

# BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

November 2012

Issue No. Three

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### PROGRAMS

Bridgewater Cemeteries  
By Coleman (Bill) Hoyt  
November 27th at 6:30 pm  
in the Old Brick School House

#### ANNUAL MEETING

The BHS annual meeting will be  
December 4th at 6:30 p.m. in the  
Old Brick School House.

Agenda will include:

- President's Report
- Annual Treasurer's Report
- Budget for 2013
- Collection Report
- Approval Amended By-Laws
- Election of Board Directors

#### OFFICERS

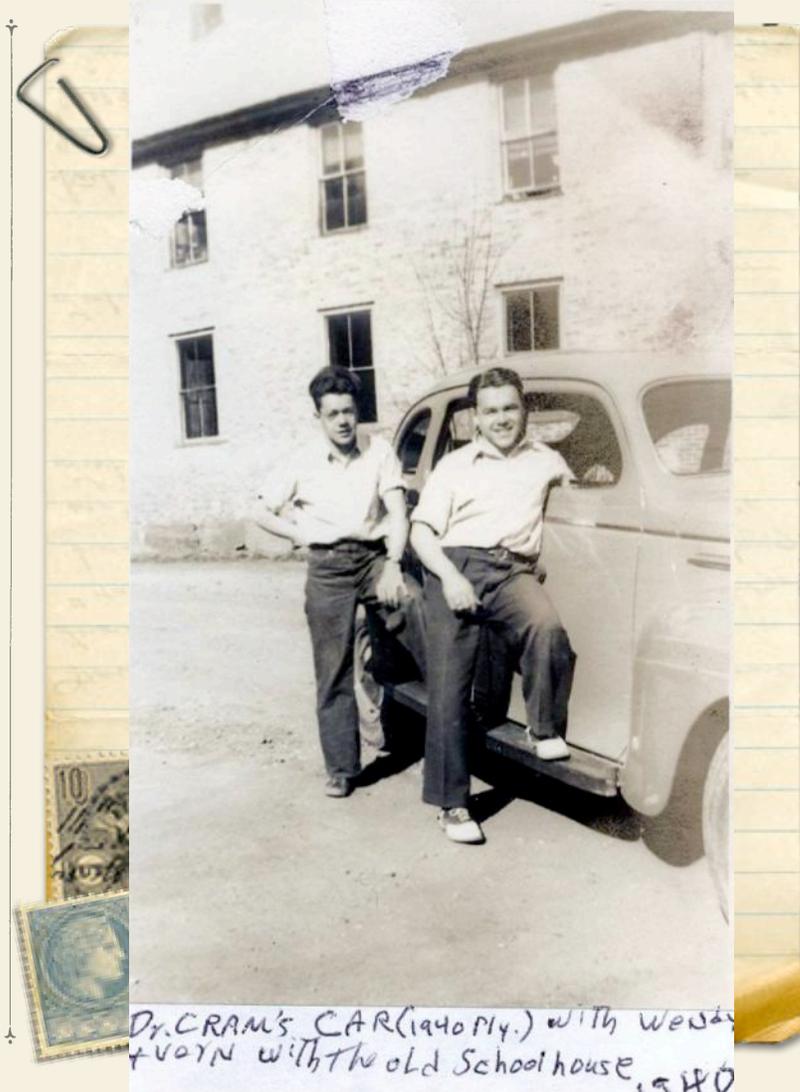
President: Jeannette Sawyer  
Vice President: Charles Astbury  
Secretary: Sondra Stevens  
Treasurer: Sondra Stevens  
Membership: Alice Paglia

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susanne Weldon  
Phoebe Standish  
Polly Timken  
Sue Kancir  
Lauren Jane Wilder  
John Atwood  
Olive Greenough



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



DY. CRAM'S CAR (1940 PLY.) with Wendy  
& VAIN with the old Schoolhouse, 1940



## BHS Reflections

Jeannette Sawyer, President

As 2012 comes to a close, I would like to reflect on the Bridgewater Historical Society's success, review our accomplishments, thank our Board of Directors and everyone for their contributions which are too numerous to list here, to praise each member for their continued dedication and support and review our goals for next year.

We have continued to meet at the Old Brick Schoolhouse on the last Tuesday of each month. With the generosity of our donors we had a restoration done on a section of bricks in the back of the building by the fire escape. While doing this, it was found that the building had two layers of bricks, plus it was determined that the foundation was sound and did not need any repairs. In the spring, we hope to have the damaged bricks in the front restored and some much needed minor repairs and exterior painting done.

A few of our many accomplishments have been to participate in the Vermont History Exposition in Tunbridge with a photographic display of Bridgewater's Civil War soldiers, their mills and mines plus other items from our collection. We had two presentations, "Orchids from the Wild to Windowsills" by John Atwood and

## WW I Service Flag Returned to Bridgewater

"The History of Gold Mining in Bridgewater and Plymouth" by Coleman (Bill) Hoyt which were both very well attended. For fourteen weeks this summer BHS held open houses on Saturdays, 10 AM to 2 PM that started on July 7<sup>th</sup> and ended on October 6<sup>th</sup>. We had many visitors and felt that this endeavor was successful and would be continued next year. The BHS worked on a project with the Bridgewater 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students with their cultural heritage unit which included visits to the old schoolhouse for research. They also did a local cemetery visit. We were asked if BHS would like to contribute to the Vermont Standard's Historically Speaking column. Charles Astbury wrote a wonderful and sad story about Rubie Perkins. Our goal is to continue to contribute to this column with our stories about Bridgewater. A few of our members attended a conference in Barre, VT on "Archives on a Shoestring" to assist us with our collection management project. The photograph shown here is of the large World War I Service flag, one of the many gifts that we received this year. It was donated by the Vermont Veteran's Militia Museum in Colchester, VT and presented to us by Director, Walter Houghton.

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## Town Tractor



1935-1936

By Vernon Cram

This town tractor-snowplow kept the hills and back roads open. These roads were seldom sanded. Everyone who lived up in the hills had to use chains. Dr. Cram had studded tires and chains. Most did.

Back to the plow. Us kids would tie our sleds on back of the tractor and ride all the way to Mendell Cemetery and on Cemetery Hill we could go to Richmonds. The plow was kept in a building on Route 4 as you leave town west, across the road

from where Ralph Robinson lived years ago. The place was called the Tramp House. One side of the building, as a town sponsored place, where tramps (as they were known) could stay for the night. They could go to Julian Robinson's store and be given a bag of food and go to the Tramp House. It must have been known by them that certain towns did this. I never knew the whole operation. The store would bill the town (couldn't afford it today). Bridgewater was that kind of town!!



# Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department

## Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department

By Walter E. Houghton

One cold winter night at the Corners, I remember being aroused from sleep and observing a fiery glow outside on the snow. Our neighbor, Verona West's house on the Upper Road was on fire and by morning all that was left was a smoking cellar hole and burnt cinders all over town. Woodstock sent two pumpers including the old Maxim driven by Bill Washburn, but they were too late. As a young boy, I was traumatized to think that people could lose their homes and possessions in that manner. Down at the Mill, one of Gramp's additional duties was fire fighting. Sometime during the war, the town came into possession of a trailer mounted fire pump. It was painted O. D. so it was obviously a Civil Defense resource. Sometime in the early fifties it was moved from the Mill up to our garage along with hoses and a ladder. The fire department officially started in 1952. Harlan Booth was Chief and my father was Asst. Chief. Being clever and creative townspeople they proceeded to make a fire truck! They acquired a 4WD Marmon-Harrington truck from the town garage and built a body on it. They mounted the pump and Chrysler engine from the CD unit, bought more hose, painted it red and thus, Bridgewater's first fire truck! What an ambitious project. Everyone in town pitched in, and Bobby and I were right there in the middle of it all! Later the same enthusiastic group built their own fire station. Night after night the town would turn out to mix and pour concrete, and lay cement blocks. It was right out of the tradition of an old fashioned "barn raising". They had fun doing it, with a spirit of community that was so... Bridgewater! I have often thought as I drive by the station what is going to happen to it someday when all those beer cans in the cement finally turn to dust! In addition to the BVFD, my dad was also the Town Fire Warden. This involved issuing fire permits and maintaining the state furnished fire equipment. When we got bigger, Bob and I took care of the backpack Indian Pumps and associated hardware. We kept a close liaison with the Pico Fire Tower. Carolyn Parameter was the ranger up there. She was a former Army nurse from the C-B-I campaign and one tough lady. Once in awhile we would walk up the mountain and bring her mail and supplies.

The call we dreaded most was "Forest Fire!" on some peak in town. We would muster everyone, break out the

pumps and run to the scene. From the time I was able to carry one of those pumps, I was there also. It was scary sometimes, running through the woods trying to get ahead of it, smoke so thick you could hardly breathe! I remember one time on the Gold Coast Rd. the beavers started one. They chewed down a tree, and fell it across a power line -whoosh, instant forest fire! We were strong advocates who grew up with Smokey Bear and the slogan "Prevent Forest Fires!" I eventually went on to fly fire patrol with the state owned airplane on critical fire danger days. For nine years I was on the Shelburne Fire Department and in running one of the nation's busiest airports responsible for a 66 man station full of giant crash trucks and rescue boats. It all harkened back to that terrible glow on the snow that night and "the little fire dept. that could" up in Bridgewater!



Standing  
Craig Phillips,  
Everett Olmstead  
Sam Howard  
salesman  
company rep  
company rep  
Bob Rosenburger

front row kneeling.  
Fred Merriam,  
Dave Jenne  
Stephen Hill  
Eugene Westney

1982

## In Memory

It is with sorrow and regret that we report the passing of two of the Bridgewater Historical Society's members, Ruth Houghton Needham and Nelson B. Lee, Jr. The Bridgewater Historical Society appreciates all the contributions given to this organization in memory of these wonderful and dedicated people.

Just after our newsletter had been mailed out last year, on November 27, 2011, the Bridgewater Community lost a longtime resident, **Ruth Houghton Needham**. Ruth and her twin brother, Royal, were born on the Upper Road in Bridgewater Corners in 1927. Ruth attended school and lived most of her life in

the area where she was a devoted wife, mother, business woman, friend and an honored volunteer. She was also an author that wrote a book about her life entitled "From the Upper Road". As a true Vermonter, she was a local historian interested in preservation of our cultural heritage and was the first person to offer her old photograph albums for scanning so the society could preserve the essence of the town for future generations. As a proud and active Director and Charter Member of the Bridgewater Historical Society, Ruth is sadly missed. So fitting was a quote from her obituary, "She was truly a gift to all who had contact with her."

The Bridgewater Historical Society lost an avid supporter on September 6<sup>th</sup>, when **Nelson B. Lee, Jr.**, passed away. He was a long time resident of North Bridgewater, arriving when he was 8, in 1940, when his father bought Grandma'am's Hill farm. As a selectman for Bridgewater, he advocated for saving the brick schoolhouse. It is fair to say that if it weren't for Nelson, the Society might not be where it is today. He shall be missed.



## BHS Reflections

Continued from page 2

The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project that we were involved in for two years donated a free two year Comcast drop, two computers, a flatbed scanner, a wireless router, Microsoft Office Professional software and provided programs to assist us with our collection management and a genealogy class for beginners. This project also enabled us to have the [bridgewaterhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:bridgewaterhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) email account and have our membership list managed on the computer. Our goal is soon to have a website and an archival program where we can digitalize and make public our meetings, historical holdings, documents and photographs. We are still in hopes of having a class for novice computer users to

become more confident with the internet. In the near future we plan 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. We have collected many wonderful stories, but need many more to have this project be successful.

I am looking forward to another exciting and productive year for the Bridgewater Historical Society.

Jeannette Sawyer, President

# Help Us Identify



The Society often gets photos but need help to identify people or places. This wonderful photo was shared by Audrey Putnam. Can you identify any of these fine looking women?

Do you know what event this is or the year? Do you recognize any of the individuals? Picture from the Ruth Needham collection.



Please help identify these women and the event. Picture provided by Edith Blanchard Osmer



## Stories and Tales

Wanted!!.....Your Bridgewater Stories to be included in our proposed book of Bridgewater Stories and Tales. This was our plea from last's year's newsletter. Well!! Stories have been coming in. You will note several examples included in this newsletter. Thanks to everyone who have sent and told their stories. As you can see, they are wonderful memories of our great community. We know there are so many more stories just like these so please consider writing your tale and sending them to the Bridgewater Historical Society. It would be a shame to lose all this history. Don't forget to include pictures if you have them.

Send to:

Bridgewater Historical Society

PO Box 98

Bridgewater, Vermont 05034

802-672-3745

[bridgewaterhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:bridgewaterhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

### Christmas At Gram's

By Edith Blanchard Osmer

How I miss the Christmas of long ago,  
A beautiful tree with lights all a glow.  
And all the family would get together  
From hundreds of miles, no matter the weather.  
Gram had turkey with fixings, all steaming in pots,  
and listening to the ticking, of the old wooden clock.  
The last to be served was pie and strong cheese,  
what kind of gifts, were we going to receive.  
Then to the piano, we'd gather around.  
I can close my eyes and still hear those sounds,  
We'd sing our hearts out, with Christmas songs  
"Thank God," For my memories that linger on.  
I visualize their face's and their voices I hear,  
Although they've been gone, for many a year.  
They are looking down and wishing us well,  
Saying! don't be afraid this place is swell.  
We'll sing again and share our love,  
When God takes you to heaven above.

## Membership

It's time again to renew your membership. The society is 156 members strong. Please find the renewal form at the end of the newsletter. Many of you have joined in the lifetime capacity and many have paid for multiple years. Thanks you so much. However please complete the membership form if you have address or email address **changes**. We don't want to lose track of you.



# Rubie Perkins Story



Rubie Perkins dresses



The Charles A. Perkins Family Dailey Hollow 1890's  
Julian Seagle Eliza Dinsmore Martha Louise Charles Alvora James  
Rubie

These dresses worn Rubie Amelia Perkins were recently discovered in an attic and graciously donated to the Bridgewater Historical Society by Phoebe Standish and her family.

The following is an excerpt from:  
"Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976" compiled by Gladys S. Adams.  
page 74

"March 23, 1893 Standard reported that Rubie Perkins, eight years old, daughter of Charlie and Eliza (Dinsmore) Perkins, had been scalped when her long braided hair had caught in the moving belt of the stretcher mill. April 6th, Standard reported that Rubie had undergone an uncommon operation at her home in Dailey Hollow. Dr. Pond of Rutland assisted by Drs. Francisco and Boyden, performed skin grafting whereby punctures were made in the bone and skin transplanted to the punctures. The operation "known as the Tierce method was first practiced by a French surgeon during the French and Indian War".

Early one morning in April, Rubie, with her father, sister Martha, her aunt Mrs. John Cleveland and Uncle Jasper Perkins, started for Rutland where treatment was to be continued. Stops were made for lunch with John Morse in Sherburne where the horses were changed, and at the snow limit where the sleigh was exchanged for a carriage left by Clayton Allard. After a rest at Mr. Rangers in Mendon they arrived at the Globe Hotel in Rutland at 6:30 PM. Sister Martha, later Mrs. Jared Standish, became a devoted attendant but despite the care and medical attention Rubie Perkins died Aug. 28, 1893 of diphtheria."

Bridgewater Center

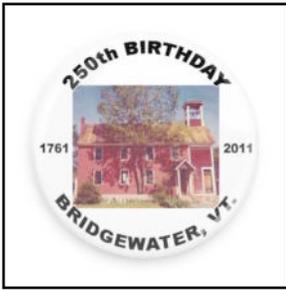


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**THE BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



# 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	DATE _____		
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:** \_\_\_\_\_