



December 2011

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The End of the Year

I feel like I should have some words of “historic” wisdom, now that the year is nearly over. But here are the words of Edgar Guest (the “People's Poet”) who says it best

A happy New Year! Grant that I
 May bring no tear to any eye
 When this New Year in time shall end
 Let it be said I've played the friend,
 Have lived and loved and labored here,
 And made of it a happy year.

The Bradford Landmark Society had a very good year in 2011. The Herbig Bakery staff and volunteers painted the building – first time in approximately 39 years, and it looks great. We had some interesting donations to the Landmark, too – including a real 1959 Soap Box Derby car. Recent donations include a group of interesting Bradford bottles, some very early Library Board minutes and accession books dating from 1901, books, photographs, and even the original brass key from the old Bradford House which burned down in 1868. Great stuff.

We received the collection of *The Bradford Evening Star and Daily Record* in early spring – nearly 120 volumes – and we've been having a wonderful time indexing them. Reading old newspapers can be quite addictive.

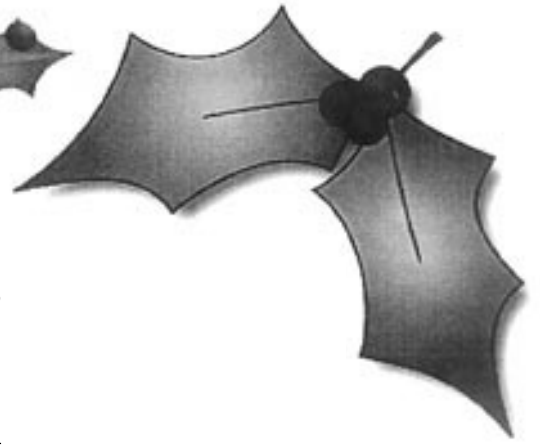
The Crook Farm Fair was a huge success, with lots of great music, food, and interesting crafters and vendors.

We repaired several of the roofs at the Crook Farm, too – the schoolhouse, carpenter's shed, and weaver's buildings all got needed repairs.

And welcome to several new members of our Board of Directors, Patti Neidich, Linda Brocius, Sam Heyler, Colette Roessler and Tony Clark. You will find that it is very rewarding – and fun – to be part of the Landmark, the city's only historical society dedicated to preserving our past.

Inside this Edition of The Inkwell

Holiday Open House
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 Necrology of the Businesses



You're Invited to

A Holiday Open House
at the Bradford Landmark Society

45 East Corydon Street

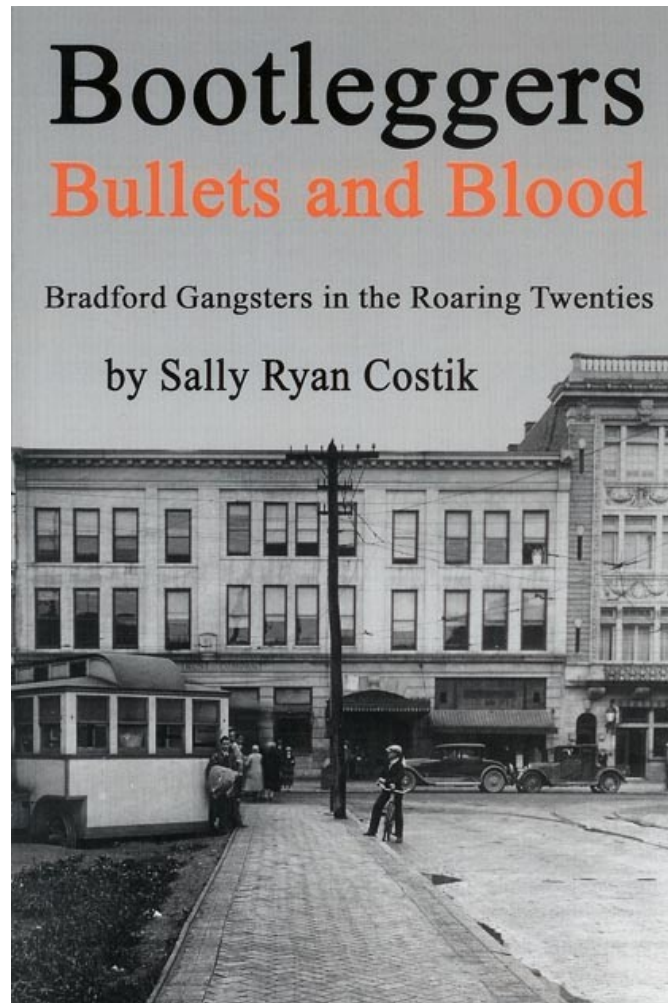
Wednesday, December 14
11 AM to 4 PM

Refreshments, cookies, punch, & more
All store merchandise will be 10% off

Books! DVDs! Lithographs! Wooden
Buildings! Yellow Dogs! Notecards!

(You might even win a free membership)

Introducing a new book by Sally Ryan Costik



\$20.00

Nearly everyone who knows even a little about the history of Bradford remembers the name Al Ritchie – the famous gangster, reputed to have ties to Al Capone, who was shot down in the street in front of Colella's Bakery on River street in 1931. But some of the best parts of the Prohibition story in Bradford have never been told: gangsters, bootleggers, gunmen, raids by Federal Dry Agents, women, policemen, and nearly 50 murders.

And you might even find out that your grandparents were bootleggers!

Book Signings will be held at the Main Street Mercantile, December 10, starting at 10 AM, and at the Bradford Landmark Society's Holiday Open House on Wednesday, December 14, 11 AM to 4 PM. **Bootleggers, Bullets and Blood** is available for purchase at both locations.

National Toy Hall of Fame Inductees 2011

Each year, we announce the toys that have been inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame at the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, NY. This year, three toys have been selected: the dollhouse, Hot Wheels, and the blanket. Read on, for the reasons why these toys were selected, from www.museumofplay.org.

The Dollhouse.

The first dollhouses were developed to display the miniature possessions of very wealthy Europeans in the late 1500s. These diminutive “baby houses,” as they were known, consisted of cabinets divided into compartments to display miniature furniture and household accessories. Exclusively the playthings of adults, baby houses not only showcased finely made furnishings of exotic woods, metals, fabrics, and other materials, they also served as symbols of a lady's wealth and refined tastes.

Miniatures, however, fascinate children as much as adults, and by the 17th and 18th centuries, German toy makers produced a variation of the baby house – now called a dollhouse – for youngsters to furnish with tiny chairs and tables, beds and pallets, and tapestries and floor coverings. Mass-production methods of the 19th century allowed toy manufacturers to offer dollhouses cheaply, and more children of the growing middle class played with these miniature houses in their playrooms. By the turn of the 20th century, companies in Germany, England, and the United States supplied dollhouses and furnishings of varied scales to suit every taste and pocketbook. Dollhouses continued to be a favorite plaything of American girls throughout the 20th century and remain popular today.

Dollhouses help children learn about interior design and household management. Small hands develop manual dexterity in placing furnishings in the tiny rooms just so. While playing with their dollhouses, children begin to discern architectural styles and furnishings of varying designs and functions. Dollhouse play encourages kids to make up their own stories about families and activities as they move tiny figures from room to room and prepare the rooms for meals, clean-up, parties, bedtime, and other familiar routines.

Hot Wheels.

In the 1960s, Elliot Handler, a co-founder of Mattel, Inc., envisioned a die-cast car to surpass the popular English Matchbox brand. He wanted a line of toy cars to dominate Mattel's boys' division just as its Barbie doll had become the strongest brand in its girls' division. Handler insisted that the toy cars look authentic, so the project enlisted Harry Bradley, a top auto designer from Chevrolet, to lead the toy design team. What Handler really wanted was not the cars of Detroit, but the radical versions altered by custom-car shops – like vehicles he often saw on California's highways. And Handler wanted his little cars to zoom. So, Mattel engineers produced “muscle” cars with thick, plastic mag wheels built for speed and minimal friction axles that featured “torsion-bar suspension,” which gave the cars shock absorbency and wheel bounce. Kids coveted the 16 muscle models – custom Barracudas, Camaros, Corvettes, Cougars, Firebirds, and others – that Mattel first offered in 1968. Mattel's designers enhanced the cars' appeal with the candy colors of Spectraflame, a painting process that revealed the shiny metal beneath the colors. The toy company developed flexible, plastic tracks for racing Hot Wheels, complete with the famous loop that became the symbol of the brand to several generations of kids.

Hot Wheels' success increased with each year's new models. Combining popular models with speed made the miniature cars even more appealing than Mattel or Handler could have imagined. Sales topped 16 million in the first year and have hardly slowed since. Mattel has produced upwards of three billion cars, outdistancing the combined output of the Big Three automakers. More than 800 models and 11,000 variations of Hot Wheels have been manufactured, and these days – according to Mattel – eight cars are sold every second.

The Blanket.

Children have played with blankets ever since ancient agrarians domesticated woolly animals and spun their coats for fabrics. In imaginative play and make-believe, kids have discovered the many playful uses for the blanket. It fills in for a king's robe, a bride's veil, a superhero's cape, a Roman soldier's cloak, a princess's flowing gown, and a wizard's flying carpet. Thrown over a table, it forms a tent; draped around two chairs, it becomes a fort; on top of the carpet, it serves as a safe island surrounded by sea monsters. In puppet shows, the blanket substitutes for theater curtains; for a magician, the blanket conceals the secrets of the show. And in tug-of-war, the blanket gets top billing. It is also suitable for tossing toys in the air or for parachuting them back to earth.

And best of all, blankets give cover to legions of kids who read by flashlight long into the night.

Inducted toys are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- **Icon-status:** The toy is widely recognized, respected, and remembered
- **Longevity:** The toy is more than a passing fad and has enjoyed popularity over multiple generations
- **Discovery:** The toy fosters learning, creativity, or discovery through play
- **Innovation:** The toy profoundly changed play or toy design. A toy must be inducted on the basis of this criterion without necessarily having met all of the first three.

Anyone can nominate a toy for inclusion into the Toy Hall of Fame, just go to their website. Each nomination must meet the criteria above. The 2011 toys in this year's competition included Transformers, Star Wars action figures, Jenga, the Simon electronic flash game, Dungeons & Dragons, the dollhouse, Twister, Rubik's Cube, the pogo stick, puppets, radio-controlled vehicles, and Mattel's Hot Wheels.

And for those toys that didn't make it yet, here is a little poem from 1927 for encouragement . . .

I'd like to be a could-be
If I could not be an are,
For a could-be is a maybe,
With a chance of reaching par.
I'd rather be a has-been
Than a might-have-been by far.

As a tribute to one of the most beloved Christmas movies of all time, we offer this article which we found on the Internet, regarding the inspiration for the town of Bedford Falls. Hee Haw and Merry Christmas!

It's a Wonderful Life

The Real Bedford Falls . . .

Was the Upstate New York village of Seneca Falls Frank Capra's inspiration for the design of Bedford Falls in *It's a Wonderful Life*?

Karolyn Grimes, the actress who played Zuzu, one of the children of George and Mary Bailey (James Stewart and Donna Reed) in the American movie classic, thinks it was.

“When I came around the corner and saw [Seneca Falls'] main street, I gasped and said, 'This is Bedford Falls!’” Grimes then saw the steel bridge that flows over the canal: “It is nearly a replica of the same bridge that George Bailey had grown up with all his life.”

Physical similarities between Seneca Falls and Bedford Falls are striking. In addition to the architecture along the main street and the steel truss bridge, Seneca Falls has many Second Empire Victorian homes (like the large, old house George and Mary owned in the movie). Both towns have a canal. In 1945, when the movie was shot, Seneca Falls was a mill town, just like Bedford Falls. Seneca Falls had the globe street lamps seen in the movie and even had a median on a portion of its main street.

There were also similarities in the towns' characters. Both had a large Italian community and both had a neighborhood where people of modest means could live comfortably, courtesy of the generous terms of a community leader. In the movie it was “Bailey Park,” named in honor of George Bailey's family building and loan; in Seneca Falls it was “Rumseyville,” named after the owner of one of the town's large pump manufacturers.

Seneca Falls' town leaders are so sure it served as Capra's inspiration that they have created an *It's a Wonderful Life* festival. This year's event is December 7-9 and will include a screening of *It's A Wonderful Life*, during which featured guest Karolyn Grimes will discuss her experiences shooting the movie. (Her character closes the movie with the famous line, “Look, Daddy; teacher says, 'Every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings.’”) The downtown will be decorated with replicas of the Christmas lights of Bedford Falls, and the shops and restaurants will serve up *It's A Wonderful Life* fare.

So why does Seneca Falls think it is Bedford Falls? After all, Bedford Falls strikes a chord with millions of people in small towns across the country. Jimmy Stewart said the set reminded him of his hometown of Indiana, Pennsylvania. Many towns have similarities to Bedford Falls. Why isn't the movie set just an excellent depiction of the look and feel of small-town America?

Seneca Falls' claim begins with geography. It's hard to dispute that Capra set Bedford Falls in New York State. Rochester, Buffalo, and Elmira are mentioned in the script and referenced as being relatively close. All three are an easy drive from Seneca Falls. And, a reference to Cornell University in Ithaca, just 40 miles south, was taken out of the script by the studio's rights clearance lawyers.

There are road signs in the movie pointing to Katonah and Chappaqua, both of which are in Westchester County and near the towns of Bedford and Bedford Hills. Maybe they were Capra's inspiration?

But Bedford is a very affluent community of Colonial-era homes and sprawling horse farms, not like the humble Bedford Falls in the movie at all. And Bedford has just a few buildings on one side of its main street, nothing at all like the center-of-town feeling in the movie.

Bedford Hills comes closer; it was populated by a large Italian immigrant population in the '40s, and its main street has buildings on both sides, some of which are same-era architecture as Capra's Bedford Falls. But the town is much smaller and doesn't have the same physical layout as that in the movie, and there isn't a steel bridge over water.

There's something else against the Bedfords being Capra's inspiration. Both of these towns are just 45 miles from New York City. Even in 1945 train and automobile travel times, neither Bedford nor Bedford Hills resembled the remote spot that has Jimmy Stewart's character feeling hopelessly isolated from the world. (A check with the local historian and townspeople revealed no evidence or local legend of Capra visiting the area or any knowledge of the towns' connection with the movie.)

Capra's Bedford Falls has a Genesee Street, and that is a common street name in Upstate New York. Seneca Falls has a Genesee Turnpike.

A check of the map of New York reveals half a dozen towns with "Falls" in their names, but each lacks significant characteristics of Bedford Falls.

Comparing Seneca Falls to other towns in the state gives more evidence in its favor. When *It's A Wonderful Life* was made, New York State had many towns the size of Bedford Falls. Some had similar architecture, some were mill towns, some had a large proportion of immigrants, and some had a steel bridge.

But none of them had as many similarities to Bedford Falls as Seneca Falls.

The final proof offered for the town's claim is the story that Frank Capra visited the town in late 1945. He was going to visit an aunt in nearby Auburn and stopped in Seneca Falls and had his hair cut.

Barber Tommy Bellissima didn't know who Frank Capra was at the time, but when the movie came out, he recognized the name of his famous patron on the poster. He remembered Capra because the two had talked at length about their lives in Italy and common experiences as immigrants. The name stuck with Bellissima because *capra* in Italian means goat.



But Capra never mentioned Seneca Falls in his memoirs, and nothing about the town is found in his archives. No definitive proof has been found that Frank Capra visited Seneca Falls and brought the image of the town back with him to Hollywood.

So is it just a coincidence that Seneca Falls is practically identical to Bedford Falls, or did Capra deliberately keep the Seneca Falls connection to himself? After all, he wanted the town of Bedford Falls to appeal to everyone. Making it known his set design was based on one place would have compromised its universal appeal.

Consider this scenario:

It is documented that Capra was in New York City in November 1945 trying to talk Jean Arthur into the female lead in *It's A Wonderful Life*. A check of historical maps shows the most direct route in the '40s from New York to Auburn, where his aunt reportedly lived, would have been west across NY Route 17 and then north when he got to the southern Finger Lakes region – a route that would have taken him through Ithaca and then Seneca Falls.

Leaving Bellissima's barbership, Capra would have gone over the steel truss bridge on Bridge Street to get to the main part of town. On that bridge was a plaque honoring Seneca Falls resident Antonio Varacalli, who had leaped into the icy waters of the canal in April 1917 to rescue a girl who had just attempted suicide by jumping off the bridge. Varacalli saved her but he was overcome by fatigue from the rescue and drowned.

Varacalli's "guardian angel" sacrifice would have certainly captured Capra's attention. *It's A Wonderful Life* was based upon the short story "The Greatest Gift" by Philip Van Doren Stern. The movie is remarkably true to the story: A man frustrated and beaten down by life contemplates suicide by jumping off a bridge, a guardian angel intercedes and grants him his wish that he had never been born, the man gets to see how terrible things in his small hometown would have turned out if he had never lived, then he frantically goes back to the bridge and pleads to get his life back. His wish is granted and the man rushes back into town in euphoria to celebrate his life with his wife and children.

Here on the bridge in Seneca Falls was a real story similar to the opening incident in his upcoming movie; Capra certainly would have been inspired.

Capra was still in the early planning stages of *It's A Wonderful Life* when he visited Seneca Falls, having just signed the contract a few weeks before. Not only did the bridge over the canal and the guardian angel match the plot of "The Greatest Gift," but Seneca Falls also had the size, look, and personality of the town depicted in the story. It's not hard to imagine that he would have wandered into town and started taking notes . . . And while the movie closely follows the storyline of "The Greatest Gift," there is no mention of location in the short story. Capra on his own placed Bedford Falls in Upstate New York.

Bedford Falls might just be a composite of small towns across America, set in Upstate New York. But the fact is no town in Upstate New York has as many similarities to the town in *It's A Wonderful Life* as does Seneca Falls.

Either by design or extraordinary coincidence, when Frank Capra created Bedford Falls, he replicated Seneca Falls.

Some Famous Quotes from "It's a Wonderful Life."

Clarence: Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives. When he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?

Clarence: You see George, you've really had a wonderful life. Don't you see what a mistake it would be to just throw it away?

Harry Bailey: A toast to my big brother George: The richest man in town.

Zuzu Bailey: Look Daddy. Teacher says, every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings.

Clarence: Remember, George: no man is a failure who has friends.

When the Creek Caught Fire

Bennett Brook creek runs down alongside Interstate Parkway, through Callahan Park, behind the High School, crosses under Willard Avenue, flows past Edward Street, crosses under Hobson Place bridge, crosses again under Campus Drive, and finally spills into the Tuna Creek. It's a pleasant little stream, not very wide, and certainly not considered dangerous. But in September of 1946, that pleasant little stream caught fire, burning at least three homes, a garage with an automobile inside, and badly scorching three other residences.

Oil, on the surface of the water of the creek caused by an abandoned oil well leaking oil into the water, created a roaring inferno from a point behind the High School to Edwards Street, the flames leaping nearly 50 feet into the air, burning shrubbery and trees.

The fire was first noticed on the morning of September 19th. A very strong odor of gas was first detected around 7 AM by a fireman, Sidney Huff, who lived at 44 Willard Avenue. Huff took a quick look around his house, looking for leaks and checking all the gas jets then went outside where he noticed that the gas odor was much stronger. He asked his wife to call the gas company to report the strong gas smell and to ask them to send a gas man to come investigate. Then he went off to work at the fire house, where a short time later, the fire alarm was sounded.

Meanwhile, Edward Bittner, who lived at 11 Edwards Place, just 150 yards away, was sleeping in a rear bedroom of his home, closest to the creek. He also smelled a strong gas odor, and checked out his house as well, then called Harry White of the Bradford Transit Company, to report the possibility of a leak in their line when he suddenly looked out his window and saw that the creek was on fire, and flames were flowing down the creek.

By then, one side of his house was on fire, and believing himself trapped, he kicked out a window and with the help of his neighbor, Harry Olson, managed to escape from his home.

Neighborhood boys, attracted by the novelty of the situation, raced along the creek, watching as it traveled along.

When Fire Chief Larkin, summoned by the fire alarm, arrived on the scene, he immediately called out all the men in the fire department, both the day crew which was already on duty, and the night crew. Seven fire lines were opened, from hydrants on Edwards Place, Edwards Street, Willard Avenue, West Washington Street, and Fairbanks Avenue, to check the fire.

Each fireman responded to different sections of the creek; in addition to water, the firemen also used foamite to control the oil fire.

After the damages were assessed, it was discovered that two of the properties that were considerably damaged belonged to City Councilman Edward Bittner and City Fireman Sidney Huff. The Huff home and greatest portion of his furniture and personal belongings were destroyed either by fire or water damage. The Bittner home was badly damaged and a large loss of household goods and personal belongings.

The garage was owned by Mrs. Anthony Onuffer of 33 Willard Avenue; the automobile inside was owned by Oscar Stromberg. The rear and side of the residence of Joseph Frantz of 40 Willard Avenue, across the creek from the Huff house, was badly burned along the side bordering the creek. Across the street from the Huff house, the residence of Carmen Rizzo, which had been recently painted, had the paint blistered. All the shrubbery along both sides of the creek was burned and the iron girders of the Willard Avenue bridge buckled because of the heat. The firemen fought the blaze for four hours, and stayed on the scene until nightfall.

Later, it was reported that the cause of the fire was unknown, although abandoned oil wells in the area might have been the source of the oil.

Pennsylvania

The Bradford Landmark Society receives a newsletter every two months from **The Center for Rural Pennsylvania**. The newsletter is always quite interesting, and the latest issue looks at the 2010 population statistics for the state. We thought it was very enlightening.

Did you know that there are now 12.7 million people in Pennsylvania? The majority, 73% are located in urban areas, such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but the 48 counties considered “rural” also gained in population, about 2% increase. To date, Pennsylvania has the third largest rural population in the United States.

Some counties had decreases, of course; the three counties with the largest decline in population are Fayette County (-8%), Elk County (-9%), and Cameron County (-15%). The three counties that grew the most in population are Monroe County (+22%), Pike County (+24%) and Forest County (+56%). Way to go, Forest County! I guess that the old joke about there being more deer than people in Forest County doesn't hold true anymore. Actually, though, the Forest County population growth can be directly attributed to the opening of a 2,300 bed maximum security prison near Marienville in 2004. (By the way, did you know that Forest County is the only county in Pennsylvania without any traffic lights?)

Rural Pennsylvania's total land area is 33, 394 square miles and rural Pennsylvania is bigger than New Jersey, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont combined. The largest county, in land area, is Lycoming County, with 1,228 square miles, and the smallest is Montour County, with 130 square miles. McKean County has about 984 square miles, of which 3 square miles of that are water.

The least densely populated counties are Cameron, Potter, and Sullivan, with less than 17 people per square mile (McKean County has 22 people per square mile). The most densely populated counties are Allegheny, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia, each having more than 1,600 per square mile.

Among the rural Pennsylvania population of 3.4 million, 21% are children under the ages of 18; 62% are working adults (18 to 64 years old), and 17% are senior citizens. In urban counties, 22% are children, 63% working adults and 15% senior citizens.

Rural Pennsylvania has slightly more females (1.74 million or 50.3%) than males (1.72 million or 49.7%), but in urban areas, females make up 52% of the population, and males make up only 48%.

Here are some interesting statistics about our home state:

Which has the highest percentage of children under 5 years of age? Lancaster County, 7 percent.

Which has the highest percentage of people age 85 and older? Cameron County, 4 percent.

Which has the highest percentage of single person households? Forest County, 36 percent.

Which is most populated? Philadelphia County, with 1.52 million residents.

Which is least populated? Cameron County, with 5,085 residents.

Which has the youngest median age? Centre County, at 28.7 years of age.

Which has the oldest median age? Sullivan County, at 49.9 years of age.

Necrology of the Buildings 2011

There were lots of changes in the commercial district of Bradford. Some new businesses moved into Bradford, some businesses closed their doors, still others either changed their owners, their names, or their locations. The Bradford Landmark Society keeps track of such things – they are all part of the history of our city. Here is this year's list:

New Businesses:

- Rookies Sports Bar, 211 Main Street
- Timeless Treasures/Keeping Ewe in Stitches, 10 Chestnut Street
- Café 6IX, 17 Kennedy Street
- Kristen's Consignment, 4 Boylston Street
- Janet's Boutique, 125 Main Street
- Foster Brook Market, 1 Bradford Mall, Foster Brook
- Almost 10 Below, 117 Main Street
- Joelle Walters Photography
- Wise Guys Tattoo, 36 South Avenue
- Inferno Tattoos & Piercing, 21 Main Street
- The Aud, 30 Boylston Street
- Cellular Connection, 1001 East Main Street (old Bradford Mall), Foster Brook
- Bradford Chiropractic Center, 119 Main Street

This business changed its name:

From Tortugas Mexican Restaurant
to Tortugas Western Bar and Grill,
Main Street

These Businesses Moved:

- Main Street Mercantile, now at 45 Main Street
- Little Power Shop, now at 70 Minard Run Road
- Peggy Johnson Dance Studio, now at 21 Kennedy Street
- Between Four Walls, now at 550 East Main Street

These Businesses Changed Owners:

- The Broaster & More, 89 Main Street
- Franco's Texas Hot, 1020 East Main Street
- Kimberly's Cool Beans, 30 Boylston Street

These Businesses closed in 2011:

Charlie's Cycle Center, Limestone, NY and Minard
Run Road, Bradford, PA

Main Street Antiques, 86 Main Street

The Sports Café, 48 Davis Street

Bradford Furniture & Carpet Gallery, 45 Main St.

Cow Palace, Limestone, NY

Moose Lodge, Pine Street

East End Presbyterian Church, 18 Welch Avenue

What about the North Pole?

We all know that Santa Claus lives at the North Pole, but what is the North Pole really like? Actually, there are two North Poles – a geographic one, and a magnetic one. The northernmost point on the earth's surface is the geographic North Pole, also known as true north. It's located at 90° North latitude and all lines of longitude converge at the pole. The earth's axis connects the north and south poles, as it is the line around which the earth rotates. The North Pole is about 450 miles north of Greenland in the middle of the Arctic Ocean.



SEASONS GREETINGS
NORTH POLE STATION
NORTH POLE, AK 99705

The North Pole experiences six months of daylight and six months of darkness.

Robert Perry, his partner Matthew Henson, and four Inuit are generally credited with being the first to reach the North Pole on April 9, 1909 but many suspect that they missed the pole by a few miles. In 1958, the United States nuclear submarine Nautilus was the first vessel to cross the North Pole. Other attempts to reach the North Pole have been quite interesting. Today, dozens of planes fly over the North Pole using great circle routes between continents.

Located hundreds of miles south of the geographic North Pole lies the magnetic North Pole at approximately 82.7° North and 114.4° West northwest of Canada's Sverdrup Island. However, this location is not fixed and is moving continually, even on a daily basis.

If you really want to visit the “North Pole”, Alaska, New York, Oklahoma, and Idaho all have towns named North Pole and they would be happy to see you. Merry Christmas!

