from the Civil War and Congress was busy fighting among themselves. (Remember Charles Sumner's 1856 savage beating on the Senate floor.) Dealing with something so practical and so far removed was perhaps not a priority.

As camels were quite superior to horses and mules and were able to travel long distances without water while foraging on creosote bushes, as well as showing no ill effects from a rattlesnake bites, there was more work in 1859 for camel missions in Texas. On May 31, 1860, Robert E. Lee, the U.S. Army officer in charge of Texas, ordered a dangerous mission to locate a site for a camp near Comanche territory. Twenty camels, 25 mules, and an infantry escort set out. By late June, it was so hot and dry that the men feared for their lives. Three mules died before they reached a creek. All the animals and men drank desperately while the camels just watched until the frenzy was over and then "topped up." After resting, the expedition carried on but stopped at a fort where they left one man and nine mules who were unable to continue. Lee was suitably impressed and praised the "endurance, docility, and sagacity" of the camels. This was the last major camel expedition before the Civil War.

In 1861, Camp Verde was overtaken by Confederate troops who recorded 80 camels on the site. Some reports say camels were used to transport baggage, but there is no record of any camels assigned to army units. When the Union re-took the camp in 1865, there were estimated to be over 100 camels. Some camels were roaming wild. In 1866, the Army rounded up 66 camels and sold them at auction to Bethel Coopwood. Bethel was a colorful figure who settled in San Antonio. Prior

to the war, Coopwood lived in Los Angeles (murder city at that time) and made his money in land transactions. When the war began, he became a Confederate officer and led a partially successful campaign to extend Confederate control westward. He had hoped to go all the way to the California gold fields. After the war, he settled in Texas, started various businesses, and bought the camels. He sold some to circuses but kept others and was often seen riding them around San Antonio.

A few of the camels wandered freely and were sighted as late as 1902. They were not completely forgotten as they were featured in the early 1950s on TV episodes of *Death Valley Days*, *Maverick*, and *Have Gun Will Travel* (episode written by Gene Roddenberry). You can still stream the film "*Southwest Passage*" today on PlutoTV!

Of the eight camel drivers brought to the United States, the fate of only one of them, Hi Jolly, is known. He lived in the United States until his death in 1902. He is memorialized in Quartzsite, Arizona. The text reads "The Last Camp of HI JOLLY Born somewhere in Syria about 1828, Died at Quartzsite December 16, 1902, Came to this Country February 10, 1856, Camel Driver – Packer, Scout, Over 30 Years a Faithful Aid to the U.S. Government Arizona Highway Department 1935."

Why did the Army lose interest in camels? Perhaps Jefferson Davis' early support of the project didn't sit well with the Army after the Civil War. Perhaps it was a lack of people experienced with camels or their need for specialized tack that would be hard to supply. The rapid development of railroads after the Civil War made the need for improved pack animals less important.

Now let us return to the adventures of the Supply. She was used in 1858 as part of a "gun boat diplomacy" mission. The U.S. Navy with 19 ships, 200 guns, and 2500 men desired a show of force to right a perceived wrong in Paraguay. The armada sought redress for an earlier incident when the USS *Water Witch* provoked an exchange of gunfire with a shore battery in Paraguay, and a U.S. sailor was killed. This show of force convinced Paraguay to fold and sign a "peace treaty" with the United States.

Next the Supply joined the Africa Squadron. This task force operated off the west coast of Africa and Gulf of Mexico to

*continued page 9*

## MHSM Events Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

**Lydia Maria Child: A Radical American Life Biography of Abolitionist Lydia Maria Child**  
**Speaker: Prof. Lydia L. Moland, Colby College**  
*Thursday, September 14, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., MHSM, 10 Governors Avenue*

The radical abolitionist Lydia Maria Child is one of Medford's most famous nineteenth century personalities. Born in 1802, she grew up near her father's famous Medford bakery and would have witnessed evidence of slavery's legacy.

She published a book-length denunciation of slavery and was ostracized by Boston polite society for her radical views. She persisted in fighting for racial equality, women's suffrage, and Native American rights until she died in 1880. Despite this lifetime of activism, she is best known for immortalizing her Medford childhood in the poem "Over the River and Through the Wood"—a fact whose irony would not have been lost on her.



### Poetry Reading and Fundraiser

**Poet: Max Heinegg**  
*Friday, September 29, 6:30-7:30 p.m., MHSM,*



### 10 Governors Avenue

Max Heinegg, poet, singer-songwriter, and recording artist will launch his new book *Going There* (Lily Poetry Review) at MHSM and read selections from it. Musical guests and friends will also be featured. Medford Brewing Company will generously donate beer for those 21+ in attendance. Donations of \$10 to help support the Historical Society are appreciated. Spaces are limited to 35.

### OCTOBER

### Civil War Photojournalism

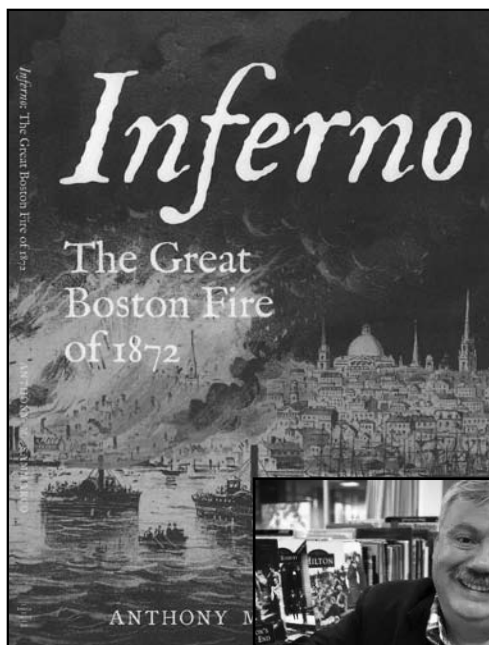
**Speaker: Jay Stott**  
*Thursday, October 12, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., Charlotte and William Bloomberg Medford Public Library*



Encounter Medford Historical Society & Museum's national treasure, the Civil War Photograph Collection\*, as never before and hone your history detective skills. Join us on a trip back in time and see this collection through the photographers' eyes as they intended it to be seen and experienced: a direct witness to the people, places, and events of our American Civil War. Learn about the technical and physical challenges they faced and the choices they made as they plied a rapidly evolving craft that was then barely twenty years old. Explore some of the hidden stories their photos tell. It promises to be a unique evening not to be missed.

*Co-sponsored by the GAR Hall and the Museum of Lynn and the Civil War Roundtable.*

\* For more information, see "Remarkable Collection..." in our September 2019 newsletter available in the News section at [www.medfordhistorical.org](http://www.medfordhistorical.org).



## NOVEMBER

### **Inferno: The Great Boston Fire of 1872**

**Speaker: Anthony Sammarco, Historian and Author**  
**Wednesday, November 8, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., Charlotte and William Bloomberg Medford Public Library**

The Great Boston Fire of 1872 destroyed sixty-five acres of land in Boston, from Washington Street, between Summer Street and Milk Street, fanning eastward towards the wharves projecting into Boston Harbor. The fire is said to have destroyed 776 buildings in Boston's downtown, causing \$73 million in damage (\$1,682,000,000 in 2022 dollars), and killing an estimated twenty people, leading to stricter building regulations in Boston.

## DECEMBER

### **An Evening at the Museum Toy Drive & Fundraiser: A History of Medford in 5 Objects**

**Speakers: Kyna Hamill and Dee Morris**  
**Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., MHSM, 10 Governors Avenue**

Join us and get a glimpse of Medford's rich history through the discussion of five unique objects from MHSM's collection. Medford Brewing Company will generously donate beer for those 21+ in attendance. Donation of \$10 to help support the Historical Society are appreciated. Attendees are asked to bring a new toy for the Medford Family Network toy drive. Spaces are limited to 35.

### **REGISTER NOW! SPACE IS LIMITED**

Registration is free at  
[www.medfordhistorical.org/events](http://www.medfordhistorical.org/events)

## **U.S. Camel Corps** *continued*

suppress the slave trade. With the outbreak of the Civil War, she joined the southern blockade and engaged in her first and only combat, capturing a schooner carrying arms and ammunition near Sarasota, Florida. After the war, she was used in 1871 to transport relief supplies to French citizens left starving because of the Franco-Prussian War. Her final task before her decommissioning in 1879 was to convey American exhibits to the European expositions in Vienna and Paris.

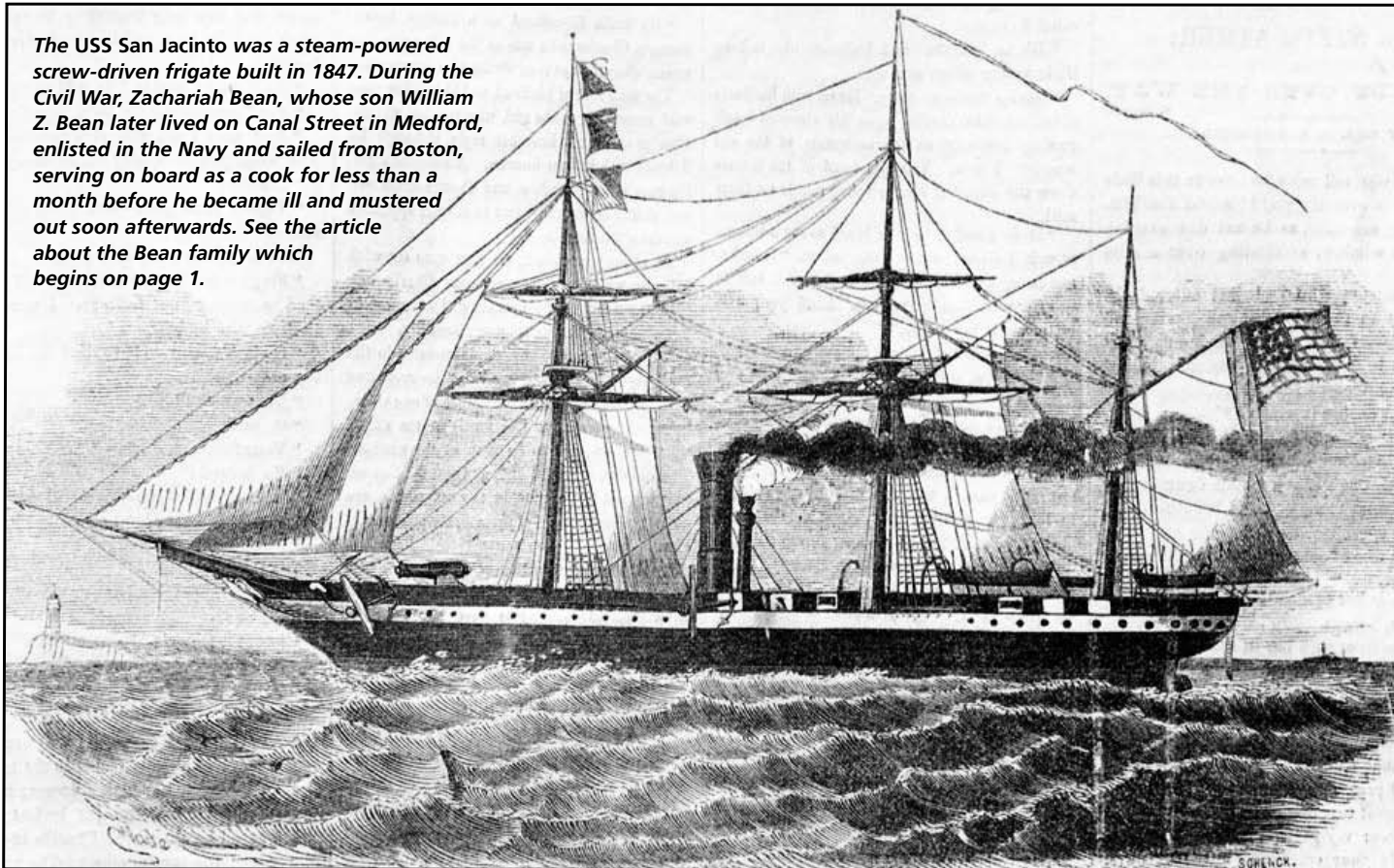
My last thoughts are about the two officers involved in the camel voyages. Army Major Wayne and Navy Lieutenant Porter chose different paths during the Civil War. Porter, promoted to Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy, had an important role in the siege of Vicksburg. Army Major Wayne was the son of James Moore Wayne, a former Mayor of Savannah, Georgia and later a U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice. The elder Wayne remained loyal to the Union until his death. The younger Wayne resigned his commission after Lincoln's election and became a Brigadier General in the Confederate Army seeing action in Georgia.

I wonder if father and son ever reconciled before the father's death in 1867 or if Wayne and Porter ever met again to reminisce about their camel adventures in the Middle East?

*Hi Jolly Monument in Quartzsite, Arizona marks the grave of a Syrian-born camel driver brought to the United States in 1856 by the U.S. Cavalry.*



*The USS San Jacinto was a steam-powered screw-driven frigate built in 1847. During the Civil War, Zachariah Bean, whose son William Z. Bean later lived on Canal Street in Medford, enlisted in the Navy and sailed from Boston, serving on board as a cook for less than a month before he became ill and mustered out soon afterwards. See the article about the Bean family which begins on page 1.*



***Your Medford Historical Society Newsletter***

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