



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

April 2021

COVID-19 Closure 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

Ellen: Info@NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

Stay safe and well!



History Corner

by Kathy Pierce

More Than a Minute: Some Patriots Marched On

*By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flags to April breeze unfurled,
There once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.*

The Concord Hymn by Ralph Waldo Emerson

And that is why Patriots Day is celebrated every year. Along with militia companies from dozens of Massachusetts towns, Northborough's minutemen set off on April 19, 1775, to face down British soldiers sent to seize colonial military supplies stored in Concord. The British were beaten back and retreated to Charlestown. Thus began the American Revolution. Unfortunately,



Minuteman Statue
Northborough

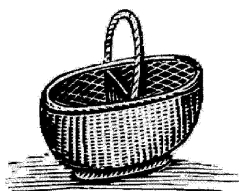
our local men missed the action.

The militia company of about 50 men commanded by Capt. Samuel Wood assembled that day at his home on Main Street after hearing the alarm that the British were marching toward Lexington and Concord. Following quick stops at home to prepare and to alert their families, they headed out. All this was done in a matter of a few hours, but by the time they made it to the battle scene, the skirmish was over and the British were on their way back to Boston.

But that was just the beginning. The local men did take part in the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17 and Capt. Wood was slightly wounded. One Northborough man, Nathan Johnson, claimed to have fired the last shot in that battle.

Some militiamen joined the newly formed Continental Army, but many returned home to their families and farms. As the war dragged on until 1783, recruiting these farmers for more and longer military service became a struggle for towns. Each town was given a quota and had to raise the money to pay the soldiers. This led to numerous town meetings each year as one call after another came for more men to enlist. In 1778 alone, there were 11 such sessions in Northbor-

(continued on page 4)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

Our new scanner has a feature which allows scanning documents into Microsoft Word without retyping them! It uses the ABBYY fine reader program. Two of Bob Ellis' booklets are out of print and I have scanned them, added some photos and printed them. *Northborough Notables* and *Alice Kimball's Northborough* are now available again in the museum. Both are about 50 pages each. My thanks to Ernie Racine for his time and effort and help.

Accessions

Jo-Ann Sullivan donated some great photos from the 1930s – White Cliffs, the High School fire on Main Street, 1938 hurricane which toppled the steeples of St. Rose and the Baptist Church, and damaged the Library.



Helen Garcia and her daughter Tricia Garcia donated Helen's water color painting - "Desert Fireweed". They also donated a large paper cutter, useful when backing documents and photos.

Claire Swan

It was with great sadness that we heard of the passing of long-time member Claire Swan. As well as presenting



several programs with her husband Parker, who passed away in 2013, she had served as a director and a trustee multiple times, worked on the Society's fishermen's

breakfast and suppers, and served on several committees. At the time of her passing she was serving as a Trustee. She will be missed for her energy, wisdom and humor, along with her amazing fashion sense and lipstick!

Nominating Committee Report

Underlined named individuals are nominated for the positions and terms listed, subject to vote by the membership at the Annual Meeting. This report is incomplete - more names will be added before the meeting.

POSITION	PERSON	TERM ENDS
President	<u>Rick Ferenchick</u>	2022
Vice President	<u>Mike Duchesneau</u>	2022
Directors	Allyn Phelps Jr.	2022
	Lois Smith	2022
	Michael Mills	2022
	<u>Mark Bashour</u>	2023
	_____	2023
	_____	2023
Treasurer	Dale Williams	Indefinite
Membership Secretary	Jean Langley	Indefinite
Recording Secretary	Hilary Wilson	Indefinite
Museum Trustees	Beryl Krouse	2022
	Bill Webster	2022
	Nancy Harlan	2023
	Melanie Magee	2023
	<u>Jane Fletcher</u>	2024
	<u>Diane Lyford</u>	2024
Hospitality	Cathy Duchesneau	2022
	Marcia Mills	2023
	<u>Suzanne Williams</u>	2024
Program	Jo-Ann Sullivan	2022
	Karen Walsh	2023
	<u>Janice Ferenchick</u>	2024
Property	Paul Derosier	2022
	Chuck Krouse	2023
	<u>Peter Stone</u>	2024
Publicity	_____	2022
	<u>Kenneth Bennett</u>	2023
	<u>Laura Ziton</u>	2024
Kitchen	Debra Bennett	2022
	Cindy Atwood	2023
	_____	2024
Legislative	Mark Bashour	2022
	Ernie Racine	2023
	<u>Kenneth Bennett</u>	2024
Nominating	<u>Kenneth Bennett</u>	2023
	<u>Carol Bostock</u>	2022
	<u>Lynne Derosier</u>	2022
Ways & Means	Henry Squillante	2022
	_____	2023
	_____	2024

Proposed Changes to Society By-laws

The Legislative Committee has been at work and will be advancing amendments to the Society by-laws for a vote of the full membership at the Annual Meeting. The proposed changes adjust terms of office; refine and clarify the budgeting, nominating, and bylaw amendment processes; and make multiple smaller changes to bring the by-laws up to date and aligned with current operating practices. A two-thirds vote is required to accept the changes.

The full text of the bylaws showing proposed changes may be viewed at the Society website.

If you do not have access to the website, please call Hilary at 508-393-3869 and we will arrange for you to receive a paper copy of the proposed changes.

See: northboroughhistoricalsociety.org



The Directors have not been idle while the Society has been closed!



Northborough
Historical Society



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. Whole Foods grocery orders placed online through AmazonSmile for pickup or delivery are eligible purchases.

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

When you follow this link you will be able to select Northborough Historical Society as your charity of choice - just follow the instructions to start shopping. You will also be able to open an account with Amazon if you do not already have one.

For the Society to receive your contribution you must access Amazon via **<https://smile.amazon.com>** so add it to your bookmarks now!

0.5% of your purchase may not seem very much but when all of the purchases of all of our members and friends are aggregated, this donation from the AmazonSmile Foundation can be a significant contribution to our funding.

Questions? Email: northborough_historical_society@charter.net

History Corner, continued

ough. Indeed, between May 1778 and July 1781, the town raised and paid for 50 soldiers.

"The lengths of service for the soldiers were generally short because few but younger sons from large families could afford long absences from their farms," according to *Northborough: A Town and Its People, 1638-1975* by William Mulligan. "Quickly it became hard to find volunteers for even three month enlistments."

Mulligan notes that in 1776, the town had only 140 men over 16 with many too old to serve. Plus, some who served in the early days of the war believed they had done their part and it was time for younger men to step up. Financial inducements were offered to entice more volunteers to fill the town's quota. With rampant inflation during the war, this effort became a costly burden for towns to bear.

Joel Pratt, one of the local militiamen who marched on April 19, continued on in the army. Though he had already served two enlistments, he volunteered again during one of the 1778 town meetings where the problem of finding men for war duty was being debated. This moved Pratt to sign on for three more years and to challenge other "old soldiers" to follow his lead. His stance was a courageous act of patriotism, but Pratt was also single and not a farmer. Thus, he was freer to take on a longer enlistment than most of his fellow townsmen. Pratt began serving the country as a minuteman in 1774 and ended his service as a lieutenant in the army nine years later. During those years he returned on and off to live and work in Northborough. Pratt was born on a farm in Oxford, Mass., in 1752,



Minuteman Statue
Concord

according to a memoir by his great-great-great-grandson, Dean Ladd. Joel's father died when he was just a year old, which led to his living with several families. After completing a seven-year apprenticeship here at age 21 under Capt. Jesse Brigham, he began working for Abraham Wood's clothing mill operation. Abraham Wood was the younger brother and business partner of militia Capt. Samuel Wood and was also clerk of the militia company, which could account for Pratt's fervor for military service. Pratt and Abraham Wood became longtime friends.

Ladd's account of his ancestor's military service, plus a lengthy memorial sermon delivered upon his death in 1844, describe the arduous life of a Revolutionary soldier. Too long to detail here, the memoirs tell of Pratt's involvement in several notable events. These included wintering at Valley Forge where he became ill, and carrying his regimental colors at the Battle of Monmouth while serving with generals Washington and Lafayette. He also commanded Washington's security guard at his headquarters in New Windsor, N.J., during the winter of 1780-81. It is said that during this assignment, he had the honor of dining with Washington and his wife, Martha.

When his war days ended in 1783, the 31-year-old Pratt returned to Northborough, went to work again for Wood and married Charlotte Ball in 1785. He moved to Sterling in 1786 where he lived and farmed until his death at age 92.

Pratt's steadfast commitment to America's long battle for independence is just one example of those who answered the country's call at a minute's notice. In total, 124 men from Northborough joined him. Numbered among them, of course, were the original patriotic militiamen who marched off to join the fray on that fateful April day in 1775.

Membership

Annual Dues:

- Single — \$20
- Student/Senior — \$15
- Family — \$45
- Lifetime — \$250

Mail 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 in September each year

Renewal of Membership

If there is a red dot on the address label below, it is time to renew your membership of the Society.

Next

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, May 11