



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCLXXXVII

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

May 2020

COVID-19 Meeting & Program Cancellations

The board meetings Friday meeting, and program scheduled for May, 2020 have been cancelled due to concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus. The Museum and archive will remain closed until further notice.

Stay safe and well!



History Corner

by Kathy Pierce

Just Horsing Around...

In better times, a field of the sleekest and fastest horses in the world would have competed this month in the world-famous Kentucky Derby. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, however, that festive race has been put off until September. Still, the thought of the event brings to mind some skilled horse-breeders and their steeds from past times in Northborough.

First in the lineup is the "celebrated" Roman, a "beautiful bay" imported from England by Stephen Williams, who in 1799 bought the 400-acre Holloway farm at what is now 302 Church St. Williams began importing and breeding acclaimed varieties of horses, cattle and sheep to raise on the farm. He became active in several county agricultural societies and his stock went on to win scores of awards in animal husbandry shows.

An 1825 advertisement in the Massachusetts Spy touts "Mr. Williams' Celebrated Horse Roman." The lengthy ad says Williams bought Roman from the Earl of Warwick and details the horse's racing accomplishments as well as eight generations of his bloodline in England.

"He is a beautiful bay with blacks legs and not a white hair, stands 15 hands 2 or 3 inches, and is the best bred and most powerful blood horse ever sent to this country," the ad reads. "He has great bone, fine action and excellent temper, and has proved himself one of the fleetest and most powerful horses in England. For walking, trotting, and racing, he is unrivalled." The ad recounts what races he won and which competitors he bested.

It is at the end of the ad that we see its main purpose. "Roman will cover (mate) the present season at the subscriber's farm in Northborough, county of Worcester. Terms are \$20 for the season, the money to be paid previous to taking away the mare."

Four years later, an 1829 ad in the New England Farmer still praises Roman's beauty, speed and bloodline and boasts, "Mares have been repeatedly sent to him from Maine, Rhode Island and Connecticut as well as remote counties of this state his colts are handsome and command high prices."

In his diaries, Williams recorded numerous awards that his animals took at agricultural fairs and shows. In October, 1825, he noted awards by "Roman, ram and two heifers." On Oct. 8, 1828, he noted cattle awards as well as "Roman, brown mare and colt."

In a paper presented to the Historical Society in 1907, Ellen Williams, a descendant of Stephen's who inherited his property, noted, "This horse attracted breeders from all over New England so that what with the Durham cattle, Dishley sheep and this English stallion, there was a constant going and coming to this farm and household."

Would that we had an illustration of this wondrous steed, but none could be found.

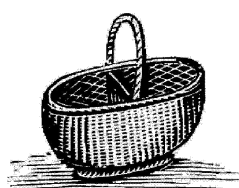
A few years later another local aficionado of fine horses gained a good reputation in this circle. This time it was the prosperous industrialist Ezra Chapin, who in the late 19th century owned the woolen mill on upper Hudson Street in what became known as Chapinville. Chapin was an astute businessman, but it appears he had a passion for breeding and racing fine horses.

"E.W. Chapin rejoices greatly in a Hambletonian Colt from his Morgan Mare. He believes in blooded stock and sees money in the business. Cost of siring the colt, only \$100," announced a brief newspaper clipping of the time.

The headline on Chapin's 1909 obituary in The Telegram terms him a "Lover of Horses and Woolen Manufacturer." It is interesting that his fondness for horses was highlighted before his successful industrial career.

The obituary says he was a well-known figure in Worcester and on the "speedway for 40 years." He most likely drove his rigs in the horse trotting races on the Worcester Driving Track at the 20-acre Agricultural County Fairgrounds off Highland Street. Driv-

(continued on page 4)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

Kathy Pierce and I hope that some of you are recording your thoughts and experiences during this coronavirus historical event. This is history in the making and we need to save our local reactions for future generations. Submit your stories through our website: historian@northboroughhistoricalsociety.org, or mail to Northborough Historical Society, P. O. Box 661, Northborough, MA 01532 or use the drop box at the archive door, corner of Main and School Street.

I have been working mostly at home updating our Collections on Excel and PastPerfect software. Lately I am ploughing my way through the large accession from Carol Bostock of the Bostock-Schleyer-Dumont families of Northborough. They have saved some 400 photographs that are a treasure to our archive. Her father, Jack Schleyer, frequently took pictures of the town and natural events, such as the 1938 hurricane, 1938 and 1953 floods and the Chapin Mill fire. This fills a major gap in our files of this time period. The photos of the families enjoying life, and school children are fabulous – and all are identified thanks to Carol. Starting May 6, the Society's Facebook page will post historical marker sites selected by the Historical Commission for the 250th Anniversary. We thank Laura Ziton and Lois Smith for keeping the house-bound residents of Northborough entertained and educated to our town's history.

Meet the Nominees

Ken Bennett Ken is our current President. He is Chairman of Contra Dance in Northborough which he resurrected from near failure. Ken was born and grew up in Northborough with many generations in the family farm. He operates his own business.

Richard Ferenchick Rick is our current Vice President. He holds an MBA and retired as VP of Sales and Marketing following a long career in fastener manufacturing and distribution. He is one of the original incorporators, two-time president and multiple year board member of the New England Fastener Distributors Association. Rick is a Graduate of the US Naval Academy and Retired Commander, US Naval Reserves.

Lois Smith Lois is currently a member of the Board of Museum Trustees. Lois has lived in Northborough for 17 years. She has Master's Degrees in Mathematics and Statistics from Purdue. Lois worked for many years as an actuary in Life, Health, and Financial Services Insurance before retiring in 2015.

Michael Mills Michael has lived in Northborough almost 40 years. He has a BA in Economics and a Masters in Business Administration. Michael is a member of several boards including Literacy Volunteers, the Foundation Board of his alma mater, Colony Retirement Homes and is a member of the Northborough Lions, the Worcester Economic Club and a Corporator for Bay State Saving Bank. He and his wife, Marcia, have two adult sons.

Claire Swan Claire is a longtime resident and active member of the NHS. She has served on many committees in the society, including as a trustee, and used to give historical bus tours of the town and lectured to the school children each year. She also served on the Northborough Historical Commission and was the founding president of the Friends of the Northborough Library. She was Chairman of the Board and longtime board member of the Seven Hills Foundation in Worcester and has long been active in the DDS community on a state and local level. She is presently a Registrar of Voters for the town and active in the Garden Club. Her fascination in Northborough's history has never diminished.

Nancy Harlan Nancy moved to Northborough 10 years ago and credits the Northborough Historical Society for her knowledge of the town and New England. A graduate of Mount Holyoke College with Masters Degrees from Vanderbilt and Johns Hopkins, she taught third grade at a private school in Groton, MA for 7 years and is currently a substitute teacher in Northborough Public Schools. Nancy is also active as docent at the Worcester Art Museum.

Melanie Magee Melanie is a longtime Historical Society member who happens to live in Shrewsbury. She worked on the after-dark cemetery tours that the Society has sponsored, along with the Friends of the Northborough Public Library, where she is a member and past president. She also was part of the committee that applied for the Community Preservation Committee grant that funded the renovation of the society building.

Marcia Mills Marcia has lived in Northborough almost 40 years and has a BS and MS in Education. She taught Grade 2 at the Peaslee School for many years. Marcia is a volunteer at the Thrift Shop at her church. She and her husband, Michael, have two adult sons.

Jo-Ann Sullivan Jo-Ann is a lifelong resident of Northborough and a former Paralegal. She is very interested in local history, has previously served on the NHS Board of Museum Trustees, the Program Committee, helped with school tours, and served as a museum hostess. Jo-Ann is a History Committee member of the Girl Scout Council of Central and Western Massachusetts and helps with tours of the council's museum.

Chuck Krouse Chuck is a lifelong resident of Northborough. He is a former member of the Property Committee (served for 3+ years). Chuck is knowledgeable in all of our building systems and has been an active problem solver, for example, he was instrumental in getting a nagging heating system problem corrected 3-4 years ago.

Cindy Atwood Cindy has served on Museum Trustees, Nominating Committee and Program Committee for NHS. She also served as secretary for Northboro Conservation Committee. A graduate of Fisher Jr. College, she was secretary for a real estate firm in Boston and served twenty years at Northborough Free Library.

Ernie Racine Ernie was twice President of NHS. He has held positions on the Board of Directors, Property, Nominating, and Program Committees. Ernie has also served as Chapter Chair and Vice President of other non-profit volunteer organizations. He is retired following a career in engineering and management.

Janice Ferenchick Janice grew up in Northborough and has spent most of her adult life in town. She is an active NHS member, serving two terms on the NHS Program Committee. Janice serves on the Board of Directors for two other volunteer organizations. She is a retired school psychologist.

Linda Corbin Linda Corbin has lived in an antique house in Northborough for over 30 years and became a member of the Historical Society shortly after moving to town. She has served on the NHS Hospitality Committee for several years, and also enjoys her docent duties when the Northborough third - graders visit the museum for their spring field trips. She was a member of the Gala planning committee for the 250th town celebration. Linda was a Principal for the Hudson Public Schools for 19 years, and is now retired.

History Corner, continued

ing was the commonly used term for horse trotting back in the pre-automobile days.

"In the speedway brushes he captured his share of honors, loving the sport for sport's sake, and never entering his horses for races," noted the obituary. It adds that he was "a good judge of horse-flesh, a lover of the animals and one enjoying holding the reins over an animal boasting a record."

One of his last noted horses was "the famous Colleen," who for three seasons was recognized as "the queen of the snow path." Two colts born to Colleen "showed signs of putting up the goods, which made their dam famous." Earlier on he drove his longtime racer, Cruso, on the track for about 15 years.

But life with his horse-drawn vehicles did not always run smoothly.

"E.W. Chapin is again a victim of an accident; on Sunday after-



noon between Northboro and Hudson," reported a newspaper of his day. Apparently Chapin veered out of the path of an oncoming automobile and his carriage overturned. Initially it was thought that he had a broken back, but it turned out to be ligament damage. Perhaps this is the reason Chapin became the first person in town to own an automobile...or so it is said.

Lastly comes Noah Wadsworth, who owned a grocery store in the town center. Local history says Wadsworth rarely owned fewer than six horses. At one time, a large, black horse of his was conscripted to pull the fire wagon. Unfortunately, as the harness was dropped over its head, the horse became frightened and backed through the rear of the fire station. "Before the alarm could be answered, the engine and horse had to extricated from the wreckage," records the history of Northborough by William Mulligan.



A message from President Ken Bennett

Hi Northborough Historical Society Members,

The NHS By-Laws requires that all officers, directors, trustees, and members of standing committees be elected at the Annual Meeting which is to be held in May. Because of the coronavirus, we will be having the vote done mainly by email. So, with a **Yes** vote, (you approve of the slate of nominees) or **No** vote, (you disapprove of the slate of nominees), send an email vote message with the header NHS Ballots to our NHS treasurer DALE WILLIAMS daw451@verizon.net by May 22. Please include your name in the email. To **vote by phone**, call 508-393-6298 and leave a message containing your **name** and your **Yes** or **No** vote.

There are no By-Law amendments to be voted on this year and haven't been any now for the last 3 years. However for each of the 4 years before that there were. I encourage you all to go to the website below and read the 14 pages of the By-Laws.

Thanks,

Ken Bennett - President

daw451@verizon.net vote by **May 22**

Section 1. Election (Page 12 of Bylaws)

A. All officers, directors, trustees ,and members of standing committees which are required by the By-Laws shall be elected at the Annual Meeting. A majority vote constitutes election.

ARTICLE VII - MEETINGS (Page 13 of Bylaws)

Section 6. The Annual Meeting shall be held in May. The fiscal year shall end April 30th.

http://northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/BYLAWS-2017/By-laws_May_2017.pdf

Membership

Annual Dues: Single: \$20 Senior / Student: \$15 Family: \$45 Lifetime: \$250

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

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