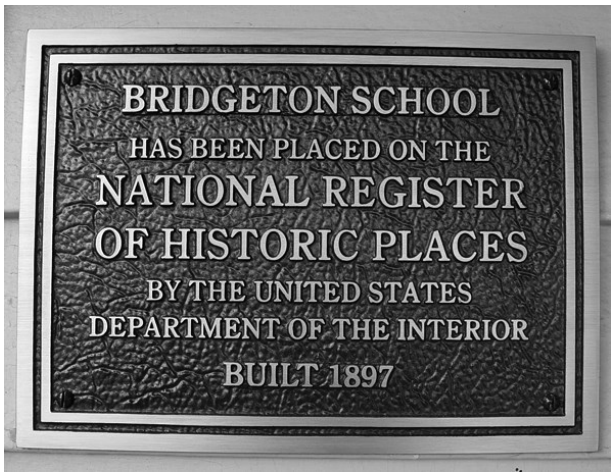
The Historian

BURRILLVILLE HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2007



It is with great pride we announce that our National Register plaque has been placed at the front entrance to the school.

Freda Ide

It is with deep sadness that I write about the passing of Freda Ide. She was an active member of the Society, serving on the planning committee for many years. She also served as chairperson of the nominating committee. She volunteered for almost every event the Society held and contributed by baking and making handmade items for our bazaar. She attended the Bridgeton School as a child and was always on hand to tell stories about her school days to youngsters visiting us. Freda's presence was always a sparkle of sunshine and we all miss her terribly.

Burrillville Bicentennial Video is Completed! The video is titled *Burrillville Celebrates 200 Years of History* and was written and produced by Betty and Carlo Mencucci. The premiere will be held at the Assembly Building in Harrisville on September 8th and 9th. The video contains numerous old photos with stories about Burrillville's early history; also its schools, farms, businesses, celebrations and much more. It is the culmination of two years of work involving many interviews and extensive research. Don't miss this free

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President's Message

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At the last several meetings, there have been discussions about purchasing a storage shed to be used to house a lawn mower, gas and other tools needed to keep the Bridgeton School grounds in order. If you have an idea on an appropriate looking shed, please contact one of the officers.

On June 18-20th, Carlo and I attended the Country Schools Association of America conference. The conference included a bus trip to 5 one-room schoolhouses in N.H. and Mass. When we visited the schoolhouse in Salem, NH, we were greeted by the entire town council and at least 20 members of their historical society. That was an impressive turnout demonstrating the pride they have in their one-room schoolhouse. At the Parkerville Schoolhouse in Wellfleet, MA we were greeted by a teacher and 15 students in costume engaged in their lessons. The people in this organization are truly dedicated to preserving the memory of the small country schoolhouse.

Betty Mencucci

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Aug 28 - partial screening of Rocky Point film by David Bettencourt
Sept 25 - video presentation by Betty and Carlo Mencucci titled "Burrillville Celebrates 200 Years of History."
Sept 29 - Annual Open House
Oct 6 - Footsteps in History at the Bridgeton School

Picture Exhibition

Photos printed with funds from the Ocean State Power grant will continue to be on display through October. If you have not seen them yet, plan to come to the annual Open House in the fall.

Past Events

The Society was involved in many events this spring. In April, a group from the Eleanor Slater Hospital toured the school, viewed a slide show and listened to stories about Burrillville history. The next event was Tour Rhode Island's visit in May. A busload of people toured the school and watched us churn butter in the Davis Swing Churn. The Society had a booth at the Family Fair to reach out to the public about Burrillville's history. We also participated in the Callahan School Open House. Betty Mencucci presented a slideshow that showed former teachers and classes when it was Burrillville High School. Mabel Hopkins and Denice Mitchell were there to answer questions and Patricia Mehrtens set up collages of the different villages in town.

The yard sale scheduled for May 19th was held indoors due to bad weather. Because of low sales, the event was held again on June 2nd. The Society thanks Ken Hopkins of Affordable Tent Rental for the donation of a tent as well as tables, and also to all the volunteers that helped take items out of the basement at 6:00 o'clock in the morning.

BH&PS Hosts Land Trust Meeting

On May 21st the Burrillville Land Trust met at the Bridgeton School. Paul Roselli, President talked about the Farmer's Market. The movie by Al Gore titled "An Inconvenient Truth" was shown.

June Meeting at the Western Hotel

Albert Matolla, owner of the Western Hotel in Nasonville, invited the Society to meet in his historic tavern and served a buffet dinner. Albert is interested in learning the history of his building. If you have information about any previous owners, please contact him or one of the officers. He also allowed us to tour the building and see the old meeting hall on the upstairs floor. Thanks, Albert for a great meeting!

For Sale. Electric organ. Works great! Make an offer.
White plush carpet, good condition, 12' x 15'

Earth Day Cemetery Cleanup

The Society chose the Walling cemetery in Nasonville for its annual Earth Day Cemetery Cleanup project. Heading south on Route 7, the cemetery is located on the left side of the road off a dirt-bike path just up the hill from the Western Hotel. It was becoming totally overgrown with young pine trees. Unfortunately some of the gravestones have been knocked down.

Before cleanup

Russell Lacey and Betty Mencucci after cleanup was complete

Ellwood L. Walling

Photo taken in 1900 when Ellwood Walling was 43 years old. He worked for the railroad as a baggage handler. After being injured in a train accident in March 1924, he spent much time researching Burrillville history and taking photos. Some of his photos are on display in the BH&PS picture exhibition. Ellwood died in 1938 and is buried in the Walling cemetery. Unfortunately, his gravestone is one of the stones that has been

Donations

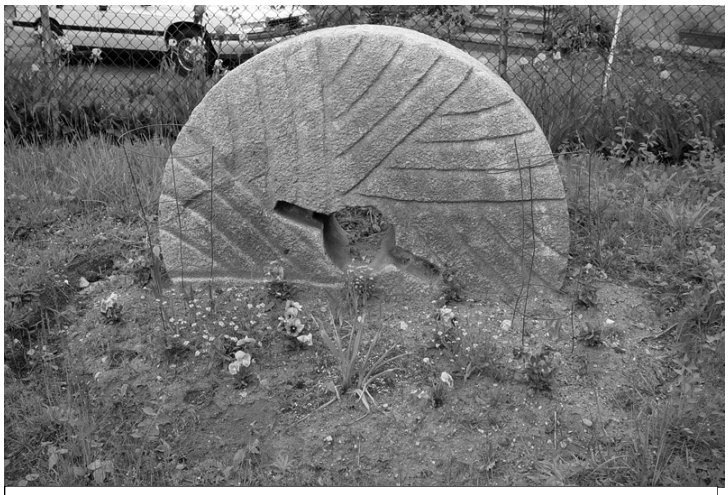
Harvey Greenhalgh donated about a dozen photos he took of Burrillville houses built in the 1700s.

Gerry McKenna donated a collection of Remington photos and Remington Store memorabilia belonging to Joyce McKenna. He also donated two albums of old Burrillville postcards.

Shirley Scaranella donated a metal stamp that prints, *"1881 Salisbury Post Camp #16 Pascoag."*

George Brouillard donated 5 yearbooks from 1928-1932.

Rose Lavoie donated several yearbooks and newspaper clippings.



Memorial garden for Joyce McKenna
A millstone from Wilson's Reservoir forms the backdrop of the garden which is located at the rear of the Bridgeton School. The flowers were planted by Rose Shaw.

Country Schools Association of America
7th Annual Conference, Rivier College, Nashua, NH

Betty and Carlo Mencucci were the feature presenters at this conference, showing their video documenting the restoration of the Bridgeton School bell tower. The video was well received with many questions on materials and methods used. Conference attendees came from all over the country including many states in the Midwest. Other topics presented at the conference included what it was like to be a teacher or a student in a small school back in the 1800s, re-enacting activities, school lessons and games in the one room school, collecting oral histories, living history programs, schoolhouse restoration success stories and more.

ABIGAIL AND ABNER BARTLET *

At some time during 1703, Abner Bartlet was born to Jacob and Sarah (Albee) Bartlet at the family homestead on the common and undivided land between Wrentham and Mendon, MA. By 1719, this same area was incorporated as the Town of Bellingham. However, due to boundary adjustments over the years, the homestead farm today would be located in East Woonsocket. Abner was born into a strong religious family. His father was a devout Quaker, blacksmith and farmer. Abner as he grew was trained in the iron trade of his father, as were his two brothers, Joseph and Jacob Jr.

Only a few miles away in 1705, Abigail Arnold, daughter of John and Mary (Mowry) Arnold was born in a rude cabin on the bank of the Blackstone River next to a brook that empties into the river adjacent to the Woonsocket Falls. John ran a sawmill at that location and is considered the first permanent settler in what is today the City of Woonsocket.

Abigail was also born into a strong Quaker family. Her father provided the lumber for the building of the first Quaker meetinghouse in the general location of the present day meeting house on route 146A in North Smithfield. In 1712 Abigail moved with her family to a newly built home which stands today on Providence St. in Woonsocket as the oldest house in that city.

Not much is known of the early lives of Abner and Abigail; however, being raised in strong Quaker families, their lives no doubt revolved around their faith. The couple more than likely became acquainted through meetings of the Friends.

Nothing is known of Abner's occupation during his early adulthood. He was a blacksmith, but how he was engaged in this work is unknown. It is known, however, that his father Jacob made farm implements like scythes and other farming tools. It can only be assumed that Abner was trained and skilled at making these products.

On February 20, 1731, Glocester and Smithfield were incorporated, subdivided from the northern lands of Providence

In September 1731, Abner purchased 109 acres of land in the northeasterly part of Glocester (now Burrillville) from Daniel Jencks of Smithfield.

On April 30, 1734, Abner and Abigail were married and settled down on land somewhere in what today is

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3 Bellingham, MA.

By 1737 Abner and Abigail had located to Glocester, Rhode Island to a dwelling on the 109 acres purchased of Daniel Jencks in 1731.

In 1739, at the age of 34, Abigail gave birth to their first child, a son they named Rufus. Subsequently in 1742 and 1745 she gave birth to two more sons, Elisha and Caleb.

Abner compiled a long record of public service for the town of Glocester. In 1743 he was selected as Constable and Fence Viewer. He was elected to the Town Council for seven terms from 1744 to 1751. In 1747 he was chosen to represent Glocester as its Deputy at the Rhode Island General Assembly held at South Kingston. He served as the town's Appraiser of Estates for eleven years and Surveyor of Highways from 1753 to 1755. He also served on the Grand Jury in 1751 and in 1754. He was selected to serve as the town's Rate Levier from 1755 to 1758 and Overseer of the Poor from 1758 to 1764. He served as a Petit Juror for the Supreme Court in 1765, Overseer of the Poor in 1769, and Surveyor of Highways in 1770 for one term. This concluded Abner's public service at the age of 70.

In August of that same year Abner purchased from Joseph Hix of Glocester 76 acres, "all his farm and land unto adjoining where he now dwells." There were three parcels in this purchase: 57 acres on the north side of the highway, (Mt. Pleasant Rd.); 14 acres on the south side of the same highway along with a 5 acre parcel adjoining the 14 acre purchase.

1750 Bartlet Homestead - Mt. Pleasant Road

In December of that year Abner purchased 5 acres of land from his neighbor Ed Inman adjoining the 76 acres purchased five months earlier from Joseph Hix. The acreage was in two pieces; one contained 2 acres and 86 poles while the other was a three- acre piece. With this latest purchase Abner and Abigail now owned 290 ¾ acres in the northeast section of Glocester. It was on the three acres purchased from Inman in December that Abner and Abigail built a three-quarter, two-story colonial between December of 1749 and September 1750 when a deed of Ed Inman III mentions the new house recently built by Abner Bartlet. That house stands today some 25 feet from the northside of Mt. Pleasant Rd.

Bartlet Homestead interior

On November 24, 1764, Abner Bartlet purchased 4 ¾ acres in Smithfield from Jeremiah Kelly of Bellingham, Massachusetts for 40 pounds. This land was located next to the Branch River eastward of Edward Inman's Mills, which today is the location of the upper falls at Slatersville, Rhode Island. It was on this acreage that Abner and other proprietors constructed an iron forge. They included Joseph Buffum, William Buffum, John Arnold, Jr., Rufus Bartlet, and Elisha Bartlet. Rufus sold his share of the business to his brother Caleb in 1767 and moved to Cumberland. Abner and Caleb remained in the business until 1783 while Elisha continued to operate a Blacksmith shop in conjunction with the iron mill until 1790 when he sold his share to Salisbury Dow.

Abner Bartlet died on December 13, 1784 at the age of 83. He was survived by Abigail who did not depart this life until 1811 at the unbelievable age of 106. His three sons Rufus, Elisha and Caleb also survived Abner. Both Abner and Abigail are buried in the family cemetery across the street from their homestead farm. This cemetery is identified as Rhode Island Cemetery, Town of Burrillville, No. 35.

The homestead farm was willed to Caleb giving Abigail the privilege of the west room for the rest of her life. Caleb willed the house to his son Stephen. The homestead then passed on to Elisha Bartlett and finally Fayette Bartlett. Fayette was the last family member to own the property. In the early 1900s he sold it to Mr. Ballou.

* The author, out of respect for Abner Bartlet, has

We are still collecting slips from IGA and Dino's. Ask your friends and relatives to save them.

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www.bhps.org

The BH&PS meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

tipped over.

Photo courtesy of Cynthia Aubin