



# THE HOURGLASS

## NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCXXXII

Northborough Historical Society  
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

January 2026



**Next Meeting & Program: January 23, 2026. *You'll Get a Bang Out of Henry Knox.*** How did a 25-year-old bookstore owner become the hero who launched the American Revolution without firing a shot? Steven Glovsky explores the improbabilities and inconsistencies of Henry Knox's story, leading up to his undertaking the transport of urgently needed cannon in the winter of 1775 -1776.

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

### Loyalists

It is important to recognize that early in the dispute with the British authorities, there were three factions of citizenry; those who professed loyalty to the king (Loyalist/Tory), those who were critical of British authorities (Patriots/Rebels) and a significant portion that were not committed to either side (Neutrals). Over time, the Neutrals were forced to commit to one side or the other.

As time moved on from events such as; the shooting of civilians in the Boston Massacre, (*March 5, 1770*), tossing tea into Boston Harbor (*December 16, 1773*), tarring and feathering John Malcolm (January 25, 1774) to open warfare in Lexington & Concord (*April 19, 1775*) the citizenry became more antagonistic to each other's interests.



During the Revolutionary War, many loyalists were treated brutally, like the tarred and feathered man in this print by David Claypoole Johnston.

Courtesy Library of Congress

Loyalists supported the Crown for a variety of reasons:

- **Fear of Anarchy** - They were very concerned that the Patriots often followed mob behavior and violence. The thought of supporting men exhibiting such behavior was appalling. Many Loyalists feared that a successful rebellion would lead to a breakdown of law and order. The British government was seen as the legitimate and stabilizing force.

- **Personal Safety and Property** - Some colonists believed that remaining loyal was the safest choice, protecting them from raiding their homes, tar and feathering (see image), violence, harassment, and the potential seizure of their property by Patriots.
- **Economic and Professional Ties** - Professionals like clergymen, lawyers, and merchants often had livelihoods tied directly to British patronage or trade networks within the empire. They felt the Crown offered a secure economic future.
- **Duty to Uphold the Law** - Some simply believed it was their duty as British citizens to obey the laws and government, even if they disagreed with specific policies like taxation.

In 1774, a "Bond of Protection" petition was circulated that urged Loyalists to sign that they would stand firm with the British Crown and band together to protect their lives and properties from harm by Riotous and lawless Patriots. One line from the petition reads: "*We will **not** acknowledge or submit to the pretended authority of any Congresses Committee of Correspondence or other unconstitutional assembly of men, but will at the risk of our lives, if need be, oppose the forcibly exercise of all such authority*"

In June 1777, every town was required to identify loyalists. Think about this, this encouraged neighbors and family members to turn in family members and neighbors. In Northborough, Loyalists were disarmed, confined to their homes and in some cases arrested with their property confiscated. In this article I am highlighting two families where some members were Loyalists and others were Patriots.

Reverend Peter Whitney of Northborough was relentless in his support of the patriot cause. However, his father, Reverend Aaron Whitney, the minister of Petersham, Massachusetts was a strong supporter of the British Crown. In fact, Rev. Aaron was banned from preaching in Petersham due to his beliefs. Just imagine the family conflict that must have arisen from such a difference of opinion.

The Northborough family of James Eager Jr. (1720-1761) were loyalists. This included his widow Miriam (Wheeler), his sons James and John, daughter Zilpha (married to Michael Martin) and daughter Miriam (married to Ebenezer Cutler). James Eager Jr.'s widow Miriam relocated and died in Nova Scotia. His sons, James and John were delivered to the Board of War, banished from the state and had their lands confiscated and auctioned off. John claimed financial losses as a Loyalist to the British Parliament in 1784. His petition mentions he "*escaped from prison in 1777 .... and faithfully served his Majesty in the Commissary Generals Office, often did military duty in a volunteer company and was always ready and willing to risk his life in support of his maj-*

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**History Corner, continued**

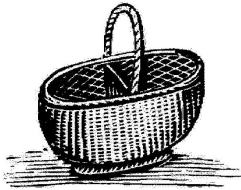
esty’s Government”. He eventually became a resident of Nova Scotia. His daughter Zilpha’s husband, Michael Martyn had their estate confiscated and auctioned off. James Eager Jr.’s daughter Miriam died in 1779. Her husband Ebenezer Cutler was a vocal opponent to the revolutionary cause which resulted in him being charged by the Northborough Committee of Correspondence as an enemy of this country and serving time in jail. Escaping jail, he found his way to Boston and served in the “Loyal American Association – Second Company” before he eventually evacuated to Nova Scotia.

Contrast this family of Eager Loyalists to their cousin Bezaleel Eager. Bezaleel married Persis Ward, a sister of Patriot General Artemas Ward of Shrewsbury. Bezaleel was an early leader of Northborough’s Committee of Correspondence and a captain in the Revolutionary War. As a member of the Committee of Correspondence, it is possible he charged his cousin Miriam’s husband, Ebenezer Cutler, as being an enemy of this country.

There were certainly other loyalist identified within Northborough. Several mentioned in Northborough history books include Thomas Billings, his son Sylvanus, and John Taylor. As Loyalists were identified, they were treated as suspects to the rebel cause.

The November 2013 Hourglass contains an article written by Bob Ellis about Loyalists in Northborough. This is the link to Bob’s article:

[https://www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/Hourglass/Hourglass\\_2013\\_11.pdf](https://www.northboroughhistoricalsociety.org/Hourglass/Hourglass_2013_11.pdf)



**Curator’s News**  
by Ellen

Our collection of framed paintings, documents and photographs is quite impressive but we still welcome Northborough related donations. Recently Brett Warren reached out to us to see if we would accept a watercolor by Bill Wallace of our former Hudson Street School. Of course!



We have artwork by other former Northborough residents: David Green, J. Thurston Marshall, Herman and Walter Pienze, Marguerite Peaslee, Al Howard, Sheldon Berlyn, Elizabeth Wadsworth, Marie Kinchla, Helen Garcia, etc. Several were involved with the Northborough Art Guild, founded in 1963 by George Carpenter and Historical Society members Dot Hunt and Priscilla Hele.

**Westborough Historical Society Event**

**Monday, FEBRUARY 2: 7pm: “Buried Treasure: Discovering Westborough’s Stone Age.”**

Archaeologist Michelle Gross describes the work and discoveries of invaluable stone tools unearthed during three archaeological digs in Westborough in the 70s and 80s. She and Professor Curtiss Hoffman discovered artifacts dating more than 8,000 years ago around Naagawoomcoom (Lake Chauncy), Assabet River headwaters (Mill Pond), and Lake Hoccomocco/Charlestown Meadows. The Natives, mainly Nipmucs or “People of the Fresh Waters,” created these stone tools for their lives in seasonal camps, and their agriculture. Admission is free and open to all. Sibley House, 13 Parkman Street, Westborough.

**Membership**

<b>Annual Dues:</b>	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

Scan QR code to donate via PayPal



**Next Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Tuesday, February 10**