



The Hourglass

CCXXIV Northborough Historical Society October 2013

www.Northboroughhistsoc.org

NHS1906@verizon.net

Meeting October 25, 2013, 7:30 PM at Northborough Historical Society.

Reading Northborough's History Along its Recreation Trails - Forest Lyford, Historical Society and Trails Committee member, will present a slide show highlighting some of the many historical features that can be viewed along more than 25 miles of recreation trails in town.

Hosted by Bucky and Ruth Rogers

His Name Was Oak or Oke or Oaks or Oakes

Is this title OK? Our subject, first name Nathaniel, came along before Noah Webster started his campaign to regulate spelling and perhaps didn't care how anybody spelled his surname. We meet him very early in the history of our town. Kent's Northborough History tells us that "In 1694 Samuel Brigham, who was a younger brother of John Brigham, and was a tanner in the eastern part of Marlborough, sold to Nathaniel Oke (Oaks) . . . '[a] tract of land in town of Marlborough, being one-half part of the thirty acres the above said Samuel brought to town and is laid out now John Brigham's sawmill.'"

Kent reveals a few more facts. Nathaniel Oak (to stick with that spelling) lived on that thirty acres in a house that later served Rev. John Martyn and then Rev. Peter Whitney until it burned and was replaced by the latter with the house that stands today at 62 Whitney Street. His family constituted one quarter of those in that part of Marlborough which eventually became Northborough. It does not seem that they could have taken shelter in the Goodenow garrison when unfriendly Native Americans attacked, for a journey between these two locations is about two miles as the crow flies and even today cannot be readily done in anything approaching a straight line.

Otherwise we knew nothing of Nathaniel Oak until a correspondent asked us whether Oak was affiliated with our Goodenow garrison. It appeared to me that before he came to what is now Northborough he must have been associated with

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 News

This month has been extremely busy with our organ concerts and they have been a great success. There has been a wide variety of music performed by students and professionals alike. My thanks to all of them for volunteering their talents. Last week's concert with Allyn Phelps was a lively one and I'd like to thank him and his "Elite Choir" who volunteered at the last minute: Judy Bissett, Alene Cole, Fran Hemstreet and Forest

a Goodenow garrison in Sudbury. The inquirer knew other facts-and traditions-about the man, learned from an Oak who did extensive genealogical work around 1900 (much of which is on the Internet).

The traditional part has it that Nathaniel Oak came to New England from Wales as a cabin boy. Nine miles off the coast the ship foundered, and "he alone survived by swimming shore." A good story, it is based on a Bible entry by Nathaniel's great-grandson. The entry also states that "Oak vowed to the Lord that if he preserved him to get to land he would never go into water again." So presumably Nathaniel did not even wade in the Assabet. The great-grandson's account continues with another adventure. While working in Sudbury, "His master set him to work in a pitch-pine forest to pick up pine knots. In this employ he was attacked by a catamount, or wild-cat, which he slew with a large pine knot. His master gave him the bounty the State paid for the pelt of this furious beast, with which he bought a sheep or two, which he let out to double. These sheep were all the property he began the world with when he became of age."

Henry Oak found information about his hardy ancestor in local records, in the Worcester Magazine in 1826 and in Hudson's history of Marlborough. In Sudbury he married Mehitable Rediat, who predeceased him, and secondly Mary Halloway Farrar, of the family later associated with the establishment of the North Precinct of Westborough (later Northborough).- The marriage is not found in the Vital Records of Marlborough, but the births of their six children, between 1703 and 1720 are. In that latter year, Nathaniel must have been well into his seventies-but what might you expect in the senescent years of a man with such early accomplishments? The youngest child, George, would have been born after home became part of Westborough, but the Westborough records include only events pertaining to the children of Nathaniel and Mary.

Nathaniel's activities officially occurred between 1703 and 1717 in Marlborough, and after 1717 until his death in 1721 in Westborough, according to Henry Oak (but the vital records of Marlborough, Westborough, and Northborough do not include his death). They doubtless happened, however, in and around what is today 62 Whitney Street in Northborough.

Lyford. They sang beautifully - and with no rehearsal!

The last concert will be Sunday, October 6th at 2:00 with Glen Campbell, organist at The Church of the Nativity. He has chosen selections from classical pieces, popular tunes, and hymns. Glen also volunteered to instruct and supervise museum visitors on the organ during the "Pay-to-Play" fund-raiser. I'd like also to thank all those who baked refreshments for the receptions after the concerts, and especially to Carolyn Squillante, Carol and Buz Bostock, Llanda Richardson and Ernie Racine.

Recent Accessions:
High School Year Books,
1946 and 1947 from
Priscilla Jay.

Ellen Racine, Curator

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

Bob Ellis, Historian

Kent's Current Events

October 23, 1911- The State Road through the center of the town which has been in process of construction for some time past, was completed today. This completes the road through the town from the Marlborough line to the Shrewsbury line.

October 14, 1913- I was in Boston today, and from 12 o'clock until 2 there was a vigorous snow storm. At Northborough there was not snow but some hail.

October 7, 1914- The old Ball homestead on Main Street (the present home of Mrs. Sarah Searle) was the scene of a pretty home wedding this evening. Melville Irwin and Miss Alice Manley Swainhardt both of Cleveland, Ohio were united in marriage by the Rev. J. C. Kent, pastor of the Unitarian Church. Guests were present from Boston, Newton, and Chicago. It is a long time since a function of this kind took place in this old homestead. The house was built in 1747.