



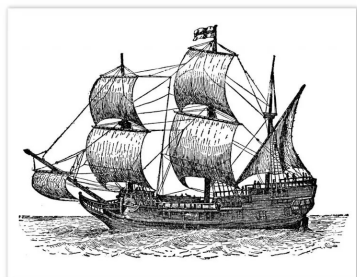
THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCXCIX

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

October 2021



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, October 22, 2021

1620: The First Year. Christopher Daley, a local historian and author, will lecture on the Mayflower voyage, the settling of Plymouth Colony and the Pilgrim's encounter with the Wampanoag people.

The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m., at **Trinity Church, 23 Main Street, Northborough.** The church parking lot is accessed from Hudson St. The event is free and open to the public. Masks must be worn.

Northborough Historical Society COVID-19 Accommodations

After conferring with Northborough's Health Department and following CDC guidelines, please note the Northborough Historical Society has decided to hold their fall meetings at the Trinity Church, 23 Main Street in Northborough.

Although the NHS building can accommodate our guests, the meeting room is not large enough to provide for social distancing and adequate ventilation. The Trinity Church's meeting room will provide a substantially larger space. In making this move, together with an enforced mask mandate, and no refreshments being served, we have made in-person meetings as safe as possible under the circumstances.

Watch for meeting notices on a monthly basis since we may adjust meeting plans due to changes in CDC guidelines.



Masks must be worn.

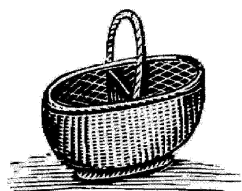
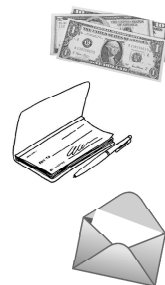


Membership Dues Payments

If you are planning to pay your membership dues at the October meeting, please put your check or cash (exact amount) in an envelope, along with a completed copy of the membership renewal form, and place it in the container at the membership table when we meet at Trinity Church. This is to enable everyone to maintain social distancing and avoid the usual scrum around the table.

Form available at www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/membership.html

Thank you for your help in this matter.



Curator's News by Ellen Racine

I spent a good part of last month preparing for a slide show for the Northborough High School Alumni Association. After scanning through at least 1,000 slides, I chose 60 and then headed to the archive to research captions for them. I used primarily Dave Benton's slides as they would be from the eras that the alumni would remember - 1950 through 1980. I also added slides recently donated by the Rich family of Rutland Road, and the neighboring Lin-



Toren's Mill

coln and Pleasant Streets. I included photos of the 1930s from the Warren family and Joanne Sullivan and even earlier ones from the Ball family - and a few of mine such as the R&T Furniture fire of 2018. Ernie spent time teaching me PowerPoint and the projector that was borrowed from Janice Ferenchick. Then projector screens were needed as the rented room at the Haven had all windows! Forest Lyford and Brian Smith came to my rescue with slide screens (now rare items). All went well and I guess I now have a "Show on the Road".



R & T Furniture before the fire

Welcome New Members!

Jennifer Dorval
Ellen Giancola
Kara Macek & Alex Bowman
Ruediger Volk

**Next
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, November 9**

amazonsmile

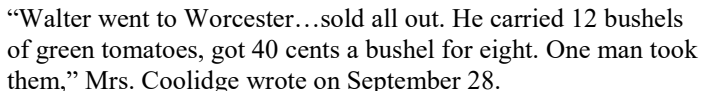
**Don't forget! You can support
Northborough Historical Society
while shopping at Amazon.**

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



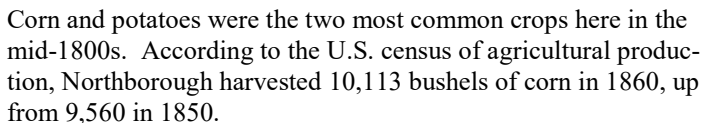
Museum Harvests Town's Farming History

That explains why the locals were so busy at this time of year harvesting their crops for sale. In her 1898 diary, Olive Coolidge has several notes about her husband Walter's trips to Worcester and Marlborough to sell their produce, which included bushels and bushels of tomatoes, melons and, eventually, apples.



In 1865, there were 141 farms in town which likely accounts for the large store of farm equipment in our museum collection. On the list are a handmade rake from the early 1800s, scythes, grain measures, plows, an ox yoke and scores more.

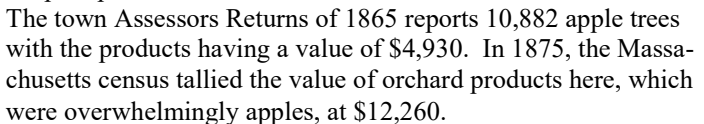
One of the more interesting pieces, displayed in the museum foyer, is a corn sheller. Several such machines were invented, beginning in 1839, but the museum's was patented in 1851 by Joshua M.C. Armsby of Worcester and sold by Oliver Ames & Sons of Worcester and Boston. The Ames company was a nationwide purveyor of agricultural equipment. The society holds other pieces of farm equipment made by Ames, as well. The corn sheller is a wooden box on legs with a hand-cranked wheel. It scraped kernels from corn cobs by pulling them through a series of metal-toothed cylinders. The kernels fall into a bucket placed under the machine and the empty cob is then ejected. Much of the shelled corn was used to feed livestock.



It is a mystery who donated the shell to the society as it was dropped off anonymously at the museum several years ago. No doubt, however, it was once a welcome assist to a local farmer.

Apples, of course, were, and still are, a lucrative local product.

Thus, two antique apple pickers on long poles are among our collection. A wire basket that opens and closes at the top of the pole plucked the fruit from the tree.



Besides the apple pickers, the archive holds a couple of wooden apple barrels and a barrel header used to fasten the lid on the barrels.

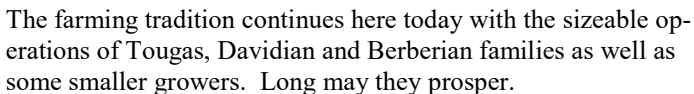
In several of her October 1918 diary entries, Mary Mentzer noted that their farmhands picked apples all day. Occasionally, town folk were allowed to pick the fruit as well. On November 17, Mary wrote that they sent apples to Montana.

In what might seem funny to many, she wrote on October 17 that “the cows got drunk.” This condition could be the result of eating half-fermented dropped apples in the orchard, some say. Whether cows actually get drunk on this feast is a highly debated point. Most experts say this is not possible, but that cows may get acidosis, a digestive problem, from eating too many apples. Symptoms of acidosis can resemble inebriation, they say, including tremors and staggering. It can be dangerous to the animals.

Humans, on the other hand, can get drunk on fermented apples, or more precisely on hard cider made from them. With all this apple growing in Northborough, it is not surprising that cider-making was a profitable byproduct of the orchards. “The boys made cider in the evening,” Mary Mentzer wrote.

For a time in the mid-1800s, Cyrus Mentzer, an ancestor of Mary's husband, Thornton, had a cider business on the family farm. Working just three months of the year, Mentzer's Cider & Vinegar Mill put out 600 barrels of the fruit drink from 6,000 bushels of apples. This amounted to between 19,000 and 25,000 gallons. He also produced 70 barrels of vinegar, according to William Mulligan's *Northborough: A Town and Its People, 1638-1975*.

Closer to our time, Benzoin Toren also ran a cider mill in the mid-1900s on Crawford Street. A glass jug from his mill is displayed in a museum case featuring artifacts from local industries. Along with the jug is a wooden spring Toren created to hold his jugs securely in crates to avoid breakage. There is also a spigot from a



Membership Renewal

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