



THE HOUR GLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCXXXIII

Northborough Historical Society

October 2014

www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org

The next meeting of the Northborough Historical Society will take place at 7:30 p.m. Friday, October 24 at the Society Building at 52 Main Street. The program will focus on the sinking of the *Titanic*. How much do you really know about the *Titanic*? If your knowledge comes from movies or romantic books, you might be in for a surprise.

Save the Date! Plans are underway for members and their guests to enjoy a cocktail reception at the historic White Cliffs mansion on **Sunday, November 23, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.** The program will include information on this Northborough landmark which is currently up for sale. Mark your calendar now, and look for more information coming soon!

Dues are Due: If you have not yet renewed your membership for the 2014-15 season, please stop by the welcome table at the next meeting, or mail a check to:
Membership Secretary, Northborough Historical Society, PO Box 661, Northborough, MA 01532.

The Board of Directors will meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 14.

Lost at Sea

This month, the Society will host a program about the *Titanic*. Let us take a look at several other shipwrecks that have concerned Northborough in some way. One did not involve a towns person, but rather a famous woman whom Mary Allen, eldest daughter of Unitarian minister Joseph Allen, revered as a teacher.

Margaret Fuller, along with Giovanni Ossoli and their two-year-old son, were returning from Italy where she had served as the only female correspondent of the *New York Tribune*. In the stormy wee hours of July 19, 1850 their ship struck a sandbar little more than one hundred yards off the coast of Fire Island, near the Long Island coast. With no help coming from shore, the captain proposed that the five passengers (for the ship was primarily a freighter) ride planks to shore which would be pulled by swimming sailors. Ossoli and Fuller declined this offer, and when the ship broke apart, they and their son lost their lives.

Eleven years earlier Fuller had taught eighteen-year-old Mary Allen and her friend Hannah Gale in the Greene Street School in Providence, Rhode Island. Mary kept a diary relating her year in Providence, emphasizing her admiration of Fuller's classes. Several biographies of Fuller mention Mary, her most literate student. Her teacher, knowing of the boarding school operated by her parents (with some assistance from their daughter), also wrote Rev. Allen about sending a cousin of hers to them as a student. After Mary's year in Providence a correspondence

Membership

Annual Dues:

Single - \$20

Student/Senior - \$15

Family - \$45

Lifetime - \$250

Send dues to:

Northborough Historical
Soc.

Membership Secretary

P.O. Box 661

Northborough, MA 01532

*Please make checks payable
to Northborough Historical
Society*

Curator's News

by Ellen Racine, Curator

Applefest: a round of applause goes to Forest Lyford and the many others who hosted the luncheon, lawn exhibits and to JoAnn Sullivan for providing children's activities. We again provided a booth at Algonquin with Jenifer Bakkala, Arlene Marshall, Jane Fletcher and Linda Corbin dressed in period costumes. Bob Ellis provided the history quiz for entertainment.

The Ice Cream Social on Sunday was entertaining, with music from the Senior Center Harmonica group, Algonquin Jazz Band and Algonquin Choral Group. It was a

developed between the two women.

During the next decade, Fuller's accomplishments included the editorship of *The Dial*, the transcendentalist magazine initiated by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the writing of the first feminist book by an American writer, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Her death ended a brilliant career at the age of forty.

A much more spectacular shipwreck four years later took the lives of nearly three hundred people, including the young family of Frederick Gale, born in Northborough in 1816. Several details may now be added to my description in the October 2002 *Hourglass* of their deaths on September 27, 1854 when the steamship *Arctic* collided with a French vessel off the Canadian coast. Their child, a daughter, had been born in Florence while the Gales were on an extended honeymoon. Paintings of both parents were made in Florence.

Some of their possessions, shipped separately, arrived in Northborough. The portrait of Sarah Gale came into the hands of Richard Brigham of Avon, Connecticut, whose father had Northborough connections. He recently donated her picture to our Society, but the portrait of Frederick, known to have once adorned a wall in the Northborough National Bank, has disappeared. Gale was a son of Cyrus and Eliza Gale and brother of Hannah, mentioned above. The American Antiquarian Society has more than 400 letters that passed between these two siblings, as well as journals that Frederick kept while traveling in Europe for several years beginning in 1847. These years abroad allowed him close access to some of the many revolutionary activities that dominated Europe in 1848. Regarded as a fine lawyer in Worcester, Frederick died at thirty-eight.

The sinking of the *City of Columbus* on January 18, 1884 ended the career of Helon Brooks, who manufactured parts for musical instruments on Hudson Street. The ship struck submerged rocks called the Devil's Bridge near Gay Head on Martha's

successful weekend.

My thanks to Paul Derosier for re-installing the dehumidifier in the archive. It was moved to squeeze in one more file cabinet and needed a new drainage hole drilled through a double cinderblock wall.

Our Sewing group has met and has started to plan their period costumes. Our next meeting will be Monday, Nov. 10 at 1:00 p.m. Please feel free to join our informal monthly group. We have patterns, reference materials and plenty of ideas.

We have received some very exciting donations this past month and some will be on display for our October 24 meeting. Richard Brigham of Connecticut donated a lovely oil portrait of Sarah Gale, c. 1854 with an unusual history. Dr. Mary Ann Breault donated a wonderful large photograph of John Fairley inside his hardware store on South Street, c.1940. She also donated research papers, a slide rule and two hand saws from Liz Walker's Market.

Other Accessions:

Blue Willow pattern tea cups and saucers made in Occupied Japan from Helen Calverley
The Game of Northborough, 1980s from Alan Gustafson
Promotional ruler from O'Brien's from Marie Nieber.
Pin and photo card of Brian Arsenault from Bob Marchetta.

Vineyard, and while some Wampanoag Indians from Gay Head saved some passengers, Brooks was among approximately one hundred who died. His wife, remaining home in Northborough, outlived him by many years. Brooks initiated a business that persisted in town for many decades.

Deficiencies either in the crew or in available safety equipment contributed to all of these disasters. The captains of both the *Elizabeth* and the *City of Columbus* were men with almost no experience. The *Arctic* lacked an adequate number of boats for the passengers, and, shockingly, the eighty-five crewmen and passengers who survived included none of the women and children aboard.

If any reader knows of other shipwrecks that involved Northborough connections, please let me know.

Our Newest Members

Alexandra Fleischman
Arthur Marsan
Stephen Repka
Jane A. Gasek
Patricia Cluff
A.P. Singer
J.P. Howe
Marj Hastings
Mary Fortin
Rob Berger
Charles and Marnie Frankian