



# THE HOURGLASS

## NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLXVII

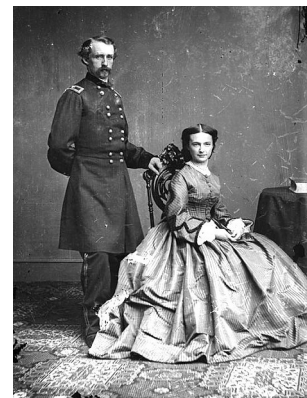
Northborough Historical Society  
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

March 2018

### Next Meeting & Program: Friday, March 23, 2018

#### An Evening with General and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant featuring Sam Grant.

After a brief introduction of Grant's life by Mrs. Julia D. Grant, the engagements, habits and contributions of U.S. Grant are explored by Sam Grant through the use of lively and often humorous anecdotes, letters and his impressions of the times. Since 1989, Sam Grant has dedicated his life to understanding Ulysses S. Grant, one of the greatest leaders this nation has ever known.. 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. Refreshments will be served after the meeting.



## History Corner

by Bob Ellis

### On Main Street, March 4, 1846

We are going to accompany two Northborough residents on a walk that they took on the above date, probably in the early afternoon. Is it possible to imagine Main Street as it was 172 years ago? Yes—to some extent. But as a cautious historian, I must sometimes use words like *probably* in recounting what we time-travelers can see.

We are leaving a house familiar to us, 97 Main Street (to use modern street numbers), with Olive Seaver and her son Samuel. The time is probably early afternoon. The weather is—let us say uncertain; no record of it seems to exist in the diaries and letters in the historical archive to come, but let us hope that it is a reasonably fine late winter day. We have no pavements to walk on, of course.

Across the street just short of the river is a shop where gunsmith Edwin Wesson is guiding two younger brothers. One of them, Daniel, has probably already fallen in love with Cynthia Hawes, who lives a little east of the Seavers. A contemporary will later claim that “the Wesson boys

were quiet, sober, and industrious,” but Luther Hawes does not want his daughter to be the wife of a mere gunsmith. Next year the two will elope. As a consequence of their union Northborough will still be coping with their summer home, the White Cliffs, in 2018.

Several buildings that greet twenty-first-century eyes are sites long familiar to the Seavers; others were erected either a little before or a little after 1846. After we cross

the river and move up the incline, a salt box (it will be #75 and red in 2018) catches our eye. Where the Town Office Building would stand, another house, somewhat similar to #75, belongs to Samuel Fisher, who took his own walk westward earlier today.

### Membership

#### Annual Dues:

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

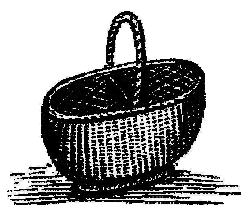
Send dues to:

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.

(continued on page 2)



## Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

We have recently received wonderful additions to Northborough's history from Carol Zachary, the great granddaughter of Thornton Mentzer and Mary Mack Mentzer. Along with sixty pages of genealogy, there is a broadside advertising an auction of C. J. Mack's livery stable, horses and vehicles in 1908. He was the father of Mary Mack Mentzer. Also included are high school diplomas, penmanship booklets and Grange certificates, but the real gems are two diaries briefly kept

by Thornton Mentzer, and thirty-six diaries religiously kept by Mary Mack Mentzer from 1880 through 1942! We hope to learn much of life in Northborough during these decades.

Occasionally little mysteries get solved. Filed away was a photo labeled Harriet Johnson, daughter of Dr. J. J. Johnson and wife Mary Allen. It actually matches two other photos of her mother, Mary Allen. Also in a file with Dr. Abel Ball were three photos labeled “Dr. Ball's wife” but one is identified on the back as Lydia Ball — who was the wife of Dr. Stephen Ball II. One particular photo matches his photo, same format and photography studio. I'm thrilled that we now have an actual photograph of Lydia!

A group of Cub Scouts, Pack 25, Den 2 came to the Museum for a tour on February 12th. They were unusually interested in many items and asked many relevant questions.

#### *New Accessions:*

Additional Gale Store receipts found during the Habitat for Humanity renovation project on Main Street.

Genealogy and diaries of Mack and Mentzer families from Carol Zachary.

Christmas ornaments and wedding flowers made of wax, 1940s, from Mrs. Robert Benedict.

**History Corner, continued**

Directly across the street stands an elegant new house, #64, built for Captain Cyrus Gale. It lacks the cupola, however, known by later generations. Just beyond it the future home of the Gray carpet store probably already exists. In only a couple of years Dr. Henry Jewett, an ancestor of the Grays, will set up his practice there.

Is Mrs. Seaver getting tired? Of course not. Born in 1779, Olive, whose mother, Hannah Wood, married Thomas Seaver, the ensign of Northborough’s Minutemen, will live for twenty-seven more years. Her ancestry explains how Samuel Wood’s historical house has come into the Seaver family.

On the corner of School Street, further back than the future Baptist Church (and Historical Society headquarters) we will see its predecessor. Across the street educational sessions are probably proceeding under John Clark and Mary Ann Fisher (Samuel’s daughter) on both floors of the brick building that after long service as the town’s Central School will become for a century the home of the Northborough Grange—and then sink into emptiness and neglect.

Back on the corner at #48, a Greek revival home belonging to Dr. Stephen Ball II will please a future architectural historian with its corner capitals and their “Doric design.” In front of this house a sycamore has probably already sprouted. It will grow huge and finally be removed in the second decade of the twenty-first century. A little further along, perhaps already behind a white picket fence, is a house already a century old (#38). It is Dr. Ball’s dwelling. Beyond it stands not the library that will appear a half-century later but a commercial building where he conducts his practice.

Back on the north side of the street we recognize several buildings. The first is a colonial building (#51) belonging to Rev. Warren Fay, a retired minister from Charlestown whose son Samuel has served as first minister of Northborough’s Evangelical Congregational Church. A new church building will rise next year on the corner of Hudson Street under the present minister, Rev. William Houghton, whom we will meet.

*Bob Ellis can be reached by email at [rpj1@aol.com](mailto:rpj1@aol.com)*

---

**Visit to the Willard Clock Museum**

**We will meet at the Willard Clock Museum** in Grafton for a members-only event on Sunday, June 3, 2018. We will tour the Museum and enjoy a picnic lunch in the Museum’s barn. There will be two tours, one at 12 noon and one at 2:30pm. A boxed meal will be served between the two tours in the Museum’s barn. Price is \$15 per person. Places are limited so please sign up, ASAP. If transportation is an issue, please let us know when you make your reservation.

**Time**

- Tour 1: 12 noon  
Picnic: 1:00pm - 2:30pm  
Tour 2: 2:30pm

**For reservations, call or email Norm Corbin or Hilary Wilson.**

Phone: 508-393-0181 Email: [77norlin@charter.net](mailto:77norlin@charter.net) or [hilarywilson@charter.net](mailto:hilarywilson@charter.net)

**Please bring your payment** to the Welcome Table at our March 23 meeting or mail a check to:

Norm Corbin  
35 Whitney St  
Northborough, MA 01532

Checks should be made payable to *Northborough Historical Society*.

**Choose a sandwich:**

- ☐ Ham            ☐ Roast Beef  
☐ Turkey        ☐ Vegetarian



Benjamin Willard began making clocks in his small, rural Massachusetts workshop in 1766. His three younger brothers, Simon, Ephraim and Aaron, quickly learned the trade and began a three-generation clockmaking legacy. Today, over 80 Willard clocks are exhibited in the birthplace and original workshop of the Willard clockmakers, along with family portraits, furnishings and other Willard family heirlooms. Works by all three generations of Willard clockmakers, including famed clockmakers Simon Willard Jr. and Benjamin Franklin Willard, are also displayed.

---

**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, April 10**