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THE HOUR GLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Northborough Historical Society

January 2015

www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org

Get on Track for the next meeting of the Northborough Historical Society at **7:30 p.m. Friday, January 23**, when Norm Corbin will present: "Wilder Bush: Combs and More." Wilder Bush is well-known as the first entrepreneur to bring comb manufacturing to Northborough. Did you know that he was also a key player in bringing the railroad and first bank to town as well?

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, Jan. 13.**

History Corner

by Bob Ellis, Historian

Northborough in 1965

In 1965, I had my first experience of Northborough, which consisted solely of driving through it twice daily between Marlborough and Worcester. Looking at the Northborough Annual Report for 1965-1966, I see the officers of the United States ♦ Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Leverett Saltonstall, and Edward Kennedy ♦ and of Massachusetts ♦ John Volpe, Elliot Richardson, Kevin White, Senator Edward W. Brooke ♦ none living today but Brooke only a few days deceased. When I arrived in '66, I remember being *always* informed by merchants that they had to charge me 3% “for Governor Volpe.” He did dare to show up at a Republican summer rally at the Yellow Barn in August of '65, however.

In the March town meeting the voters appropriated \$8,000 to the Bicentennial Committee by a vote of 216-9, and agreed to be “in favor of having industrial firms locate” here by 234-9. Could those have been the same nine people? Perhaps some of you who were around can identify those nay-sayers. The Appropriation Committee disapproved of several motions eventually supported by the voters, but it did appropriate money for the Bicentennial. It disapproved of \$8,000 for mosquito control, but the voters, many of whom were probably more likely to work out-of-doors than the committee members, endorsed it. The proper means of mosquito control became an issue. Although Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring* had appeared three years earlier, a number of people still supported the wholesale spraying of foliage. The Appropriations Committee also rejected \$3,000 to establish a conservation fund;

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*

The Evening at White Cliffs

More than 100 Historical Society members and their guests converged on the town’s White Cliffs mansion on November 23 for an evening of food, frivolity, and memories.

White Cliffs, which is currently on the market for sale, was the scene of an elegant and informative evening, which gave members of the Society a chance to enjoy the public spaces of this historic facility under its current ownership. The mansion was built in 1886 as a summer retreat for gun manufacturer Daniel Wesson and also has operated as a

then voters passed over the recommendation.

A less expensive motion, “to turn over the Old Bell Watering Trough on South Street to the Northborough Historical Society,” had no trouble passing. Long ago this cracked bell hung in the steeple of the Baptist Church but was removed in 1891 because the pastor could not bear its sound. It returned to its former location, by that time our headquarters, after serving for decades, inverted, as a watering trough at the corner of South and Summer Streets. It continues to stand on our lawn today.

Robert E. Johnson, Herman L. Sparrow Jr., and Richard Connell were serving as selectmen. Among other officials, Allyn W. Phelps was town accountant, and Arthur Cole chaired the School Committee. The last of the present elementary schools, the Lincoln Street School, came into existence, the most expensive school yet (because of inflation, it appears). Its construction followed the plan of the Maple Street School, opened four years earlier and renamed in 1965 in honor of Marguerite Peaslee, who had died in 1960.

A number of details about the town are described in a scrapbook made by Ralph Harper, no waster of space, for he covered previous written entries in the book and maintained no margins on the tops or bottoms of pages. He tells us that Margaret Sherman, a great benefactor of our Society, contributed funds for an addition to the Brimfield Public Library. Her family had lived there for seven generations. She made the gift to honor her father George, also an important Historical Society member of an earlier day.

Several serious accidents marred the year. In one of them, the car of David Settele, a physical education teacher, was struck by a train at the Summer Street crossing, critically injuring him. Town Counsel Robert Gabriel noted that there were no warning lights at four railroad crossings in town.

In 1965 the Vietnam War was still young

restaurant and an event facility.

The November event was planned and sponsored by the members of the Society’s Board of Directors’ membership committee and was spearheaded by Norm Corbin, who also gave a historical presentation as part of the evening. Members were invited to wander about and enjoy the grandeur of the mansion, as well as view a film about White Cliffs which was created by Society member Brian Smith. Informative posters offered historical information about the facility.

Surprisingly, a few attendees were seeing the inside of the mansion for the very first time; most arrived, however, with years of memories. Weddings, awards ceremonies, dinners, Mother’s Day brunches, and Winter Balls of the past were the topics of much of the conversation of the evening.

Photographs of the event, as well as historical information on the mansion, and a link to Norm’s presentation, are all available on the Society’s web site:

www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

enough so that a Northborough marine who was engaging in it, Gregory Stirk, made a considerable story. Many more would serve, two dying as a result.

The young man who might be called Northborough's second-most famous pitcher, Ken Reynolds, almost pitched the Northborough American Legion team to a regional championship. Actually Reynolds lived in Marlborough. He went on to pitch for six years in the major leagues, longer but less successfully than Mark Fidrych.

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The town engineer, William Taylor, decreed that only Solomon Pond Road could provide a cloverleaf adequate for the entering and exiting cars on the upcoming Route I-290. As it turned out, of course, Church Street furnished another location, at the expense of the Fawcett farm. The town resisted the judgment by the Massachusetts Department of Motor Vehicles that both Green Street and Brewer Street should close to complete the highway project.

Also in 1965, Northborough was busily preparing for its anniversary celebration the following year, as it is again in 2015.

society.org.

Our Newest Members

Janet Nigosanti

Mary Sullivan