



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCXLIX

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

September 2016

Northborough's 250th Year

John and Abigail Adams: An American Couple.

Our September meeting will feature Dr. Gary Hylander who will present *John and Abigail Adams: An American Couple*. 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. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m., **Friday, September 27** at the Society building, 52 Main Street. The event is free and open to the public. An optional **Pot Luck Supper** will begin at 6:30 p.m. and is open to all.

Snapshot in Time

The Historical Society is sponsoring a photograph contest as part of the town's 250th anniversary celebration. This will provide future generations with a snapshot of Northborough in 2015 - 2016. Photographs must be submitted by October 3, and will be judged and displayed at the Historical Society building. A prize will be offered for the best photograph in various categories.

<http://northboroughhistoricalsociety.org>



History Corner

by Bob Ellis

Northborough in the Late Nineteenth Century

Northborough to some extent reflected the economic factors dominating the final decades of the nineteenth century: industrialization and immigration. The Chapin and Wood fabric mills reached peak production, comb manufacturing continued and some new ventures, including a corset factory began. Older industries where small groups of men worked by hand, such as brick makers and fashioners of footwear, yielded to larger, more technologically advanced operations elsewhere. The fabric mills would succumb to technology a few decades later.

Corset making, which employed more than two dozen local people in 1880, lasted only a few years. Another apparently short-lived industry was a rubber mill, involving several people who lived along Reservoir and Church Streets. An industry of the late 1890s, the sophisticated camera and film business of Thomas H. Blair, was soon purchased by Kodak founder George Eastman and moved to Rochester, New York.

By 1880 over 14% of Northborough's 1,676 residents had been born in Canada, most arriving somewhat later than the mid-century surge of Irish immigration. If one

counts the locally-born children of the 71 Irish-born residents, a similar portion had Irish backgrounds. The social implications included the necessity of teaching English to French-speaking children and the establishment of the Roman Catholic church of St. Rose's on Pierce Street in 1883. Although the immigrant and native population did not mingle much, Irish and Yankee elements did work together against alcohol dependence in the post-Civil War temperance society.

Some children of immigrants attended school until the ages of ten or twelve, then went into the work force. Of the seven children of Michael and Julia McGrath in 1880, three (ages 23, 13, and 12) worked with their father in the shoddy (reprocessed wool) factory, two were in school, and two were of pre-school age. The five older children of Canadian-born Peter and Margaret Metvina worked in the mill, while 13-year-old Mary attended school.

By following the path of the 1880 census taker we get some idea of where some

Membership

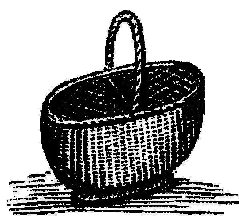
Annual Dues:

Single — \$20
Student/Senior — \$15
Family — \$45
Lifetime — \$250

Send dues to:
Northborough Historical Society
Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 661
Northborough, MA 01532

*Please make checks payable to
Northborough Historical Society*

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Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

The Museum opens for the fall season on Sundays, September 11 through October 23 from 2 to 4:00. Stop by and enjoy some of our town's history. During Applefest the Museum will be open and the Northborough Art Guild will have an art exhibit and bake sale from 12 to 4:00

both days: Sept. 17 and 18th. Plans are underway to borrow the Stage Coach from the Wayside Inn for the parade, last seen in the 1966 and 1916 parades! We'd like to remind you of the Cemetery Tour to be held on Saturday, September 24 and we will also be selling tickets for the Harvest Supper on October 22 in the Museum. And don't forget to submit your photo contest entries by early October.

I have been working on a spread sheet recording cancelled checks and check stubs for the Proctor Button & Comb Company from 1876 through 1897.

With this I hope to gain insight into the profit and loss during those years and the companies who supplied raw materials, equipment and operation supplies to them.

Recent Accessions:

1917 Log book; Mass. Historical Collections, Every Town in Mass., 1839; photo of Raymond J. Boudreau from WWII; booklet on life of Dorothy Burnham Rose, 1886-1987 - from Llanda Richardson

Two large boxes of letters, photos and news clippings saved by Elizabeth Hilliard - from Jim Laurence.

History Corner, continued

immigrants lived. The ones who lived in the houses built for them by the owner of the Woodside Mill (think “Residence at the Falls”) often dwelt two or three families together in one house. A considerable number of immigrants lived along Brigham Street on both sides of the Brigham farm (think “Juniper Hill Golf Course”). But few dwellings along this route can be found on the 1870 or 1898 maps of Northborough. Some of these people, chiefly of Irish descent, must, it appears, have lived west of the Brigham-School Street intersection, perhaps in shacks constructed during that period and later abandoned.

Another ten per cent of the 1880 population came from another New England state, only a smattering of people from states other than New York.

In the 1880s Daniel Wesson and his Northborough-born wife reappeared on the scene after several decades of his huge success making firearms. While he made sure of his water supply by erecting a new dam at Bartlett Pond, a pumping station below its outlet, a cistern on a nearby hill, and piping to his new mansion (with some water available to neighbors), he also urged the town to establish its own water supply. A new reservoir, partly in Shrewsbury, partly in Boylston, enabled the first water mains in town streets.

Two important developments near the end of the

century, scarcely discussed at all in the existing histories of Northborough, point to the growing relationship of the town with other communities. The construction of the Wachusett Aqueduct presaged the eventual end of the use of the reservoir, and the establishment of the trolley system made travel east to Marlborough and west to Worcester possible for everyone, just as the earlier railroad had brought Northborough close to Framingham and connections elsewhere from the latter town. In 1900 few people could have foreseen the effects that those new electrical poles and wiring along Main Street would generate.

If we look at the 1897 Northborough yearbook, which included for the first time the occupations of its citizens, we see the beginning of a world in which most people would not be farmers. Twenty people worked as clerks, a position only occasionally found earlier. No fewer than seventeen engineers lived in town (but probably only temporarily while the aqueduct work proceeded). An architect, an ice cream dealer, a jeweler, and a publisher could be found among the residents.

The purchase and expansion of the former Central School on School Street by the Northborough unit of the Grange, an important organization for farm families, in 1895 made clear, however, that Northborough still considered itself a farming community.

Northborough Historical Society Old Fashioned Harvest Supper



As part of the Town’s 250th anniversary celebration, The Northborough Historical Society will host an old fashioned harvest supper on Saturday, October 22, with two sittings, one at 5:30 p.m. and one at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$20 each and are available for purchase at the Historical Society Museum, 52 Main Street, on Sunday afternoons, September 11 through October 16 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., at our September meeting and at Shattuck Pharmacy, 17 West Main Street. The menu will feature roast turkey with stuffing, gravy and cranberry sauce, roast pork loin, soup and salad, several side dishes, cider, coffee, tea and gingerbread. Tickets are available on a first come, first served basis. For information, call Forest Lyford at 508-393-6680 or Jane Fletcher at 508-393-2414.

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

- **September 17 Applefest Fireworks**-ARHS.
- **September 18 Applefest Parade**—Town Center <http://www.northboroughapplefest.com>
- **September 24 Cemetery Tour**(Details not yet available)
- **September 27** Dr. Gary Hylander will speak on the **Cold War** as part of the “Historical Events Affecting Northborough 1776-2016” speaker series at the Northborough Senior Center. The program will begin at 6:30 p.m. and is open to all.
- **October 3** Deadline for **Snapshot in Time** photo contest! www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org
- **October 15** Friends of the **Senior Center 250th Fashion Show and Tea**, <http://www.friendsofnorthboroughseniors.org>



- **October 22** Northborough Historical Society’s **Harvest Supper**. 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at the Society Building. For more information see above.
- **October 28** Bryan Farr will present “**History of Route 20**”at the Northborough Historical Society. 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 speak on the historical and cultural significance of the highway and will highlight landmarks and less-remembered points of interest in Northborough and neighboring communities. The meeting and program will begin at 7:30 p.m. and are free and open to the public.
- **October 29 Masquerade Party**
- **November 20** Trinity Church **Open House** at 2 p.m. Brief overview of the history of the church by Forest Lyford, a tour of the building, a short organ concert and refreshments.