



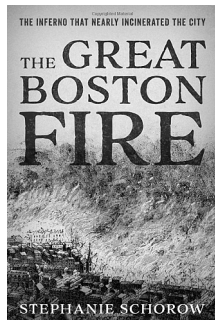
THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCXII

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

October 2023



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, October, 27 2023

The Great Boston Fire: The Inferno that Nearly Incinerated the City. Stephanie Schorow, a journalist and author of nonfiction books, will share the harrowing story of how close Boston came to total destruction in 1872. Her talk will capture the drama of life and death as the heroic firefighters battled the flames as they worked to protect the city. The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at the Society building, 52 Main St., Northborough, MA. The event is free and open to the public. Masks will be optional.



History Corner

by Ken Bennett

Bob Ellis 2016 Grand Marshal

Ellis to Serve as Applefest Grand Marshal was an article in the September 12, 2016 Community Advocate written by Liz Nolan. Bob Ellis served as the Northborough Historical Society's Historian for over 20 years and retired in 2019. He did come back two years later to fill in briefly between the previous and the present historian.

The following is the Community Advocate article.

Bob Ellis has lived in Northborough for a half-century and has been an integral member of the Northborough Historical Society. He not only knows a lot about the town's history, but now will be a part of its history as the 2016 Applefest Grand Marshal.

When Ellis and his new bride Christine originally moved to Northborough, the town was celebrating its bicentennial. He has witnessed many changes since then.

"When we moved to town, there were 8,000 people living

here and now it is greater than 14,000," Ellis said. "Everyone knew everyone."

Another change he noted was in government as he recalled a story of a resident who was a mail carrier and then became a town accountant for many years.

"Government has become more professionalized," he said. "Jobs now require specialized education and backgrounds for positions."

What hasn't changed is how much he likes Northborough and the people living here. The honor of being chosen as the Grand Marshal was a surprise to Ellis.

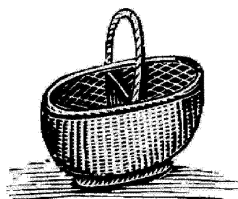
"I was voting for someone else," he said.

A former English professor at what is now Worcester State University, Ellis is retired and has turned his energies to volunteering at the Historical Society. A member since the '80s, he now focuses on writing for the organization's newsletter, *The Hourglass*, and helping people research their homes and families.

"After I retired, it's been something to do and a place to go," said Ellis.

He often receives email requests from family members who have ancestors who lived in Northborough.

(continued on page 2)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

Northborough's Great Fire of 1871, at the corner of Main and South Streets, started Friday, July 21, at 9:00 p.m., and burned a barn owned by Dr. Henry Barnes. With great efforts, neighboring buildings were saved

On Saturday evening at 9:00 p.m., another fire was sighted in the center of town, also in a building owned by Dr. Barnes. It quickly spread to adjacent buildings (those pictured to the right) displacing a general store, and two tenements.

Another wooden building, housed the postmaster, groceries, tailor, fish market and the town treasurer and another tenement. The first "Arcade" building contained a grocery and grain store and housing for three residents. Another twenty buildings were on fire at various times but were contained by heroic efforts of citizens and fire companies from Westborough, Shrewsbury and Marlborough. The fire was most likely set by a former employee of Dr. Barnes.



The Devine building was built in 1888 as a replacement, but this later burned in 1979. It was the home of O'Brien's 5 & 10, Renco Insurance Co., Northborough Jewelers and the Northborough Music Shop along with offices and apartments on the second story.

The Society Museum is now closed for the winter

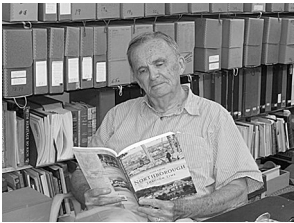
History Corner, continued

“They are interested in the houses their ancestors lived in and about many aspects of the town,” he said.

Volunteers at the Historical Society have been collecting town information for over 100 years, which Ellis has helped to organize. Ellis said that there are decades of amazing information and recollections about Northborough that has been passed along over the years.

“The Historical Society is well-known in town and has a good reputation,” said Ellis. “There are outstanding people in this organization and I am happy to know them.”

Although Ellis is often called the “Historian” of the Historical Society, he describes himself as the fact man. He is not a newcomer to research and writing; in fact, he is an author of several books. “Francis Bacon -The Double Edged Life of the Philosopher and Statesman” was published in 2015. His interest in Francis Bacon was sparked as a young student when reading a book of short biographies and again when taking a 17th century literature course. In addition, he has written books focused on Northborough’s history including “Northborough in the Civil War: Civilian Soldiering and Sacrifice” and “To Celebrate Our Town – The First One Hundred Years of the Northborough Historical Society.”



Bob Ellis in the Society Archive
Photo: Liz Nolan

Historical Society Board member and Northborough’s 250th Committee member Norm Corbin is thrilled that Ellis was selected for the grand marshal. Corbin said that Ellis has helped to supply historical information for many of the 250th events, such as the 50 historic marker project and for the upcoming cemetery tour. He has also been busy writing articles highlighting the town’s history.

“Bob is always willing to give his time,” said Corbin. “He is a great resource and a great guy to work with. He is a tremendous asset to the town.”

<https://www.communityadvocate.com/2016/09/12/ellis-to-serve-as-applefest-grand-marshal/>



Parade Grand Marshall Bob Ellis, along with his wife Christine, ride in style in the 2016 Applefest Parade.

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



**Custodian
Needed**

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.

Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, November 14

Welcome
New Member!
Michael Roman

Just a reminder. Dues were due in September!

► 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