



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCXIII

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

November 2023



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, December 1, 2023

Byzantine and Russian Icons. Dennis Sardella, a docent at the Museum of Russian Icons in Clinton, MA, will present an informative lecture on the topic of religious icons and the role they play in Eastern Christian spirituality.

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

In the October 9, 1950 issue of Life Magazine there was an article about the Northboro Unitarian Church, which burned down December 22, 1945. Pictures of the fire in the article were taken by Dana Martin with whose son Cliff I played baseball and Algonquin football. In the following History Corner article by Bob Ellis published in the January 2012 Hourglass, of interest to me is that Gordon Walker is mentioned. Gordon was a cattle dealer whom I remember seeing because he did business with my father.

The Burning of the Church by Bob Ellis

The following is from a book of recollections by Dorothy Hayes Wild, who on December 22, 1945, lived with her family at 25 Church Street. She was nine years old at the time and obviously reconstructed the event later with the help of other family members. "Ev" is her father and "Maggie" her mother. Changes that I've made in Mrs. Wild's accounts are few and minor.

"Ev, get up, our church is on fire! Call the fire department, hurry! I'll wake the girls and make sure they're kept inside! Hurry, we must call Gordon too, so he can help!" Maggie gasped. (Her brother, Gordon Walker, lived at 10 Church Street and was a Northborough selectman.)

"Maggie, help me get my clothes and boots and I'll get some help," Ev replied, stumbling crazily from bed. "Oh, we have to get Andy and Billie alerted. We don't know if it'll spread down

the hill, and it's so cold out! Get over to Andrew's, Maggie, and help Billie." (The references are to minister Andrew Rosenberger and his wife Williamena.)

"Oh, please, Lord, let it stop. The whole thing looks like it's going to tumble." Maggie was hysterical by now and sobbing uncontrollably.

Maggie rushed around, yelling at the girls to stay inside by all means not to leave the house. She frantically phoned the firehouse and her brother. May and Dottie awoke in stupor, trying to sleepily digest the chaotic state around them and hushing each other for fear they too would awaken Donna Jean. The girls traipsed into a front bedroom and could hardly believe their eyes. They had never witnessed anything like it! The old church was engulfed in shooting flames and tumbling down onto the surrounding snow-covered ground.

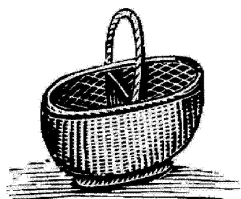
"Oh, May, what are we going to do? Our church is burning all down!" Dottie, full of sobs, cried.

"I know. Where is Daddy? Oh, my goodness, why is this happening at Christmas," May replied in convulsive tears.

"Girls, girls, please come on downstairs with me now." Maggie quietly and weakly spoke as she ushered them down the front stairwell. "Daddy is helping put out the fire, and we cannot do anything but pray, and we'll do that down next to the Christmas tree you both helped decorate, OK?"

As fate would have it, of course, the beloved old Meeting House did burn to the ground. The firemen and every resident around turned out to help. But the hoses were frozen, Mill Pond too far away to pump water uphill to the church, so the huge old timber

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Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

The Museum is now closed for the season but we are always willing to open up when asked. The archive is open on Wednesday afternoons and quite often we receive surprise visitors wishing to donate Northborough memorabilia, or research their houses and genealogy. We always offer a quick visit to the museum in addition to researching our files.

Last month five visitors from the Berlin Historical Society and His-

toric Commission toured our museum and archive. We had a pleasant time sharing stories and I am grateful that Kathy Pierce was able to help me out.

My thanks to Ken Bennett and Lois Smith for all their work on the Historical Society Facebook pages. They have generated a lot of interest in our town's history, bringing in new members, and educating us older residents on more recent history that now needs to be preserved.

Another two paintings by Walter Peinze have sold and we are thrilled that they will be appreciated and enjoyed.

This is the last Hourglass of 2023 - there is no December issue.

The Officers and the Board of Directors of the Society would like to wish all of our members and friends a wonderful Holiday season, and a happy and healthy New Year.



History Corner, continued

structure tumbled in a huge heap. On top of the smoldering black pile of burnt embers lay the strong Paul Revere bell, resting on its side.

The congregation gathered immediately, renting the local Grange Hall, and put forth a plan for reconstruction with Andrew at the helm. ‘All things were possible’ was what Andy reassuringly said, appraising the situation like a businessman as well as a minister. Maggie, her old patriotic and Christian faith prevailing, offered to chair the Building Fund for the Second Meeting House.

"Come on, May, get yourself going. We're running up to help uncover the church silver," Dottie yelled soon after the embers had sufficiently cooled. A renovation plan was already in place and, being the closest neighbors, the girls wanted to help dig up some treasures. ‘Everybody will be done by the time we get there.' She knew the local boys were going to be there and wanted to show them that girls could do it too.

Rummaging through heavy burnt timbers was a dirty and smudgy job for girls and boys. However, Andrew knew this was a great way for the youth to gain some valued time together doing something very worthwhile. He appointed a few able-bodied churchmen to oversee them and left it up to the older youth to see that no one got hurt. The church kitchen's silverware and salvaged goods became a huge pile over the months of recovery. Then all had to be cleaned. The youth of this vigorous church, with its charismatic leader, worked diligently alongside its many members for what was to be five years towards a monumental goal.



A Historic Church Burns

Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, January 9

Welcome
New Member!
Michael Leonard

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

As we enter the season of thanks and giving, would you please consider making a small donation to the Society?

Any support would be greatly appreciated, and would help us to maintain our beautiful old building and care for our collection.

Please make checks payable to *Northborough Historical Society* and mail them to:

Northborough Historical Society Attn: HGTG
PO Box 661
Northborough, MA 01532

*Northborough Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) organization.
Your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent provided by law.*



The Northborough Historical Society is thankful for the support of all our members and friends. We wish you all a safe and happy holiday season!

► 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