

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Oct 2022

Issue No. Twenty Two



circa. 1911

Monthly meetings

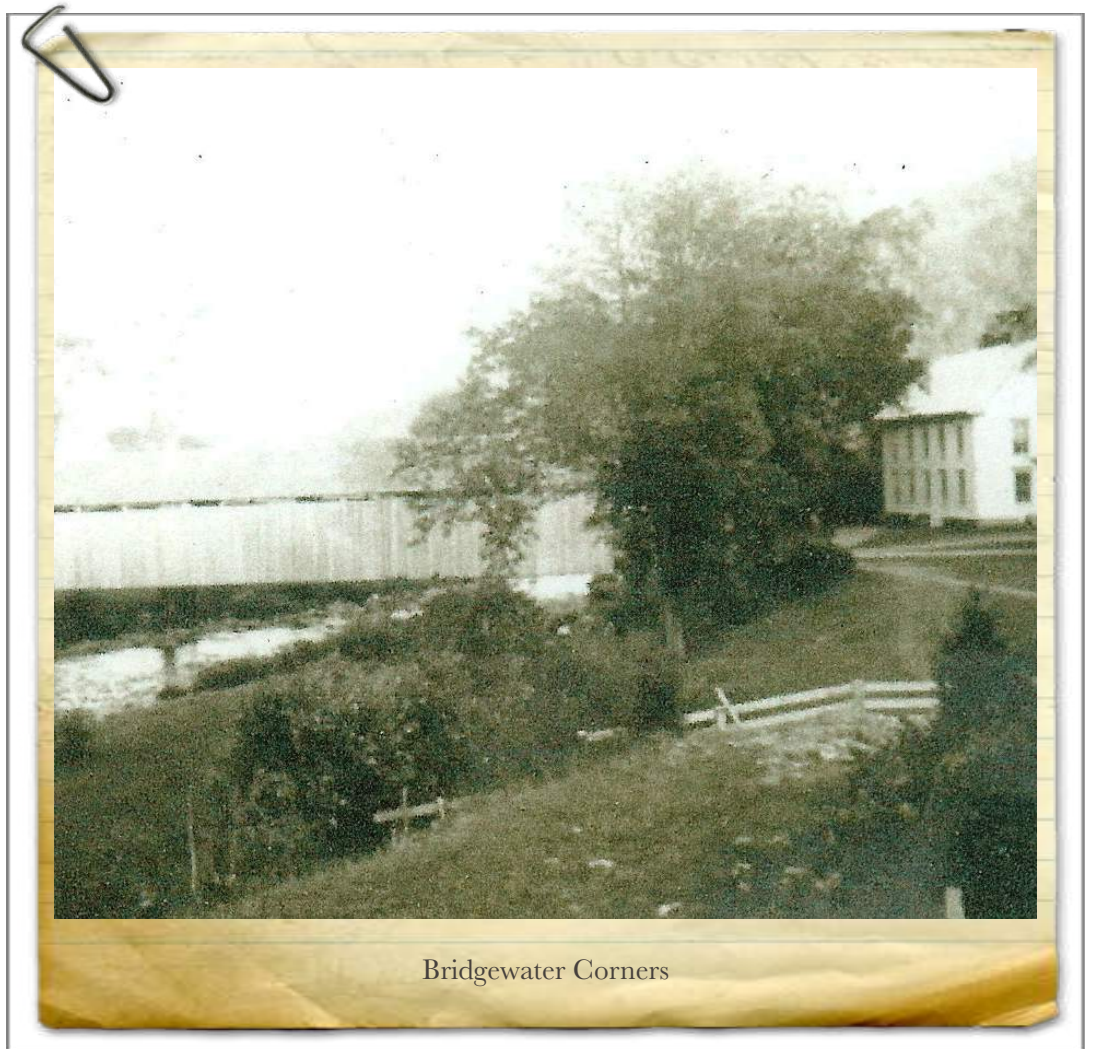
held last Tuesday
of each month at 6:30 p.m.
Old Brick School House
12 North Bridgewater Road
Bridgewater, VT 05034
www.bridgewaterhistory.org

BHS OFFICERS

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

BHS DIRECTORS

John Atwood
Barry Griggs
Melinda Griggs
Elisha Lee
Alice Paglia
Karol Messier
Jeannette Sawyer
Sondra Stevens
Chris Stevens



Bridgewater Corners

Letter From the President

By Polly Timken

The Bridgewater Historical Society has concluded a very successful season. The visitor numbers were up primarily due to the summer exhibit, "Farms and Families of Bridgewater". We had photos as well as tools on exhibit. If you haven't been able to take it in yet, you can email bridgewaterhistoricalsociety@gmail.com for an appointment.

Our speakers included Howard Coffin, speaking on the tragedy at the Mt. Washington Cog Railway and his subsequent journalism career; Charlie Shackleton, "Finding Endurance" and Elisha Lee, "Gold Mines in Bridgewater 1851-1924". They were all well received and it has worked well to hold the events at the Bridgewater Grange. For those that couldn't make it, please go to our web site, Bridgewaterhistory.org, for a link to the videos.

Looking for Friday night fun? Every Friday Chris Stevens posts on Facebook a photo from our collection. Tune in and offer your thoughts on who or what the subject is.

Sadly, we lost both Ernest Kendall and Audrey Putnam. Their experiences growing up and living in Bridgewater served us well whenever we had a question or just wanted to hear local stories.

Members have not been idle this year. Please catch up with them in the articles about their hike to Kellogg Cemetery, the trip to Shackleton's Furniture Mill, and the trip to Governor Wentworth's house in Portsmouth, NH

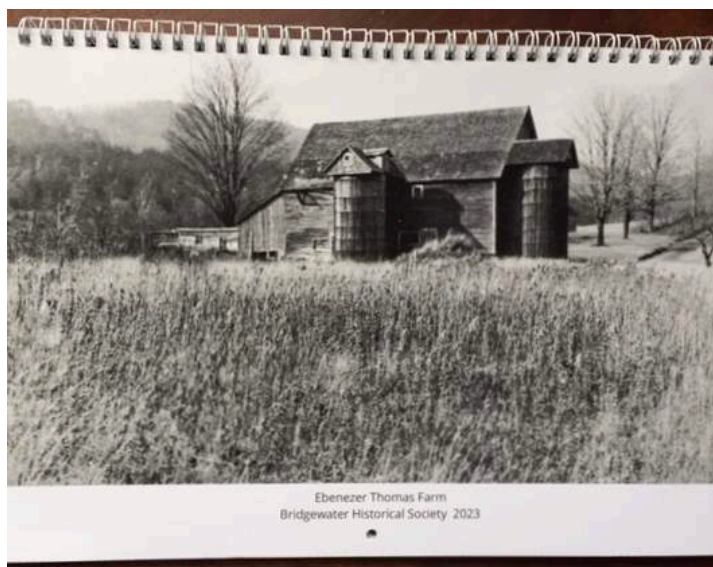
The Society is gearing up for next season. We welcome to the Board Elisha Lee. He will bring us experience with his previous volunteer board job at the Dover, MA, Historical Society. I return as President and Bob Kancir as Vice President. The crew now consists of Melinda and Barry Griggs, Chris and Julie Stevens, Bob and Sue Kancir, Jeannette Sawyer, Alice Paglia, Sondra Stevens, John Atwood, Karole Messier and Elisha Lee.

The Society's financial situation remains solid and our membership is still strong even as many groups lost support during COVID. We will spend the winter planning next season's exhibit.

Please stay in contact.

Bridgewater Historical Society 2023 Calendar

Just in time for the holidays! A perfect gift featuring 13 beautiful photos of "Farming and Families of Bridgewater Past." The calendar is available at Bridgewater Town office, Shackleton Thomas at the mill and Maple Leaf Farm. Price is \$12.



BHS on the Move

By Chris Stevens

Cellar Holes on the Kellogg Lot

In early May, board members John Atwood, Bruce Maxham, Sondra Stevens and Chris Stevens, along with Stanley Robinson and new landowner Dan Bollag, walked the Kellogg Lot off Goldcoast Road to research cellar holes. Many of the stone cellar holes were able to be located and there appeared to be an abundance of stone structure foundations as well as stone walls that we could see, mostly matching the older maps the group used. The prevalence of stones probably says something about the suitability of agriculture, mechanized or not. The group learned much from Stanley, who spent years logging the area, and Sondra, who rode horses on and mowed the property. John and Chris brought older maps to help locate the old school and some cellar holes. Dan was surprised to learn that there were so many buildings in the area long ago. The trip ended at the Kellogg Cemetery. Sondra Stevens and Butch Wardwell did a wonderful job cleaning up the cemetery this spring, and helped Tom Giffin and crew from VOCA (Vermont Old Cemeteries Association) repair gravestones in early June.

Tour of the Shackleton Thomas Furniture Shop

On Tuesday, August 30th, Charles Shackleton gave five BHS board members (Barry Griggs, Melinda Griggs, Jeannette Sawyer, Chris Stevens and Julie Stevens) a private tour of Shackleton Thomas at the Bridgewater Mill. What a treat it was to see the beautiful furniture and pottery, the amazing workspaces, and the interesting photos and timeline. In his entertaining manner, Charles explained the histories of his family, his business, and the building. We are fortunate to have such skilled artisans in our town!

Wentworth Coolidge Mansion

By Bob Kancir

We recently visited and had a tour of the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion located on the banks of Little Harbor in Portsmouth New Hampshire. It was the home of Benning Wentworth (July 24, 1696 – October 14, 1770) who served as the governor of New Hampshire from 1741 to 1766. While serving as governor, Wentworth is best known for issuing land grants in territory claimed by the Province of New Hampshire west of the Connecticut River, which led to disputes with the neighboring colony of New York and the eventual creation of Vermont. Three of the land grants issued by Wentworth in 1761 became the towns of Bridgewater, Hartland and Woodstock. He continued making land grants from this house until 1764, when the Crown imposed a moratorium.

The mansion, a National Historic Landmark, is a 40 room clapboard structure. Its odd appearance was a result of its construction by moving and joining preexisting buildings and adding new wings, to make a single composite building. This also led to an interesting maze of rooms with odd shapes, sizes and ceiling heights. The tour takes you up and down staircases at varying widths and steepness through three wings of the mansion that appear to be intended, for formal entertaining, family life and servants work.

The house descended through the Wentworth Family until 1816, when it was acquired by the Cushing Family who farmed it. In the 1840's they began showing it to the public. It was one of America's first historic houses open to the public.

Continued on page 4



Benning Wentworth portrait by Joseph Blackburn (1790),
as installed in great parlor
source Wikimedia

Wentworth Coolidge Mansion

continued from page 3



Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

source Wikimedia

In 1866 the Coolidge Family bought it and restored and expanded it with the help of Sumner Appleton, who had founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. (Now known as Historic New England.) Coolidge used the house as a summer home. Photos from the home dating 1937 show the house furnished with an assortment of antiques, arranged to satisfy the interest in Colonial Revival movement, prominent in the early 20th C. His widow, Mary Parsons Coolidge, donated the mansion to the State of NH in 1954.

Sources:

New Hampshire State Parks
 Chronicling The Early History of Bridgewater, Vermont
 1741-1791,
 F. Gordon Tuthill & Robert P. Kirby
 Wikipedia

Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

We have been given a sample box of wool by Charlie Astbury. It was passed on to him by Sam and Carolyn Stevens, who had bought it from an auction of household items in 1977.

The tiny samples, no bigger than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch square, turn out to have been dyed various colors. The vibrancy of the colors has faded over time due to contact with the acid in the wood of the box. However, upon turning a few over, one can see the wonderful variety. Each square was numbered.

We are not sure at what stage these samples would have been used. Were they for the dyers to use when dyeing a new lot of raw wool? Were they for the designers, when picking colors for various weaves? As they were dyed, we don't think they were samples from raw wool suppliers.

There is as much to be learned about the actual process of procuring and dyeing raw wool, as there is about weaving the finished product. We would appreciate anyone contacting us with anything they might know about this box, or the steps involved.



Sample Box

Growing up in Bridgewater Corners

By Walter Houghton

When I was five, we bought a house and moved to Bridgewater Corners. Growing up there was like a paradise for little kids. We had 15 acres, a maple sugar woods, a barn with two cows, occasional pigs, chickens and even Mallard ducks. We lived along the bank of the Ottauquechee River across from the now Long Trail Brewery and it was our domain. My brother Bobby is three years younger than me and we always had chores to do with all the animals and chickens but ample time to play. Down by the river there was an old apple tree and we would pretend it was a B-17 bomber flying over Germany. We, along with Dean Fraser from Fraser's Store down at the Corners, would fly in it for hours. We had welding goggles, inner tubes for Mae West life jackets and machine guns and other pretend stuff up there. When we were shot down by the Messerschmidts we would simply bail out! Funny thing how are interests were in airplanes way back then as all three of us still make a living in aviation! We also had a whole airfield upstairs in our garage. It was a thirty-foot-long military air base painted on the floor, with all kinds of models, hangars and buildings. It was once featured in a Boston newspaper! Our parents always knew where we were because it was an all-time consuming hobby. Our neighborhood kids that we hung around with were Dean, Bub and Johnny Rogers. Bub was like our big brother and we would be together doing stuff almost daily. I went to Bridgewater Corners School for first grade. This involved walking through the woods and in the snow in the winter. I used to tell my kids "I walked three miles to school, uphill, both ways, in the snow!" That was a gross exaggeration for me, but not for the McKinstry kids who walked down off Bridgewater Hill every day, including first graders! And they used to tell us of bear sightings along the way! The scariest thing we had were occasional spotted adders (milk snakes). My mother would go hysterical at seeing one. We would run to get the hoe and she would scream all the while chopping it up. They were some tough snakes but not welcome on our property! I guess they are probably on the endangered species list now. I worked out at an early age, pulling yellow rocket weed out of farmer's fields for 10 cents an Hr. or helping Carroll Adams with haying. No bales back then, just loose hay and pitchforks!



Bridgewater Corners looking west from the Upper Road showing Miner Garage on the left with Corners Store further along Route 4 on left

Bridgewater Corners School

From Gladys S. Adams "Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976"

School District #6 - 1869

The school house at Bridgewater Corners was originally located on the upper road near Karl Houghton's driveway and Karl Houghton says he has plowed up bricks on the spot where the building stood. In 1872 it was referred to as the "old hillside school house at Bridgewater Corners with an enrollment of thirty four scholars." In 1884 Charles H. Bugbee was the school committee, Abbie Abbott of Barnard taught the summer term and Henry Weymouth of Sherburne taught the winter term.

Bridgewater Corners school house was destroyed by fire on the night of Feb 5 1890. The school children of that day imagined they would have a long vacation but classes were held the very next day at the Grange Hall. The new school house was built just over the iron bridge and opposite the Grange Hall.

1893 pupils were: George and Walter Branch, Bessie Bugbee, Georgie Carter, Ellen, Lewis and Vera Chamberlain, Edgar Chapman, Coyt, Lena and Lydia Dimick, Abbie Gibbs, Christine Johnson, Nellie Josselyn, Clytie, Leon and Mabel Lucas, Rosie Morse, Everett, Harold and Hallie Perkins, Nellie Potter, Cheney and Julian Robinson, Florence and Wilmer Shattuck, Alfred, Gertie, Myrtle, Nora and Sara Vaughan and Carrie Weatherbee.



Bridgewater Corners School on the Upper Road



Bridgewater Corners School 1953

In 1945 Bridgewater Corners school house was modernized and given a new wood shed and inside toilets. Since 1953 it has been closed and reopened several times. 1976 it was used for first grade only.

Blacksmiths

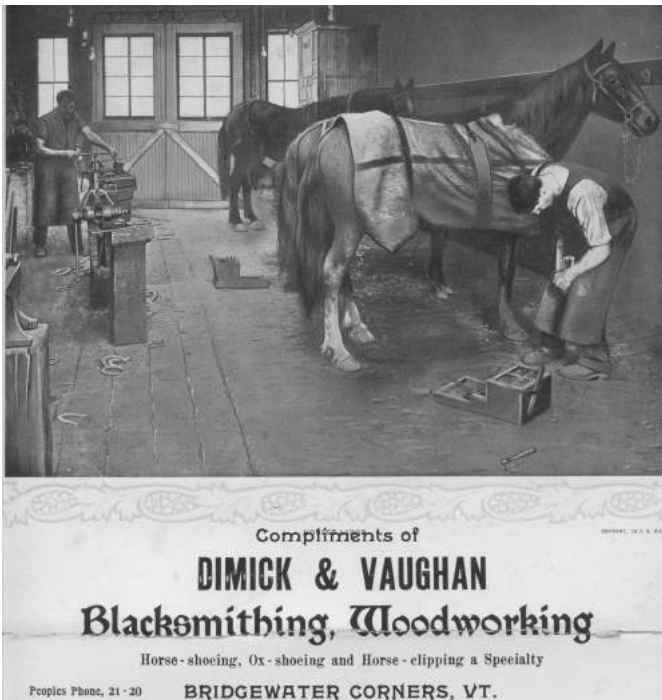
MINER BROTHERS

From Gladys S. Adams "Bridgewater Vermont 1779-1976"



Gerald and Harold Miner

Gerald and Harold Miner had both a blacksmith shop and a garage for a few years. They were in the garage business until 1950 when Gerald went into the store business in West Woodstock and Harold opened a store at the Corners which lasted until about 1960 when route 4 was widened. Gerald Miner also used a car to go about as a traveling blacksmith.



Brenda Badger gave us this poster advertising her grandfather Vaughan's Blacksmith Shop. She found it in the Vaughan House, which is now owned by the Long Trail Brewery, at the SW corner of RTs 4 and 100A.

We think it was a sample for a calendar, provided by a printing company, along with the stock photo of a blacksmith shop, as the bottom half is blank



Bridgewater Corners

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