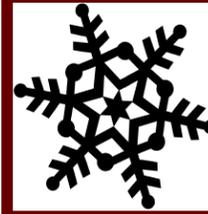




Quaboag Historical Society
 PO Box 635
 West Brookfield, MA 01585

Winter 2012



Quaboag Historical Society

Quaboag Historical Society Winter Newsletter

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy. ~William Blake

President's Message

Greetings Everyone and Happy New Year! Hope this newsletter finds you all well and enjoying this rather strange winter. My daffodil bulbs are sticking out of the ground which I have to say is a bit unsettling being that it's only February but after all the snow we had last year, I shouldn't complain. Anyway, this year marks the 200th anniversary of North Brookfield and in light of that, I would like to dedicate this newsletter to that beautiful town and its residents. The town of North Brookfield has a rich and varied history and has been the home of many distinguished people. So, I hope you enjoy what I gathered for this month's newsletter and I hope to see many of you at the annual meeting in April. Take Care....

Amy Dugas, Co-President

Upcoming Event:

The Quaboag Historical Society Annual Luncheon will be held on April 29, 2012 from 12-4 at the Salem Cross Inn. The speaker this year will be Patricia Perry from Sneak Peek Productions. Her interactive program, entitled "Unsinkable", brings the audience face to face with one of history's most talked about events- the sinking of the Titanic. Here's the "trailer"....

April 15, 2012 marks the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic. How much do you really know about the Titanic? If your knowledge comes from movies or romantic books, you might be in for a surprise. For instance, it wasn't just the iceberg that helped to sink the Titanic. But don't let the tragic end of the world's largest ocean liner overshadow its extravagance. Travel with Sneak Peek aboard the luxurious floating palace that was the Titanic. Fair warning, though. Each audience member will become one of the Titanic's passengers or crew. Some will survive and some will not.....

How fun is that? Lots! We hope to see many of you there.....

Inside this issue:

| | |
|--|---|
| Museum Update | 2 |
| Jedediah Foster Chair Appraisal | 2 |
| Some Distinguished Men of North Brookfield | 3 |
| North Brookfield Reminiscences | 4 |
| Brief History of North Brookfield Savings Bank | 5 |
| Early North Brookfield Land Grants | 6 |
| Pictures From the Past | 7 |

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Museum Update

The museum is currently closed for the winter and will re-open in April. We acquired a new set of bookcases from the library recently and will be able to use them to display more of the historic photos framed for the 350th. If anyone would be interested in visiting the museum during the winter, you can contact me at 508-867-5428 to set up an appointment.

Board Member Needed

The Executive Board is looking for a volunteer to take over the Recording Secretary position. All that is required is attending our monthly meetings, taking notes and presenting them to the Board at the following meeting. Contact Amy Dugas or Bill Jankins if interested.

Jedediah Foster Chair Appraisal at OSV

A while back, Ruth Lyon (pictured) informed the Board that OSV would be hosting an event where folks could bring in their unique antiques to be appraised by Stephen Fletcher (pictured), one of the appraisers on the popular program, Antiques Road Show. The Board thought this would be an excellent opportunity to have a professional look at the Jedediah Foster since we know so little about it. Ruth graciously offered to attend the event with the chair (as Bill and I were unable to) and report back on Mr. Fletcher's assessment. The following is a summary of what Ruth learned at the appraisal. Thanks to both Rob and Ruth for doing this for the Society.



"It seemed to me that, of the numerous items displayed, the Foster chair was among the most impressive; I believe Fletcher agreed. However, he gave equally serious attention to an ironstone pitcher or a Currier and Ives print.

Everyone who had registered to offer an item for appraisal had been asked to submit a photograph in advance. Those photographs were, as the items were displayed for appraisal, shown on a screen. Then, my big moment, the Foster chair was placed on the dais, and I was invited to come forward to discuss it. I briefly mentioned the Quaboag Plantation history and Foster's place in it and in Massachusetts history; I then described the provenance of the chair; that it had been in the Foster family until it was presented to QHS by John Foster.

Fletcher examined it, just as we've seen him perform similar examinations on television. He described it as a Flemish Chair, ca 1690s, probably from France or Belgium, possibly England or Holland. He declared it wonderful in that it bore original paint and displayed great Flemish scroll feet, carved cresting and stretcher, and stretcher and back turnings. He examined the back and the seats carefully, noting that there appeared to be three seats extant, one of which might be original in part. He noted the leather covering on the seat and the back. He said, considering the fact that the leather was not original to the chair, it might be a good idea to have the chair examined by a "chair expert" to determine whether anything further could be determined as to the original seats and back, and even to consider professional restoration. He said he could provide the name of such a consultant should the QHS wish to take that step."

Pictures From the Past



Above: Downtown North Brookfield in winter, c. 1905

Below: Welcome Home Parade and Celebration for World War I Veterans, September 1919



Early Land Grants in North Brookfield

(Excerpts taken from *North Brookfield Land Grants, 1887*, Charles E. Jenks)

The earliest recorded grants of lots date in 1687; and the grants continued from time to time till 1720-1721, when most of the remaining lands were apportioned to the inhabitants. The description of these granted lots is very imperfect, the bounds usually running from one marked tree or heap of stones to another, without magnetic bearings or often without distances. The first actual survey, with use of a compass, appears to have been made about 1767, by Rufus Putnam. The meadows on the brooks were among the earliest grants, and often in small quantities, and little attempt has been made to mark such boundaries. The roads are very numerous and crooked. The rule followed appears to have been to give every settler who would build a house "a way to get to mill and meeting".

Let it be noted that the earliest grants in Brookfield township, made at the Re-Settlement of the place in 1686, lie within the limits of North Brookfield.

A Few of the Early Grants

Matchuk Meadows: The larger part of these meadows was granted-mostly in small lots-to the first settlers, before 1673. The southerly part of this lot came into possession of Joseph Ayres, who built a house before 1720. His gifts and purchases embraced most of the land in town lying southwest of his house. He and his son William, and great-grandson William, held this estate till the death of the latter in 1835.

John Pynchon, Sen.: 1674, "Pynchon's Farm" is named in the earliest notices of Quabaug, and was granted near the beginning of the First Settlement of the place. A description of the lot is attested as follows: "A True Copy, extracted from the Records for Quabogue, and taken out of that Book where the Grants and Records of Quabogue, alias Brookfield lands are entered while said Book was in Mr. Pynchon's Custody as recorder thereof. This done this 5th day of November, 1674-John Pynchon, Recorder." The "Farm" comprised of 50 acres of upland. The Grant appears to be conveyed in 1742 to Joseph Dwight and by him sold in 1744 to Elisha Dwight, and called in the deed "Pynchon's Matchuk Farm." Elisha Dwight sold 1757 to Daniel Gilbert.

- **Joseph Woolcott:** Granted 1687, and soon built upon. This was the scene of the murder of Woolcott's wife and two children, by the Indians July 27, 1693.
- **John Woolcott, Jr.:** Granted 1687; a grist mill was built on the lot before 1717 and the house standing was built as early as 1723.
- **Thomas Gilbert:** Granted 1710 to 1721. Described as "at Tower Hill".
- **Joseph Moses:** Granted 1714, and covers a considerable part of what is now the Centre village.

Abraham Ayres: Granted 1714. Within this grant were fifteen acres of meadow belonging to Sergt. John Ayres, deceased, John Younglove, deceased, and John Warner, deceased. The lot was conveyed 1727 to Gershom Keyes, to Samuel Porter the same year and to William Ayres in 1731. The first schoolhouse in old Brookfield was located in the south-west part of the grant.

Hope you enjoyed the newsletter. We are always open to articles, stories or pictures submitted by members for inclusion in the next newsletter. Have something interesting to share? You can email it to amydugas@charter.net or mail it to Amy Dugas, P.O. Box 54, West Brookfield, 01585

Some Distinguished Men of North Brookfield

(Taken from *A Historical Paper*, written by Mrs. Emma F. Bates and read before the Peter Harwood Chapter, D.A.R., July, 1920)

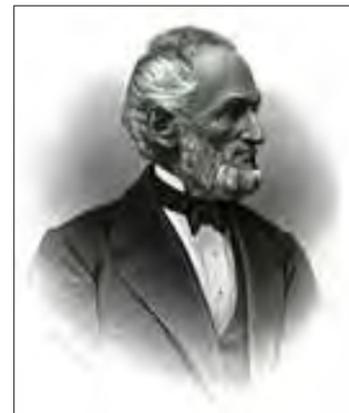
North Brookfield is distinguished for having been the home of several men of international reputations. **General Rufus Putnam**, Washington's most distinguished engineer, made his home here for 27 years, being a citizen of the town during the Revolutionary War, and while with General Washington and the American Army. I must allude to the family of **John Waite**. He came to North Brookfield in 1746 and settled near Wickaboag pond but soon removed to a large house on Foster's hill, which was on the great post road from Boston to Albany, and opened an inn which became widely known and very popular, and the name of the old Waite tavern was a pleasantly familiar one to travelers for many years.

Honorable Amasa Walker lived in North Brookfield most of his life. His writings on political economy and finance were published in many editions, and in many countries and languages, and while a member of Congress, his speeches on finance moved the issue of compound interest notes in a bill, which became a law.

There was also **Deacon Tyler Batcheller** who did more to promote the growth and prosperity of the town than any other one man. In 1819, he established what grew to be the largest boot and shoe industry in the world, giving employment at one time to most of the people of the town. Another resident the greater part of his life was **Charles Adams, Jr.**, who took a prominent part in state politics for some years. He was a representative to the General Court several times, State Senator three times, a member of the Executive Council several years, and State Treasurer for five years. **General Francis A. Walker** was born in North Brookfield, and spent his early childhood and youth here. He was graduated at Amherst College; was a brilliant officer in the Civil War and during his service was wounded, taken prisoner, and several times promoted. He was commissioner of revenue in charge of the Bureau of Statistics at Washington in 1869; superintendent of the census in 1870 and 1871; commissioner for the Indians in 1872; Professor of Political Economy and History in the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale and President of the Institute of Technology in Boston from 1881 until his death in 1887. He ranked as the greatest political economist of his time and received more honorary degrees from universities, both here and in Europe than any other man in the United States.

I could mention other residents, whose lives exerted a wide-spread influence for good, far and beyond the borders of this community such as **Dr. Snell** and my own dear and honored father, **Charles Duncan**. It has been the influence of such men that has given North Brookfield the enviable reputation that it has ever maintained.

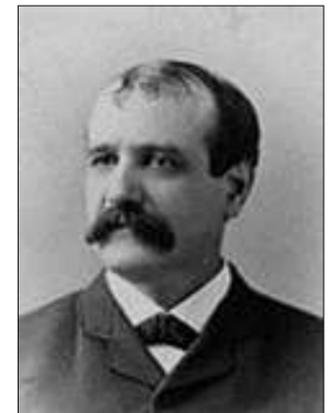
Amasa Walker



Gen. Rufus Putnam



General F. A. Walker



North Brookfield Reminiscences

(Taken from a paper read by Mrs. Martha B. (Nye) Bishop at a meeting of the Appleton Club, The North Brookfield Journal, May, 1918)

- The North Brookfield Public Library was first opened to the public on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 26, 1879, in rooms fitted for it in the Walker block. The present building was erected in 1894 and was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Erasmus Haston. It was dedicated in September of that year with an address by the late Senator, Hon. George F. Hoar of Worcester.
- In 1864, the first historical society in North Brookfield (and one of the first in the state) was organized with Hon. Amasa Walker as president. The Quaboag Historical Society was formed in 1864 with Robert Batcheller as president, and he continued at its head for five years, when he resigned, giving a fine address at Brookfield.
- Old Home Week was celebrated in 1902 and invitations were sent to as many of our former residents as could be located. Appropriate union services were held in the Congregational Church on Sunday. Monday evening there was a general illumination of all the buildings and homes. Tuesday the bells were rung for an hour at sunrise, there was a reception at the town hall, followed by a big New England dinner in what was the skating rink on School Street, dancing in the town hall in the evening.
- There were delightful choir parties given every winter for many years.
- Ezra D. Batcheller gave wonderful fine fruit parties at his pleasant home on Main Street where the library now stands, to partake of a feast of his choice grapes-Delawares, Concord, Dianas and Isabellas, as well as delicious pears. His gardens will be remembered for their wealth of beautiful azaleas, daffodils, hawthorns, roses, tulips, and later sweet peas, asters, dahlias and verbenas enjoyed by

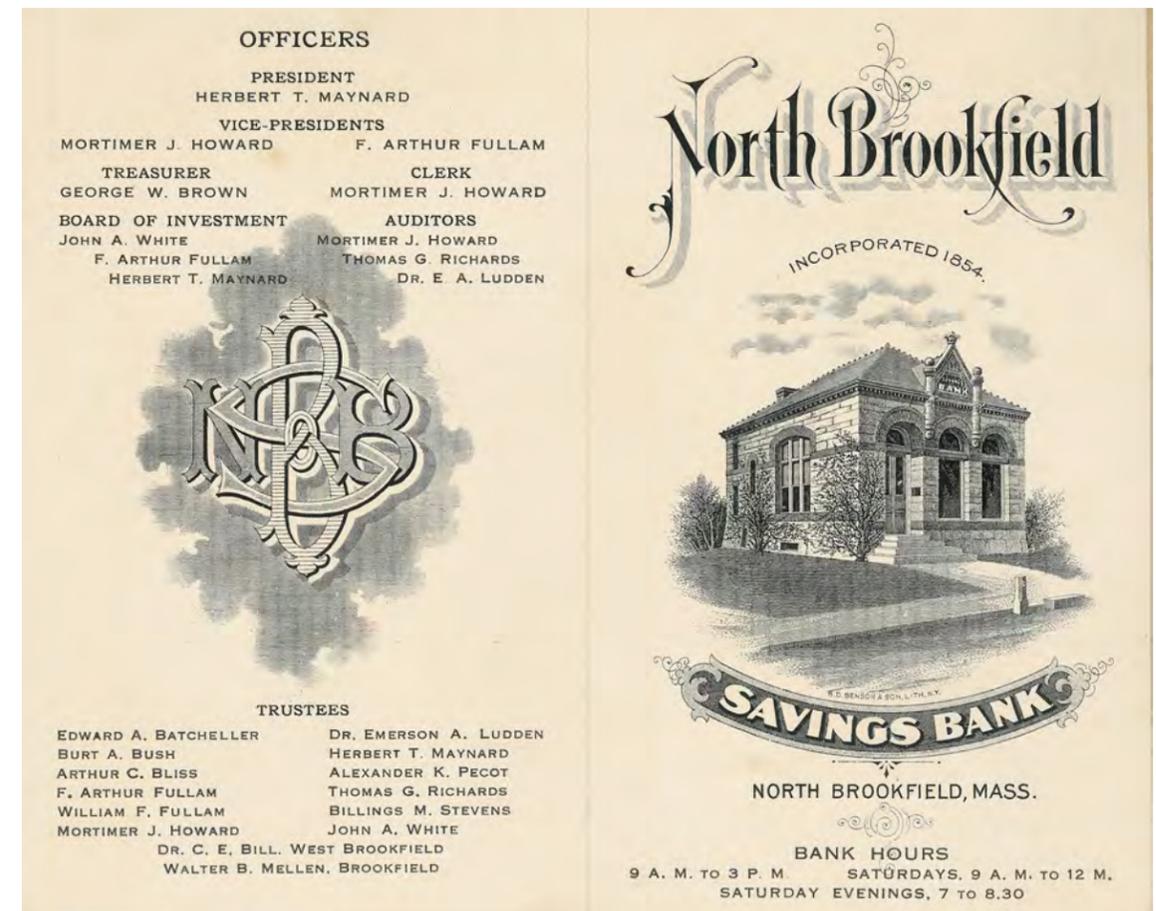


Haston Library-North Brookfield

Brief History of North Brookfield Savings Bank

(Taken from a paper read by Mrs. Martha B. (Nye) Bishop at a meeting of the Appleton Club, The North Brookfield Journal, May, 1918)

The North Brookfield Savings Bank was incorporated in 1854, in the organization of which Prof. Amasa Walker took a very active part and served as its president for the first nine years. He was followed by Hon. Charles Adams, Jr., for 18 years, Mr. S.S. Edmands for 7; Charles E. Jenks, Esq. for one; Mr. Wm. H. Montague for 5, and George R. Hamant, the present incumbent, 23 years. For the first 9 years, it was kept in a store in the town house with Mr. Hiram Knight as treasurer. But the burning of the building in 1852 necessitated a change and it was taken to the home of Hon. Bonum Nye, who resigned as vice-president and was elected treasurer with a salary of \$50, semi-annually. It was open for business at all hours, from early morning until late in the evening, and on quarterly days a large proportion of the men waited until evening before coming and the room was crowded until very late, leaving no time to balance accounts, etc. until the treasurer protested against the evening service. He felt it was unsafe to handle so much money at such late hours. This suggestion was followed by a heated discussion, the president maintaining that the bank was for the benefit of the working people who should be accommodated. No decision was agreed upon that evening, leaving the treasurer in a very unhappy state of mind. Early the next morning, a note from the president stated that upon more mature reflection, he withdrew his objection, feeling that the suggestion made by the treasurer was a wise one. A vote was passed limiting the hours from 9 to 12 a.m. and from 1 to 4 p.m. The bank remained in the same spot until the new building was erected in 1893. (The bank as you know is currently on a lot next to Hannaford Market).



Early annual report cover of North Brookfield Savings Bank.