

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

November 2014

Issue No. Six

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANNUAL MEETING

BHS Annual Meeting
December 2nd
6pm short meeting
Election of Executive Board Members
6:30 program **Gerry Hawkes**
INVENTING LAND MANAGEMENT
SOLUTIONS: From armored forestry
tractors to 4 million BTU flame treatment
systems.

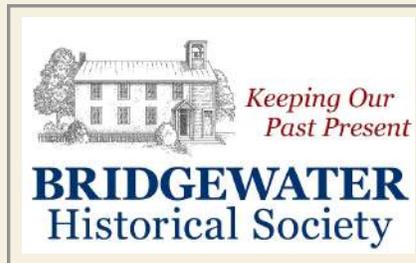


OFFICERS

President: Polly Timken
Vice President: Jeannette Sawyer
Secretary: Sue Kancir
Treasurer: Sondra Stevens
Membership: Alice Paglia
Curator: Polly Timken

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susanne Weldon
Phoebe Standish
Bruce Maxham
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



Photo from the Booth Family Collection

Letter From the President

Greetings. We hope everyone had a nice summer and was able to enjoy our delightful weather this fall.

We have had a very busy and successful season. April brought Judy Edwards to speak to a full house on the Civilian Conservation Corps and its camp in Plymouth. Many in the audience had either seen the site of the camp or knew people who had worked there.

In June, John Atwood gave a wonderful presentation at the Grange on his parlor organ. It was well attended and those there felt they had been transported back to the turn of the 20th century.

We participated at the Vermont History Fair in Tunbridge in June. Our display, "The Fabric of a Community" attracted many visitors. Many had either worked at the woolen mill or had relatives that did. The Valley News gave us a great write up. It was so successful, the Thompson Senior Center invited us to bring it to them. At both events, Ernest Kendall spoke on his memories of growing up "in the mill". Many in the audience were encouraged to add their memories.

Labor Day brought us to the North Country Bluegrass Festival. Our exhibit this year was the Woolen Mill.

In September we joined with the Grange and hosted Christine Hadsel who spoke on the theater curtain there. The organization "Curtains Without Borders" had been there before to help stabilize the curtain. She gave a fascinating talk. The book she is writing has a picture of the Grange curtain.

All of these events couldn't have happened without the long hours of help our volunteers have donated, as well as the great support we received from our first Annual Fund. The support from all of our friends and neighbors is wonderful and reminds us that the job we have undertaken is very much appreciated.

I would like to thank all of our volunteers and donors for all of their work in making the BHS the place it is today.

Polly Timken, President



John Atwood at the reed organ



Bridgewater Corners Grange #284 Country Scene backdrop, possibly by O.L. Story Scenic Company, Boston c.1910

The Third and Fourth grade from the Bridgewater Village School came to hear about the mill as well as the telephone switchboard and to learn about Dr. Cram and other members of the community. Ernest Kendall again helped with his story telling for the children.



"Fabric of a Community" now on display at BHS

Students from the Village School visits BHS



Bridgewater Village School 3rd and 4th Grade

Mercy Grinwold and her Third and Fourth grade students from the Bridgewater School visited us on September 30th. They are studying Bridgewater history. Ernest Kendall spoke to them about growing up here and going to the school. He also talked about the mill while Sue Kancir put on a slide show for them. Jeannette Sawyer gave them the background story about her grandfather, Winfred Perkins, and the telephone switchboard. They were able to see and feel what it would have been like to run the telephone switchboard the night Vice President Calvin Coolidge, got the message about President Harding's death back in 1923.

Also on display was Dr. Cram's medicine bag and pill case. They all seemed to enjoy the visit and returned to school with a new understanding of Bridgewater's place in Vermont history and how communication methods have changed over time.

Hats Off to Our Volunteers

Our hats are tipped to our many volunteers. We want to especially thank Ernest Kendall for his talks to the Senior Center and the Third and Fourth grades of the Bridgewater School. His memories of growing up at the mill attracted many visitors and brought out a lot of interest in the BHS.

John Atwood produced a wonderful program on organ music at the turn of the 19th century.

Andy Bird did a great job replacing lighting that was faulty or didn't meet code. His pay of chocolate chip cookies is not nearly enough for his time and effort on our behalf.

We wouldn't be able to rest easy this winter without Don E Sawyer's help in ridding us of unwanted four legged critters who had moved in underneath our building. We didn't consider them a necessary addition to our cause and he jumped in and saved the day. Bruce Maxham followed up with the insulation.



Top Hat on loan from the Southgate House

We were able to stay open on Saturdays this summer with help from John Atwood, Phoebe Standish, Jeannette Sawyer, Polly Timken and Ernest and Nancy Kendall. Visitation has been good with a lot of interest in genealogical research.

Sondra Stevens and Alice Paglia have kept expert track of our membership and bookkeeping.

Sue Kancir continues to carry us through the tech world, maintaining our web site, mailing lists, software programs and most importantly, producing our newsletter.

Bridgewater Spotted Fever Epidemic 1811 to 1814

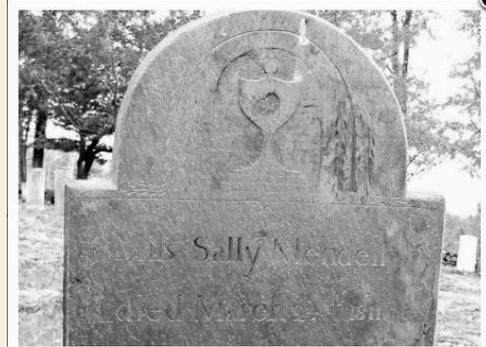
By Jeannette Sawyer

With frightening epidemics occurring worldwide today, I think that it is worthy of mentioning the spotted fever epidemic that was prevalent in New England in the years of 1811, 1812 and 1813 of which the town of Bridgewater had its share. It was called first "spotted fever", and later "malignant fever." Symptoms of the disease were chills, pain in the chest and head, rash, rapid respirations and a weak, fast pulse of 80-180 per minute. The tongue was white and furry with death frequently following within hours. So devastating was the disease, it was stated that "whole families were swept away, and entire neighborhoods were depopulated". Bridgewater born, Zadock Thompson (1796-1856), wrote in his *Natural History and Statistical History of Vermont*, published in 1842, that the "death toll from the disease was estimated more than 6000 deaths in Vermont, or one death to every 40 inhabitants". He also suggested, that many earlier outbreaks of disease were caused, "by the sudden changes of temperature to which our climate is subject." Spotted fever was said to be the same as what is now called cerebral-spinal meningitis, and was not then considered contagious. Others thought the fevers were caused by typhus attributed to poor living conditions.

An illustration of some methods of treatment of this disease was shown in later years among the papers of Capt. Charles Church, who was a wealthy and leading citizen of Westminster. The following is a recipe that was reported to be one of the most effective of any used at that time. Certainly if the patients survived the medicine, they surely ought to have survived the disease. "Cure for Spotted Fever- To one quart of lime add one gallon of water. To one quart of tar, add two quarts of water. Let these stand in separate vessels until they froth, skim the froth, pour them together. To this mixture add eight ounces of saltpeter, four ounces of opium -take a glass when going to bed and repeat the same in four or five hours." Dr. Joseph A. Gallup of Woodstock listed "bloodletting" as his treatment of choice and was strongly opposed to the use of opium or brandy. After treating about 200 patients, he contracted spotted fever, but survived to live another 36 years.

During the time the epidemic raged, there were 70 deaths at Bennington, 57 in Peacham, Pomfret and Reading had 44 each, just to name a few. Bridgewater's death toll was thought to be 26. The first recorded death in Bridgewater from this fever was Miss Sally Mendell, age 21 on March 24,

1811. The next year Selah Montague, age 51 died on May 17, 1812. It is likely that more deaths occurred, but spotted fever was not documented as being the cause.



Sally Mendell
d. Mar 24, 1811

The following is an excerpt from the book *Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976* compiled by Gladys S. Adams, page 26. "The brunt of the epidemic came to Bridgewater in 1813 when on Feb. 25, Dr. Benjamin Perkins, Bridgewater's pioneer doctor, age 52, died. The next day his brother-in-law, Lt. Elijah Walker, age 50, died. The third adult death occurred in this family when Dimis (Knight) Jones, age 67, wife of Ariel Jones and mother-in-law of both Dr. Perkins and Lt Walker, died on March 26. That March also took the lives of 10 more adults and 11 children in Bridgewater. Ezekiel and Polly French lost three children ages, 6, 8 and 12 between Dec. 1, 1813 and Jan. 25, 1814.

There are many descriptions of different fevers and diseases that struck Vermont. We may never know exactly what the people of Bridgewater died of between the years of 1811 and 1814, but we do know that the population census of Bridgewater in 1810 and 1820 was 1,125 people. There were about 26 deaths or one death to every 43 inhabitants in town which must have been extremely devastating for the earliest settlers as it would be today.



Dr Benjamin Perkins
d. Feb 25, 1813

My Grandfather, Karl Houghton

By Walter E. Houghton

From an early age I remember my trips to the Mill with my grandfather, Karl. For nearly forty years he was in charge of maintenance there. This was a huge responsibility as more than half the town worked for Bridgewater Woolen Co. I would run along behind Gramp, up to the Boiler Room, through the utility tunnel under the road (a frightening place!), Card Room, Weave Room and so on. In writing this, I still recall the smells and the noise. You would go in there with all those machines running and people that you knew would smile and wave and greet you by making their lips spell out a hello. Why, there must have been a 100 decibels of noise in there. Wonder they weren't all deaf! Gramp's shop was a fascinating place. All the saws, drills, planers, etc. were driven by overhead belts. Gramp, over

the years had lost two fingers and part of a thumb to those saws in the days before OSHA required guards. I used to watch him use the thumb stub in place of a multimeter and stick it in a light socket to check for 110 volts! Gramp was a clever guy, master carpenter, plumber, electrician and what ever else was needed. Even today when I am building something, or fixing something I pause and say to myself, "OK, How would Karl do this?" I still have a metal square with, "K.W. HOUGHTON" on it and it has magic powers! Frequently at his house the phone would ring, he would answer and say "Jean, I gotta go to the Mill!" In later years when I ran some very large airports, I think that sense of responsibility rubbed off on me because I used to hang up and say "Polly, I gotta go to the airport!"



Elwin- great grandfather, Karl- grandfather, Earl- father and baby Walter Houghton

In Memory

By Lauren Jane Wilder

It is with sadness and regret; we announce the passing of the following community members.

Cecilia Grover (92), Woodstock class of 1940, was a member of the Women's Army Corps (WACS), worked at Boston Army Base and the Department of Agriculture in Woodstock. She was a dedicated fan of the Boston Red Sox, Boston Celtics, a resident of Bridgewater and a member of the Bridgewater Historical Society.

Jonathan Paglia (38), Woodstock class of 1993, worked on the Debevoise farm, Bently's, Prince and Pauper, Casey's Caboose and the Foundry. He played football, basketball and softball. Jonathan was a resident of Killington.

Jonathan (Jack) Maxham (65), Woodstock graduate, New Hampshire Technical College graduate, served in the Army Reserves, worked on the family farm and Granite State Electric. He enjoyed sugaring, working with oxen, hiking, traveling and the Red Sox. Jack was a resident of Pomfret.

Carroll Earle (85) Korean War Vet, drove school bus, delivered sawdust, worked for Putnam Construction, U.S. Postal carrier and was a dairy farmer. He enjoyed sugaring, skiing, skating, dancing and the Red Sox. Carroll was a resident of Bridgewater Corners.

Wilbur Putnam (76), a Bridgewater resident, worked for Putnam Construction, He enjoyed hunting, fishing, driving back roads and four- wheeling. He was a member of the Bridgewater Grange and a member of the Bridgewater Historical Society.

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In Memory

continued from page 5

Pauline (Polly) Sawyer (91), Woodstock class of 1940, attended Skidmore College and Katherine Gibbs. She worked at the Bridgewater Woolen Mill, and as a legal secretary for James Wright Esq. and Niles, Johnson and Gibbs. Polly enjoyed skiing, golf, gardening and nature. She was a member of Woodstock Ski Runners, a Girl Scout leader and a member of the Bridgewater Historical Society.

Vaughan Taylor (101), was a graduate of Wentworth School for Architecture, and resident of Bridgewater Corners. He worked as a timekeeper, during the building of the Bridgewater Post Office and as a carpenter. Vaughan served on the Board of Education for Woodstock, and was one of the first contributors to the Bridgewater Historical Society.

Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

After the presentation on the Mill at the Senior Center, Barbara Condict of Woodstock stopped by the BHS to show us her Bridgewater Woolen Mill blanket. The blanket was given to her husband, "Chubb" Condict, as a thank you present from the Bridgewater Congregational Church for his serving as an interim minister there in the 1960's. (Some of you will remember him as principal of the high school.)

The pattern is completely different than any others we have seen. Ernest Kendall saw the pattern and shared the following information with us.

"The fabric design was one of about three different patterns (in a variety of colors, including blues and yellows) that the mill produced in the late 1950's-60's that were done to appear like Scandinavian knitted winter sweater patterns. These were some of the more

difficult designs done for a production loom and were very successful. My father was pretty proud of these designs. However, they were quickly copied by other lower cost producers for several years.

These fabrics were originally sold to the fashion trade for lightweight shirt jackets, skirts or winter coat liner material. Due to its popularity, some light weight blankets or throws were made for local special orders although it was not really designed and finished as a blanket material."



Membership

Bridgewater Woolen Mill employees circa 1900



As many organizations are experiencing declining membership we are exceptionally proud that our membership is growing. BHS added 14 new families in 2014, bringing us to a total of 114 families.. The first Annual Fund was a huge success with over \$3000 donated. Thank you for your support which allows us to continue our programs, exhibits and maintain our collections and historic school house.

Please consider renewing your 2015 membership. The form is page 7 of this newsletter.

Membership Renewal Form

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 January. The Society depends on dues and fundraising 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**

MEMBERSHIP IS JANUARY TO DECEMBER (calendar year)

____ INITIAL ____ RENEWAL _____ DATE

LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP AMOUNT

____ STUDENT \$3.00

____ SENIOR (age >62) \$6.00

____ INDIVIDUAL \$10.00

____ FAMILY \$20.00

____ CONTRIBUTING \$50.00

_____ DONATION

**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**

Name: _____

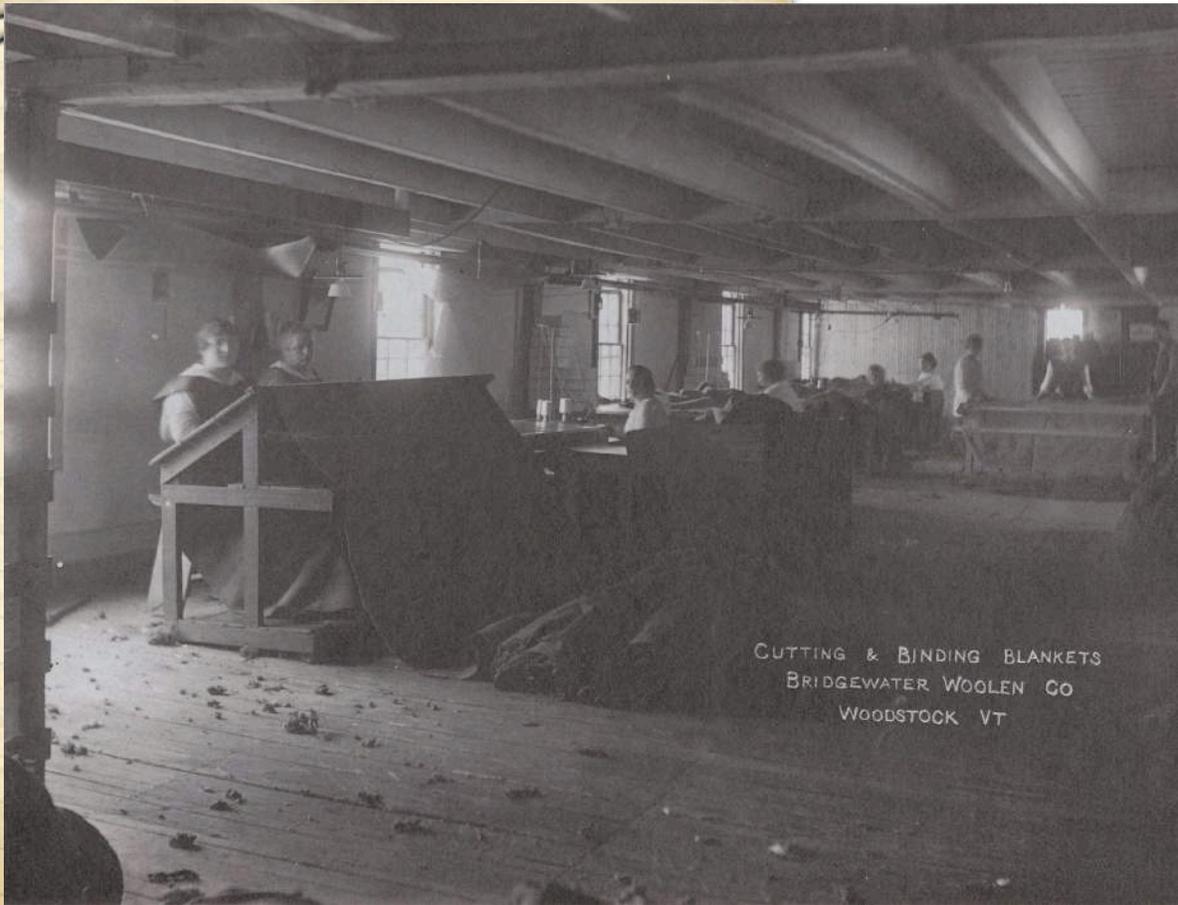
Family Member please include names of children (ages < 19): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email address: _____

1/28/2014



CUTTING & BINDING BLANKETS
BRIDGEWATER WOOLEN CO
WOODSTOCK VT



Nov 2014

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