



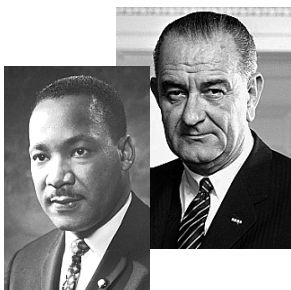
THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCXV

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

February 2024



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, February 23, 2024

Landmark Civil Rights Legislation of the Mid 1960s. Mark Bashour will examine the roles of Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Lyndon Johnson in bringing about landmark legislation that would change this nation permanently

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

The following article was published in the February 2014 issue of the Hourglass, by then Historian Bob Ellis.

A Selectman in 1911

What was it like being a selectman in 1911? To answer this question, I'll call on his daughter, as she spoke before the Historical Society on February 22, 1957. Elizabeth Hilliard, a retired history teacher who at the time was Northborough's librarian, was recalling the experiences of her father Philip.

In 1911 the Republican Town Committee, of which Mr. George Brigham was chairman, thought it would help town politics if they could persuade my father to run for the office of selectman - with a salary of \$50 a year. The campaign was exciting, although other possible contestants withdrew, when my father's candidacy was announced.

The first Monday in March was fair, with enough wind to dry up part of the mud. My father put the back seat on his wagon and let me accompany him before school to "get out the vote" for Mrs. Annie Eames to serve on the

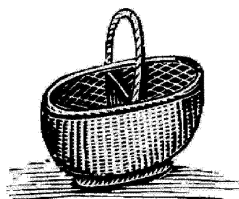


school committee. Mrs. Sarah Jane Carpenter marshalled the Women's Relief Corps out in force, and insisted that the men dress up and curtail the use of tobacco and profanity around the town hall. From then on, town meetings never were the same.

The reform element was successful in electing its candidates. The next morning, Mr. Kent met my father and said, "I congratulate the town. I do not congratulate you, for you will find it a thankless task." About 11:00 that night Mr. George Dean complained that his sheep were being bothered by the dogs of Simon Peter, from Smith's Mills, and why hadn't the selectmen appointed a field driver and fence viewers? It was about this time that my father figured his official salary amounted to 2½ cents an hour.

My father was elected on a three-plank platform to stop bicycle riding on the sidewalks, get the loafers off the town hall steps, and make the town bone-dry in fact, as well as legally. He promised himself that he would improve the town's roads but realized that would take time and study. An immediate beginning was made, however, when the selectmen made a tour of inspection. Mr. Stratton took his covered delivery wagon, in which he and Mr. Cook rode on the front seat, and put my father, as the newest member, in back in a rocking chair. They

(continued on page 2)



Curator's News by Ellen Racine

We had a variety of questions this month. For example: Was there ever a semi-pro basketball team in Northborough? To answer this question, I searched through the scrapbook of newspaper articles written by John Kellette from 1899-1901 for the Worcester Telegram & Gazette.



In October, 1899, George A. Martin approached the selectmen to see if the newly formed Northboro Basketball Association could use the Town Hall gym, move the two chandeliers and make 12 foot high window screens. By November they had a team run by Junius Q. Hatch, George Russell Gallup and John W. Kellette. Jack Doyle of Marlboro would coach. On January 12, 1900 they played Sherwood house of Worcester and won 13 to 11, attendance 250. They played teams from Worcester, Milford, Hudson and finished their season in March, playing six games, winning three. Other topics covered in his articles were horse and wagon accidents, boys being boys, oyster dinners, dances, clubs for men and others for women, The Grippe and of course weddings

and funerals. Thanks to his saving his articles, we have a detailed view of life at the turn of the last century in a town with a population of 2,127.

John Kellette continued writing, producing film scripts and stories and in 1919 - 1920, he published song lyrics, often composing the music himself. His most famous song: "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" sold 5,000,000 copies.

New Accessions:

Yarn Winder and spinning wheel from John Griffin

Wedding gown and photos of Floyd & Marjorie Woodcock from Ann Wynn Game of Northborough, 1980s

Portrait photo of Florence Felt from Elizabeth D. Loutrel

decided that improvements were necessary.

Bicyclists were the first menace to be attacked. Cloth signs forbidding riding on the sidewalks, were posted on trees near the center of town, and the selectmen kept a watchful eye out for violators. I upset the effectiveness of the plan, however, by riding out of Mrs. Emery’ driveway. As I crossed the sidewalk diagonally, somebody saw me and complained. (In another talk, by the way, Miss Hilliard claimed that she used to ride up Rice Avenue, then called Winding Hill Road, from where the Metropolitan Aqueduct now crosses it, “trying to get a good start from the sand at the bottom to the ledge at the top.” If she succeeded, she was a great pedaler!)

The loafers were attacked on three fronts. ”No loitering” signs were posted at each town hall entrance; benches were erected under horse chestnut tree on the west side of the building, and between Wesson Memorial fountain and Main Street, and men were given an opportunity to work on the roads or for the water department. By the time the benches were removed later, to widen the state road, old age assistance enabled the loiterers to buy used cars.

The third plank of the platform required the greatest preparation and secrecy. My father arranged with the AntiSaloon League to send “spotters,” who obtained evidence that liquor was being sold illegally in town. About midnight, I was awakened by tramping up and down the cellar stairs, outside my room. The next morning, I was shown the cases of liquor which had been seized, and were to be sent to the Statehouse, to be poured down the sewer. I couldn’t see why the accompanying wine glasses had to go too, when they would be very nice for dolls’ tea parties, but the only souvenir left was an empty crème de menthe bottle. (The hotel owners in town all howled, she noted.)

The affair did make an impression in an unexpected quarter, however. One evening I answered a knock at the back door, and I didn’t like the looks of my caller and asked for my father. When the latter arrived, he recognized “Jakey” Mosso, who said, “Mr. Hilliard, you’ve always been a good man. Do your duty and lock me up. I’m drunk.” My father obliged.

The Nominating Committee will soon be looking for volunteers to serve on boards and committees as of May 2024. The duties of each committee are described in the document **Get Involved Stay Involved** which can be found by following the link from the front page at: <https://www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org>

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.

Welcome New Member!

Kimberly Thomas

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

Information about future programs and more is available on our website.

www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

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

► 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