



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CCCXXXV

Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

May 2026



Next Meeting & Program: May15, 2026 Before There Was a Dam. From Northborough, the way north ran straight across the Nashua River Valley through West Boylston. That all changed with the coming of the Wachusett Reservoir in 1895. Come with Paul Marrone as he takes you on a colorful tour by river, road and rail through the once beautiful and peaceful valley.

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

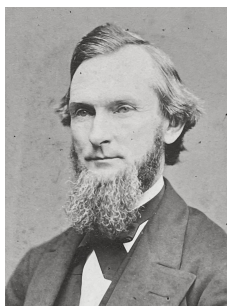
by Alex Varnes, Intern

This month's Hourglass article was researched and written by student intern Alex Varnes, with guidance from Kathy Pierce, former news writer and historian. Alex, an Algonquin Regional High School senior, began working with us in January. We have enjoyed her company and numerous accomplishments - data entry, accessioning donations, creating a showcase exhibit, and authoring a guide for a quick museum tour.

The Hildreths: They Came, They Stayed, They Prospered

Starting in 1839, the comb industry would play a big role in the history and development of Northborough. Aside from the Josiah Proctor family, there was another prominent family in Northborough known for their combs. The Hildreth family came from England in the 17th century, with the first recorded members being Richard and Sarah, who would be followed by ten generations as of the modern day, with the latest recorded family member being born in 1948, according to a printed family tree from the archive. It is unclear whether this descendant has had children. Nine members of the Hildreth family are buried in the Howard Street Cemetery, just a short drive from the Historical Society. Of all the members of this large family, three in particular draw attention, be it for their prospering businesses or perhaps their service to the community.

Milo Hildreth was the owner of a company fittingly called Milo Hildreth & Co., which won at least one award in its existence. He came to Northborough sometime in the 1840s and started his business with Abraham Seaver in 1853, making goods out of tortoise shell and horn. Tortoise shell was expensive, while horn was a fraction of the price, and could be painted to look like shell. Shell was imported from the East Indies, and horn was imported from Texas. The importation costs



Milo Hildreth

might have contributed to the price of shell. Milo had an office in Boston, but manufactured products in Northborough, and one of his shops was located at 89 Main Street, the site of the recently closed Stone's motorcycle shop. Specific goods included combs, cuff pins, ear-drops, buttons, bracelets, cigarette cases, and a few other items. There was plenty to choose from if you were shopping, and presently



Frances Hildreth

the museum has a generous collection of Hildreth's creations on display, and stored in the archive. Milo's competitors included Columbus Eames, Whitaker and Proctor, and Walter Farwell. Aside from his business, which was quite successful, Milo was a trustee of Lyman State Reform School, and a believer in prohibi-

tion, refusing to take part in any smoking or drinking. He also donated \$250 to the establishment of the first public library in 1866. He and his wife, Frances, had seven children, according to published records, and lived at 64 Main Street in a Greek Revival home.



The Hildreth Home
64 Main Street

One of their children was Mary E. Hildreth, the eldest daughter who was regarded as a patient yet energetic woman who enjoyed serving the community. Mary was a teacher and a devout Christian who died young from Tuberculosis, also known as consumption, on October 17th, 1889 at age 34. It was said that even as she suffered from the sickness for months, she did not complain, and showed unwavering gratitude for those who helped care for her. While it is typical for funeral booklets to exaggerate a person's goodness, it seems that many people were genuinely fond of Mary.



Mary Hildreth
Funeral Booklet

Moses Hildreth, Milo's brother, owned a local fishery. He was known to be fond of trout, and as such

(continued on page 2)

had thousands of them in his collection, ranging from adults to babies who had just hatched. Moses and his wife, Lurenia, whose name has been spelled in various ways, had four children together, two of which tragically died in infancy. Moses and Milo were business partners for several years, and as such both names are listed on a business card in our collection.

The Hildreth family influenced Northborough in their own way, much like many other town families.

While they might not be as well-known as the Proc-tors, they are still notable for their contributions to the life and history of the town. Milo participated in politics and business, Moses participated in business but still took time for his passions, and Mary had a kind heart that was not soon forgotten. Even though there is little information on the rest of the family, I am sure they each had their own special qualities that made them Hildreths.

Proposed by-law changes to be voted on at the Historical Society Annual Meeting on May 15, 2026

By law regarding welcoming new members

This change is to bring the by-law into compliance with current procedures

Current

ARTICLE IV - ELECTED OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, TRUSTEES, NEWSLETTER EDITOR, OTHER PERSONNEL, AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Section 1

A. President

- 4. Shall send a letter welcoming a new member to the activities of the Society, and enclosing a copy of the Bylaws and any other orientation material.*

Proposed

D. Membership Secretary

7. Shall welcome new members and guide them to resources for more Society information.

By law regarding approval of expenditures

This change is to increase the amount of an expenditure that can be made without the approval of the full membership, and give the Board the authority to approve expenditures up to that amount

Current under Finance Committee

ARTICLE IV - ELECTED OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, TRUSTEES, NEWSLETTER EDITOR, OTHER PERSONNEL, AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Section 6. Standing Committees

H. Finance

The Finance Committee shall:

- d. Review any requests for expenditure of funds in excess of \$500, and make a recommendation to the Board of Directors on the worthiness of the expenditure.*
- e. Ensure that any request for large expenditure of funds, approved by the Board under 2.d. above, is presented to the membership for their approval/disapproval.*

Current Under Treasurer

ARTICLE IV - ELECTED OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, TRUSTEES, NEWSLETTER EDITOR, OTHER PERSONNEL, AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Section 1

E. Treasurer

1. Shall receive, hold and pay out all the Society monies subject to the order of the Society Board of Directors.

Proposed

1. Shall receive, hold and pay out all the Society monies subject to the order of the Society Board of Directors. Expenditures over \$1000 must be referred to the Board for approval. Expenditures over \$2000 must be presented to the membership for approval. Budgeted expenditures and emergency expenditures are excluded from this provision.
2. Shall ensure that any request for expenditure of more than \$2000, approved by the Board under E. 1 above, is presented to the membership for their approval/disapproval.

Text in italics to be deleted.

Nominating Committee Report

Underlined names are submitted to be voted on at the May 15, 2026 Annual Meeting

Position	Person	Term Expires
President	<u>Ken Bennett</u>	2027
Vice President	<u>Rob Van Buren</u>	2027
Directors	Janice Ferenchick	2027
	Mike Duchesneau	2027
	Chuck Liljestrand	2028
	Mark Bashour	2028
	<u>Rick Ferenchick</u>	2029
	<u>Jack Bakstran</u>	2029
Treasurer	Nadine Proctor	2027
Membership Secretary	Jean Langley	2027
Recording Secretary	Hilary Wilson	2027
Museum Trustees	Jane Fletcher	2027
	Kathy Pierce	2027
	Lynne Derosier	2028
	Allyn Phelps Jr	2028
	<u>Linda Corbin</u>	2029
	<u>Rhonda VanBuren</u>	2029
Publicity	Zenya Molnar	2027
	Alex Molnar	2027
	Laura Ziton	2028
Hospitality	Marcia Parsneau	2027
	Carolyn Squillante	2028
	<u>Ingrid Molnar</u>	2029
Program	Suzanne Williams	2027
	Arlene Marshall	2028
	<u>Marcia Mills</u>	2029
Property	Rob Van Buren	2027
	Peter Stone	2027
	<u>Open</u>	2029
Kitchen	Marcia Mills	2027
	Debra Bennett	2028
	<u>Rebecca Shaw</u>	2029
Legislative	Hilary Wilson	2027
	Michael Mills	2028
	<u>Carol Bostock</u>	2029
Nominating	Mike Duchesneau	2027
	<u>Ellen Racine</u>	2027
	<u>Lois Smith</u>	2027
Ways and Means	Marie Spence	2027
	John Northgraves	2027
	Mark Bashour	2028

Submitted by the Nominating Committee
Mike Duchesneau ▪ Ernie Racine ▪ Rhonda Van Buren

The Annual Meeting will be held on
Friday, May 15, 2026.

Only members who have paid dues for the 2025 - 2026 Society year may vote at this Annual Meeting. If you are not sure if your dues are current, please email Membership Secretary Jean Langley.
MembershipSecretary@NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

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

Northborough Historical Society Pizza Party

The pizza party was held on May 6th.
Vast quantities of salad, pizza, cake and fruit punch disappeared!

There was much discussion at the red cup raffle table on how many tickets to put in which cups.

A good time was had by everyone, all while raising funds for the Society!

Thank you to all who made it possible.



Ready for the Influx



Red Cup Raffle Prizes



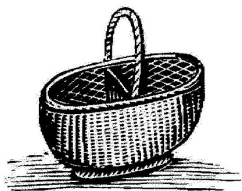
Bob and Jean Displaying the Menu



Alex Selling Raffle Tickets



Serious Pizza Eating in Progress



**Curator's
News**
by Ellen Racine

SAVE THE DATE:

Saturday, June 27th at 1:00 - Gavin Klein will perform an Organ Recital for us. Gavin is a recent organ scholar graduate from Holy Cross and has quite a busy schedule. He plans to continue his organ studies at Yale this autumn. A free-will offering is welcome.



May 10th is Mother's Day and because of a shortage of museum hosts and a longing to spend time with our families, the Museum will be Closed on that Sunday. We are still in need of a few more hosts for May 31, June 7th, June 14, June 21 and June 28. You will be assigned with another member and provided with instruction. Please consider helping out. We like to have three hosts at each opening.

Happy Mothers Day!



COLONIAL FAIRE

Commemorating Northborough's Independence vote of June 3, 1776

**Saturday May 30th
10am-3pm**

ELLSWORTH-McAFEE PARK

(Rain date: Sunday, May 31st)

Period Demonstrations ★ Colonial Re-enactments ★ Artisan Crafts ★ Food

sponsored by



Northborough
Revolution 250

Membership Renewal

Society membership dues are due in September. Payments can be made, by cash or check, at the welcome table at the Friday, May 15th meeting.

► 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

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

Scan QR code
to donate via
PayPal



**Next
Board of Directors
Meeting
Tuesday, May 12**

Northborough Historical Society, 52 Main Street, Northborough

www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org



Dear Friends and Neighbors:

As spring begins and we near the end of the 2025-2026 program year, I hope you are proud of what you have made possible. Members and supporters like you are critical to preserving and celebrating the history of Northborough. We could not do it without your generous support. Now, I hope you will continue to be part of what we can accomplish together.

With your donation, you are:

Providing free public programs to hundreds of people; programs that engage, entertain, and educate through explorations of topics related to local, regional, and national history

Making the extensive Museum collection accessible to people of all ages, a collection that features artifacts dating from 13,000 years ago to the present

Ensuring that research in the Archives can continue, bringing to light the many facets of Northborough history that are saved and catalogued. The archive contains more than 6000 artifacts, many of them digitized, that are available to the public

You are ensuring that all of these critical features of the Northborough Historical Society can continue today and tomorrow for all generations.

As the cost of program speakers rises, your gift ensures that we can continue to provide free programming to all. As oil and electricity costs increase, you are keeping the Museum and Archives open – also free – to the public.

We ask to give what you can to support an organization you care deeply about. All gifts – no matter the size – keep the programming and Museum and Archives free and accessible to all.

Share your **pride in Northborough's historic people, places, inventions, arts, and culture.** Share your passion for local history. We hope you will join us in making a gift to the Northborough Historical Society.

And I hope to see you at one of our upcoming programs:

March 27, 2026: The Legacy of Inventor Thomas Blair

April 24, 2026: How Isaiah Thomas Brought the Revolution to Worcester

May 15, 2026: Before There Was a Dam

With deep gratitude,

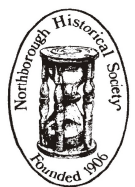
Ken Bennett

Ken Bennett, President, Northborough Historical Society

Scan to donate
via PayPal



Thank you for your generous support of the Northborough Historical Society. Your contribution will help the Society to continue its mission of preserving and sharing Northborough's history



Name: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Please send me more information about membership, and the Society's programs

☐

I would like to donate: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ Other amount \$ _____

Please mail this completed form, along with your check made payable to
Northborough Historical Society, to the address below.

Northborough Historical Society Appeal HG, P.O. Box 661, Northborough, MA 01532

Donations may also be made at our website: www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org/donate.html

The Northborough Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.