

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

November 2015

Issue No. Eight

Upcoming Events

ANNUAL MEETING

BHS Annual Meeting
December 1st
6pm short meeting
Election of Executive Board Members & Officers
6:30 program-Helen Mango
“700 Million Years of Mountain Building
A Geological History”



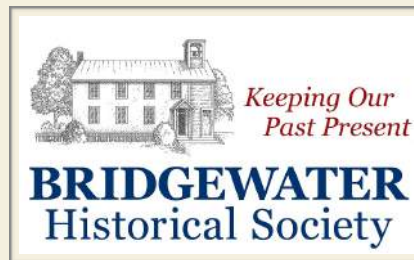
Dr. Helin Mango
Castleton University

OFFICERS

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

DIRECTORS

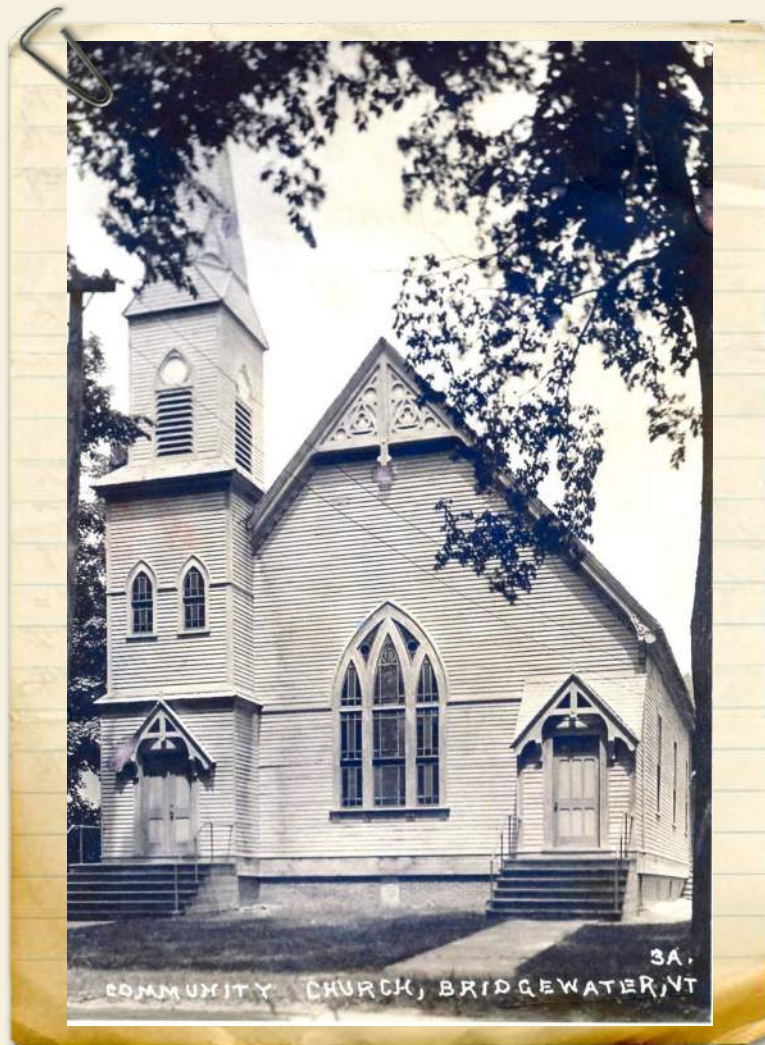
Susanne Weldon
Phoebe Standish
Alice Pagalia
Audrey Putnam
Lauren Jane Wilder
John Atwood
Olive Greenough
Nancy Kendall
Bill Hoyt



Monthly meetings

held last Tuesday
of each month at
6:30 p.m.

Old Brick School House
12 North Bridgewater Road
www.bridgewaterhistory.org



Letter From the President

Polly Timken, President

Autumn is here and will be gone too soon. Time to reflect on the past season and all that has happened. Summer was filled with genealogical inquiries. Jeannette Sawyer fielded these and was rewarded with a project involving Gordon Tuthill and Carol Tandy. They succeeded in finding the cellar hole for the Davis/Morrison family. The project then evolved into restoring the headstone of nine-year-old Marguerite Davis, in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. As a thank you for Jeannette's help, Carol came down to Bridgewater from Williston, VT. and volunteered her time cataloguing school photographs. We are very grateful to them both for their work.

In September we hosted Ernest Kendall, who shared his memories of the Mill with a standing room only crowd. Tales emerged of long forgotten events. This talk served as a catalyst for our oral history project, led by Jeannette Sawyer and Sue Kancir. To date they have interviewed Henry Biathrow and Ed Stevens and Kathleen and Pauline Carr. October's program on log drives on the Ct. River, by Jere Daniell was another huge success.

The Annual Fund was a great success. With your help, we succeeded in raising \$3,226.00. We greatly appreciate all of the support shown by everyone. The funds allowed us to paint the North, South and East sides of the old brick school house and some repointing was done.

The final talk of the year will be given by Helen Mango, from Castleton University on "700 Million Years of Mountain Building", a laymen's history of the geology of the area. This will be held during our Annual Meeting on Tuesday, December 1st. There will also be election of 3 Board of Directors and 3 Officers positions.

We wish you a short winter and the best of health and look forward to next season when we open our doors with an exhibit pertaining to "H2O The Power of Water in Vermont History". This is the theme for the Vermont History Expo that we will participate in at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds in June.

Congregational Church 150 year Celebration

One Hundred and Fifty Years
of the Bridgewater, Vermont
Community Congregational Church



Committee of Arrangements
Mrs. Aldie L. Manley, Chairman
Benjamin Needham Mrs. Edith Furman
Glenn Woods

WEEK OF DECEMBER 19, 1943

Sunday School at 9.30
Morning Worship at 10.45
Hymns
Rev. Chauncey A. Adams, Secretary of the Vermont Congregational Conference, will give the sermon.
At 6.30 there will be a Social Hour at the church with lunch served by the Ladies' Aid Society. A cordial invitation is extended to all friends of the church.
At 7.30 there will be the Anniversary Service with special program and an address by Rev. J. Greydon Brown, D.D., of Rutland.
Wednesday at 7.00 p. m. Young People's meeting.
Thursday at 7.30 the regular choir practice.
Next Sunday, Dec. 26, at 7.30 p. m., a large group of children and youth will present a Christmas pageant with assistance of the choir and minister.
The minister takes this occasion to wish a joyful Christmas and a useful and happy 1944 to all our people, for God still rules and remembers each of us.

SUNDAY EVENING AT 7.30

Prelude: Electric guitar, Donald Furman, and organ
Processional: Hymn 58 (three verses); congregation rises at second verse and joins in singing
Invocation: Dr. Chauncey A. Adams
Duet: Frank and Albert Blanchard
A paper by Mrs. Pearl Taylor concerning the church through the past 150 years
Men's Chorus
Scripture Reading: Re
Choir Anthem
Prayer: Dr. J. Greydon
Response by Choir
Offering
Men's Chorus
Hymn 531
Address by Dr. Brown
Hymn 73 (second time)
Benediction by the M
Postlude Music

donated by:
donated by Edith Blanchard Osmer



Bridgewater Churches



Bethany Mennonite Church
Postcard by Fred Mueller

USA Today recently had results of Gallup's Annual "State of the States" survey. Part of the survey included the percent of individuals who attend religious service every week. Vermont, where 17% of resident say they attend religious services weekly was the lowest percentage in the country. Despite the states' low percent, Bridgewater has been able to maintain 3 of its 4 churches, illustrating the interest and devotion of our residents to places of worship. We at the Bridgewater Historical Society are happy to be of help in preserving some of the history of these groups.

History of Bridgewater's places of worship:

Union Church (Universalism)

In 1799 a Universalist convention was held at Woodstock with ministers Hosea Ballou, Walter Ferris and William Farwell preaching the doctrine. Nathaniel Stacy (Bapt New Salem Mass 1779) a young man interested in Universalism visited the convention. He recalls in his "Memories" that he found also attending the convention Benoni Shaw, together with his four brothers, all members of what was known as the "New Light Congregational Church" with Seth Ransom as their pastor. "When Ballou preached in Bridgewater, services were sometimes held in Union Church at Bridgewater Corners. It was located on the hill road which was the main road in those years. He preached at the home of Barnabas Thompson, also in the school house which stood not far from the Thompson home in the north part of town."

"Years passed by and the Universalists decided to build a church at the Village. When it was ready to dedicate, announcements to that effect were made by the Universalists newspaper the Watchman.

Unfortunately the church was lost to a fire February 10, 1881.

excerpts from "Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976"
Compiled by Gladys S. Adams

Bethany Mennonite Church

In the spring of 1952, the Moyer, Kulp and Schmell families from Blooming Glen, Pennsylvania moved to Bridgewater Corners, Vermont. At the request of the Mission Board of the Franconia Conference of Mennonites, they hoped to establish a new church in Bridgewater Corners. The Mennonites then in Vermont amounted to barely a handful; a few met for worship at churches in Andover and Bartonsville. But the Moyers, Kulp, and Schmells believed in the Christian tradition of spreading the teachings of Jesus, a practice re-energized among the Mennonites by a revivalist movement in the mid-twentieth century.

Vermonters in
Bridgewater and

Plymouth were not completely unfamiliar with the denomination's practices and beliefs. After World War II, Mennonites traveling through the area noted a dearth of open, flourishing churches, a circumstance they attributed to tepid community support and a shortage of pastors returning to Vermont after the war. As a trial undertaking in 1947, the group ran two-week-long vacation Bible Schools for children in seven central Vermont communities. Their door-to-door solicitations for students were fruitful. After five years of successful summer Bible Schools, the Franconia Mission Board bought a building and six acres located a few hundred feet south of the Ottauquechee River on Route 100A in Bridgewater Corners. The structure, Wilmer Schmell wrote in his memoirs, was "a large private home with porches and columns on two ends and looked like a public building." Vermonter Josiah Josselyn built it in the mid 19th century, probably in 1840, from lumber milled around the corner, on property that he bought from his father-in-law. It was a big, rambling house, with a barn attached at the rear. When the Mennonites bought the home in 1952, the seventeen-room building was in need of repair and renovation. Its only running water came from two pitcher pumps. The lone bathroom was supplemented with an indoor privy in the barn end of the building. The five-holer "was carrying togetherness a little too far," wrote Schmell.

A group of volunteers left Blooming Glen after an evening Easter service and arrived in Vermont the following morning to begin work to convert part of the structure into a meeting house, and the rest into a parsonage. The church's pastor, Abram Landis, and his family moved in nine weeks after the work began. The first service was held on June 29, 1952. One hundred and fifty six attended the dedication in July. The Kulp, Moyers, and Schmells, along with Landis, chose the name "Bethany Mennonite" for the new church, after the place outside of Jerusalem that Jesus reputedly visited and from where he is said to have ascended into heaven.

The vacation Bible School continued to be popular, its average enrollment increased from 80 or 90 per session to nearly 200 when combined with the summer schools of the Bridgewater Congregational and Center Churches. Bethany Mennonite Sunday services usually drew between 60 and 100. The three Bethany Mennonite founding families remained in Vermont for decades, carving out a role for their church in the religious community and inscribing the local landscape with the marks of their perseverance and singular work ethics. "We made many mistakes and learned a lot," wrote Schmell of the group's endeavor in Vermont, and, he added, they grew "to love and to appreciate Vermont and its people.

From article that appeared in Vermont Standard 1/27/11 by Laura Power

Bridgewater Churches

Second Advent Church/Oak Chapel

From 1843 to 1867 the Bridgewater Center Adventists probably held meetings at the school house and it was here on March 16 1867 that plans were made to build their house of worship. A committee of Elisha P. Perkins, Sr., Chairman; Judson Y. Briggs, Secy.; and Charles C. Bugbee, E. P. Perkins and Alfred B. Gillet as Trustees, was chosen. The church was dedicated Feb 1 1868 with Elder G. W. Stetson officiating.

Tent meetings and revivals were held and converts were baptized by complete immersion in the North Branch. Curious folks who wanted to watch climbed onto the roof of the covered bridge and during the actual baptism onlookers were known to call out "Dip him again, he needs it."

In June 1886 the following was recorded in the town records by George E. Smith, Town Clerk:

Advent Christian Society, Bridgewater, Vermont, June 23 1886

We, the subscribers, associate ourselves together as a corporation under the law of the state of Vermont to be known by the name of the Advent Christian Society of Bridgewater.

In 1891 trustees Alfred B. Gillett, Chauncey Temple and Albert Dinsmore were charged with keeping the meeting house in good repair and - to give right of way 'by boot or team' to Mr. Barrows and Charles Hathaway. In 1899 Z. Churchill donated a bell for the church.

Records available show there was a busy Sunday School here from 1903 to 1906. By 1911 the forty remaining members were widely scattered and it was decided that the Advent Society of Bridgewater Center would disband. However, those members who lived at the Center and vicinity continued to hold services whenever possible. Elisha P. Perkins, for one, was constantly on the alert for some evangelist who would come and preach at Oak Chapel.

Christmas 1915 - The school children from Chateaugay, Dailey Hollow, Bridgewater Hill and Briggs gathered at the church at Briggs filling it to overflowing. Some children walked three miles to church and three miles back home and it was a dark night. After the regular program of recitations and songs, Supt. E. V. Perkins announced a surprise in the way of a big box of books and toys from John C. Dana of Newark NJ and a box each from Mrs Laura Billings Lee and Dr Charles L. Dana of New York.

In July 1933 Mr and Mrs Elisha P. Perkins presented a framed statement of a brief history of the church which now hangs behind the pulpit.

About 1954 the Assemblies of God began holding church services at Oak Chapel under the direction of Rev. Harry Snooks. This denomination continued at Oak Chapel until 1970 and was later supervised by Rev Earl French and Rev Earl Hyzer.

From 1971 to 1975 the Church of Christ held services at Oak Chapel with George and Richard Merrill in charge.

excerpts from "Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976"

Complied by Gladys S. Adams

Bridgewater Congregational Church

January 1, 1793 marks the official date of the beginning of the Congregational Society in Bridgewater. Services were held in the North Bridgewater Schoolhouse. "The North Bridgewater Congregationalists were noted for unity and peace." John Ransom was ordained pastor in 1795. Tithing men were elected at Town meetings prior to 1800. It is felt that many of the North Bridgewater parishioners are buried in the North Bridgewater cemetery.

Between 1816 and 1897, despite the lack of pastors, services were conducted. A survey in 1844, suggested the Society establish the gospel in the Village. The North Bridgewater congregation opposed outside interference, not many in the Corners were interested; but in the Village a dozen people responded positively. The North Bridgewater Congregational Society moved to the Village. Meetings were thought held during this period at the Meeting House.

The Congregational Church was built in 1879 by William C. Bugbee, contractor. The dedication occurred September 2, 1880. Later in the year, the 650-pound bell was placed in the belfry. The bell is still ringing 136-years later.

In 1944, improvements were achieved with a hall and kitchen. Following WWII the church retained resident ministers. After 1965, there were lay preachers and temporary clergy. A long serving pastor, Pam Lucas resigned in 2000. Our current pastor, Beverly Anderson, has been with us since 2003. Her services are shared with the Sherburne United Church of Christ.

The Original name was the Bridgewater Community Congregational Church. In 1957, the Church merged with the Evangelical Reformed Church becoming a part of that denomination. In December 1997, a vote to officially accept the name, "The Bridgewater Congregational Church/United Church of Christ" was accepted.

The Church has struggled for years to meet expenses. Major problems addressed need of a furnace, oil tank, replacement of the well pump, interior/exterior painting, and enlargement of the kitchen. Loans were taken to help defray costs.

By 2013, due to an aging population, higher expenses, and less income it was obvious the church was facing tough decisions. A consultant, Reverend James Thomas from the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ was invited to discuss possible options. Close. Sell. Involve the community. He suggested community would rally around for a year but support would not last.

Continued from Page 6

Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

Our members and friends continue to keep us in mind when going through their attics. We have received a wonderful collection of clothing from Barbara Booth Williams. Her Aunt was Nellie Perkins and the clothing came from that house. Of particular interest is the wedding dress, beautifully made and of timeless design.



Paula Cram Arriaga visited this summer with Vern Cram and gave us one of Dr. Cram's medicine bags, complete with vials of powders and pills. Many of our members remember his visits, thereby leading me to presume that the products dispensed from the bag must have been successful!



We continue to be surprised and pleased that so many of you remember BHS when coming across items of historical interest. Our collection only grows with your help.



Bridgewater Village Church ledger 1891-1917



Where was this?

This sign has confounded us. The sign points to Barnard 2 miles to the right and Bridgewater 11 1/2 miles to the left. Does anyone have a thought on where it might have been hung?



Bethany Mennonite Founding Families July 1952
Moyer, Kulp, Detweiler, Landis & Schmell

Membership

BHS is 111 families strong. Welcome to the 11 new families who joined in 2015. Your membership dues and donations allow us continue our preservation of Bridgewater history. With that said, it is time to renew your 2016 membership. On page 7 of the newsletter is a renewal form. Please consider renewing your membership.

2016 Calendars available for \$10
email us if you would like one

Church

By Walter Houghton

From my earliest memories until I left town for the Air Force, Bridgewater Congregational Church was always an integral part of my life. There is a photo of the church being painted around 1946 and the little guy dressed in a sailor suit is me! Now in church sometimes if I close my eyes, my mind wanders back to that little church in Bridgewater. I can see Bessie Woods, Uncle Stim and Horace up there in the choir singing their hearts out. "My God I thank thee who has made the earth so bright!" I think it is on page 11 in the hymnal. Ben Needham ringing the bell every Sunday, Betty Ann playing the organ and Myrtle Adams before her. There's Burnside Holt, sitting in the back pew and Harold Perkins of course. I think of the pastors like Mr. Wells, Mr. Kraut, and Mrs. Cronk who all served so well over the years. And there were fun times there also, church suppers and the annual fireman's feast down in the church hall. I remember coming out one night absolutely stuffed and Pete Taylor remarked in his dry wit, "Well I guess I'll go home and have some crackers and milk!" I still crack up every time I think of that!



1946

What characters we had around town. When my Mom and Dad died I came to realize even more what a special place Bridgewater was. It was hard to distinguish between family and community. The outpouring of love and concern enveloped us. Of course my Mom was "Grandma" or "Aunt Ruth" to at least two generations of "Bridgewater Kids". And

Dad was the savior to everyone in town with a broken down car or piece of farm machinery. He worked his magic with the welder down in our garage and usually never took pay for it. Earle and Ruth honored us from the respect shown from the townspeople of Bridgewater for their lives.

Bridgewater Congregational Church

Continued from Page 4

Following the annual meeting of 2013, "It was decided and warned to hold a church meeting to include the Bridgewater community to discuss the future options of the church." Community members attended including from Bethany Mennonite and Oak Chapel. The community wanted the Church to remain open. Suggestions were made to send a letter to the community asking for advice and ideas. A dinner was planned with members of the community who devoted time and energy to help out. Members and non-members rallied to help the church. The group met weekly to look at ways to make the church more relevant to the community. It was

decided to update the cookbook. Bridgewater businesses advertised, helping to defray publishing costs. Members suggested having three foliage breakfasts. These were so well received the Church decided to have one breakfast a month from September through May. Suppers were restarted. The Fire Department hosts a ham and bean supper in the church hall. The Christmas bazaar is back on track.

I attended Sunday school and Vacation Bible School in the 1940s in this Church. As youngsters, Lorraine Knudsen and I performed a piano duet on stage in the church hall. I share this because people say you can never go back; but I beg to differ. My family left Bridgewater to seek employment elsewhere. After several years, we came

back as often as possible as there is no other place we would rather be. In 1994 and in 2003 when my parents passed away, it was this Church that saw us through our losses, just as they had when other family members had passed on before. "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome at the Bridgewater Congregational Church/UCC."

Karole A. (Thompson)Messier

Adams, Gladys S.

Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976
pgs. 27-30.

Taylor, Doris, Secretary. Reading at Rededication Program, July 14, 1946. Church Newsletter Notes from the Belfry. 1989-2000.

Full article can be found on the
BHS web site

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

Please renew today!

**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: _____

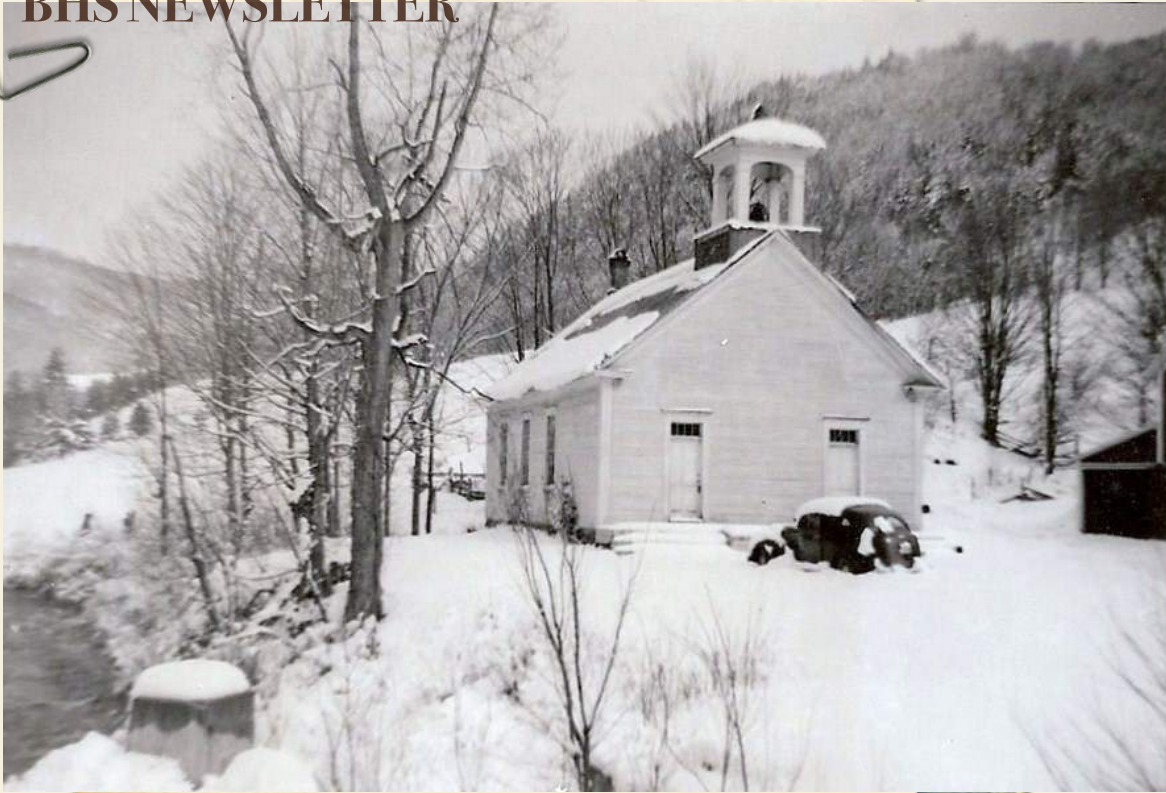
Family Member please include names of children (ages < 19): _____

Address: _____

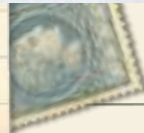
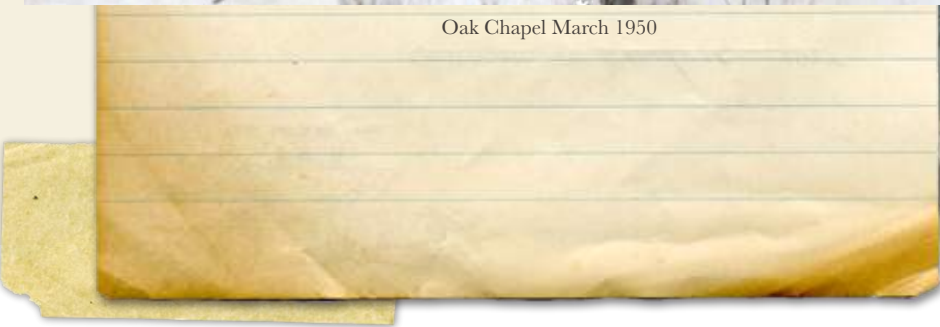
City/State/Zip: _____

Email address: _____

10/20/2015



Oak Chapel March 1950



Nov 2015

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