



Summer 2018

# Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

[WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG](http://WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG)

## SOUTH SCITUATE'S NICHOLS BROTHERS —A CIVIL WAR MYSTERY

by Chad Forman

There are twenty-four soldiers and sailors listed on the Civil War Memorial in the center of Norwell. They are the men from South Scituate (now Norwell) who died in the service of our country during the war.

Two brothers, Addison and Elias Nichols, are among the twenty-four listed. *However, should there only be twenty-three names?*

Addison F. Nichols was a nineteen-year-old farmer when he enlisted in the 45<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Militia (also known as the Cadet Regiment because of the high number of Boston Cadets who joined it) on September 15, 1862. He was mustered into Company G on September 26, 1862 along with ten other townsmen.

The Cadet Regiment was part of General Foster's expedition in North Carolina. Company G served mostly guard duty at Fort Macon and saw no combat during its time of service. Addison was mustered out on July 7, 1863.



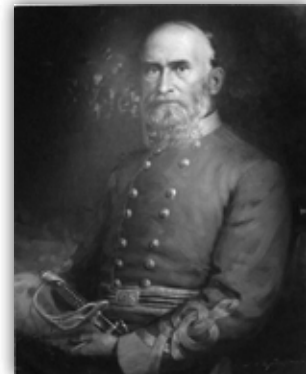
*(left) Addison Nichols' pocket watch (which was on him at the time of his death) was recently shown to attendees at a Historical Society presentation on the South Scituate Civil War soldiers.*

Perhaps lured back into service due to patriotism, adventure, or bounty money, Addison re-enlisted five months later into the 58<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Militia and served in

Company K. This would become a fatal decision, as Addison was struck during the Battle of Petersburg (Virginia) on June 26, 1864 and lay dead on the battlefield.

Addison's older brother, Elias O. Nichols, was a blacksmith by trade. He enlisted on August 4, 1862 and was mustered into Company G of the 38<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Militia on August 20, 1862.

In the early morning of October 19, 1864 at Cedar Creek (Virginia), a surprise attack on the 38<sup>th</sup> led by Confederate General Jubal Early left five Union soldiers dead, 14 wounded, and 35 captured.



*Confederate General Jubal Early (left) captured Elias Nichols in Cedar Creek, Virginia. Later in the war, Early refused to believe the Confederacy had lost and never surrendered after the Confederate defeat.*

Elias Nichols found himself as a prisoner of war, and would eventually make his way to a prison camp in Salisbury, North Carolina. In his book *A Narrative History of South Scituate/Norwell*, Joseph Merritt states that Elias Nichols was "taken prisoner and never heard from." The 38<sup>th</sup> Regimental History notes that Corporal Nichols was "never heard from." And the publication *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors* states that there was "no further record."

*(continued on page 5)*

### DIRECTORS & OFFICERS

Wendy Bawabe, President  
William Slattery, Secretary  
Robert Pashkowsky, Treasurer

### Board of Directors

Sarah Jane Baker  
Chad Forman  
Marybeth Shea  
Joan Vermette  
Janet Watson

### CONTACTING US

The Norwell Historical Society  
P.O. Box 693  
Norwell, MA 02061  
781-659-1888  
[www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org)

### MUSEUM & LIBRARY HOURS

The Jacobs Farmhouse is open by appointment only. Please contact the Society for further information or to schedule a tour.

The Norwell Historical Society Library at the Norwell Middle School (328 Main Street) is open on Wednesdays from 2:00 to 3:00 during the school year or by appointment.

The Norwell Historical Society Archives Center on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Sparrell School is open by appointment only.

The purpose of this Society shall be: a.) to plan and arrange for the promotion of knowledge about the Town of Norwell by discussion, research, meetings and publications; b.) to collect, solicit and preserve documents, manuscripts, charts, maps, records, photographs, relics, and items of local interest; c.) to arrange, index, catalog and file/maintain such material for use by the members of the Norwell Historical Society and other interested parties; d.) to work with and cooperate with other entities, groups, organizations, and individuals directly and indirectly.

# THE NORTH RIVER HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION— GONE (FOR NOW), BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

by Janet Watson

*The Norwell Historical Society is participating in a collaboration with Pembroke, Hanover, Scituate, and Marshfield Historical Societies to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the erection of the shipyard plaques along the North River by the North River Historical Association. One of the proposals for commemoration is to place additional plaques for shipyards that weren't included in the original effort in 1919. Also proposed is a centennial celebration of the shipyard history during the Summer of 2019. Caleb Estabrooks, who lives on the site of the Barstow Shipyard in Hanover, has been instrumental in organizing the endeavor and hopes to revitalize the North River Historical Association.*

In 1871 the *Helen M. Foster*, the last large ship built on the North River, was launched, ending the era of shipbuilding on the river that had lasted over 200 years.

In 1918 a group of prominent businessmen under the leadership of Luther Little of Marshfield formed the North River Historical Association to ensure that the history of the shipyards was not lost. The minutes of the first meeting are documented in the records of the Association found in the Archives of the Norwell Historical Society:

*“On December five, 1918 Messrs. Little, Sylvester, Bancroft, Dix and Hathaway met at the Exchange Club, Boston, Mass. and formed without charter, constitution or by laws, the North River Historical Association for the definite purpose of locating the sites of various shipyards formerly in operation along the North River, procuring and placing on those sites suitable tablets or markers, and securing the necessary funds to purchase same.”*



*(above) The North River shipyard plaques were originally erected in 1919 by the North River Historical Association.*

World War I had recently ended and America had emerged as a world leader. In the letter to prospective members, the Society wrote, “There is every indication that American shipping and shipbuilding is about to come into its own and it appears highly appropriate at this time that some movement be inaugurated to commemorate these sites.... If neglected, their location may be lost forever.”

The founding group expanded by one member to form an Executive Committee to carry out their mission.

Luther Little, president, grew up on the family homestead in the area of Seaview in Marshfield. Luther's interest in the North River is not surprising—he kept boats at Little's Creek on the North River for many years. His grandfather, Captain Luther Little, was a sailor during the Revolutionary War and later a merchant marine captain. Luther had other ancestors who lived and worked on the River.

J.S. Hathaway, Secretary of the Association, was the well-known manager of the New England branch of the White Motor Company (maker of White trucks) with headquarters at 930 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. Hathaway had a home at Rexhame Beach and hosted many of the meetings. In February 1919 he wrote to Luther Little, “As you know, general



*(left) Hugh Bancroft summered in Cohasset and was Vice President of the North River Historical Association when he wasn't running the Wall Street Journal.*

Prohibition has almost arrived but in the meantime, all drinks and cigars are most decidedly on 'yours truly'.”

Hugh Bancroft, Vice President of the Association, was a wealthy lawyer and newspaper publisher married to heiress Jane Barron. The newspapers he published were the *Wall Street Journal* and *Barron's Weekly*. He was principal owner of Dow-Jones & Company. The Bancrofts lived in Boston and had an estate in Cohasset.

Alfred Loring Lincoln, member of the Executive Committee of the North River Historical

Association, was director of the Huette Shoe Company in Weymouth. He lived in Hingham.

Roger S. Dix, member of the Executive Committee, was a wholesale merchant who lived in Brookline in the early 1900's but was living in Hingham in the 1940 census.

Edmund Q. Sylvester, another member of the Executive Committee, was the son of Edmund Sylvester who owned the Sylvester Tack Factory in Hanover. Edmund graduated from MIT's School of Architecture in 1892 and worked for the architectural firm Hartwell and Richardson until he opened his own office. Sylvester's work focused largely on church buildings, but he offered his expertise in designing the shipyard plaques.

*(continued on next page)*

# NORTH RIVER HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, CONT'D.

(continued from previous page)

The Society's goal was to collect \$700, which they thought would cover the cost of twelve plaques at the twelve largest shipyards. They sent out letters to prominent citizens soliciting membership and donations.

*"A group of men interested in properly erecting iron tablets or markers upon the sites of the more prominent shipyards along the banks of the North River have recently formed an association. ...As you may already know, on the North River between the bridge just below Hanover Four Corners and its former outlet to the sea opposite Telegraph Hill in Marshfield between the years 1878 and 1871 more than 1000 vessels from 30 to 470 tons were built... You may also be aware that at these various old time shipyards many vessels of great historical interest were launched."*

F.L. Briggs wrote back, "I am pleased to have your circular regarding the North River Association. I can give you a long list of people who are eligible.... I am sure that the matter of placing suitable tablets, etc. at former shipbuilding yards is something which appeals to me very much, as the Briggs' yard existed for pretty nearly 200 years and turned out, among others, the *Colombia*, *Cronstadt*, and many other vessels of note."

Horace T. Fogg, Chairman of the Rockland Trust Bank and Norwell resident, was a contributor and he responded, "From the fact that nearly half of my ancestors of that period either built vessels on the North River or sailed vessels which were built there, I'm very much interested in this undertaking."

The group consulted with L. Vernon Briggs, author of *History of Shipbuilding on North River*, regarding the

selection of shipyards. The original list was:

- Brick-Kiln Yard
- Fox Hill Yard
- Briggs Yard
- Barstow Lower Yard
- Block House Yard
- Chittenden Yard
- Whites Ferry Yard
- North River Yard
- Rogers Yard
- Smiths Yard
- Barstow Two Oaks Yard
- Wanton Yard

These yards collectively accounted for 697 vessels of record.

The Association eventually eliminated the North River Shipyard as a site because it had not existed under that name and combined the Briggs and Smith yards so that the number of plaques was reduced to ten. By June 1919, the group collected something over \$500 which was sufficient to erect the plaques.

The plaques were manufactured by the Lebanon Machine Company in New Hampshire. J.S. Sylvester wrote in a letter, "I am inclined to think if we want a good job of putting the posts into the ground that we will have to do it ourselves."

There are no further records of the Association's activities after July 1919. So, we don't know when the plaques were installed or if the members did, in fact, take cigars and maybe the last legal liquor they could buy to the shores of the North River to dig the posts themselves. However, the project was completed by December 26, 1919 when the *Rockland Independent* wrote an article expressing gratitude to the Association members for "preserving its history and linking its seats to the time of today and generations to come, of the yards in which these ships were built."

## THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH



The mystery of this photo is not its location (clearly Norwell Center), but *when* this great fire took place. Did you know that much of the building burned in this historic blaze? What year? (Answer at the bottom of page 6)



(from left) Sarah Baker, Rachel Wollam, Marybeth Shea and Wendy Bawabe enjoy the Wake Up The Farm event at the Jacobs Farmhouse on May 12<sup>th</sup>. The event saw over 100 visitors to Farmhouse Museum!

3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL

# wake up the farm

AT THE JACOBS FARMHOUSE

# SAVE THE DATE: SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING AND DOLLEY MADISON TALK—SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28<sup>TH</sup>

The Norwell Historical Society has a special treat for this year's 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting: actress Janet Parnes will come to the James Library & Center for the Arts and portray First Lady Dolley Madison.

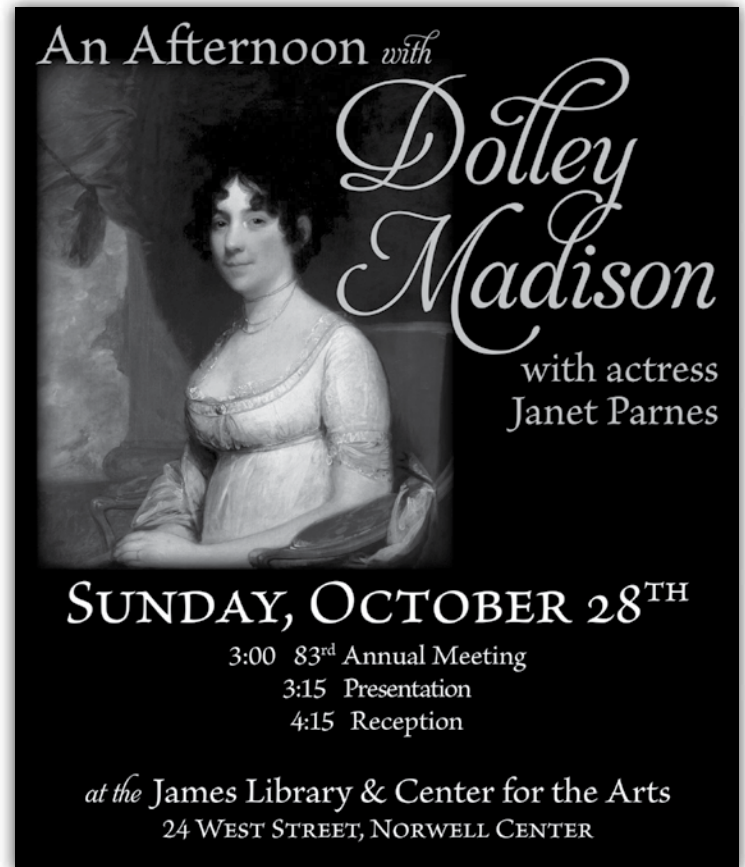
Mrs. Madison was born in 1768 and 2018 marks the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth! Celebrate this occasion with the Norwell Historical Society and learn about this influential First Lady who used her charm and status to become a force for women's rights, to facilitate political connections for her husband, and to transform the White House into an exquisite national home.

Dolley Madison may be known for saving the George Washington portrait during the burning of Washington, but there is far more to her story than that. Actress Janet Parnes' performance reveals the fashionable, gracious, and politically astute Dolley few of us know.

This event is free and open to the public, but members of the Society will be given priority admission to ensure we have a quorum for our Annual Meeting (which will precede the presentation).

Please RSVP via the Society website (use the "Upcoming Events" tab) or call the Society Library phone at 781-659-1888 and leave a message.

The James anticipates the installation of its new elevator in time for this event, so the event will be handicapped accessible.



An Afternoon *with*  
*Dolley Madison*  
with actress  
Janet Parnes

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28<sup>TH</sup>  
3:00 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting  
3:15 Presentation  
4:15 Reception

at the James Library & Center for the Arts  
24 WEST STREET, NORWELL CENTER

In order to encourage new members to the Historical Society, please consider bringing a friend to this event.

---

---

## CITIZENS BANK IN QUEEN ANNE'S CORNER REMODELS —HISTORICAL SOCIETY BENEFITS!

The Norwell Historical Society received a phone call from Citizens Bank in Queen Anne's Corner recently—the bank is remodeling and they had some questions about a photograph that hung in their offices since the 1980s when the branch was opened.

Society Board member Janet Watson immediately went to the bank to assess the photograph and was pleased to discover that it was a beautifully-framed picture of the launching of the *Helen M. Foster* in 1871 on the North River at Chittenden Yard. The photograph was taken by renowned photographer James H. Williams, who lived



*Danielle Darmetko (left), Branch Manager of Citizens Bank in Queen Anne's Corner in Norwell, poses with Society president Wendy Bawabe and the hand-colored photograph.*

on River Street, and this copy was printed directly from the original 1871 glass plate. It is noted on the back of the piece that the photograph was hand-colored in 1981 by Frank Klay of Hingham.

Having no room for the photograph in their new re-design, the bank asked if they could donate the picture to the Society.

Currently, the Historical Society has only a small original Williams print of the *Helen M. Foster*

launching, so this large scale re-print is a welcome addition to our collection!

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP**

3-Year Membership (\$35) \_\_\_\_\_

Life Membership (\$350) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to the *Norwell Historical Society* and mail to: NHS,  
P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061

OR YOU CAN JOIN ON-LINE   
[www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org)

**AREAS OF INTEREST**

Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_ Research Library \_\_\_\_\_

Tour Guide \_\_\_\_\_ Program Planning \_\_\_\_\_

**THE NICHOLS BROTHERS OF SOUTH SCITUATE**

(continued from page 1)

However, further investigation shows the muster roll reading for Elias Nichols as follows:

*“Absent taken prisoner Cedar Creek Oct. 19, 1864. Confined Mil. Prison Richmond VA Oct 23/64. Sent to Salisbury, NC Nov/64. No further record of him found. **Reported he enlisted in the Confederate Army.**”*

The Confederate prison in Salisbury, North Carolina was one of the worst—men died at an alarming rate. There was little food, horrific sanitation, and very few supplies as the Confederacy had only six months left. The Camp Commandant (a Colonel from Florida) was incompetent, which only made matters worse. Examination of the extensive, but incomplete, camp records of those buried there do not list Elias Nichols.

A desperate Confederacy started a recruitment effort amongst the 8,000 prisoners it held in their last three prison camps in Richmond (Virginia), Florence (South Carolina), and Salisbury (North Carolina). About 1,600 able-bodied Union men took the deal as a way to escape almost certain death in the Prisoner of War camps.

These soldiers became known as “Galvanized Yankees.” It should be noted that the Union did the

same thing for duty out West—recruiting confederate prisoners known as “Galvanized Confederates.” An example of this was portrayed in the 1965 movie *Major Dundee* with Charlton Heston.

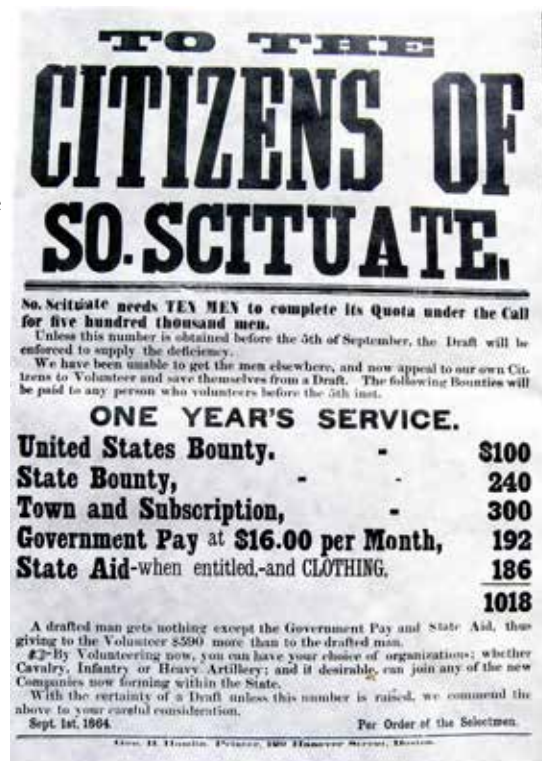
Confederate Lt. Colonel J.G. Tucker organized the first of these units on October 16, 1864 as the 1<sup>st</sup> Foreign Battery. Later, as it grew in size, it was renamed Tucker's Confederate Regiment on February 28, 1865—only weeks before the end of the war.

Very little is known about this regiment, and as far as I could determine no roster exists. What we *do* know is that when General Joseph Johnson surrendered his Army of Tennessee in North Carolina to General Sherman on April 26, 1865, seventy-two of these former POWs were serving as Pioneers.

So back to my original question: *Should the South Scituate Civil War monument have 23 names listed, instead of 24 names?*

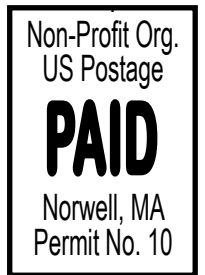
(left) The Norwell Historical Society has one of the original bounty posters for the town, encouraging residents to enlist before being drafted.

**For more information on South Scituate's Civil War soldiers and their homes, see the Society's pamphlet “A Driving Tour of Historic Sites Associated with South Scituate Civil War Soldiers.” Contact the Society via our website and we will mail you a copy.**





NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 693  
NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061  
WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

---

## NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS AND MEMORABILIA

- A NARRATIVE OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL** \$20  
by Samuel H. Olson  
This book chronicles the life and times of our town from 1845-1963 with a collection of articles previously published in *The Norwell Mariner*. Each chapter is its own story!
- SHIPBUILDING ON THE NORTH RIVER** \$45  
by L. Vernon Briggs  
The definitive index of ships built on the North River and the shipyards that lined its shores was written in 1889 and reprinted in 1988. Lists interspersed with an occasional tale.
- HISTORIC HOMESTEADS OF NORWELL** \$15  
Learn more about our stately houses and the people who lived in them. This book, well-illustrated with drawings, discusses architectural features and includes genealogical information.
- NORWELL 1903 MAP** \$25  
This 16" X 20" reproduction of the 1903 Plymouth County Atlas map of Norwell is a high quality digital copy of the original hand-colored version. Suitable for framing.
- MARYJANE CLARK-INSPIRED TRAVEL MUGS** \$15  
Choose the Jacobs Farmhouse or the James Library.  
Artist Erica Vermette created these original pieces. (2 for \$25)
- THE ABCs OF NORWELL** \$10  
by Gertrude Daneau  
A coloring book perfect for children of all ages! This illustrated book can be used as a text for teaching budding historians, or as a quick guide to Norwell's many famous personalities and historical features.
- HISTORY OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL** \$25  
by Joseph Foster Merritt  
This history of the town to 1938 was republished in 1988. A unique narrative written by Norwell's Town Clerk, it is considered to be an invaluable account of Norwell prior to WWII.
- MORE THAN JUST A COOKBOOK** \$5  
This book is full of time-tested favorite recipes submitted by locals. Beyond the gastronomic delights, we have included sketches, interesting narratives and accounts of historic events.
- THE WAY WE WERE** \$20  
by Jeanne Garside  
This book is a series of articles written for Norwell's Centennial Celebration in 1988. Illustrated with old photographs, it tells what times were like in 1888.

*All the above items are available at the Society Library in the Middle School on Wednesdays during the school year (2-3:00 p.m.), or you may call Wendy Bawabe at 781-659-1464, or you may request a publication using this form and enclosing a check (made payable to NHS). Mail to: NHS, P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061.*