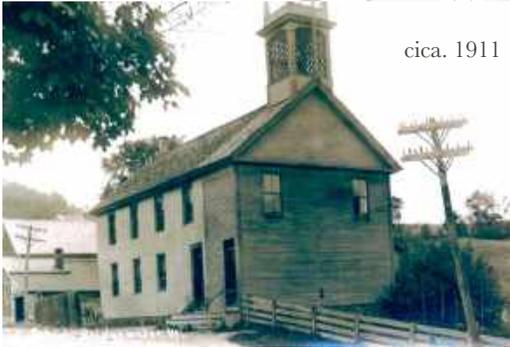


BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Sept 2020

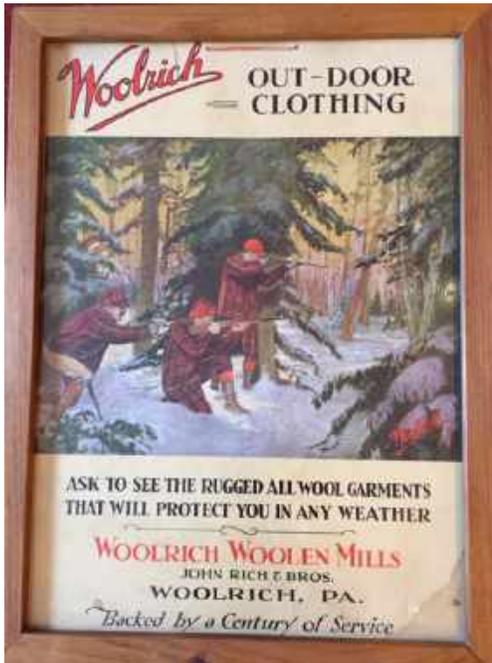
Issue No. Eighteen



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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



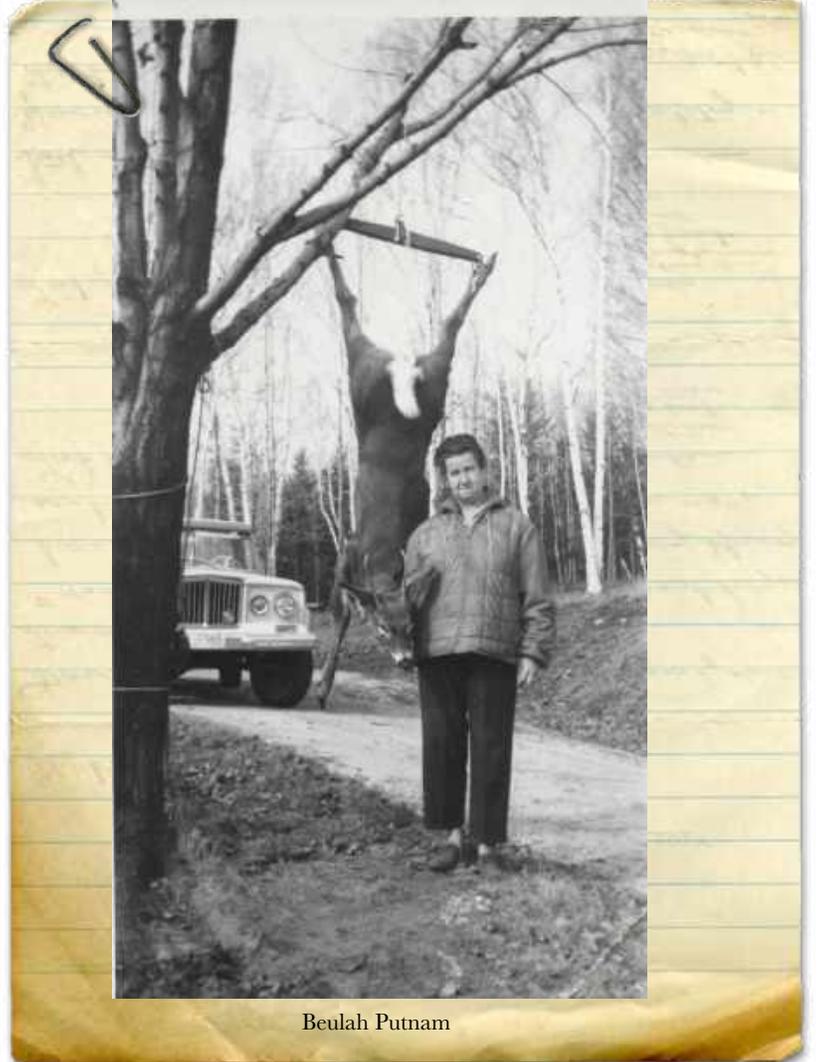
Poster from the Bridgewater Woolen Mill

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Vice President: Polly Timken
Secretary: Sue Kancir
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Ernest Kendall
John Atwood



Beulah Putnam

Letter From the President

By Jeannette Sawyer

The Historical Society has created an exhibit on Camp Life in and around Bridgewater. As a result of our research we have received many photographs and some stories from our members. The exhibit and newsletter are our way of preserving the material for later generations. Although we have been closed this summer due to the pandemic, hopefully we will open in early spring with the new exhibit.

Many of the stories and photos remind me of my childhood growing up in Bridgewater. The red plaid hunting clothes brought back memories of me walking beside my dad while he was in the woods hunting deer, I was learning hunting strategies before I was old enough to carry my rifle, a 3220 Savage bolt action. The photos of families and friends at special occasions also brought back many precious and wonderful memories of days gone by.

From the generous donations of photos, we can see that the **Harlan Booth** Camp, like many others, was the site of many hunting weekends, with friends and family. Harold Booth and his two friends, the Ranshausen boys, must have been very proud to be included with the adults. Getting your first deer is a rite of passage and recording it a special moment. Of course, getting a jeep stuck on the way to camp was all part of the process.

Building the camps was an event in itself and the different styles attest to what materials were available and could be hauled up to the sites. While the **Atwood** Camp was clapboarded, Gunsmoke camp was asphalt shingled. The **Campbell's** camp was plywood. **Clyde Mosher** and **Robert Bridge** are photographed building their shingled camp in the 50's and the **Putnam** family built theirs with slab cut planks in the 1960s.

Most camps are for deer hunting, but sometimes family events were held in the summers. The **Sutter** family provided a photo of a large reunion of the **Frechette** family, held in 1966 at what was once their camp, but is now for sale by the **Robinsons**, on the Kellogg lot. The Atwoods have loaned us photos of outings at both the John Atwood camp, and the Donald Atwood camps in North Bridgewater. Photos from the **Jenne** and Atwood camps address the 'dining' experience at camp. Baked beans, bread, bacon, hot dogs, etc., all washed down with copious amounts of liquid refreshment. Good times, good fun, and a few deer in the freezer for the winter.

The **Birmingham** family house in Dailey Hollow became the famous **Oldenburg** camp where the local people were always welcome at gatherings and deer hunting was the main event of the year where the families hunted together.

Camp can also provide a place of solace. The **Shurtleff** family have shared with us their story of building the camp as a moment in their lives when they could be together during a time of grief.

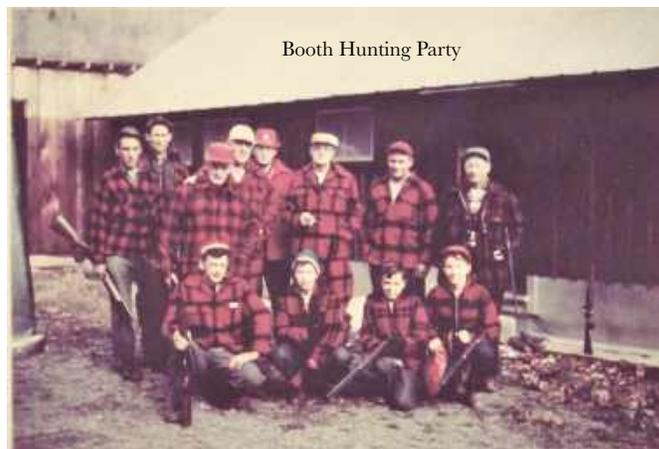
Here at the Historical Society, we are still working at maintaining the collection and the building and assembling programs for next season, when hopefully we will be back on track with a full schedule of talks. We welcome your stories and photographs and will continue to carry on our mission, "Keeping the Past Present." Thank you for all of your support.



Clyde Mosher and Robert Bridge



Wayne & David Oldenburg



Booth Hunting Party

Camp Life in North Bridgewater

By John Atwood

Vermonters take for granted many aspects of their culture—e.g. village marching bands; sugaring off parties; card parties; chicken pie suppers. Camp life culture was especially important in the last century. Camp building was a passion for Reno Atwood (1897–1983) who was the force behind construction of at least five camps. He was aided by his sons and relatives notably Roy Campbell. For this account, I interviewed Richard Atwood and Albert Bassett whose parents grew up in North Bridgewater. Apparently the Bassett family possessed just one camp below Phelps Road built by Walt Bassett and his uncle, Carol Bennett. (As a side note, game animal names do not generally end in an “s.” One doesn’t hunt bears, rabbits and raccoons, rather bear, rabbit and ‘coon!)

Stories passed down from the 19th century are lacking, but camps probably didn’t feature significantly in a largely deforested landscape. Rural life was largely subsistence—one hunted to feed the family or to eliminate predators. Hunting and fishing increased the food larder and were serious tasks and not sports. One cookbook (now lost, dated about 1880) featured “baked coon” attesting to a serious meat item as were certainly other mammals. Hunting was based at the home.

By early 20th century sheep pastures were largely abandoned providing forest settings for hunting camps. They acquired the function as social gathering places, while hunting and fishing remained essential activities. Any able family member was still expected to help provide meat for the table; hunting deer, bear, ruffed grouse (partridge), woodcock, rabbit, and also fishing brook trout, the [then] common fish of mountain streams. Ducks and geese don’t seem to have been hunted by the North Bridgewater families, and deer provided the largest gain for the effort. Bear were sought in the larger forests of western Bridgewater before they became common everywhere, but such ventures were seldom successful. Women, while largely responsible for growing garden vegetables and picking berries, occasionally joined the hunting parties. Hunting became a social activity as were silo filling, and community dinners. There was no conservation ethic for animals that compete with man; witness the last cougar shot in Barnard and now in the Vermont State house. It was one’s duty to kill all birds of prey given names such as chicken hawk, duck hawk, fish hawk, and pigeon hawk (John Atwood, Sr., pers. comm.). The Bald Eagle had long been exterminated from Vermont. It was the duty of able citizens to provide meat for the table and to eliminate predators.

By mid 20th century, the countryside had changed to a quilt-like pattern of forests and fields. Deer became over populated due to loss of predators and laws governing short hunting seasons against killing does. In 1958, this writer recalls regularly every evening counting 42 deer in the fields owned by John Atwood Sr., neighbor, Nelson Lee. The abundant deer herd provided ample success for hunters.

But the camp as a hunting center was likely less important than its function as a family and neighborhood retreat. Indeed, calling it a hunting camp may have been an excuse for building it! Camp building was, itself, a social activity. When Reno Atwood built his last camp (ca. 1964), he engaged several relatives to help, and so the effort brought several men together as a social gathering. Reno was severely razzed by one of the helpers claiming his camp would raise his real estate value. Roy Campbell while mounting siding quipped, “Every nail you drive!” The act of camp building brought men together in a masculine but non-competitive way.

Vermonters needed a get-away from the work place and the family camp was never far away. Some camps served as man caves for exchanging stories (mostly off-colored), and for gathering during hunting, often accompanied by generous consumption of spirits. During one evening in one of several camps called Gunsmoke, one participant was clearly inebriated. There being no indoor plumbing and needing water, he took a leaky bucket to a nearby stream. When he returned, the water had leaked out. Several repeated returns had the same result to the glee of the other participants. John Atwood’s camp was the center for the annual Camp Dinner that usually took place in winter. But camps also served as centers for outdoor family picnics in summer. Whatever the occasion, the meal was incomplete without a generous provision of hot dogs, sometimes augmented with hamburgers and potato salad, but the hot dog was the meat of choice always slathered with French’s yellow mustard.

The late 20th century saw hunting become progressively less essential to the family larder. Time for earning ever larger household incomes was required to satiate the wishes of consumers, much of it created by the television. Many species returned—mourning doves, wild turkeys, cardinals, opossums, bald eagles, peregrine falcons. Attitudes changed towards predators now accepted as part of the landscape not to be wastefully killed. Vermont hunting culture has changed. But this, too, may change—already black bears have become much too urban, and deer are village nuisances. Ah, how the pendulum swings! Photos on page 4.

Camp Life in North Bridgewater

continued from page 3



Camp Gunsmoke Reno Atwood



John Atwood Sr,
Age 12, 1934



John Atwood Sr. camp, built in 1954 by Reno Atwood, (L.) and his sons John Atwood, Sr., (center) and Donald Atwood (front)

In Memory of:

Olive Allard Greenough was a founding member of the Society and will be sorely missed. She died on July 24th, at age 100. She went to the Bridgewater Village School and Woodstock High School. She married Coburn in 1937 and worked at the Bridgewater Drug Store before working in the Post Office. A member of The Congregational Church, she was instrumental in helping to start the Historical Society and was one of the early donors to our collection.

Bill Hoyt passed away peacefully in October 2019. As a boy, he summured in Bridgewater at his parents "Saddlebow Farm," playing with the Campbells and others in the neighborhood. Upon moving here permanently in 1988, he became involved in Bridgewater as Cemetery Commissioner. He was very interested in gold mining in the region and gave a talk at the Society on the subject. As a former Commander in the Bridgewater American Legion, he presided at many funerals and placed flags annually at veterans' headstones throughout Bridgewater's cemeteries.

The Society has lost another early supporter, Hank Smith. He moved to Bridgewater in 1979. His interest in the community and its buildings caused him to spearhead the creation of the Bridgewater Recreational Center in 1986, saving the Brick Schoolhouse in the process. Without his energy and enthusiasm, the building was in danger of being torn down. In 2006, The Society signed a lease with the Town, and created the current exhibit and storage space.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to these three early supporters, who each had a vision, bringing their different skills and interests to help the Bridgewater Historical Society. Olive's generosity and love of Bridgewater, Bill's involvement with the Veterans of Bridgewater and enthusiastic interest in gold mining and cemeteries, and Hank's interest in the preservation of the building, all came together to benefit the Town and the Historical Society. They shall be missed.

Shurtleff Camp

By Jennie Shurtleff Amirkiaee

Our little camp is located in North Bridgewater on a hill that was part of our “sugar lot.” It was built for my sister, Mary Louise Shurtleff. She was battling cancer, and the bright spot in her life was the camp on the hill. It is a simple structure – basically one room with a cast iron stove for heat, a little kitchenette in the corner, and a sleeping loft above. My brother, my father, Don Sawyer, and a few of our other friends helped to build it one summer, working mainly on the weekends. Even before the basic structure was completed, we’d invite friends and neighbors over to have dinner there. Although the camp is located only a quarter of a mile or so from the main road, then, as today, it seemed like a different world. Up on the hill, everything was quiet, peaceful, and far away from the problems that we faced with my sister’s illness.

My sister passed away in 1984. After her death, we didn’t go to the camp as often, and we never completed the deck or all the many other plans she had for it. While our memories of the camp are happy ones, there is a certain sadness that goes with a place that was built for someone who is no longer there.



Mary Louise Shurtleff & Don E Sawyer

Although my sister had been very active in sports growing up, at the time the camp was built, she was unable to engage in those past times, so she filled the camp with books, games, puzzles, and a small stuffed lamb that she called “Jip.” She had won Jip at the Lion’s Club Fourth of July Fair when she was a child, and he was one of her favorite stuffed animals. Jip is now over 50 years old, and his fleece is worn and ragged, but he, like the little camp on the hill, is a reminder of my sister who grew up in North Bridgewater and spent some of her happiest moments there.



Putnam Camp

By Audrey Putnam & Bob Kancir

The hunting camp of Ed and Beulah Putnam, named "SUMDAY" was built in 1963. It was located on a 350 acre plot of land in Bridgewater, VT. The camp had a bedroom, bunk room, bathroom and a large open area comprised of the kitchen and dining/living room with a fire place. Propane powered the refrigerator, range/oven and lights. Later a wood stove was added to the open area as the fireplace did not provide enough heat for the camp. Originally, water for the camp was provided in milk cans. Later a well was dug and water was pumped from the well by a generator into a holding tank and gravity fed to the camp. Men planned their vacations around hunting season. Regulars to the camp were Ed, his two sons Wib and Max, Duane Wilson, Allen Prior and Tom Pearsons. Later they were joined by grandsons Bruce Putnam and David Pearsons. No women were allowed except Beulah and only because she was the designated cook! The camp was basically only used during hunting season although Ed and Beulah did spend some time there during the summer months. The camp was used as a hunting camp until the property was sold in 2007.



Wib Putnam



Bruce Putnam and David Pearsons



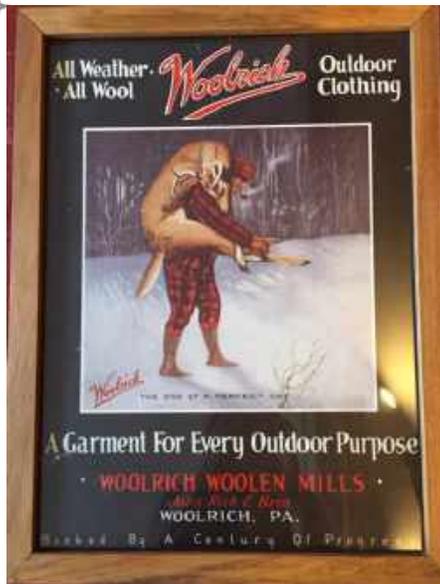
Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

Our current exhibit, "Camp," which will run through 2021, has brought together many photos and artifacts related to hunting and fishing camps in Bridgewater. The Historical Society owns two posters from the Woolrich Company, advertising hunting clothes. The pipe smoking hunter carrying the deer, and the photo of the poster on page 1 of three hunters all shooting at once in close proximity to each other, are amusing interpretations of what deer hunting must be like (or at least to the artist). These posters were meant to entice anyone to purchase the clothing. If you wore the clothing, then surely you would be a successful hunter. If not successful, then at the very least you would be warm.

According to Ernest Kendall, the Mill manufactured plaid wool for hunting clothes; supplying both the Woolrich and Profile companies. There were two ways to make plaid woolen cloth. The first method, known as "thread-dyed," is to dye the woolen threads black and red before the weaving process. The second way, known as "piece-dyed," is an easier, and therefore a quicker and cheaper method. The fabric was woven using black dyed thread and natural undyed (white/grey) thread. The fabric is then overdyed a deep red (or another color/green). The red overdyed doesn't show on the black bands.

BHS has on exhibit a thread-shirt and a piece-dyed hat, that were made from wool from the Mill. Both belonged to Donald Atwood.



Red's Camp

By Lisa Frechette Sutter

My sister was able to find a photo of our family reunion at the camp. From what we recall, that was the only time we went there, so I'm afraid there are not many stories to tell. From that visit I remember tons of sweet corn, a staple of our family reunions, cooked in a huge pot in the kitchen. And someone saying that adding milk to the water made the corn sweeter. My brother, Jeff and some of my cousins fished in the pond. I think they caught some, but probably threw them back. And there was always someone who brought home made doughnuts. The best! We'd all bring something to share with everyone. It was a regular feast of my Aunt's famous (to us) baked beans, potato salad and more.

My grandfather's nickname was Red. It could be that the camp was named for him or that it was painted red.



In attendance were my father's sisters and brothers and my cousins.

Included in this photo taken in 1966 are:

- Seated at the table going clockwise-Paul and Louisa Frechette, my mom Alice Frechette, sister Melanie and me, Lisa.
- Facing us from left to right behind the table are Luella Frechette (Bud's wife) a cousin with last name La Flam, and Cindy Frechette.
- At the other table, my Grandfather, Edward (Red) Frechette is seated. He has grey hair and glasses and is wearing a burgundy shirt. I believe the young man in front of the window is Randy Frechette, son of Paul and Louisa.



Dick Ransenhousen, Harold Booth and Bob Ransenhousen
1961

