

BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring Issue
March 2026



Dear Members:



The coming of Spring means the arrival of daffodils and tulips, the budding of trees and the awakening of our dazzling Virginia landscape. It also signals the arrival of the BHS' annual fundraising banquet!

Bridgewater Historical **Society's** **Annual Banquet** **and Fundraiser** **April 16, 2026**

Join with us at the Bridgewater United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall on **Thursday, April 16, 2026. 6pm**, enjoy a delicious meal catered by Circle of Love UWF. **7pm**, there will be a short business meeting followed by our keynote speaker.

The United States will turn 250 years old this July. In honor of this occasion our after dinner speaker will reveal to us info about the Bridgewater area around the time of the American Revolution.

Our speaker is **Dr. Scott Hamilton Suter**, Professor of English & American Studies at Bridgewater College, and an expert in public history, folklife, and regional culture. A native of Rockingham County, he has contributed significantly to the preservation and interpretation of the Shenandoah Valley's history through his academic work, public history projects, and books. In addition to teaching at Bridgewater College, Dr.

Suter also serves as curator of the collections at Rocktown History, the museum of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society.

Tickets are \$35 dollars per person. The Circle of Love UWF has requested a headcount by April 8. Send a check and the names of those attending by April 8 to:

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

Questions:

Call the BHS at 540-237-4017.

Press:

0 for Sharon Kline,

1 for Larry Elkins or

2 for Greg Riddle.

Or email:

bwasm109webmaster@gmail.com.

You may also drop off your check and the number of people attending at the BHS Museum. With the Town of Bridgewater as a partner, it is now staffed Monday – Saturday from 10am - 3pm.

New Displays Coming to the Museum!

The Story Realm Cabinet

The east side of the cabinet, toward Main St., will continue to tell the story of Old Town Hall, which houses the BHS Museum. The west side, toward Grove St., currently features the Bridgewater Retirement Community. Near the end of April it will feature the history of **Bridgewater College**.

In addition, museum displays are coming in April depicting how Bridgewater celebrated the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration of the 200 year anniversary of the United States. Bridgewater was incorporated in 1835. There will also be displays of the 125th and 150th Bridgewater celebrations held in 1960 and 1985! Many Bridgewater residents still remember all the activities, of being a cast member in “Bridging The Waters” – a historical spectacular play based on the history of Bridgewater - and dressing in clothes reminiscent of the 1800s in our past nation wide and town celebrations. Come see the diverse and community based ways Bridgewater commemorated in the past.

Virginia250 Events for 2026

Bridgewater, Virginia

There are still some details to be decided but here is what the BHS is sponsoring and planning in order to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States this July. There may be changes or additions in the future.

Sunday July 5, 2026. 1pm – 4pm.
Walking tour of Bridgewater highlighting the history of the John and Jacob Dinkel brother's houses, but including other historic structures and sites along Main St.

Judy Galang, the owner of the Dinkel Tavern, which was Jacob Dinkel's residence, has graciously offered to open her house and gardens on July 5 for tours. Her mother Evelyn opened this property during Bridgewater's 125th anniversary celebration in 1960 and it has been open for several other celebrations through the past decades.



215 S. Main St. Dinkel Tavern

Rachel Hayes will be providing tours and stories of her grandparents' former home at 111 S. Main St. Her grandparents were Ruby and Ike Riddleberger. 111 is currently a historic venue that hosts weddings, baby and bridal showers, meetings, receptions, birthdays, or most any event. It is owned by Mark and Nicole Flanders.



111 S. Main St., J.G Brown
House

The BHS Museum will be open. Other places of interest on the walking tour will be the site of John Dinkel's 1800s mill on the banks of North River and his house on Wynant Place.

NOTE: John Dinkel's house and grounds at 1 Wynant Place will **NOT** be open for tours, but there will be a tented display with historical info and artifacts concerning the house located adjacent. We may have a surprise guest stop in and tell some history and interesting facts about the house!

The BHS is very excited to bring this event to Bridgewater during the United States' 250th Anniversary. So mark your calendars now!

Rockingham County

Sponsored by the Massanutten Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Other historical societies and local groups have been invited to have displays/tables at this event and the BHS will be there.

Saturday July 4, 2026. 9am – 1pm.
Rockingham Park at the Crossroads.
5329 Spotswood Trail, Penn Laird, VA

DAR Press Release:

Who doesn't love a birthday?! July 4, 1776 was 250 years ago and we want to celebrate America's birthday in a **BIG WAY!** Join us at the county park for an event-filled day that will entertain folks of all ages! From a children's bicycle/wagon parade to historic reenactments, to exhibits full of history and fun...be sure to mark this on your calendar because you won't want to miss what could likely be the largest celebration of America 250! in Rockingham County!

SAVE THE DATE, as the DAR is getting ready to party across the country!



Wednesday April 22, 2026 is the day of the Great Community Give and the Bridgewater Historical Society is proud to be a part of the Community Foundations Initiative again this year.

You may have seen commercials, ads, or heard about it from other great local non-profits.

To get to the BHS on the Great Community Give website type this address into your browser:

<https://www.greatcommunitygive.org/organizations/bridgewaterhistory>

Picture From Yesteryear



Dinkel Tavern after a devastating flood in the 1900s. Major renovations took place to the façade some time after this picture was taken.

Other Museum News:

Christmas Ornament: 2025



The 2025 Christmas Ornament featured the Jacob Dinkel House, also known as the Dinkel Tavern located at 215 S. Main St.

Since 2015, the BHS has highlighted a prominent landmark of Bridgewater on our ornaments. John Dinkel's 1820 era house at 1 Wynant Place is to be featured for 2026. John was a brother to Jacob. John and Jacob are considered the founders of Bridgewater. The new ornament should be available this summer.

Thanks to all who have supported us with the purchase of an ornament or, in some cases, the

entire set of ornaments from 2015 to the present!

Spring also means it is time to renew your membership.



Membership dues are \$30 a family and play an integral part in the financial success of your Historical society. 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.

The BHS and Social Media:

Instagram: The BHS can be found at **bridgewatervahistory**.

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

Website: Work in Progress!

Email Addresses:

Help us save on postage! If you are currently receiving your BHS newsletter by mail, but have an email address, would you consider letting us send it to you electronically? Send us your name and email address to bwasm109@gmail.com and we will get you switched.

Volunteer at the BHS:

For your enjoyment and convenience, the Museum is open Monday – Saturday, 10am -3pm year round. It is crucial to have knowledgeable docents in the Museum. Consider becoming a docent at the Historical Society. Call us at 540-237-4017 for more information of how you can contribute.

For our July 5 event, we also need docents at some of the historic sites. Can you spare an hour or two on Sunday July 5? Be in the middle of it all!!



Bridgewater Historical Society Annual Banquet April 16, 2026

Meal at 6pm, Catered by Circle of Love UWF

Program at 7pm entitled “*Bridgewater in the Backcountry*”,
exploring our area in the 1770s, during the Revolutionary War.

Speaker – Dr. Scott Hamilton Suter

*Professor of English and American Studies
at Bridgewater College and Curator of the
Collections at Rocktown History*

Where: Bridgewater UMC Fellowship Hall

219 N. Main St., Bridgewater, Virginia

Price: \$35 per person

To reserve a spot send check by 4/08/26 to:
Bridgewater Historical Society
P.O. Box 102
Bridgewater, VA 22812

Questions: Call us at
540-237-4017 or email at –
bwasm109webmaster@gmail.com.



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: bwghsm109@gmail.com



C.T Riddle house, formerly located across the street from the Crimson Inn Office. Torn down in 1973 by First Virginia Bank (now Truist).

Bridgewater Historical Society

P.O. Box 102

Bridgewater, VA 22812

Phone: 540-237-4017

Museum Hours for 2026!

Regular Hours:

**Monday - Saturday,
10am -3pm.**

**The Museum may be available
other times by appointment.**

Questions? call 540-237-4017.

***Hope to see you at the
BHS!***