



# THE HOURGLASS

## NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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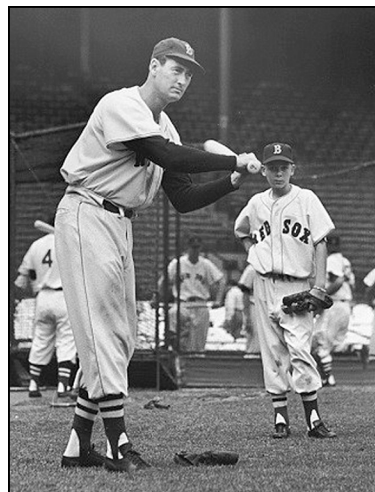
Northborough Historical Society  
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

October 2017

### Next Meeting & Program October 27, 2017

**Rounders to Baseball: A History of America's Favorite Game.** Anne Barrett will trace baseball's evolution, from the 19th century's local "townball" teams, to the formation of professional leagues, and the emergence of early baseball's greats, with a focus on New England's own home team. Join us, as we learn more about the history of America's favorite game!

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

### Two Naturalists in Northborough

Edwin Way Teale, born in 1899, was a great American naturalist. Among his many books were four covering four automobile trips which he made across America between 1947 and 1962 with Nellie, his wife. Each celebrated one season—spring, summer, fall, and winter—by a three-month journey across the land to see how the season developed. Most of these trips were made before the advent of the Interstate Highway System, but the Teales would have scorned such routes. Primarily they did not visit tourist sites but places where they could observe the flora and fauna and events of interest to naturalists. They employed extensive research and precise observation over a total of 76,000 miles in forty-seven of the contiguous states.

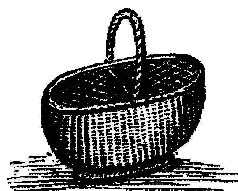
In 1979, I believe, Ann Zwinger, a generation younger, joined Teale on a canoe journey to survey the Assabet and the Sudbury, two rivers that join to form the Concord. Teale had been the president of the Thoreau Soci-

ety, Henry Thoreau having been one of his heroes. This trip, at the age of seventy-nine, was the last of Teale's many naturalistic journeys. In 1980, while working on his section of the book, he died. With the help of what he had written, his extensive notes, carefully monitored by Nellie, and Zwinger's finishing touches, *A Conscious Stillness: Two Naturalists on Thoreau's Rivers*, appeared in 1982. From its title you would never expect this book to provide a substantial review of Northborough history, but it does.

"The first trip in Edwin's new canoe!" Zwinger wrote. "A perfect May day on an entrancing stretch of the Assabet, the mile or so just upstream from the town of Northborough, which contains so much of what a river meant in the lives of those who settled beside it." (p. 82) Although Teale's physician limited the amount of his physical activity, it is clear that he was present in the stern, she in the bow of the canoe, on the way through Northborough.

Traveling the portion cutting through the golf course, they came to "a handsome stone railroad bridge. . . . As we enter the arch of the bridge a disembodied voice says, 'You'll never make it!'" Zwinger agreed with one of the three boys sitting on the parapet. "I get out, safely shod in Nellie's sneakers, to pull the canoe over a little bar of

(continued on page 2)



## Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

It has been a busy month again with special requests for museum visits, photocopies of papers and research. Thanks go to the Tuesday Trustees work party of Cindy Atwood, Cheryl Charest, Kathy Pierce and Jo-Ann Sullivan for their tremendous help in reading and sorting the Hilliard letter collection and also labeling the 74 items from June Corey French.

In September, I attended the first of five workshops "Finding Common Ground..." with the goal of writing a recovery plan to be executed in the event of a disaster. Forest Lyford, Ernie Racine, Chuck Krouse and Paul Derosier have been involved in surveying our building for hazards that need to be addressed. This evaluation will also involve various town departments.

Our entry in this year's Applefest Parade was well received. It attracted more visitors to the museum! Thanks go to Jo-Ann Sullivan for organizing our float, Chuck Krouse

and Forest Lyford who drove the trucks, and Cindy and Dick Atwood who portrayed a WWI soldier and a nurse. Chuck Krouse's 1950s Willy's truck was decorated with authentic propaganda posters.

### New Accessions:

N. High School desk and chair, 1950s from Jo-Ann Sullivan.

Photos, costumes, sports items and a transit with tripod from June Corey French.

**History Corner, continued**

gravel.” (p. 90) Unless you’re a golfer, you probably see this bridge only briefly traveling north on School Street. Zwinger summarizes the story of the construction of the Agricultural Branch Railroad in 1856.

Beyond the golf course the way became rougher. But the naturalists took in every thing: dragonflies, damselflies, bumblebees, barn swallows, turtles. Just above the dam at Main Street the naturalists paused, and the reader encounters a description of Northborough history that covers the pages from 91 through 98, with some further along. Mail through the eventual Main Street as early as 1673, the Wood fulling mill, Samuel Fisher’s carpentry in the 1830s, Blair’s camera works and cash register, and other riverside activities are recounted, thanks to Zwinger’s consultation with our historian of the day, Pat MacFarland. The inclusion of this material demonstrates how fully these naturalists valued historical background in their writing.

Zwinger continues: “We take to the water again below the dam, through the rocky run at Woodside, past the model house built in 1855 of Assabet clay bricks manufactured in Albert Goodridge’s brickyards; bricks made of glacially deposited clays sold for half a cent each in 1850.” (p.

119) After a recent disastrous fire, the owners have rebuilt the interior inside its historic brick frame.

The naturalists were not through with our town. Zwinger, using the present tense as she always did, wrote: “We turn back upstream. . . the charm of the river blossoms and burgeons all about us. . . reflections of treetops waver in the river. . . birdsong festooning the trees, the soft aroma of elderberry flowers.” (pp. 98-99) Finally they emerged “at the small bridge on Brigham Street, where the openness of the Brigham farmland still remains in the golf course which replaces it. A ‘rabbit-ear’ fence follows the road, gray boulders laid to form a fence with spaced slabs set vertically, notched to carry wooden crosspieces.” (p. 99)

At Brigham Street, using the ‘Steady Eddy,’ a wooden frame Teale had invented to steady his canoe when moving it on or off the roof of his car, she noted words written on it. It came, he replied, from a text the Teales had seen in a British cemetery: “The wonder of the world, the beauty and the power, the shape of things, their colors, lights and shades: these I saw. Look ye also while life lasts.” (pp. 100-102)

**News From the Board of Directors**

- After many years of sterling service, the furnace in the archive decided that it was time to retire. The Board approved the Property Committee’s suggested replacement, and the expenditure of \$3,649.64 was approved by the members at the September 22 meeting. The new furnace is now installed.
- From time to time, the Board recommends that honorary membership be given to certain members. This may be awarded for dedicated service to the Society, extraordinary donations of time and talent, or outstanding achievement in historic preservation and education. You probably don’t know that the Society has 34 honorary members. The Board decided that we should recognize and honor our honorary members who have done so much for the Society. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, we will purchase a wooden board to display their names.
- The Board has appointed the following members to committees.  
Hospitality Committee: Linda Corbin  
Legislative Committee: Hilary Wilson  
Ad hoc Membership Committee: Melissa LeSage & Beth Finch McCarthy
- There are still several vacancies on committees and the Board of Directors. If you would like to join one of these merry bands, please email Hilary Wilson at [hilarywilson@charter.net](mailto:hilarywilson@charter.net). For full committee descriptions please go to [www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org) or call Hilary Wilson at 508-393-3869.

**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*

**Dues are due!**

**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](mailto:northborough_historical_society@charter.net)

**Next  
Board of Directors  
Meeting**

**Tuesday, November 14**