

# BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

December 2011

Issue No. Two

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### ANNUAL MEETING

The BHS annual meeting will be December 27th at 6:30 p.m. in the Old Brick School House. Agenda will include:

- Election of officers
- Approval of 2012 budget
- Approval of changes to the bylaws
- View video Bridgewater Celebration 250 Anniversary by Bob Rosenberger

Refreshments will be served.

#### VERMONT HISTORY EXPO 2012

June 16th and 17th, 2012 at the  
Tunbridge World Fair Grounds.

*Continued on Page 7*

#### BRIDGEWATER HUMANITIES PROGRAMS

Dec 6, 2011 Film: To Kill A Mockingbird  
(Part of Vt Reads/Vt Humanities Council)

Jan 3, 2012 Village Poets

Feb 7 Cardmaking Workshop

Mar 5 Safeart Ensemble

Apr 3 Making Music

May 8 Native Gardening

Jun 5 Visual Art Painting Demonstration

Jul 3 Movie: Drums Along The

Mohawk

Aug 7 Local Music History

Sep 4 Village Poets

Oct 2 Collage Making

Nov 6 Movie: Bull Run (Part of Vermont  
Humanities Program/Vt Reads)

Dec 4 Holiday Music Concert

Programs are 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

*Continued on Page 8*

**Monthly meetings**  
held Last Tuesday  
of each month at  
6:30 p.m.  
Old Brick School House



Old Brick School House Bridgewater Village 1911



## BHS Reflections

As the year 2011 comes to a close, I would like to reflect on the Bridgewater Historical Society's success, applaud our accomplishments, thank everyone for their donations and gifts which are too numerous to list here, praise each member for their dedication and support and review our goals for next year.

Since first meeting in the old brick school house last October, we have continued to meet here the last Tuesday of each month, have added the Bridgewater Humanities program on the first Tuesday which has had poetry readings, movies, a music program and a popular Civil War speaker, Howard Coffin. We have made many improvements to the building such as cleaning, painting some of the interior, installing track lighting and all florescent bulbs, window shades and an exterior door. We have discussed having a structural engineer evaluate the building and will need advice and financial assistance with this goal.

The society has been involved with the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project, receiving a free two year Comcast drop which soon will enable us to have a website, digitalize and make public our meetings, historical holdings, documents and photographs. If the town officials decide to launch a municipal website, the society is prepared to offer some assistance. We are also in hopes of having a class for novice computer users to become more confident with the internet. Also, with the assistance of the Bridgewater Village School students we planning to create a complete index with all names and places to compliment Gladys Adam's book "Bridgewater, Vermont 1779 -1976" so that that this wonderful history resource can be easily researched. Our most important goal for next year is to publish a book featuring, "telling your stories" about, events, growing up or living in Bridgewater. I am looking forward to another exciting year for the Bridgewater Historical Society.

Jeannette Sawyer, President

Bridgewater Village



# Bridgewater Celebration 2011

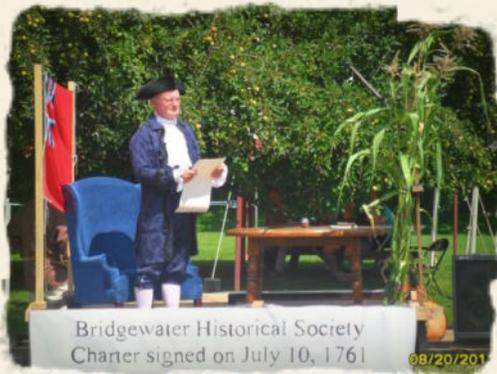
2011 was a noteworthy anniversary year for three Bridgewater entities; the town's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Grange #284's 110<sup>th</sup> and the Volunteer Fire Department's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. Members from these and other Bridgewater organizations worked closely together for over six months to organize and execute an event that brought friends and neighbors together for a celebration to be remembered for a lifetime.

This Bridgewater Celebration held on August 20<sup>th</sup> was a huge success from the early morning firemen's muster games to the spectacular evening fireworks! Some of the activities in between included a parade led by the American Legion that went from the Mill Mall to the Recreation Field. The parade featured 8 fire trucks, a youth bicycle team, numerous floats, antique cars, trucks and tractors, a horse drawn wagon, and Shriners on small three wheelers. The entire

parade route was lined with waving and cheering people. The parade was followed by a speech by John Atwood, our elegant Benning Wentworth impersonator, who with Charles Astbury and Phil Cooney portraying Bridgewater's first settlers, had been on the historical society's float representing the reason for our 250<sup>th</sup> birthday party. During the delicious chicken barbeque provided by the Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department, the Current Flash band played for everyone's listening enjoyment. There was a K9 demonstration, bingo table, children's games, yard sale tables and a very popular dunking booth. Throughout the day there were frequent raffles for wonderful donated prizes.

The Bridgewater Historical Society held an open house and presented the video "The History of Windsor County" that drew a standing room only crowd. At 2:50 PM the Congregational

Church, the Bridgewater Historical Society, and Mill Mall rang their bells and the Fire Department blew their whistle to recognize the 250<sup>th</sup> (semiquincentennial or first half of 500 years) anniversary of the signing of our charter on July 10, 1761 by Benning Wentworth, Governor of the Province of New Hampshire under the reign of King George the Third. This charter designated a 28,000 acre land grant to be the Town of Bridgewater. The bells and fire whistle also summoned the people for a town photograph that was taken in front of the historical Southgate House by Barb Wood, photographer for the *Vermont Standard*. Free birthday cake and ice cream was served and the well known band, Automatic Rooster played for the street dance until Bridgewater's first public fireworks display began at dusk. Many thanks are extended to the entire community for this fabulous day.



John Atwood as

Benning Wentworth



Alice Paglia on  
the Grange float

# First Son

## A STORY OF A BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIFE MEMBER

By Charlie Astbury

**It's 1938:** A Bridgewater Center couple's first born is a son. The Great Depression lingers, life is difficult.

**1947:** This "first born" and I first meet at vacation Bible School.

**1952:** First born is a freshman at Woodstock High where I'm a sophomore. Bridgewater students were required to buy their books, supplies and furnish their own transportation. The Town paid only for tuition.

**1953:** The "first born" has to leave high school to help his family.

**1955:** The military draft is near for "first born" and myself. Lots of high school boys joined the military soon after graduation. Why wait a year for Uncle Sam? Get it done! Rutland was the place to catch the bus to Manchester N.H. "First son" was waiting at the bus station when I arrived. Both of us passed the physical exam and boarded a army bus for Fort Dix, N.J. We completed basic training 9 weeks later. After a 2 week vacation we traveled to Fort Campbell Kentucky for 12 weeks of airborne jumping training. We earned our wings and are United States Army Paratroopers, with a 50% pay raise.

**1956:** Jan 2nd, we board a troopship to cross the north Atlantic bound for Germany. 12 days later we anchor in the English Channel to wait for a channel pilot. The White Cliffs of Dover are sure white. But after several hours it's like watching paint dry. Soon enough we arrive at the seaport of Bremerhaven Germany. An overnight train ride brings us to Munich, Germany, home of the Black Forest. "First son" and I are quartered in a hugh stone and concrete building, three stories high and 200 feet long, a 10 foot high stone wall separates us from the streets of Munich: a city of a million.

**1956:** Summertime, "First Son" transfers to military police school, that required one more year of duty. I demurred, it's 2 miles across Munich to the police school.

**1957:** "First Son" gets a promotion, marries a German girl. Months later I prepare for my return to

the states. "First Son" and I say goodbye for awhile. He is happy as a lark with his wife and another promotion.

**1958:** "First Son" and I soon loose mail contact.

**1980s** I learn "First Son" is thinking about retirement from the military but will live in North Carolina.

**2005:** The years fly by. At the 50th high school reunion "First Son" and I are again in the same room. He looks old. Hope I don't look that old. After a few minutes it's like four years passed, not 48. Now we meet at least every other year.

**2010:** I invite "First Son" to join our newly minted Bridgewater Historical Society. He asks about Life membership. I reply we have not decided that yet. His reply, "let me know when you decide". I did and he joined as a Lifetime member, plus a nice donation.

**2011:** "First Son returns to celebrate Bridgewater's 250th Charter year. Now, as a famous radio and TV commentator says "we can tell the rest of the story". First Son's name is Ronald Adams. Ronald Adams (US Army Retiree) holds the highest Rank a US Army Non-Commissioned Officer may attain. Ronald Adams is Sergeant Major US Army. And that happens to only one in a million Army persons. With pride I say "His is a job WELL DONE" and indeed it is.



# The Shaw Family Arsonist

By John Atwood

A tragic series of arsons caused by Edward Shaw occurred in the night in early September, 1873. These affected three farms in North Bridgewater and adjacent English Mills (now Prosper). The Vermont Standard dated 11 September 1873 and subsequent issues recorded the events that took place.

The events began at the Shaw homestead farm now owned by John and Donna Atwood. Edward Shaw was a great grand son of the farm's settler, Isaiah Shaw, and was 23 years old when he set about "his diabolical errand." The Vermont Standard recounts the events that led up to the arsons. Edward had shown various insane and possibly dangerous behaviors in the prior weeks, such as constantly keeping a loaded gun at his side. During the day before the arsons, he expressed to his father that three men "were banded together to kill him." The Shaw family had a trusted neighbor, G. A. Slocum, watch over him during the evening, but Edward escaped through an open window disappearing into the night. Later around 11 P.M., a glow

was seen in the direction of the Charles Montague farm located about a third mile to the north of the present Nelson Lee home. All buildings were destroyed, but neighbors saved some of the furniture from the Montague house. Edward had been seen at the farm just prior to the burnings. The second fire was seen "a mile away and across lots" at a barn owned by one of several Maxhams living in the area. Mr. Slocum, who had been entrusted to watch Edward, road into English Mills warning the residents of impending danger, but fires were already set to two barns owned by Lyman Cobb who lived about a mile north of the stone school house. Despite efforts to apprehend the Shaw boy, he wasn't found until the next day in an apple orchard having attempted to take his own life with a sharp knife. He was soon taken to the Asylum at Brattleboro where he died in 1876 at age 26.

Edward's father partially atoned to the arsons by giving the Montague family his entire field of hay, or about 30 loads. Rather than rebuild, Charles Montague bought a farm in the Cox District of Woodstock. The

once prosperous Montague farm would be absorbed into the neighboring farms.

Edward is buried in the North Bridgewater Cemetery next to his sister, Ida, also insane, and also who died at the Brattleboro Asylum in 1889. Both parents were later buried just in front of them watching over their children for eternity. The last of the North Bridgewater Shaws died in 1901. What was the affliction that caused Edward's insanity? We may never know, but if he had been born a hundred years later, his symptoms might have been remedied medically. Sadly, he was born a hundred years too early.



*Edward and Ida Shaw's grave stones*

## In Memory

It is with sorrow and regret we report the passing of two long time Bridgewater residents and Bridgewater Historical Society members, Irving Shurtleff and Earle Allard.

Irving Shurtleff owned the last dairy farm in Bridgewater on land which has been his family for generations. A kind and generous man, Irving loved his family, friends, land, animals, local history and storytelling. Irving lived his life as a true Vermonter and he is sadly missed.

Earle Allard was born and brought up in Bridgewater, the only boy and adored by his three sisters. After his retirement Earle returned to Bridgewater and was very active in the Volunteer Fire Department and the person everyone went to for assistance. If you wanted it done, ask Earle. Each spring all his friends and neighbors looked forward to his return from Florida as he always made house to house visits to see how the winter was if there was anything he could do to help. Earle will be remembered by his kindness.

There was an outpour of generous donations in memory of both gentlemen. The BHS purchased an Epson projector with the donations. We are able to use the projector for both presentations on a computer and to play DVDs. There have already been several opportunities to use the projector. Next time you are at the Little School House take a look at the plaques honoring Irving and Earle. Thank you to all who made donations.

## Membership

Membership is the key to any organization. Even though the Bridgewater Historical Society is only two years old the membership is strong. Currently we have a total of 175 member from 106 households. Those members come from 15 states. 9 members (6 households) have even joined for a lifetime. In 2011, BHS had 59 new members. What a commitment to preserve the history of our small town. Joining and paying for membership is only part of equation, becoming an active member is the

other part. The society meets every month on the last Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at the Old Brick School House. As you read through the newsletter you will see so many accomplishments by the organization this year. Next year's goals, such as establishing a BHS web site, recording stories of the big storm, recording past history of Bridgewater and digitalizing pictures, are lofty goals and will require participation from all the members to meet those goals. With all that said, it is time to renew your membership for 2012. The renewal

form is included in this newsletter. Please take the time to complete the form and mail to the Bridgewater Historical Society at PO BOX 98, Bridgewater, VT 05034. New this year is the ability to renew for multiple years. For those with email, please include your email address. It's a big savings to send the newsletter electronically whenever possible and a quick way to contact members. We greatly appreciate all the support and hope you join us again for another year.



*Bridgewater 250th Celebration  
Town Photo  
by Barb Wood for the VT Standard*

## Stories and Tales

By Charlie Astbury

Wanted!!.....Your Bridgewater Stories

To be included in our proposed book of Bridgewater Stories and Tales

Bridgewater, Vermont has 250 years of history, yes, 91250 days of history and more being made every day. Your Historical Society intends to produce a book of Bridgewater stories and tales. Not a history book but a collection of tales and stories about our town, our people, places and events. Stories of happy joyful times and hard or difficult times and just simple times. People stories passed down from family, friends and past generations and maybe a story of you and your times. Dig deep down and permit our book to preserve for our grandchildren and the world information concerning any of the past 250 years. Our goal is to capture the ESSENCE of Bridgewater, Vermont. Your story may be less than 50 words or in some more than 500. Some of you may feel writing for publication is not your thing. Fear not, we have members ready and willing to write your story, wherever you may be comfortable. Your name on your story as author is your choice. Remember it takes a wide assortment of stories and lots of them to make a book, so your story is important to the success of this book.

Subject matter should be in good taste, but not food recipes. Camping, hiking, hunting, fishing and everyday working stories will fit, even a little bit of politics, but keep it polite please. Stories for this book may cross most any town or country lines, just as long as a connection may be made with Bridgewater. Keep in mind some of early settlers crossed the ocean on the Mayflower, and many escaped the potato famine in Ireland. Please, Please permit us any of those stories, we would cherish them. Within this book of stories we intend a selection of stories about Floods. Stories from our brand new 2011 flood, back to the floods of 1973, 1927 and the 1869 flood. And maybe a few dryer floods of other years. To finish this plea, we desire to photocopy any and all older photos, paintings, drawings printed and handwritten articles, just anything pertaining to Bridgewater or surrounding areas.

Contact information for Bridgewater Historical Society is listed below:

Bridgewater Historical Society  
PO Box 98  
Bridgewater, Vermont 05034  
802-672-3745  
[sawyersinvt@hotmail.com](mailto:sawyersinvt@hotmail.com)  
[kancir@vermontel.net](mailto:kancir@vermontel.net)

## Vermont History Expo 2012

By Charlie Astbury

Continued from page 1

The Vermont History EXPO is presented by the Vermont Historical Society. This society was founded in 1838. They fondly claim to be for Vermonters and Vermonters at Heart. More than 200 Vermont Historical Societies hold membership in the V.H.S., including Bridgewater Historical Society (BHS). This year the BHS will have a Bridgewater History booth at EXPO 2012. The Vermont History Expo is held every other year at the Tunbridge World Fair Grounds, at Tunbridge Vermont. Tunbridge Fair Association opens their grounds and buildings to Vermont History EXPO. These buildings are stuffed with town, farm and school artifacts and lots of history, surely some joy for everyone.

The EXPO 2012 theme is VERMONT IN THE CIVIL WAR. 2011 marks the 150th year of the start of our Civil War. Each local Historical Society will display some of their towns Civil War history items about their citizens and town.

EXPO 2012 opens June 16th and continues through June 17th. Parking is plenteous and FREE. Admission ticket covers all events, buildings and booths. Refreshments are available at a cost.

Please attend this Vermont History EXPO and please make yourself known at our Bridgewater Historical booth. We welcome everyone and will assist you to become members. Membership is open to all, no tests and you may be from any place in this world. Thank You.

# Slavery Statics

By Charlie Astbury

2011 makes the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War between the states of the United States. The main issue in this war was slavery. In 1790 and 1860 the states were all located east of the Mississippi River. In modern times the Civil War is still a topic of discussion. One question often asked is, what states had slaves and how many did they have? History books and the internet research provided the below stated answer. The data sets were depended on the United States Census reports as their source of information. Below is the Census information on slaves for both 1790 and 1860.

**1790 & 1860 Slave Population (by state)**

State	1790 # Slaves	1860 # Slaves
New Hampshire	158	0
Vermont	17	0
Rode Island	952	0
Connecticut	2750	0
Massachusetts	0	0
New York	21,324	0
New Jersey	11,423	0
Pennsylvania	3737	0
Delaware	8887	1798
Maryland	103,036	87,188
Virginia	293,427	490,887
North Carolina	100,572	331,081
South Carolina	107,094	402,541
Georgia	29,264	462,230
Kentucky	11,880	225,490
Tennessee	3417	275,784
Maine		0
DC		3181

Note: In 1780 Massachusetts and Pennsylvania passed laws restricting slavery. Large areas of the country were not yet states and had no census report. Some southern areas had hundreds of thousand slaves.

# Bridgewater Humanities

Continued from page 1

The Bridgewater Humanities has collaborated with the Bridgewater Historical Society and Hand In Hand Community Service to offer monthly programs. All programs are open to all free of charge. Programs are held on the first Tuesday of each month (6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.) in the Bridgewater Historical Society Building at 12 North Bridgewater Road. All dates and themes are subject to change.

For more information contact:  
 Lauren Wilder (802)299-1777  
 Jeannette Sawyer (802)672-3745



Bridgewater Cornet Band



*Stillman Weedon with his grandson Stillman Needham*



December 2011

Issue No. Two





# BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL

We welcome new members and would love to have you join the Bridgewater Historical Society, Inc. The table below lists the yearly dues which are to be renewed each December. Multiple year renewals are available. The Society depends on dues and fundraising to finance all activities.

**Donations are welcome.**

**Please choose the level where you feel the most comfortable, fill out the form that is below and mail it with your payment to:**

**Bridgewater Historical Society  
P. O. Box 98  
Bridgewater, Vermont 05034-0098**

**Meetings held:**  
Last Tuesday of the month  
6:30 p.m.  
Old Brick School House

**The Bridgewater Historical Society is classified as a 501(C)(3) public charity.  
As such, your donation is fully tax deductible. Please ask for a receipt**

\_\_\_ INITIAL      \_\_\_ RENEWAL

LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP	AMOUNT	NUMBER OF YEARS	TOTAL AMOUNT
___ STUDENT	\$3.00	X _____ YEARS =	_____
___ SENIOR	\$6.00	X _____ YEARS =	_____
___ INDIVIDUAL	\$10.00	X _____ YEARS =	_____
___ FAMILY	\$20.00	X _____ YEARS =	_____
___ CONTRIBUTING	\$50.00	X _____ YEARS =	_____
___ LIFETIME	\$300.00		

\_\_\_\_\_ DONATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_