

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October 2021

Issue No. Twenty



circa. 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



Homes of Charles Prior, Etta Prior, Hazel and Guy Welch/Post Office 1960

Letter From the President

By Jeannette Sawyer

Here at the Historical Society we are welcoming the holidays with renewed spirit and energy. We opened in July with the very successful Camp Life Exhibit. Now we are welcoming new board members. Thank you to all members who submitted ballots.

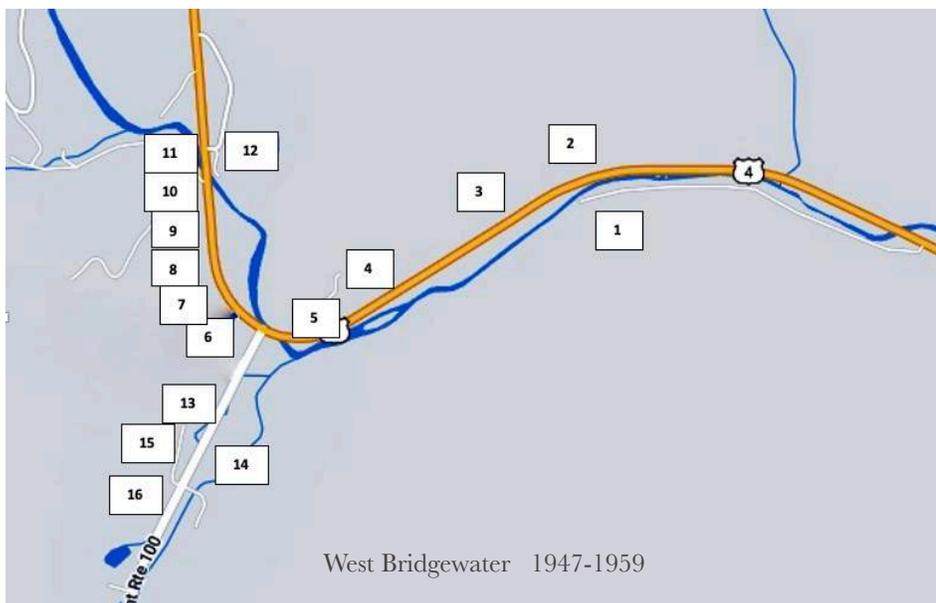
We are very pleased to share with our members the article written by Therese Belisle Fullerton, on her days growing up in West Bridgewater. The childhood memories bring us back to a time when doors weren't locked and the neighbors watched out for each other's children. Her memories are further enhanced with a great collection of photos. It is rare to have firsthand memories paired with photographs of the families houses. Not only did Therese write down her memories but she also helped create a map of the hamlet so that future generations can come back and recognize landmarks. We hope everyone enjoys this issue and we wish you all a happy and healthy 2022.



Belisle and Thompson homes



Carrie and Cy Thompson
50th Wedding Anniversary 1956



West Bridgewater 1947-1959

1. Cy & Carrie Thompson
2. Therese Belisle Fullerton
3. Erwin & Lucy Prior
4. Helen & Irwin Welchman
5. Lloyd & Addie Whittier
6. Ben & Florence Oldenburg
7. Thelma & John Sanford
8. Charles & Clara Prior
9. Etta Prior
10. Hazel & Guy Welch, Post Office
11. Francis & Florece Palmer
12. Labree Family
13. Cieselski Family, Cleo & Betty Bridge,
Clark & Della Knowles, Leonard Pinney
family
14. Ed Stevens Sawmill
15. Lloyd Roberts family
16. Miss Bell

MEMORIES OF LIVING IN WEST BRIDGEWATER 1947-1959

By Therese (Belisle) Fullerton

I moved to West Bridgewater June 1947 (we waited until school was out as I was in the first grade in Springfield) with my parents Oscar and Rita Belisle, sister Yvonne and brothers Henry and Armand. My dad was a bulldozer operator on road construction and his job at that time was on Mendon Mountain so we moved from Springfield to West Bridgewater. I remember his taking us to the job on a Sunday and driving the bulldozer on a steep slope. Every time I drive over to Rutland now, I remember that day and am still amazed at what he did.

In the fall of 1947, I went to Riverside School. There were 2 of us in the 2nd grade. Can't remember how many children went there but it was a one-room school with 8 grades. We were picked up by Phil Biathrow who had a long Packard car (it almost looked like a hearse). There must have been at least 9 or 10 of us that rode in that car. There was a long bench that I sat on. I only went there for 2 or 3 months and then dad decided I wasn't doing well so I moved to my Uncle Adrian and Aunt Emma's in Bellows Falls and went to St Charles Parochial School for the rest of the school year. I was some homesick but my cousin Georgette (she was 5 years older) also went to the same school and watched over me. She loved movies and took me to the theatre and I still remember the first movie I ever saw "Good News" musical with June Allyson and Peter Lawford! The next year 3rd grade in the fall of 1948 I went to the Bridgewater Elementary School and by then we had a regular big, yellow school bus pick us up. Stan Hutt was the driver for years. 8th grade graduation was June 1954 from Bridgewater and then the fall of 1954 was Woodstock High School. The old high school with all those stairs - 4 flights and I was lost the first few weeks. It was huge compared to little Bridgewater School. My class went from about 13 of us to freshman class of 55! Then in the fall of 1957 we moved to the new Woodstock Union High School in West Woodstock. Our graduating class of 1958 was the first class to graduate from the new school. (# 2 on Map)

CY & CARRIE THOMPSON

Across the road from us was an old retired couple Carrie & Cy Thompson. She used to play the piano and taught us a couple of old songs. "Camp town Races" was one. She used to like to sit out on her "piazza". I had never heard it called anything but a "porch" until I heard her call it a "piazza". (# 1 on Map)

ERWIN & LUCY PRIOR

The first neighbor up the road from us was Erwin and Lucy Prior. They also had 2 daughters Doris (Dean) and Betty (Putnam) and 2 sons LeRoy and Allen. I have many good memories of them. I always thought of them as my second mother and father. Lucy helped me a lot. I remember having a problem with square roots and she worked with me a couple of nights. I still don't know what they do! Also, she gave me my first home permanent. Wow! Those big heated curlers and did they ever smell. She had to put me out on the porch but I did have curls. They quite often invited us along when they went places. Also, since my mother didn't drive and my father usually only got home week-ends, they helped out. In fact, when it came time for me to get my driver's license Lucy went with me. After that I was able to drive mother to places. Erwin worked for the State Highway Dept and plowed route 4, among other things. I remember how good he was to us girls. Sometimes when we didn't have a ride to the dances on Saturday nights, he would drive us over and wait in the car until it was time to go home. (# 3 on Map)



Erwin & Lucy Prior home 1960

MEMORIES OF LIVING IN WEST BRIDGEWATER 1947-1959

HELEN & IRWIN WELCHMAN

The next neighbor above Priors was Helen and Irwin Welchman with daughters Dorothy and Carolyn and son Eddie. They ran the Riverview Cabins. We didn't see Mr. Welchman much as he went back to work in the aircraft plant on Long Island, where they had come from originally. Carolyn became my best friend. We were both the same age and spent a lot of time together. They had several cabins in back of the main building. We used to help them make up the cabins after their guests left. I don't know how much help we were as we were kids and did a lot of fooling around. They had a nice tourist business with a gift shop and a swimming area and gas pumps. They lived in a house across the road. They sold the business to Ed Dwyer about 1952 and went back to Long Island. I always stayed in touch with Carolyn and she came back a few times. They wouldn't recognize the place now. All the cabins and main building got moved when the highway went through in early 1960's. Also, their old home was flooded last year. (# 4 on Map)

BEN & FLORENCE OLDENBURG

After you cross the bridge and at the junction of Rt 4 and Rt 100 was "Oldenburg's Store". Ben and Florence Oldenburg were great people and had everything in that store. Also, they had gas pumps outside. We use to bring our red wagon and got groceries from mother's list. Also, they were the first to have a TV and all of us neighborhood kids would spend hours watching TV in their living room. There was only one TV station from New York Channel 6 WRGB. Black and white, snowy screen but we loved it. There was a big family – older kids –Wayne, Lloyd and Janice and younger kids-Michael and Steve. They were always around and helping out in the store etc. (# 6 on Map)

THELMA & JOHN SANFORD

Next to Oldenburg's was the "Tri-Angle Diner" run by Thelma and John Sanford and daughter Mona. I got my first job there – summer of 1954. I worked there 3 summers, 1954, 1955 and 1956. They also had cabins and a restaurant. It was a long day. Started at 7 AM to serve breakfast then we'd make up the cabins, serve lunch and in between we would help hang up laundry (sheets). Thelma made her own pies every morning. She also made her own soap for the laundry. We'd help bring in the sheets in the afternoon when dry and run them through the big mangle iron. Then we'd serve dinner. Wouldn't come home until after 9 PM a lot of nights. I got paid \$15.00 a week plus tips. Sometimes we'd get big tips. It was interesting and we'd meet a lot of people. I remember there was a TV in the dining room and it was the 1956 Democratic Convention – Stevenson for President and I saw Senator John Kennedy for the first time. Everyone seemed to be impressed by him. Who knew he would be President in a few years? (# 7 on Map)



Oldenburg Store, Tri-Angle Diner, Charles Prior, Etta Prior, Welch home, across street Whittier home

CHARLES & CLARA PRIOR

The next place up from Sanford's was Charles and Clara Prior and sons Albert and Roger and daughter Joyce. He was Erwin Prior's brother. The fact that I found interesting was there was a sign in the middle of their lawn showing the town line of Bridgewater/Sherburne and below it the county line of Windsor/Rutland. (# 8 on Map)

ETTA PRIOR

The next place was Etta Prior (Grandma Prior) who lived in a former school house that had been converted to a house. She was a nice older lady (Erwin and Charles Prior's mother). We would stop in to see her when we went next door to the post office. She was usually sitting in her chair looking out the window. (# 9 on Map)

MEMORIES OF LIVING IN WEST BRIDGEWATER 1947-1959

HAZEL & GUY WELCH

The next house was the West Bridgewater Post Office (actually located in Sherburne). Hazel Welch was the post mistress. She and her husband lived there and had a store and a gift shop and gas pumps. We (Yvonne and I and usually Betty Prior and the Welchman girls) would go up to the post office after getting off the school bus and wait for the mail to arrive via "The Stage" which was Ferris Ayer in his truck. Then we had to wait for Hazel to sort it. It always turned out to be a social occasion. The Welch's had several grown children who were away but did have a son Tommy Welch who was about our age. I remember he used to play the accordion. (# 10 on Map)

FRANCIS & FLORENCE PALMER

Up the road from the Welch's were Francis & Florence Palmer and their sons Chester and Clayton. Mr. Palmer had big horses. We use to go sliding in the winter on the road next to Palmers. We'd walk all the way up that steep hill (not always all the way up where the Bailey Frank Family lived) and really had a fast ride down and had to watch it on one sharp corner. The name of the road is Lombard Road and all that area is part of Killington now. (# 11 on Map)

THE LABREE FAMILY

I don't remember much about this family except the mother was a school teacher and the daughter's name was Mitzy LaBree. I may have not spelled their name correctly. Mitzy was older than us and I believe went to Woodstock High School. They lived in the house that Lloyd Moyer bought a few years later. Now Mosher, I believe. (# 12 on Map)

CLEO & BETTY BRIDGE

First house on the right was Cleo and Betty Bridge. They had a daughter Jeanne and son Eddie. Eddie was a baby and we sometimes would push him in his carriage. Cleo worked for the State Highway Dept with Erwin Prior.
(# 13 on Map)

THE CIESELSKI FAMILY

Now back down the road across from the Charles Prior place was the Cieselski family. I don't remember their first names. They moved up from New Jersey and had a big family, 8 children I believe. I baby sat for the children one week-end when the parents went back to New Jersey for a quick visit. The older girls helped me some but I was glad to see them come back home! Before the Cieselski family moved there it was a farm owned by Carl and Fanny Cleveland. She used to go down the road (we assumed she went to town to get supplies) with her horse and wagon.

The next building below Cieselski's was an old abandoned building. It was known as the old cheese factory but also had been used as a hall. It was a long narrow building. We use to go in sometimes as there was an old piano there that attracted us kids. We were told to stay out of there as it was ready to fall down but being kids, we still did go in once -in-awhile! (# 13 on Map)

LLOYD & ADDIE WHITTIER

Next is house on corner, right next to the road and across from Oldenburg's store. I remember Mr. Whittier was an older man and use to sit on front porch in a rocker. They had a grown son Norman and 2 daughters Catherine and Shirley. Now I'm going to go across the road on to Rt 100 (known as Plymouth Road to us). (# 5 on Map)



Lloyd & Addie Whittier home 1960

MEMORIES OF LIVING IN WEST BRIDGEWATER 1947-1959

CLARK & DELLA KNOWLES

The next house up on the left was Clark and Della Knowles. They had 3 children, son Larry and daughters Dianna and Sharon. (# 13 on Map)

LEONARD PINNEY FAMILY

Next house was the Leonard Pinney family. I don't remember the mother's name but there were 4 children, Jeanine, who was older, Linda and twin boys Edwin and Elwin, who were about the same age as my brothers. (# 13 on Map)

ED STEVENS SAW MILL

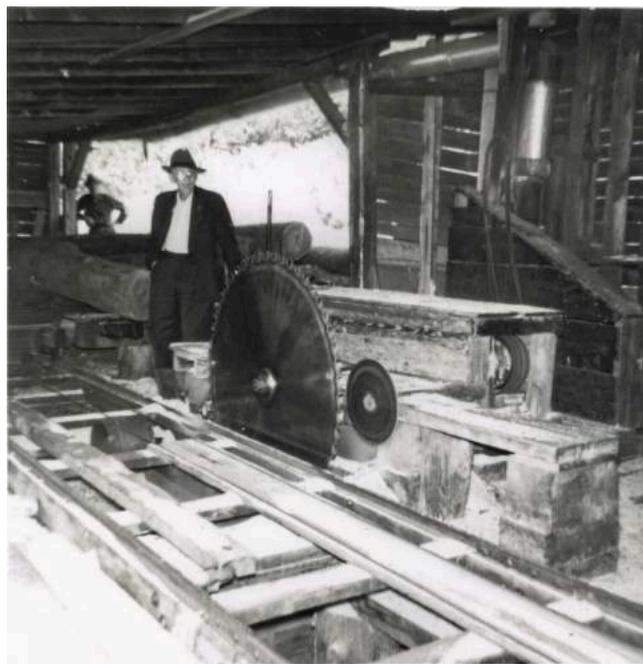
Ed Stevens had a saw mill in behind the Penney's. We use to buy wood from him. They would deliver it early in the week and we (Yvonne, Henry, Armand and I) were supposed to pile it in the wood shed before dad came home that week-end. We would put it off until the last minute then would rush to get it done! (# 14 on Map)



Stevens Sawmill 1959

Left photo
George Redmond
Ed Stevens
?
Charles Stevens

Right Photo
George Redmond
(on his 90th birthday)
Ed Stevens



Well, that was the West Bridgewater Village as I remember it. Now when I go up to West Bridgewater, usually on my way to Rutland, I could cry as it is no longer that ideal community of my childhood. A lot of the homes are no longer there or moved. The "River View" building in the 1960's when the new road construction was done, was moved across the bridge and became part of the Back Behind Saloon. Also, one of the cabins, the round one with all the windows was moved to the same area. The former Welchman home was damaged so badly in the 2011 flood that it is now condemned.

My former home is gone, destroyed by the 2011 flood

The former Whittier home was also moved during the 1960's road construction. It became a store known as "Blackies" and now that was badly damaged in the 2011 flood.

The home where Cieselski's used to live is gone.

The Tri-Angle Diner building is no longer there. About the only places left are the former Prior house, Oldenburg's and the former Cyrus Thompson house.

I've enjoyed this journey down memory lane and hope others will also.

MEMORIES OF LIVING IN WEST BRIDGEWATER 1947-1959



Bridgewater Village School 3rd & 4th grade, 1949-50

Front row -
 Nelson Hunt
 Anne Stewart
 Carol Strupen
 Carolyn Wellman
 Larry Kason
 Bobbie Dwyer
 Jannette Polkin
 Charles Solger
 Judy Newman

Middle row -
 Marie Beland
 Suzanne Reese
 Theodore Anthony
 Lawrence J. J
 Nelson Penney
 Cecil Rogers
 Bruce Leonard
 Jack Stewart

Back row
 Ronald Austin
 Teacher: Frances Spry
 Ernest Kendall

My 4th grade year
 3rd + 4th grade - 1949-1950

There's 4th grade class at Bridgewater Village School. Class includes several Bridgewater Historical Society Directors and members.



Birdseye view of Whittier home and Oldenburg Store



Helen & Irwin Welchman



Therese's dad, Oscar "Shorty" Belisle worked for Lambert Construction Co.

BHS OFFICERS

President: Jeannette Sawyer
 Vice President: Polly Timken
 Secretary: Althea Derstine
 Treasurer: Julie Stevens
 Membership: Sue Kancir
 Curator: Polly Timken

BHS DIRECTORS

Sondra Stevens
 Bruce Maxham
 Ernest Kendall
 John Atwood
 Chris Stevens
 Nancy Kendall
 Alice Paglia
 Barry Griggs
 Melinda Griggs
 Karol Messier

