



# THE HOURGLASS

## NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCIII

Northborough Historical Society  
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

March 2022



### Next Meeting & Program: Friday, March 25, 2022

**Bathsheba Spooner: A Revolutionary Murder Conspiracy.** Local author Andrew Noone will tell the intriguing and scandalous history of Bathsheba Spooner, accused of murdering her husband, and dubiously famous as the first woman hanged in the United States. This most sensational "true crime" tragedy of 1778 happened right here in Worcester County.

The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m., at the Society building, 52 Main Street, Northborough.

The event is free and open to the public. Masks will be available, but mask wearing is optional.



## History Corner

by Kathy Pierce

### Women Selectmen: It Started in the 70s

Northborough's first selectmen were elected in 1766, the year the town was incorporated. For the next 206 years, only men would serve on the town's governing board. It wasn't until 1972 that a woman even ventured to seek a seat on the panel.

With March being designated as Women's History Month, it's an appropriate time to recall the first women who stepped up to run for a place on the centuries-old, all-male Board of Selectmen. In fact, two women actually jumped into the race in January of that year - Carol Hetzel, termed a housewife by the newspapers, and Shirley Deptula, a real estate broker.



There were two seats open on the board that year and three candidates. Besides the two women, longtime local attorney Robert R. Gabriel sought a second three-year term. In the end, Gabriel and Carol Hetzel won, making the 29-year-old the first woman ever to serve as a selectman.

"Just to be a spectator at town meeting is exciting. It is even more so for a member of the board which has to provide direction for the voters if it is doing its job," Ms. Hetzel said in a newspaper interview after her election.

A native of Hot Springs, Ark., Ms. Hetzel had lived in town for just four years, during which she became a member of the Historic District Commission, Conservation Commission and Municipal Housing Commission. She held a master's degree from Columbia University and taught briefly at Connecticut College for Women, New London. She then worked in the technical publishing field.

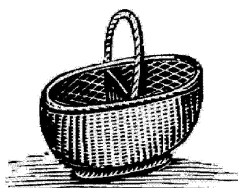
Ms. Hetzel's husband, Michael, shared her interests in local conservation matters and both served on the Conservation Commission before she became a selectman. However, Ms. Hetzel did not complete her term. Citing job responsibilities, she resigned in September 1973, with a year and a half left in her term.

"I am unable to give the Selectman's job the time and therefore attention it deserves," she stated in her resignation letter. Carmelo Panzera was appointed to complete her term.

Incidentally, another female milestone occurred in 1973 when Linda Richardson was appointed the first woman police officer. She was a police dispatcher before joining the force.

The second woman to run for the Select board was 21-year-old Dawn Rand, who sought the seat but lost in 1974. She

*(continued on page 2)*



## Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

Our Open Wednesdays are back from 1:30 to about 4:30. Kathy Pierce and I have met with several inquisitive residents. One particular Wednesday we had eight - three of whom asked to see the Museum. They enjoyed their tour. We have two more personal tours scheduled.

Scanning photos continues. I completed a large notebook of slides and will move on to the slides of items in our collection.

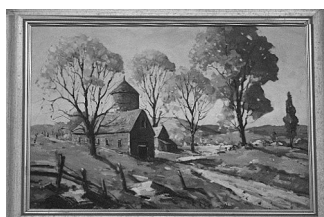
**New Accessions** - Allyn Phelps donated his grandfather's and father's collection of Tax Assessors books from 1870 to 1968. They are used frequently so we are grateful to have extra copies.

Postmaster Mark Stone has sent along ledgers of account and records, money orders and window registrations from 1900 to 1917.

Wendy Friree Taft has donated 27 paintings by Walter A. Peinze. We will choose several for the collection and Wendy has suggested the others could be used as a fundraiser. Several of the oil paintings will be displayed in the meeting hall for our upcoming March meeting. These paintings are from 1950.



Walter A. Peinze  
Self portrait Age 25



History Corner, continued

later succeeded in her bid for the board and served for several years.

It fell to Francis Ouellette then to become the second woman to sit on the board and the first woman to complete her term. Ms. Ouellette ran twice for the Board of Selectmen. She lost in 1976, but succeeded the following year. In 1977, she tallied 833 votes vs. 628 for incumbent Charles Clarke, the only other candidate. She ultimately completed two terms on the board, being reelected in 1980. During those years, she was the only woman on the board and served as chairman in 1980.



Before running for the town office, Ms. Ouellette was on the board of directors of the League of Women Voters and was a member of the ad hoc committee to create a Town Administrative Code. She is a native of Allentown, Pa., and majored in education in college.

Ms. Ouellette had strong interest in trash recycling issues. While on the board, she pushed for development of a joint resource recovery plant with several area towns. In so doing, she served on the Central Massachusetts Resource Recovery Committee and the state Solid Waste Advisory Committee. That effort led to building of the regional waste-to-energy trash incineration plant in Millbury.

In a recent telephone interview, Ms. Ouellette, who now lives in Maryland, termed her work on the Solid Waste Committee, “the milestone of her time in office.”

She said she was very glad to have had the chance “to participate and learn how government works and doesn’t work.” She doesn’t appreciate people who run for office for their own benefit and not for the good of the people, she stated.

After finishing her two terms on the town board in 1983, Ms. Ouellette broadened her horizons and sought to become the State Representative for the Eleventh Worcester District in 1984. She lost that race.

If Ms. Ouellette had won the state representative race, she would have garnered another second-place political honor for a Northborough woman. In 1956, Bessie L. Murray, a Republican, served one term as state representative for the 11<sup>th</sup> Worcester District. Though nominated for a second term, Ms. Murray chose not to run again. No other woman has ever served in that post.

Today there are three women on the Board of Selectmen. Thus, the crack in the door opened by those first pioneering women has widened. Seeing women seated and voting at board meetings is no longer an anomaly.

“That’s great. It’s time that people appreciate the ideas that women have,” Ms. Ouellette said.

**Next  
Board of Directors  
Meeting  
Tuesday, April 12**

**Donations**

It is now easier than ever to make a donation to Northborough Historical Society

Donations can be made online at our website.

[www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/donate.html](http://www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/donate.html)

If there is a red dot in the address panel below, it is time to renew your membership.

**Membership**

<b>Annual Dues:</b>	<b>Mail dues to:</b>
Single — \$20	Northborough Historical Society
Student/Senior — \$15	Membership Secretary
Family — \$45	P.O. Box 661
Lifetime — \$250	Northborough, MA 01532

*Please make checks payable to  
Northborough Historical Society*

Dues are due in September each year

**Northborough  
Historical Society**

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# Northborough Historical Society, 52 Main Street, Northborough



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Since 1906, the Northborough Historical Society has preserved our connection with the past. As the Society enters its 116th year, we ask you to consider contributing to our Annual Appeal. We rely on the contributions of members and friends to fund our daily operations, offer public programs, preserve the Society’s building, and continue our commitment to collect and protect documents and artifacts that bring our historical past to life.

Member historians have written more than 200 articles and books about Northborough’s past. Our curator has organized and catalogued thousands of documents and over 6,000 artifacts and is in the process of digitizing many of these records. Our archives are available for research by appointment.

The Northborough Historical Society Museum is located in the 158-year-old former Baptist Church at 52 Main Street. The Museum is open to the public, free of charge. It features artifacts dating from the 1700s to the present. Exhibits honor veterans from the American Revolution to the Iraq War, and commemorate notable sports figures, artists, inventors and business owners.

Our monthly meetings, which are open to the public, are held on the fourth Friday of the month. Recent programs include:

- Lucy Stone, a prominent suffragist and abolitionist, performed by History At Play, LLC
- Northborough Historical Markers – In Plain Sight but Unseen
- The Mayflower’s journey, settling in Massachusetts, and encounters with the Wampanoag
- Vikings, an Icelandic Saga, an archaeological perspective of weapons, combat and culture
- “Wicked Pissed: New England’s Most Famous Feuds,” presented by Chronicle’s Ted Reinstein
- Northborough’s history as a farming and industrial community

Please consider a donation to the Society, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contribution will help us to continue our mission, and enable us to apply for matching grants.

Sincerely,

*Richard Ferenchick*

Richard Ferenchick, President, Northborough Historical Society



Thank you for your generous support of the Northborough Historical Society. Your contribution will help the Society to continue its mission of preserving and sharing Northborough’s history



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Please send me more information about membership, and the Society’s programs

☐

I would like to donate: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ Other amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this completed form, along with your check made payable to  
*Northborough Historical Society*, to the address below.

Northborough Historical Society Appeal HG, P.O. Box 661, Northborough, MA 01532

The Northborough Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.