



# The Hourglass

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CCXXVIII NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY February 2014  
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**February 28, 2014 - Baby, It's Cold Outside** - Ever wonder how our ancestors survived winter's challenges of bitter cold and crushing boredom without the help of central heating and electronic devices? Travel back in time with Patricia Perry, popular historical interpreter, and learn about clothing, tools, and activities that people invented to keep themselves safe and sane in winters long ago.

*Hosted by Norm and Linda Corbin*

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## A Selectman in 1911

*What was it like being a selectman in 1911? To answer this question, I'll call on his daughter, as she spoke before the Historical Society on February 22, 1957. Elizabeth Hilliard, a retired history teacher who at the time was Northborough's librarian, was recalling the experiences of her father Philip.*

In 1911 the Republican Town Committee, of which Mr. George Brigham was chairman, thought it would help town politics if they could persuade my father to run for the office of selectman—with a salary of \$50 a year. The campaign was exciting, although other possible contestants withdrew, when my father's candidacy was announced.

The first Monday in March was fair, with enough wind to dry up part of the mud. My father put the back seat on his wagon and let me accompany him before school to "get out the vote" for Mrs. Annie Eames to serve on the school committee. Mrs. Sarah Jane Carpenter marshalled the Women's Relief Corps out in force, and insisted that the men dress up and curtail the use of tobacco and profanity around the town hall. From then on, town meetings never were the same.

The reform element was successful in electing its candidates. The next morning, Mr. Kent met my father and said, "I congratulate the town. I do not congratulate you, for you will find it a thankless task." About 11:00 that night Mr. George Dean complained that his sheep were being bothered by the dogs of Simon Peter, from Smith's Mills, and why hadn't the selectmen appointed a field driver and fence viewers? It was about this time that my father figured his official salary

amounted to 2½ cents an hour.

My father was elected on a three-plank platform to stop bicycle riding on the sidewalks, get the loafers off the town hall steps, and make the town bone-dry in fact, as well as legally. He promised himself that he would improve the town's roads but realized that would take time and study. An immediate beginning was made, however, when the selectmen made a tour of inspection. Mr. Stratton took his covered delivery wagon, in which he and Mr. Cook rode on the front seat, and put my father, as the newest member, in back in a rocking chair. They decided that improvements were necessary.

Bicyclists were the first menace to be attacked. Cloth signs forbidding riding on the sidewalks, were posted on trees near the center of town, and the selectmen kept a watchful eye out for violators. I upset the effectiveness of the plan, however, by riding out of Mrs. Emery's driveway. As I crossed the sidewalk diagonally, somebody saw me and complained. *(In another talk, by the way, Miss Hilliard claimed that she used to ride up Rice Avenue, then called Winding Hill Road, from where the Metropolitan Aqueduct now crosses it, "trying to get a good start from the sand at the bottom to the ledge at the top." If she succeeded, she was a great pedaler!)*

The loafers were attacked on three fronts. "No loitering" signs were posted at each town hall entrance; benches were erected under horse chestnut tree on the west side of the building, and between Wesson Memorial fountain and Main Street, and men were given an opportunity to work on the roads or for the water department. By the time the benches were removed later, to widen the state road, old-age assistance enabled the loiterers to buy



used cars.

The third plank of the platform required the greatest preparation and secrecy. My father arranged with the Anti-Saloon League to send "spotters," who obtained evidence that liquor was being sold illegally in town. About midnight, I was awakened by tramping up and down the cellar stairs, outside my room. The next morning I was shown the cases of liquor which had been seized, and were to be sent to the Statehouse, to be poured down the sewer. I couldn't see why the accompanying wine glasses had to go too, when they would be very nice for dolls' tea parties, but the only souvenir left was an empty cr me de menthe bottle. (*The hotel owners in town all howled, she noted.*)

The affair did make an impression in an unexpected quarter, however. One evening I answered a knock at the back door, and I didn't like the looks of my caller and asked for my father. When the latter arrived, he recognized "Jakey" Mosso, who said, "Mr. Hilliard, you've always been a good man. Do your duty and lock me up. I'm drunk." My father obliged.

*Bob Ellis, Historian*

**Curators News**

I have finished transcribing four journals from the Crosby family in our collection. Hezekiah Crosby's oldest daughter Rosa kept a diary for some 60 years beginning with her marriage in 1866 to William Warren. If anyone would like to transcribe some of these at home, please let me know (508-393-2343). There is no deadline! We also have diaries from several other families just waiting for attention.

A small group of Tiger Cubs will be touring the Museum on February 17th. Even in the winter, we have visitors!

My thanks to Norm Corbin for presenting a short program on the White Cliffs and its importance to Northborough for the River's Edge Arts Alliance meeting on February 4th. The audience participants will be creating paintings, poems, writings, etc. using inspiration from several local Historical Societies. We look forward to seeing their final results.

**New Accessions:**

- Boy Scout Charters from 1931 and 1933 from Jack Pierce
- Framed photo of Northborough Train Depot from Al Aldrich
- News articles on antique bicycles, Rolling Bicycle Museum and the American Wheelmen from Bob Trimble.

*Ellen Racine, Curator*

**Director's Meeting**  
**February 11, 2014**  
**7:30 PM**  
**Northborough Historical Society**  
**Building**

**Membership**  
**Northborough Historical Society**

**Membership Dues:**  
**Regular \$15.00; Student and Seniors (65 and over) \$10.00; Family \$35.00; and Life \$250.00.**  
 Dues should be sent to  
 Judy Bissett  
 300 Ball St.  
 Northborough, MA 01532

Checks should be made out to the  
**Northborough Historical Society**  
**Red square on your label indicates that it is time to renew your membership.**



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