



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Northborough Historical Society

June 2015

www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org

Summertime is here: The Northborough Historical Society will have no Friday night programs in June, July, or August. The Hourglass will be on hiatus for the summer as well. **See you in September!**

Applefest, Northborough's annual town-wide celebration, is scheduled for Saturday, September 19.

History Corner

by Bob Ellis, Historian

The Burgoyne Fire

Here is most of an article from the November 8, 1899 issue of the *Worcester Telegram*. Observe how well it illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of our town at that time.

Fire this morning destroyed the barn and contents, and the house, of George Henry Burgoyne, South Street. The loss is \$3000: insurance \$1750.

At 9 o'clock the 28 alarm was blown from Worcester & Marlboro street railway powerhouse chime whistle. Not for a half-hour did the fire department make its appearance, though the house is but a half-mile from Northboro center, on the road to Westboro.

A short time after the arrivals of the ladder

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

The museum is open Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. in June. Please stop by and see what's new.

We welcome new members at our period costume Sewing

truck, the old hand tub, Assabet, arrived, driven by James Duffy. The old story was the same at today's fire as it has been at all others a short way out of town, not hose enough. The house is 1700 feet away from a hydrant, but the department was helpless because of no hose.

The fire started in the barn, and when noticed it was all in flames. It is not known what started the fire, nor is any reason given. Mrs. Burgoyne was alone in the house. Mr. Burgoyne was at his blacksmith shop in town, and the children were in school. The fire alarm was given by Wilbur H. Duplisse, and citizens turned out and removed everything portable to a lot across the road, and the department was meanwhile

Calling for Water and Hose.

Whiting Manufacturing Co., under orders from Thomas H. Blair, heard of the fire, sent hose enough to connect to the fire. Water was then run into a barrel and pumped out through the hand tub.

The barn contained three tons of hay, Arthur E. Woods' pet mare, Mabel; farming implements and provisions for winter. Everything was burned. Five pigs and a sow were taken out before anybody thought of fire. Over the loss of Mr. Woods' mare, Burgoyne is distracted.

One hundred heads of cabbage, 10 cords of wood, three tons of Franklin coal and other stuff went up in smoke in a shed adjoining the barn. There was no insurance on the shed. After the fire department arrived the house caught fire. While working inside removing furniture, a reporter of The Telegram was nearly overcome with smoke and was helped downstairs by Charles Edwards.

After the hose sent for was connected, besides others, Northboro selectmen William J. Potter, president Northboro bank, ex-Representative Asa B. Fay, 11th Worcester district, and Allyn D. Phelps, did yeoman service of the pump handles on the tub.

A long department ladder, laid against the house, fell among 10 firemen, but no one was injured.

Everyone present was loud in denunciation of the fire department's methods of handling fires, and scored the town for not providing hose enough for the department.

The house was built in 1889 and cost \$1500. Mr. Burgoyne will rebuild as soon as the insurance is

Group. We will meet next on Monday, June 8 at 1 p.m. We are sewing our 250th Anniversary costumes for wearing at the Ball, parade, fashion show, and other events. Drop by and see our creations.

I will be attending a workshop next week through the New England Museum Association entitled "Keeping it Safe" at the Rhode Island School of Design. It will include topics on conservation of paper, costumes, furniture care and storage, and a tour of their back rooms at the museum. It should be a very interesting day!

Snapshot in Time: The Northborough Historical Society is sponsoring a photograph contest as part of the town's 250th anniversary celebration. The purpose of the contest is to document life in Northborough during 2015-2016 for future generations. Photographs submitted for the contest will be judged in early October 2016 and displayed at the Historical Society building. A prize will be offered for the best photograph for each of the following categories, and a people's choice also will be awarded based on popular votes. Categories are: **Buildings** (inside and out) ; **Sights and Scenes** (streets, landscapes, traffic, etc.); **Northborough at Play** (leisure-time activities, sports, recreation, parades, concerts, etc.); **Northborough at Work** (construction, farming, town government, DPW, fire, police, building maintenance, etc.); **Northborough People** (family gatherings, etc.). **Deadline is October 3, 2016. For more**

adjusted. The agent said everything would be

Considered a Total Loss.

Burgoyne did rebuild his house, and it stands today at 157 South Street. The fire, not the most notable of its time, brought many people together: all three selectmen, Thomas Blair, a helpful but critical group of neighbors, a reporter (John Kellette, twenty years before *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*) who blanked out while assisting, the man who guided him to safety and even the much-berated firefighters, whose official report, it must be said, did not refer to their lateness, the lack of hose, or the ladder falling amidst the firefighters. Their report does tell us that F. V. Gay was commander at the scene.

In addition, photographs of such an event, common today, were surely very rare in 1899, but Frank Eames managed two shots. Kellette and Eames, both 25 at the time, journalistically and pictorially here and elsewhere give us a remarkably full account of many aspects of Northborough life.

A couple of people from a later time also deserve credit. John Eames gave his father's immensely valuable collection of glass photographs of Northborough to the Society in 1932, two years after his father's death. Bob Kennerly made prints from Eames's glass negatives in 1983. Bob was also involved in the decision necessarily a rare one to purchase from a dealer the records of the Northborough Fire Department.

information and an entry form, visit www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org.