



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLXXVI

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

March 2019



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, March 22, 2019

A Visit with Louisa May Alcott – presented by Jan Turnquist, Executive Director of Orchard House, the Alcott family home in Concord, MA. Louisa May Alcott, author of the 1868 book *Little Women*, comes to life with a captivating living history experience by welcoming the audience to interact with her presentation.

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 Kathy Pierce

The Life and Times of a Historic Northborough Meeting House by One Who Loves It: Part II

Many local history buffs are familiar with the boarding school run by Rev. Joseph Allen and his wife, Lucy, during the early 19th century in their parsonage across Church Street from the stately white Unitarian church where Rev. Allen preached.

Fewer people seem to know about the E.H. Allen Home School that opened later in the century in the former Evangelical Congregational meeting house at Church and Pleasant streets. It was in that building, as I mentioned in The Hourglass last month, that members of my family have lived for 45 years. It is about Allen's school there that I write this month.

Edward Allen, a son of Joseph and Lucy, grew up in the Unitarian parsonage with six brothers and sisters. He pursued his higher education at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York. Like a bevy of Allen relatives, he became a teacher, and a notable one at that. After heading Savin Academy in Sherborn for eight years, he returned to Northborough in 1882 to found his own secondary school. It catered to boys ages 10 to 18 with a four-year course of study in sciences and classical literature to prepare them for college. In 1885, the school had 17 students and in 1888, the tuition was \$75 to \$100, according to a state report of the time.

In a written account, Gordon Allen, Edward's youngest son, said most of the boys at the school came from Boston, but one was from Philadelphia, another from Milwaukee and one actually from South America.

Though much renovation had been done to the old Meeting House by the time we bought it in 1973, there was, and still is, evidence of its life as a church, which I described last month, and as a school. The third floor is divided into two good-sized rooms on one side and a smaller one across a hall. These seem to be just the right size for housing several students. And as I mentioned last month, pages with images of Benjamin Disraeli, 19th-century British Prime Minister, remain glued to a closet wall.



Shelves built onto the corners of the rooms are perfect for holding wash basins, candles or oil lanterns. Remember, these boys studied by lamplight.

According to Gordon Allen's account, his father remodeled a since-demolished barn on the property for classrooms and an assembly room.



In the house's fascinating third floor, we found old hoops for skirts, pegged leather shoes and an interesting letter. It sounds much like a parent's letter today to a child away at school.

Dear Franz,

Mr. Allen has sent me bills and has charged \$4 for rubber boots. What did it mean? You know I gave him \$3 when I was in Boston expressly for that purpose and that is what I paid for Bertie's. You wrote me that they cost \$4 in Northboro and I said you might ask Mr. A. for the extra \$1.....Did you get your overcoat sleeve fixed? There is a charge of \$1.65 for mending. Was it for that? When you write answer my questions about boots and overcoat...I have not received any Sunday letter as yet. With Love, Aunt Helen.

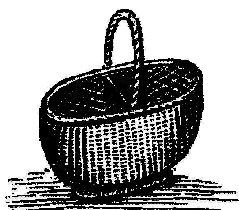
Sounds like Aunt Helen was footing the bills for Franz and Bertie, and is keeping close tabs on them and Mr. A. The letter came from Brooklyn in January 1883.

Gordon Allen also recalled that for physical education and fun, the boys played baseball and football on the triangle at Church and Pleasant streets, as well as in a field across the road. The boys also practiced running up Church Street, turning left onto Pleasant and then back to the school while striving to break previous records. They sometimes took "Mr. Mack's barge" to Worcester Polytechnic Institute to watch one of Edward's sons compete in track and football for the school. Gordon termed this "a great treat."

Edward Allen closed his school in 1889 to become principal of a school in New York. The sturdy structure has been a residence ever since.

The final chapter in this three-part series on the old Meeting House will follow next month.





**Curator's
News
by Ellen Racine**

We are well underway with scanning slides from the large Dave Benton Collection. These slides are from the 1950s to 1980s and capture early houses and streets in town. The Bob Kennerly Collection has been scanned by Forest Lyford and these involve trolleys, trains, the 1938 Hurricane and the building of the Aqueduct. We have a large 3-ring binder of slides of museum objects that will be scanned next.

Much work has been done transcribing diaries into our computer. They will be easier to read, cross-reference Northborough events and people, and also preserve the information. Lois Smith, Carolyn Squillante, intern Elizabeth and I have all been involved with these diaries dating from 1868 to the 1940s. They cover the families of Mack, Mentzer, Crosby, and Warren.

New Accessions:

Victorian Glass Handbook, 1946 by Ruth Webb Lee of Northborough from Eileen Francis. We have Ruth's earlier book, Handbook of Early American Pressed Glass Patterns, 1936 from Bunny Rogers.

Two letters to Franz, 1882-3 when he was a student at Edward Allen's Home School. These were found in the attic of 71 Church Street by Kathy Pierce.

Business advertising blotter from Angelo R. Oliva, 1930s.

Business cards for Mrs. Jo Sullivan, School of Elocution, Speech & Expressions, 1950s, Sullivan's Messenger Service, 1930s, and Milo Hildreth & Co., 1880s, Real Tortoise Shell Jewelry, Combs and Novelties, from JoAnn Sullivan.

Day-Book, mid 1800s possibly belonged to Atty. Samuel Clarke of Northborough

Calendar Raffle Update

Drawings for our March Calendar Raffle Prizes are in full swing! Thanks to our organizers Bob Marchetta, Joan Maddox and Laura Zitton, and our ticket sellers too numerous to mention, the raffle raised \$3270 for the Society. Kudos to all those involved, and a big thank you to our prize donors.

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*

**If there is a red dot in the address
panel of this newsletter your dues
are past due!**

Welcome New Members!

**Philip Backholm &
Linda Grady Backholm
The Fidrych Family
Judith Harbold
Donna Morris**

**Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, April 9**

Thank You To Our Raffle Prize Donors!

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Lowe's Market | Northborough Contra |
| Lala Java | Dance |
| Qdoba | Northboro House of |
| Al's Oil | Pizza |
| Monti's Pizza | Paint Your Own Pottery |
| Festive Breads | Northborough Area |
| Northborough Oil | Community Chorus |
| Pepper's | Clean and Green Car |
| Lavish | Wash |
| Casa Vallarta | JPs Restaurant & Pub |
| The Ski Barn | Two Doors Away Café |
| Craftworks | Not Your Average Joe's |
| Armeno's Coffee | Wayne's World |
| Ted's Montana Grill | Scrubs with Style |
| Northboro Auto | American Legion #234 |
| Margaritas | Uno's Pizzeria & Grill |
| Northboro Septic | Jimmy's John's s |
| Bob Marchetta | Core Connection |
| Michelle Gillespie | Main Stream Boutique |

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