



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCXXIV

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

February 2025



Next Meeting & Program: Friday, 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 adoption across the nation in the early 2000s.

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.



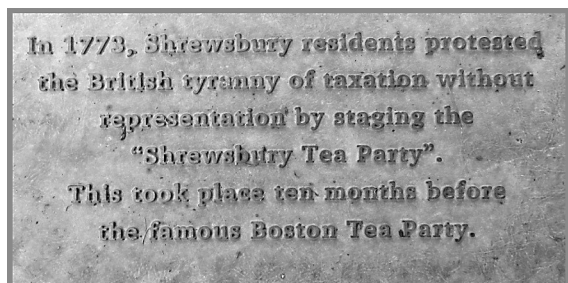
History Corner

by Normand Corbin, Historian

Northborough Tea Party Part-2 FINAL

Because my findings, reported in last month's Hourglass, corrected a significant local history event, I've decided to document the methodology I used for future researchers. I expected finding the original news article about our Tea Party to be relatively straightforward, considering today's databases of old newspapers, and knowing the month, year and newspaper for the article. But it was NOT!

Northborough historians, starting with Rev. Allen in 1866 through Robert Ellis in 2013, noted the Northborough Tea Party as occurring in **February of 1773**, and reported in the "*Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Post-Boy*" newspaper. This date means it would have occurred 10 months before the Boston Tea Party. A Historic Marker on Shrewsbury Common also mentions this event, calling it the "Shrewsbury Tea Party", also noting that it occurred 10 months before the Boston Tea Party.



Shrewsbury Tea Party Marker in the Shrewsbury Town Common

I found that the reference cited by many historians had an incorrect citation of both newspaper and year. The correct reference is the **February 14, 1774** edition of the "*Boston Gazette and*

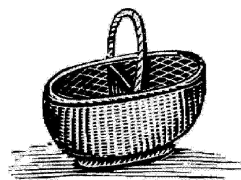
Country Journal." This places the event 2 months after the Boston Tea Party. Hence, all the bragging rights about occurring before the Boston Tea Party were in error.

My initial investigation started with a GOOGLE search. It found that the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester had copies of the "*Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Post-Boy*". With the support of Eric Wang of the Northborough Library along with Laura Haskell and Dan Boudreau of the American Antiquarian Society, I was sent digital copies for February, March and April of 1773. Luckily, the newspapers were only published once a week and four pages long, so visually scanning for the article was not very time consuming. However, I could not find the desired reference.

I felt something might be wrong with the reference. A new Google search was conducted with key words like "Northborough", "tea" and "burning". This led me to a recently published book (2023) by James R. Fichter "*TEA Consumption, Politics and Revolution 1773-1776*." Mr. Fichter is an Associate Professor of European and American Studies at the University of Hong Kong. The book mentions our event on page 124, BUT with a date of February **1774**, not 1773. Specifically, it reads "'Indians' from Northborough travelled to neighboring Shrewsbury, Massachusetts to confiscate a bag of tea from a peddler in February 1774. They burned it in front of the tavern." I contacted Mr. Fichter via email, and asked about his 1774 date. He mentioned that the year of 1773 for our event makes no sense because the driver for the destruction of tea was a result of the Tea Act on May 10, 1773. So, Northborough's event had to be after the Act was published.

Using the 1774 date, a new Google search led me to the original article which is on-line at the Massachusetts Historical Society. It was found on Page 3 of the **February 14, 1774** edition of the "*Boston Gazette and Country Journal*". In colonial times newspapers were known to reprint articles from other papers, so I went back to check if the article was also in the original

(continued on page 2)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

We are gearing up to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War. The Costume group has been sewing costumes and accessories for upcoming events and Algonquin students have jumped on board to help with programs.

If you have time to spare during the dreary months of winter, consider volunteering in the archive and museum. We need help transcribing diaries and documents, scanning photos and arranging displays, show-cases, storage. Plenty of fun for all.



Tarble Haskell, 1916



Minutemen of 1975



Bob Kennerly, Paul Keough, Ted Lawrence, George Hamilton, 1981

History Corner, continued

“*Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Post-Boy*” reference for February or March 1774, but it was not.

This led me to ask two questions: Is there a firsthand account of the event? Why was the initial reference incorrect?

I reviewed the diary of Rev. Parkman of Westborough, but he makes no mention of the event in February, nor March of 1774. Rev. Whitney makes no mention of it in his July 14, 1774, sermon where he discussed the “*excesses of wickedness*” of tea which was 5 months after our Tea Party event, nor is it mentioned in his 1793 “*History of Worcester County*” book when he reviews Northborough. I’m still looking for a firsthand account.

Rev. Allen makes no mention of this event in his “Sketches of the Town of Northborough” in 1826 but mentions it in his 1866

“Centennial Celebration” article. So, sometime between 1826 and 1866, Rev. Allen learned of this event, but from where did he learn it and why was it incorrect? I have yet to find the answers. I’ll be digging into the archives’ Rev. Allen’s files.

Finally, I contacted Prof. William H. Mulligan Jr. who is the Professor Emeritus of History at Murray State University in Kentucky and wrote the book “*Northborough: A Town and Its People*” back in 1982 and the booklet “*Northborough During the American Revolution*” in 1975. He mentions our Tea Party in both references. His told me his reference to our Tea Party was based on prior Northborough history authors’ information; he had no reason to doubt their work. He did make a very good point; back in the early 1970’s searching antique newspapers was a much more difficult process than in today’s internet age. HOW TRUE!!

Membership

<u>Annual Dues:</u>	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

Welcome New Members!

Paul & Janine Brueggemann

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

Correction

In last month’s Hourglass Marcia Parsneau was thanked as a member of the Kitchen Committee. Marcia was replaced on the Committee in May by Marcia Mills. Our thanks to both Marcia’s!

Reminder: Dues are now overdue!

Please mail your check to the address above, or bring your payment, cash or check, to the membership table at the February 28 meeting. To ensure that your contact information is up to date, please complete a membership form (link below) and submit it with your dues.

<https://www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/pdf/Membership.pdf>

Volunteers Needed!

We are looking for a few members who would be willing to print out a small flyer each month containing information about each program, and post it in a location around Northborough or the surrounding towns. If you can help us with this please email:

northborough_historical_society@charter.net

Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, March 11



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.

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

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