



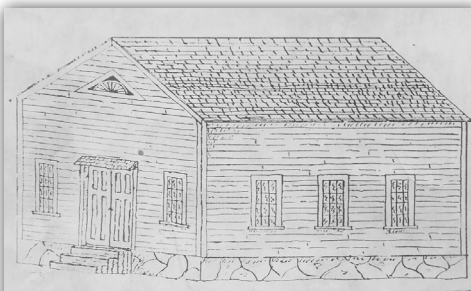
# NORTH RIVER PACKET

For the latest online news and events, visit [norwellhistoricalsociety.org](http://norwellhistoricalsociety.org)

## South Scituate/Norwell Town Halls

*In February, 1964, Harry L. Chase, Jr. (Town Office Manager) assembled a history of Norwell's Town Halls to the (then) present Cushing Memorial Town Hall. The Society has updated Mr. Chase's information and included the current Osborn School/Norwell Town Offices. This compendium is timely given the upcoming Town Meeting article proposing a new building for Norwell Town Hall.*

Prior to 1818, Scituate (which included Norwell until 1849) had no official Town Hall. Selectmen would meet in local taverns and Town Meeting would take place in one of the town's churches. In 1818, the first Town Infirmary (Almshouse—see inset link below) and Town Offices were built on the site of today's Cushing Center.



This drawing is the only depiction of the Town Hall that once stood on the green in Norwell Center.



The Town Farm House (at left in the photo) on the site of today's Cushing Center, Norwell's Town Offices for many years.

### Town Farm House (1821-1885) Scituate Town Offices

The town offices of old Scituate were housed in the town farm house or infirmary (Almshouse) building, erected in 1821 on the site of an earlier dwelling which had served as an infirmary and town offices from 1818 to 1821. The Almshouse continued to serve as the location of some of the town offices until November 1935, when the building was torn down to make room for the erection of Norwell's new Cushing Memorial Town Hall.

### First Town Hall (1849-1884) South Scituate Town Hall

South Scituate's first Town Hall had formerly served the town of Scituate. Erected in 1830 at Sherman's Corner (at the intersection of Old Oaken Bucket Road and Winter Street— next door to today's Union Mission Chapel),

it was close to the geographical center of Scituate. After the separation of the two towns in 1849, the building was moved during the winter of 1849-50 to the green in Norwell Center. The new Town Hall stood on the site now occupied by the WWI Soldiers' Monument (across from the State Police barracks on the town green). Here it remained until 1871, when it was moved across West Street and set up on land donated for the purpose by Israel Nash, where the Kent House now stands. It was destroyed by fire in 1884.

### Second Town Hall (1885-1935) South Scituate/Norwell Town Hall

In 1885, a new Town Hall was built on a location nearer to the geographical center of South Scituate, on the site of the former Osborn School/present Town Hall.



This photo shows the Town Hall and High School as it looked from 1885 until 1903, when a large addition completely changed the look of the building.

In the spring of 1896, the high school was added to the building. The 1903 map of Norwell refers to the structure as "Town House & High School."

To learn more about the **Almshouse in Norwell Center**, [read this article](#) by Pattie Hainer on page 4 of the Spring 2019 newsletter.

The QR code at right links to the issue.



(continued on page 4)

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

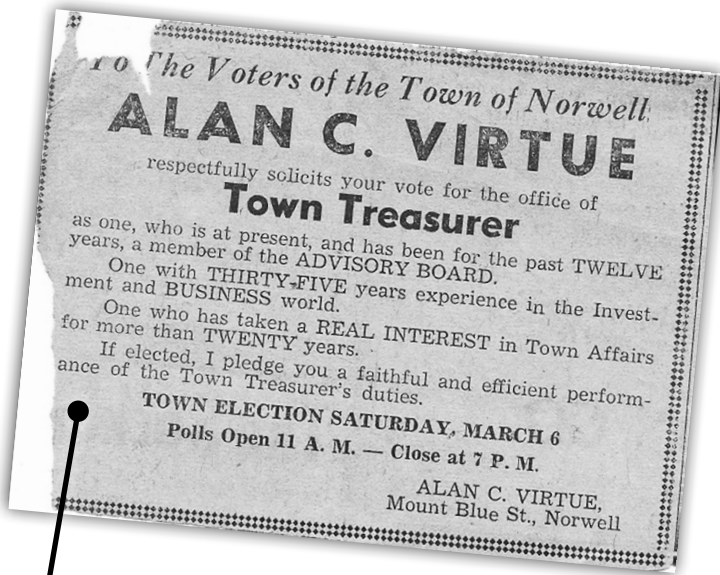
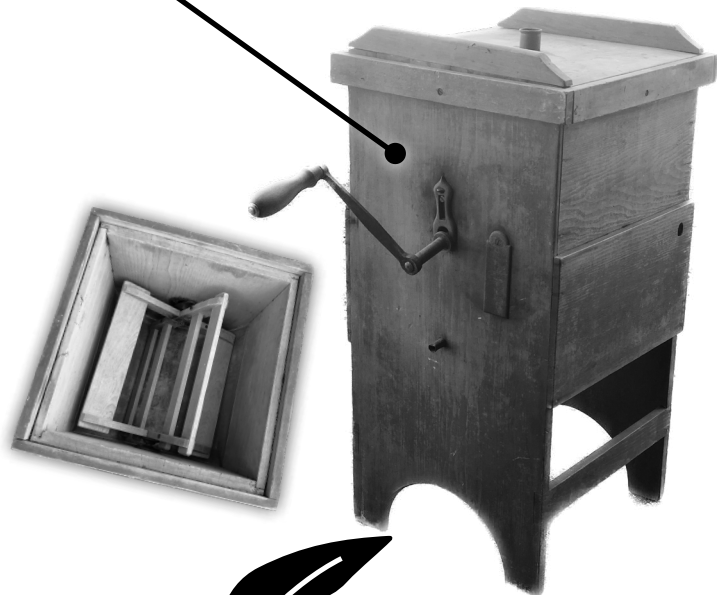
*Treasures known and treasures found in the Norwell Historical Society Archives and in the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum are featured here in each issue.*

Historical Society volunteers recently embarked on a thorough cleaning of the second floor of the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum, in preparation for the filming of a video tour. This video will serve as a means of access for those who are differently-abled and cannot climb the stairs.

While rummaging through the attic of the house to find items that will be featured on the tour, we noted this strange contraption. Unsure as to its intended use, we are appealing to our readers for their thoughts.

The handle is attachable to the side and turns a removable paddle mechanism on the inside (see photo at left). Made of wood, the rounded bottom of the box is lined with metal, and there is a plugged drain hole at the bottom.

One suggestion is that it is an old honey extractor. Other thoughts?



The Norwell Historical Society Archives has many old newspaper clippings, including this one showing an advertisement for the campaign of Alan Virtue in 1943. Mr. Virtue ran against Margaret Dumas for the position of Town Treasurer. Today, the position is an appointed position, not an elected one. See an ad for Mrs. Dumas' campaign, and read her recollections of the election on page 6 of this newsletter.

## Just The Facts

### Officers

Wendy Bawabe, President  
Christian Jevne, Secretary  
Marybeth Shea, Treasurer

### Board of Directors

Laurie Detwiler  
Chad Forman  
Rebecca Freed  
Daniel Neumann  
Stephen O'Neill  
Alan Prouty  
Karl Swenson  
Janet Watson, Archivist

### Museum & Research Library

The **Jacobs Farmhouse Museum** is open at scheduled events and by appointment only. Please contact the Society to schedule a tour.

The Norwell Historical Society **Research Library & Archives Center** on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Sparrell School (322 Main Street) is open on Thursday mornings from 10:00 am until noon or by appointment.

### Administrative Consultant

Rachel Wollam

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Norwell Historical Society is to discover, preserve, and celebrate Norwell history through stewardship, education, and awareness—engaging our community, both present and future, to be vested in its history.

### Mailing Address & Phone

The Norwell Historical Society  
P.O. Box 693  
Norwell, MA 02061  
781-561-1161



# DISCOVER MORE ONLINE!

Look for the magnifying glasses in this issue—that means there is more to discover online and at the Society’s website [NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG](http://NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG).

## What is a Half Hull Model?

*Sometimes new research starts with a question sent to us by someone who is curious about something. That was the case when Don Messinger contacted the Historical Society and asked if we could provide information about a half model that he received as a gift.*

It all began when Don and Joan Messinger were married in 1972. Don’s friend Gifford Booth gave the couple a half hull model as a wedding present. It hung on their wall since the wedding, but Don knew very little about it. Gifford’s father, Rodman Booth, was a Norwell High School teacher with an interest in maritime history, and Don thought that he was the person who collected the model.

Joe Chetwynd from Pembroke, who is not only an expert on local shipbuilding but also a shipbuilder himself, agreed to consult. So Don, Joe, and a few Society Board members convened an impromptu meeting at the Archives on February 23, 2023 so Joe could take a close look at the half hull.

What is a half hull model? Unlike the elaborate, detailed ship models with sails and rigging that we are used to seeing in museums, a half model is a

basic wooden model of the hull without rigging. It was carved to scale by the shipbuilder who used it to conceptualize

“ *The model would eventually be used to create a full scale line pattern laid out on a loft floor...* ”


the shape and sheer of the hull and perhaps to introduce innovations in design. The model would eventually be used to create a full-scale line pattern laid out on a loft floor. From there it was transferred to pine boards which would go to the timber yard where the actual ship timbers were cut.

In America until 1794, the half models were “block” models, carved from a single block of wood. The problem with block models was the laborious process required to transfer the dimensions to a paper plan. In the late 1700s, Massachusetts shipbuilders conceived of the idea of the “lift” model. These were composed of horizontal slices of wood (or lifts) that formed the shape

of the hull and were joined together by wood screws or dowels. When the lifts were taken apart the dimensions were easily transferred to paper, saving the shipbuilders countless hours of calculation.

Don wondered if the model was of a North River ship. Since only a few are known to exist, that would have been an exciting find! However when Joe examined the back, he found that the year “1874” was carved into the wood with the notation “Fisherman” along with a name (presumably the shipbuilder’s) that was illegible. Since the last ship launched on the North River was the *Helen M. Foster* in 1871, Joe determined right away that the model was not a North River ship. Joe noted that the hull lines of Don’s model were very similar to the *Helen M. Foster*. The ship was a fishing schooner built for speed and popular in that late 1800s for quick return of the cargo of fish to shore so it could be shipped inland by railroad before it spoiled.

The model was a lift model, and Joe noted that it was particularly interesting and finely crafted since it was not mounted on the wooden back (as is usually the case) but instead carefully fitted into the back and attached with wooden toggles.

We are grateful to both Don and Joe for a fascinating look at shipbuilding history. If you have an interesting historical artifact and would like more information, we would be happy to try to find an expert and convene a discussion. 



Shipbuilder Joe Chetwynd (left) and Norwell resident Don Messinger with the half hull model in the Archives.

*Answer from page 5: The “Halfway House” (also known as Leonard’s Tavern) was located at the intersection of High Street, Grove Street, and Route 53—at the site of the Mobil gas station today.*

# Town Hall History, cont'd.

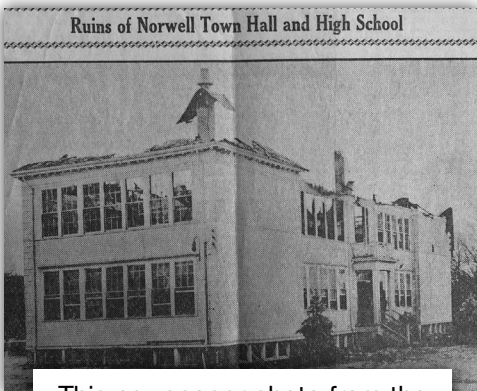
(continued from page 1)

In 1922, a new high school building was attached to the front —completely changing the look. On December 20, 1935, the wooden building was completely destroyed by fire and left Norwell without either a high school or a Town Hall.



This photo of the Norwell Town Hall and High School shows the 1922 addition. The original building can be seen at the back.

After fire destroyed the Town Hall and High School, Norwell reverted to its colonial roots and held its town meeting at the First Parish Meeting House. Voting that year took place in the GAR Hall on High Street.



This newspaper photo from the Society Archives shows the ruins of the all-wood building after the fire on December 20, 1935.

Also in 1935, the Almshouse (and site of some of the Town Offices) closed its doors and was razed. According to author Sam Olson, "A much more enlightened and economically practical mode of dealing with the local indigent was adopted. The Board of Selectmen ordered that an auction... be held. Included in the sale to the highest bidder would be the facility's cow and a flock of hens."

## Cushing Memorial Town Hall (1936-1985)

### Norwell Town Hall

The Cushing Memorial Town Hall was dedicated November 2, 1936. Its building was the fulfillment of a provision in the will of Miss Florence M. Cushing, who wished to give the Town a building or monument which would become a memorial to her father, Hayward Pierce Cushing, and her uncle, Nathan Cushing. The Cushing family had been influential in the affairs of Scituate, South Scituate and Norwell for more than two centuries.

“The 1935 fire left Norwell without either a high school or a Town Hall.”

The auditorium and lobby in this building were used for departmental meetings and for civic and social events. The offices of the Board of Selectmen, Town Accountant, Town Treasurer, Town Collector, Town Clerk, Board of Assessors and the Emergency Communications Center were located here. The Annual and Special Town Meetings and elections were held in the building until the population grew so much as to necessitate a larger venue. At that time, Norwell High School (today's Sparrell School) hosted the meetings.

## The Osborn Building (1985-today)

### Norwell Town Hall

In 1983, Town Meeting voted to move the town offices from the Cushing Memorial Town Hall to the old Osborn School building, which had been closed for two year. When Proposition 2½ became law on July 1, 1982, the Town budget was cut back and 40 school employees, mostly in the teaching area, were let go. As a result, the Osborn School was closed.

For two years, the Permanent Building and Maintenance Committee worked on converting the old school to an office building, and in July of 1985 the new Town Hall was officially opened. It was noted in a Town Report that “available office space will increase dramatically (from about 3,000 to 20,000 square feet), and enable us to bring most town offices together under one roof. This should result in economies in lighting and heating expense and, more important to the citizen, make town offices more easily accessible.”

Today the Norwell Town Hall has not lived up to the “economies” predicted in 1985. The third floor has been closed to the public for many years due to unsafe conditions, and the building's retrofit from school to office building has proved awkward at best.

The 2023 Annual Meeting is proposing an alternative to the Town constructing its own offices. Will the desire for a geographically-central location (as in 1885) overrule the planned West End location? Residents can watch history happen by attending the [Town Meeting on Monday, May, 8th](#).

# ANTIQUES APPRAISAL DAY

It's time to spring clean, grab your antiques, and stop wondering if they're valuable!



**COME TO THIS ANTIQUES ROADSHOW-STYLE EVENT AND ASK THE EXPERTS**  
J. James Auctioneers & Appraisers of Plymouth

**SUNDAY, APRIL 30<sup>th</sup>**  
**1-4 pm**

**Phoenix Lodge  
Hanover Four Corners**

[Advanced sign-up only](#)  
[\(use the QR code at right\)](#)  
\$25/item appraised



# School Days 1962-68

*The former Osborn Elementary School serves as Norwell Town Hall today. Former student and Norwell resident Betsy Baldwin Brink recalls her school days in the old building during the 1960s.*

*by Betsy Baldwin Brink*

I recently unearthed a postcard of the Ella F. Osborn Elementary School on Main Street, now Norwell Town Hall. It turns out February 27, 2020 went unnoticed, at least by me, as the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this school's opening.

When I arrived on the bus for first grade in 1962, along with my friend and Central Street neighbor Polly and her big sister Liz, the school was just 12 years old. I didn't attend preschool or kindergarten, so pulling into that semicircular driveway signaled the start of my first school experience. Finding the old postcard brought back memories, which may or may not be figments of my overactive imagination.

## 1<sup>st</sup> grade, Mrs. Pyne

On the first day of 1<sup>st</sup> grade, I noticed a slender trickle draining from the back of the chair of the little girl next to me, who looked a little nervous. I went up and told the teacher. Thankfully, Mrs. Pyne handled the situation with more grace and empathy than I did. In spite of the fact that my nice-to-meet-you skills needed some work, that little girl became one of my best friends.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, Mrs. Daneau

It was an ordinary day in November 1963 in Mrs. Daneau's 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class when Mr. Rosenberg, our janitor, rushed in to tell her that President Kennedy had been assassinated. A black and white TV on a metal cart was wheeled into the cafeteria, which was right next to our classroom in the basement level. Shortly after that, we all went home for the day.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, Miss Reinert

We were always assigned to desks in alphabetical order by last name, so I was always up front. In the desk behind me was always David, and this was the year he introduced his unique talent of flipping his upper eyelids inside out, which made it look like his eyes were bleeding. I was a pretty

shy, quiet kid, so I found David antics wildly entertaining.

## 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Miss Lenfestey

I didn't know that teachers had first names or lives outside of school. Then our 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Miss Lenfestey got married during the school year. I don't know if she did it over February or April vacation or what, but we were all dumbfounded.



Elementary School, Main Street, Norwell, Mass. Built in time to be opened February 27, 1950. Color Photo by Hingham Camera Shop

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

POST CARD  
Address

At a cost of \$375,000, the Osborn School was named after Ella F. Osborn, a former teacher and principal.

## 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Mr. Goldberg

I had the lead role of Mrs. Wiggins the cow in Mr. Goldberg's dramatic production of the year. During the first performance, one of the main stage props tipped over. Not to be daunted, Mr. Goldberg leaped onstage, pulled it all back together, and the show went on! That stage was also the scene of choral performances led by Mr. Garlick. I loved chorus and still regret being pulled out and sent to the principal's office one day for chewing gum. Thanks to Mr. Garlick's persistence, I can still sing all the songs from *Oklahoma!*

## 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Mr. Fay

Fond goodbye to the "Ella F."—and hello to the brand new William G. Vinal Elementary School.

What do you remember about school days in Norwell?

Betsy is happy to be fact-checked on her recollections. [Send her an email via the NHS website.](#)



## THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH



This photo was recently found in the Archives and digitized. Where was this very busy tavern (known as The Halfway House because it was about "half way" from Boston to Plymouth) located in Norwell? (Answer at the bottom of page 3)

# Crowell for Treasurer!

*Eighty years ago, Margaret Crowell was elected Norwell's Treasurer, a position she held for 18 years from 1943 to 1961 (when she "retired" to marry George Dumas). The following is an edited version of her recollections of the 1943 campaign (written a few days after the election) and a wonderful insight into local politics and a young woman's bold decision to run for office.*

by Margaret Crowell (Dumas)

In early New England days, the annual town meeting held in March was a much anticipated event. It came after a long dull winter, just before the busy period of spring plowing and planting and, as a result, provided considerable interest to everyone. The various articles in the warrant were discussed in corner grocery stores around the cracker barrel, and the merits of the candidates for office were weighed carefully. In fact, sometimes these discussions were more lively than an actual town meeting.

Town Meeting was a real event not to be missed, a bright spot in an otherwise quiet and uneventful winter. This year (1943) however, with the ban on pleasure driving necessitating curtailment of practically all social affairs [because of gas rations for WWII], some of us cast about for some activity to enliven an otherwise dull winter. Town politics became the choice.

It happened that Mr. Robbins, for whom I worked at the bank, decided to resign as Town Treasurer—a position he had held for 28 years. When his decision was announced, the first person to file nomination papers was Alan Virtue: a member of the Advisory Board, a man in his middle fifties, and a stock broker in Boston. The next candidate to enter the field was Elmer N. Josselyn, the local grocer. Several people asked me why I did not run for the office. After thinking about it, I finally decided to do so. I sallied forth on Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup> with my nomination papers [to get them signed]. That was the last day for filing, so I scurried about in the wet as it was raining hard. By four o'clock I had 34 signatures!

From that date, I spent every available moment campaigning and really had a most enjoyable time.

Mr. Josselyn was not an active competitor, but Mr. Virtue was another sort. Both he and his wife are very aggressive in manner and, while underneath are both very kind, the first impression is not so pleasing. As a member of the Advisory Board he has always expressed his opinions at town meeting, especially in regard to appropriations of money. While his judgment was good for the most part, he had a most exasperating way. Lately he had served as captain of the volunteer police force and his men, after they really got to know him, liked him. Mrs. Virtue has long been active in the Norwell Visiting Nurse Association and recently was president of the Republican Club (which has about seven hundred members from Hanover, Norwell, Hingham, Cohasset and



Margaret Crowell's campaign ad from the Society Archives.

Scituate). More recently she has been active in the Women's Defense Corps, as well as serving on the Republican Town Committee. All in all, they were an active pair to have as adversaries.

The Virtues belonged to the "Mink Coat Set," throw gay parties, and generally step about. Personally, I enjoy hearing

about their doings, but to some of the modest folks [in town] they make a poor impression.

I continued to call on people in the back streets and they enthused about the idea [of my candidacy]. Many remembered me from the time I rode my pony around the wood roads and greeted me cordially as "Margaret!" In fact, I craftily made myself quite solid with the working class, so much so that Daddy said I was the darling of the Fore River gang! However, I also had a great many of the elite on my side too including the Wilsons (pastor of the Unitarian Church), Mr. Judd (who is manager of Symphony Hall), and Tenney Davis and others of that type.

One triumph was the fact that Ernest Sparrell favored my candidacy. He has always been an astute politician. His approval was sought by anyone running for office in this locality. For a number of years he was our representative in the General Court and had considerable influence in state politics. Governor Saltonstall has appointed him to certain committees and he has mysteriously accomplished a great many things without apparently exerting any effort.

I did a great deal of my campaigning on foot as I did not want to waste gasoline. When walking by Sparrell's [Funeral Home], I was hailed by the chief himself. We had a grand talk about the campaign, of which he heartily approved. He predicted my victory. That left me walking on air, for it really was quite a compliment; but even so, I never relaxed my efforts for I had no intention of losing the contest through overconfidence.

While the garage men and many of my friends were very optimistic, others came to me with doleful tales of Mr. Virtue's success in obtaining promises of votes and predicted a very close contest. Since there is no public [transportation] in town, it was necessary to provide [rides] for some of the voters who had no way of getting to the polls themselves. Friday evening before the election, I spent a long time with the Ration Board applying for

*(continued on page 7)*

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

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

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

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

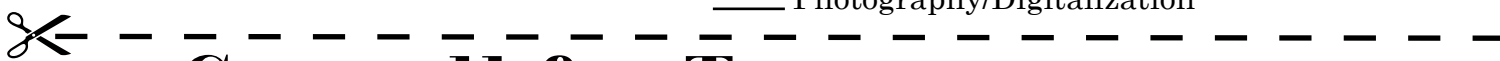
- 3-Year Membership (\$35) \_\_\_\_\_
- Life Membership (\$350) \_\_\_\_\_
- Donation (any amount) \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Researching at the Archives \_\_\_\_\_ Other:
- \_\_\_\_\_ Organizing at the Archives
- \_\_\_\_\_ Farmhouse Tour Guide
- \_\_\_\_\_ Farmhouse Maintenance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Event Planning
- \_\_\_\_\_ Photography/Digitalization



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 NHS, P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061



# Crowell for Treasurer, cont'd.

*(continued from page 6)*

extra gasoline and eventually secured an allowance of 18 gallons.

Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, the day of election was simply nasty ... snow, which fell quite heavily, turned to rain making ankle-deep slush. The polls were open from 11:00 in the morning until 7:00 in the evening. I voted soon after 11:00 and decided it was best to have chains put on the car [tires] to transport voters. It certainly would never do to get stuck in a snowbank!

After turning the car over to my friend Jane, I settled myself at the Town Hall with a basket of sandwiches which I was much too excited to eat. In times past I have acted as an Election Officer so all my old friends were there, joking about my deserting them. (Since I was running for office, I could not count votes). It was all more or less a blur to me. A great many people were coming and going. The Virtues had four or five cars collecting voters.

Mrs. Virtue had a list of voters. As they came in the Town Hall to vote she checked them off. I too had a list, but I had been in and out and over a hundred voters had passed through without my checking them. I cheerfully asked if I might check my list with hers. "The lion and the lamb laid down together," so to speak, and the rest of the day we sat side by side.


When the polls closed and while waiting for the votes to be counted, I finally calmed down enough to eat a sandwich and settled into knitting a glove for the Red Cross. I did not have the slightest idea whether or not I had won the contest, but I did realize that a great many people I knew had come and gone—many of whom had probably voted for me. Still, being a beginner at such activities, I was far from confident of the result.

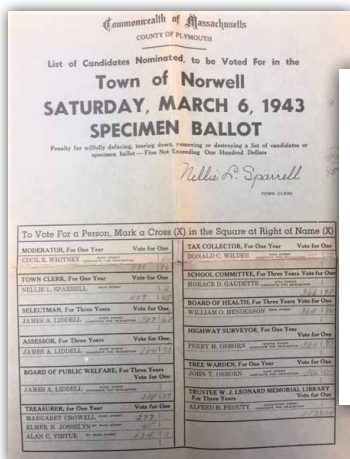
About eight o'clock the vote was announced. 448 votes were cast and nine absentee ballots. One absentee ballot had not been signed by a notary so it was not counted. The result was:

- Margaret Crowell 277
- Alan Virtue 134
- Elmer Josselyn 45

It was simply overwhelming to win by a margin of 143 votes, and everyone was most gleeful as they congratulated me! The grand part was that I was able to return to the Ration Board half the allowance of gasoline, for our two cars only used nine gallons. It was all very jolly and after being sworn into office I had a pleasant talk with the three selectmen as to various plans. I went home joyful—as you can well imagine

Then the telephone began to ring ... friends from far and near calling up to learn the score and express their delight at the outcome. There have been many cards and notes from all parts of the county. Friends of my father sent a huge bunch of roses, and the Barnards sent a gorgeous springtime bouquet. Dorothy Repellier (our neighbor up the lane) made a delicious cake with a white "V" in chocolate icing. My father said the V could stand for "Virtue" as well as "Victory." All in all I really had quite a celebration.

My work does not begin until my bond, which has been ordered, is delivered to the Selectmen and then approved by the authorities in the State House; so now I am having all the fun and none of the work. 



A copy of the 1943 official ballot showing Margaret Crowell's victory from the Archives.



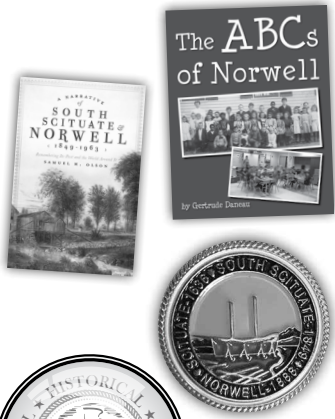
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**Spring 2023**

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY ITEMS FOR SALE**



**The ABCs of Norwell** (*shown at left*) **\$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 historic people and sites.

**Historic Homesteads of Norwell** **\$15**

Always wanted to know the history behind the antique homes in town? This book delves into the background of many of Norwell's historic houses and the people who lived in them.

**A Narrative of South Scituate & Norwell** (*shown at left*) **\$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, so this book is very readable. Looking for a single book to summarize Norwell's more recent history? This is the one.

**History of South Scituate-Norwell** **\$25**  
*by Joseph Foster Merritt*

This history of the town, originally written in 1938, was republished in 1988 by the Society. A unique narrative with illustrations, it is an invaluable account of Norwell prior to WWII.

**Norwell town seal pin** (*shown at left*) **\$5**

Looking for the perfect teacher gift for the holidays? Since all faculty wear lanyards, the brass and enamel town seal pin (1-inch wide) is a great gift for your child's teacher.

Looking for more items?

[Visit our website](#)

to see all of the items available for purchase.



*All the above items are available for delivery (within Norwell) or will be mailed (for a \$5 fee). You may purchase items online or you may use this form and mail a check (made payable to NHS) to: NHS, P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061.*