



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLX

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

May 2017

Next Meeting: May 19, 2017

Annual Meeting, Pot Luck Supper & Program:

Photo Detecting 101 by Maureen Taylor. This presentation will help us rediscover our family history, one picture at a time. Maureen is a renowned expert in genealogy, historic photo identification, photo preservation and family history research. She is an author of several books, a consultant, seminar leader and a featured guest on The View and The Today Show. The pot luck supper will begin at 6:30 p.m., the meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m., at the Society building, 52 Main Street, Northborough. The event is free and open to the public.



History Corner

by Bob Ellis

Some Further Images of Northborough's Past

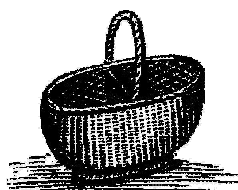
Let's say that it is a Sunday in May or June, perhaps not one of the nicest spring days, and you've decided to visit the museum of the Northborough Historical Society. Here is a sampling of things you might see.

On the stage at the rear stands a grandfather clock. On it is the name of its maker, Thomas Yoakley, and "Ratcliff Cross," a place near London where he lived. It crossed the ocean and until April 26, 1780 stood in the parsonage of Rev. Peter Whitney on what is now Whitney Street, but on that day the parsonage burned to the ground. The clock was saved through the efforts of some of the unknown or little-remembered people whose efforts often result in making our museum the fine place that it is. John Minot Rice, a prominent Northborough man then teaching at the United States Naval Academy, gave it to the library in 1890, before there was an Historical Society. Eventually the library made it over to the Society.

On the floor to the left of the stage are several implements, somewhat strange today but once commonplace. Let us take one that came in 1963 from an unused building behind the former Lowe's store (which, if you don't know, is the structure between Shattuck's Pharmacy and the Bank of America). The rear building was empty except for a bellows most likely used by Northborough's last full-time blacksmith. When he was forced into retirement in 1915, some people probably argued that the era of blacksmiths should not end, for a number of other people would also be displaced (those whose work depended on horses, for instance). But people were increasingly moving around by Model T Fords rather than by horses. In 1963 Arthur Bostock, who the following year would become the president of our Society, looked in, saw the bellows, and decided that it should come here to remind us of that once important work in our community.

If we move to the other end of the museum, two displays, both more than two hundred years old, show how things were measured and made. What may well be the oldest set of weights and measures in Massachusetts was discovered in Northborough in 1914. The town's sealer of weights and measures, Harold Foss, held on to this unusual possession, despite the claim of the Commonwealth sealer

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Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

The Museum is now open Sundays from 2 to 4:00 through May and June, or by appointment. Our opening day was well attended and all enjoyed the political and popular music of the WWI era provided by the Senior Center Harmonica Group. My thanks to the Museum Trustees for all their efforts to make this a memorable event. The museum was

cleaned by all, including Bill Webster, whose grandfather's 3-piece suit is on display, and Bob Ellis who provided excerpts from two WWI diaries. Kathy Pierce researched and wrote the descriptions for the stage and the six stations throughout the museum. Cindy Atwood researched and wrote of Red Cross activities, food restrictions and found recipes of the times that we all tried. Have you tasted peanut butter soup? Jo-Ann Sullivan found decorations, researched several areas, and supplied records for our Victrola. Cheryl Charest managed our array of 1918 recipes in the meeting hall and did much of the baking. Dick Atwood and Ernie Racine both made

replica WWI airplanes for our "In the Air" exhibit. Also displayed are several powerful propaganda posters from our collection.

Please make time in your busy schedules to visit the museum and experience the times and trials of 1918.

New Accessions:

Chet's Diner menus and postcards from the 150th parade from Ron Ackley.

WWII scrapbook, of news articles of Northborough service men and women compiled by Rita Walsh Snell.

Commemorative coffee mugs from 1991 belonging to Arthur Boucher were donated by his daughter, Eddi Magay.

History Corner, continued

that standard sets of weights and measures all belonged to the state, while the County treasurer argued that the set should go to Worcester. Sealer Foss, whether by argument or mere persistence, gets credit for keeping the set here.

Its 100-pound weight actually weighs 112 pounds but that is one key to the age of the set. The “long ton,” once used in determining the carrying capacity of a ship, contained 2,200 pounds, not the present-day 2,000-pound ton. By 1826, probably well before that date, the long ton went out of use. How did Northborough acquire this set? The answer is not known, but some early Northborough people, the Orne family, for instance, had sea connections.

It is interesting that two analytical balances just above the cabinet holding this device, dating from the late 1950s, and donated by Bob Kennerly, employ in compact form essentially the same principle and are just as easy for a lay person to understand. Today, when balances are calculated electronically, most of us cannot see or understand how they work. (It is possible to trace the principles of many

items from the 1950s and see, for instance, how television sets worked or how IBM cards were created. Today, unless we are specialized engineers, we have no notion of how their counterparts work.)

In 1967 one of the largest items in our collection, a hand-hewn loom, was dismantled and reassembled in the museum. Used for the preceding fifteen years by Swedish-born Emma Brandt, who lived on Pleasant Street, it had an earlier history involving two women from Berlin with educational connections to Northborough. Florence Bemis remembered that her former teacher in the early 1900s, Hope Rice, used this loom, and another person identified it with Fanny Rice (probably Frances Rice, Hope’s sister), who served as principal of Northborough High School in 1918. The loom may have originated in Berlin, but, like the old standard balance and many of our other acquisitions, it will remain here for the contemplation of our museum-goers.

*Society Historian Bob Ellis can be reached at
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Get Involved Stay Involved

Be an integral part of the Historical Society by offering your time and talent to one of our committees. New to the Society? Joining a committee is a great way to meet people, and find out more about Northborough’s history. There are vacancies on these committees.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for conducting the routine business of the Society. The Board exercises its powers through the standing committees, and through special committees which may be appointed from time to time by the Board.

Hospitality Committee

The Hospitality Committee is responsible for recruiting hosts to provide refreshments at regular Member meetings.

Program Committee

The Program Committee, in cooperation with the Historian, arranges programs for monthly meetings for the coming year. The finalized program schedule is given to the Newsletter Editor in time for printing and mailing to members prior to the September meeting.

Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee is responsible for reviewing the Society by-laws each year and making any necessary recommendations to the Board of Directors. The Committee also acts as the interpretive and advisory authority on all questions concerning the by-laws.

Kitchen Committee

The Kitchen Committee is responsible for ensuring that the kitchen is kept in a clean and sanitary condition, and that it is stocked with necessary equipment and supplies.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is responsible for preparing a slate of candidates for board and committee vacancies as laid down in the Society by-laws.

Interested? Please email Paul Derosier at stude38paul@yahoo.com

For full committee descriptions please go to www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org or call Hilary Wilson at 508-393-3869.

Save time. Save money. Save space. Save a tree.

Would you like to receive the Hourglass by email?

Please email your request to
northborough_historical_society@charter.net

Don't forget the Pot Luck Supper before the May meeting!

Come along and enjoy sharing a meal with fellow members.
Not been to a Society supper before? Bring a dish to share, a plate and silverware, and you'll be all set.
Tip: Paper plates and plastic cutlery mean nobody has to do dishes!

What kind of food? Your choice.
No time to cook? Store bought is fine.
What time? We eat at 6:30 p.m.
Desserts, fruit punch and coffee will be provided by the Board of Directors and the Program Committee.