

The History of Bode and of his Statue



BODE

Young African Enslaved in Groton, MA, c. 1735
Bode was the first Provincial inhabitant of the territory that is now Mmon. He drove a herd of cattle here to Noge Meadow each spring, and camped alone throughout the summer while tending them.

In memory of "Twig"

Dedicated to author and illustrator
Elizabeth Oton Igwe (1910-2005),
for her commitment to our town's history.

Mason Historical Society
September 13, 2008

Sculptor - Liz Sibley Fletcher

THANK YOU!

The Mason Historical Society
gratefully acknowledges the support of:

The Estate of Elizabeth Orton Jones

The Fredrick W. Cox and Dorothy
Thurber Cox Fund of the New
Hampshire Charitable Foundation--
Nashua Region

Bernie O'Grady and O'Grady
Construction LLC for donating the site
work and installation.

The many, many, many individual
contributors who donated amounts
great and small, including gifts from
present and former Mason residents,
friends of Twig, and friends of the people
and history of Mason.

Mason Historical Society

Dedication Ceremony
September 13, 2008

BODE



In Memory of Elizabeth Orton Jones

Dedication of Bode

A statue in bronze by
Liz Sibley Fletcher
Dedicated to the memory of
Elizabeth Orton Jones
September 13, 2008
10:30 a.m.

Program

Call to Order: African inspired drumming:
Gary Wolpert

Invocation
Rev. Chris Owen

Opening Remarks
Charles V. Moser--Mason Historical Society

Unveiling of Bode

Historical Perspective
Valerie Cunningham

Traditional Story
Brother Blue

Benediction

PLEASE ENJOY OLD HOME DAY!!!

Bode

Bode, an enslaved African man, lived in Groton, Massachusetts in the early eighteenth century. Each spring he drove cattle here and camped on the east side of Nose Meadow, becoming the first recorded colonial inhabitant of this land, before it was even known as Mason. Groton church records show that he married a woman named Bye in 1750.

Elizabeth Orton Jones

Elizabeth Orton "Twig" Jones (1910-2005), Caldecott Medal winning author/illustrator and long time Mason resident, was a founder of the Mason Historical Society and primary author of Mason's Bicentennial history. Twig was fascinated by the story of Bode and originated the idea of a statue of Bode overlooking the meadow.

Valerie Cunningham

Valerie Cunningham was recently named a Restore America Hero by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She has been researching and writing about northern New England's Black history for over thirty years. Valerie is the founder of the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail, Inc., and the African American Resource Center.

Brother Blue

Brother Blue is a storyteller with 30 years of storytelling experience under his belt. He is the official storyteller of Cambridge and Boston. He earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard with honors, a master's degree in playwriting from Yale Drama School, and is an ordained minister. He is sometimes known as Hugh Morgan Hill, Ph.D.

Liz Sibley Fletcher

Liz Sibley Fletcher is the award winning sculptor who brought Bode to life. Liz has has as fine arts degree from the Massachusetts College of Art, and a master's in Resource Management from Antioch, New England. She is a member of the New Hampshire Art Association, the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen, and is past president of the New Hampshire Potters Guild.

REMARKS OF CHARLES V. MOSER, ESQ.
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
DEDICATION OF A STATUE OF BODE
TO THE MEMORY OF ELIZABETH ORTON JONES

September 13, 2008

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, Selectmen, honored guests Valerie Cunningham and Hugh “Brother Blue” Hill, sculptor Liz Fletcher, Mason Historical Society president Linda O’Grady;

I am Charles Moser, vice president of the Mason Historical Society, This morning the Historical Society is dedicating this statue in memory of one of its founders and most dedicated members, Elizabeth Orton Jones -- Twig. The statue and even its location, were conceived by Twig and beautifully realized by sculptor and Mason resident Liz Fletcher.

The members of the Mason Historical Society are proud of their efforts in bringing this project from idea to reality, from overcoming very real doubts about whether our little band could do it, to making the big decision to cast in bronze instead of composite, to writing grant proposals and raising funds. Bode would not be here at all today without the generous support of the many, many people in the Mason community who donated to this project--many of them two or three times. We are grateful to the many people who gave their time to the project, and extend special thanks to Bernie O’Grady of O’Grady Construction who contributed many hours preparing this site, moving this boulder and making sure that Bode was fixed to it just so. We are grateful to our Selectmen, Dr. Christopher Guiry, Nancy Richards, and Mark Richardson, who believed in this project and worked with us to choose this wonderful site for Bode. The Mason Historical Society is grateful to the Estate of Elizabeth Orton Jones, and its executor, Dr. Dayle Hufford, for the generous donation of all of the proceeds of the estate sale--that really got us off the ground. And finally we are thankful to the Fredrick W. Cox and Dorothy Thurber Cox Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for their very generous grant.



Elizabeth Orton Jones was, of course, a renowned illustrator and author of children’s books, for which she is known all over the world. Here in Mason we knew other sides of Twig. Twig was fascinated with the history of Mason, and did a considerable amount of research--sometimes traveling to Boston or Groton or Concord to review original documents or to find the grave of some former Mason resident. In 1968 Twig and a group of others founded the Mason Historical Society. That year, Mason celebrated its 200th Anniversary. Twig edited and contributed to the authorship of the Mason Bicentennial History. I would be remiss if I didn’t tell you that copies of the Bicentennial History are available for you to purchase in the Town Hall or from the Mason Historical Society.

Beside her love of history, Twig was active in the education and entertainment of the children of Mason. She was very active in Andy's Summer Playhouse, a children's theater which got its start here in Mason. She wrote plays for the children to perform, decorated the scenery, and generally inspired every child that she came across. Twig was a regular guest at the Mason Elementary School and Mason Public Library, where she would tell stories of people or events from the history of Mason. Twig would have the students choose a story to render in crayon, cementing the memory of the tale for a very long time.

Mason has old stories, stories that still resonate in the landscape of their origin. There is the story of the lady who long ago collected rattlesnakes, and though the snakes have been gone a hundred years, today you can visit the Rattlesnake ledges on Nobby Hill where she caught them. There is the story of the wife of one of our founding fathers, who 250 years ago sounded a conch shell to guide the layout of a road through the wilderness, and traces of Flagg Road still exist to this day. There is the story of the Reverend Francis Worcester spending the night on a boulder, surrounded by hungry wolves, before being rescued the next day, and if you know where to look you can still find Wolf Rock, climb up on it and listen for the howl of wolves.

Then there is the story of Obadiah Parker who in August 1768 set off on foot for Portsmouth with the Town Charter in hand, to get Governor Wentworth's signature incorporating this town with the name of SHARON. Unbeknownst to Mason's incorporators, a town by the name of SHARON had already been granted. However, the Governor had no qualms about granting our charter, once the name SHARON was crossed out and replaced with the name MASON.

There is the story of how, before Governor Wentworth of New Hampshire chartered the town of Mason, the governor of Massachusetts granted the town of Groton, and the northerly border of Massachusetts being uncertain, where you sit today was once claimed by the Commonwealth and known as Groton Gore.

Which brings us to the story of Bode. As the Bicentennial History of Mason recites it, every year beginning around 1735 several Groton families would send their young cattle from Groton up here to Groton Gore, to graze in a natural grassland known as Nose Meadow. And Nose Meadow is the beautiful meadow you see to our west. History tells us that the cattle were entrusted to the care of a Negro slave named Bode.

Not too much is known about Bode except that he was black, he was a slave in Groton, and that the public record shows that he married his wife, Bye, in the church in Groton.

The story of Bode driving cattle here survives in several town histories. The story as included in our Bicentennial History book, is without attribution, but I am certain that the reference to Bode was written by Twig: This is how she told the story:

"Bode, perhaps only a boy, would drive the cattle through the forest from Groton to Nose Meadow where he would camp for months, all alone, hunting, fishing, gathering berries for his food, while the cattle grew fat on the plentiful vegetation of this wilderness. Sometimes Bode would burn over an area to promote succulent new growth for the cattle... Most of the time Bode was the sole inhabitant of what is now Mason, all summer long, under the stars at night, in the midst of storms, thunder and lightning, and pouring rain. Sometimes the hideous howls of wolves filled the air; Bode heard owls screeching, foxes barking, wild turkeys gobbling. What were his thoughts?"

And with that you know not only Bode, but you experience Twig's love of history, her vivid imagination and her humanity. In a few sentences, she takes the fact of Bode, paints a lively picture of him alone in a scary world, and then leaves us with a critical thinking question: What were Bode's thoughts? To Twig, Bode was alive and she imagined him as a person, with fears, vulnerability and strength. When she told the story of Bode to elementary students, she would say "make believe you are Bode for a short while--talk to yourself; what was Bode thinking?"

Twig was an award winning visual artist, but to my knowledge she never rendered Bode on paper or canvas. Fortunately Twig was also a master at verbal communication and there are many among us gathered here who would remember her saying she could picture a statue of Bode, and describe him sitting on a rock overlooking the meadow where the cows were grazing. In fact, if you stop in to the Historical Society exhibit in the Town Hall today, you can see a video of Twig talking about Bode.

Twig's idea of a statue of Bode took hold in the Mason Historical Society, and in the mind of her friend Liz Fletcher. When the Historical Society approached Liz about sculpting Bode in Twig's memory, she reacted with great enthusiasm, accepted without hesitation, and dove right in to researching and modeling. I think you will agree that Liz has created a breathtaking work. One, that when I see it, brings to life the picture of Bode that Twig Jones' words had already drawn in my mind. And so, the statue of Bode will draw the same picture in the minds of those who never heard Twig tell the story. It is our hope that many future generations of Mason students will look out the window of the elementary school over there, and see this man, a slave, sitting here, and contemplate the challenges of man versus nature, contemplate man's inhumanity to man, and contemplate the power of society to change for the better. In fact, we can all do it. There is plenty of room on this rock to sit down next to Bode, to feel with him the same sun, the same wind and the same rain that fell on him over 250 years ago. We can look out over the same verdant meadow that Bode looked over.....but, we can only imagine what Bode, the slave, alone on his rock, was thinking.

AND NOW, IN MEMORY OF TWIG, THE MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS BODE.



Dedication Speakers:

“Traditional Story”, Brother Blue (Dr. Hugh Morgan Hill, PhD), sitting with Bode and Ruth Hill



“Historical Perspective”, Valerie Cunningham, sitting with Bode and Sculptor Liz Fletcher



Making Bode's Statue 2006 - 2008

Liz Sibley Fletcher

How thrilled I was when Mason Historical Society asked if I'd like to make a statue of Bode! Many times Twig had spoken to me (and to many others!) of her longing to have a statue of Bode sitting where he used to watch over the cattle so long ago. I felt so honored to be asked to carry out Twig's wish. The Historical Society members were very clear about how Bode should be – life-size, sitting on a rock, with his bare feet on the ground, dressed in clothing appropriate for his period (1730s).

First I researched the clothing – what would a slave have worn? I consulted Valerie Cunningham, a well-known authority on African American history in New Hampshire. When I asked her, Valerie answered, “Hand-me-downs, naturally!” Of course! So I gave Bode worn-out clothes that a farm worker might have had in colonial times. Later on, when constructing Bode's life-sized statue, I pressed burlap onto the wet clay of Bode's shirt, using a piece of a corn sack from nearby Barrett Hill Farm to emphasize the home-spun look.

To try and discover what Bode's age may have been when he was in Mason, I checked the old histories at the Groton Library. In the years when Bode herded cattle in Mason, the state line had not yet been drawn so Mason belonged to the town of Groton, Mass. The only dated record I could find was for his marriage in 1750, the same as Twig had found in her researches.



Twig had assumed that Bode was relatively young when he lived in Mason, probably a teenager. This could be possible, since it was over 15 years after he first came to Mason (1734) that Bode was married. In keeping with Twig's vision of Bode, the Historical Society agreed that he should be portrayed as a young man.

Then I made two small models of Bode for the Society to choose from, ordered the clay to build him, and spent the autumn and early winter of 2006 forming him with the clay. In place of the rock that he would eventually sit on (which was yet undiscovered) Garth Fletcher strengthened an old chair without a back to be Bode's temporary seat as he was created.

At the outset of this project, the Historical Society felt that Bode would be cast in concrete, since it was more affordable than bronze. But when Society members saw Bode formed life-size in the clay, they began to think that bronze casting would be worth attempting. This would mean a serious fund-raising effort, and seeking grants.

Thanks to the major contribution from the proceeds of Twig's Estate sale, there were sufficient funds to begin the first step of the lost wax bronze casting process – making rubber molds from Bode's clay original. From the 3 quotes received for bronze casting, the Society chose Paul King Foundry of Johnston, RI. Their price was lowest, and their reputation is excellent. Bode spent most of 2007 in 19 separate pieces of rubber mold cast in plaster. The rubber molds can be kept for a long time and used over and over again to make many editions of the same statue.

In the winter of early 2008, I worked with Historical Society officers Linda O’Grady and Charlie Moser to prepare grant applications to the NH Charitable Foundation and the Arthur Getz Foundation. In the spring, the community was thrilled to learn that we were awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Frederick W.Cox and Dorothy Thurber Cox Memorial Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation’s Nashua Region. Though the Society did not receive the other grant we applied for, the people of Mason came through with flying colors, donating generously so Bode could be made in bronze at last!

Now Bode’s molds could return to the foundry for the bronze casting. This was done in the traditional lost wax process, originated by the ancient Chinese. First Bode’s rubber molds were filled with wax, to re-create his exact form. Then this wax statue was cast in very strong plaster molds, which were heated in a kiln to melt the wax away (called burning out). Then the molten bronze was poured into the molds, filling the spaces once occupied by “lost” wax.

Now Bode was in bronze, but still in separate pieces – the skill of the welder was needed to put all those pieces together seamlessly, so the statue would look as I’d created it.

The success of creating a bronze sculpture depends strongly on many skilled people at the foundry. Paul King Foundry, run by Paul Cavanaugh, is well staffed with skillful workers. Especially outstanding are Sarun, from Cambodia, an expert mold maker, and Mike, Paul’s brother, who is a master welder. With their capable hands, they recreated Bode in bronze as I had made him in clay.

Meanwhile, the search had been on for the rock Bode needed to sit upon. Dave Morrison had the great idea that it should be big enough so people could sit next to Bode, really putting themselves in his space. Since Dave was on the Mason Highway Department, he could readily check around town for possible rocks in the course of his work. But a suitable rock proved hard to find.

One day as I was entering the Mann House, I gazed out to the woods behind it. There were two large rocks at the edge of the trees – one looked like it was meant for Bode! I sat down upon it -- it fit with room to spare – this was the one, waiting nearby all along! So when the day came in August that Bode returned from the foundry, contractor Bernie O’Grady didn’t have to move the rock very far to set it upon Bode’s place with his tractor. We’re all so grateful to Bernie for donating his skills and time to install Bode upon his rock – it was quite a tricky job!

Now Bode was ready to be welcomed home at Old Home Day. Until the moment of unveiling at his dedication, he was kept under wraps. When storyteller Brother Blue (Dr. Hugh Morgan Hill of Cambridge) unveiled Bode, he was so moved that he began speaking to Bode immediately. In the course of his narrative, he brought out the slave chains that had been used on his grandfather. (Brother Blue is in his late 80s) Shaking them, he urged us all to melt the chains of hate and ignorance with the power of love. Such a moving performance.

What a joyful day that was, Mason’s 240th Anniversary Old Home Day! Musician Gary Wolpert remarked that day to me, “Mason is a most unusual place – we don’t have a monument to a general or politician, we have a monument to a humble man. That’s really something to be proud of!”



Who Was Bode?

Mason, New Hampshire's first inhabitant from across the Atlantic Ocean

Bode (also spelled Boad in 1800's histories) was a young enslaved African who spent summers alone in the New Hampshire wilderness, tending cattle that belonged to farmers of Groton, Massachusetts. His encampment was near Nose Meadow, at the present village center. Bode was the first resident of Mason to come from across the Atlantic Ocean, back in the 1730s before the state line was drawn. Mason was a part of Groton then, called Groton Gore. Each spring from 1734 through 1740, the cattle would be driven to pasture in Mason. Year after year, Bode would stay with them for months all alone, until the farmers returned in the fall to collect the cattle. Mason was a wilderness then, 20 miles away from Groton.



A sculpture of Bode is being made in honor of noted children's author and illustrator Elizabeth Orton "Twig" Jones, who died in 2005. Twig was a founder the Mason Historical Society and edited and wrote the Mason, NH Bicentennial History in 1968. Twig did much research about Bode, and would come to Mason Elementary School to tell the children his story. She wanted them to know that when Mason was a wild place with wolves and bears, a young man from Africa came and lived here alone, braving the elements to do his job.

Twig always wanted a sculpture of Bode to be seated on a rock in the place where he used to watch over the cattle (now in Mason's village center), to remind people of the town's beginnings, and the courage of a young man who lived here alone long ago. Bode must have been a capable young man, skilled with animals and resourceful to keep them safe all by himself through months in the wilderness. He did this job for seven years, until the state line was drawn in 1741.

It is thought that Bode might have been a teen-ager when he first came to Mason in 1734. *Bode's marriage is inscribed as follows in the church records of Groton:*

"February 5, 1750: Bode to By (Negro servants of Groton)."

No last names are noted.

Bode as recorded in the Histories of Mason, NH and Groton, Mass. From a Lecture by the "Little Minister of Mason" Reverend Ebenezer Hill whose ministry in Mason began in 1789 and extended for 50 years.

"Some families from Groton used to come and make hay near the center of what is now Mason. It was called Nose Meadow, where they had a camp. In the latter part of winter they sent up young cattle with a black man named Boad to feed and tend them until they could get their living in the woods. Boad's camp was about a hundred feet from the spot where the Mann House now stands. Here Boad used to spend months alone, year after year, like Robinson Crusoe," sole monarch of all he surveyed." This Boad was a slave."

From the 1858 History of Mason by John Boynton Hill (son of Ebenezer Hill) quoted in "Boundary Lines of Old Groton" by Samuel Green, 1885:

"It was the custom to cut hay upon the meadows and stack it, and early in spring to send up their young cattle to be fed upon the hay, under the care of Boad, the Negro slave. They would cause woods to be fired in the spring, after which fresh grass herbage springing up furnished a good store of finest feed upon which cattle would fatten."

From the 1968 Mason Bicentennial History, edited by Elizabeth Orton "Twig" Jones:

"Groton people petitioned the Great and General Court and were granted in 1734, as compensation for the lands which had been taken from them, a triangular territory called Groton Gore – 10,800 acres extending into the present towns of Milford, Wilton, Brookline, Mason, and Greenville. The upper point of the triangle was located in Greenville, originally a part of Mason.

For the people of Groton it was like acquiring a big back yard with a back door opening onto it. They made use of their back yard immediately, blazing trails through the woods, coming up in groups and parties to cut hay in the meadows, to cut poles on the hills, to gather chestnuts, wild grapes and berries, to hunt and fish. Pole Hill was so called by them. They had a camp close to our present Center, a few rods to the north and west of the Webers' house, on what they called Nose Meadow. Every year in late winter, several Groton families would send up their young cattle under the care of Boad (sometimes spelled Bode) a Negro slave. Boad, perhaps only a boy, would drive the cattle through the forest from Groton to Nose Meadow where he would camp for months all alone, hunting fishing gathering berries for his food, while the cattle grew fat on the plentiful vegetation of this wilderness. Sometimes he would burn over an area to promote succulent new growth for the cattle. Parties of Groton people would come up in midsummer to cut and stack hay. In the fall they would come again. But most of the time Boad was the sole inhabitant of what is now Mason, all summer long, under the stars at night, under the sun by day, in the midst of storms, thunder and lightning and pouring rain. Sometimes the hideous howls of wolves filled the air, Boad heard owls screeching, foxes barking, wild turkeys gobbling. What were his thoughts? We know very little about him. In the early church records of Groton, long after his duties of bringing the young cattle to Nose Meadow were over, we find under MARRIAGES – February 5, 1750: Bode to By (Negro servants of Groton) Still later, in a list of members of the Church of Christ in Groton, we find, down in the corner of the page, away from the other names: Bode Negro. There were fourteen Negro slaves in Groton, Boad being the only one listed as a church member.

From 1734 through 1740, so far as we know, Boad brought up the cattle every year. There are traditions which say that the meadows along Campbell's Brook were used by Groton people as late as 1750. Be that as it may, the Gore, from 1741 on, no longer belonged to Groton."

Bode as recorded in the Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society - Page 199 Massachusetts Historical Society - History - 1909

"About the year 1740 there was a negro slave in Groton by the name of Boad, who used to look after the cattle sent up to Groton Gore in the spring to be pastured during the summer. In the summer of 1735 the Province of Massachusetts Bay made a grant of land to the proprietors of Groton, which became known as the Groton Gore. This territory comes now wholly within the State of New Hampshire, lying mostly in Mason, but partly in Brookline, Wilton, Milford, and Greenville. In speaking of this tract of land Mr. John Boynton Hill, in his "History of the Town of Mason, N. H.," says:

Under this grant, the inhabitants of Groton took possession of, and occupied the territory. It was their custom to cut the hay upon the meadows, and stack it, and early in the spring to send up their young cattle to be fed upon the hay, under care of Boad, the negro slave. They would cause the woods to be fired, as it was called, that is, burnt over in the spring; after which fresh and succulent herbage springing up, furnished good store of the finest feed, upon which the cattle would thrive and fatten through the season. Boad's camp was upon the east side of the meadow, near the residence of the late Joel Ames (p. 26).

Undoubtedly Boad, mentioned in this paragraph, is the same slave who, under the name of Bodee, was sold by Benjamin Bancroft to William Lawrence. Among the marriages in the church records of the town, under the date of February 5, 1750-51, the following entry is found, — "Bode to By"; and at that time this probably was considered a sufficient record for the marriage of an enslaved couple. In the year 1751 Abraham Moors owned a slave named Zebina; and she probably was the bride on the occasion."

In the 1780s and early 1790s the families of former slaves quite commonly provided financial assistance for them even where, as in Massachusetts, there was no longer a legal obligation to do so. For example, Mrs. Love Lawrence of Groton, Massachusetts, made a payment of £3, 18 shillings in 1787 and another of more than £36, 7 shillings in 1789 on behalf of Bode or Body, "a negro man" left to be supported by her in her husband's will.²⁹ Although such assistance was humanitarian and at the very least a form of reparation to which all former slaves were surely entitled, nonetheless the continuing support and responsibility of former owners for free persons of color tended to blur the boundaries between slave and free.



Bode's Contributors

"Bode would not be here at all today without the generous support of the many, many people in the Mason community who donated to this project--many of them two or three times.

Mason Historical Society is grateful to the many people who gave their time to the project, and extend special thanks to Bernie O'Grady of O'Grady Construction who contributed many hours preparing this site, moving this boulder and making sure that Bode was fixed to it just so. We are grateful to our Selectmen, Dr. Christopher Guiry, Nancy Richards, and Mark Richardson, who believed in this project and worked with us to choose this wonderful site for Bode. The Mason Historical Society is grateful to the Estate of Elizabeth Orton Jones, and its executor, Dr. Dayle Hufford, for the generous donation of all of the proceeds of the estate sale--that really got us off the ground. And finally we are thankful to the Fredrick W. Cox and Dorothy Thurber Cox Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for their very generous grant enabling Bode to be cast in bronze."

(Charles Moser, Mason Historical Society Vice-President, Speaking at Bode's Dedication)

The Frederick W.Cox and Dorothy Thurber Cox Memorial Fund

of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation - Nashua Region	\$5,000
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The Estate of Elizabeth Orton Jones

\$4,820

The Mason Community and Friends

\$9,615

William Adams	Adam Hamel	David & Teri Parker
Susan Andersen	Wendy Hutchins	Arthur & Ginie Rafter
Carol Balcom	Cathy & Gary Johnson	Anne Richards
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Michael & Bette Goen	Charles Moser	R. Ziminsky
Ken & Pat Green	Carolyn Mueller	Margaret & Richard Zoerb
And Numerous Anonymous Contributors		

In Kind Contributors who gave their skills and time

Barbara DeVore	Charles Moser	Linda O'Grady
Garth Fletcher	Bernie O'Grady	Gwen Whitbeck

If anyone's name should be added, please let Mason Historical Society know.

