

# BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

May 2015

Issue No. Seven

### Upcoming Events

11 Loomis Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

**H**  
Vermont  
Humanities  
Because Ideas Matter

802.262.2626  
vermonthumanities.org

### Inventive Vermonters: A Sampling of Farm Tools and Implements

Sunday, May 17  
2:00 p.m.

Old Red Brick Schoolhouse  
12 North Bridgewater Road  
Bridgewater



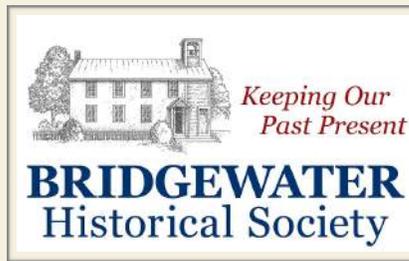
Vermonters have always been inventive, especially when it comes to agricultural innovations. Time- and labor-saving inventions that ease the hard work of farming have always been important in our rural, agricultural state. In this illustrated lecture, retired engineer Paul Wood presents a sampling of farm tools, implements, and artifacts invented or produced in Vermont, examining their use, uniqueness of design, and the often fascinating stories of the inventors themselves.

Free, accessible to people with disabilities, and open to the public.

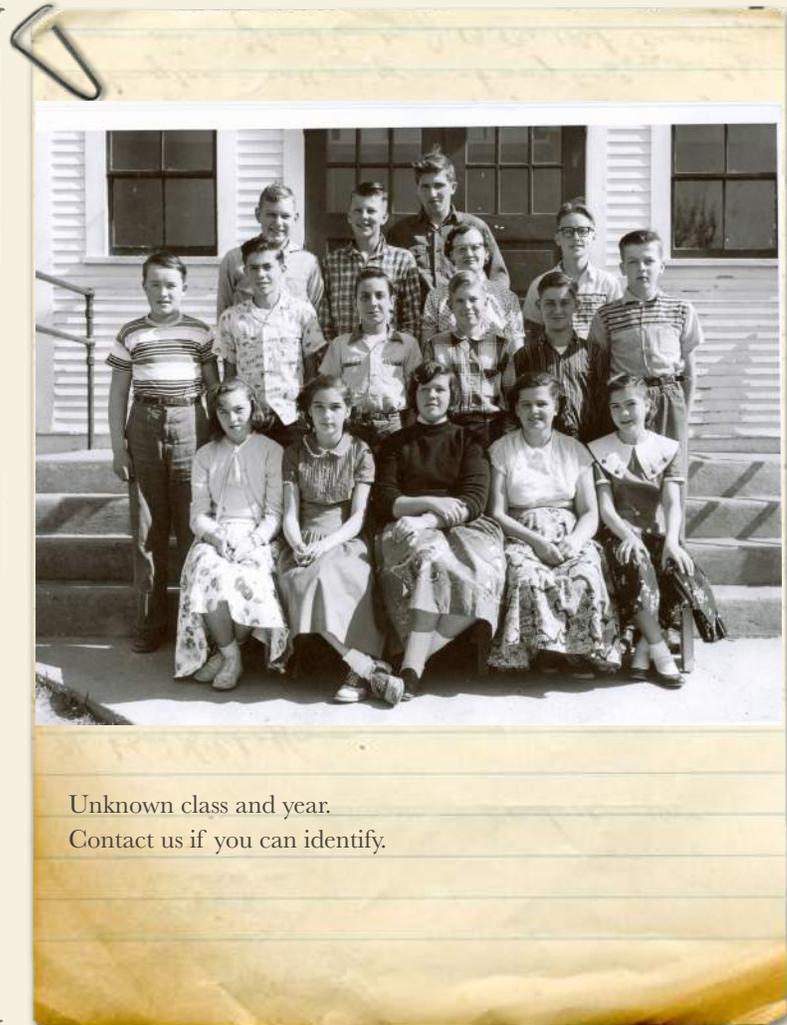
Contact Jeannette Sawyer at (802) 672-3745 or [bridgewaterhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:bridgewaterhistoricalsociety@gmail.com) for more information.

A Vermont Humanities Council event\*  
hosted by the Bridgewater Historical Society

\*Under grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the NEH or the Vermont Humanities Council.



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



Unknown class and year.  
Contact us if you can identify.

### OFFICERS

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

### DIRECTORS

Susanne Weldon  
Phoebe Standish  
Alice Pagalia  
Audrey Putnam  
Lauren Jane Wilder  
John Atwood  
Olive Greenough  
Nancy Kendall  
Bill Hoyt

## Letter From the President

Polly Timken, President

2015 is off to a good start. It seems as though the heavy snow and cold temperatures caused some to stay indoors and clean out their closets. We have received a wonderful collection of material from the Needham family. Photo albums, scrapbooks and uniforms are only part of the trove that Ruth's daughters brought in. We hope you will be able to stop in soon and see them.

Jeannette Sawyer attended a workshop on textile preservation so we can begin the work of proper storage and display of the quilts, blankets, dresses and uniforms. Any help in this field would be greatly appreciated. Jeannette and I both attended a workshop hosted by the Vermont Arts Council on how to apply for one of their Cultural Facilities Grants. This will be important when we are planning for the future of our building and its exhibits.

We are looking forward to our first speaker of the season, Paul Wood. We hope that during his talk on Vermont made farm tools we will be able to collectively find out more about the Self Acting Cheese Press that is now in our collection.

The closing of the Bridgewater Village School brings out many memories from our membership. It is comforting to know that because of our enthusiastic members, we have been given quite a few class photographs and other memorabilia. It is an important reminder of how the Historical Society has become the "go to" place for our history's safe keeping. This issue of our newsletter honors the bittersweet moment of not only the 100th anniversary of the village school building but also its closing. We will miss the vibrancy the school brought to village life and look forward to the students' success in Pomfret.

## Volunteers Needed

Wondering what goes on at BHS? There is plenty, but not without your help.

We also would greatly appreciate **two hours** of your time this summer. One Saturday, two hours, Internet service available. The possibility of doing research as well as keeping our doors open to the public is waiting. No advanced degrees necessary.

Sue Kancir and Jeannette Sawyer are ready to launch the oral history project. Volunteers are needed and tech support would be helpful.

Don't want to do "schoolwork"? Then maybe helping us preserve our **Textile Collection** is more up your alley. We have been given some very old dresses and quite a few military uniforms. We will need help in creating proper storage and displays for them.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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

Or, call me, Polly Timken at 802-280-5262



Gift from John Atwood



Alice Griggs, teacher at Pleasant View School in North Bridgewater. She later married Roger Thompson. Gift from Needham family.

# Bridgewater Village School 100 Years

The Bridgewater Village School building was built 100 years ago, opening in September, 1914, with approximately 50 students, aged 5-18.

The first village schoolhouse, now the home of the Bridgewater Historical Society, was built in 1806 and renovated in the 1840's with a second floor added. After the students moved into the new building in 1914, the old building was used as Town Offices with an apartment upstairs.

At issue in 1915 was the necessity of standardizing textbooks. None of the twelve teachers making up the District had graduated from "Normal School" (teachers' college). Five were graduates of a teacher training course, and ten were high school graduates. Each school received a map of the US that year and some books and pictures were donated by John Cotton Dana.

In 1948 the Village Schoolhouse was renovated and two rooms added. The basement was enlarged and has been used for Town Meetings ever since.

During the 1950's the Bridgewater Corners School was used as overflow whenever the Village School could not accommodate all of its primary students.

On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school, in 1964, there were 103 students. Work on the building included installing fluorescent lights in one room and hopes of new lights in another room the following year. Floors were sanded and re-sealed in two rooms, thus finishing all the floors in the building.

The big issue in 1964 was the discussion of re-districting the Supervisory Unions. One member of each town was to study plans for new districts! The PTA was thanked for providing a hot lunch program and for helping to pay for telephone service (one telephone). The PTA and the Lions Club purchased a 16mm sound projector and screen and the PTA installed a television! One of the first to have permanent TV service in the area. The students raised money for a slide projector.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1989 there were 87 students, 5 full time teachers, two part time teachers and two teachers' aids.



In 1991, David Bielman designed the final addition of three offices and a multipurpose room.

The Bridgewater Village School has served our students well for the past 100 years.



Bridgewater Village School, 1914

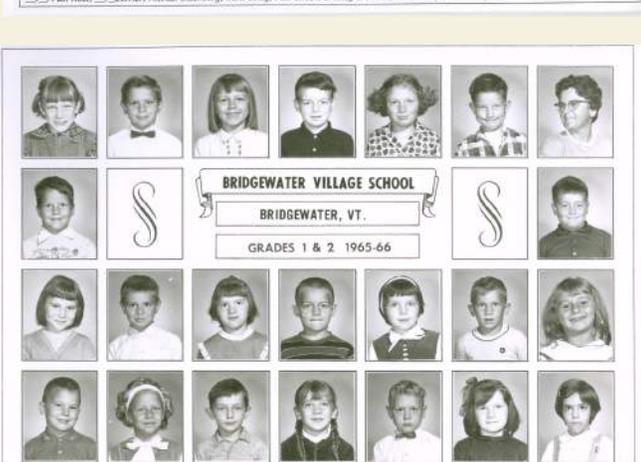
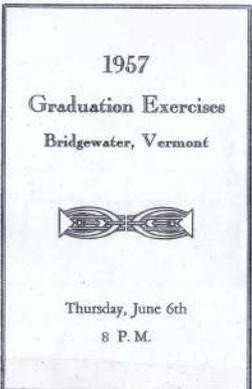
# Class Photos



BRIDGEWATER VILLAGE SCHOOL 1942-1943- Front row RT to LT-Ronald Greenough, Penny Anthony, Linda Gerritt, Sandra Robinson, Karl Goodrow, Hub Anthony, Marilyn Brown, Ruth Bellmer, Barbara Young, Edith Woodard, Alan Poirer, Mary Weston. Back row: J. Carrier, Ronald Harris, Paul Hobb, J. Carrier, Michael Oldenburg, Irene Coffey, Paul Smith, Bradley Bronwell, Louis Phalco, Mac Sharp. Teacher: Miss Doris Bole



Front Row L-R/Louis McLaughlin, Barbara McArthur, Mary Weston, Edith Woodard, "Karna" Greenough, Ruth Bellmer, Ruth Bellmer, Penny Anthony and Louis Phalco. 2nd Row Audrey Grogg, Doug Grogg, David Wood, Robert Houston, Yvonne, Susan Brown, Yvonne. Top Row Fred Wood, Paul Hobb, Jenny Wood, and Allen Phalco



Alston Studios, Inc.



Alston Studios, Inc.

# Autograph Books

The sun is stronger now and with it come memories of spring years ago at the Woodstock High School. There was a tradition of classmates handing autograph books back and forth to each other to record notes and poems to those graduating or just moving up. The Historical Society is fortunate to have a few of these books. They are valuable for a couple of reasons. Some of them provide a list of the classmates and teachers and where they were from. They also provide a very human side to what otherwise would be just a class roster. The humor of those days, illustrated through jokes and poems, shows how close the students had grown to each other. Times were hard during the Depression but these vignettes show an eternal optimism and enthusiasm for the future.



John Atwood, Jr. gave us his mother's book. Lucile A. Bigelow was in the class of 1936. Here are some of the poems in her book.

"Yours until the Catbird has kittens"

"Down by the River, carved in a rock, three little words, Forget me Not"

"Yours til the Cowslip slips"

You may wander the wide world o'er,  
You may meet with good and great,  
But don't forget the friend you met in the  
Old Green Mountain State."

"They strolled down the lane in silence, The sky was studded with stars. They reached the gate in silence, he opened for her the bars.  
She raised her soft eyes to him, there's nothing between them now. For he was only the hired man and she the Jersey cow."

Some excerpts from other autograph books:



"Roses are red violets are blue,  
Girls out of high school are ready  
for \_\_\_\_\_ College"

"I have seen houses without chimneys and boats without sails,  
But the coldest thing in winter is a shirt without a tail."

"Kiss me cute, Kiss me cunning,  
Kiss me quick cuz Daddy's coming."

"Bite off more than you can chew, Then chew  
it. Plan for more than you can do, then do it.

"Sit on the tack of  
success and rise quickly"

Hitch your wagon to a star, Hang on tight and  
there you are."

# School Days

By Walter Houghton

My teacher was Ruth West and she had also been my dad's teacher at the Corners School. It was one room, 28 kids, all eight grades. Sort of like modern day experimental school programs. The big kids lugged water from the spring up back, looked after the young ones and you never talked back to Mrs. West or that

would get you a trip to the woodshed. Today, what went on out there would be a capital offense, but I don't remember anyone not obeying her the second time!

By fourth grade, I moved down to Bridgewater Village School at my mother's insistence. Through her interest she became a School Board member and served the town in that

capacity for several years. It was a good move and it broadened my sphere of influence. Made good friends with Bridgewater kids like Jeannette Perkins, Nelson Pinney, the Leavitt and Taylor girls. I got my first kiss from one of them, but for the life of me I can't remember which one! My closest friend was Ernest Kendall. Ernie was the smart one in our class but we always had something going on. Because he was already a Red Sox fan I think I rooted for the Indians!



1947, all grades-Bridgewater Corners school with Ruth West teacher



1951, grades 5&6 Bridgewater Village school with Nellie Leavitt teacher

## Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

One of the more unique items we now have in our collection is a "Self Acting Cheese Press", donated by the Woodstock History Center. This cheese press was designed and patented on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1837 by Sullivan White, of Bridgewater. Jeannette Sawyer unearthed what little we know about him. There were several Whites living on the North Bridgewater Road. The 1860 census shows a 53 year old farmer, 'Sullivan' White, living in Bridgewater and married with three children. He would have been 30 years old when he patented his cheese press. Some of the family is buried in the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery.

The Self Acting Cheese Press was unique in that it used the weight of the cheese, amplified by levers, to press the liquid out of the cheese curds. This was different than the standard method of a screw having to be turned repeatedly to press the curds.

On Sunday, May 17, at 2:00 PM, we will host Paul Wood from the Vermont Humanities Council. He will talk on Vermont Made Farm Tools and Implements, including the cheese press.



Self Acting  
Cheese Press

100th Anniversary T-Shirt



Gift from the Bridgewater Village School

## Membership



Bridgewater Village School  
Class of 1948

BHS is 101 families strong. Thank you to the 94 families who have renewed their membership and welcome to the 7 new families. Your membership dues and donations will allow us to paint our historic building this summer.



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