

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April 2022

Issue No. Twenty One



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

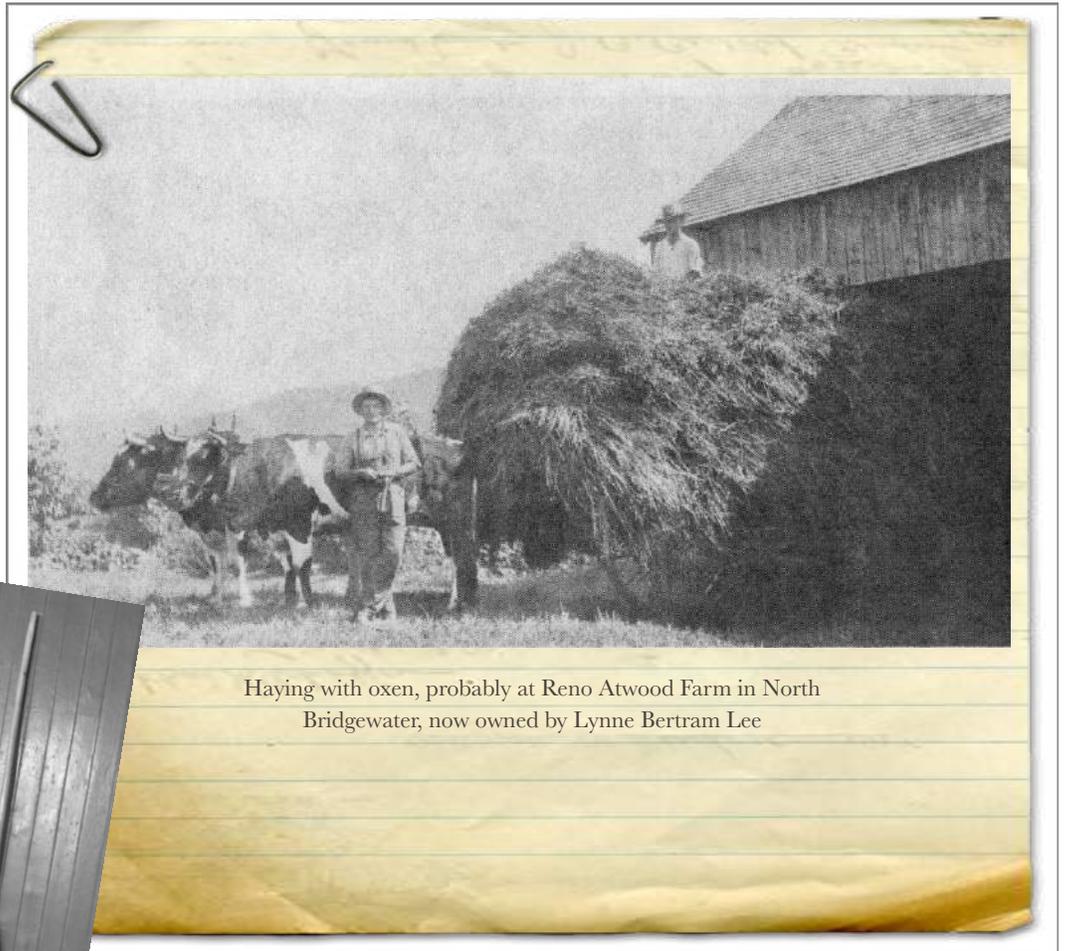
2022 PROGRAMS

All programs will be held at the
Bridgewater Grange on
Rt 100A

Disaster on Mount Washington
Howard Coffin
June 5th at 2pm

Recovery of the Endurance
Charlie Shackleton
August 7th at 2pm

Gold Mining in Bridgewater
Elisha Lee
date to be announced



Haying with oxen, probably at Reno Atwood Farm in North
Bridgewater, now owned by Lynne Bertram Lee



Hay Rake from the Bud Jenne Farm

Letter From the President

We hope that by the time you receive this newsletter, either online or via the US Mail, Spring, and everything good that it entails, will be in full action. Here at the Old Brick Schoolhouse, our volunteers have finished the spring cleaning and are busily installing our exhibit for 2022: **Farming and Families in Bridgewater**. We arrived at this theme while doing research on some of the early hilltop families of Bridgewater and how they made their living from the land. Elisha Lee and John Atwood have provided us with their research into the Montague and Bassett families and their properties, coincidentally, located next door to each other.

On a sad note, we would like to extend our sincere condolences to the Putnam family on their loss of Audrey, one of our early supporters and fellow board member. We shall miss her generous contributions of not only family photographs and ephemera, but her infectious smile and “can do” attitude.

We have lined up a schedule of speakers for the season, and will open our season with Howard Coffin, speaking at the Bridgewater Grange on the Disaster on Mount Washington. Charlie Shackleton will also give a presentation on the Discovery of the Endurance. Elisha Lee will give a talk on the gold mines in the area.

Please stop in this summer and see the fabulous photos of farming in the hills, as well as a special exhibit of seldom seen items from our permanent collection.

Thank you again for your loyal support.
Jeannette Sawyer, President

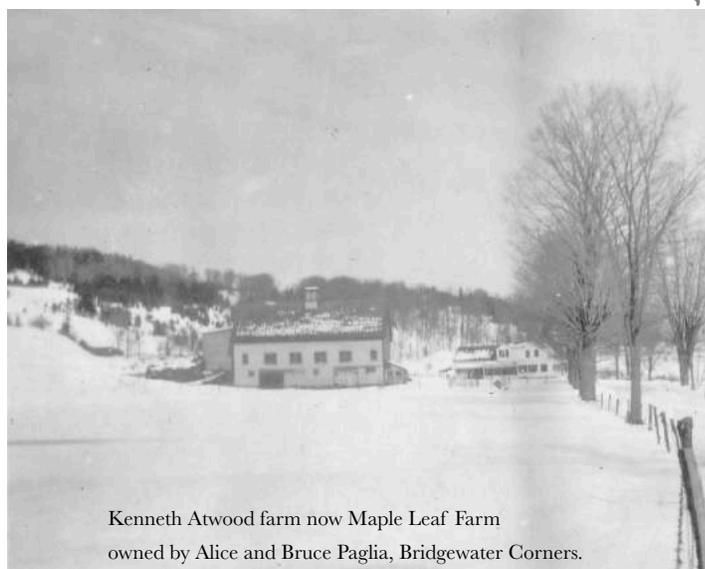
Maple Leaf Farm

By Bob Kancir and Alice Paglia

There is long history of farming in Alice Paglia's family. Her great grandparents, John and Abby Townsend, grandparents, Fred and Jenny Townsend and her parents Paul and Pearl Townsend all farmed the Bridgewater Corners, VT area. They all raised dairy cows, selling the milk to the local co-op, sheep for wool that was sold to the Bridgewater mill, and chickens for eggs. To feed the animals they grew hay and feed corn. Potatoes were another major crop that was grown. In the Spring when the maple sap flowed they boiled it down and sold maple syrup.

In 1965 Alice and her husband Bruce bought the house and barn next to the house Alice grew up in from

Kenneth and Lilly Atwood. Soon after they named it the Maple Leaf Farm. In 1985 they built the farm stand. The original greenhouse was located directly in back of the farm stand. One day a strong wind blew the greenhouse on end. Alice was inside at the time and luckily was not injured. Alice's good friend and neighbor Wilbur 'Wib' Putnam was driving by saw what happened and helped Alice cut the plastic sheathing covering the metal framework so that the wind could not blow it further. A new greenhouse was constructed soon after and remains safely on the property today. In 1996 the Maple Leaf Farm started selling Poulin feed and grain and expanded the farm stand to accommodate their products. Today the 300 acre Maple Leaf Farm raises beef cows instead of dairy cows and grows hay to feed them. Chickens are also raised and the eggs sold in the farm stand along with vegetables and a variety of staples. In the greenhouse you will find an assortment of plants and flowers in season.



Kenneth Atwood farm now Maple Leaf Farm
owned by Alice and Bruce Paglia, Bridgewater Corners.

History of Montague Farm

By Elisha Lee

Montague Farm is situated on the east and west sides of North Bridgewater Road, just south of Grandma'am's Hill Road. The property was first settled by Selah Montague, third son of Captain Moses Montague, a prosperous farmer and Revolutionary War veteran of South Hadley, MA. Selah had moved to Woodstock by 1784 when, at age 23, he purchased an initial 50 acres on what would become the North Bridgewater Road from Joseph Evans of Hartland. A year later, he purchased another 100 acres in two transactions from Isaac Bisbee of Bridgewater. In 1787 Selah journeyed 144 miles south to Granville, MA, where he married Electa Winter, daughter of Daniel Winter and Mehitable Warner, and returned with an ox cart full of household necessities. The farmhouse was probably constructed at some point between 1790 and 1810.



The Montague Farmhouse Looking West Toward Grandma'am's Hill - 1936

(Courtesy of Helena Wylde Swiny)

There are few records indicating what was produced on the farm at any given point in time. Vermont hill farms of the early 19th Century were necessarily self-sufficient, and it is likely that Selah grew wheat, barley, rye, and flax. In addition, an advertisement in *The Washingtonian* of 30 Jul 1810 lists Selah as a breeder of Merino Sheep.

Selah and Electa Montague had ten children, of whom eight survived. The youngest, Laura, died of "spotted fever" (possibly meningitis or typhoid) in 1811, followed by Selah himself, who died in 1812 at age 51. He was both insolvent and intestate at the time of his death. When his estate was partitioned in 1814 the farm encompassed 185 acres. Their oldest son, Moses, married Annis Dike, daughter of Daniel Dike and Abigail French of Bethel at some point prior to 1816 and remained on the property. Son David went west to Decatur County, IN, where he too was a farmer. Son Daniel became an engineer and settled in Plymouth and New Bedford, MA. Son Otis farmed in Knox County, OH. Their daughters mostly married into local families, Betsey to Reuben Burt, Clarissa to Richard Southgate, Jr. as his second wife, and Rowena to William Boyce. Electa (Winter) Montague outlived her husband by 37 years, dying in 1849. Both Selah and Electa are buried in the North Bridgewater Cemetery.

Moses and Annis Montague had nine children, all of whom survived to adulthood. Their oldest son, Justin Selah Montague, stayed on the farm. Son Charles married Amelia J. Thompson, daughter of Edwin Thompson and Wealthy Cox of Bridgewater, and farmed on Perkins Road and later in Woodstock. Son Norman was a farmer and brick mason in Woodstock. Son Edwin Moses became a grocer, settling in Boston and later Lowell, FL, where he became involved in real estate and orange farming.

History of Montague Farm



North Side of the Montague Farmhouse -1936
(Courtesy of Helena Wylde Swiny)

On 8 Apr 1840 Justin Selah Montague married Ruth Sophia Maxham of Bridgewater, daughter of Jabez Maxham and Ruth Chubbock. Justin and Ruth remained on the farm, sharing the property with his parents until Annis Montague's death in 1863, and raising four children – Justin Edward, Frances Caroline, Charles Richard, and Clara Amelia. Justin Edward remained on the farm with his sister Clara Amelia. Neither ever married. Frances married a farmer, George Harlow Vaughn of Woodstock, Charles worked in Woodstock in several retail capacities and was the bookkeeper at the Bridgewater Mill and Treasurer of the Woodstock Hotel Co.

The Population Schedule for the 1850 Federal Census for Bridgewater lists Moses Montague (59), living with Annis (51), Caroline (22), Laura (17), Justin S. (34), Ruth S. (34), Justin E. (9), and Frances (3). Both Moses and his son Justin Selah are listed as farmers, and the real estate (listed in Justin's name) was valued at \$1,050. A closer examination of the Population Schedule indicates a total of 199 individuals classified as farmers with real estate valued (farmers whose real estate was not valued were perhaps tenants as opposed to owners). Real estate valuations ranged from a low of \$50 to a high of \$6,000 with an average value of \$1,160. Based upon this indicator, Montague Farm was slightly below average in value and, presumably, productivity. The reported value a decade later was \$2,000, somewhat above an average value of \$1,512. The total number of farmers in Bridgewater with reported land values was 175, reflecting a decline of 12% from the previous Census report.

In October of 1869 Justin Selah Montague and his oldest son, Justin Edward Montague, purchased the Justin McKenzie farm on Gulf Road in Woodstock at a cost of \$7,000. At 145 acres, the McKenzie Farm was only slightly smaller than Montague Farm, however it lay on flat ground at a lower elevation and offered closer proximity to Woodstock. Justin Selah Montague's brother Norman had purchased the adjoining Jesse Royce Farm in November of 1868, and in 1874, their brother Charles, whose farm on Perkins Road had been destroyed by arson a year earlier, purchased the neighboring John Cox Farm.

In November of 1870 Justin sold Montague Farm to Charles H. Deso of Westford, taking back a promissory note in the amount of \$2,550. A notice published in the Vermont Standard on 1 Dec 1870 states that Deso intended to turn the property into a dairy farm. Deso was apparently unable to make the payments, and, within two years, the farm was deeded back to Justin. Charles Deso's in-laws, Moses and Margaret Potwin, may have remained on the property as tenants until Justin found another buyer, his wife's nephew George Rowland Maxham, in 1881.

Montague Farm

While Charles Deso's conversion of Montague Farm did not materialize, George Maxham appears to have recognized a similar potential. Child's Gazetteer and Business Directory of Windsor County, Vt. for 1883-1884 lists Maxham as a dairy farmer with 150 acres of land, 12 cows, and a 500-tree sugar orchard. The shift from sheep to dairy farming is typical of the time, when the regional railway system had evolved to the point at which milk could be delivered to urban markets and cattle feed brought in from the Midwest. Bridgewater's Grand List for 1883 indicates that the farm consisted of a 150-acre homestead with a 30-acre woodlot. In addition, Maxham owned the 90-acre "Bradford Pasture" in Bridgewater Hollow.

On 27 May 1910 George and Ida Maxham sold the property to Ellis F. "Ellie" Eaton for \$1.00. With the departure of the Maxham family, the property's days as an owner-occupied farm came to an end. After a succession of short-term owners, the property was purchased in 1912 by Frank E. and Sadie McGlinchy of Ashland, KY. The McGlinchys appear to have planned a new house, however Frank's death in 1914 put an end to that project. His widow Sadie moved to Taunton, MA but continued to own and presumably rent out Montague Farm. While at least some of the tenants occupying the property were farmers, the existing structures no longer contributed to the value of the property. In 1936 Sadie McGlinchy conveyed the farm to Caroline Weed Parmenter, who sold it four days later to John (Jack) Irton and Mary Harrison Wylde of Dover, MA. The Wylde family demolished the existing house and barns, replacing them with the present house, designed by Jack Wylde's architect brother Cecil C. Wylde. The property has remained in the Wylde family for three generations, and is now owned by Jack Wylde's grandson, Philip Fairfax Swiny.

The diminishing viability of Montague Farm appears to have been less a matter of declining productivity than of externalities and increasing opportunities. Presumably a Vermont hill farm offered increased opportunities to the third son of a South Hadley farmer with marginal prospects at home. In each of the next two generations, the farm provided an adequate living for a single son yet not so much as to support two or more. The younger Montague sons, like their father and grandfather, left to seek their fortunes elsewhere, either locally or as part of the ongoing westward expansion.



Montague Farm Barn Being Demolished in 1936
(Courtesy of Helena Wylde Swiny)

Bassett Family Settlement in Bridgewater

By John Atwood

The regeneration of secondary forests exhibit quilt-like patterns that reflect Vermont's changing agriculture. One has only to compare early 20th century photos to today's landscapes to note the evolution of our countryside. Early *Vermont Life* issues show photos of more open fields and pastures, often graced with mature American elms. Progressive field regeneration often with conifers has created the forest patterns we see today. This is a short account of the Bassett family settlement from settler Hayward Bassett to the children of Talmadge W. Bassett on what is now called the Kellogg Road (named after later residents).

Hayward and his brother, Zachariah, settled on the southeastern part of the Kellogg Road. According to Bridgewater land records (LR Book 3, pp. 43 and 45), both acquired land in Bridgewater from Jedediah Damon in 1793. Gordon Tuttle has determined that each Bassett acquired a long rectangular plot of 100 acres, both contiguous and parallel. As an interesting side note, Hayward and his brother each married sisters with the maiden name of Damon, inferring land acquisition linked with marrying into the Damon family.

1. **Hayward Bassett** (1754-1844). The given name is most likely derived from the mother's maiden surname, Mary Hayward, but it is often misspelled as Howard. A veteran of the American Revolution, Hayward enlisted (spring 1776) in Roxbury and fought in the Battle of Flatbush before being discharged at Ramapaw, New Jersey. Hayward may have lived his entire Bridgewater life on the Kellogg Road. He came to Bridgewater in 1789 (Revw Veterans Who Lived in Bridgewater, VT), but his domicile is unclear between that date and 1793. Hayward acquired an additional 17 acres from Elisha Gillett in 1803 (LR Book 5, p. 39) located on Ohio Hill (Gordon Tuttle).

No extant records reveal how Hayward made his living, but he most likely followed the pattern of other subsistence farmers--at first clearing for farming and harvesting timber for building materials. He probably made potash from felled trees as a cash product, supplementing his income with growing vegetables for winter storage while fishing and hunting game. Hayward's initial success would depend on taking advantage of all available resources, and exploitation was not limited by environmental ethics. He undoubtedly raised sheep with the introduction of the Merino (1810-1815) creating an exquisite landscape such as one might find in Yorkshire, but the environment was on its way to collapse. He had several children including Seth detailed below (at least three children died in infancy). Hayward is buried in the Kellogg Cemetery.

2. **Seth Bassett** (1787-1876) came with his parents to Bridgewater at age two. He acquired land from his parents (1821, LR Book 8, p. 39) and additional land from James Woodward (1820, LR Book 7, p. 372), John Woodward (1843, LR Book 14, p. 48), Timothy and Wm. Grow, Jr. (1822, LR Book 8, pp. 104, 105), John Pratt (1851, LR Book 9, p. 430), and Nathan Lamb (1857, LR Book 16). The Hosea Doton map (1856) shows Seth still located on the SE portion of the Kellogg Road which was probably on land settled by Hayward. By 1869 S. Bassett is indicated on Beers Atlas map SE of the cemetery, and his son, John Sutherland Bassett (J. S. Bassett) to the NW of the cemetery and just SE of the B. Robinson farm. Seth had released land to his son, John Sutherland Bassett (1841, LR Book 12, p. 245), where he was living (Federal Census) in 1850. He died in 1876 and is buried in the 'Bassett' Cemetery (now, the Kellogg Cemetery). Seth apparently lived the rest of his life on the Kellogg Road.

3. **John Sutherland Bassett** (1817-1900). The Federal Census of 1850 indicates that JSB was a farmer living with his wife (Rachel E. White) and children in Bridgewater and where he was still living in 1880 (Federal Census). The 1900 Federal Census indicates he was in Bridgewater with his son, Seth Hayward Bassett where he died.

In addition to receiving land from his father he acquired land from Isa Raymond (1847, LR Book 14, p. 278), and Churchill & Raymond (1864, LR. Book 18, pp. 390, 391). He released land to seven individuals, but none to his daughters or sons. Beers Atlas (1869) shows JSB living on the Kellogg Road just SE from the Bulah Robinson place. Although buried in the Kellogg Cemetery (genealogy by Jeffrey Bassett), no memorial has been found there. He likely died poor, perhaps a victim of depleted soils.

Bassett Family Settlement in Bridgewater

4. **Seth Hayward Bassett** (1845-1927) was John S. Bassett's son and who married Betsey Olinda Wyman in Woodstock in 1871. John Atwood, Sr. once indicated that she taught school at the Bridgewater Hollow school house located at the north end of the Kellogg Road. Seth H. Bassett acquired land from E. B. Hathaway & Lydia Huntoon in Bridgewater (1875, LR Book 20, p. 649) but none from JSB. By 1880 (Federal Census) Seth moved to Barnard with his wife and children, including Talmadge Wyman Bassett and Earnest [sic] E. Bassett. By 1890, Seth had acquired land in Bridgewater from E. W. Sherwin (LR Book 22, p. 295), and by 1900 (Federal Census) he had returned to Bridgewater with his wife and son, Ernest E., and father, J. S. Bassett in the same household, probably on what is now Phelps Road. By 1920 (Federal Census) he was living with his son Ernest to whom 100 acres was passed (1932, LR Book 29, p. 526).

5. **Talmadge Wyman Bassett** (1872-1941) and brother, Ernest E. Bassett (1878-1947) lived in Bridgewater when young with their father, S. H. Bassett. They are listed in the Federal Census of 1880 as living in Barnard. But the census of 1900 indicates that all had returned to Bridgewater, including Ernest living separately with father, Seth H. Bassett. Talmadge had formed his own household having married Alura Carrie Bennett at the end of Phelps road and lived at the Ira Bennett farm which he acquired. They had five children, Lena, Walter, Marjorie, Milton and his twin sister, Mable. Marjorie Bassett, married Reno Atwood, a farmer on North Bridgewater Road with a family farm that was productive for the time. Brother Walter became a carpenter living in West Woodstock, Sister Lena had moved to Connecticut, and Mable died as a teenager. Both Talmadge and his brother Ernest were living on the Phelps Road as contiguous neighbors by at least 1940, and this family line was not to return to the Kellogg Road. A distant cousin, Frank (or Francis?) P. Bassett, is said to have owned about 1400 acres on the Kellogg Road, but it is unclear if he ever lived there.



Talmadge Bassett in front of the Bridgewater Hollow School

6. **Milton A. Bassett** (1905-1987). Milton and his wife, Cecile Prior Bassett, took over the Talmadge W. Bassett farm in 1940 (LR Book 31, pp. 165, 166). Seeking a more productive farm, he and his family moved to Woodstock ca. 1945 where their son, Albert Milton now resides. The Woodstock farm is contiguous with that purchased by sister Marjorie Bassett Atwood and husband Reno ca. 1943. The Bridgewater farm was sold to several parties, including a brother (Walter) and uncle (Carrol Bennett).

The Bassett families normally passed land to at least one of their children by purchase or by gift. If the lack of land transfers to children of John Sutherland Bassett is due to poverty, a statement by Frank Shurtleff that the Kellogg Road supported the community for only three generations is probably true. Although JSB is said to have been buried in the Kellogg Cemetery, no permanent marker has been found.

The story of subsistence farming by the Hayward Bassett family and descendants is surely similar to those of other Bridgewater families. These are stories of ordinary people, and landscape patterns from now regenerated land is the result of their brave efforts. When Hayward came to Bridgewater, the landscape was probably as mature as it had ever been with trees that would be familiar today, but individuals would have been immense. Beech trees would have been more abundant than now, and fall color would have been dominated by yellow. Still, there were maples in the area, a fact that allowed Asa Jones access to sugar production, as related by his son Abner. Fields that survived the 19th century remained open with fertilizer applications maintaining soil fertility but contributing to stream pollution. The Bassetts could not be concerned with progressive soil depletion, loss of top predators and game animals, or stream pollution. Their concern was competition with farms close to railroads and those with more fertile soils on flat land lacking stones. The movement of the Bassetts was motivated by opportunities available to them taking them elsewhere out of the Kellogg Road altogether. A quotation from Klyza and Trombulak (p. 224) is appropriate here "...Vermont is adaptive when needs demand and resilient in the face of constant change," and the Bassett family story is one of adaptation.

Come to our exhibit this summer and see the photograph of the Bassett family reunion (ca. 1907) with key to participants including several Bassetts mentioned above. You may find a relative there!

Bassett Family Reunion



Acknowledgments

Gordon Tuthill shared his carefully researched knowledge of Bridgewater land ownership. Albert and Anne Bassett shared their knowledge of family history and loaned the Bassett family photograph scanned for the exhibit. Nancy Robinson facilitated access to vital and land records.

Source and Background Materials

Albers, J. 2000. *Hands on the Land*. The MIT Press.
Bassett family genealogy compiled by Jeffrey Bassett, 520 Salceda Dr., Mundelein, IL
Klyza, C. M. and Trombulak, S.C. 1999. *The Story of Vermont*. The Middlebury Press.
Wessels, T. 1999. *Reading the Forested Landscape*. The Countryman Press, Paperback Edition

Milk can from the Phelps Dairy Farm. The farm was previously owned by Talmadge Bassett



Silo Styles



Nelson Lee Barn



Ernest Bassett Barn

While doing research and collecting photographs for this summer's exhibit Farming and Families in Bridgewater, we noticed a distinctive style for the top of the silos on two of the local barns. They both show small 'houses' on top, as opposed to a conical shape or a-frame top. Originally the silage was pitched out by hand. Then silo unloaders were invented which worked by electric motors. They were stored in the top of the silo and then lowered down by cables as the silage was fed out.

The first photo shows the silo at the Nelson Lee farm, which was probably built by the previous owner, Reno Atwood. The second photo shows the silo at what was the Ernest Bassett farm on Phelps Road, now owned by the Tyler family. As Reno Atwood married Margaret Bassett, from the farm on Phelps Road, it is quite possible that the silos were built by the same person.

This style also appeared on the silo at the Maxham Farm on the Pomfret Road, where Chippers is now. Bruce Maxham, having grown up there, recalled helping his grandfather build it.

After contacting both Tom Visser, at UVM and author of "A Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings, and John Porter, creator of presentation "The History of Agriculture as Told by Barns" and author of "Preserving Old Barns: Preventing the Loss of a Valuable Resource", we now know that this style is unique to this area.

Opening for the Season

The Bridgewater Historical Society will be open the 2nd and 4th Saturdays from 10am to 2pm, from May 28th to October 8th.

Come see the new display -

Farming and Families in Bridgewater.

Free and open to the public, handicap accessible.



Kenneth and Lilian Atwood on the David Thompson homestead (North Bridgewater, ca. 1920-1930), then a less fertile subsistence farm. The farm is now owned by Charles Shackleton and Miranda Thomas.

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