



Summer 2016

# Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

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

## JACOBS FAMILY HISTORY: DR. HENRY BARTON JACOBS' LIFE

by Bill Slattery

*Editor's Note: The following is the sixth (and second-to-last) installment of a history of the Jacobs Family written by Society Archivist Bill Slattery for the Town of Norwell's application for the Jacobs Homestead property to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The application is still pending with the Department of the Interior. Parenthetical notes have been added to help with context.*

[There is no evidence that Henry Barton Jacobs kept a diary. He did, however, write many letters.] Most of the ones that were found date from his mother's widowhood years. As a young man, [Henry Barton] shared in the work of the farm with his father and uncle. We know little about his early social life, but know that he attended Hingham High School, Exeter Academy as a preparatory school, Harvard University, and finally, Harvard Medical School.

While at Harvard, Henry rarely returned home except on a few weekends or vacations. On those occasions he would socialize at functions with his brother [Fred] and others. After Henry graduated from medical school in 1887, he seldom visited home. He was on the staff of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, but decided around 1890 that it would be more profitable to become the private physician to Mr. Robert Garrett of Baltimore. Mr. Garrett had retired in 1887 as president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad due to mental difficulties.

Although Henry's position was lucrative, it did not come without a

price: Mr. Garrett believed himself to be the English Prince of Wales! Mr. Garrett's wife decided that rather than place him in an asylum, all those around him would instead serve as courtiers and flatter his notions. Living in Baltimore in three huge connected buildings and fourteen servants, and summering in a mansion in Newport, Rhode Island, this pretense appeared completely natural to the delusional patient.

Although it was believed that no one in the Jacobs family was known to have expressed feelings about the destruction by fire of the Assinippi Universalist Church in 1893 (a church that the family had patronized since its founding in 1766), a letter was written by Henry to his mother dated Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup> of that year. He wrote:



Henry Barton Jacobs

*I was so sorry to hear the news of the burning of your little church that I almost cried. I don't see how you had the courage to start right out to get subscriptions for a new [church building], of course there is no use in crying over spilt milk and your method of acting was very wise and philosophical. It does seem hard though that just as everything had been gotten into such a beautiful condition it should have needed to burn up... I will gladly*

*(continued on page 2)*

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### 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 JACOBS' FAMILY HISTORY, CONT'D.

(continued from page 1)

*give you something toward the new church and will send you a cheque when necessary covering my subscription and that of father's. I should think you might possibly get some money from the headquarters of this denomination toward rebuilding. They must have certain missionary moneys which could certainly be put to no better use than aiding you.*

Henry's willingness to make contributions for both his father and himself was not only indicative of a philanthropic spirit, but also of a new economic stability [achieved from his employment with the Garretts]. This permitted Henry to make sure his parents were cared for in their declining years, and to assist his ailing younger brother, Fred, so that he could have access to the best medical centers [given his struggle with, and eventual death by, tuberculosis].

After the death of Mr. Garrett in July of 1896, Henry proceeded to look for other employment. This turned out to be the opportunity to serve as an instructor at Johns Hopkins University. He became a specialist on lung diseases like tuberculosis—undoubtedly in honor of his ailing brother. At about the turn of the century, Henry published a couple of medical articles on treatments for tuberculosis and American practitioners of them. His collection of rare books and the medical tools he collected remain a legacy to Johns Hopkins to this day.



*Mrs. Mary (Frick) Garrett Jacobs as she appeared around 1885, about five years before she met Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs*

Apparently, the widow of Mr. Garrett, born Mary Sloan Frick (1851-1936), often felt the need for medical attention, and so developed a relationship with Dr. Henry Jacobs. He accompanied her on her annual trips to Paris to search for quality art works—she had long felt prevented from these trips during her husband's illness.

Mrs. Garrett made her connection with Dr. Jacobs permanent by marriage on April 2, 1902, in Baltimore. The new Mrs. Jacobs was reported to be worth \$20 million at this time. The

couple made a sort of pre-nuptial contract where neither could claim the property of the other, even if one survived the other in death.

In 1902, Mrs. Jacobs decided to have a mansion she called "Whiteholme" constructed in Newport for her summer social season. She was already socially prominent in Baltimore, but wished to join the

Vanderbilts in sharing company among the Newport, Rhode Island elite. The home also provided another venue for her art collections. Henry accompanied her wherever she went: in Baltimore; "Uplands," her Maryland country estate; Newport or Paris—undoubtedly keeping close tabs on her health. Their nuptials caused a stir in their social circles.

Henry wrote often to his widowed mother back home in Norwell, and she would stay at a nearby Baltimore hotel during winter months, often with a female companion who also accompanied her back at the Norwell farm for other seasons.

By 1897, cousin George Turner and his family lived in "the other house" [the smaller and less grand side of the Jacobs Farmhouse] to help with the farm chores. There was probably a regular crew employed at the [Jacobs] sawmill—until maintaining and operating it was no longer a family economic necessity. There was also growing competition as mills no longer depended on water power but could place a power source wherever needed (for example, Lyman W. Lincoln operated a sawmill in the Mount Blue section of town using a diesel engine around 1913).

While [Jacobs cousin] George Turner was more a carpenter than a farmer, he found farming agreeable enough, even inventing a means of lifting hay into the upper part of the barn without having to pitch it up. He installed hardwood floors in "the other house" [the Turner "side" of the Farmhouse] and about 1900 had an ornate metal ceiling taken from the demolition of a commercial building, cut up, and placed in the front sitting room (the most formal room). When George's son, Harold, took ill with scarlet fever around 1910, he took a spare outside window and installed it in the wall of a storage room. Harold could then convalesce and still see the dining room and the rest of the family—he was considered somewhat contagious.

Later [after Harold was well], Henry Jacobs paid for him to attend Tufts University where Harold learned engineering. Although Harold Turner made frequent trips to Toronto, Canada for employment, when he returned to Norwell he was often asked to assist his father on the farm. Harold's only son, Harold Jr. (born 1927), left a detailed essay to the Society about his childhood at the Farmhouse [available to read on the Society website—see Publications Archives, "Turner Recollections"]. According to Harold Turner Jr.'s essay, Dr. Henry Jacobs visited and checked on the Farmhouse only on rare occasion. Henry's attentions were not appreciated by his cousins, who were disappointed when he forbade them to use electricity in the house that was meant for use in the barn.

The remaining Turners may have left the farm in 1936 when Harold Jr. would have been nine. It was also the

(continued on next page)



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

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

**JACOBS' HISTORY, CONT'D.**

*(continued from previous page)*

year that Dr. Henry Jacobs became a member of the new Norwell Historical Society (established in 1935), and when the Society was first allowed to use some rooms at the Farmhouse for displays. It would be fair to say that Henry knew, after his mother's death in 1921 and given the age of George and the unreliability of Harold, that he would need help in keeping the stone walls in place, the grass mowed, etc.

Even when no one lived at the house, Henry saw to it that a housekeeper came at least twice per month to keep the place neat. He decided to hire a neighbor, Patrick Gammon, who lived in the house east of the farm. In the U.S. Census of 1930, Gammon called himself "farm manager." Ten years earlier, he had listed his prior occupation as "work, poultry farm"; he would have been about 50 in 1922. To assist him, Henry Curtis Hines, age 26, from Hanover was hired. Neither appeared to have lived in the Farmhouse.

Meanwhile, back in Baltimore, Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs showed leadership and support for many medical organizations and charities. He was a trustee of Johns Hopkins Hospital, and first president of Maryland's Society for the Prevention and Relief of Tuberculosis. He wrote numerous articles for medical journals. He was considered very knowledgeable on 19<sup>th</sup> cent. French medicine, tuberculosis, and small pox.

In Newport, Henry was governor of the Newport Casino, president of the Redwood Library, and president of a beach association. After the death of Mrs. Jacobs in Newport in 1936, Henry published an illustrated book showing the works of art she had gathered. Most of these would be donated to the Museum of Art in Baltimore.

Henry, the last of his part of this Jacobs line, died at age 82 at his deceased wife's Baltimore mansion of a

heart attack on December 18, 1939. The philanthropy shown, especially to children's and medical causes in Baltimore, made the residents feel the great loss they suffered from the death of this generous couple.

While "Whiteholme" in Newport was torn down in 1963 by Salve Regina University, the Jacobs' Mount Vernon Place Mansion in Baltimore was saved with its purchase in 1962 by The Engineer's Club. It is today called the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion and is one of several structures designated in the Mount Vernon Historic District, a national historic landmark. The original architect for the mansion was the well-regarded John Russell Pope, who also designed the National Archives, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Museum of Art in Baltimore. The ballroom-theatre of the mansion complex continued to be used by citizens of Baltimore for cultured entertainments in the spirit of Mrs. Garrett-Jacobs.

The Jacobs were childless, and a pre-nuptial agreement forbade that one would inherit the wealth of the other. Henry Barton Jacobs, having been a vice-president of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (today called Historic New England—HNE), and aware of an interest developing in local history by the organizing in 1935 of the Norwell Historical Society, provided in his will that his family's farm estate in Norwell could go to either SPNEA of which he had been an officer, or to the Town of Norwell. Therefore, SPNEA controlled the estate from 1939 until 1988.

*(Please see the final installment in the next issue)*

*Answer from page 4: The photograph was taken from Main Street near the Town Green. The house at left that no longer has a front porch is the Pickels Cushing house at 644 Main Street—the First Parish Church Parsonage.*



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## MEA CULPA, MEA CULPA!

Sincerest apologies to any of our members who missed the 2016 Strawberry Festival because they didn't know the date!

The May issue of the Society newsletter was unable to be mailed due to major computer issues that resulted in a temporary loss of all member names and addresses! Thankfully, the issue has been resolved, computers have been sufficiently backed-up, and all files are restored. We apologize for our lack of communication prior to the Festival.

Please remember that the Society website is an excellent source of up-to-date information: [www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org).



Former Historical Society president and Historical Commission Chair Joe Carty passed away on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Joe lived and breathed Norwell history and was the "go-to" source for town anecdotes and historical trivia. He will be greatly missed.

## THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Where was this photograph taken?

This photo shows many features that still exist today: the formal stone wall in the right foreground, the house on the far right and the house on the left—although that home's front porch and white fence no longer exist. The sidewalk/path shown center (with a pedestrian) also, sadly, no longer exists.

From where today was this photo taken? What is the house shown at left that no longer has a front porch?

*(Location/ Answer at the bottom of page 3)*