

HAPPY 400th BIRTHDAY

Year's worth of events honor America's first poet

By Sally Applegate
Correspondent

Anne Bradstreet turns 400 next year.

Actually, she died in 1672 at the age of 60, but North Andover is ready to spend a year celebrating the 400th anniversary of the birth of its first heroine.

Born in England in 1612, Anne Dudley Bradstreet became America's first published poet.

She and her family came to America in 1630 on the *Arabella*, whose captain, the Rev. John Winthrop, would later become the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

North Andover poet Karen Kline calls Bradstreet the "founding mother of both Boston and Cambridge," since Bradstreet was the first person to set foot off the British ship.

"The settlers landed at the foot of Prince Street in the North End on Sept. 17, 1630 and founded Boston," said Kline. "She would never see her beloved England again. In December they crossed the Charles River and founded New Towne, now known as Cambridge."

Bradstreet, also named America's first Poet Laureate, will be honored during 2012 in a series of events sponsored by the Friends of Anne Bradstreet Foundation.

How did North Andover come to claim Bradstreet as its own?

Bradstreet and her husband, Simon, would move from Cambridge north to Ipswich in 1638, a settlement that reminded her of England.

"This was the best time of her life," said Kline. "She enjoyed the environment and the community, and each home had its own library."

She and Simon moved again, to Andover, where they remained until her death.



Actress Susan Lenoe, in character as poet Anne Bradstreet, reads from Bradstreet's poetry at the memorial stone erected to honor the nation's first Poet Laureate. WICKED LOCAL PHOTO BY NICOLE GOODHUE-BOYD

It was during her time in Andover – which then encompassed the area where North Andover is today – that she began to write poetry.

Bradstreet, a lover of books and knowledge in a time when women were not regularly educated nor expected to have their own opinions, did not live to see most of her work published.

As such, she might find it odd to have an entire year of events planned in her honor, including the creation of a North Andover High School Academic Hall of Fame, into which she will be the first inductee.

A large group of people has been collaborating on what Kline calls “the Anne Plan” for nearly two years, including Ed Wang, former Local Cultural Council chairman for North Andover and Anna Choi-Wright and Linda McDonald, both council members.

Merrimack College Vice President Linda Murphy, Professors Michael Bell, Gordon Mackenzie and Debra Michaels and School of Education Dean Dan Butin “have all been wonderfully supportive” said Kline, as have North Andover residents Laura Gifford, Nella Lush and Phil DeCologero.

Kline said planners will continue to come up with additional ways to honor Bradstreet in 2012.

2012 events honoring Anne Bradstreet

Fire and Ice A festive free evening beginning at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 1 (New Year’s Day). The Friends of Anne Bradstreet Foundation plan a bonfire, songs and poetry at Smolak Farms at 316 S. Bradford St. Anne Bradstreet (actress Susan Lenoe) and Robert Frost (portrayed by a yet-to-be-determined actor) will read their poetry, including Frost’s “Fire and Ice.” Email valleyofthepoets@gmail.com to learn more

Documentary Gordon College plans a documentary (The Life of Anne Dudley Bradstreet) produced with and filmed at Salem Pioneer Village (a 1630s recreation in Salem, Mass.) and produced by Kristina Stevik

Musical collaboration Dorothy Lamb of Harvard University, the North Andover High School Chorus and others plan a musical production.

The Massachusetts Poetry Festival Bradstreet will be honored with programs during the fourth annual event in Salem, Mass., in May. An exhibit by North Andover children of poems they have written is planned in conjunction with the festival, and will be shown the weekend of April 20 to 22.

Stevens Library Several programs, some for children, are in the planning stage, including “Poetry in Bloom!” to be displayed throughout the building. “Poetry in Bloom!” may also be done at the North Parish Church in the Old Center.

Barkfest and Beyond (Sheepshearing Edition) A new program, 400 Years of Connection – Dogs, Horses and Sheep, Then and Now, will be presented on the North Andover Common. The May 2012 program focuses on extensive research showing how animals were used then and how they’ve evolved over centuries to now become therapists to humans.

ACTT Partnering with the Merrimack College School of Education and North Andover elementary schools, this local children’s arts program will also offer summer programs for local children, called Anne’s Kids on the Common.

Trails & Sails With support of the Essex Heritage Foundation, the September event that celebrates recreation opportunities in Essex County will include Bradstreet events.

Academic Hall of Fame North Andover High School plans to unveil an Academic Hall of Fame to complement the existing Sports Hall of Fame. Bradstreet will be its first inductee.

Symposium at Merrimack College Planned for late September or early October, symposium is expected to include readings, musical performances and papers presented by leading area scholars.