



# The Hourglass

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CCXXV NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY November 2013

[www.Northboroughhistsoc.org](http://www.Northboroughhistsoc.org)

[NHS1906@verizon.net](mailto:NHS1906@verizon.net)

Meeting December 6, 2013, 7:30 PM at Northborough Historical Society.

**The Marvelous Amusing Quack Medicine Show** - Look back in time to the extraordinary medical techniques practiced during the 18th and 19th centuries with Dave Downs.

*Hosted by George and Marcia Hamilton*

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## Loyalism in Northborough

True revolutionaries are few in number. When Northborough achieved its political independence in 1766, it is unlikely that very many of its citizens would have been thinking about independence from Britain. Only three years earlier the Treaty of Paris concluded the French and Indian War, in which some soldiers from Westborough's North Precinct, soon to be Northborough, fought in the British army to defeat the French, who had longstanding claims on the New World. Townspeople would likely have viewed Britain and the British army as protectors of the American colonies.

By the 1770s, however, resentment against certain things British grew. We've all read about stamps and tea and "taxation without representation," and we know that ten months before the famous Boston Tea Party of 1773 Northborough had its own tea party. "A number of Indians," as the author of Northborough History put it, "seized a thirty-pound sack of tea and burned it." It is difficult to know how many citizens supported this action; the tea merchant obviously didn't. But successful revolutionaries are good persuaders, and by August of 1774 Northborough voters chose to send a Committee of Correspondence to the upcoming Provincial Congress which essentially rejected British rule. By this time the local revolutionaries had done their work. The leader of this group, Bezaleel Eager, would later serve in the American Revolution.

Committees of Correspondence would become the seekers, watchers, and often the prosecutors of those who remained loyal to the mother country. Four Northborough men—James Eager, John Eager, Ebenezer Cutler, and Michael Martyn, all related—lost their property and were forced to leave town. Clearly politics divided the numerous Eager clan. "No

reproach is attached to the names of the loyalists, for they but exercised their undoubted right to decide for themselves what form of government they believed in," Northborough historian Joseph Coleman Kent, correctly recognizing their right, wrote. But he went on: "All that we can say is, they were short-sighted and faint-hearted." Short-sighted maybe, faint-hearted not at all. They, with the courage of true revolutionaries, would hold out against a whole town that thought differently.

In 1775 the Provincial Congress passed judgment on these and other Massachusetts men, which proclaimed, "Brought before this Congress, charged with endeavoring to subvert the Constitution, and by words, from time to time, for many moths past in various places, stirring up the people to assist in the execution of the late Acts of Parliament, encouraging the people not to submit to the measures proposed by the Continental and Provincial Congresses . . ." I won't go on; you get the idea. Ebenezer Cutler was singled out as "an implacable enemy to the liberties of his country" and jailed.

Later he and James Eager, who was also jailed but escaped and did military duty for the British, went to Nova Scotia. A number of Northborough residents, later including camera and film manufacturer Thomas H. Blair, migrated from Nova Scotia, but many New England loyalists went there. It is interesting to observe that Cutler prospered there. He acquired 1441 acres of land in Digby Township, gained success as a merchant and was made protonotary of Annapolis County. Little is known about James Eager's life there. Nova Scotia's relationship with Britain was much more congenial. The country later became a part of Canada and thus of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

The Committee identified other loyalists. "They were subjected to a good deal of inconvenience in consequence of it," wrote Rev. Joseph Allen, an earlier historian who probably knew some of these men. Sylvanus Billings asked for reconciliation in 1780 and was rejected, but later the town forgave him. John Taylor, also suspected, was a Harvard graduate—one of only a handful of college graduates in late eighteenth-century Northborough. He gravitated out of town. Many men identified as loyalists were professional people: lawyers, physicians, and ministers. The Rev. Peter Whitney, the second pastor of Northborough, firmly supported the Revolution, but his father, Aaron, a minister in Petersham, remained a dedicated loyalist. It can be argued that the careers of some professional men depended on their allegiance to colonial society as it stood, but it is also true that they were more likely to be people who judged Britain a great and enlightened nation of which they wished to remain a part.

*Bob Ellis, Historian*

**Curator's News**

The Organ Concerts are finished, Applefest is over and the Museum closed on Sunday. We had approximately 125 visitors to the Museum in September and October and in addition, the Organ Concerts brought in approximately 225 people over the four Sunday events. It was a very nice turnout.

I have been transcribing some of the journals in our collection. One that Carrie E. Webb kept in 1872 when she was 21. She later married Lewis Addison Sparrow who purchased a farm on Colburn Street. I am currently working on two journals from 1865-67 written by 17 year old Ellen Crosby. I have hopes of transcribing those of her sister, Rosa, and their father Hezekiah. It's a privilege to get a glimpse of a young woman's day-to-day life in the mid 1800s; visiting, sewing straw, sleigh rides,

dances, sewing, washing, etc.

Recent Accessions:

Stereopticon with photo cards belonging to David French's father and possibly his grandfather

Wedding suit, 1898, of Abel Reynolds of RI, grandfather of Louise French

*Ellen Racine, Curator*

**Upcoming Appalachian Mountain Club meeting:** Wednesday, Nov. 20th at 7:45 at the Historical Society building. Chris Petrini, Town Counselor from Framingham, fulfilled a life-long dream to hike in the Nepal Himalayas in the fall of 2011. This 40 minute video, "Trekking in Nepal – a 50 year Spiritual Journey", created by Chris and Michael Lamy, a Boston College student, describes the highlights of Chris's travel adventure to Nepal from a spiritual perspective. Stay for Q&A and refreshments.

**Director's Meeting  
Historical Society Building  
November 12, 2013  
7:30 PM**

**Membership  
Northborough Historical Society**

**Red square on your label indicates that it is time to renew your membership.**

**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**



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