

# BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

May 2016

Issue No. Nine

### Upcoming Events

#### 1. Vermont Eugenics

Julia Purdy  
Sunday June 5th at 2pm

#### 2. Vermont History Expo

Saturday and Sunday June 18 & 19th

#### 3. Aviation in Vermont

Walter Houghton  
Sunday July 24 at 2pm

#### 4. Springfield Tool Industry

Jere Daniell  
Sunday October 2nd at 2pm

#### 5. BHS Annual Meeting

Sunday October 23 at 1pm.

#### 6. Geology of Vermont: What Lies Under Our Scenery and Soils?

Peter Thompson  
Sunday October 23rd at 2pm.

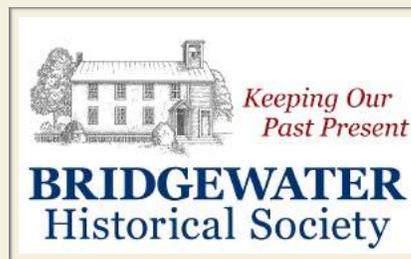
The **Old Brick School House** will be open to the public Memorial Day to Columbus Day Saturday 10am to 2pm

#### OFFICERS

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

#### DIRECTORS

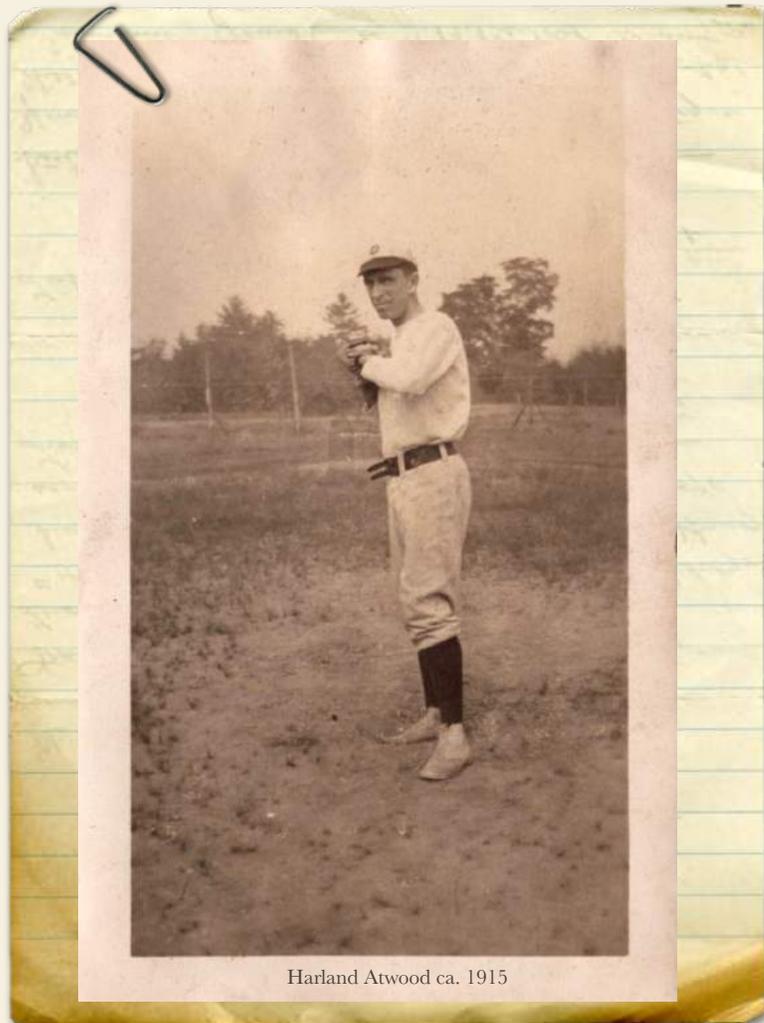
Susanne Weldon  
Phoebe Standish  
Alice Pagalia  
Audrey Putnam  
Lauren Jane Wilder  
John Atwood  
Olive Greenough  
Nancy Kendall  
Bob Kancir



#### Monthly meetings

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

Old Brick School House  
12 North Bridgewater Road  
[www.bridgewaterhistory.org](http://www.bridgewaterhistory.org)



Harland Atwood ca. 1915

## Letter From the President

Polly Timken, President

May has arrived, perhaps for the third or fourth time. Many days this winter were in the 50's and 60's. While everyone breathed a sigh of relief from heating bills, we certainly hope for good weather this summer and a strong tourist season.

The winter was spent scanning John Atwood's amazing photograph collection. The family took many photographs throughout five generations, providing quite a composite history of North Bridgewater.

Audrey Putnam, Jeannette Sawyer, Carol Tandy and Sue Kancir spent a great deal of time cataloguing the school photos and labeling as many students as they could. Some are posted on Facebook and have received a tremendous response.

Bob Kancir is spearheading a group to help with work on the Josselyn Cemetery. In addition to cleaning up the cemetery, information will be added to the current database.

The new Prosper Valley School 3rd Graders will be visiting the Old Brick Schoolhouse this spring. They are working on a wool program and will be visiting the Mill as well.

We are gearing up for the season with four speakers planned. (See Events) In addition to that we are preparing for our display at the Vermont History Expo in Tunbridge on June 18-19. We hope you are all able to come and visit our exhibit as well as the others from around the state. This year's theme is "H2O The Power of Water in Vermont History".

I look forward to seeing many of you in Tunbridge and at the Bridgewater Town Festival in August where we will have a display set up.

## Season Events

We have an exciting list of speakers this season. Programs will be **Sundays at 2pm.**

On **June 5th**, Julia Purdy, local historian from Rutland Town will talk about the eugenics movement in Vermont, whereby well-meaning reformers tried to "cleanse" the Vermont gene pool by a sterilization program aimed at the hill farmers, the indigent, and the "feble-minded." Not a pretty story, but one worthwhile revisiting. There are some interesting wrinkles the speaker will bring in, for example, the tie-in with the growing, state sponsored tourism industry of the 1920s-1930s.

Walter E. Houghton, Asst. Professor, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, will give a presentation on "Aviation in Vermont". It is the early history of how aviation started here with photographs of the old White River Airport, Lindbergh's landing at Springfield Airport and other historical stories. Walter also talks about the military aviation, including the formation of VT Air Guard and Vermont's role in the Cold War. Walt grew up in Bridgewater and has been interested and involved in aviation all his life. Join us on **July 24th** for Walter's presentation.

On **Oct. 2nd**, we will welcome back Jere Daniell, retired history professor from Dartmouth. Last year's presentation was a lively talk on the log drives of the Upper Valley. This year he will cover the Springfield Vermont machine tool industry. We look forward to hearing fascinating stories from the audience as well.

The featured speaker at our Annual meeting on **Oct 23rd** will be Peter J. Thompson, Affiliate Professor of Geology Earth Sciences, UNH, College of Engineering & Physical Sciences. He will talk about the big-picture patterns that have affected where the best agricultural lands are in Bridgewater including a brief description of the rock units. And of course he will cover something about gold. Peter grew on the family farm just east of Bridgewater Village.

# Bridgewater Baseball



Believed to be the first Bridgewater baseball team

## Red Sox/Woolen Mill Memories

In the late 1940s and 50s it was difficult being a Red Sox fan while working at the woolen mill (no small transistor radios, even if allowed/audible in the mill, nearly all day games, etc.). However my parents (Helen and Charles Kendall) developed a system to keep the mill workers (including my father) informed during important, late season, games

Living just across the road from the mill, my mother would listen to each game on our staticky radio and then place on the window ledges of our two dining room windows - an apple (Red Sox) or an orange (Yankees or other enemies) every time a run was scored. I fondly remember seeing employees frequently sticking their heads out of the second floor, spinning room windows to better see the score, and then disappearing to spread the word.

Considering how much my mother disliked listening to ball games on the radio, it was amazing how many years this went on.

Ernest Kendall

## BASEBALL NEWS

Baseball got plenty of coverage in the local newspapers.

### BRIDGEWATER.

#### BASEBALL TEAM ORGANIZED.

A baseball team has been organized in town, Hugh Copeland being manager. They are now in practice, having hired grounds of E. S. Curtis. The first game will be played with Hartland tomorrow on the home grounds:

Spirit of the age, volume, June 03, 1911,

Baseball was something country boys could play. Jenny Shurtleff's grandfather, Frank Shurtleff (b. 1883 or 1884) had a ball field (ca. 1900) in which neighborhood men participated. I've seen the field now fully grown to trees. It must have seemed a fresh sport in 1900!

John Atwood



The Kendall (plus Sharpe/Frechette) Mill House

## North Bridgewater School

By John Atwood

Children's education was important to the early settlers (history reviewed by Gladys Adams (Bridgewater, Vermont, 1976. pp. 80—97)). A state law of 1792 required dividing townships politically into school districts thus creating small well-knit communities whose students presumably lived within walking distance of the school. The North Bridgewater School (once known as Pleasant View School) was developed in District # 1 (of 12) in Bridgewater township indicated in *Beer's Atlas*.



North Bridgewater School (Pleasant View School) prior to renovation as a residence. Oral history suggests that this building replaced one that burned. Note vents to chemical toilets.

As with other one-room landscape-rooted school houses, the Pleasant View School building was modest in size, simple in design, utilized local materials, and lacked interior plumbing. Although much larger school buildings today appear very different, the function of the North Bridgewater School was similar. Although it served primarily as a teaching environment for elementary school children, it was also as a community center for meetings, performance of musicals, stage plays by local residents, community picnics and athletic competitions. But the North Bridgewater School also

served as a Congregational Church in summer, a function ignoring separation of church and state. One story indicates that the Billings family of Woodstock attended the church services in summer, arriving in one of the first automobiles to penetrate North Bridgewater. *Spirit of the Age* (July 5, 1902) also reports the establishment of a Sunday school. Oral history among local residents suggests that at one time soldiers rounded up remaining Indians bringing them to the school house to be taken to Indian Territory, but the origin of the Indians is lost as is the timing of the event.

Wood stoves supplied heating in winter. Gladys Adams relates that Kenneth Atwood, as a student living nearby, was hired for one season to start the fires before the teacher and students arrived for which he was paid five dollars. Students generally walked to school, including those living two miles away to the north, a grueling commute in winter as the roads were doubtfully rolled.

Funding the school was initially the responsibility of residents; later it was a town function. The teacher was contracted for a single term with modest payment that included board with a local residential family paid directly by the town. This became an important income source for farming families raising their own food with subsequent minimal cost to housing. The Woodstock newspaper *Spirit of the Age* (September 13, 1902; April 23, 1904; May 5, 1906) reports at least three local farms hosting the school teacher. If a teacher fell ill, the school closed owing to lack of substitutes. School enrollment was probably never high; *Spirit of the Age* (February 9, 1907) reports eleven students. In 1940 Pleasant View School contained 5 students distributed among as many grades taught by Alice Briggs (later Thompson), and it subsequently closed. Students that remained in the area were then tuitioned to other schools.

Continued on page 5

# North Bridgewater School

continued from page 4

The loss of the North Bridgewater School, as with so many schools with a single room, is due to the demise of hill farms with many children and the advent of automotive transportation creating larger communities and allowing the concentration of many more children in fewer but larger structures.

The early school buildings were simple but usually sturdy structures easily converted for other uses such as hunting camps, barns for hay storage, and residences, and at least five still exist in Bridgewater. The North Bridgewater School was converted in the early 1960's into the current residence.

Acknowledgment: gratitude is extended to Jennie Shurtleff of the Woodstock History Center for discussions about the North Bridgewater School.



Interior view of school ca. 1908 with students.  
Note the folding of the American flag.



The last school teacher,  
Alice Briggs, at her desk. Ca. 1940.



Interior view with front entrance. Ca. 1935. Note windows on left. Kenneth Atwood once indicated that schools were mandated to retrofit older window arrangements with windows placed only along one side in the belief that light from opposite sides hurt students' eyes.

## Josselyn Cemetery Project

By Bob Kancir

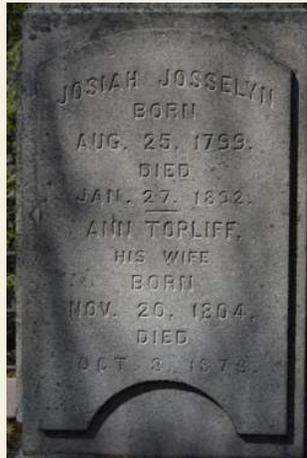
The Josselyn cemetery is a small private cemetery located behind the Bethany Mennonite Church and the Putnam home located on Route 100A.

Josiah Josselyn (1799-1892) married Ann Topliff and in 1840 built the house now occupied by the church. He later built the Grange hall next door in 1876. It was the first Vermont Grange hall built exclusively for a Grange.

Both he and his sons, Calvin and Andrew, held many Bridgewater town offices. A wonderful painting of Josiah hangs in the upstairs of the Grange hall. An interesting fact about Josiah's brother Robert, he was the private secretary for Jefferson Davis.

After permission from the Josselyn family, members of the Bridgewater Historical Society took on the project of cleaning up the old cemetery. To date, the leaf litter and debris has been cleaned up.

The moss was brushed from all the stones, luckily all are in good condition. The cemetery was mapped and all 15 stones were photographed.



The inscription information was entered into the cemetery database with plans to add it to the BHS website cemetery page. With warmer weather the metal railing will be painted. A copy of the information was sent to the Bridgewater Cemetery Commissioner and the Town Clerk.



## Membership

Membership is going strong. Thank you to all who have renewed their 2016 membership. We are 101 families strong.



Please help us identify year and players

## Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

One of the many pleasures of acting as a curator is the “discovery” of wonderful artifacts and books in our collection. When the Town agreed to lend us the items from the library in the Southgate House, some very old children’s books and textbooks were amongst the others. One in particular caught my eye and is a wonderful glimpse into what we seem to dismiss as an old and dusty era.

The Alphabet Of Flowers was published by Dean & Son’s in London, ca. 1850. The labor-intensive letterpress-printing job was hand colored, using a “pouchoir” stenciling method. The result is a startlingly brilliant publication that sold for six cents.

It is believed that Charlotte Charbonneau donated these children’s books to the Bridgewater Library in 1974.



### Needed

Does anyone have a dress form or a mannequin they are no longer using? We are in need of them to display the beautiful vintage clothing in our collection. Children’s or small adult are needed. Please contact us at [timkenp@msn.com](mailto:timkenp@msn.com).



Dresses needing to be displayed properly



1940's ?

Back row lt to rt:

1. Fred Southgate 2. Rob Southgate 3. ? 4. Charles Weeden 6. ? 7. ?

8. Bump Davis 9. Frazer.

Front row.

2. Dick Thompson

