



The Hourglass

CCXII Northborough Historical Society June 2012

All Was Not Fair at the Fair

Battles sometimes rage between churches, sometimes within a church. Here is an example from Northborough history.

In 1900 the pastor of St. Rose's church was Rev. Levi J. Achim. A descendant of French ancestors who came to the United States in the early 1700s, he was born in Spencer in 1859, graduated from Holy Cross in 1885 and completed studies for the priesthood in 1888 in Montreal. In his first few clerical years he served parishes in Springfield and South Hadley Falls but in 1894 was assigned to Northborough, then part of the Diocese of Springfield. As pastor at St. Rose's Father Achim also had "mission" responsibility for Shrewsbury. Like many clergy before and since, his problems included financial ones, specifically the task of completing payments if possible, on the church on Pierce Street, which had been constructed in 1883. All available information on Father Achim suggests that he was an energetic man. To help with the mortgage he proposed a church fair.

After the fair, our Worcester Telegram correspondent, John Kellette, wrote in the March 18 issue: "Rev. Levi J. Achim, pastor of St. Rose church, today preached a sermon in English to his parishioners, who regarded it the most cutting, sarcastic and defensive one that ever passed his lips while he has been pastor, and he left the impression on the minds of his hearers that there is more to come."

At the church fair the priest had "offered a solid gold watch in a contest, in which figured Miss Alice Ellsworth and Miss Lydia Cariveau. . . . Miss

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

Curator's News

Our USO Canteen party was a great start to the museum opening and approximately \$150 was raised toward restoring the pipe organ. Our thanks to all who came and supported our efforts. The Museum is open Sundays from 2 to 4:00 through May and June so if you haven't already seen the new military exhibit, "Marching Through Time", please stop by - and have a great summer!

Carriveau was declared the winner by several hundred votes. The opposing faction insisted Miss Ellsworth was the real winner, and denounced the alleged methods. The fair ended in sensational fashion, and Fr. Achim determined that he would never again try to raise the mortgage on the church by means of another fair."

In his sermon the apparently much-harassed pastor "thundered out with hard hitting effects his denunciation of what he termed the hypocrisy of his enemies. . . He challenged any one man, woman or child then in the church to arise and accuse him of dishonest dealings, but no one arose."

After these sobering remarks he announced a tidy \$900 profit at the fair "which would go for the most part toward paying the debt of the church. He said the church had other debts besides that on the property that must be paid, and he proposes settling them first of all."

The reporter acknowledged that "since coming to Northboro in 1894 [Father Achim] has done much toward elevating the church. He firmly believes in allowing young people all the fun there is in life, so long as they do not ride a free horse to death. He has paid \$1000 on the church mortgage, and expressed a wish that he be allowed to stay here until he has completely wiped out the debt."

It is very likely that ethnicity, not religion, was at the root of this dispute. Father Achim's parishioners were overwhelmingly of Irish or French-Canadian ancestry, and the two young women in the contest were, whether they realized it or not, probably seen as representatives of two contrasting cultures. Their families came together to worship. Their basic religious beliefs were the same, but their accents and their attitudes differed. They tended to live in different parts of town, the "French" near the two fabric mills on Hudson Street, whereas the "Irish," more often farm laborers, usually lived close to outlying farms. Alice Ellsworth lived in a relatively small "Irish" section of Pleasant Street. Father Achim performed the marriages of most of his parishioners, but Irish generally married Irish, French married French. We do not have details about much of Father Achim's

New Accessions:

Photos of the former 6 Church Street by Diane Guldner

Fire Department Anniversary T-Shirt, 1985 from JoAnn Sullivan

Eyeglasses and sheepskin case, c.1850 from Llanda Richardson

Betsy Ross commemorative flags, 1966, from Dick Perron

Ellen Racine, Curator

later service in Northborough but hope that it was
more peaceful.

Bob Ellis Historian