



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCXIX

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

June 2024



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, September 27, 2024. Backyard Astronomy. Jim Zebrowski, from the Aldrich Astronomical Society will present a talk on backyard astronomy. This program will provide practical tips for exploring the skies with Jim's demonstration of a six-inch Dobsonian telescope and an 80mm refractor. Learn how to use a smartphone for sky navigation.

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 Norm Corbin

Early Boros Archaeology Part 1

To start, I'm honored to be the next Historical Society Historian. I have big shoes to fill because of the fabulous work of Bob Ellis, Kathy Pierce and Ken Bennett. I will do my best to follow in their footsteps.

This article brings us back to the very early inhabitants of the local Boro towns from 14,000 to 3000 years ago.

Archaeological findings in Northborough and adjacent communities reveal the presence of indigenous peoples, mammals and vegetation from past millennia. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) maintains a statewide database on prehistoric archaeological sites. Twenty sites have been documented in Northborough. Most of these sites contain only a few artifacts like arrowheads; several others are much more substantial.

The glaciers in New England retreated some 14,000 years ago. This started the **Paleo Time Period** in New England and it lasted until about 10,000 years ago. Paleo-Indians were the first migrants to enter New England. These first people were hunter-gatherers who relied on now-extinct animals (such as mastodon, giant beaver and ground sloth) for the meat portion of their diet.

One fascinating site in Northborough that can be traced to this time period is the discovery of mastodon (*Mammuth Americanum*) remains on November 17, 1884. They were

discovered buried in a meadow on the farm of William U. Maynard. The remains included fragments of bone, several teeth, and portions of tusks. A recent 2021 article "*Man and the Mastodon: Revisiting the Northborough Mastodon*" by Dr. Robert S. Feranec et.al. determined that the tusk fragments are from approximately 13,200 years ago. In a communication I had with him about his article, Dr. Feranec noted that the environment in the area of Northborough some 13,000 years ago would be similar to today's boreal forest. Boreal forests exist today in regions of the northern hemisphere with cold temperatures, and are made up mostly of cold tolerant coniferous species such as spruce and fir. Remnants of the mastodon are on display in the museum of the Northborough Historical Society, and at the EcoTarium in Worcester Massachusetts.

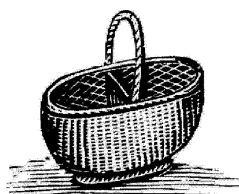
One year after the initial discovery, digging continued at the site to look for additional mastodon remains. On October 12, 1885, a human skull and lower jaw bone were discovered



Workmen digging in Maynard's meadow in October 1885

some six feet away from the mastodon findings. The included photo was taken in 1885 at the excavation site. The initial evaluation by Dr. Putnam in 1886 came to the conclusion that it belonged to a female Native American and that it was unrelated to the mastodon discovery. However, a recent evaluation of the skull by Dr. Robert Feranec, was less definitive. He recommended that radiocarbon dating and DNA testing of the skull should be conducted to deter-

(continued on page 4)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

Last Thursday our George Stevens 1874 organ was tuned by technicians from Andover Organ of Methuen. Craig Seaman and Jon Ross spent 3-1/2 hours tuning, with Craig working inside among the pipes. Here you can see Jon watching for Craig's flashlight while playing scales. They did a great job and now it's ready for Robin Jubenville's concert on June 15 at 2pm.



Dressing mannequins for the museum is always a fun task.

The wedding gown and army uniform of Floyd and Marjorie Terrill Woodcock are now on display on the stage. Next to the organ is the 1830 pink velvet ball gown of Lydia Lincoln Ball, wife of Dr. Stephen Ball II.



Officers, Board and Committee Members
2024 2025

Position	Person
President	Mike Duchesneau
Vice President	Janice Ferenchick
Directors	Bob Van Buren
	Paul Derosier
	Zenya Molnar
	Alex Molnar
	Ken Bennett
	Valerie Kennedy
Treasurer	Dale Williams
Membership Secretary	Jean Langley
Recording Secretary	Hilary Wilson
Museum Trustees	Lynne Derosier
	Allyn Phelps Jr
	Carol Bostock
	Linda Corbin
	Jane Fletcher
	Kathy Pierce
Publicity	Carolyn Squillante
	Hilary Wilson
	Zenya Molnar
	Alex Molnar
Hospitality	Debra Bennett
	Cindy Atwood
	Marcia Parsneau
Program	Cathy Duchesneau
	Nadine Proctor
	Suzanne Williams
Property	Chuck Liljestrand
	Paul Derosier
	Bob Van Buren
Kitchen	Rhonda Van Buren
	Jane Fletcher
	Marcia Mills
Legislative	Bob Van Buren
	Jean Langley
	Hilary Wilson
Nominating	Rick Ferenchick
	Carolyn Squillante
	Carol Bostock
Ways and Means	Mike Mills
	Henry Squillante
	Marie Spence

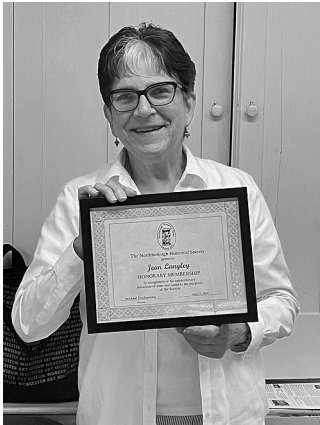
Other Positions

Curator	Ellen Racine
Historian	Norm Corbin
Webmaster	Geoff Wilson
Newsletter Editor	Hilary Wilson

Membership

Annual Dues:	Mail dues to:
Single — \$30	Northborough Historical Society
Student/Senior — \$25	Membership Secretary
Family — \$55	P.O. Box 661
Lifetime — \$500	Northborough, MA 01532

Please make checks payable to
Northborough Historical Society
Dues are due in September each year



Newest Honorary Member

At the May 17 Annual Meeting the Board of Directors proposed that long-time member Jean Langley be granted Honorary Membership. The membership expressed their approval with a thunderous round of applause.

Currently serving as Membership Secretary, Jean has also served on various boards and committees over the years, and hasbeen a perennial Museum host.

She volunteered regularly to work our Turkey, Ham and Bean, and Spaghetti Suppers. We had the best bus boy and cocktail waitress in town with Jean working the tables with her pitcher of fruit punch!

Thank you, Jean for your many years of exemplary service to the Society.

We were deeply saddened to receive the news that long-time member and historian Bob Ellis had passed away on May 8, 2024. He will be very much missed. Our condolences to Christine and his family.

The poem below was written by Bob on the occasion of his 65th birthday.



What is our life? A trip without a map
along a drolly labyrinthine trail,
now splashed by sun, now awed by a thunderclap:
caressed by calm, then staggered by a gale.

A birthday is a stop to quaff some cheer,
relax and ruminate along the way,
and boast a bit: “We’ve made it - (up to here)”
but here, we know, we can’t expect to stay.

Though we prefer, these latter days, to rest,
we push ahead, relieved that as we grow
more elderly, the gauges all attest
that, after all, we haven’t far to go.

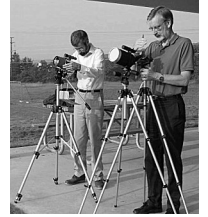
Our spirit migrates through modernity
till it arrives, on schedule, at eternity.

- Robert Ellis

Program Schedule 2024 - 2025

Meetings 7:00 pm

September 27, 2024 **Backyard Astronomy.** Jim Zebrowski, from the Aldrich Astronomical Society will present a talk on backyard astronomy. This exclusive event will provide you with practical tips for exploring the skies with Jim's demonstration of a six-inch Dobsonian telescope and an 80mm refractor. He will also explain how to use a smartphone for sky navigation allowing you to see celestial objects and track the International Space Station in your own back yard.



October 25, 2024 **Meet Frances Perkins: The Unsung Heroine Behind the New Deal.** The historical performer, Janet Parnes, will portray Frances Perkins, the first Woman in U.S. history to be appointed to a Cabinet position - Secretary of Labor under Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. This educational event will provide insight into the history of the New Deal and the role of women in politics.

December 6, 2024 **Beaver Meadows to Farmed Wetlands and Back.** Forest Lyford will discuss how former beaver activity helped shape the drainage patterns and the distribution of organic-rich soils in Northborough, the modification of wetland areas by farming, and recent beaver activities. His discussion will include how these industrious creatures alter streams in ways that are both beneficial to wetland ecology and, at times, challenging to humans.



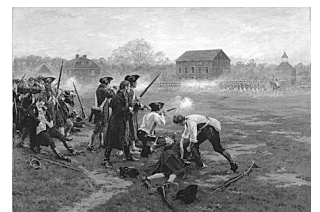
January 24, 2025 **The Agricultural Branch Railroad.** Journey through time with Ed Sterling and Dave Westerling as they unveil the story of railroads crossing through the farming towns of central New England. Join us for this immersive lecture as we explore how these trains once fueled the agricultural communities of yesteryears.

February 28, 2025 **The USGS StreamStats Program.** Pete Steeves, a Physical Scientist/GIS Specialist at the US Geological Survey, will guide us through watershed applications and analysis, shedding light on the journey of USGS StreamStats from its beginnings in Massachusetts in the 90s to its widespread adoption across the nation in the early 2000s. Join us as we explore how this program, integral to national mapping initiatives, has also played a role in harmonizing data along the US-Canada border.



March 28, 2025 **White Cliffs, an Architectural Marvel.** Join us for a fascinating journey into Northborough's past, as Norm Corbin and Tom Reardon share a historical account of the architectural detail and construction of White Cliffs. They will highlight the recent unearthing of architectural documents that shed new light on the construction of this iconic structure.

April 25, 2025 **Northborough During the Revolutionary War.** Presented by Norm Corbin and Bob Licht of the 250 Rev Committee. This engaging program invites you to discover how Northborough's Tea Party predates Boston's by 10 months, and the town's early stance on independence precedes July 4, 1776. This lecture will explore these historical facts and other fascinating events as we hear about our community's rich history.



May 16, 2025 **The Original Bucky Lew, Basketball's First Black Professional Player.** Author Chris Boucher tells the engaging story of Harry Haskel "Bucky" Lew, who at 18 years old in 1902, took to the court with the NE Basketball League, becoming the first Black Professional player in the country. Chris chronicles Bucky Lew's journey from his rise to professional basketball, to coach, to general manager, to owner. Chris will include interesting anecdotes of Northborough's basketball history and local players.

Zeh School Second Graders Visit the Museum

On May 9th, we had the delightful experience of hosting 42 enthusiastic second graders, along with their teachers and chaperones, from Zeh School at our museum. The students were excited to explore the various exhibits, and they particularly enjoyed the artifacts in the colonial kitchen and the 1930s kitchen. The highlights of their visit included the brass cash register, which they mistook for a typewriter, the Blair camera and the dinosaur bones.

A special thank you to our dedicated members who volunteered as docents for the event. Your guidance and enthusiasm made the visit memorable for the children.

We look forward to welcoming more students and children from our town in the coming year. Your continued support in these educational endeavors is greatly appreciated.

History Corner, continued

mine age and ethnicity. A recent communication with Prof. Richard Bailey, a paleontologist at Northeastern University and my old geology professor, noted that if the skull can be associated with the mastodon date, “it might represent the earliest record of humans in Massachusetts and perhaps New England”.

The **Archaic Time Period** followed the Paleo Time Period and lasted from about 10,000 to 3,000 years ago. The natives during this period were fishermen, hunters and gatherers. Early during this period, natives traveled in small isolated groups. Later, they tended to meet up with other groups to form a village, usually in the spring. A late archaic period camp site called the “*Old Stony Brook Site*” has been identified in Northborough on the Marlborough line. The site no longer exists, as it was demolished with the expansion of the MWRA (Massachusetts Water Resources Authority) Walnut Hill Water Treatment Facility. Full documentation was carried out at the site in 2001 prior to its destruction. Many artifacts were found and the site may have been a small hunting camp. It was estimated to be around 3,500 to 4,500 years old. Other Northborough sites also contain artifacts from this time period and the Northborough Historical Society has many artifacts in their collection. There is also a significant archaic site located nearby in Westborough. It is the “Charlestown Meadows Site” located near the headwaters of the Assabet River. Radiocarbon dating of artifacts from this site ranged from 4,290 to 5,223 years ago.

As you can see, our Boros lands have been important to indigenous peoples for thousands of years. The next article will review the **Woodland Period** (3000 to 500 years ago), and the **Contact Period** that begins when Europeans started interacting with the North American indigenous peoples. Information for this article was taken from the 2022 Northborough Historic Preservation Plan prepared by the Northborough Historical Commission.

**Organ Recital with Robin Jubenville,
along with soloist Robyn Tarantino**
Northborough Historical Society
Saturday, June 15 at 2:00 p.m.



Robin currently teaches piano through Metro Music. Her organ teachers have included Steve Long, James Christie, and Brink Bush.

Robin Jubenville, a Massachusetts native, has endeavored to become a concert organist since her teen years. After an engineering career, thirty-five years as a church organist, and raising four children with her husband, it is finally time for her to follow her dream.

The event is free, but donations to the Society would be very much appreciated.

**Next
Board of Directors
Meeting**

Tuesday, September 10



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.

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

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