



# THE HOURGLASS

## NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLXXXII

Northborough Historical Society  
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

November 2019



### Next Meeting & Program: Friday, 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.

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

### On All Things Cranberries

Do you recognize the antique pronged farm tool pictured here? If so, would you expect to find it in Northborough? It is, indeed, and you can see it in a case in our museum among a collection of other farming implements.

The photo is of a cranberry scoop found in a house on Washburn Street, and with Thanksgiving just a few days off, this month's History Corner is dedicated to that ubiquitous holiday staple.

What might also be surprising to some is that it grew and was harvested here. There are several references in our archive records of cranberries growing around town. In particular, an 1866 assessors' report prepared for the town's Centennial Celebration lists statistics for dozens of industrial and agricultural items made or raised here. The report shows:

<i>Acres cranberries</i>	<i>1/2</i>
<i>Bushels</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Value</i>	<i>\$60</i>

It is also reported in a past Hourglass that cranberries grew in quantity in the meadow across from the stately brick colonial house at 385 Davis St. The house, built in 1832, was owned



by a member of the prominent Davis family, after which the street is named and which included Gov. John Davis.

And as proof in black and white, we have a photo of upland cranberries growing wild on Sulphur Hill, off Howard Street near the Berlin line. The photo is one of hundreds taken around town by Dave Benton, a lifelong resident and longtime active member of the Historical Society. This writer did not scale that peak to see if the berries still grow there.

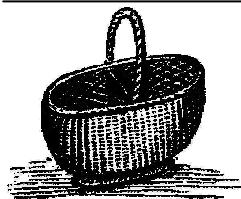


These days most of us get our cranberry fix out of bottles and cans and especially around Thanksgiving. In those long ago days of the first American feast, however, cranberries had wide uses among the Indians well before the Pilgrims got here. In the English language, the berry originally was called the craneberry because to the colonists its flower, which blooms in June, resembled the head and bill of the sand crane. It was also called the fenberry because of the bogs and wetlands where it grew naturally. Harvest time for the berries in Massachusetts is mid-September to mid-November. They are harvested both dry and wet.

Among the Native Americans, the berry's name was *sassame-nesh* to the Algonquin; to the Wampanoag, it was *ibimi*, meaning bitter or sour berries.

A National Geographic article on the tart, healthful fruit tells of a concoction called pemmican, which was a mix of crushed cranberries, dried deer meat and melted fat. This high-protein mash-up was important to the survival of the Native Americans and fur traders as they ranged far and wide in the wild.

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## Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

The museum is now closed for the winter season and our efforts will shift toward archival work and digitizing efforts. We will continue scanning and prioritizing our collection and preservation needs.

Although the museum is officially closed, we do open up when requested for research or tours. We have been approached by the Fitzgerald Institute to have their students visit the second week of November. Hopefully our warmer weather will continue a little

longer. My thanks to Linda Corbin and Beryl Krouse for offering to be the tour guides.

And speaking of volunteers, I wish to thank all who hosted in the museum this fall: Cindy and Dick Atwood, Mark Bashour, Bill Webster, Jo-Ann Sullivan, Marcia Parseneau, Carol Bostock, Mary Kennerly, Kathy Pierce, Jean Langley, Diane Rollins, Jodie Martinson, Bob Ellis, Lois Smith, Chuck Liljestrand, Nancy Harlan, Helen Calverley, Forest and Diane Lyford, Marie Wyman and her son Joe, and our President, Ken Bennett, who has checked in every Sunday. Special thanks go to Ernie Racine for my many last-minute requests.

### Welcome New Members!

Gerald Bourque  
Michael & Marie Mills

### Next Board of Directors Meetings

Tuesday, November 12  
Tuesday, January 14

History Corner, continued

Some today refer to pemmican as the original energy bar. It was not a food adopted by the colonists, however.

Devon Mihesuah, a professor at the University of Kansas and a member of the Choctaw Nation, says various Indian tribes ate cranberries as fresh fruit, made tea out of the leaves and formed them into cakes to store. Some boiled the fruit and made dye out of the rich red juice for their rugs and blankets. They also used them for medicinal purposes such as "blood purifiers", laxatives, cures for fever and stomach cramps, and as treatment for childbirth-related injuries. Scientists have since also discovered the nutritional value of cranberries.

The magazine says that cranberries likely were known to the British colonists in their home country, but it was not the same variety that came to be cultivated and widely popular in the United States. Food author Stephen Cole notes that the import of honeybees to the colonies sparked the creation of new and sweeter uses of cranberries on dining room tables. William Tudor, a satirist in the 1800s, once wrote of cranberry sauce: "It is eaten with almost every species of roasted meat, particularly the white meats, turkies, etc. Some even eat it with boiled fish, and I knew one person, otherwise a very worthy man, who eats it with lobsters, for supper." Clearly, Tudor did not approve of the latter.

This writer doesn't know if cranberries can still be found in the meadows or hilltops in town, but for the more adventurous among us, it might be fun to go exploring for them.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Memories  
of  
Thanksgiving Past



Caleb Maynard, diary entry, Nov.26, 1868  
*Today is Thanksgiving. Charlotte and Levi, Austin and Hattie were all here...Carried them home...Went sparking this evening. (Caleb also recorded sparking (courting) last summer. Oh, that boy.)*

Harriet Ball Mayo, diary entry, Nov. 27, 1878  
*Thanksgiving Day. Oh, how sad to me. Two empty seats in our circle. Dr. B. and dear Charlie...At 11:30, I went to Wid. Maynard with beans and cabbage. She is in great trouble...then I went to the homestead, dined at 1 p.m. ...only Lydia, Sarah, Ella and self. Very good dinner...I came home alone at 7... just going to bed. I'd rather be alone than in company.*

Rev. Josiah Kent, journal entry, Nov. 30, 1911  
*Thanksgiving Day. A most perfect day in every respect. Not a cloud in the sky...A union service was held in our church...Rev. H. preaching the sermon. It was a characteristic sermon. Mr. H. is certainly amazing. I think it is impossible for that man to speak three sentences without trying to be funny. And as he does not know how to be funny, his efforts are all abortive. He told us today that one reason why we should be thankful today is that we have good appetites even though we have no food to satisfy those appetites. Well, well.*

As we enter the season of Thanksgiving and giving, would you please consider making a small donation to the Society?

Any support would be greatly appreciated, and would help us to maintain our beautiful old building, care for our collection, and continue to provide the Friday night programs that the community enjoys so much.

Please make checks payable to *Northborough Historical Society* and mail them to:

Northborough Historical Society  
PO Box 661  
Northborough, MA 01532

*Northborough Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) organization.  
Your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent provided by law.*



**The Northborough Historical Society is thankful for the support of all our members and friends. We wish you and yours the best this Thanksgiving holiday!**

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**

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