

The Hourglass

CXLIV

Northborough Historical Society

November 2015

www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

Text only - recovered from MailChimp email, February 2022

“A Date Which Will Live in Infamy:” Seventy-four years ago, this was how FDR described the recent attack on Pearl Harbor, which soon led to our country’s involvement in World War II. Join us at the next meeting of the Historical Society at 7:30 p.m. Friday, December 4, as Professor Gary Hylander recounts the facts of this historic event in a dramatic presentation. Hosts are Rick and Gerri Cayer.

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, and there are only a few left! Mail your dues to: Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 661, Northborough, MA 01532 or drop by the Welcome Table at the next meeting.

History Corner by Bob Ellis

Red Horses and Bouncing Balls

If you are of a certain age, you may remember hearing on your radio the song of a little girl fond of riding with Daddy, who “stopped for his gas and his oil / At the sign of the flying red horse.” Originally this winged horse was Pegasus, who brought thunder and lightning to Zeus. Recently the Society acquired a jacket emblazoned with “Flying Red Horses,” worn by members of a basketball team coached by Simeon Fouracre, who in the late 1940s operated a Mobilgas station in Northborough.

Considering John Fouracre, who donated the item, a little too young to remember much about this team, I consulted his older brother, Bob, a longtime sports broadcaster. He not only remembered his father’s team but told of playing on a small boys’ team that performed as a preliminary feature to the Red Horses’ games. The Red Horses played in a league made up of teams from various towns in the area that operated in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This was semi-pro basketball; most of the members played for fun, but the more sterling performers might be paid. Sometimes these paid players, because

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

they were members of a college team or were for other reasons deemed ineligible, would play under false names.

Basketball began in Northborough long before that time. While working at the Springfield, Massachusetts YMCA in 1891, James Naismith, responding to a request for an indoor game that could be played in the winter, nailed peach baskets at a height of about ten feet at the ends of the gymnasium and devised thirteen rules for a game played with a soccer ball. To avoid excessive body contact and injuries, one of the rules called for the ball to be moved only by passing it. Dribbling and other features now characteristic of basketball came later.

Basketball seems to have arrived in Northborough eight years later. Two items appeared in the same issue of the Worcester Telegram on November 28, 1899: "Northboro basketball association was formed tonight at the home of J. W. Kellette, who was elected manager. . . The players will be chosen from J. Q. Hatch, Benjamin Cox, Edward Lane, Eli Miller, Philip Miller, George A. Martin, Samuel Libby, William Ellsworth and J. W. Kellette." Kellette settled into the position of timer and scorekeeper.

Meanwhile at a meeting in the town hall, members of the Northboro high school football team, whose season had probably just ended, organized a basketball team, involving Arthur Corey, George Simpson, Bernard Burdette, George LaPorte, Joey Proctor, and Joseph Gallagher. Both students and older men were suddenly taking to the court.

There are records of girls playing the game in the same era, although I haven't found any local references. Alice Irwin, the last member of the Ball family who lived for generations at 38 Main Street, told me that she played basketball as a girl, though not in Northborough. She was born in 1887, so she must have been another early player of the game.

I have attached a photo, not of Red Horses but of the 1938 Northborough High School girls' team. The third girl on the left is Pat Proctor, who (as Pat McFarland) gave great service to our Historical Society for many years.

The game that these girls played (and was still being played a few years later when I was in school) involved not five, but six, players on a team. It being deemed impossible or at least dangerously unfeminine for them to go racing up and down the court, three were designated to function only defensively, retrieving the ball for the three offensive players at the other end of the court. Imagine playing a game the object of which is to score baskets and being condemned never to shoot a basket!

Basketball has proven an enhancing sport for tall people (some of them tall enough to make one wonder whether Naismith's ten-foot basket height is now sufficient). Tall people were once expected to be clumsy (a seeming fact) until many of them learned, by playing basketball well, that they didn't have to be clumsy at all. Another example of a disproved "truth," by the way, was that girls had to throw a ball "like girls" - until someone went to the trouble of showing them how to throw "like boys," in other words like people who have learned how to do it properly.

Curator's News by Ellen Racine

Our new book, Northborough Through Time, is here. You may pick up a copy at Shattuck's Pharmacy, the Town Clerk's office or by calling me at 508-393-2343.

The Proctor Button & Comb grant project has been completed. It was made possible through funding from Mass-Humanities. This consisted of creating categories and inventorying some 23,800 documents from a company that underwent several partnership changes from 1876 to 1903. Included in the twelve boxes are orders and letters from customers and sales agents, employee time sheets, product designs and production notes and operating expenses. Much pertains to local workers and town businesses. A finding aid is available on our website: www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org. Click on research and archives, then special projects. This gives you a quick glance into the vast collection.

Recent Accessions:

- 1966 Bicentennial parade photos from Grace Mowczko
- Commemorative buttons from Ed Davidian
- Photos and news articles from Barbara Hogan
- Slide rule and Weems Plotter Circle from Ed Sheehan
- American Cooking 1935, issues from Doug & Paula Moore
- Military uniforms from Jay Houston
- Flying Mobil semi-pro basketball jacket of Simeon Fouracre from John Fouracre
- Photo of Whitney parsonage from Rick & Marie Nieber
- Class of 1936 photo, football photos c.1900, Grange Hall outing and bills from Adams Hardware from Jim & Debbie Emery

Program Schedule 2015-2016

Programs take place Fridays at 7:30 p.m. at the Historical Society 52 Main St. 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.

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.