



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCVIII

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

October 2022



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, October 28, 2022

Challenger: Soaring with Christa McAuliffe. Performed by Judith Kalaora, Director of History at Play. This multi-media Immersive Living History Experience pays homage to Christa's life, her role in the Teacher in Space Program, and as a crew member on the NASA Challenger Space Shuttle.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at Trinity Church, 23 Main St., Northborough, MA. The event is free and open to the public. Masks will be required.



History Corner

by Bob Ellis

Why Be an Historian?

Most of us have no chance to make any changes in our world, nation, or state. They are large; their centers are usually far off. We can contribute to our local community, and many of us do. All Historical Society members, I suspect, will agree that we can contribute more effectively if we know our community better, not only in its present state but to some extent, its past.

A professional historian could help us here, but such a person is often unavailable. Our last historian worked in journalism, also a helpful background. People from many positions have succeeded as amateur historians. I began my work here as an amateur. I knew, however, that historians have to respect truth and recognize that the author doesn't know it all, and must guard some statements with words like probably or perhaps.

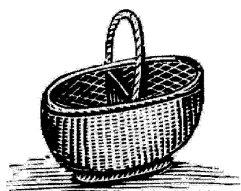
First of all, the task gave me a place to go - not a commercial or merely entertaining place, but one that reflected the town to date. It was filled with pictures and records and various other expressions of the character of the community. It drew you in. Like a good school, it was a place

where you could investigate things, discover what interested you, and thereby, without realizing it, become better educated.

To give an example from much later in my career, I was intrigued by the material that had been scooped out of the walls of the old Gale Store on Main Street when it was being modernized about 2017. I picked one day, March 4, 1846, and found information: Which people came to the store at what time, what they bought, how much they paid. They bought tea and molasses and beef and ribbon and cambric and all sorts of things. It was curious to learn such things from a day so long ago, but I believe that what people buy tells much about them. Social historians love such information.

Today's historian must not be afraid of writing. Much writing today is informal, and its vocabulary differs little from ordinary talk. A history is at best a story, and we all have stories to tell our friends. If you write the story very much as you would tell it, everybody will be satisfied. Here is a tiny sample of what my predecessor, David Benton, wrote in a 1984 Hourglass: *Alice Kimball coming to an executive meeting when in her 80s. She had a bunch of Mayflowers. "Oh I know where they grow in New Hampshire so drove up and got some." She was forever young. Remember the red Studebaker Hawk (super charged) she drove 30-40 MPH.* It was just a small contemporary item, but now it's an elegant element of that woman's great life.

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Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

The Museum is open through October 23, so please stop by.

Thanks, again, to Rick Ferencich and Ken Bennett for hosting a booth at the Applefest street fair, handing out Event Calendars and encouraging visitors to head to our museum. And they did!

Ken handled the Society entry in the Sunday parade, with logistics by Rob Van Buren and artistic design by Debbie Bennett.



Photo courtesy of Jeanine Vitale. www.prismpointphotography.com

Applefest is always a fun and busy weekend. Northborough Art Guild's Art Show, with floral displays by the Garden Club, filled the meeting room with visitors, and 120 of them toured the museum during the two-day event. We were pleased that one more of Water Peinze's paintings went off to a good home.

Our Historical Pageant was enjoyed by attendees of the Northborough High School reunion. Kathy Pierce was her usual vivacious self as presenter and writer of the show. Nine Society members appeared in replica costumes portraying Northborough's famous and not-so-famous residents. My thanks to all who participated at the Haven on September 24th.



History Corner, continued

The historian of a town helps people who have specific questions about their family, their house, some business in the community, or some event of special interest. Such people may be from next door or almost anyplace else. I’ve had questions from people as far off as China and Australia, and usually these people have information to offer also. They are always grateful for what you can tell them, and we are grateful for what they can tell us.

If you like a little reaction to your work, you have a report to make at monthly meetings. Not great on the stump, I kept mine short, but I heard some done fully and beautifully by Kathy Pierce.

You may have an opportunity with an author. One man, realizing how vital to Daniel Wesson his early working days in Northborough had been, contacted Kathy. Now she has been credited in his book about American gunsmiths and given a copy. An earlier writer, Ann Zwinger, whose *A Conscious Stillness* (1982) gives an account of two naturalists’ travel down the Assabet River in Northborough as part of a book on Thoreau’s rivers, cited assistance from Patricia MacFarland, a frequent assistant to our curator and

historian. I was acknowledged for helping on a book about Emily Dickinson and her early Northborough friend, Ben Newton.

Being historian can confer unexpected personal gains. A few years ago, I wished to increase my understanding of my grandmother’s early years. She was born and lived in a northeastern Pennsylvania village. I had quite a few isolated facts but could form no clear narrative picture of them. Applying the knowledge of nineteenth-century district schools, gained in our archive, to her experience of her district school there, I found that it was just the assistance that I had needed. She had nothing to do with Northborough, but Northborough gets the credit for filling out my picture of her childhood.

You also, I think, will garner your own unexpected benefits.

I hereby invite the next historian to request a good exploration of the archive with someone who spent many happy hours there - me.

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. The deadline for applications has been extended to **November 15**. Contact us at

Historian@NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

**Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, November 8**

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