



# THE HOURGLASS

## NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCXC

Northborough Historical Society  
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

October 2020

### COVID-19 Information

At this time there are no Friday meetings planned at the Society. The museum and archive will remain closed until further notice. Enquiries regarding the museum and archive should be directed to Historian Kathy Pierce and Curator Ellen Racine. They can be reached by e-mail:

Kathy: [Historian@NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:Historian@NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org)

Ellen: [Info@NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:Info@NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org)

**Stay safe and well!**



### History Corner

by Kathy Pierce

#### At Long Last, Women Get to Choose, Too

It was November 2, 1920, and 38-year-old Ida A. Johnson of Main Street was about to do something she had never done before. For the first time, Ida, along with thousands of other women across the country, would cast her vote for the president of the United States. In fact, Ida was the first woman in Northborough that day to check off her choice for that office.

After 70 years of a hard-fought national campaign, women gained that suffrage right through passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in August 1919. The amendment proclaimed that the "right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."



The Suffragist float in the town's 150th anniversary parade in 1916 carried Ida Van Horn in the front supporting the flag, with Mrs. Samuel Maynard and Mrs. William Stearns in the back.

Another local woman who exercised her new right that day was Rosa Crosby Warren. "It's town meeting day. In the afternoon, I went down and voted for the first time. Olive (her daughter) went in the forenoon," Rosa wrote in her November 2 diary entry.

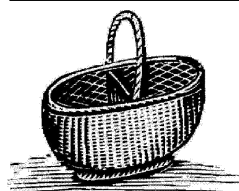
There was likely a good bit of rejoicing here when the 19th amendment passed as local women had pushed for their right to vote in town elections for decades. Way back in 1881, 1882 and 1883, the warrants for the annual town meeting listed this article: *To see whether the Town will, by its vote, or otherwise, ask the Legislature to extend to women, who are citizens, the right to hold Town offices and vote in Town affairs as male citizens.* The 1881 warrant says the article was included "by request of Hon. W.T. Bowditch, Lucy Stone and others." Bowditch and Ms. Stone were staunch advocates of woman suffrage.

The late Dorothy Burnham Rose, who at 98 was the oldest town resident in 1985, recalled in a newspaper interview that year that she had attended rallies for suffrage as a young woman despite her father's objections. He thought the suffragettes were a



Dorothy Burnham Rose as a young woman.

(continued on page 2)



### Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

Good News – we have finally purchased a computer, software and a scanner for the archive with money earned from our January breakfast and basket raffles at Chet's Diner. This equipment, in addition to our laptop, will greatly speed up digitizing when the archive can be safely opened and adequate ventilation is not an issue.

An interesting request came in from my sister-in-law, Carol Asplund, a Holden resident. She is self-publishing a book of her grandfather Walter Krieger's WWI diaries.

I helped scan Walter's photo album, and recognized some of the photos as being taken by Northborough's Clarence Nelson! With further research,

we found that both men were in New Mexico at the same time in 1916 and served in France in the 26th Yankee Division.



Clarence Norman Nelson, 1916

were in the trenches in 1918.

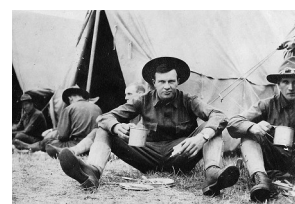
Clarence had also kept a diary giving Carol a resource to check details and better pinpoint locations, experiences and practices. Walter wrote detailed reports of his surroundings, and his drawings depicted line formations,

camp sites, etc. After the war, the two men moved to Holden and raised their families.

Her book should be out in April with credit given to the Northborough Historical Society.

#### New Accessions:

Kitchen utensils from 1920-40s used by the Peinze family from Carolyn Squillante



WWI, Walter sitting with food

#### Welcome New Members!

Larry & Linda Schafer  
Jessica Newfell  
Tara Dykens  
Mitch & Alysia Cohen

**History Corner, continued**

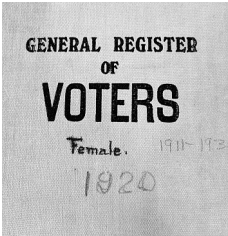
"bad crowd" and he did not favor giving women the vote. Ms. Rose, however, said she and a friend who accompanied her to the rallies "were quite convinced it was right."

What may come as a surprise to some is that women had been able to vote for, and serve on, local school committees for many years before 1920. In 1879, the Massachusetts legislature agreed to allow women to vote for and serve as School Committee members. At that time, about 5,000 women in the state registered to vote.

It appears, however, that women served on school boards well before the state legislation passed. Likely they were elected by or appointed by male town residents or officials. The 1876 Northborough town report notes that Sarah Allen was paid \$53 for service to the School Committee. Frances Chesborough is listed as a member of the School Committee in 1878. The 1880 town report expressed regrets at her resignation and acknowledged that "her long and valuable services as a member of this committee have done so much to advance the interests of our schools."

Following Ms. Chesborough came Harriet Allen, whose term expired in 1882; Elvira Johnson, who served from 1883 to 1889 and Lucy Davis, who served two terms. Under the recent state law, women voters would have had a say in choosing those three members. By 1892, 161 women were serving on school boards in 112 Massachusetts communities, according to PrimaryResearch.org.

But that's as far as women's voting rights went until the 19th Amendment passed in 1919. Here in Northborough, 278 women registered to vote in 1920 alone, according to records preserved at the Town Hall and graciously retrieved for this article by Town Clerk



*The town record book listing women registered to vote in the 1920 national election*

Andy Dowd. They brought the total of local women eligible to vote in the national race to 363.

Overall 737 town residents voted that year. Warren G. Harding, the Republican candidate, won locally and nationally to become the new president.

Interestingly, most of the women who registered before 1920 signed on in 1911. As noted, they could only vote for School Committee members. Why such a flurry all of a sudden? A look through Historical Society archives found that a contentious School Committee race that year drew out two opposing factions. An account of that race will make a spicy topic for a future History Corner article.

As for Ida Johnson and other women voters here, it didn't take them long to jump into local political activities. The September 1920 meeting minutes of the formerly all-male Northborough branch of the Republican League noted that the "large audience in attendance included many ladies."

On January 25, 1921, Ida was appointed to the nominating committee for the organization's next slate of officers. Among those tapped for the positions were Jessie M. Potter for vice president, Almira A. Wadsworth for Membership Committee chairman and Mrs. Walter Brigham, Music Committee chairman.

Soon after, a Mrs. Knowlton of the Republican State Committee gave some wise guidance at the July 1922 meeting of the town Republican League.

"She addressed herself particularly to the women and urged them to ascertain for themselves the honesty, ability and experience of the candidates in order that they might vote intelligently and wisely."

Sound advice, ladies.

**Amendments to Society By-laws**

In order for the Legislative Committee to give due consideration to any suggested by-law changes before making their recommendations to the Board of Directors, any suggestions for changes to the Society by-laws should be emailed to the Legislative Committee by December 31, 2020.

Current by-laws can be accessed at the Society website.

**[http://www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/BYLAWS-2017/By-laws\\_May\\_2017.pdf](http://www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/BYLAWS-2017/By-laws_May_2017.pdf)**

Please email any suggestions for changes, along with the rationale for those changes, to Legislative Committee member Jane Fletcher at **[jfletcher07@verizon.net](mailto:jfletcher07@verizon.net)**

**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 2020