



# The Hourglass

CCXVII Northborough Historical Society January 2013

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

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

**Meeting January 25, 2013, 7:30 PM Northborough Historical Society**

**Program: Tobias Lear, Secretary to George Washington**-Dr. Brad Nutting plays the role of Tobias Lear (1762 - 1816), in 3 parts: Lear's role as Washington's private secretary prior to 1789, as first presidential chief of staff (1789-1793), and his checkered and ultimately tragic career which followed. Washington's goodwill tour of New England, which passed through Northborough on the Boston Post Road in October, 1789, was orchestrated by Lear.

*Hosted by Beryl and Chuck Krouse*

## Sanborn Maps of Northborough

Sanborn maps, designed to assist in the insuring of businesses and industries, were invented by D. A. Sanborn of Somerville, Massachusetts in 1866. These maps, showing sections of towns in scale, also depict many other features of historical interest. We have a number of these maps, particularly from the years 1910 and 1928.

## 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

## Kent's Current Events

Jan.14, 1914. Cold Weather  
Wednesday For three days

One from 1910 depicts the Northboro Wollen Mills. (What is a wollen? It's just a mistake. Sanborn isn't perfect.) The map describes the mill, just off Hudson Street near its intersection with Colburn Street, as "not in operation." Kent's Current Events tells us that since Ezra Chapin had died the previous year the mill had not operated and was mortgaged both to the town and a bank in Worcester. It thus had both "night and day" watchmen. A number of details are given: the locations of such operations as fulling, carding, weaving, and spinning, also the picker room, the cloth room, and the dye house. Leading up to the mill is the Assabet River-in actuality only the (still-standing) canal from the river--which diverted a great deal of it, if not the whole stream, into the factory to supply its motor power. The mill did have electric lights at the time. Indications of hoses, sprinklers and other equipment of importance to insurers are given, much of it abbreviated and often difficult for the layman to read.

At the Main Street crossing of the river the Whiting Manufacturing Company operated.

we have been having very rough weather. It started in at about noon on Monday with a black snow squall. From that time the wind increased in violence and the cold in intensity. By the middle of the afternoon the wind was blowing seventy miles an hour and kept up all through the night and all the next day. The mercury fell below zero, and at no time on Tuesday did it rise higher than 4 degrees below. Today there has been but little wind, but the cold is intense. Both this morning and yesterday the mercury was down to 14 degrees below zero.

Railroad service has been demoralized, and much damage done. It is one of the worst situations known to the weather bureau.

**Jan. 27, 1915. Burglary.** Northborough was the scene of several burglaries last night. The Burglars entered the Selectmen's Room in the Town Hall and after ransacking that room passed into the drug store of Claude T. Shattuck where they stole cigars etc. They next went into the grocery store of Mr. Daniels (next door) where they took nothing; next into the Post Office where they got nothing; next into the Depot where they got about eleven dollars belonging to the Express Company; and

Where the parking lot sits on the south side of the street and where the motorcycle shop stands today, Thomas H. Blair, his camera business now gone, made cash registers and "moving picture machines." We have one of the former. The latter represents Blair's patent (U. S. Patent Office #1,186,070) "to provide greater security against the admission of fire to the magazines or receptacles containing the films." On the south side of the street west of the river Albert Carr's grist mill ground away.

If we proceed toward the middle of town, we can note that the Baptist Church building, our present headquarters, had horse sheds along School Street and behind the building in a spot that may have included some of the present funeral home's parking area. The church had electric lights, by the way, as did the other two Protestant churches; the map says nothing specific about St. Rose's on Pierce Street. The Hudson Street School, by the way, did not have electricity. It should be remembered that electrically-lighted buildings in town were then quite a recent phenomenon.

In the building where Pepper's now does business, the streetcar company had its power station. Near it on the side near Pierce Street was an apparently large coal pile with a railroad siding back to the main tracks, and a streetcar barn beyond. In the middle of town two hotels were operating, the Assabet House at Main and South, the Northboro Hotel at Main and Church. West from South Street on Main were, respectively, a general store, a dwelling, a lunch room, a barber shop, and in the "Arcade" a bicycle shop, a Chinese laundry, and a harness works. The livery stable was at the former location of Lowe's store with a blacksmith shop behind it.

In 1928 things were different. The Northboro

next to George H. Felt's coal office where they stole Mr. Felt's fur coat.

### **Jan. 15, 1919    The Movies Come**

Northborough is developing into an amusement center, The movies have struck town, and gave their premier performance this Evening. By permission of the Selectmen, a performance will be given every Wednesday evening. The movies have great educational possibilities, and are beginning to be used in that capacity. I think that the moving picture business has a great future.

Lest some should regard this as the first moving picture exhibition in Northborough I will record this: The first exhibition was given in the town hall 21 years ago, and under the auspices of the churches. The pictures were very crude, but they were a novelty and drew a big crowd, notwithstanding the weather was very stormy. I remember this exhibition very vividly, for I represented my church on the committee.

Textile Fibre Company (alias Chapin Mill), now owned by "Mrs. Whitaker," was again not operating and would soon cease manufacturing forever. The Whiting buildings were gone, and Carr's mill was out of business. Coming into town as before, short of the Baptist Church, its horse sheds gone, stood a new high school, both it and the Hudson Street School surely electrified. Streetcars had disappeared, their power building now housed O'Neill Brothers Ice Company (the coal pile and car barn having vanished).

Downtown the Assabet House was no longer in business and the burned-out Northboro Hotel had been replaced by a filling station. On Main west of South most of the buildings are depicted with only an "S" (for sales, no doubt), except for the lunch room, called a restaurant, with an ice cream factory attached in the rear. The livery stable had disappeared, and the blacksmith's shop had become a "print shop."

We've seen many changes, but so did anyone looking at Northborough from 1910 to 1928.

Bob Ellis, Historian

**Director's Meeting  
Historical Society Building  
7:30 PM January 8, 2013**

**Our mailing address has changed**

**Northborough Historical Society  
300 Ball St.  
Northborough, MA 01532**