

# BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

November 2013

Issue No. Four

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### PROGRAMS

Judy Edwards  
**CCC Camps of VT**  
Dec 3rd, 7pm

John Atwood  
**The Reed Organ & 19th  
Century VT Music**  
June 2014

#### ANNUAL MEETING

The BHS annual meeting will be  
December 3rd at 6:00 p.m. in the  
Old Brick School House.

Agenda will include:

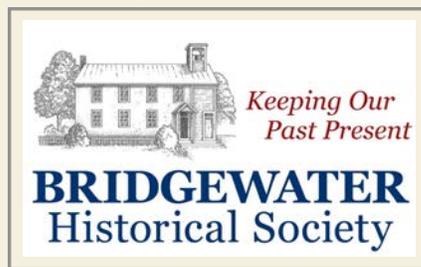
President's Report  
Annual Treasurer's Report  
Budget for 2014  
Curator Report  
Election of Officers & Board Directors  
Program on CCC Camps -7pm (see pg 5)

#### OFFICERS

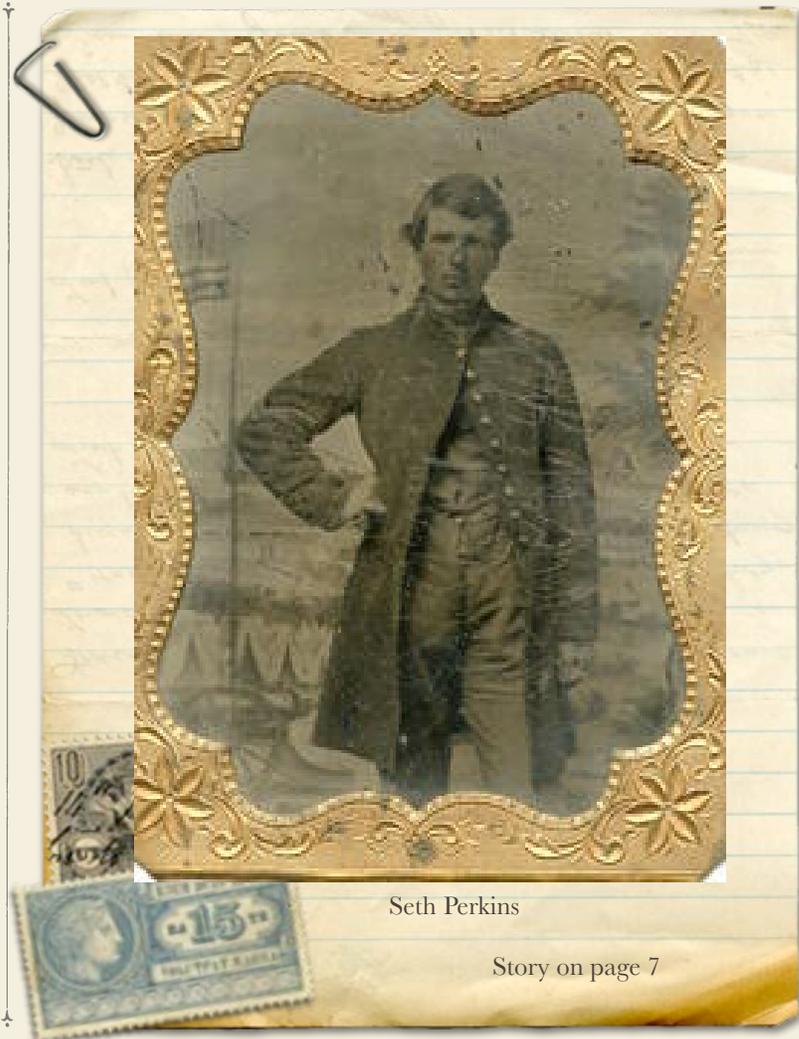
President: Jeannette Sawyer  
Vice President: Charles Astbury  
Secretary: Sondra Stevens  
Treasurer: Sondra Stevens  
Membership: Alice Paglia  
Curator: Polly Timken

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susanne Weldon  
Phoebe Standish  
Polly Timken  
Sue Kancir  
Lauren Jane Wilder  
John Atwood  
Olive Greenough  
Nancy Kendall  
Bill Hoyt



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



Seth Perkins

Story on page 7

## BHS Reflections

As the year 2013 and my last second two year term as president of the Bridgewater Historical Society comes to a close, I would like to reflect on this organization's success and their extraordinary accomplishments. I would like to thank the Board of Directors and each member for their dedication and support. It is with my heartfelt appreciation of these people that I summarize this past year's achievements.

Our most important achievement was the development and implementation of our professionally designed website, [www.bridgewaterhistory.org](http://www.bridgewaterhistory.org). This was financially possible with the assistance from the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project, The Vermont Council on Rural Development and private donors. A unique feature of the website's cemetery data base is that it is searchable by name and has a photograph of each gravestone. There is an extensive photo gallery and pages for events, collections, newsletters, stories and more.

The BHS also has a Facebook page where many historical photographs have been posted. While our Website is informational, Facebook can be interactive. For example, when a school photograph is posted, anyone can comment or name the students. This is very beneficial in identifying old photographs and a good way to communicate.

With the generosity of our donors and volunteers, we have been able to continue our maintenance of the brick schoolhouse. This year the front of building had a large section of bricks repaired as well as the painting of the entire front and our unique bell tower. The beautiful hand painted sign donated by Brenda, Beryl and Belinda Needham in memory of their

mother, Ruth Houghton Needham proudly announces the Bridgewater Historical Society's presence. It is my hope that in the future we will be able to continue the much needed maintenance to this beautiful historical structure.



We have had three presentations, "How the 1761 Charter Effects the Town Today" by Gordon Tuthill. Howard Coffin talked about his newly released book, "Something Abides: Discovering the Civil War in Today's Vermont." He also paid tribute to his friend and collector of Civil War books, Robert W. Allen. John and Donna Atwood donated this very large Civil War book collection to the Bridgewater Historical Society. Frank Jay Barrett presented "From Boston to Woodstock, The Arrival of the Railroads to the Upper Valley". In August we held our 6<sup>th</sup> Bridgewater History Day with presentations: "The History of the Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department" by Bruce Maxham; a "Pictorial History of Bridgewater" by Geoff Kenyon and Tom Adams presented "Using a Digital Camera to Record an Ancient Cemetery". These presentations were all very well attended.

BHS has had the brick schoolhouse open on 20 Saturdays, 10am to 2pm this summer, June 1<sup>st</sup> through October 12<sup>th</sup>. We had many visitors and felt that this

endeavor was successful and would be continued next year. One of our honored guests was Wendall "Wendy" Cram, son of Dr. Albert Cram, Olympic skier and member of the famous 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division that served in World War 2.

We have installed the Musarch archival computer program and we are in the process of accessioning and digitalizing our entire collection. Also installed on our two computers is a digital PDF file of the Gladys Adam's book "Bridgewater, Vermont 1779 -1976" (thanks to Tom Adams) so this wonderful history resource can be easily researched.

Other achievements have been to collaborate with the Bridgewater Humanities holding two programs, "Poetry 180", a Vermont Reads Program and "Potluck" which featured a vocal and instrumental 1960's folk revival concert. We also participated at the North Branch Blue Grass Festival and tour of the Thomas Lamb House and Gardens on Bridgewater Hill, see page 8. With these accomplishments in mind, I am looking forward to another exciting and productive year for the Bridgewater Historical Society.

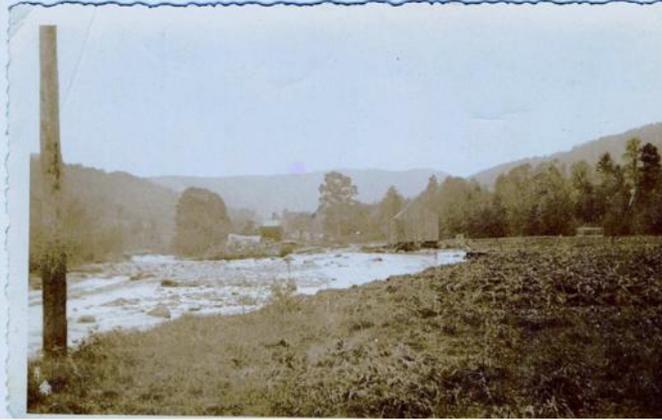
Jeannette Sawyer, President



Wendell "Wendy" Cram

# Caught in the 1938 Hurricane

75th Anniversary of  
the 1938 Flood



John H Oldenburg Jr.

By Royal Houghton

Early one late September afternoon, the power suddenly went off. Because of all the rain we had that week we thought it might have been a tree down somewhere. Father sent me down to Alfred Vaughan's store for some kerosene for the lamps. I was eleven years old at the time. After purchasing a gallon of kerosene I proceeded to go back home. Stepping out on the store steps, suddenly a large elm tree across the road blew down pulling the roots out of the ground. Mr. Vaughan quickly came out and pulled me back into the store. My house on the Upper Road could be seen from the store. Communication was established by hand signal that I was all right and that I should stay there. After a couple hours my brother, Evan, came and got me. I remember that Alfred Vaughn passed out free ice cream that was melting with the power off. I really enjoyed that.

With all the destruction of the power grid my father, Karl Houghton, had a crew of several men rebuilding the power line from the Corners to Bridgewater Center. They worked long hours and for quite sometime. Dick Thompson also had a crew doing the same on other power lines.

By Sue Kancir

As I researched the history of the 1938 hurricane I found a great deal of information about New England and Vermont but no information about what happened locally. Quickly, I was reminded to check one of Bridgewater's best source of local history, "Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976" by Gladys S. Adams. Sure enough on page 119 is this wonderful account of the flood.

*The September 1938 hurricane caused the most damage at Bridgewater Center. Mr and Mrs John Oldenburg and their family who lived in the Hiram Pratt house, and Mrs Blanche Adams, Mr and Mrs Bruce Hodge and daughters Lota and Manon who lived in the house next below Oldenburgs, went to the house of George Fish which was located on higher ground on Baker Hill. When the weather subsided John Oldenburg went to investigate and found that his house had been completely washed away. The Adams/Hodge house survived.*

*Every vestige of the dam at the old Ansel Barrows Mill, owned in 1938 by B. H. Hubbard, was removed. The bridge near Oak Chapel was carried off and a storage shed nearby was relieved of lumber and stretchers. Between Bridgewater Center school and Chateaugay, a distance of four miles, every bridge was gone and large sections of roadbed were torn out.*

*At the Village the water was thirteen inches higher than it had been in the 1927 flood and one approach to the Curtis Hollow Bridge was ruined. The Woolen Mill had an estimated ten thousand dollars damage and four hundred cords of wood were washed away.*

Also the "Annual Reports of Town Officers for the Year 1939 Bridgewater Vermont" has a detailed listing of over \$7000 in expenses relating to the flood.

Both of these resources as well as many others are available for review at the Bridgewater Historical Society located in the Old Brick School House, 12 N Bridgewater Rd.

# In Memory

By Lauren Jane Wilder

It is with sorrow and regret that we report the passing of six Bridgewater Historical Society's members and contributors. The Bridgewater Historical Society appreciates all the contributions given to this organization in memory of these wonderful and dedicated people.

**Alfred Grover**, 90, World War II U.S. Marine veteran, Civil Service employee and Bridgewater resident, was active with the Bridgewater Planning Committee and the Woodstock Union School Board. Al was a lifetime Red Sox fan and member of the Bridgewater Historical Society.

**Stephen Frechette**, 88, Bridgewater native, World War II U.S. Army veteran and happily retired Postal Worker, lived most of his life in West Springfield, Vermont. In Memoriam: from Thomas and Lisa (Frechette) Sutter

**Elizabeth Ellen Shurtleff**, 81, Surgical Nurse at Mary Hitchcock, long time North Bridgewater resident, Dairy Farm owner and community activist was devoted to her family, pets and neighbors. Betty was a member of many community organizations including the Bridgewater Planning Commission, Prosper Homemakers, Home Dem, Girl Scouts, Woodstock Union School Board, Bridgewater Board of Civil

Authority and a charter member of the Bridgewater Historical Society.

**Norma Sawyer**, 84, a longtime Bridgewater resident and member of the American Legion Auxiliary, was raised in Woodstock and Pomfret, Vermont. Norma enjoyed spending time with her family, gardening, animals, fishing, card games and dancing.

**Marjorie Southgate Vail**, 88, a graduate of Woodstock High School and Northampton Commercial College, was a Librarian for Smith College and the Norman Williams Library in Woodstock for over 30 years, followed by a stint with the Woodstock Chamber of Commerce. Marjorie was a member of many local community programs, including Woodstock Ski Runners, Retired Seniors Volunteer Program, Silver Lake Progressing Club, Glad Rags and Bridgewater Historical Society. In addition, she enjoyed the outdoors, playing tennis and skiing.

**Michael Harlow**, 71, U.S. Air Force veteran Vietnam, graduate of Woodstock High School and East Coast Aero Technical School, retired from Pratt and Whitney Engine Services as an aircraft mechanic. He enjoyed motorcycles and was a member of the West Windsor Historical Society and the Bridgewater Historical Society.

## Help us Identify ??



## Dinner with the President

### My Grandfather's Visit

By Edith Blanchard Osmer

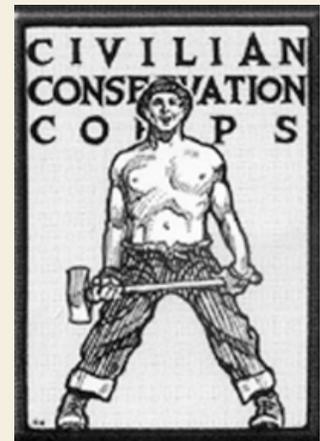
Frank Furman had a job one time, doing carpentry work for President Coolidge, at the President's home in Plymouth VT. He said he worked there for a week or two when the president paid him then invited he and his wife, Edith, up for supper the following Saturday night. Frank was pretty nervous about going but they got ready and went. He said, Thank God there was only 1 fork, 1 knife and 1 spoon. He was worried they might have more utensils and he wouldn't know which one to use first. Well, Mrs. Coolidge had cooked a big pork roast with potatoes, gravy and vegetables. Gramp Furman said he was still nervous, but Mrs. Coolidge passed all the dishes around and then it was time to eat. President Coolidge reached over cut a big piece of pork off and threw it down on the velvet rug for the dog to eat. He said after that he felt right at home. After the supper they had pie and ice cream with coffee. They enjoyed the supper and the visit then they went home. He said not many people get invited to the President's home and have a common meal and conversation.



Edith & Frank Furman

## BHS Annual Meeting

The Bridgewater Historical Society Annual Meeting will be December 3rd at 6pm at Old Brick School House located at 12 N Bridgewater Road. There will be a short business meeting which will include annual reports and the election of Officers and Board members. At 7pm we have the honor of **a presentation by Judith Edwards on the Civilian Conservation Corps**. Ms. Edwards is the author of a dozen historical fiction books for young readers. Through her research for the books she has gained a vast knowledge of the Vermont CCC. According to the Vermont Historical Society, the federal legislation championed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the spring of 1933 originally designed four camps in Vermont in Roosevelt's effort to fight the Depression. But through efforts of the State Forester Perry Merrill, Vermont eventually ended up with 30 CCC camps by 1937, with a total of 40,868 men working in Vermont's forests. Come hear the the amazing story of the CCC camps.



# Curator's Report

By Polly Timken

We have received some wonderful items this year. Sue Lilly presented us with a sampler made by Ruth Maxham, aged 12 from Bridgewater. Jeannette Sawyer has done some of the genealogical research on it. Ruth was born in Carver, MA in 1816. Her father, Jabez Maxham, had married Ruth Chubbuck from Carver. We don't know when they moved to Bridgewater. Ruth married Justin Selah Montague in 1840 from Bridgewater and had four children. She died at age 83 in 1899.



The Woodstock History Center turned over to us a cornet that belonged to a member of the Bridgewater Cornet Band, possibly "Rossie Curtis". It is nice to have the cornet displayed with photos of the band. The Woodstock History Center also passed on to us a section of a beam supposedly from the "oldest house in Bridgewater".

Other gifts include a wooden dye bucket from the Bridgewater Mill, as well as a wool blanket and papers pertaining to the mill, given to us by Charlie Shackleton and Miranda Thomas. Gary Neil gave a collection of papers that include plans and photographs of the Mill in the '70's and 80's.

We have collected many of the items that were on exhibit at the Mill in the '70's. They had been in storage at Gillingham's. Ledgers, a checkbook, loom books and catalogues from the Vermont Natives Industries are amongst the items.

Phoebe Standish and her cousin Richard gave us a number of items from the Perkins family, including a "kit" used by Charles Perkins during the Civil War and a handmade linen towel. The towel was made by Betsy Russ in 1860 from flax grown on the Ziba Russ farm near Dailey Hollow in Bridgewater. The gift also included some glass plate negatives and prints that are a valuable addition to our collection.

At the Bridgewater History Day Bud Jenne presented us with a Bridgewater Mill Mall Stock Certificate signed that had been signed by him.

We are pleased with how popular the Society has become and are glad that people are looking to the organization as a safe place to preserve the history of the town.

## Stories and Tales

Wanted!!.....Your Bridgewater Stories to be included in our proposed book of Bridgewater Stories and Tales. This was our plea for the past 2 years. Well!! Stories have been coming in. You will note several more examples included in this newsletter. Thanks to everyone who has 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)

*Bridgewater Center School  
1950-1951*

## Membership

It's time again to renew your membership. The society is 156 members strong coming from 13 states and 1 Canadian providence. Please find the renewal form at the end of the newsletter. Many of you have joined in the lifetime capacity or paid for multiple years. Thank 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.



## Perkins' Family Civil War Soldiers

By Phoebe Standish

Jasper H., Charles A. and Seth O., the three eldest brothers, of Elisha Perkins family from Bridgewater, VT and their cousin, Orrin B. enlisted in our country's Civil war in 1861-1862. They all returned home with the exception of the youngest boy Seth, who at the age of 19 lost his battle with life, in Maryland, before his father could reach him with a comforting word. The eldest brother, Jasper, spent time in the dreaded Andersonville Prison and survived the ordeal, remarkably, to return to Vermont along with his brother Charles and their cousin to begin life of their own.

see photo page 1



Jasper and Charles Perkins

## Sterns House and Garden Tour

On July 28th, Judy Stearns and her brother-in-law David, hosted nine members for a garden and house tour of their home on Bridgewater Hill. It was a special treat to be able to see the restoration they have done over the years on the Thomas Lamb house, 1797 (formerly Heselton). The Judy and John Stearns bought the house with his brother David in the early 1970's and started restoration right away. Over the years they renovated the attached barn into a living room, workshop and guest suite. The kitchen was totally redone and the living room still uses the original fireplace. The work was all done with an eye to maintaining as much of the original material as possible. An additional treat was to see the beautiful gardens and pond. The foundation stones were used to create a terrace off of the kitchen. Everyone enjoyed the ice tea and cookies afterwards. The Historical Society is very thankful to Judy and David for hosting us.



Judy and David Stearns



Heselton Family chickens and all

## Bluegrass Festival

By Polly Timken

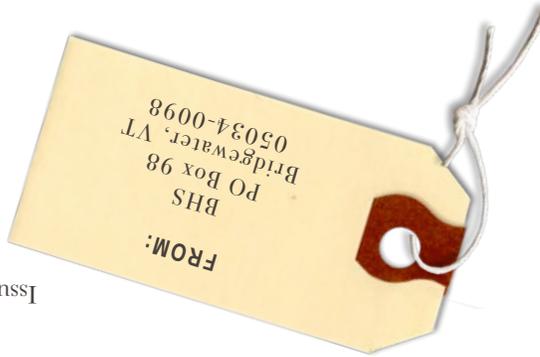
The Historical Society was invited to have a booth at the North Country Bluegrass Festival in Bridgewater Center on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend. Heather and Randy Kennedy rightly assumed that their bluegrass fans would be history buffs, and they were right!

On and off showers didn't deter about 40 visitors to the booth. Everyone loved the old photographs and gold mining was the hot topic of the day. We were able to show them the gold mining DVD made by Donald Sawyer, as well as guide them through our web site on the laptop. The fans enjoyed the sites and conversation with old friends. We hope to return next year as it was good exposure for the Society and brought many former residents together for the first time in ages.





John L. Atwood & Addie Royce Atwood  
of North Bridgewater  
circa 1930

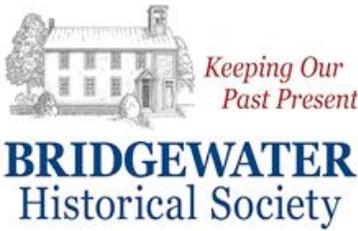


November 2013

Issue No. Four

# MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Pease renew your membership today



## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL

It's time to renew your Bridgewater Historical Society Membership. We also welcome new members and would love to have you join. The table below lists the yearly dues which are to be paid each December for the coming calendar year. The Society depends on dues, fundraising and donations to finance all activities. 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 pm  
Old Brick School House

### MEMBERSHIP IS JANUARY TO DECEMBER (calendar year)

<u>INITIAL</u>	<u>RENEWAL</u>
<u>LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<u>STUDENT</u>	\$3.00
<u>SENIOR (age &gt;62)</u>	\$6.00
<u>INDIVIDUAL</u>	\$10.00
<u>FAMILY</u>	\$20.00
<u>CONTRIBUTING</u>	\$50.00
<u>LIFETIME</u>	\$300.00
<u>CONTRIBUTIONS</u>	

### Your tax deductible contributions are welcome

We would like to take the opportunity to ask you for your help in maintaining the building and collections. Projects such as painting the building and putting up exhibits require not only work from volunteers but financial help as well. We are hoping that our members can help us continue with the ongoing work of preservation and presentation of the history of Bridgewater.

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

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

Family Member please include names of children (ages < 19): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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