



THE HOUR GLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCXXXVII

Northborough Historical Society

February 2015

www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org

Take a Walk through History at the next meeting of the Northborough Historical Society at 7:30 p.m. Friday, February 27. Jason Newton, a descendant of the Rev. Thomas Hooker, will present “Rediscovering the Old Connecticut Path,” which will focus on the journey that Hooker and his congregation took in 1636 from Cambridge to Hartford. Today, the Path is hidden from plain sight, but ready to be rediscovered for this historic importance and beauty.

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, Feb. 10.

History Corner

by Bob Ellis, Historian

Mill Street: The Mill and the Road

Although Josiah Coleman Kent’s history of Northborough says little about the mill at the foot of Mill Street, it is one of the early such establishments in town. It has been associated with the town’s first pastor, John Martyn. If it seems strange for a parson to operate a mill, Martyn did not join the ministry until 1746, the year he turned forty; furthermore, he complained of not being financially supported while carrying out that ministry. Such activity would not have been surprising.

Mills were important in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Several extracts pertaining to Sturbridge in the period from 1800 to 1865 on a web site maintained by Old Sturbridge Village suggest a pattern of mill use probably very similar to Northborough’s at the Mill Street site and elsewhere:

Farmer-millers dammed all of the community’s principal streams. . . Simple stone-lined walls filled with earth . . . served as dams for many of the earliest mills. . . Mill owners at the early sites sought to redirect and control water through flumes and stone-lined raceways. . . Early mill owners were more concerned with utilizing natural flow than creating large dams and ponds. . . Farmers operated their sawmills from late fall through early spring, the slowest month of agricultural activity.

The first comprehensive map of Northborough in 1830 indicates the mill but not its operator. At this time there was still no street to the mill, but in 1841 the town accepted a road “from John Rice’s [the corner of Church and Pierce where a superfluous bank now stands but will soon close] to Curtis Rice’s” ♦ basically Pierce Street, and another road “from the mill of John Glazier to meet this road.” An extension of the new Mill Street commenced “at the southwest corner of John Glazier’s mill” and reached Whitney Street at a point just across the street

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

It has been a quiet few months in the archive and museum. Work is continuing on our picture book “America through Time” and most of the captions have been written. After finalizing a few more entries, much time will be spent scanning the 91 plus photographs. This has been a fun project and I hope it will be well received.

Our period costume sewing group continues to meet on the second Monday of each month. We will meet February 9, March 9 and April 13 at 1:00. Come and see our projects or join us with yours.

of John Glazier to meet this road. An extension of the new Mill Street commenced “at the southwest corner of John Glazier’s mill” and reached Whitney Street at a point just across the street from the road emerging from behind the First Church. This extension necessitated a bridge across Cold Harbor Brook.

An 1855 map of Northborough shows this route clearly. That map suggests that Mill Street was conceived as stretching past the site of the present fire station all the way to Church Street with only the road branching off to the right being considered to be Pierce Street. Oddly, on an 1870 map Mill Street is not shown at all. The mill is marked simply “G. Mill.”

In the fourth of the maps we have from the nineteenth century, published in an 1898 atlas, however, Mill Street is shown as in 1855. In 1909 a newspaper article noted an important roadway change:

The pedestrians who have used Mill street for a short cut from Whitney to Pierce street are somewhat disappointed at seeing two large no-trespassing signs posted at the entrance from Whitney street. This means a walk around Church to Pierce street, which is an inconvenience to the comb shop hands [at Farwell’s shop on Hudson Street] who live in the north section of Northboro. The street has been closed several years as a highway, but has always been used by the public as a footpath from Whitney to Pierce Street.

Thus from 1841 until 1908, Mill Street was termed a “highway.” Presumably during this period you could ride your horse or perhaps drive your wagon over the Cold Harbor bridge. This new prohibition may reflect the advent of motor vehicles.

Around the time of those disturbing no-trespassing signs, a post card view of the mill was made. By that time the Glazier mill had become the mill used by the Felt and Proctor lumber companies (located where “Doggie Den” and the plastic card factory stand today) until the time, several years into the twentieth century, when lumber could be cut by electrically-powered saws. The mill building was used as a residence in those early years of the 1900s; later it deteriorated and eventually was removed in the 1950s. The waterfall still exists, and the bridge, no longer very useful after the way was blocked, also vanished.

In a subsequent *Hourglass* we will examine the residents and residences of Mill Street.

2015-16 Committee Openings

The Northborough Historical Society has openings on several committees for the 2015-2016 season.

Most of these positions are 3-year terms.

If you would like to volunteer to be nominated or know of someone to nominate for a committee, please contact Kevin Carroll at:

skybars@verizon.net.

Museum Trustees	2 positions
Program Committee	1 position
Property	1 position
Publicity	2 positions
Kitchen	2 positions
Legislative	1 position
Nominating	1 position

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