

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April 2020

Issue No. Seventeen



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 2020 programs

Due to COVID-19, our programs will be on hold until Vermont lifts the Stay Home, Stay Safe Order.



Ruth Needham and Olive Greenough
Original Board Members
2010

OFFICERS

President: Jeannette Sawyer
Vice President: Polly Timken
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
John Atwood



Post Office across from the Bridgewater Woolen Mill.
The building was a boarding house and shipping
department for the mill prior to becoming a Post Office.

Letter From the President

By Jeannette Sawyer

Hello Members and Friends:

We hope this newsletter finds you and your families safe. It has been a long haul during the fight to contain the virus. Everyone is making sacrifices and together we will pull through.

Here at BHS, we have made adjustments to the calendar. Cancellations and changes in our programs have been, and will be, posted on our web site and Facebook, along with email. We hope to reschedule Howard Coffin's talk on VT Women in the Civil War and Adam Boyce's talk on Harold Luce the fiddler to a date later this season.

The winter hasn't been all bad. We have enjoyed receiving items relating to Camp Life along with many photos and memoirs. As we do not know when we will reopen this season with the Camp Life exhibit, there is still time for anyone to email us any stories or photos they feel would be an addition. Just reminiscing about the "old days" at camp is a great way to get through the current doldrums. It can lead to phone calls, emails and Facetime amongst family members. The "do you remember" conversations result in different answers from everyone involved, which is always fun. Why not hold up to the screen the "family photo album" your parents made and show it to the clan via Facetime. The youngest generations will be sure to remind us how old we all are.

Bob Kancir's article on page 3 on the Women's Suffrage Movement in Vermont, illustrates just how hard everyone worked over the years to get the legislation passed. Coming off the heels of WWI and the 1918 Flu Pandemic, it is remarkable that no one lost sight of the bigger picture, while dealing with the after effects of those two world - wide disasters. It serves as a good reminder that we can't lose sight of our bigger issues during these days of quarantine.

History doesn't stop being made and the Bridgewater Historical Society is not stopping its work on preserving Bridgewater's History. We hope you will be able to keep up with our postings and come visit when we reopen.

Stay well and keep smiling.

Bridgewater Historical Society Celebrates 10 Years

On September 28, 2008, five residents: Andy Blanchard, Betty Shurtleff, Phoebe Standish, Ruth Needham and Jeannette Sawyer, met to discuss reactivating an earlier historical restoration group. The next month they hosted a very successful open house at the Grange, with many local people bringing in old photographs for scanning and identification.

In January of 2009, this small group was notified that the 1803 brick schoolhouse was in jeopardy of being torn down. Quickly our focus was to save this building. Thus 2009 became an organizational year for the Bridgewater Historical Society in which we elected an Executive Committee: President, Jeannette Sawyer; Vice President, Charles Astbury; Secretary and Treasurer, Sondra Stevens; and Membership Chairman, Alice Paglia. At the town meeting in March, it was voted to save the building and provide a space for the Historical Society with an annual lease of \$1. On November 5, 2009 the State of Vermont granted us a Certificate of Incorporation and on March 05, 2010 the Department of the Treasury of the Internal Revenue Service informed the Society that we were exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

The first Bridgewater History Day was held on May 22, 2010 at the Grange with over 100 people attending. Guest speakers were Walter Houghton and Geoff Kenyon, with Polly and Erwin Fullerton displaying old tools.

We thank the Bridgewater Fire Department for the use of their meeting room for 2 years. In August of 2010 we signed a long-term lease with the town for the Old Brick Schoolhouse, which is now our headquarters. We held our first public event there with speaker Howard Coffin, the well-known author and Civil War historian. This event was a huge success.

Every year since we have had speakers give presentations free to the public as well as provide educational programs to school children. Due to the generosity of donors, our building houses a growing archived collection of Bridgewater's historical past. Permanent and revolving exhibits related to our collection are on display, with free admission to all. The website, www.bridgewaterhistory.org, contains, among other things, listings of events, an extensive collection of historical photographs, and a database of the Bridgewater cemeteries. Our award-winning newsletter is published twice a year.

We rely on support from our members and community to preserve the brick schoolhouse building and provide cost free programs. Our gratitude goes to every single person that has assisted in the success of the Bridgewater Historical Society.

Vermont and the 19th Amendment

By Bob Kancir

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution giving women the right to vote.

The amendment reads:

“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”

In Vermont a drive for voting rights had been made in the state as early as 1870, without success. In 1880 the Vermont legislature did grant tax-paying women the right to vote in school district meetings. Women were allowed to hold school offices or to be elected or appointed as school superintendents or town clerks. In 1900 women became eligible to become notaries public or trustees of public libraries, and in 1902, town treasurers.

The principle organization in the state lobbying for these gains after 1907 was the Vermont Equal Suffrage Association (VESA), a statewide group of activist women. Organized in the early 1880s as the Vermont Woman Suffrage Association, it focused efforts on persuading the state legislature to act on women’s political rights. Annual statewide conventions were held from 1885 through 1920, meeting in a different Vermont community each year. VESA’s legislative committee presented lengthy reports on the year’s legislative session in Montpelier. After many years of VESA’s efforts, Vermont passed legislation in 1917 allowing taxpaying women to vote in town meetings.

Despite these efforts, and although eleven other states had succeeded in granting full suffrage to women, it was federal action that finally brought full voting rights to the women of Vermont. In 1917, the U.S. House of Representatives finally agreed to create a committee on woman suffrage. By June 4, 1919, the 19th Amendment had passed both houses of Congress and was sent to state legislatures for ratification. At least 36 states needed to vote in favor of it for it to become law. The Vermont Legislature passed full suffrage for women in 1919, but Governor Percival Clement, an opponent of woman suffrage, vetoed it.

By 1920, with only one more state needed to ratify the federal amendment, Clement resisted strong pressure within the state to call a special legislative session to consider ratification. He argued that it would require a vote by the people and the state could not afford the expense involved. The 19th Amendment became the law of the land on August 26, 1920 and Vermont General Assembly ratified it on February 8, 1921.

Vermont women took immediate advantage of their right to vote. In the 1920 gubernatorial election, Clement’s candidate was defeated in the Republican primary by James Hartness, who had been a leading voice on a state committee to ratify the 19th Amendment. According to estimates, Hartness captured about 75 percent of the 10,000 or more votes cast in the election by women. The most dramatic change, however, came in 1921, when Edna L. Beard of Orange won a seat in the state House of Representatives, becoming the first woman member of the Vermont legislature.

In 1920 the Vermont Equal Suffrage Association welcomed into existence the newly formed Vermont League of Women Voters. VESA held its last state convention in that year in conjunction with the new organization, and then disbanded.

Vermont Historical Society, “Women Get the Vote, 1920”
National Park Service, “Vermont and the 19th Amendment”



Ielfield Mail Canceling Machine

By Bob Kancir

A hand-cranked stamp-canceling machine once located in the old Bridgewater Village Post Office was recently donated to the Bridgewater Historical Society by Alice Paglia. The purpose of the machine was to apply postal marking on a postage stamp or postal stationery to deface the stamp and prevent its re-use. Cancellations come in a huge variety of designs, shapes, sizes and colors.



Marking is from an early trial of an Ielfield machine

The hand-cranked stamp-canceling machine was invented in the 1860s, and by the turn of the 20th century, postal employees began using electric devices that would do the same thing, only faster. Even with electric automation technology in use, hand-cranked canceling machines were still in operation in rural American communities until the introduction of the ZIP code in 1963.

The donated machine, a model D, was invented by August Ielfield and manufactured by the Ielfield Postal Supply Corporation, Silver Creek, NY. The stamp-canceling machine's cast iron base supports a series of three rubber wheels that feed letters past a roller and out into a spring-loaded gate. It is operated by a hand crank with a wooden knob.



Bridgewater Village Post office 1921

Machine Cancel Society

"Cranked, not scanned" Andy Flynn, The Post Star

BHS Celebrates 10 years



Kedra Greaves
Oct 2010



Vern Cram, Kathleen Carr, Jeannette Sawyer, Horace Carr, Royal Houghton
June 2015



Darrell Thompson with Sharps rifle
Oct 2016



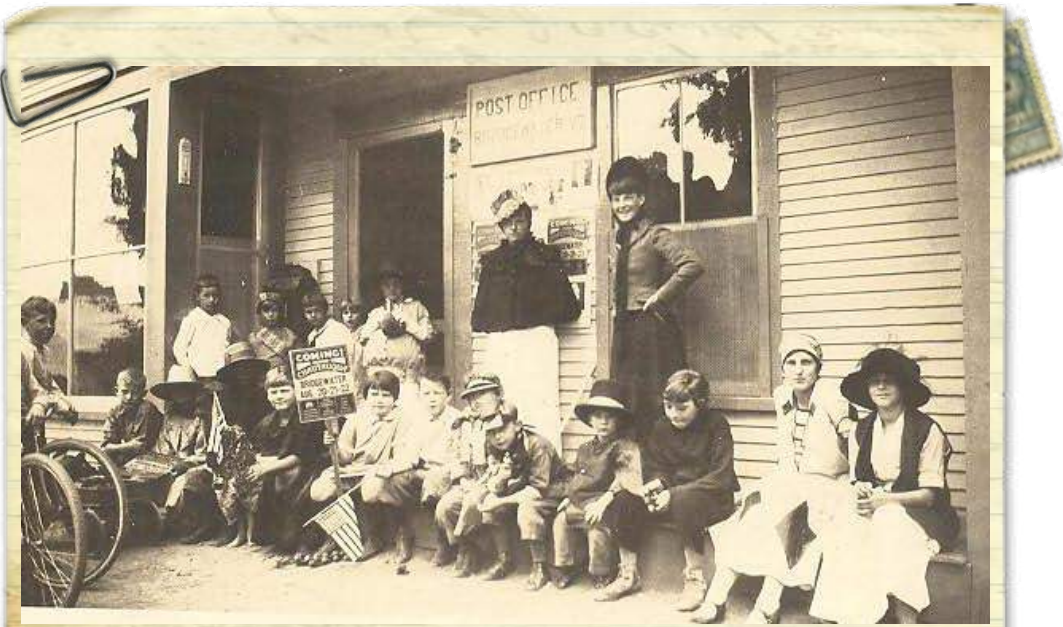
Bridgewater Village
School 3rd Grade
Sept 2014



Bob Kirby,
Gordon Tuthill
Aug 2019



Wendy Cram 2013



Bridgewater Village Post Office

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