



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLXXII

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

October 2018

Next Meeting & Program: Friday, October 26, 2018

Frederick Law Olmsted and the Massachusetts Legacy – presented by Alan S. Banks, the overseer for the historical interpretation of Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline, MA. The firm of Frederick Law Olmsted was involved in over 1200 landscape architecture projects throughout Massachusetts including Boston's Emerald Necklace. This illustrated lecture will sample this rich landscape legacy and explore ideas that shaped some of the most treasured places in Massachusetts. 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.



Boston's Emerald Necklace



History Corner

by Bob Ellis

The Crosby Family

In the 1860s three members of Northborough's Crosby family were compiling diaries, thus giving us insights into a family who lived in the brick house at 312 South Street still in use today.

Hezekiah, a former traveling salesman (then called a peddler), was a farmer when he began his diary on May 11, 1863: "Harroved and bushed ground for planting." A few days later he noted that he was hoeing his potatoes, agriculture being his main but not only subject. He wrote during the 1860s but not, as far as we know, afterwards.

Most likely his habit inspired his two daughters. We have several volumes of a diary kept by Rosa beginning on January 1, 1866, but probably kept earlier. The *Hourglass* has referred to it as far back as Christine Ellis's "What Was It Like Being a Woman in 1896?" in April, 1996. As 1866 began, Rosa was twenty-one and in three months would become Mrs. William Warren.

Also on the first day of 1866 Ellen began her diary with the following entry: "At the request of someone outside the schoolroom, I am going to keep a journal. It has not been a very pleasant today. I did not attend church. Mr. Joseph Henry Allen preached." Her negative comments are not typical. The preacher whom she did not hear was the eldest son of Dr. Joseph Allen. One oddity about the second day of her journal was her failure to mention that it was her twentieth birthday, although Rosa did include that fact in her own diary. Ellen made very regular entries until April of 1867. She continued regularly only into the early 1870s. She was not a reflective diarist. On her twenty-fourth birthday, how-

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Membership

Annual Dues:

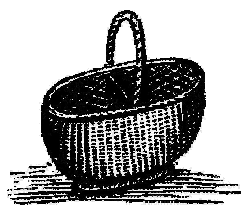
- Single — \$20
- Student/Senior — \$15
- Family — \$45
- Lifetime — \$250

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 September 2018



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

We have again had a very busy month. I have supplied photos for a calendar to Avidia Bank for their upcoming celebration. My thanks to Mark Bashour for setting this up. The Library is also celebrating and I have searched the archive for documents and photos to help with their historical display.

We have received six boxes and a

suitcase of the Robertson family, formerly of Northborough. Three generations including WWI and WWII family photos and letters had been stored and abandoned in a St. Johnsbury, VT barn for almost 50 years. Ernie and I had a nice trip to Vermont and visited with Rick and Dawn Daniell whose father had stored these items.

Another mystery – we discovered a box of very old deeds, plot plans and wills and even Algonquin High School athletic letters on our doorstep with no indication of who donated them. They pertain to the Fay, Fawcett, Forbush, Rice and Ball families from as early as

1794 to 1872. We'd love to know who donated them so we may extend our appreciation.

Jeff Koopman, new owner of Hays Funeral Home donated a framed copy of a Northborough map from 1855. It is in good condition (our others are not) and will be displayed in the meeting hall in October.

Applefest weekend saw 82 visitors to the museum and \$305 earned in root beer and book sales. Thanks to Mark Bashour and his volunteers who made this happen.

History Corner, continued

ever, she wrote, “I cannot realize that I am so old.” She then went on to live almost sixty-seven more years.

To return to her second entry, “I did not have my lessons very well. I don’t know whether it was because I was thinking so much about the wedding [of a friend] or what it was. Though I did not feel like studying.” She appreciated school and lamented the ill behavior of many students. A month later she wrote, “I hope before another year has passed “that we shall have a new school house” to “better accommodate” the students. To reach her school house she had to walk back to Davis Road and the length of Davis Street to approximately its modern intersection with Northgate Road (then not existing). Eventually South School students got a brick building. Ellen also walked many times to town, a trip that required a short uphill climb to South Street’s highest point but on return a very long uphill climb. (How often is it done today?) Her father owned a horse but does not appear to have offered her its accommodation very frequently.

The family often made trips to town together. They attended many lectures. Ellen notes attending lectures on Iceland, temperance, “Above the Clouds” (perhaps about astronomy, perhaps ballooning, a topic of interest at the time), and many other subjects. She and her brother frequently attended singing school, devised to improve participation in performing church music, for very seldom could a Northborough resident hear or study accomplished

music. She attended dances and dancing schools “at Bundy’s” (Bundy being the manager of the quite new Northborough Hotel; its dance floor already famous locally). All the family frequented the new library. Hard as they worked, they seemed always to have the energy to pursue learning and join community activities. After completing school early in 1866, Ellen worked mainly as a straw sewer making hats.

She expressed great love for her brother, who apparently did not maintain a diary. John Quincy Crosby was born in 1848 and was surely named for the former vice president, who died that year after serving as one of the nation’s great opponents of slavery. In the same year Hezekiah had signed the local petition demanding the establishment of a Free Soil party. John was one of the initial students in the new Northborough High School. Later he became a machinist and an inventor, filing several patents. Unlike the other members of his family, he died young, succumbing to consumption at the age of twenty-nine.

Ellen eventually became part of her sister’s household and can be found mainly in Rosa’s diary. Outliving Rosa by a decade, she resided with another elderly woman on Hudson Street before she died on Christmas day, 1936. By that time there were no more Crosbys living in Northborough.

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

News from the Board of Directors

- The need for a plan to digitize the collection so that material can be accessed online. A sub-committee will be formed to achieve this.
- As of January 1, 2019, Northborough Fire Department will no longer monitor fire alarms. The Property Committee is looking into alternatives, including our current alarm company. There will be an extra charge for this service.
- Ideas to raise funds for the Society were discussed.
- For the Property Committee to pinpoint future projects to repair / maintain the Society building and to note those for which Community Preservation funding might be available. Forward planning would enable the Society to meet deadlines for CPA funding applications.
- The need to recruit an Applefest chairman, and have the Applefest Committee in place early enough to allow for better planning and coordination of the event.

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

Would you like to receive the Hourglass by email?

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