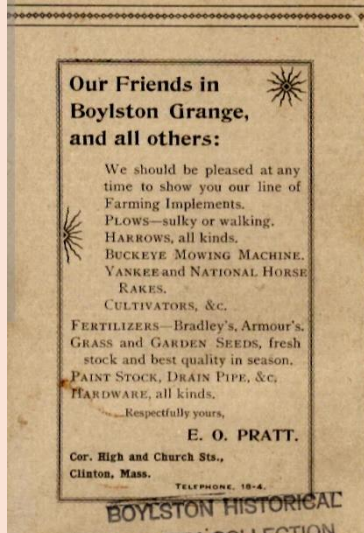


# May News from Boylston

## Through the Years

By Judy Haynes

May was a month named for the Roman goddess Maia, who oversaw the growth of plants.<sup>1</sup> From news clips going back to 1885 we make note that farming in Boylston was common and very active; thus, planting was important in May. In 1885,



**Boylston Grange Program**

1907

BHSM Archive Collection

“Farmers are busy planting. Gypsies who have been camping in town left Tuesday for Worcester.”<sup>2</sup>

The crops considered “most profitable” was part of a discussion at the Grange, a very active organization for farmers. In 1909, it was noted that farmer William Hastings

“...sold last year 200 bushels of onions, 150 bushels beets, 75 bushels parsnips, 400 bushels carrots, 700 bushels tomatoes, 700 barrels of cabbages, 900 barrels of apples, and milk to the amount of \$2,400.”

Part of Mr. Hastings success was attributed to his water supply which was obtained by a windmill he had built. Walter J. Bigelow of Northborough had completed its installation. The windmills sat on a 70 foot tower above Bigelow’s well. It pumped many gallons of water into a tank, which served his root cellar and his barn and provided

“...plenty of water to wash his vegetables for market.”<sup>3</sup>

Farming could be risky and accidents occasionally made the news. Sadly, it was reported that Howard J. Shattuck of Boylston was caught in the fertilizer sower on 2 May 1912 and succumbed to his injuries. He was only 23 years, 9 months and 1 day old.<sup>4</sup>



PRINCIPAL CALVIN H. ANDREWS  
In Charge of Hay Rake on Boylston Farm.



**Nellie (Bigelow) Whitcomb**

District 1 – school teacher

BHSH Photograph Collection

Aside from the practical side of life in May, it is and was a time of getting outside to celebrate the arrival of spring and for remembering those fallen soldiers on Memorial Day. The oldest news clip I found from 1878 notes that “Memorial Day was appropriately observed in Boylston, the soldiers and sailors uniting in its observance.”<sup>5</sup> It goes on to describe the details with a procession starting at 10 a.m., with prayers by Rev. H. S. Kimball in honor of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War soldiers. Appropriate remarks were made by other speakers, and then a collation was held on the Common. Even the children of District No. 1, with the guidance of teacher Mrs. Nellie Whitcomb, had the children appear in “appropriate costumes.” There is no description as to what ‘appropriate’ dress was worn.

Memorial Day continued to be observed in a similar manner throughout the centuries and is still held with proper respect and remembrance to this day in 2024. A Fridays Fascinating Finds noted more detailed history of the day in 2023. To see “Boylston’s Memorial Day” check our website: [www.boylstonhistory.org](http://www.boylstonhistory.org) and click on Artifacts to see articles prepared for Fridays Fascinating Finds.

May also derives from the Latin word Maiores, “Elders,” who were also celebrated during this month.<sup>6</sup> While no news specifically named an event for the elders of the times, reports always showed who was visiting with whom, who was travelling, and many of the social scene were elders. Any newspaper, as true of today, also included the obituaries.

One of the more prominent people recorded: “We are this week called upon to record the sudden decease of Capt. John Andrews of this town, who died on Tuesday morning, 3d inst. [May, 1878]. He resided in the brick house “formerly occupied by Silas Hastings and Elmer Loring, and where he has ever since resided.”... He was a “prosperous farmer, influential in town affairs,” and took interest in the “prosperity and well being of this community.”<sup>7</sup>

On February 11, 1944 the Boylston column head reads: “Mrs. Vickery [Prouty], Veteran Boylston Granger, Dies”... She was the widow of George H. Prouty and lived on Central Street, a resident of Boylston since she was eight years old... Nellie May (Vickery) Prouty, was

<sup>1</sup> *Old Farmer’s Almanac*. 2024. Yankee Publishing, Dublin, New Hampshire.

<sup>2</sup> *Boylston news*. Worcester Telegram. May 23, 1885.

<sup>3</sup> *Boylston*. May 20, 1910. Special to the Telegram.

<sup>4</sup> *Boylston*. May 2, 1912. News item in Mary French Scrapbook collection.

<sup>5</sup> Scrapbook collection of news clips by Mary French. May ‘Boylston’ news 1878.

<sup>6</sup> *Old Farmer’s Almanac*. 2024. Yankee Publishing, Dublin, New Hampshire.

<sup>7</sup> *Boylston*. 1878 news item from Mary French scrapbook collection.



**Goldie Prouty**  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*

71 at the time of her death. “She had held several offices in the Boylston Grange” where she had membership for 55 years. “She leaves a daughter Goldie Benson and a sister-in-law, Mrs. Lillian E. Vickery.”<sup>8</sup>

May brought to the Town Hall an evening of entertainment sponsored by the Men’s Club who held a chicken pie supper, bazaar and entertainment at 7 p.m. on May 12, 1922. Supper



**Mrs. Lillian Vickery**  
*Boston Post Cane Recipient 1972*  
*Cane honors eldest resident of*  
*Boylston, Massachusetts*  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*

tickets were 50 cents with admission to the bazaar free. Bazaar offerings consisted of donations including a “New Style Florence Three Burner Oil Stove,” an “Eight Piece Set of Alladdin [sic] Enamel Ware,” an “Automobile Robe” – just to name a few items we would be unfamiliar with today.<sup>9</sup>



**Event in the Men's Club in the 1920's**

Would anyone recognize the event or individuals in this photograph?  
We are seeking to learn any details about this photograph.

*BHSM Photograph Collection*

The Ladies Benevolent Society of the Congregational Church appeared active with meetings in many of the news items; there was even a Children’s Grange. An organization titled The Merry Workers held a party at the Town Hall in 1885. Their supper netted \$29. The group may have been associated with the church, but it is not evident from the item. A concert was held at the church and emceed by Harry Souci in late May, 1919, to benefit the organ motor fund. This was the fourth annual concert he hosted. Clearly the month of May was full and had something for all people and all ages.



**Congregational Church**  
**Third Meeting House of Boylston, Massachusetts**  
*BHSM Photograph Collection*

What you see here is but a sampling of the news items held at the Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc. They provide a look back at life in our town from many years ago.

*Be sure to join us, the Boylston Historical Society and Museum, on Memorial Day when we are open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with exhibits honoring our veterans and other items of interest such as Technology over the Ages – how it has changed today. Come see it for yourself.*

<sup>8</sup> *Boylston* news clip from Mary French Scrapbook collection.

<sup>9</sup> Small flyer found in Mary French news clips scrapbook collection.

Archive Collection, Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc., 7 Central Street, Boylston, Massachusetts

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