

# BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October 2024

Issue No. Twenty Six



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](http://www.bridgewaterhistory.org)

### *Inside this Issue*

#### **From the President**

Remembering Jeannette Sawyer

#### **Curator's Corner**

"History of the State Vermont"

by Zadock Thompson

Ruth Maxham Sampler

Lady Esther Products

#### **The Lady Esther Story**

#### **Annual Meeting**

October 29th at 6:30pm

#### **Dedication of the Bridgewater Corners Grange Hall (1876)**

#### **The "Nation's Guest"**

Lafayette's Visit to Vermont (1825)



#### **BRIDGEWATER CORNERS CHEESE FACTORY**

In 1894 space in the Grange Hall was leased from Andrew Josselyn and Calvin T. Josselyn by George Smith, Edward Shattuck, C. T. Josselyn, E. J. Robinson and Andrew Miner to manufacture cheese.

In 1902 the Josselyn Cheese Factory made cheese here.

## From the President

By Polly Timken

It is with great sadness that I share with our membership the passing of our dear friend and founder, Jeannette Sawyer. As no doubt everyone knows, she was an incredibly hard working, determined citizen, who singlehandedly spearheaded a group to create a historical society for Bridgewater. She navigated her way through the red tape to establish our not-for-profit group with the State. She created many albums of photos with information on topics such as gold mining, the Civil War, schools, farms, the woolen mill and small-town life.

Jeannette was prescient enough to realize that time was short when it came to encouraging her friends and neighbors to look in their attics and family albums for stories, photos and artifacts of a vanishing way of life. And look, they did. As a result, we have a wonderful collection of items and photos that are now safely stored together as records of a vanished life. Through her we have a close membership that is more of a family than an organization. Although we are saddened by her loss, she left us all better off knowing Bridgewater's history is there for generations to follow.



Jeannette Sawyer Multitasking





## Curator's Corner

By Polly Timken

In September, we received a wonderful gift from the Oppenheimer family. A small volume, "History of the State of Vermont" from its earliest settlement to the close of the year 1832", by Zadock Thompson, AM. At 252 pages and measuring 3.5" x 5 3/4", it was published for use as a textbook. It was to be a history of a people "assuming powers of self -government and advancement ...from a state of nature to the establishment of a civil compact and to a regular efficient organization." He derived the material from "The History of Vermont", by Dr. Samuel Williams, the "Vermont State Papers" compiled by the Hon. William Slade, and information compiled by Thompson while researching his "Gazetteer of Vermont" in 1824. There is only one illustration, a hand drawn map of Vermont, showing Lake Champlain and tributaries on South to Fr. Ticonderoga, Bennington and East to the Connecticut River. This small volume is a valuable addition to our collection.



We have been contacted by the Vermont Sampler Initiative, for information on any samplers we may have in our collection. They are creating a file of as many samplers as they can find in Vermont, to be included in an online database for the National Sampler Archive Project. Sue Lilly had given us a sampler made by Ruth Maxham. We were able to provide them with a photograph and some information on Ruth Sophie Maxham. She was the daughter of Anna Shurtleff and Jabez Maxham. Born in Carver MA in 1816, she married Justin Selah Montague in 1840 and died in 1899 at age 83.



Karole Messier has donated a collection of cosmetics that were sold at the Bridgewater Drug Store, when her mother, Ruhie L. Thompson, worked there from 1942-50. Some of our members mothers probably had "Lady Esther Face Powder," "Evening in Paris" talcum powder or hand and body lotion; and a perfume stick in a decorative 'gold' case. These items add to our other drugstore items, a powder compact and marshmallow tin.

## The Lady Esther Story

By Karole Messier



Simon Cohen you are FIRED! What is the rest of the story?

The Lady Esther Company was one of the most popular producers of face powder in the United States. This prestigious firm ranked in the top ten companies in the 1940s and was selling their products in U.S. drugstores including in the Bridgewater, Vermont drugstore.

The Cohen family was riddled with secrets, intrigue and rivalry. Aaron Cohen and his wife, Miriam (Mary) Busiel had five children Esther, Ida, Abraham (Otto), Sadie (Syma) and Simon. One version states Aaron Cohen, a blacksmith, immigrated in 1892 to the U.S. from Russia or Poland. Approximately six years later his wife and children joined him. Two more children, Florence and Alfred were born to Aaron and Miriam in the U.S. The other version of the family history is Aaron married Miriam and adopted her five children giving them the Cohen name, which would have made them half siblings. The literature suggests this could have been the root cause of the family problems.

To further complicate their history, the family appears in the 1900 Federal Census but were absent in the 1910 census. In subsequent censuses it appears several family members had relocated to Holland, Michigan. With the expansion of their business into Europe, Otto and Syma felt the need to identify as U.S. citizens from birth. In order to achieve this, their two siblings, Florence and Alfred who were born in the U.S. vouched for Otto and Syma as being born in Louisville, Kentucky. This confirmation allowed Otto and Syma to conduct their business and move freely between the U.S. and Europe.

The Lady Esther Company was started by the Cohen women making beauty products in their home and selling the products door-to-door. Some speculate the name Lady Esther was for the eldest sister. Others believe the name was of Biblical origin as Esther was considered a great beauty.

Simon had been a member of the Company but was fired by his sister, Syma along with others. This included the husband of one of her sisters in a ruthless cost cutting move. Esther, Ida and Simon moved to San Francisco. Simon changed his last name from Cohen to Coates. Other siblings chose to use their mother Miriam's surname Busiel except for Otto who added "Jay" to his name and retained the Cohen name.

The family appears to have been very dysfunctional, mired down with poor choices in spouses. This ended in several divorces, which included the parents Aaron and Miriam divorcing. Three of the marriages and divorces were attributed to Alfred the last of the siblings to be head of the Company. Lawsuits and rivalry were rampant within the family and with their competition. The Company was warned on two occasions by the Federal Trade Commission to stop their "over advertising the benefits of their product." They were called to task by the IRS because they formed three separate companies to help defray tax costs. The problem was all three companies were selling to each other and all had the same players in each company.

The Company expanded globally and relocated their manufacturing operations to larger factories to meet the demand for their products. The Company knew how to market their products by giving in-store demonstrations on using their makeup, sponsoring popular radio shows like The Orson Welles and Guy Lombardo Shows and using print media in magazines and newspapers like The Chicago Daily Tribune. In some instances, these liaisons failed due to a falling out between Lady Esther and the programs they were sponsoring. In 1936, the Company had sales in excess of \$36 million. Otto, Syma and Alfred became the mainstays of the Company. Otto relocated to New York City to manage the business on the East Coast. At some point, it appears Otto left the Company and became affiliated with Charles of the Ritz cosmetic division. His obituary states that he had enjoyed a fifty-year relationship with Charles of the Ritz. Otto was 96 years old when he died at his home in Miami Beach.

In the mid 1940s, the Lady Esther Company began to fade. Coty products became the go to Company. There was great rivalry between these two companies. Lady Esther had a popular face powder on the market prior to the Coty Company introducing their own product. Lady Esther encouraged women to take the "bite test" by putting the powder between their teeth, biting down and not experiencing the grittiness of the other face powders being offered. Coty described their Air Spun powder as being "born of a cyclone" against Lady Esther claiming their product used the "twin hurricane method". Not too long after Max Factor came on the scene, Lady Esther was warned again about making despairing remarks about other products clogging their pores. The Lady Esther product was beginning to lose traction during this time and employed additional cost cutting measures. To save money, the face powder box went from an octagonal shape to the round shape. The cover was decorated with lacy white fans with the LE logo appearing in pink across the top of the box cover.

## The Lady Esther Story

cont. from pg 4

Syma sold her interest in the Company to her brother Alfred. She married a man 26 years younger than her. This marriage went the way of her first marriage ending in divorce. Syma eventually sold her mansion and moved into a suite at the Drake Hotel in Chicago where she succumbed at age 99.

Alfred became the final member of the Cohen/Busiel/Coates family to run the Company. Alfred was handsome, pulling in \$95,000 per year. He was appearing in the society columns and being touted as a potential husband. First, he married Carolyn Young with whom he had a daughter. His next marriage to actress, Gayle Mellott, ended in divorce after seven months. His third wife was Suzette Compton. On his death in 1951, due to PKD (polycystic kidney disease), many women came forward claiming to be recipients of his estate, including his sister Syma. She said her brother had a verbal agreement stating if one died the other inherited the business. The Company was traded on numerous occasions. The Trademark is owned by a U.S. pharmaceutical company and the product manufacturing is owned by a German Company, LE Kosmetik. Alfred Busiel left the PKD foundation a 9.3-million-dollar donation to identify better treatment methods with the ultimate goal of finding a cure for PKD.

The last word of this story ends with Simon (Cohen) Coates making a statement to the Chicago Daily Tribune. Simon and his sister Ida set up a small business named Brosis. Simon's company never made the kind of money as Lady Esther, Inc. The Brosis name is short for brother and sister and is a reminder of the importance of family. Simon was a down to earth humble man. Simon's quote was "People are making a racket out of the beautiful business of cosmetics."

Sources: Smithsonian National Museum of American History. (C) Made-in-Chicago Museum, 2024 Andrew Clayman  
The American perfumer & essential oil review New York: Robbins Perfumer Co (etc.) (1906-1955). The Chemist and Druggist (1859)  
London: Morgan Brothers. Lady Esther Kosmetik GmbH. Chicago Tribune Daily. Obituaries for Otto Cohen, Syma Busiel and Alfred Busiel. [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). Lady Esther, Ltd. Lady Esther Corset Shoppe, 317 Ill. App. 451. 46 N.E.2d 165, 148 A.L.R.6 (1943).

### Bridgewater Historical Society Annual Meeting

The 2024 Annual Meeting will be held at the Old Brick Schoolhouse on Tuesday October 29th at 6:30. We will be voting on the slate of Board of Directors to fill the positions of those who's terms are up as well as reviewing the annual reports. There will be a reception in honor of Jeannette Sawyer following the business portion of the meeting.  
Board of Directors (3 year term)

Alice Paglia

Althea Derstine

Karole Messier

Rhonda White



### VOLUNTEER !

It's that time of year again, when one starts to put away the garden things, fold the tent and close the camp. What better time to get out the list of indoor projects. Here at the Historical Society, we are looking for volunteers who love to work on computers, web sites, collection care, newsletter articles, housecleaning, just about all the things you would be doing at home. However, work here is more fun as you can do it with a dedicated bunch of volunteers who are not historical society nerds, but just people who are enjoying saving a bit of Bridgewater's past for the next generation. Speaking of the next generation, bring them along as they can contribute to our IT projects while earning credits for their college applications.

BHS 2025 calendar honoring the Bridgewater Fire Department will soon be on sale for \$15 at Bridgewater Town office and Maple Field Farm.





## 1876 Dedication of the Bridgewater Grange Hall



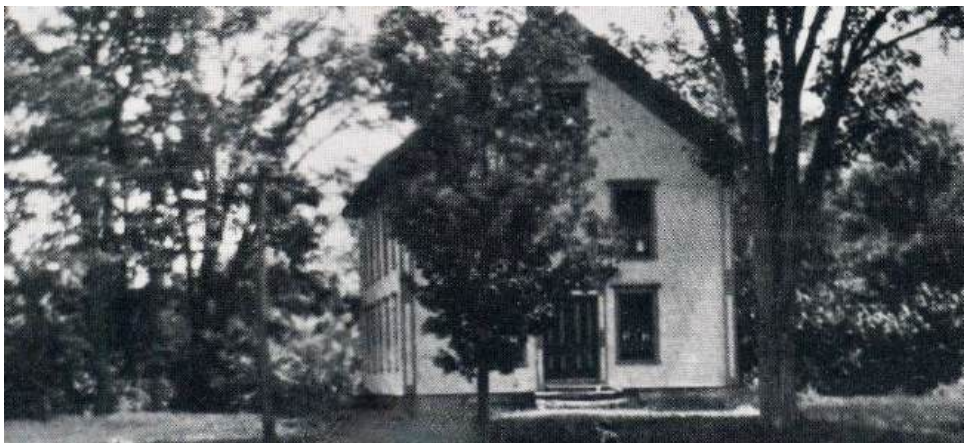
The Bridgewater Historical Society frequently uses the Grange Hall for programs and events. The follow is a summary and description of the beautiful Josselyn Hall dedication.

A hall recently erected by Josiah Josselyn, Esq. of Bridgewater for use by Bridgewater Grange #168 was dedicated Saturday Dec 9 1876. The hall is located in Bridgewater Corners on the south bank of the Ottauquechee River near the covered bridge which crosses the river at that place and some ten rods from the beautiful residence of the proprietor.

It stands at a suitable distance from the road and is surrounded by noble elms. The building measures sixty by thirty-two feet, is two stories high and is thoroughly furnished from cellar to garret. The plans were drawn by Josiah Josselyn; carpenter work by Joseph A. Davis of Plymouth; plastering and mason work by Jasper Perkins and William Benson of Woodstock; stucco by Norman Montague of Woodstock; painting by Myron Dimick of Bridgewater; calcimine, tinting, lettering and ornamental work by Marsh and Slayton of Woodstock; windows, moulding and other machine work by C. W. Sayward of Woodstock; chandeliers, lamps, curtains and other fixtures by J. B. Jones of Woodstock; hardware, A. Hatch of Woodstock and stoves and pipes by Edward Doyle of Bridgewater.

Saturday morning, the day fixed for the Dedication, came with a snow storm, the like of which had not been seen for years. The "beautiful snow" was perhaps never known to fall faster, and it continued to descend till the hour 11 o'clock a.m., the time fixed for the ceremonies to commence. But though the snow had got deep, and continued to fall, the brothers and sister with their friends came, some on wheels and some on runners, and by 12 o'clock noon, the number present in the hall, was over two hundred, and notwithstanding the "inclemency of the weather;" Woodstock, Hartland and Plymouth Granges were represented. The storm did not prevent the arrival of Hon. E.P. Colton, Worthy Master of the State Grange, and Hon. Peter Collier of Burlington University, who had been invited to take part in the dedication.

The dedication ceremony took place at 2 PM and at the conclusion a dinner was put on by the Sister Grangers. Two hundred guests sat down to oysters, turkey, chicken, duck, meat, cake, pie and pastry.



Portrait of Josiah Josselyn  
Still hanging in the upper hall  
of the Grange

## The "Nation's Guest" 200th Anniversary

In 1824, President James Monroe thought it would be a good idea to bring back the Marquis de Lafayette, last living American General from the Revolutionary War, for a short tour of popular cities as a way to celebrate the nation's 50th anniversary and reignite its patriotism. Upon his return to the United States, Lafayette was welcomed with universal affection and gratitude by Americans in all 24 states. Everyone enthusiastically embraced the last surviving general of the American Revolution.

His arrival in New York inspired four days and nights of continuous celebration a response replicated during his visits to each of the other states. Everywhere were reported parades, balls, dinners, and other celebratory events hosted in Lafayette's honor. His three-month tour turned into 13 months as he was welcomed by all as the "Nation's Guest!"

At 7.30 Tuesday morning, June 28, 1825 The Marquis Marie Jean Paul Roche Yves Gilbert Motier Lafayette, accompanied by his son, George Washington Lafayette, and his secretary, Mons. Le Vasseur, crossed Cornish-Windsor bridge (spanning the Connecticut River and uncovered during the time of his visit) and were received in Vermont by the committee of arrangements and by Gen. Asaph Fletcher, sheriff of Windsor County, marshal of the day, and his five assistants. A salute of fifteen guns was fired, bells were rung, the troops saluted, and the air rang with cheers. The honored guest was welcomed in behalf of the citizens of Windsor by Hon. Horace Everett, of Windsor, in a brief address, gracefully acknowledged in response.

Reaching Woodstock about eleven o'clock in the morning, with unfavorable rainy weather, the formal procession was formed near Mr. E. King's under Chief Marshal Lieut. Col. Ransom assisted by Capt. G. W. Rice.

The procession moved from King's Corner up Pleasant Street to the White Meeting House. A most elegant and extensive triumphal arch, tastefully dressed with shrubbery and evergreen, was thrown across Elm Street, near the Meeting House, having about two feet above the cap-stone of the arch the name of Lafayette in large gilt letters upon both sides. This was the special design of George P. Marsh, then a recent graduate from Dartmouth and just entering the practice of law from his father's office in Woodstock, afterwards to attain high station and honors. Apart of the military escort was drawn up along the north side of what is now Tribou Park. From Elm Street the procession proceeded along the north side and around the west end of the "Green", to a station opposite the site of the old Eagle Hotel (located on the site of the present-day Woodstock Inn's parking lot), where a platform had been erected, ornamented by arches and festoons of evergreen and flowers. Here an address of welcome was made by Titus Hutchinson, Esq., chairman of the Committee of Arrangements, elected that year one of the judges of the Supreme Court of Vermont. The felicitations of Lafayette in response were brief, alluding to the prosperity observed here and everywhere in America, and to the interest which Vermont had shown in the scenes of the Revolution and to the men, so many of whom survived in a state still young and thinly settled. The distinguished guests of the day were then tendered refreshments at Barker's Hotel. Mr. Robert Barker was then proprietor of the line of coaches running between Woodstock and Randolph Center, with four and six horses to each coach, making eight and ten miles an hour over the old turnpike, by the Winslow Stand, Aiken's Tavern and great day for Barnard. And it was a great day for " E. Akins ", for Barnard sent him to represent the town at the next session of the Legislature. It was also a great day for Elisha Chamberlin, Nathaniel Stevens and Jasper Richmond, for they manned the gun, the pride of Barnard's artillery company, which was then in its prime, said to have been commanded at that time by Capt. Apollon Warner, whose portly physique gave him the name of "Capt. Pod". It is reported that Lafayette complimented the gunners, saying, " That is a smart gun and is well handled."



Leaving Woodstock by stagecoach Lafayette passes through the mountains to Barnard and Royalton, Vermont. He passes through Randolph; here he is said to have met a young Justin S. Morrill and eventual Senator Dudley Chase. He is escorted with Governor Cornelius P. Van Ness and others through Barre to large festivities in Montpelier that include speeches by Supreme Court Judge Elijah Paine and others. He spends the night in Montpelier at The Pavilion.

On June 29, 1825 Lafayette meets with women's groups and then departs Montpelier for Burlington, Vermont, arriving there about 11:00am. He lays the cornerstone for the "South College" building at the University of Vermont and gives a talk to about 50-60 students. He is entertained at the Grasse Mount estate. He departs 12 hours after he arrives for Whitehall, New York.



Sources: [thelafayettetrail.org](http://thelafayettetrail.org).

"A Day with Lafayette in Vermont" by Jay Read Pember



Vern Cram, Kathleen Carr, Jeannette Sawyer, Horace Carr & Royal Houghton  
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