

BRIDGEWATER

HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

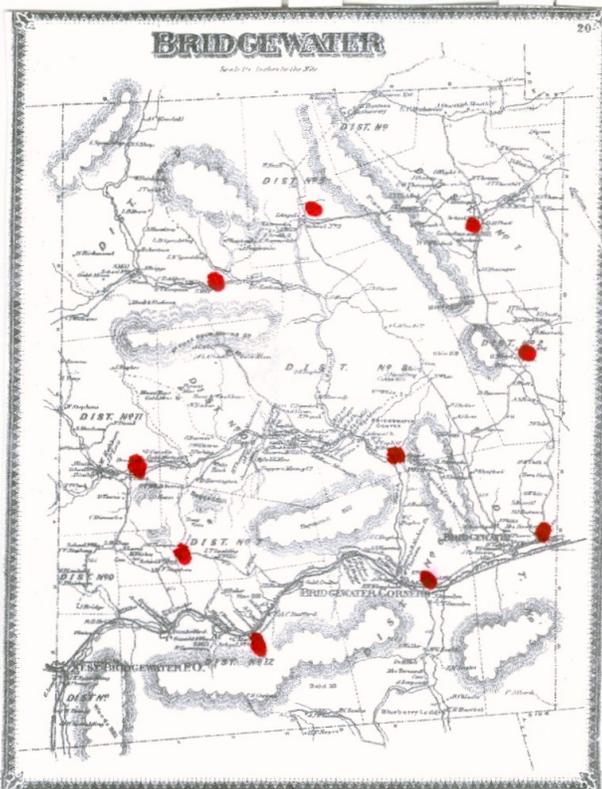


BEGINNINGS TOWN AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On July 10th, 1761, the Governor of the Province of New Hampshire with the blessing of King George the Third granted a Charter for the town of Bridgewater. 248 years later the state of Vermont granted Bridgewater its first certificate of corporation for a Historical Society. In March 2010, this society received an IRS 501 (C) 3 non-profit public charity status so that your donations to us are fully tax deductible.

For two years the Bridgewater Fire Department has granted us the use of their meeting room for our monthly meetings. The arrangement has been very helpful toward our efforts to start this historical society. The fire department is hoping to raise funds to upgrade their station. Mail will reach them at P.O. Box 163. Thank you.

In late summer we signed a long term lease with the town for the old red brick schoolhouse which is located at 12 North Bridgewater Road, near the Village School. This two story schoolhouse was built in 1803. It has a bell tower and bell, a beautiful vaulted ceiling in the upper room and a fireproof concrete vault on the first floor. (Photograph at the top of this page). After weeks of cleaning, painting, and hookups, we were ready for our first public Bridgewater Historical Society meeting. Howard Coffin, a well known author and Civil War historian, drew a full house. Howard held everyone's attention and the hour passed quickly. Howard asked for questions or comments. Our society President, Jeannette Sawyer, commented that it is on record that in August 1854 townspeople met at this very same building to "favor the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act (Law)" and how appropriate that we meet here tonight to discuss the Civil War and the soldiers that served in it. Indeed it is!



BRIDGEWATER SCHOOLHOUSES

An often asked question is, "Why did Bridgewater have so many schoolhouses?" The answer is, schoolhouses needed to be within walking distance of every home. Bridgewater is 8 miles long north to south and 6 miles wide east to west. With hills and valleys, deep snow and long winters, foot paths and very poor roads, traveling was difficult to say the least.

On the small map the dots show where ten of the schoolhouses were located in the middle 1800s. The dot at the bottom, far right side, is the same schoolhouse we now use as our Historical Society's headquarters and meeting place. We meet here at 6:30 pm on the last Tuesday of each month. Please join us.

BRIDGEWATER'S 250TH

BIRTHDAY

Bridgewater has its 250th birthday on July 10, 2011! The Charter of Bridgewater is dated, July 10, 1761. This is a huge anniversary; a quarter of a millennium. Bridgewater is not alone with this birth date. Most towns in Windsor County have a 1761 Charter date, as do towns across the

Connecticut River in New Hampshire. This is a historical event and could be a history lesson for everyone, if someone, some group, the town, or the historical society finds the energy, the time, the money, the effort required to plan and pull off a town birthday event. The town's budget is stretched close to their limit, and our historical society has more on their plate than it can digest. Maybe each person who would like to have a 250th birthday event could talk with the historical society, the town officials, your friends and neighbors, even the school board and ask them to beat the drum for the 250th birthday event. If you do not, who will?

BRIDGEWATER'S POPULATION – THE PAST 250 YEARS– 1761 TO 2010

YEAR	POPULATION	
1761	0	Chartered, no settlers
1780	10	First family, Asa Jones, wife, 9 children and one son-in-law
1791	293	60 families, 146 males, 147 females
1800	781	Number of families more than doubles. 1803 brick schoolhouse built in village
1810	1125	26 soldiers from Bridgewater served in the War of 1812
1820	1125	Nothing gained, nothing lost
1830	1311	Population on the rise again
1840	1363	The largest population ever. Second story added to the brick village schoolhouse
1850	1311	Some people went west for gold
1860	1292	Vermonters left for the Civil War
1870	1141	Population down
1880	1084	Population down
1900	1000	Population dropped below 1000, never to be above 1000 in the next 110 yrs
2010	less than 1000	

BRIDGEWATER'S HISTORY DAY 2010

The Bridgewater Historical Society held its' third annual Bridgewater History Day on May 22, 2010 at the Bridgewater Grange Hall with over 100 attendees. Guest speakers, Walter Houghton and Geoff Kenyon, presented wonderful photographic slide shows of Bridgewater's rich and fascinating history. It was unbelievable that the two collections featuring Bridgewater could be so interestingly different. Erwin and Polly Fullerton, widely known experts on old farm tools and implements displayed a large array of different tools and household items. Many people brought in tools for them to identify with surprising results. In addition, the Bridgewater Historical Society had many tables of their collection on display which included historical books, old diaries, documents, maps, manuscripts, photographs, and interesting artifacts.

Many people brought in old photographs that were scanned and added to the society's fast growing collection. Also, during the day the attendees could choose pictures from the collection to have their own copies made at a minimal fee. The event was deemed very successful and the hope is that it will become an annual event for years to come.

ANNUAL MEETING AND DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The past 18 months have been the Bridgewater Historical Society's organizational year. We held monthly meetings with 6 to 20 attending. Meetings were public and open to everyone interested. About one year ago we elected officers for the organizational year. Elected President, Jeannette Perkins Sawyer; Vice President, Charles Astbury; Secretary and Treasurer, Sondra Robinson Stevens; and Membership Chairperson, Alice Townsend Paglia. Acting as the Executive Committee, these officers drew up the Corporation's Bylaws. At our annual meeting this December we may fine tune the bylaws before adopting them. Because our corporation is a non-profit public charity a few changes in names and duties may be required.

Our already elected corporation's officers will constitute the Executive Committee: duties are in the bylaws. At the annual meeting the members present will elect a Board of Directors, five to fifteen, from our membership. Willing to serve members need to be nominated 30 days prior to the meeting, but do not have to be present to be

elected. The already elected officers (the Executive Committee) will be added to the elected directors, plus any willing past presidents and curator if we have one and this will constitute the Board of Directors. A Chairperson will be elected from the within the Board of Directors by the Board of Directors. It is possible to elect any board member as the Chairperson, including the Executive Committee officers. The board may choose a clerk of the board or if willing the corporation's secretary may serve as clerk of the board.

The chair of the Board of Directors shall preside at the director's meetings and any special board meetings. The President of the Corporation shall preside at our annual meeting of the Corporation and any special meeting of the Corporation. The President may appoint a moderator to serve at our annual or special corporation meeting. The President of the Corporation has a host of other duties as noted in our bylaws. The bylaws state the duties of all officers and committee chairs.

NEWS FLASH: It is a pleasure to announce that on Dec. 28, 2010 the following members were elected to serve for three years on the Society's Board of Directors. They are Olive Greenough, Sue Kancir, Ruth Needham, Phoebe Standish, Susanne Weldon, and Lauren Jane Wilder.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Our fiscal year is the calendar year. Each December your society begins its' membership drive. Yes, it is an annual thing as we need to review and increase our membership. In review, the past year's membership increased by more than 500 percent! Yes, from less than 25 to more than 150 members! But, we must remember 2010 was our startup year and we can expect no such percentage gain for our 2011 year, however, our bylaws state that the Bridgewater Historical Society shall not discriminate as to membership. That gives anybody in the World the opportunity to be a member. As of now, members extend from Vermont to California then to our mother country, England (we are happy to say that 1776 did not end our friendship).

A membership form (new or renew) is included in this newsletter. Please feel to copy the form for your extended use.

Please mail or bring it to one of our monthly meetings the last Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm located at the old brick schoolhouse, 12 North Bridgewater Road. We will welcome all.

LIMITED PARKING AT THE OLD BRICK SCHOOLHOUSE

Along with the fine things come some things that we wish could be better. Parking at our headquarters at the red brick schoolhouse is limited without a doubt. Evening parking is available at the nearby village school and Southgate house town office parking lot. The walking time is less than 3 minutes. Hopefully, more of us will be able to park there when we know a certain meeting will draw more attendees. What could we do to have more parking?

One remedy is right across the street from the historical society's building. That property is posted with a real estate property for sale sign. This property has a historical small brick house and an empty, flat lot, large enough to park thirty or more cars. The asking price is well under two hundred thousand dollars. This society's checking account is also well under two hundred thousand dollars. Several members suggested that maybe some members or friends of the society might have the knowledge and expertise to help us investigate this possibility.

Another thought is the property could, if owned by the town or society, solve the parking shortage that is a problem for the town office, the elementary school and the historical society. Is there anyone out there who would consider chairing a committee to look into the parking problem? If so, please contact the Bridgewater Historical Society at P.O. Box 98, Bridgewater, Vermont, 05034 or by e-mail at sawyersinvt@hotmail.com or telephone 672-3745, 672-3425, 672-6223, 672-3790 or 802-775-0729.

The Society is soliciting donations of the following items for the old school house:

- Folding tables – 8 ft. long X 30 in. wide (approx)
- Folding chairs
- Room darkening window shades –7
- Plate glass replacement for display case
- Volunteer labor to repair + replace front door