

# BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Nov 2019

Issue No. Sixteen



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](http://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

Program are currently in the planning stage. Let us know if you have a program suggestion.



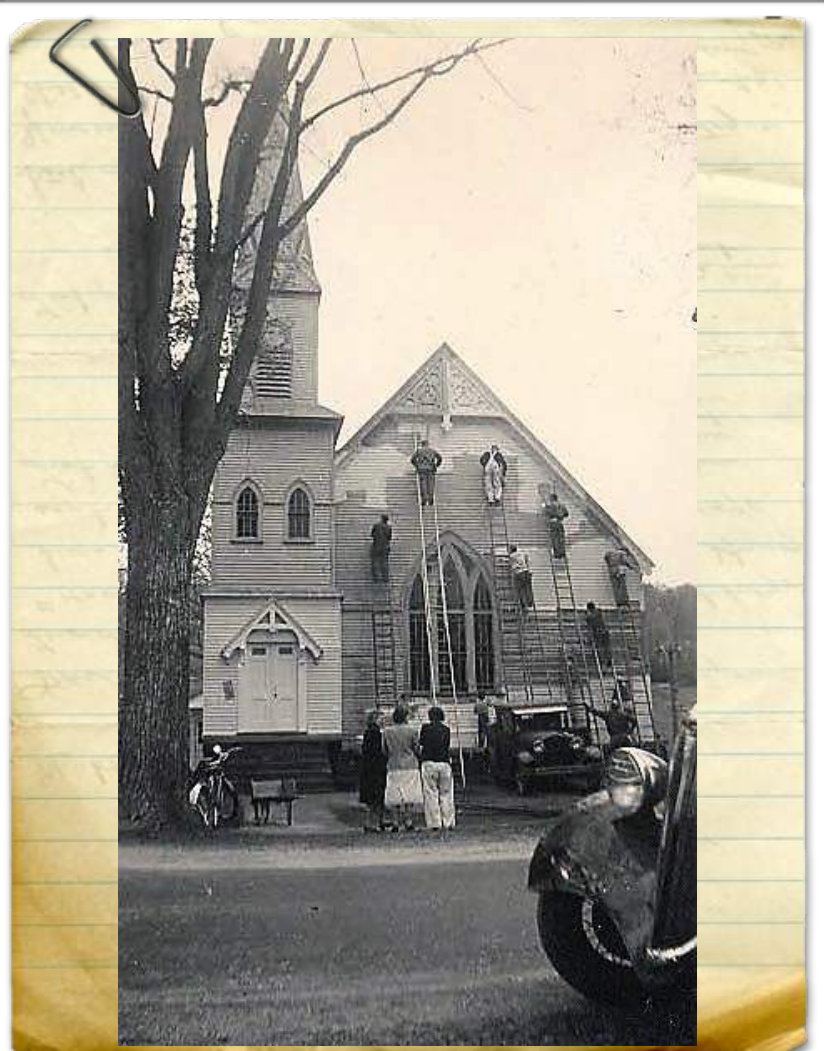
Work on the Bridgewater Congregational Church 1944

### 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



## Letter From the President

By Polly Timken

The Bridgewater Historical Society is thriving. We have had a very successful season. Our speakers' programs have all been well attended. **Howard Coffin** opened with "Vermont and 1816, The Year Without A Summer". **The Vermont Civil War Heritage Trail Group** gave a presentation on their projects. **Steve Taylor** spoke on the history of the Grange Movement. **Carrie Brown** presented her book "Rosie's Mom – Forgotten Women of the First World War. **Cassie Horner** talked about her book "Lucy E - The Road to Victory". **Erwin Fullerton's** presentation of "Every Tool Has a Story" closed out our season with his presentation of antique tools. Links to the program videos are available on our website.



Howard Coffin

The Society received an **Award of Merit in Publications** from the Vermont Historical Society for our bi-annual newsletter. The judges appreciated the research and historical content of the newsletter and the fact that we produce it twice a year. They were impressed with our coverage of 20<sup>th</sup> Century topics. All issues are available on our website.

Additional publishing news revolves around Robert Kirby and Gordon Tuthills' publication of "**Chronicling Bridgewater**", covering their research into the original proprietors of Bridgewater. An interview with the Vermont Standard recognizes the years of work on Gordon's part and the copious ground and research covered by Bob. It is a valuable resource for any research into the early history of the town.

The Society was also able to reprint the very popular "**Bridgewater, 1779-1976**", by Gladys Adams.

Our membership continues to be very generous not only with the annual fund but with donations to our collection. **Harold Booth** was kind enough to donate many items from his family's collection of photos, tools, and antique clothes. The Butternut wood desk and the Edison Victrola are just part of the family story involving the sawmill and stretcher mill his parents and grandparents ran.

The summer exhibits reflect two prominent citizens. "**Richard E. Thompson and the 302<sup>nd</sup> Motor Transport Corps**" and "**Harland Booth – Work, Family and Leisure**". We had many visitors stopping in to enjoy them as well as reminisce.

The summer season finished up with our participation at the annual Bridgewater Celebration in August. We always receive many visitors viewing our displays.

We look forward to next year and another busy season and welcome anyone who might be interested in doing research or helping with our events and exhibits.



## THE 1918 SPANISH INFLUENZA AND HOW IT AFFECTED OUR AREA

By Jeannette Sawyer

One hundred one years ago in the late summer and fall of 1918 there was an outbreak of a highly contagious illness, called the Spanish Influenza. This disease spread rapidly across the world and in fifteen months killed fifty to a hundred million people, at least six percent of the Earth's population. It was said to have started in two places, Camp Funston, Haskell County, Kansas and Fort Devens military base, Massachusetts, where American troops were assembled for transport to Europe to fight in World War I. The disease quickly spread into Vermont through the transportation centers of St. Johnsbury, St. Albans, White River Junction, Rutland, in the more populated communities of Burlington and its neighboring towns, Barre and Montpelier.

Vermont civilian population fell victim to this illness that struck without warning and, unlike previous epidemics, attacked people in the prime of their lives rather than the very young and very old. It typically ran its course in three weeks, but could kill victims in three days or less. Without the aid of antibiotics or antiviral medicines, physicians were unable to treat cases or its complications, being frequently pneumonia. They were reduced to making diagnoses, treating symptoms, and recording the cause of death. The huge numbers of dead bodies overwhelmed the hospitals, undertakers and cemeteries. Quarantine centers and emergency hospitals were set up, public use of gauze masks and awareness campaigns were all undertaken swiftly to stop the spread. The State Department also issued warnings about kissing.

There was a critical shortage of doctors and nurses as many had already been deployed overseas or were serving in military bases elsewhere. By mid-September, it was so dire that the senior class of medical students at the University of Vermont was pressed into field service and newspapers called on healthy and capable women to take on nursing duties.

By the end of September, town medical officers had exercised their authority to close all public meeting places; schools, churches, places of entertainment and a statewide ban on all public meetings went into effect on October 4<sup>th</sup>.

The flu subsided in November just as World War I came to an end, but less severe outbreaks continued into February 1919. Statistics reported by the Vermont Board of Health for 1918 show the devastation. In a state with a population of 355,956 in the 1910 census, there were 43,735 cases of influenza in 1918, resulting in 1,772 deaths which was 25 percent of the total deaths for the year. Like most Americans, Vermonters celebrated the end of the Great War, which was a much bigger news story than the end of the flu, even though the pandemic claimed five times as many American lives.

*Continued on page 6*



Fort Devens



1918 Post-card to Myra Thompson about Richard Thompson at Ft. Devens. "R. is all right. He is still quarantined. H.T.

## “Chronicling Bridgewater”

By Polly Timken

August 22, 2019, was a significant day for both the Bridgewater Historical Society and the Town of Bridgewater. Bob Kirby and Gordon Tuthill published their book “Chronicling Bridgewater”.

After attending last season’s talk here by Gordon, Bob Kirby realized that any unwritten material on the settling of Bridgewater would get lost if not collected in a book. Gordon, over the past 60 years, has not only researched land records and created photocopies of 300 deeds but has also digitized three books of land records. However, there is no existing plotting map of the original settlers properties. So Bob took it upon himself to research the original proprietors and where they were from.



Neil Allen, Editor of the Vermont Standard, interviewed Bob Kirby and Gordon Tuthill on August 29<sup>th</sup>.

This research took Bob up and down the CT River Valley, to find the names of the proprietors. He has pieced together their biographies and now hopes that someone out there might have a copy or knowledge of where an original plotting map for the town might be. The Historical Society is indebted to them both for tackling the “lost” key to the Town History.

“Chronicling Bridgewater” is available for \$20 by contacting Jeannette Sawyer.

### WELCOME HOME - WWI

“Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976”

by Gladys S. Adams

On Saturday Oct 4 1919 Bridgewater held a “Welcome Home” celebration for the soldiers. A parade was formed at the Young Men’s Social Club house and consisted of the band and the soldiers who marched to the hotel and then to the ball field. There was a ball game between Bridgewater and Hartland, followed by races, games and a tug-of-war. The outdoor activities came to a sudden end with the arrival of a thunder storm. “Everyone came up in double quick time except the band, twenty eight soldiers and three Civil War veterans.”

An oyster supper was served from five to eight thirty PM at the hotel to about five hundred people. The Woolen Company ran two movie shows to accommodate those who could not be served at the first table and the second for those who were.

100 years ago

Later there was dancing at the hall and then a third movie show for waitresses and workers who had been unable to see the other two.

The speaker of the day was Rev. R. W. Barstow of Woodstock whose subject was “True Democracy”.



## BHS Receives an Award

By Polly Timken

The Bridgewater Historical Society is proud to announce that they have received an Award of Merit for the bi-annual publication of their newsletter. The Vermont Historical Society presented the group their League of Local Historical Societies and Museums Achievement in Montpelier on September 29, 2019.

The Vermont Historical Society judges appreciated the research and historical content of the newsletter and the fact that it is produced it twice a year. Of particular interest was the coverage of 20<sup>th</sup> Century topics.

The Bridgewater Historical Society Newsletter is produced by a small group of volunteers with input from the membership at large. Copies of the newsletter are accessible via the web site [www.bridgewaterhistory.org](http://www.bridgewaterhistory.org).



Ernest and Nancy Kendall, Audrey Putnam and Jeannette Sawyer

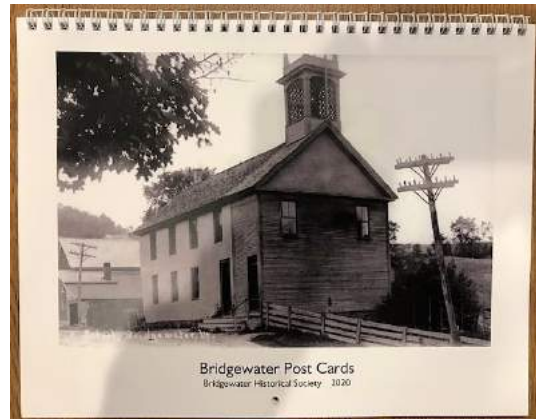
### 100th Birthday Celebration

Bridgewater Historical Society charter member Olive Greenough celebrated her 100th birthday November 2nd, 2019 in the recently restored basement of the Congregational Church. Amazing Lady!!



### Just in time for the Holidays

The Bridgewater Historical Society 2020 calendar is now available. The theme is postcards from Bridgewater. Cost is \$10.00. You may purchase a calendar by contacting Jeannette Sawyer at 802-672-3745. Calendars are also available at the Maple Leaf Farm on Route 100A in Bridgewater Corners, the Thrift Shop in the Mill and Bridgewater Diner.



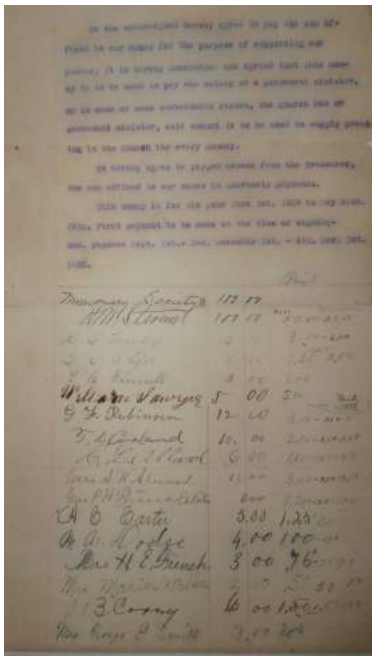


# Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

We are the lucky recipients of a very interesting document relating to the Congregational Church. Lisa and Michael Olmstead gave the Society a document that lists the pledges made in 1909-10 towards the support of a full time minister for the church. Robert Kirby was kind enough to pay for the document's restoration done by Corey Barbis in Woodstock.

The typed ledger has signatures from 57 residents. They gave a total of \$548 with \$100 coming from the "Missionary Society". Payments were made in installments on June 1, 1909, September 1<sup>st</sup>, December 1<sup>st</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910. All the payments were in cash with the exception of \$5 "paid in wood".



The document sheds light on a period when the congregation's membership was really a reflection of the whole community. The value of each pledge was a large financial commitment for many, and illustrates their pride in the town as well as the church.



The Historical Society would like to express their appreciation for the current volunteers who are assisting the Church in the restoration of the building. Without the church, the town risks losing one of the few central gathering places for the community to come together.

Darrell Thompson has donated a leather wallet belonging to William Gates. (1825-1879). Gates married Harriet Roena Fish (1830-1897). She was the sister of Sarah G. Fish Thompson (DeAlgeroy Thompson's widow). The wallet contains a scrap of toile fabric with a print of pigs and a boar at the trough, in a calico bag. The scrap of fabric in the wallet travelled around the world several times as William Gates was a sailor early in life. He subsequently became a farmer, living in Shrewsbury, Vermont and was buried in Bridgewater. They are both buried in the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Bridgewater, just South of DeAlgeroy and Sarah Thompson.





*Bridgewater Village School 1913 upper grades*

- Student Names  
Left to Right
- Back Row  
Addie Brock  
Hazel Rahue  
Stella Dandonneau  
Lucy Robinson  
Moe  
Glenn Woods
- Middle Row  
Percy Solger  
Ralph Robinson  
Harry Yetman  
Mildred Taylor  
Blanche Curtis  
Mildred Potwin
- Front Row  
Lola Thompson  
Oleila Jasmin  
Nellie Hamilton  
Corinne Dandonneau  
Phyllis Smith  
Wilmer Yetman

