

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November 2018

Issue No. Fourteen



cica. 1911

Monthly meetings

held last Tuesday
of each month at 6:30 p.m.
Old Brick School House
12 North Bridgewater Road
Bridgewater, VT 05034
www.bridgewaterhistory.org

Old Brick School will be open

2nd and 4th Saturdays

10am to 2pm

Memorial to Columbus Day

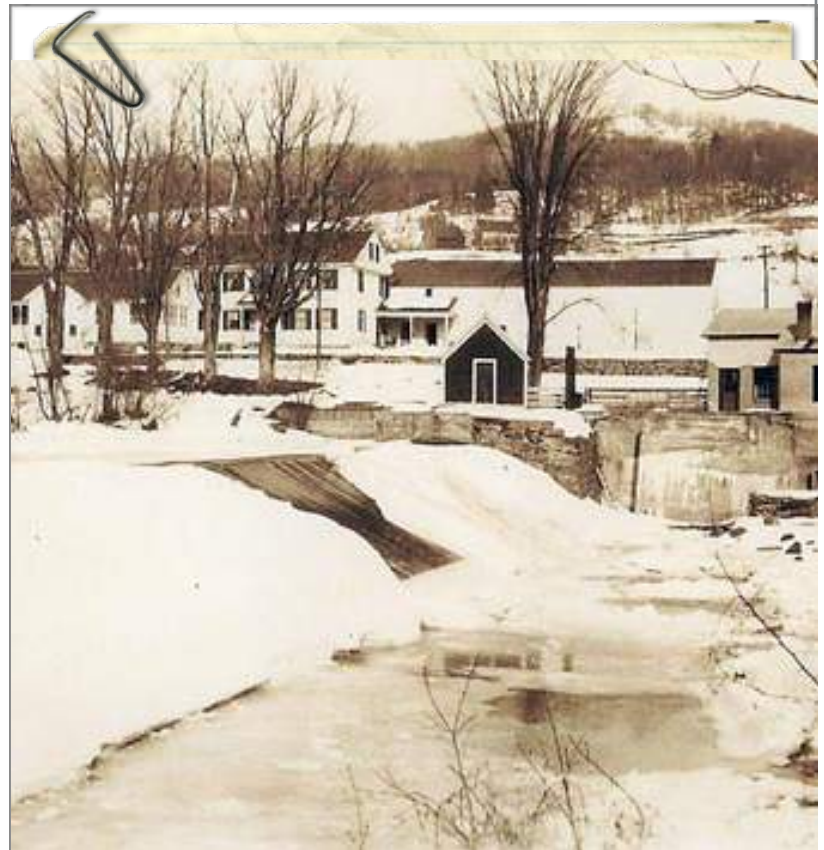
and by
appointment

PROGRAMS

2019 programs to be announced



Steve Butz program on
"The Shays Settlement Project in Vermont"



Bridgewater Village - Mill dam, power house, Southgate house,
3 barns and sheds

OFFICERS

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

DIRECTORS

Alice Paglia
Audrey Putnam
Althea Derstine
Gloria Martin
Bob Kancir
Bruce Maxham
Ernest Kendall
Laura Robinson

Letter From the President

By Polly Timken

This season's newsletter takes a different direction than former issues. Ernest and Nancy Kendall were interested in interviewing some of our members on topics that pertain to a more recent history of Bridgewater. They wanted to know about the Bridgewater Television Company (BTVC), and how it started. That topic started us talking not only to the Carr Family, but also the Robinson Family. The more we found out, the more we wanted to know. If any readers have more information to add to what we have, we would love to hear from you.

We had a very successful season with seven presentations. All of the events were very well attended, averaging 25 people. (See photos)

The Prosper Valley School visited in June and the children very much enjoyed seeing the Old Brick Schoolhouse and ringing the school bell.



Sandy Palmer gives advise on how to care for quilts old and new

We are planning on republishing "Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976" soon and would appreciate any additions or corrections from our membership. Tom Adams provided us with an interesting background of his mother Gladys, who wrote and produced the impressive work in 1978.

I would like to take this moment to thank our friends and members for their continued support. The Historical Society prides itself on remaining financially independent. Our membership is growing and the interest and very kind donations of wonderful objects exhibit the loyalty and pride in ancestry and ties to Bridgewater.



Gordon Tuthill speaking on the original charter of Bridgewater

Missed a program - no problem.
See our web site for a link to all
the wonderful presentations.

DO YOU REMEMBER the Bridgewater TV Company (BTVC)

BHS is trying to put together a history of the Bridgewater TV Company. If you have any information, stories or memorabilia, please share with us. The information below was gathered from discussions with Horace and Donald Carr, Jeannette Sawyer, and Sondra Stevens

In 1951, frustrated by poor, spotty and very limited reception on home televisions, local residents, including Ralph Robinson and Maurice Moxley, built an elevated antenna and extended a cable along Route 4 at the west end of village, from Ralph Robinson's to Dimmick Brook.

Later, in 1956, other Bridgewater residents formed their own TV cable company (BTVC), which then proceeded to place an antenna near the old town dump. (Up Gold Coast Road past the cemetery.) From there a cable was hung, with an amplified signal, down into the village and along Route 4 in both directions for individual home hookups.

Where available the cable was strung on existing CVPS and/or Contel power poles (with permission). Only Zenith or RCA sets were available back then.

Over the years the main BTVC antenna was moved at least two times to get better reception; possibly across the Ottauquechee, near Bridgewater Corners and then later back on Gold Coast Road, further up the hill. The antenna can still be found at its last location.

Horace Carr was president of the corporation. Other

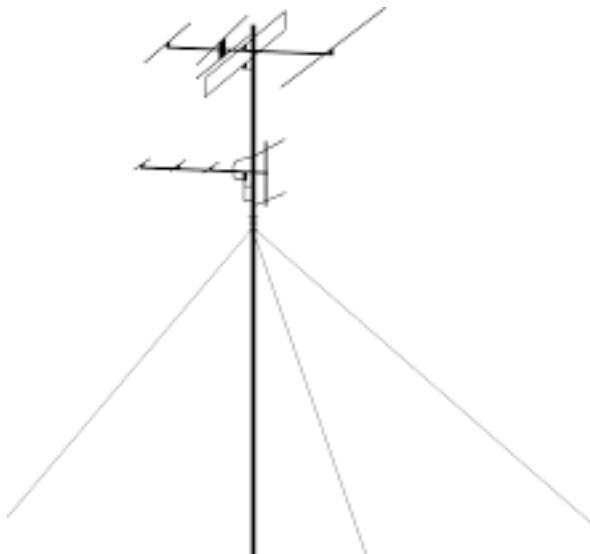
directors included Stillman Needham, Robert Sharpe, Jr., Colburn Greenough and Raymond Dawley. Marion Booth acted as treasurer some of the time. Harlan Booth, Pete Taylor and Hazen Merriam were also important contributors at various times.

Users paid a monthly fee, after hookup. Some residents considered the fees too expensive to use. At least one (unnamed) local resident figured out a way to 'borrow' the signal by placing a small antenna right next to the cable as it passed his house!

At its maximum extent, eleven miles of cable were strung, extending to Bridgewater Corners as far as the Humes Farm, and out Rt 100A, as far as the Earle Farm. In Bridgewater it was to extend across the river, to all existing hookups, and up the N. Bridgewater Road as far as the Three Sisters Farm.

The cable company continued in operation for over 34 years. In 1990 the corporation's 94 stockholders, (customers), voted to disband and have the cable system removed for salvage. In the final years, the proposed monthly charges were \$10.95 for a partial package, \$19.95/month for the regular package and approx. \$45/month for a full package, which included HBO. The corporation was dissolved in 1995. By this time other (satellite) signals reduced the need for a local antenna/cable hookup.

Ernest and Nancy Kendall



Who was Gladys Adams ?

Gladys Schielke Adams was born in Naugatuck, CT, in 1910. Her father was a cook who grew his own grapes and made his own wine. She met Charles Adams in high school. Charles had been born in Quechee, VT, in 1909, however his father Albert, a farmer, moved the family first to Rhode Island and then to Woodbury, near Naugatuck, CT.

The Adams family originated in England and can be traced back to Robert Adams, born in, Barton, St. David, England in 1474. Gladys became interested in her husband's family in the 1950s, as a result of the many trips they took from Connecticut up to Vermont. With the help of Ernest and Leon Adams, she started researching the family genealogy and looking in cemeteries to find the first Adams to settle in New England.

She found Eli Adams, born in New Ipswich, New Hampshire in 1759. He had enlisted with the New Ipswich Company in 1777 and served 70 days in the

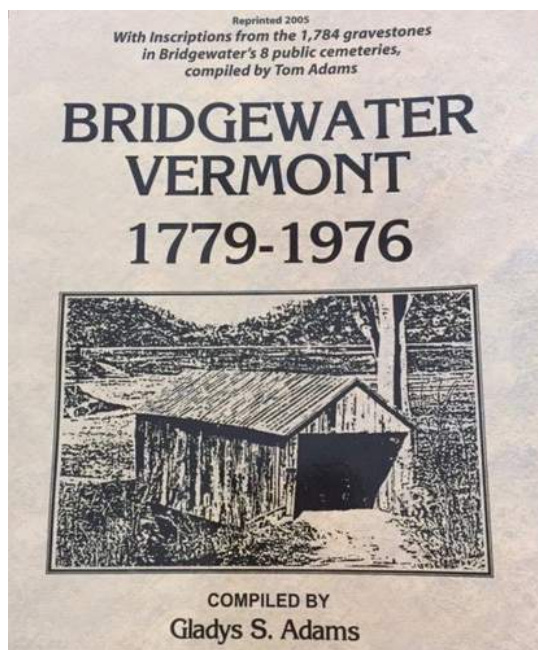
"Bennington Alarm," often cited as the turning point of the Revolution. He lived in Stoddard, NH, before moving to Springfield, VT. His son Cyrus, born in 1826, lived in Dailey Hollow.

Having completed the Adams family tree, Gladys went on to research and write "**A History of**

Bridgewater Vermont,"

publishing and marketing it in 1978. Gladys' book has been used frequently for research since its publication. Her son Tom photographed headstones in all of the cemeteries and published them in an updated edition in 2003.

Gladys went on to publish a history of Manchester, CT at the age of 86. She moved to Florida in 1998 and passed away in 2001 at the age of 91. We are extremely grateful for her research and publication of Bridgewater history.



Electric Utilities in Vermont

Bridgewater

Electric service in Bridgewater started at Bridgewater Woolen Company shortly after September 1908 when the Derby and Moore Electric Company of Lowell, Massachusetts, "installed an electric dynamo" to supply lights for the plant, the town's main employer, according to a history of the town compiled by Gladys Adams.

Bridgewater Electric Company was formed in February 1910 by D.W. Farnsworth, Harold Stevens, and Clifford Stevens, and "by January 1911, 23 houses in the vicinity of the village had been wired, "Ms. Adams reports in "Bridgewater, VT, 1779-1979." She noted that "service was later extended to the corners and the center"

Farnsworth had purchased the woolen company in 1907 and was president of that firm when he and the others set up the electric company.

Continued on page 6

Bridgewater gets TV

This article was told to Sondra Stevens, sister of Ralph L. Robinson, Jr., the best of his knowledge remembering back to approximately 1954, when Ralph, Jr. helped his dad and Maurice Moxley with this project. This project started after WCAX was started in September of 1954.

Our father, Ralph L. Robinson, Sr., had the idea that by using an antenna that was developed by WCAX in Burlington VT, and installing the antenna on some old water pipe next to his house, that maybe they could get some television reception. However, this didn't work out too good. After getting the pole up into the air, the pipe bent and broke in one of the joints and fell onto the house roof. Dad saw the humor of this, however Mother saw no humor in it.

Ralph, Sr. and Maurice thought they would like to see what the signal would be if they went up Richmond Hill, across Route 4 and the Ottauquechee River, in front of Ralph, Sr. house. Ralph, Jr. carried the battery. Ralph, Sr. and Maurice carried the amplifier and what other equipment would be needed. They did get a signal, however the three men decided it was too far to go to set up an antenna.

At this time Maurice Moxley was living in Eldred Sawyer's house. 2 houses before Dimmick Brook. Maurice had a tester which would measure the strength of the signal coming from Mt. Mansfield. Maurice and Dad decided that by going about 1500 feet up on the hill behind Dad's house, we might be able to get channel 3. In order to get the signal down to Dad's house on Route 4, they ran a wire called ladder wire on the trees down to the house. The copper wire was about 1 1/2 inches wide, with a plastic insulator attached between the wires.

Because of the line being loose, they switched to a copper wire like you would use on electric fence. A roll had about 1500 feet. They spaced the wire about 4 inches apart on glass fencing standoffs.

Now they were starting to have fun with this TV idea, so they put in poles 8 or 10 feet high with a cross arm to attach the wire to.

At this point they saw where someone had come up with an amplifier to increase signal strength. The problem they had was how to get 110 volts up the 1500 feet of wire. Dad came up with the idea to run some heavy wire up the poles they had installed earlier. The trouble with this idea was the wire was not insulated. They needed two wires, one for ground and one hot wire.

They made up a connection at the house and they had power. They used this for some time and it worked pretty well except when something like trees and limbs made contact to the wires.



Antenna as it appears today

Continues on page 6

Electric Utilities in Vermont

continued from page 4

Bridgewater Electric continued to operate as a small private utility serving that town until October 1971 when it was acquired by Central Vermont Public Service. The dam and the generating station were retained by the mill interests. Improvements have been made in the Bridgewater area electric system in the last few years bringing the system up to CVPS's standards. The woolen mill continued to operate for a short period, closing down in the mid-1970s.

Town officials are presently exploring the possibility of restoring the dam near the mill, which was washed out in the 1973, for use as a recreation area and possibly some electrical generation.

The history was researched, written and edited by Patrick J. Slattery, a former news editor, communications consultant, and presently a member of the Company's Communication Department.

October 12, 1979.

Bridgewater Gets TV

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Maurice came to my Dad about running the signal down to his house about 1/2 mile away. Maurice thought they could use the poles that the phone lines ran on. Maurice got permission and they were in the TV business. They used the bottom cross arm on the telephone poles to hitch the wires up to a white glass porcelain insulator; copper wire 4 inches apart, 2 insulators on every cross arm. Ralph, Jr. would attach the TV wire with a piece of wire to the insulator and twist the end of the wire, soldering the wire on each side of the insulator. Maurice had asked Ralph, Jr. if he would help by climbing the poles to attach the wire to the cross arms, which they did.

I don't know what happened after we got to Maurice's house , but I believe this was the last of my helping Maurice.

It was after this time that the feed for TV from my Dad's was changed; improvements were made to the system and the feed came down from above Jim Sawyer's. There are two amplifiers still remaining to this day, one above Jim's and one below Jim's house.



This new system was installed all the way through Bridgewater to Dart and Gordon Green's house which was the first house past the town line in Woodstock. I think Horace Carr will say this came down off the Cemetery Hill in 1956.

After talking with one of Maurice's sons (Steve) Maurice probably did not help with the new line for Bridgewater, as he had taken his children out to California on a cross country vacation that summer and did not return until September of 1956.

Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

Our members and friends have been unbelievably generous with their donations of objects and papers to the Society. It is so nice to know that people feel comfortable turning to us when they are parting with family collections. From Halloween masks to Civil War vintage pocket watches, we never know from one day to the next, what the day will bring and that's what makes working at the Society fun.

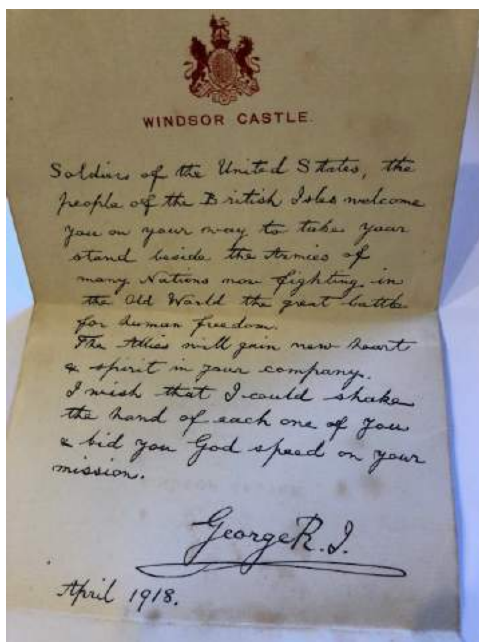
Of the more moving items, a hand written speech from King George V to the American troops, along with a piece of stained glass from a bombed out church in France, bring home to us the struggles that our forebears have gone through and that we continue to go through today. As we all know, "Those that don't study history are destined to repeat it." Here at the BHS we hope that we can continue to value the history that arrives on our doorstep in the form of artifacts and conversations, and conserve it for future generations.



Pocket Watch taken from Confederate Soldier



Fragment of dress thought to be the first wedding dress worn in Bridgewater



Speech Given by King Geo. V to American Troops April 1918



Halloween and Christmas costumes used at Pleasant School in the 1930s



Prosper Valley School students visit June 3, 2018

