

The Hourglass

CXLIII

Northborough Historical Society

October 2015

www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

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An Evening with Mark Twain: At the next meeting of the Northborough Historical Society, Richard Clark will portray Mark Twain in a solo performance about the life and work of America's foremost humorist. Come and see why wit, wisdom, and a special brand of storytelling made Mark Twain a legend in his time. The event will take place at 7:30 p.m. Friday, October 23 at the Historical Society building, 52 Main Street.

Dues are Due! Now is the time to renew your membership with the Historical Society. Individual yearly memberships are \$20, with a discount for students and senior citizens. The first 100 people who join or renew will receive a Society car sticker. Mail your dues to: Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 661, Northborough, Mass. 01532 or drop by the Welcome Table at the next meeting.

History Corner by Bob Ellis

Charles Stanley Pease and Northborough History

The name of Josiah Coleman Kent pops up often in discussions of Northborough history, but another important historian is Charles Stanley Pease. Kent was minister of the First (Unitarian) Church, Pease the minister of the Baptist Church that later joined with another parish to form the present Trinity Church. The former assumed his duties on December 1, 1895 and departed on April 1, 1921; the latter served from 1903 to 1910, served other churches for a dozen years, and returned to Northborough in 1922. He retired in 1934 but continued to live in town until his death in 1941. Thus, for a period of more than forty-five years, Northborough had the benefit of one, or both, of these men.

Their theological views differed considerably, but as historians they supplemented each other. Both were founding members of the Northborough Historical Society in 1906. In August of 1907 the

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

Society recalled the scalping of Mary Goodenow, an early white settler, exactly 200 years earlier. Rev. Pease spoke at this event, and that speech became the basis of a pamphlet still available: "The Indian History of Northborough." It is a well-documented speech on the one and only Native American attack on a site that would, in 1766, become part of Northborough.

In addition to the facts of the incident, Rev. Pease's speech also reflected an attitude common in his time, expressed in such statements as the following: "These scalping expeditions were in perfect accord with the tastes of savage warriors who loved nothing better than to lurk about like panthers ready to pounce upon some unsuspecting victim." When in August of 2007 the Society sponsored the 300th anniversary of this event at the site, the tone, as you might expect, proved less judgmental.

Let us look at some other of Rev. Pease's historical efforts during his second residence in town. On November 21, 1928 at the Northborough Grange (in one of the numerous events that mark it, in my opinion, as the most important Northborough civic, social, and recreational building still standing) he spoke on "Northborough in the Making." As Kent had once benefited from his work, he employed Kent's history as one of his sources, but he used many others. For example, he tells of a 1784 meeting between a Marlborough committee and twenty-six Indians which resulted in "a blanket deed for the whole plantation of about 6000 acres" for the whites and "31£--about \$150.00" for the Indians. He informs us that on April 3, 1886 the last log was sawed at the Whitney Street site where John Brigham had established the first sawmill in what would later be Northborough. He relates that a bounty was paid for killing twenty-three wolves in 1672 and that Brigham and seven other men hunted rattlesnakes in Cold Harbor. (By the way, such long-disappeared species are appearing again in the northeastern part of the country.) The last part of this essay, a survey of old houses in Northborough, was added when he presented it again on January 3, 1935 at the Unitarian Church.

In a 1932 talk he uncovered some of the adventures of a stage driver, Captain Levi Pease (undoubtedly a relative, though not a close one), who "on October 20, 1783, at six o'clock in the morning ...drove the west-bound stage [from Boston] and stopped at Martyn's Tavern in Northborough" while carrying mail between Boston and Hartford.

Where did Pease obtain these amazingly specific details? I cannot say, but like Kent's historical work, his writing proves accurate in cases where it can be elsewhere verified.

Charles and his wife Jennette had two daughters, each keenly interested in the church and in area history. I strongly suspect that both, had they lived a few decades later, would have become ministers also. The older, Dorothy, was ordained and served as a director of religious education in several Baptist churches. Your historian was greatly impressed by the younger, Elizabeth Felt, when I met her on what was probably her last visit to a Northborough High School reunion some years ago. Having lived long in North Carolina with her husband, a college professor also from Northborough, she remained a faithful and contributing member of our Historical Society.

Curator's News by Ellen Racine

Our new book is back from the printer! Northborough through Time covers many of the changes in town over the last 150 years. Ninety-one photographs were selected from our archived and private collections and comparable new photos taken, to create a book that will interest residents young and old.

Books will be available for sale during museum hours, 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, October 18, and before our program meeting 7:30 p.m. Friday, October 23.

Call Ellen at 508-393-2343 to purchase a copy at another time.

Books are \$24.43, with proceeds benefitting the Historical Society.

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

Program Schedule 2015-2016

Programs take place Fridays at 7:30 p.m. at the Historical Society 52 Main St., Northborough and are free and open to the public.

The September and May programs are preceded by a potluck supper at 6:30 p.m., which is open to all.

October 23, 2015 "Mark Twain" portrayed by Richard Clark. This solo performance about the life and work of America's foremost humorist, Mark Twain, is full of wit and wisdom and the special brand of storytelling that made Mark Twain a legend in his time.

Hosts for meeting: Christina Kennedy and Mary Fortin

December 4, 2015 "Pearl Harbor" by Gary Hylander. Seventy-four years ago, December 7, 1941, FDR declared the attack on Pearl Harbor as a 'A Date Which Will Live in Infamy'. In his dramatic presentation, Professor Gary Hylander recounts the facts of this historic event.

Hosts for meeting: Rick and Gerri Cayer

January 22, 2016 “Algonquin Regional High School Presentation” by ARHS students. In this two-part program, students studying US history under Stephen Godbout will do a presentation on a research project with resources from the NHS museum. The evening will also include a performance by the ARHS Chorus under the direction of Katherine Waters.

Hosts for meeting: Janice Ferenchick and Suzanne Williams

February 26, 2016 “Who is Buried In Northborough’s Brigham Street Old Burial Ground?” by Beth Finch McCarthy. The colonial-era Old Burial Ground on Brigham Street in Northborough was established to accommodate the burials of the town’s first families. Through genealogical research, Beth Finch McCarthy has identified many of the individuals buried there. Highlights of the program will look at early colonial life in Northborough to include some good gossip about the early families.

Hosts for meeting: Frank and Judy Bissett

March 18, 2016 “History of Northborough Fire Department” by Paul Desautels. Joining the Northborough Fire Department in 1965, Paul will share his first-hand knowledge of the Department, including how it grew as Northborough grew, and major fires that happened in town over the years. Most recently, Paul has been instrumental in having an historic fire “engine” returned to town.

Host for meeting: Beth Finch-McCarthy

April 22, 2016 “The Lost Art of Etiquette” by Megan MacNeil. With quotes from the Phillips Family (Phillips House is one of the Historic New England’s properties) Megan MacNeil, Registrar of Historic New England Association, will use journals, diaries and letters to discuss dining room and parlor etiquette, letter writing, how to pay a visit, calling cards and other behavior expected of the different members of the family and household staff. This lecture covers the period of time from 1880s to 1940s.

Hosts for meeting: TBA

May 20, 2016 “Living in Northborough” as recorded in the Northborough Historical Society Archives and remembered by several members of the Northborough Historical Society Members. After a pot luck supper, listen to highlights of Northborough’s past. Anyone with special memories of Northborough, come prepared to share a story or two.

September 23, 2016 “John and Abigail Adams: An American Couple” by Gary Hylander. During their courtship and marriage, John Adams and Abigail Smith Adams exchanged more than 1,100 letters, many filled with intellectual discussions on government and politics considered an invaluable account of the Revolutionary War. Abigail, a fierce advocate of rights for women and African-Americans, was an important partner throughout John's political career. Gary Hylander presents an animated lecture that brings this historic couple to life.

October 28, 2016 “History of Route 20” by Bryan Farr. Stretching from Kenmore Square in Boston to Newport, Oregon at 3,365.3 miles in length, Route 20 is the longest highway in the United States. Northborough’s Main Street is a minuscule segment of this historic road. Bryan Farr, founder of The Historic Route 20 Association, will lecture on the historical and cultural significance of the highway and will highlight landmarks and less-remembered points of interest in Northborough and neighboring communities.

December 2, 2016 "A Portrait of the Victorian Age: Letters of the Holbrook Family of Northborough" by Beth Finch McCarthy. Town figure, Levi Holbrook (m. Eliza Grout), was a very interesting character. Beth Finch McCarthy has obtained a small collection of family letters which colorfully illustrate the life and times of Victorian Northborough. Themes include rail travel in New England, private school culture, Victorian medicines, slavery, boarding in family homes, local commerce, infidelity, and the intricacies of being an independent-minded woman in a male-dominated society. This program promises to be a veritable soap opera.