



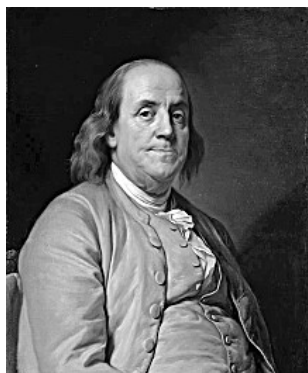
THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCXXX

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

October 2025



Next Meeting & Program: October 24, 2025. Ben Franklin and the Road to Independence. Portrayed by Tim O'Connor, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, thrice a Postmaster in America, will discuss the importance of the Post in America's growth, political discontent, revolution, and eventual freedom. Colonial letters will be shown illustrating these points in a very granular approach.

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, Historian

Northborough's Mid 20th Century Population Growth - Pt 2

As noted in my previous Hourglass article, the rapid population growth of Northborough from 1940 to 1975 (from 2,382 in 1940 to 10,561 in 1975) changed the character of the town and required significant town investments. In this article, I'll review the effects of population growth on town government, public safety and industrial development. Information in Chapter 11 of William Mulligan's book "*Northborough: A Town and its People, 1638-1975*", was used for this article. I highly recommend reading this chapter because it gives additional details about the challenges facing the town as the population exploded.

Town Government – With a population of only 2,382 in 1940, town government was run primarily with volunteers, including three members of the Board of Selectmen. It became apparent that the town needed more support than a small volunteer group to run the town as the population grew. Adding staff to help run the town started in 1957, when a secretary was hired to support the Board of Selectmen. By 1962, the town had twenty full-time paid employees. In 1968, Town Meeting voted to create a committee to draft a new town charter. In 1970, the new town charter was approved. Some of the changes included; increasing the Board of Selectmen to five; hiring a Town Administrator to conduct day-to-day administration and report to the Board of Selectmen; changing some office positions from elective to being appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The charter of 1970 is still in use today.

By the late 1960s, it was clear the town offices had outgrown the old town hall building built in 1868. A study was conducted to look at three possible options; build new, relocate into the vacant Fraser High School building on Main Street. or upgrade the current building which would have required purchasing and demolishing the properties behind it. The decision was to relocate into the two top floors of the vacant high school in 1977 where it still resides today.

Public Safety – The Fire and Police Departments were also significantly affected by the town's growth. Fire protection had been around for many years and was serviced by on-call volunteers. At the 1969 town meeting, it was proposed that a full-time fire chief and two full-time firemen be paid and on duty during daytime hours. It was not until 1973 that town meeting approved the staffing requests. In 1975, a new fire station was built on Pierce Street to accommodate the additional firemen available for twenty-four-hour protection. As

the town continued to grow, the 1975 fire station became outdated and a new fire station is currently under construction.

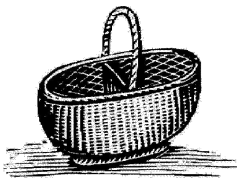
For many years a Police Chief was the only full-time member of the department. Crime never appeared to have been a serious problem before the Second World War. In 1954, an additional full-time officer was added, followed by hiring three additional full-time officers in 1959. The increased force was needed as the town was being victimized by professional criminals. Burglaries were becoming more numerous and, during the 1960s, runaways and drug problems were increasing. By 1974 the police department consisted of seventeen personnel. Although Town Meeting routinely approved new police staffing, the request for additional space was rejected.



Built in 1926, this building housed the Northborough Fire Department until the mid 1970s. It also housed the Police Department from the early 1960s to the mid 1970s. It was demolished in 2025

After many years of sharing space with the Fire Department in the old fire station on Church Street, the police headquarters was relocated into the basement of the old Fraser High School on Main Street while the upper floors were used as Town Hall. The current police station on Main Street was built in 1989.

Industrial Development – The increase in population required an increase in taxes due to the expanded need for town services such as new schools, increased water capacity, and public safety. What was clearly needed was an increase in the commercial and industrial tax base to bring in tax dollars without increasing the population and its associated needs. In 1948, a five-member zoning committee proposed new zoning and building by-laws. In 1957 an Industrial Development Commission (IDC) was established to develop a program to broaden the tax base of the town by attracting industrial and commercial development. The IDC and Planning Board identified sites for industry that would not alter the town's character or appearance. The key for the location of the industrial sites were the new interstate highways (Routes I-495 and I-290). In 1968, the first land purchases were made in the Bartlett Street Industrial Area. An additional industrial area was identified near the I-290 Solomon Pond interchange and was called the Solomon Pond Industrial Park.



Curator's
News
by Ellen Racine

A Walk Down West Main Street,
c.1970s



5 W. Main St. O'Brien's
5 & 10. 1960s.



19 W. Main St.. Arcade
Building, looking west. 1970.



27 W. Main St. Chabot
house. Demolished 1978.



31 W. Main St. Mason,
Throop, Guphill. 1978.



65 W. Main St. Pierce
house. Site of new
Fire Station.



35 W. Main St. Texaco
Gas Station.



39 W. Main St. Baird-Fawcett
house.



45 W. Main St. Bucky Rogers
Real Estate.



53 W. Main St. Stratton,
Marcoux. Bush.

Welcome New Members!

Katherine Bartlett
Thomas Conley
Carter Brannon
Sarah Sedman

Applefest

We had a very successful Applefest weekend. Between the ice cream social, the raffle and the sale of merchandise, we made a profit of \$1163. A record number of visitors passed through the Museum, and we were represented in the parade by our splendidly colonial costumed members.

A big thank you to all of those who participated at the booth, at the ice cream social, in the Museum, and in the parade.



Raffle winner Kathy Woodland with Mike
Duchesneau, who sold her the winning ticket,
claiming her \$100 worth of Lottery tickets prize

Membership

Annual Dues:

Single — \$30
Student/Senior — \$25
Family — \$55
Lifetime — \$500

Mail 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 in September each year

Next
Board of Directors
Meeting

Tuesday, November 11

If there is a red dot in the address
panel below, 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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