

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer Issue 2024



Dear Members:

Back in the Spring newsletter it was mentioned that “surely the weather will soon turn warm. This has been a chilly and windy March so far”. It just goes to show that one needs to be careful what they ask for as the temps are now in the mid 90s with humidity levels to match!



***Bridgewater Kindergarten
Class of 1966***

We are excited to announce a **Bridgewater Kindergarten Reunion Open House** on Saturday **July 20th, 2024** from 11:00am to 1:00pm or until. Our Museum

Bridgewater Historical Society
109 South Main St., Bridgewater, VA

building housed the Bridgewater Kindergarten for many years sponsored by the Bridgewater Women’s Club. Rockingham County did not offer public kindergarten until after 1975. Be sure to see the flyer in the back of this newsletter. The Bridgewater Kindergarten ran from 1952 until 1975 so we know there are lots of former students out there and Women’s Club members who helped. We also are the repository for the annual scrapbooks compiled by the Bridgewater Women’s Club listing what they did through out the year as well as what the kindergarten was doing. Using those records we were able to find out that our esteemed **Bridgewater Town Manager – Jay Litten** – was a “dog” in the Kindergarten Play of 1966! We may have a copy of your graduation program or pictures from your graduation play.

The Kindergarten Reunion Open House is open to all former

students, teachers, helpers, Women's Club members or anyone interested in the kindergarten that is part of Bridgewater's story.

Light refreshments will be served.



If you have graduation pictures **or other memorabilia from the kindergarten years please bring them on the 20th.**

See you at the BHS for the Kindergarten Open House!

Museum News:

The Museum has been “full steam ahead” with our exhibit on the Chesapeake Western Railway that served Bridgewater in the 20th century. We have a great collection of artifacts on loan from area residents.



A sample of some items on display,

To our great pleasure, we have continued to add more to our display even this month.



This scale model of the former Bridgewater Train Station was recently loaned to the Museum and is currently on display.

Road Trip!! **To the Former Chesapeake** **Railway Main Train** **Station in Harrisonburg:**

The Harrisonburg Main Train Station was the headquarters for the CW RWY of which our Bridgewater Train Station was a part of. Charles Hendricks, owner of the Gaines Group Architects, has his offices on the second floor of the old CW Train Station in Harrisonburg. He was instrumental in having a vision for that building and helping to have it restored back to its former glory. He has many CW artifacts on display as well and a wealth of knowledge about the CW building and how it was brought back to life. On Friday May 17, the BHS sponsored a tour of the CW Main RWY station in Harrisonburg.



Charles speaks to the group about the building's history

We had 27 people registered and know that more than that attended. Charles provided a tour of the building from the basement to the attic and provided refreshments!



BHS member Megan Meyerhoeffer is amazed at the original CW RWY office equipment still in the basement of the CW Harrisonburg Station.

Oak Bench News:

Last year the Town of Bridgewater donated an oak bench to the BHS hoping that we could use it as a fundraiser tool. It was made from a downed limb of the town's historic oak tree, which is located on the grounds of the Blue Ridge Christian School. Alan Cramer, a local historian, expressed an interest in the bench and a deal was struck. We are sure it will have a

good home among Alan's other historical artifacts.



Alan and his helper load up the oak bench for its trip to a new home.

July 4, 2026 Commemoration

VA250 is the name of the Commission set up, in the State of Virginia, to provide a commemoration with activities and educational experiences leading up to July 4, 2026 – the 250-year anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence. The BHS is part of the Rockingham County group that is currently exploring ways to bring 1776 to the forefront. Let us know if you have ideas. 2026 is fast approaching!

The BHS and Social Media:

Instagram: The BHS can be found at **bridgewatervahistory**. “Wondering Wednesday” posts are on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of every month and will again feature something such as a building or item from the Bridgewater of yesteryear. Then the question is posed, “I wonder what or where that was”. On Thursday, the answer is given or in the case of a building or place, a current picture is supplied showing the location today.

Facebook: We can be found at **Bridgewater Historical Society**. Our events and news are posted there.

Website: The new website is still a work in progress but will have many more features than the old one. Stay tuned for the unveiling!

Email Addresses:

If you are currently receiving your BHS newsletter by mail, but have an email address, consider letting us send it to you electronically? Send us your name and email address to bwhsm109@gmail.com and we will get you switched.

Membership in the BHS.

Be a part of the BHS family.
Membership dues are \$30 a family.
They can be paid in person at the
BHS Museum during regular
business hours or send a check with
your **name(s), address, phone** and
email address(s) to:

Bridgewater Historical Society
P.O. Box 102
Bridgewater, VA 22812.

Volunteer at the BHS:

Consider becoming a docent at the
Historical Society.
Call us at 540-237-4017 for more
information of how you can
contribute.

Need to contact the BHS:

BHS phone: 540-237-4017.
Press 0 for Sharon Kline – Pres.
Press 1 for Larry Elkins – VP
Press 2 for Greg Riddle – Sec.
Email: bwhsm109@gmail.com

Bridgewater Architectural and History Spotlight:



This issue features 111 Dinkel Ave., Bridgewater, VA. The vintage picture shows the house in the 1910s as the Bridgewater water tower had been built and can be seen, faintly, in the background on the right. In the early 2000s, the water tower was dismantled. Thomas Flory, who lives at the Bridgewater Retirement Community, gave the BHS interesting nuggets of the house's past history. He explained that his Grandparents Walter Samuel and Ella Mae Flory were the first residents of the home in approximately 1901. They had previously lived on a farm at Goods Mill. Ella had had a few miscarriages and was advised to move off the farm to have children. In 1903 the first of three children arrived - Louis, then Virginia (1905) and Walter Jr (1907). Ella and Walter lived in the house until their deaths in 1946 and 1947 respectively. A story passed down through Thomas' family history was that his grandfather Walter cured hams in a smoke house back of the main house. Once cured he would hang the hams in the attic of the main house. His mother Sofia Showalter Brunk would stay with different siblings throughout the year. During one of her visits to Bridgewater the rope holding up

one of the hams in the attic broke. It fell through the ceiling into the bed she was sleeping in! Fortunately, no one was hurt. After the passing of the grandparents, the house went to their daughter Virginia and her husband Justice. Both Virginia and Justice died in the 1950s. The house went through other owners until purchased by Paula and Dale Wilfong in the 2000s. At some point, the large front porch, with its uncovered walkway on the left and right sides of the house, was replaced with a smaller version and the brick painted grey. You may also notice, in the vintage picture, that the house has a fence and gate between it and Dinkel Av.



The Wilfongs recently replaced the leaky slate roof with a new slate roof as the copper nails had disintegrated. The job is remarkable in that it probably looks as good, or better, than when the house was

built in 1901! The original slate roof consisted of rectangle and scalloped shapes that, amazingly, could be reproduced for the installation of the new roof.

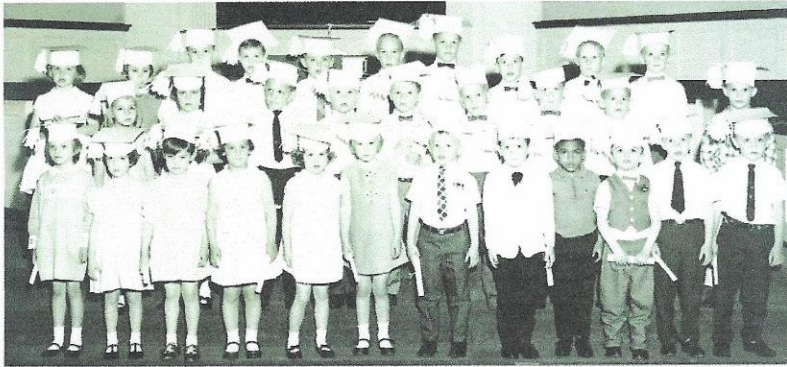


Note the ridgeline metal trim and end decorations that were reproduced. To be repurposed are the original trim pieces that were still with the house after all these years, though in deteriorated condition. This roof adds nostalgic charm to our Dinkel Avenue.

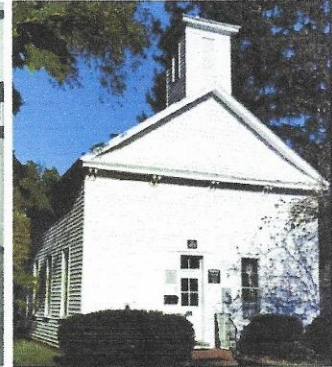


111 Dinkel Ave. as it looks today from almost the same vantage point as the vintage picture taken in the teens.

Bridgewater Kindergarten Reunion



The kindergarten class that graduated in May of 1966. Many of these kids went on to graduate from TA and became the class of 1978. Some were from Augusta County and graduated from a high school in that area.



A vintage picture of the BHS Museum Building, which housed the kindergarten for many years.

Join us!

Calling everyone for a reunion who graduated from, helped with, or have an interest in The Bridgewater Kindergarten 1952 - 1975 class.

The Womens Club scrapbooks of the kindergarten years will be on display. Light refreshments will be served. Stop in and reminisce!

When: SATURDAY, JULY 20, 2024

Time: 11:00 AM - until

Where: Bridgewater Historical Society Museum
109 S. Main St. Bridgewater VA 22812

Museum hours: 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

BACKGROUND: Rockingham County did not offer public kindergarten until 1976. From 1952 until 1975, The Womens Club of Bridgewater offered a kindergarten class in Bridgewater. They found the space to hold class and also found teachers. As such there is an entire group of people that graduated from the Bridgewater Kindergarten who then went on to elementary, intermediate and high school in the area.

Call 540.237.4017 for more info

We look forward to seeing you there!



Hours for 2024:

Friday and Saturdays, 10am -3pm.

The Museum may be available any day
by appointment.

Want to know more, call 540-237-4017.

*Hope to see you at the
BHS!*

Bridgewater Historical Society

P.O. Box 102

Bridgewater, VA 22812

Phone: 540-237-4017