



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLXXX

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

September 2019



Next Meeting: Friday, September 27, 2019

Pot Luck Supper, Meeting & Program

African American Army Units in World War I - presented by Robert Stacey, a curator for the Worcester Historical Museum. Robert will describe the experience of a Worcester man who served as an officer in an African American army unit during World War I.

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 Kathy Pierce

When the Great Gale Blew Into Town

"Wind blew violently from the southeast...fences, fruit trees, whole forests, chimnies and whole buildings were suddenly prostrated and the earth was strewn with fruit and fragments of all kinds in promiscuous confusion."

Hurricane Dorian? Nope. Though it sounds much like newscasts of that recent catastrophic storm, this is actually an account of the mayhem wreaked by The Great Gale of 1815 as it swept through New England, including Northborough, on Saturday September 23 of that year. Maybe residents of the era thought the end of world was upon them as there had been no such storm hereabouts for 180 years, according to a report on hurricanes.org. Certainly no one alive in 1815 would remember that earlier event. Nor did they have any advance warning of the looming disaster in those times of tortoise-paced communications.

The fierce hurricane of 1938, which tore the steeple off the Baptist Church that is now the home of the Historical Society, and the devastating tornado of 1953 are arguably the most well-known storms ever to hit this area. Most likely, far fewer have ever heard of that The Great Gale of 1815.

The 1815 tempest is believed to have started in the West Indies,

struck the Bahamas as what is judged a category 4 hurricane and then traveled northward. It made landfall across Long Island, N.Y., on the morning of September 23. The eye of the storm eventually moved through Central Massachusetts between Amherst and Worcester at 11 a.m. that day, the website reports.

The violent storm resulted in a reported 38 deaths in the region, many by drowning. Providence, R.I. was the hardest hit with 500 homes lost in the flooded city. Apple crops were ruined throughout the region, hay from mangled barns flew about and many animals died.

The opening description above of the storm is an excerpt from "Remarkable Events in Marlborough and Vicinity," a book written by Cyrus Felton in 1879. His words recall the effects of the "big blow" as it passed through Marlborough.

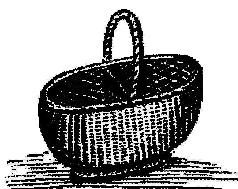
Closer to home, the gale struck the Stephen Williams farm on Boylston Road, now Church Street. In a program for the Historical Society in 1907, Ellen Williams, who later inherited the farm, shared notes from a family diary.

"Rain in violence all last night and till this day...a hurricane that has destroyed our forest trees. 30 apple trees in my different orchards. Most violent at 11 but continued until 2 p.m. Blown down and broken off trees enough for 1,000 cords of wood for Asa Fay," wrote Stephen Williams.

The storm also felled "most of Sanger's and A. Rice's south of my house and all my chestnut trees and Mr. Bartlett's, south west of the mills to the west side of Baker pasture," he continued.

Additionally, he wrote, "All the apples are blown from trees, fences down, sheds and 15 sheds at the Meeting House." The

(continued on page 4)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

We had a pleasant school visit back in June from Zeh School. My thanks to former teachers Carol Bostock, Beryl Krouse, Linda Corbin and Girl Scout leader, Jo-Ann Sullivan.

Our "Open Wednesday" work parties have been very successful and allows a time for visitors to drop by with questions. Together we have completed digitizing another Rosa Warren and Caroline Hilliard diaries, Rev. Allen's 1849 travel journal and Dr. Stephen Ball's "recipe book".

My thanks to Carol Bostock, Beryl Krouse, Carolyn Squillante, Lois Smith and Cindy Atwood.

Our wonderful intern/volunteer Elizabeth Gitschier will be leaving us for a full-time position at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. We will miss her and wish her all the best!

Ernie and I rode up to New Hampshire in June to visit with Gilbert and Laura Graves. They are descendants of Dr. Stephen Ball, Dr. Barnes, Winsor and Graves families. They donated boxes of letters, diaries, photo albums, an oil portrait and Dr. Ball's pocket watch. It will take us months to explore and accession all the fabulous material and we are very grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Graves for their generous donation.

New Accessions:

Wheeled hand plow from Carol Benedict

Cooking history book and piano lesson system from Bill Webster

Research on Gov. John Davis from Bayard S. Cutcliffe

Hymnals, sheet music, papers, photos, hats, infant clothing from the Warren brothers

A box of duplicates and discards (new to us) from the Library

Postcards and ambrotype photo of a "Maynard" man from Brian Thacker

Framed pencil drawing by Marguerite Peaslee and a typewriter from John and Laverne Maccabee

**Society Officers, Board and Committee
Members 2019 - 2020**

President	Ken Bennett
Vice President	Richard Ferenchick
Directors	Paul Derosier Rob Van Buren Peter Stone Mike Duchesneau <hr/> <hr/>
Treasurer	Dale Williams
Recording Secretary	Hilary Wilson
Membership Secretary	Jean Langley
Museum Trustees	Cindy Atwood Richard Atwood Carol Bostock Lois Smith Beryl Krouse Bill Webster
Hospitality	Linda Corbin Marcia Parsneau Cathy Duchesneau
Program	Janice Ferenchick Suzanne Williams <hr/>
Property	Ernie Racine Chuck Liljestrand Paul Derosier
Publicity	Melissa LeSage Carolyn Squillante <hr/>
Kitchen	Lynne Derosier Diane Guldner Debra Bennett
Legislative	Hilary Wilson Jane Fletcher Mark Bashour
Nominating	Bob Marchetta Carol Bostock Ernie Racine
Ways & Means	Mark Bashour Mike Duchesneau Henry Squillante

Board and Committee Vacancies

There are vacancies on the Board of Directors, the Program Committee and the Publicity Committee. If you are interested in serving in any of these roles, or would like more information about them, please contact Hilary Wilson.

Phone: 508-393-3869

Email: hilarywilson@charter.net

Applefest

September 21 - 22, 2019

Applefest is a great opportunity to raise the Society profile in the community and let them know what a wonderful organization we are.

The Museum will be open from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. on both days. Downstairs at the same times, the Garden Club and Art Guild will hold an Art Show with complementary floral arrangements.

On Saturday, September 21 we will have a booth on Blake Street manned by members in costume who will sell Historical Society merchandise, and distribute information about the Society to the public. We will also hold an Ice Cream Social with homemade root beer at the Society.

On Sunday, September 22 we will have a float, accompanied by members on foot, in the parade. As well as their Art Show, the Art Guild will also hold a bake sale in the meeting room.

If you would like to walk in the parade or have any other questions about Applefest, please email President Ken Bennett.



kbenne34@hotmail.com

Welcome New Members!

**The Calapai Family
Richard & Joan Robbins
Ron Roscoe**

**Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, October 8**

Northborough Historical Society Programs 2019-2020

September 27, 2019

African American Army Units in World War I. Robert Stacey, a curator for the Worcester Historical Museum, will describe the experience of a Worcester man who served as an officer in an African-American army unit during WWI. A potluck supper will precede the meeting.

October 25, 2019

Wicked Pissed: New England’s Most Famous Feuds. Ted Reinstein, a reporter for Boston’s WCVB-TV’s Chronicle, will offer fun and fascinating facts about historical feuds in New England. His stories include everything from sports to politics, food to finance, aviation to engineering, or simple boundary disputes.

December 6, 2019

Mysteries From Our Museum. Ernie Racine, past president of the Northborough Historical Society, will explore the backstories of several artifacts displayed in the Northborough Historical Society Museum. Hear the intriguing stories of how these items relate to historical events and why they are important today.

January 24, 2020

The Collings Foundation. Ryan Keough Director of Development for the Collings Foundation, Stow, MA, will describe how the museum supports the preservation, exhibition and interaction of historical artifacts. As a living history museum they sponsor re-enactments of transportation related events such as antique car rallies, carriage and sleigh rides, and air shows.

February 28, 2020

The Scholar and the Slaves. Robert Ellis, past Historian of the Northborough Historical Society, will lecture on William Allen. The youngest and most brilliant of Dr. Allen’s seven children, William went south during the Civil War to teach slaves. Along with two companions he later compiled the first book of slave songs.

March 27, 2020

The Vikings, an Icelandic Saga. Dr. William R. Short, an independent scholar and manager of Hurstwic, LLC, will present the history, culture and society of the Vikings from an archaeological perspective. He will also discuss Hurstwic’s recent research on the weapons and the fighting moves of Viking-age warriors.

April 24, 2020

I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone performed by Judith Kalaora, a professional actor and the Director of History at Play. In 1847 Lucy Stone was the first woman from Massachusetts to earn a college degree. As a prominent U.S. orator, abolitionist, suffragist and a vocal advocate and organizer promoting rights for women, she inspired thousands to join the suffrage movement.

May 22, 2020

Tour the Museum. Join the Northborough Historical Society Curator, Ellen Racine, and the Museum Trustees for a special visit to the Museum. A potluck supper and the Annual Meeting will precede the tour.

New Membership / Dues Renewal

Dues are Due September 2019

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

☐ I am interested in volunteer opportunities

Areas of special interest _____

Rates: ☐ Single--\$20 ☐ Senior / Student--\$15 ☐ Family--\$45 ☐ Life Membership--\$250
 ☐ An additional donation is enclosed \$_____ Thank you!

The Northborough Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Please give this completed form along with payment (cash, or check made payable to Northborough Historical Society) to any Society officer, or mail to:

Northborough Historical Society, Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 661, Northborough, MA 01532

History Corner, continued

latter being the current Unitarian Church, which once had several outbuildings in the rear for horses and other items.

Continuing his diary entry, Williams wrote, "The barn on the Shrewsbury farm blown down, 80 ft. long." He added later that "Mr. Bartlett did not use or burn all his (wood) till the winter of 1830." Well, that may have been one bright side to all the costly damage if Mr. Bartlett was able to heat his house for 15 years.

A history of Berlin, our neighbor to the north, records that "many suffered losses from the September gale, or great tornado, as it was more generally called. Many of the best timber lots in town were leveled with the ground. Nathan Johnson's wood lot was swept down. Many others in the line of the hurricane sustained severe losses in buildings and timber destroyed."

Reports gleaned from the 1891 work "Historic Storms of New England" by Sidney Perley claimed that wind from the storm carried salt water from the ocean 40 miles inland so that much vegetation appeared to have suffered from a frost.

"Rain water that fell as far inland as Worcester and Sterling...had a strong briny taste...Flocks of seagulls were seen in the meadows of Grafton and Worcester in the forenoon after the storm had subsided," according to Perley. He also related that breathing was hard "particularly...at Worcester, Mass., where a hot wind seemed to envelope the town and render the air non-elastic."

Despite the destruction that occurred locally from the remarkable storm, the troubles of farmers hereabouts were not over yet. The following year brought another disaster in the form of one of coldest summers ever experienced.

Rev. Joseph Allen, the longtime pastor of the Unitarian Church, arrived in town in 1816. Of his arrival, he wrote "This year was remarkable for the cold weather which prevailed throughout the summer and early autumn; followed by frosts in September which destroyed the corn crop throughout a large part of New England and caused much suffering and loss. The season was more unpropitious than any within memory of man."

When it rains, it pours, as the saying goes. But that frigid summer is a tale for another time.



Destruction and flooding in Providence, R.I. during the Great Gale of 1815

Don't forget the Pot Luck Supper before the September 27 meeting!

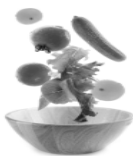
Come along and enjoy sharing a meal with fellow members.

Not been to a Society supper before? Bring a dish to share, a plate and silverware, and you'll be all set. Tip: Paper plates and plastic cutlery mean nobody has to do dishes!

What kind of food? Your choice.

No time to cook? Store bought is fine.

What time? We eat at 6:30 p.m.



Desserts, fruit punch and coffee will be provided by the Museum Trustees and the Hospitality Committee.

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 2019

Did you know that you could support Northborough Historical Society while shopping at Amazon?

When you shop through this link the Society will receive 0.5% of your eligible purchases made at Amazon. This costs you nothing - the program is funded through the AmazonSmile Foundation . You access the same pages and pay the same prices - the only difference is that you will see a small banner if the item is Amazon Smile eligible.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/04-6156604>