



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

September 2022



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, September 23, 2022

The Burnett Garfield House. Deborah Costine, a trustee for Southborough's Open Land Foundation, will present a treasure trove of pictures and historical stories of the incredible and fascinating Burnett family, the many famous persons connected to this home, and the steps taken to restore the home to its former grandeur.

The meeting will be held at 7:00 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 will be optional.



History Corner

by Bob Ellis

A Railroad and a Student

Northborough has a distinction unshared by many larger communities. It has been served by, or at least passed through, by railroad trains continually since 1855. Nobody has written much about it. Kent's Northborough History gave it two pages; a later historian discussed it not at all. I was intrigued, but not astonished, when I discovered that the person who wrote most comprehensively about Northborough's railroad was a Northborough high school student.

In the past I've considered the very worthwhile historical achievements of several Northborough students, but I missed Douglas G. Stein's from 1970. Douglas wrote an essay in a contest sponsored by our sister organization, the Historic District Commission (it public and our Society private). Douglas's essay was called "The Railroad and the Boston Post Road Through Northborough", and filled much of a 17.5-by-22.5-inch-page of the newspaper of the day, *The Northborough Star*. He showed the progression by which the Agricultural Railroad became the Old Colony Railroad, then part of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford, before becoming part of the Penn Central in 1969. A year after Douglas wrote his essay the Penn Central failed.



North from Railroad Station

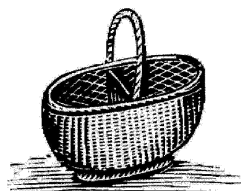


Looking from First Bridge

Douglas insisted that "the railroad turned Northborough into a swingin' town. Northborough was some metropolis as far back as the gay nineties, when a dozen or more passenger and freight trains whizzed past the little station in Depot Square, then a beehive of activity." He seems to be the only writer who identified the main users of the railroad in the early twentieth century. "The big shippers consisted of the Farwell Comb Company, the Wadsworth Green Houses, and the Blair Cash Register Company, and the Woodside and Chapin Mills." The Farwell, by the way, was the last of the comb manufacturers, Northborough's biggest industry in the previous century.

He discussed the connection between the post road as it passed through Northborough (now Route 20) and the railroad. "The railroad stole the passenger and mail from the stage lines. In 1838 Congress declared every railroad an official post road. The stage lines were doomed." The establishment of the trolley through town in 1897 allowed the two types of rail travel to cooperate, the railroad resumed serving as post road until the automobile age brought road

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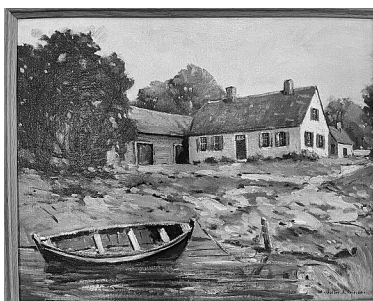


Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

Over the summer the Archive has had frequent visitors: A news reporter, video photographer and members of the Greene family hoping to see their sister's banner she made for the Northborough Minutemen, and an article on her in *the Northborough Star*. Some of our curious members also stopped by. We complied to all requests as best we could.

To date we have sold eight paintings by former resident Walter A. Peinze. Two of the larger ones were auctioned at Skinners with proceeds benefiting the Historical Society.



A shortened version of our historic fashion show will be presented by Kathy Pierce and 12 Society members for the Northborough High School reunion. We look forward to displaying our replica costumes on September 24.



Frank Bissett, Brian Smith
& Paul Derosier

Welcome New Member!
Steve Bernacki

History Corner, continued

travel back into superiority. Douglas included scheduling information. Early in the twentieth century trains went through Northborough at 5:50 A.M., 7:00 A.M. every hour until 11 A.M., then every 30 minutes until 7 P.M., 8:00, 9:00, and 9:30 were the evening trains.” He doesn’t include the date that the passenger station was torn down, which was apparently 1937.

By 1941, suburban buses passed through town even more frequently. By 1971, however, “many are empty” He sums up the situation thus: “People are less dependent on their town than they used to be. We shop in Worcester and Framingham and work in Boston and Natick, and vacation in Maine and ‘down on the Cape.’ Most of us don’t give Northborough the time of day. Yet we do live in that little town ten miles east of Worcester where 20 crosses the tracks.”

Douglas Stein was chosen president and valedictorian of the Algonquin class of 1971. Reflecting on these years, he gave a general account of his classmates’ concerns: “Some of us became adults, some of us remained kids, some discovered girls, some found alcohol and drugs exciting.

Many decided what they would do with their lives. Some are still up in the air. We became fearful of the draft and talked about how ridiculous the [Vietnamese] war is. Many of us formed our own ideas about society.”

A review of his subsequent career suggests that he became an adult rather quickly. “Now I am preparing myself to enter Tufts University in the fall, under a pre-medical program. But I still feel very up in the air. Actually, feelings of doubt and anxiety make life exciting and every year seems more exciting than the last. I look back on high school with some regret that it’s over, and I wasted time complaining about what a drag high school was. I won’t make the same mistake in college.”

He completed his studies at Tufts in only three years, graduating *summa cum laude*. At Columbia University he received his medical degree from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Today Dr. Stein is a urological surgeon in Florida. One of his favorite pastimes is mountain climbing. He has climbed Mount Rainier and only missed climbing Mount Kilimanjaro because of a serious motor vehicle accident beforehand - but his wife completed the climb!

Historian Position

The Northborough Historical Society needs a historian! If you love history, research and sharing knowledge with the community of Northborough, we encourage you to drop us a line with your interests and experience. Preliminary guidance will be offered. Duties include preparing a short monthly article for the newsletter, a quick update at monthly programs, responding to questions on genealogy and Northborough history and becoming a member.

We are a non-profit organization run by volunteers who offer monthly programs and museum visits. We would like to be sure that anyone interested in the position has an opportunity to apply. Applications must be received by **October 15**. Contact us at **Historian@NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org**

**Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, October 11**

Custodian

The Property Committee is looking for a custodian. If you are interested in the position, or if you would like more information, please contact Paul Derosier at stude38paul@yahoo.com or phone, 508-361-7321.

Membership

Annual Dues

Single — \$30 Student / Senior — \$25
Family —\$55 Lifetime — \$500

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