



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLXX

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

June 2018

Next Meeting, Pot Luck Supper & Program: Friday, September 28, 2018

Appalachian Mountain Club: Leaders in the Outdoors Since 1876 – presented by Alexandra Molnar, the Development Coordinator of the Appalachian Mountain Club. The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), founded in 1876, is America's oldest recreation, conservation, and outdoor education organization. Celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Club's Worcester Chapter by hearing the stories that inspire the modern-day outdoors enthusiast. The pot luck supper will begin at 6:30 p.m., the meeting will follow at 7:30 p.m., at the Society building, 52 Main Street, Northborough. The program and the supper are free and open to the public.



History Corner

by Bob Ellis

A Lady Who Didn't Vanish

Alfred Hitchcock once directed a film called *The Lady Vanishes*. In a somewhat different sense of the word, the lady has often vanished from the historical record. Over the years her identity has been vanquished in many ways. Before 1850 she would only be identified on federal censuses if she was a head of household. Thereafter her name was given, but her occupation was often left blank, as if being a housewife were no occupation at all. Well into the twentieth century she was more likely to be referred to by her husband's first name rather than by her own.

Mary Mentzer (1864-1942) was one Northborough woman who managed not to vanish. The Mentzer property, held by her father-in-law and husband, occupied more or less than 200 acres and remained so until sliced by Interstate I-290. The family name has persisted, for the Mentzers were the only people living on what is now called Mentzer Avenue. (Its only residents today are the Rawstrons, longtime members of our Society.)

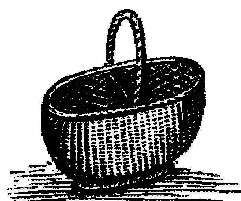
Mary was an active person. She became a member, eventually the president, of the Women's Club. She was active in the local American Legion auxiliary and the Unitarian church. Her participation in the town's 150th anniversary in 1916 brought her within range of Rev. Kent's extensive account of it. She knew how to hire a stage coach for

this event, perhaps because her father had for many years been a stable keeper, an act that led to the purchase of that stage coach by the Historical Society.

And she did something more important. Beginning at the age of sixteen and ending just a few days before her death at seventy-eight she kept a diary. We knew nothing about this diary until February of this year, when a great-granddaughter donated many volumes of it and other Mentzer items to the Society. It is carefully and legibly written. Like most diaries it is crammed with information of very limited interest today. But there are always exceptions. As I inspected this diary, I decided to find her account of the birth of her first child, Everett, known to have occurred on April 4, 1889. Her first entry, probably made a couple of days later, reads "Baby boy born at 8:30 A.M. I was very sick and took chloroform." I skipped to Wednesday, April 17, when Everett was thirteen days old: "Had on clothes and Thornton carried me downstairs." We are reminded of the differences between maternal care then and now. The next day, however, with her husband's help, she walked down.

Later, perhaps, we may look at more of the diary. For now we'll let her comment briefly on the town's 1916 celebration. In the days beforehand she and other members of the Women's Club worked on their float, the stage coach. On the big day, Thursday, August 17, "Got to town at 7:30 in old Stage-Coach. I rode on top with Mrs. Armour and Mrs. Adams. . . . Then met so many old friends and went to dinner in Town Hall." Kent's account of the event suggests that she was the woman on the right. One can see the Samuel Wood (Brian and Lois Smith) house in

(continued on page 2)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

In July, I will be attending two final workshops - a live burn followed by a salvage operation. Witnessing the recent fire of the R&T furniture building made it obvious that fire is just one source of destruction. The force of the water from the hoses and the flooding that results cause additional issues to be solved.

Helen Calverley and Carolyn Squillante, members of both the Historical Society and Garden Club, have done a wonderful job in beautifying our site for the summer season. The Northborough Art Guild's annual Art Show also benefitted from their creative plantings. Thirty-eight visitors viewed the Art Show and also toured the Museum, fourteen of whom were from a Senior Day Care center. The Museum will be open Sundays through June from 2 to 4. Please support our efforts by visiting the museum and inviting friends to join you.

Recent Accessions:

Tin stencil for labeling crates used by the Crawford Farm orchards from Christian Andersson

Boy's reproduction colonial outfit, hand-made by Carol Asplund

Welcome New Members!

Steve and Joan Hendrix

History Corner, continued

the background.

When your historian began researching Northborough people, I concentrated on famous or nearly-famous persons, of whom there are only so many. But ordinary people often tell us more about our community. We see the ways they are like us as well as different from us. We have our Mary Mentzers today, women who have their ways of contributing to the life of the community. They often do not keep diaries, but some of their other habits and the work of our assiduous record keepers will keep them from vanishing entirely.

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



President’s Corner

I want to thank the you all for your help and support during my first year as President. It has been a very rewarding experience. A special thank you to all those who served on a board or committee in the past year, and to those who have volunteered to serve next year. Without you, the Society could not function. I look forward to another great year. Many thanks to Ellen Racine, Mark Bashour, and the rest of the nominations team who did a great job of filling committees for next year. We have just a handful of vacancies on the following committees:

Publicity • Legislative • Kitchen • Ways and Means

We are also looking for volunteers to help at Applefest. If you would like to volunteer your services to help the Society, or if you need more information, please contact me, Bob Marchetta. marchetta4@verizon.net 508-393-1421.

Enjoy your summer and I look forward to seeing you all again in September.

Bob

A Splendid Day

The weather was very kind to us on June 3rd when we gathered at the Willard Clock Museum for a tour of the Museum and a picnic in the barn. The chilly, grey day that was forecast turned out to be delightfully warm and sunny, making the outdoor picnic tables very popular! The bright and airy barn was a good spot for those who preferred the shade. The beautiful grounds of the Museum made a perfect backdrop for such a glorious day.

The picnic lunch of sandwiches, chips, cookies and fruit went down well. The Museum tours led by the extremely knowledgeable Museum staff Sarah Mullen, Beverly Snow and Robert Cheney, were fascinating. Our thanks to all for making it a really splendid day!



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, September 11**