



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

January 2022

Our meeting and program scheduled for January 28, 2022 have been cancelled due to concerns about the recent surge in COVID-19 cases.
For future meeting and program updates, please check our website.

www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org



History Corner

by Kathy Pierce

Jane Dunlap: More Than a Nagging Wife

Jane Dunlap, a widow from Milton, came to Northborough when she married Deacon Jonathan Livermore on November 16, 1775, and moved into his longtime residence on Ball Hill.



We know much about Livermore, who was 75 when he married the Widow Dunlap five months after the death of his wife of 52 years, Abigail Ball. Our histories and files are rich with references to Livermore and his roles in town development. As an early settler, he became a deacon of the First Church when it was established in 1746 and held that office until 1782. He was the first town clerk, a selectman and an assessor. He died in 1801 just shy of 101 years old.

But what of Jane Dunlap Livermore? As was frequently the case for women of that era, there is little mention of her in our records - except for one rather mocking reference to her in Kent's *Northborough History*.

According to Kent, the honorable deacon "soon regretted" marrying her because of letters she sent to the church "demanding the good offices of the church be withheld from the deacon until such time as he treated her as a Christian man ought to treat his wife." Based on these letters, Kent concludes that "she led the good deacon a pretty strenuous life." No mention made of why she may have written those letters to the congregation.

That is all we knew of Jane Dunlap until last November when Wendy R. Roberts, associate English professor at the University of Albany, emailed us inquiring about Jane's letters to the church. Ms. Roberts is researching Jane for a book she is writing and read of the letters during her research. She wondered if we might have them and if she could see them. The letters are not in our files.

It turns out that Jane Dunlap was a rarity in the literary world of 18th century America - that is, a published female poet. Her short book of poems printed in Boston in January 1771 is titled *Poems Upon Several Sermons, Preached by the Rev'd, and Renowned, GEORGE WHITEFIELD, While in Boston*. Thanks to Ms. Roberts, we now have hard and digital copies of that book.

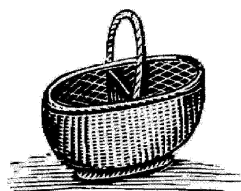


Jane's subject, George Whitefield, an Englishman, was a wildly popular, yet controversial, itinerant evangelical preacher of the 18th century. Author Mark Galli wrote of him "George Whitefield was probably the most famous religious figure of the 18th century." One newspaper called him the "marvel of the age" while another termed him "blasphemous, uncharitable, and unreasonable." He was a supporter of slavery, but held that their owners should treat them humanely.

Whitefield is credited with spurring the Protestant spiritual revival in America and Europe during that period. It is estimated he preached at least 18,000 times to some 10 million listeners.

One of those drawn to Whitefield was Jane Dunlap. In the introduction to her booklet, she writes that she heard him every time he preached in Boston in the 1760s except for his final sermons.

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Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

Our 1874 George Stevens Pipe Organ has been listed on the Organ Historical Society Pipe Organ Database.

There are thousands of pre1945 U.S. organs listed and photographed and we are pleased to be added along with two other George Stevens organs located in Shirley and Harvard, MA.



I have been scanning photo albums from the early 1900s. Clarence Nelson's has great photos of his escapades about town with his many friends. I found two of the Mentzer daughters, Eleanor, Dorothy Wood and Clara,



1914, and Carl Peinze, an uncle of Carolyn Squillante. Clarence photographed bridges, falls, water and his beloved canoe in Northboro and surrounding towns. The second half of the album contains over 100 photos of his army training in Columbus, New Mexico in 1916.



We have been swamped recently with numerous requests. One in particular came from the librarian from Algonquin Regional H.S. who has been searching through our files for history of Northborough's high schools for a permanent showcase exhibit at the school.

Recent Accessions: Redesigned, digitized Northborough maps, suitable for framing, by Mark McMenemy. Mark has donated his work to be used as a fundraiser.

The game of "Algonquinopoly" originally owned by Neil Cronin was donated by his sister, Joanne Cronin.

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 each September

History Corner, continued

“I was prevented from hearing (them), which was no small grief to me, as they were the last Labours, of that truly Pious, precious Man,” she wrote. Whitefield died in September 1770 at age 56 while visiting in Newburyport. Jane, moved by his death, promptly penned her spiritual poems, based mostly on his sermons. Religious and moral beliefs were a frequent poetry subject during that time.

Phyllis Wheatley of Boston, born into slavery and a more widely known female poet of the era, also admired Whitefield. One of her first published poems was an elegy to him, despite his approval of slavery. Jane Dunlap called “the young Afric damsel” an inspiration for her own poetry.

But back to Northborough and the Livermores. In a note to readers in her 1771 booklet, Jane states of George Dunlap, that “God ... has been pleased to take away my husband by death.” This loss, she says, has “reduced her to necessitous circumstances.”

Financial need could be one reason the 56-old-widow married the 75-year-old recent widower. Though they may not have enjoyed a blissful union, they remained married until Livermore’s death

25 years later, as testified by his 1799 will. The will declares that he gives her the personal belongings she brought to the marriage. Additionally, she inherited a chest of drawers he had given her and whatever linen cloth she had made. Under the law of the day, a husband became owner of his wife’s property. Also under the law, however, a widow inherited a third of any real estate for life, which the will states Jane received. She died January 28, 1816 at age 93.

As for the deacon’s treatment of her, First Church records from 1781 list a vote to allow Deacon Livermore “90 dollars continental money for he has want of providing elements.” Under the “doctrine of necessities” of the time, a woman had the right to be maintained in a manner equal to her husband’s social status or she could sue in court. Was that the situation here? Elements being basics, perhaps Jane was justified in complaining about her spouse’s treatment of her.

At any rate, published poet Jane Dunlap has a notable place now in Northborough’s early historical records and is no longer a mere footnote as Livermore’s grumpy second wife.

Welcome New Member!

Bill Clements

Next

Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, February 8

Donations

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www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/donate.html

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Northborough Historical Society



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Questions? Email: northborough_historical_society@charter.net