

The Hourglass

CXLVI

Northborough Historical Society

January 2016

www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

Text only - recovered from MailChimp email, February 2022

A Night of History, a Night of Song: Join us for a double feature, as Algonquin Regional High School students studying U.S. history will present a research project with resources from the Historical Society's museum. A performance by the ARHS chorus will follow. The meeting and program are scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Friday, January 22 at the Society building. The event is free and open to the public.

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. Mail your dues to: Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 661, Northborough, MA 01532 or drop by the Welcome Table at the next meeting.

Northborough turns 250 this year, and residents are planning to celebrate! Both the Town and the Historical Society have a myriad of events scheduled for the coming 12 months in order to honor the town we live in, as well as its history.

The first of these, a **Kickoff Event** sponsored by the Town, will take place from 2-5 p.m. Sunday, **January 24** at the First Parish Unitarian Church, 40 Church Street, the site of Northborough's first meeting house. The celebration will include music, a reading of the town charter, and the sharing of historical facts about Northborough for the past 250 years. Refreshments will be served, including a cake specially made by the Cake Boss and a limited edition 250th coffee blend created by Armeno Coffee Roasters.

The 250th Anniversary Gala, a night of dinner and dancing also sponsored by the town, will take place the evening of February 6. Tickets for this event have sold out.

The Historical Society is planning the following events: On May 15, a **Hunt for History** and **Ice Cream Social**; on September 24 a **Cemetery Tour**; and on October 22 a **Harvest Supper**. In addition, there will be a **Fashion Show** on May 22, and our **Photo Contest**, already under way, will run through October. Friday night programs will focus on various aspects of the history of the Town. Visit the Society web site for more details: www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org.

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

History Corner by Bob Ellis

1966 and Some Echoes in 2016

Fifty years ago, Northborough was beginning to celebrate an anniversary. The first January events were teas, the "Incorporation Date Tea" at the Unitarian Church and another conducted by the American Legion Auxiliary. The first large event would be a February dance at Algonquin Regional to the music of Lester Lanin's orchestra. After many bicentennial adventures, a great parade in August would cap the activities.

This year, the 250th anniversary celebration started months ago with a photography contest that allows photographers to snap their subjects at all seasons of the year. The extremely active Program Committee of our organization has scheduled historical programs throughout the year. The 2016 celebration runs beyond August, the final event being the Historical Society's program on the letters of a nineteenth-century family in December.

In 1966, Northborough had three selectmen (Robert E. Johnson, Herman L. Sparrow Jr., and Richard Connell). They worked on such things as the completion of the Chapter 90 Highway work on Bartlett Street considered a possible industrial site, for the nearby Route I-495 had only recently opened through Marlborough. At the same time they were "planning for the eventual construction of interstate highway I-290, which will bisect the town," (1965-66 town report, p. 27) most likely in its northern part. This highway suggested the possibility of another industrial site.

After 1966, industrial development did not spring up very impressively on Bartlett Street, but hopes were high for an industrial zone near I-290 at Solomon Pond Road. Development, however, was fitful, and in recent years, curiously, a large transportation development has emerged—back on Bartlett Street.

The previous year, the selectmen had initiated a discussion of improvements in the town center. The 1964-65 warrant included a ten-page report on the possible future of the old town hall, perhaps a stripped-down version with its upper floors removed. Selectman Connell introduced an article requesting the acquisition and demolition of the abandoned St. Rose of Lima Church on Pierce Street "for the construction of a public building or as part of a Town Mall." (1966-67 town report, p. 133) Since the town already had a "mall" in an adjoining lot on Main Street, this designation was probably intended to satisfy those who favored a business extension rather than a common. The "public building" might have been a new town hall. Eventually the empty church was demolished.

The selectmen, still hoping to "provide a vitally needed open common in the center of town," (Ibid. p. 31) recommended the buying and destruction of two adjoining Blake Street properties which in past years had served as the headquarters of Peinze's store and bakery (see the picture in *Northborough Through Time*, p. 76). This motion failed, and the Blake Street building still stands, while the old St. Rose's site is today a parking lot. Once again, a possible town common is a subject of public discussion.

In 1966, selectmen had been hearing stories of vicious dogs running loose. As a matter of fact, your historian remembers a dog nearly tearing his jacket off. Selectmen hoped that they would not have to establish a leash law, but now we have one.

In the winter of 1966, the Lincoln Street School was in its first year of operation. After fifty years that newest of the town's elementary schools has become the last to receive a remodeling, and teachers, parents, and students look forward to a revitalized school.

At the March 1966 town meeting, the voters approved an article authorizing the purchase of land on the Southwest Cutoff for a town dump and another establishing a Housing Authority. How exciting it was for youngsters to accompany their parents to the dump to see fires, and how exciting for nearby residents to find their homes being invaded by rats. Today the trash goes elsewhere and presumably also the rats. The Housing Authority continues to serve.

Another 1966 warrant article called for \$3,700 additional funds for the bicentennial. Some voters grumbled and tried unsuccessfully to strip a thousand dollars from the request, but the article passed, 152-16. Now town meetings are in May, with five selectmen and a town administrator. Will we grumble about costs? Your historian does not know; he can only deal with the past, not the future.

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.

Upcoming Programs

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.

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.