



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLXV

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

January 2018

Next Meeting & Program Friday, January 26, 2018

Across the Great Divide presented by Robert van Buren. Augusta and Adeline Van Buren were born and raised in New York City at a time when women were denied the right to vote. One reason given for this was that women did not serve in the military and therefore had not earned that right. The sisters wanted to show that women could ride motorcycles as well as men could, and that they would be able to serve as dispatch riders when the US entered WWI. They set out to prove their competence on a grueling 5,500 mile motorcycle ride from New York City to California. This presentation will take you through their experiences during the summer of 1916, with original photography from the sisters' trip dovetailed with photos from the 2016 Centennial Ride. The sisters were way ahead of their time and their story is one of courage, dedication and patriotism. Robert Van Buren is the great nephew of Augusta and Adeline Van Buren. 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

Apothecaries, Pharmacists, Druggists

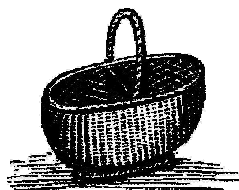
"There has always been an apothecary in Northborough, a rather unusual thing to have in a small town. . . . So far as I can ascertain we have never been without a dealer in roots and herbs." Thus spoke Alice Kimball as the president of the Historical Society in 1944.

Originally *apothecary* indeed designated a dispenser of roots and herbs, but when the first of the three Shattucks opened his business in the late 1890s on the first floor of the Town Hall, drugs were an important part of the stock. In the brick building across the street, Claude Shattuck's rival, Seth Emery, called himself an *apothecary*, as his large sign, now in our collection, attests. A druggist today is commonly called a *pharmacist*, like *apothecary* a word derived from ancient Greek.

The second Dr. Stephen Ball, who began practicing about 1796, did not graduate from medical school, of which there were only one or two in the nation, but he was an accepted medical authority, as his father had been. Even at night people "could recognize him by the odor of drugs exhaled from his old gig," as Westborough historian Harriette Forbes claimed. The colorful array of ingredients in his "recipes" justifies referring to him as an apothecary.

Mrs. Kimball, born in the 1870s, had conversations with older local people that convinced her of there being no break in the line of Northborough apothecaries. After the second Dr. Ball died in 1850 and the third Dr. Ball took his practice elsewhere, the local apothecary or druggist was A. S. Waite from 1868 to 1873. Before Waite, she thought, although she could not prove, Northborough persons continued to serve. She suggested that a man named Montague may have held the post earlier. My own research established that in the 1860s a Richard Montague was taxed for stock-in-trade worth several hundred dollars. Nothing in our records establishes him as a druggist, however. Waite was succeeded by C. W. F. Hamilton in 1873 and by Edwin W. Wood, located, like Claude Shattuck after him, in the

(continued on page 2)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

I am participating in a series of five workshops, *Finding Common Ground: Collaborative Training for the Cultural Heritage and Emergency Response Communities*, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. This involves examining our building and grounds for potential risks and hazards,

prioritizing an action list, and writing a recovery plan to be executed in the event of a disaster. The Property Committee has been actively involved as well as members of the Police Department and Fire Department. They have made several suggestions that will better secure the building and the collection. Many of the recommendations are minor and inexpensive, but several are more costly.

I spent a delightful afternoon back in September with John and Susan Proctor, descendants of Josiah Proctor, a Civil

War veteran and owner of one of the button and comb shops in Northborough from 1880 to 1903. I displayed button and comb samples produced by his company and they enjoyed searching the files and photographs of his great aunts and uncles. They recently sent a generous donation to the Museum for which we are thankful.

New Donation:

Glass showcase for the meeting hall and an "OPEN" flag from Bob Benedict.

Town Hall, by 1879.

Our Society has several photographs of the Town Hall depicting the exteriors of the Wood and Shattuck pharmacies. A newspaper article in 1892 noted that “the old sign ‘E. W. Wood, Druggist’ had been replaced by a new sign bearing the inscription ‘Northboro Drug Store,’” although Wood continued in charge for a few more years.

Emery remained in business at the eastern corner of Main and South Streets until his death in 1913. He is remembered for having sponsored the issuing of many post cards of Northborough scenes in the early years of the twentieth century, a period of great popularity for post cards everywhere. His widow inherited the shop but apparently found no replacement for him.

Claude Shattuck operated what had become the only Northborough pharmacy until his death in 1944; his son Howard continued until his retirement in 1980. In the final years of Howard’s reign, with the fate of the town hall in doubt, the pharmacy relocated to a new building across the street. In January of 1980 Howard’s son Paul began his thirty-seven-year tenure.

The pharmacy as a site for a soda fountain, a long-

standing American custom, dates back to E. W. Wood’s time, a fact confirmed by the fountain on display in our museum. This practice ended locally when Howard Shattuck moved his business across the street. Our museum also holds a cash register and the cabinet in whose drawers the druggist stored his supplies.

An important new development, the franchise drug store, arrived in Northborough in the late 1950s. The Lincoln Pharmacy, located in the newly-constructed mall immediately west of the Town Hall was succeeded by CVS, a larger business.

Paul Shattuck has made clear the plenitude of rules and regulations and other factors that oppress the independent local pharmacist today. Small businesses find it difficult to compete with corporations. It is safe to say that all of us who patronized Paul Shattuck’s drug store realize that we lost close relationships and personal touches when he retired last year. His retirement most likely brings an end in Northborough to the centuries-old tradition of the locally-owned apothecary or pharmacy celebrated by Alice Kimball.

Bob Ellis can be reached by email at rpje1@aol.com

News From the Board of Directors

- The Board voted to increase rental fees for using the Society building. New rental fees are:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Meeting room use (beverage service only) | \$45.00 |
| Meeting room and light kitchen use | \$60.00 |
| Meeting room and full kitchen use | \$80.00 |
- The plaque on which to display the names of our honorary members has been ordered. We are extremely grateful to the anonymous donor who made this purchase possible. Work will now start on updating an board which lists our past presidents.
- The Board appointed the following members to vacant positions on the Program Committee:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Suzanne Williams | Term expires May 2018 |
| Janice Ferenchick | Term expires May 2020 |
- There are still several vacancies on various committees and the Board of Directors. We need to fill these positions for the Society to function effectively. If you would like to join one of these merry bands, please email Hilary Wilson at hilarywilson@charter.net or Bob Marchetta at marchetta4@verizon.net. For full committee descriptions please go to 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

Reminder: If there is a red dot in the
address panel of this Hourglass, it is
time to renew your membership.

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

Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, February 13