



NORTH RIVER PACKET

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Imagining Venus Manning's Lost Years

Two years ago, historian Wayne Tucker wrote an article on Venus Manning for the North River Packet. Since that time, he has done further research and discovered she lived on Beacon Hill when it was a center of Black abolitionist activism. Did knowing renowned activist Maria Stewart encourage Venus to further support the abolitionist cause?

by Wayne Tucker

Wayne Tucker is a South Shore native currently residing in Rockland and an Associate Research Fellow at the Harvard Slavery Remembrance Program. His research and writing on slavery in Plymouth County and beyond can be found at his website, called **Eleven Names Project: Recovering Enslaved People of Massachusetts** (use the QR code at the end of this article for a direct link to his website).

Venus Manning is a Norwell hometown hero, yet there's a large span of her life—a 35-year stint in Boston and Roxbury—with very few data points.

Venus was born into slavery in 1777, the fifth child of a couple enslaved by a shipbuilder working along the North River. She relocated to Boston, and at age 28 she chose to be baptized at the Baldwin Place Baptist Church. In the ensuing years, Venus married Thomas Manning, gained financial literacy, became a life member of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and donated to Baptist foreign missions and anti-slavery causes. When Venus died in 1860, she was amongst the most financially secure single women in South Scituate, the town now called Norwell.

Today, her gravestone and the gravestones of her sisters and brother,

Fruitful Sylvester, stand at Norwell's First Parish Cemetery. Although English settlers trafficked enslaved Africans into Scituate/Norwell starting in the 1670s, the Sylvester/Manning family plot is the earliest identifiable and marked gravesite of Black folks in Norwell. The stones are dated from 1806 to 1860, and this site is a rare cultural treasure deserving of protection and preservation; Norwell is privileged to steward this important Black history.



Venus Manning's gravestone at First Parish Cemetery in Norwell Center is slated for restoration next summer.

A new detail that hasn't yet been shared with *Packet* readers is that 1820 census records show a Thomas Manning and

a woman of Venus's age living on Belknap Street (today's Joy Street on Beacon Hill); both were enumerated as "Free Colored Persons." [See page 4 for the photo of the census record.]

Later records hint that the Mannings lived in the North End close to the docks. Venus Manning returned to South Scituate a widow sometime between 1841 and 1850.

“ In 1820
...the Mannings
lived on Belknap
Street... the heart
of Black Beacon
Hill... and ground
zero for Black
activism. ”

Belknap Street was the heart of Black Beacon Hill, and Beacon Hill was the center of nineteenth-century Black Boston—it was ground zero for Black activism, a vital hub of the Underground Railroad, and home to important historical Black figures such as Harriet and Lewis Hayden, William Cooper Nell, Primus Hall, and numerous others.

Steps from the Manning household was an important building that still stands:

(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.

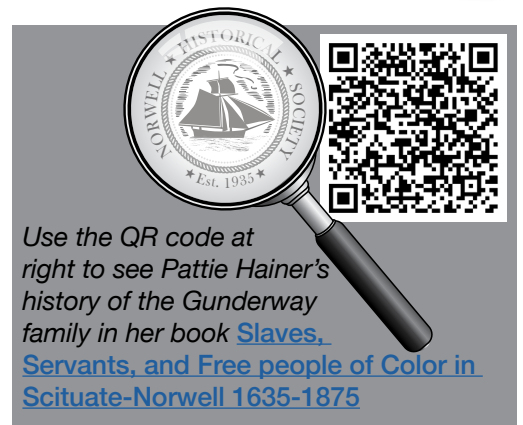
This photo of Maria Tolman's class of 1914 was recently found at the Jacobs Farmhouse. The school was located on River Street and now houses the North River Community Theater. Twelve of the 33 children were Black, evidence of a thriving Black community living in Norwell in the early 20th century. Among the children were sisters Viola, Alberta, Beulah, and Corinne Gunderway from a prominent Scituate/South Scituate/Norwell family. They descended from Revolutionary War patriot Richard Gunderway, who lived in Pembroke and served in the Continental Army.



Richard's son Jeremiah Gunderway, born about 1787, is found in the census of Scituate (now Norwell) as early as 1820. L. Vernon Briggs in *The History of Shipbuilding on the North River* identifies Jeremiah as a North River pilot, "who could pilot anything from a small fishing smack [boat] to a 'gundalow' of salt hay or a full rigged ship." Jeremiah died in 1875 at the age of 88 and is the great grandfather of the the girls in the school picture.

Their parents were Henry T. and Caroline (Winslow) Gunderway. The family also included a son Albert, born in 1910, who was too young to be attending school in 1914. Albert grew up to become a policeman in Norwell for 25 years, a member of the Board of Health, a volunteer fireman, and an active and helpful citizen until his death in in 2000 at the age of 90. The last Gunderway family member to live in Norwell was Albert's son Ronald, a fireman, who moved from Norwell in 2004, ending the family's remarkable 184 year residence in our Town!

The Gunderway family history is documented by Pattie Hainer in her book, *Slaves, Servants, and Free People of Color in Scituate/Norwell 1635-1875*, which is available for viewing online using the QR code at right.



Use the QR code at right to see Pattie Hainer's history of the Gunderway family in her book [Slaves, Servants, and Free people of Color in Scituate-Norwell 1635-1875](#)

Just The Facts

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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 3rd floor of the Sparrell School (322 Main Street) is open on Thursday mornings from 10:00 am until noon or by appointment.

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
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Norwell, MA 02061
781-561-1161



DISCOVER MORE ONLINE!

Look for the magnifying glasses or the QR codes in this issue to discover more online.

K: King Philip's War An Excerpt from Gertrude Daneau's book *The ABCs of Norwell*

Author Gert Daneau passed away in 2022. In 2010, the Society published her book, The ABCs of Norwell, which was billed as "a coloring book perfect for children of all ages." Following the letters of the alphabet, this former 3rd grade teacher reviewed Norwell's many historic people and sites to teach budding historians (and their parents) about our town.

by Gertrude Daneau


K: KING PHILIP'S WAR

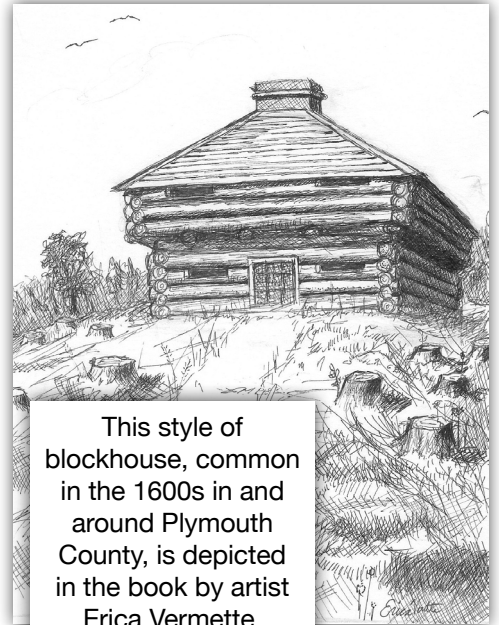
The Plymouth colony had been able to maintain peace with the local Indians and their chief, Massasoit. But when he died and his son, Wamsutta, became chief, troubles began. Upon Wamsutta's death, his brother Metacomet, became chief. Metacomet became known as King Philip.

In 1675 war began between the colonists and the Indians. It wasn't until 1676 that fighting came to Scituate (Norwell was part of Scituate then).

Scituate had already set up four "garrison houses" for the safety of the settlers. One of them was a "block house" of logs just up the river from Union Bridge. A force of 12 men was ready to protect any settlers who fled to the garrison for safety.

In April the Indians made a raid on Scituate and again in May. Many homes and mills were burned as the Indians moved along what is now the River Street area, heading for the Greenbush area. The fight that took place at Greenbush pond and the garrison house lasted for several hours until it was dark.

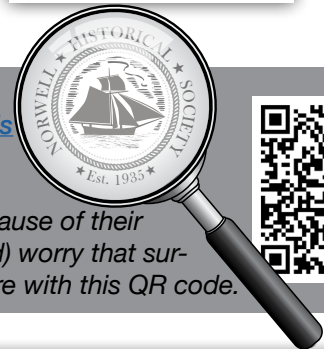
Scituate men continued to pursue the Indians as they moved on to other locations. The death of Philip in Rhode Island finally brought the war in Massachusetts to an end in 1676. 



This style of blockhouse, common in the 1600s in and around Plymouth County, is depicted in the book by artist Erica Vermette.

The Norwell Historical Society website has an [Indigenous Resources page](#) with [journals and articles related to King Philip's War](#).

While settlers were rightly concerned about their safety, Natives fought in large part because of their anger over land loss and their (well-founded) worry that surrender would mean enslavement. Read more with this QR code.



THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH

This newly-digitized photo of a Norwell church shows the many carriage barns—used for the horses and carriages of all the congregants. Countless barns! Church records would probably reveal if members not only paid annual *pew* dues, but also paid annual *carriage barn* dues? Where is this church located today? *(answer on page 7)*



Venus Manning, cont'd.

(continued from page 1)

the African Meetinghouse. In 1805, the year Venus was baptized at Baldwin Place, her neighbors formed this historic African Baptist congregation. One year later, parishioners constructed the Meetinghouse, now the oldest Black church building in the United States. Today, it is the home of the [Boston Museum of African American History](#).

Back then, beyond serving its Black neighbors' spiritual lives, the Meetinghouse hosted educational programs for children and adults, conferences, and speeches for various abolitionist groups. Although she worshipped elsewhere, I cannot imagine a scenario where Manning, a life member of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society who once lived within shouting distance of the Meetinghouse, was not tuned into its abolitionist programming.

One speaker who appeared at the Meeting House was Maria Stewart. Stewart was a pioneering abolitionist, lecturer, and writer who significantly impacted the Boston anti-slavery scene. And she, like fellow Black abolitionists Manning and David Walker (the inspirational radical who Stewart heavily influenced) was once a Belknap Street resident.

Born in Hartford in 1803, Maria Stewart grew up orphaned and indentured. She moved to Boston in 1826 and worked as a domestic servant. During this time, she became involved in the abolitionist movement and delivered powerful speeches supporting abolition and women's rights.

Stewart was amongst the first women of any race to speak out publicly, much less against slavery, and advocate for the full citizenship and rights of African Americans and women. Stewart fearlessly challenged racial and gender conventions and delivered her speeches with conviction and zeal.

Stewart delivered one of her most famous speeches on September 21, 1832, at Franklin Hall in Boston. The speech, titled "Why Sit Ye Here and Die?" was a call to action for African Americans to resist oppression and

The 1820 census shows Thomas Manning and a woman of Venus' age living on Belknap Street in Beacon Hill.

work toward their liberation. In the speech, Stewart urged black men and women to take up the cause of abolition and to fight for their rights as full citizens of the United States. She also criticized black men who refused to support the cause of women's rights, arguing that true liberation required the full participation and equality of all people.

I am also one of the wretched and miserable daughters of the descendants of fallen Africa. But, do you ask, why are you wretched and miserable? But, I reply, look at many of the most worthy and interesting of us doomed to spend our lives in gentlemen's kitchens. Look at our smart, active and energetic young men with souls filled with ambitious fire; if they look forward, alas! what are their prospects?

Maria Stewart
"Why Sit Ye Here and Die?"

Stewart left Boston in 1834, and in addition to her brief influential career as a public speaker, she continued to work for social justice in other ways. She wrote articles for abolitionist newspapers, taught school, and helped to found the Afric-American Female Intelligence Society, an organization

dedicated to promoting education and self-improvement among Black women.

Maria Stewart's speeches and writings challenged her time's prevailing attitudes and paved the road for future activists and reformers.

Knowing Stewart's story allows us to imagine a rich and active life for Venus Manning's lost years; there were possibilities for Black women to contribute to and support abolitionist causes beyond passively sitting in segregated pews listening to white clergy give anti-slavery sermons.

Highlighting Maria Stewart and Venus Manning's stories further subverts notions that abolitionist efforts were the sole purview of well-to-do white folks, and it serves as a reminder that the end of slavery owed as much to numerous unsung hometown heroes who resembled Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth as it did to folks who resembled William Lloyd Garrison and Lucretia Mott. 🍃

Not Your Average Winslow: Nathaniel Winslow, The Patriot

The colonial Winslow family was largely supportive of the British, not the patriot cause, during the American Revolution. A notable exception was Nathaniel Winslow, who lived on Tiffany Road in today's Norwell.

by Dan Neumann

The Winslow family has an illustrious history in Massachusetts. Edward Winslow was a Mayflower passenger and became governor of Plymouth Colony. His son, Josiah, was a military commander during King Philip's War [see page 3]. In 1673, Josiah too became governor of Plymouth Colony. Edward Winslow founded Marshfield, which became the family seat for many more generations of venerable Winslows.

By the eve of the American Revolution, Marshfield was one of the few towns in Massachusetts with more British loyalists than patriots. The Winslows, steeped in positions of high government office since 1620, were Tories and therefore very influential in Marshfield's evolution as a British stronghold.

The Revolution created rifts in even the most ardent families, though. Nathaniel Winslow of Scituate (today's Norwell) broke that mold, became a patriot, and participated in some of the most important events of the war.

Born in 1741, Nathaniel lived on today's Tiffany Road in Scituate (now Norwell). There were other Winslows who participated in the rebellion, but Nathaniel is of particular interest here because of his connection to present day Norwell and his distinguished service.

He was not a direct descendant of the "governor" line of Winslows, originating with Edward. Rather, he was the second great grandson of Edward's brother, Kenelm, who led a checkered life.

A carpenter by trade, Kenelm was also said to be the official coffin maker of Plymouth Colony. Not destined for high public office like other Winslows, Kenelm was fined for neglecting his duty shortly after stepping into his first post as surveyor for Plymouth Colony.

Also, several other disputes with fellow colonists led to more fines and a single day of imprisonment. Once, he was even fined for uttering "opprobrius" words against the Marshfield Church. It might be said that Kenelm had a strong anti-establishment streak—not winsome for a Winslow. Over a hundred years later, his descendant Nathaniel would exhibit a similar trait.

op·pro·bri·us *l*ə·p'rō·brē·əs/ *adj.*
Worthy of harsh criticism or censure for causing disgrace

In January 1775, just three months before the inaugural battles of the Revolution at Lexington and Concord, the town of Scituate enlisted a company of 66 "minutemen" for the protection of the town. Nathaniel was named a first lieutenant.

Tensions were high. During the same month, British general Thomas Gage sent 100 troops from Boston to Marshfield in order to protect the loyalists who were being harassed by the rebels there. Immediately after the fighting at Lexington and Concord, over a thousand militiamen descended on Marshfield from surrounding towns. Recognizing that they were hopelessly outnumbered, the British troops managed a hasty escape, safely boarding three boats at Brant Rock in Marshfield. The militia missed an important opportunity, likely the result of their inexperience.

Even though there was no fighting in the Marshfield affair, the war became a reality for the colonists of the South Shore. For Nathaniel, it must have felt strange to openly oppose loyalist family members—like his cousin Isaac, for instance, who was a well-respected doctor in Marshfield.

Joshua Winslow was another prominent relative of Nathaniel

and would not have approved of his activities. Joshua was a loyalist merchant, directly involved in the shipment of the ill-fated tea at Boston harbor. Unlike Doctor Isaac, he was universally hated by the patriots. As we know, they went so far as to dump his tea! Nathaniel and Joshua occupied opposite ends of the political spectrum.

Isaac Winslow lived in the [Winslow House](#), now a museum in Marshfield. It stands today because of Isaac's excellent reputation with the community. Otherwise, it may have fallen victim to the rebels, like many other loyalist homes.



Following the British escape from Marshfield, Nathaniel quickly advanced to Roxbury. Muster rolls indicate he belonged to a regiment under the leadership of General John Thomas. Born in Marshfield, General Thomas became a doctor and ran a practice in Kingston. His regiment played a key role in The Siege of Boston, which began after the British troops decamped to Boston from Lexington and Concord.

At that time, Boston looked a lot different geographically. Before land-fill completely reshaped the area, it was situated at the end of a narrow neck of land on a large peninsular head, and Roxbury was the gateway from the mainland [see map on page 6]. The American troops surrounded the city with fortifications, and even dug a moat across the neck. During the siege, which lasted about a year, Boston was an actual island.

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Nathaniel Winslow, cont'd.

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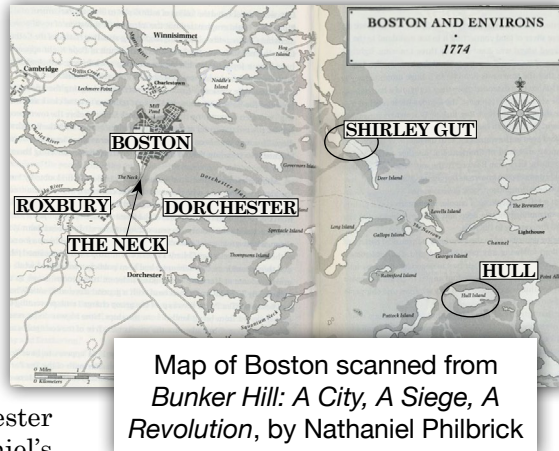
Nathaniel and his fellow patriot troops saw no action during the siege, but they were under constant threat of attack. His regiment at Roxbury, together with the rest of the American army in the region, entrenched themselves, thus cutting off all land-based supply lines for the British. While the sea route remained open for some shipments, the siege did have a considerable impact on the British troops. For instance, they were forced to tear down buildings and use the wood for fuel. Eventually, the fledgling American navy began to harass ships, making the experience even more uncomfortable and uncertain for the British.

A pivotal moment during the siege was the fortification of Dorchester Heights, an event in which Nathaniel's regiment played a key role. During the siege, both sides considered the idea of taking Dorchester. British General Gage overestimated the size of the rebel force at Roxbury and decided against it. The Americans, under the command of General Washington, were feeling more confident about securing it. During the winter of 1776, Henry Knox, in a triumphant feat, transported 60 tons of heavy artillery over 300 miles to his American compatriots in Boston from Fort Ticonderoga. On the evening of March 4th, with the diversion of blistering cannon fire and under the cover of darkness, Nathaniel's regiment slipped into Dorchester and quickly built a fortification. When dawn broke, the British were astonished at what they saw. British General Howe wrote "The rebels have done more in one night than my whole army would have done in a month."

The British then attempted a naval attack, but a storm prevented it. Ultimately, the British felt that they did not have the upper hand and decided to move their troops by ship to more advantageous positions in New York and points further south. We continue to commemorate this occasion annually on March 17th, known as

Evacuation Day (coincidentally, the same day as St. Patrick's Day).

Although the British evacuated their army, they did maintain a naval presence in Boston's outer harbor. Perhaps that is why Nathaniel appears on muster roles in both Point Shirley and Hull [circled on the map],



Map of Boston scanned from *Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution*, by Nathaniel Philbrick

after his service in Roxbury during the siege. The muster roles also indicate that he had been promoted to the ranks of Captain and Major. Point Shirley, located on the North Shore in Winthrop, was once separated from Deer Island by Shirley Gut [circled on map]. In May of 1776, around the time Nathaniel was stationed onshore there, Shirley Gut played host to a naval battle. In plain sight of the British fleet, American Captain James Mugford captured the British ship *Hope*, which was laden with military supplies. The Americans were running very low on gun powder, so this was an important prize. Two days later, and back on his own boat, *The Franklin*, Mugford was said to have died valiantly in hand-to-hand combat at Shirley Gut after his boat was boarded.

Until this point in the war, Nathaniel had not engaged in combat. However, military records show that he marched to "Bennington," and it is probable that he saw action there on August 16, 1777. The Battle of Bennington took place in New York, about 50 miles northeast of Albany and ten miles from Bennington, Vermont, for which it was named. The American troops, greatly outnumbering the British, delivered a decisive blow. British losses totaled 207 dead (including their Colonel) and 700 captured, compared to just 30 dead

and 30 wounded for the Americans. It was considered a turning point in the Saratoga Campaign and the overall war. The Americans then went on to rout the British at the Battles of Saratoga, forcing General Burgoyne to surrender. Nathaniel may have fought at Saratoga, but military records offer no conclusive proof.

We do know that he was next stationed at West Point in 1779. General Washington believed that West Point had high strategic value, given its location on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River, a vital mode of transportation. At West Point, Nathaniel was under the command of Benedict Arnold, whose famous act of betrayal involved a plot to give up the fort to the British. Luckily for Nathaniel and the American troops, Arnold was discovered, forcing his escape. Nathaniel would remain at West Point until 1781, when he retired with a pension of half pay.

His wife Sarah would have been busy while he was gone, managing a home during wartime, including a baby girl Anna, born just after the Siege of Boston. Nathaniel died in 1808 and is buried at Church Hill Cemetery in Norwell. He was survived by his wife and several children. He distinguished the Winslow family name in a new way for a new time. 🍀

 **NSTV**

The Historical Society often collaborates with Norwell Spotlight TV (NSTV) to create videos. View our programming on Norwell Spotlight TV community television (Comcast 1072 & Verizon 39) and online at NSTV's [video on demand](#) (use the QR code above).



NSTV would like our members to fill out [a brief survey](#) to let them know what else we'd like to view on Norwell's hyperlocal channels. Use the QR code at right to take the survey.



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INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

_____ Researching at the Archives _____ Other:

_____ Organizing at the Archives

_____ Farmhouse Tour Guide

_____ Farmhouse Maintenance

_____ Event Planning

_____ Photography/Digitalization



The Perambulation event on Saturday, November 18th was a huge success thanks in large part to Norwell Select Board member Andy Reardon (shown above at left), Scituate Select Board Chair Maura Curran (center holding the stick), and Highway Surveyor Glenn Ferguson (at right in the back holding the tree!).

Traditionally, Select Board members would hit each of the boundary markers with a switch during their annual perambulation of the boundaries. This marker, located off of Old Oaken Bucket Road on the Scituate line, was properly beaten during the event!

This article from the March 19, 1926 *Rockland Standard* highlights the local “criminals” on Prospect Street in Norwell during Prohibition who used an underground vault to hide their hooch! The clipping was found in the walls of the Hanover home of Society volunteer Judy Grecco. We might side with Mr. Zaneski and Mr. Mazur on this issue, rather than the “state cops” or the Norwell Police. Sorry, officers!

LOCAL OFFICERS RAID MOONSHINERS

The town authorities, working in company with the State constabulary, made a successful raid on two farms on Prospect street, Assinippi, near the Hingham line and bagged big game, on Saturday night. At the home of Thomas Zaneski, (the old Walter Simmons place), they secured 17 gallons of moonshine whiskey, 8 boxes of hops, and 25 gallons mash, the latter being found in an underground vault through the cleverness of officer Higgins of the state cops who found the trap. At the barn of William Mazur, he best haul was made, 100 gallons moonshine hidden under the hay, 26 gallons wine and 57 quarts of beer were taken here.

The raiding force consisted of Corporal Hector Pelletier, officers Higgins and Norton of the State police and officers John T. Osborne and Lester D. West, of the Norwell police.

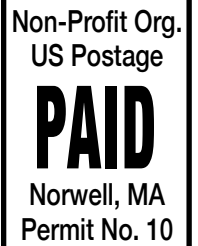


For more information on perambulation, read this article from the Fall 2023 newsletter explaining the historic tradition and how the Society celebrated.

Answer from page 3: This undated photo shows First Parish of Norwell on River Street! While there are still carriage barns to the left of the building today, all of the barns behind the parish building and on the right no longer exist.



NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 693
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061
www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Winter 2024

Upcoming Events

For an up-to-date listing of events, please see the Society website "[Events](#)" page or use the QR code at right.



North River History & Heritage Pop-Up Museum

At the Cushing Center in Norwell Center

Sat., March 2nd

The Historical Societies of the North River will all have displays at this one-day exhibit focused on our beloved river. Learn about shipbuilding through interactive exhibits and hands-on activities. Perfect for budding shipbuilders of all ages. \$10 suggested donation. Sponsored by The Jevne Team of Coldwell Banker Real Estate.

Election Day Tea with Juliette Hammond

3:30 to 5:00 pm at the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum, 4 Jacobs Lane

Tue., March 5th

In 1900, Juliette Hammond cast her ballot for School Committee in Norwell—19 years before all American women were able to vote. Listen to Juliette's story and enjoy tea and treats. This event is free to all Society members and children. \$10/non-member adult.

Spring Cleaning Tour & Tea with Mercy Turner

3:30 to 5:00 pm at the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum, 4 Jacobs Lane

Fri., April 5th

Mercy Turner, wife of the Farmhouse's final caretaker, will review the various tools she used to clean the house in the Spring. After she will invite you for tea and treats in her parlor. This event is free to all Society members and children. \$10/non-member adult.

Antiques Roadshow-Style Appraisal Event

1:00 to 4:00 in the West Barn at the Jacobs Farmhouse

Sun., April 28th

Join the appraisers from J. James Auctioneers & Appraisers of Plymouth to learn more about your antique treasures. \$25/item appraised and proceeds benefit the Norwell and Hanover Historical Societies. Members can attend for free to watch the appraisals and listen to the auctioneer's description of each item. Online sign-up for appraisals will be required and available in March.

May Day Basket Making

3:30 to 5:00 in the West Barn at the Jacobs Farmhouse

Wed., May 1st

Make a May Day basket to hang on your neighbor's door! Learn about this holiday tradition and after basket-making in the West Barn, join Hannah Jacobs in the Farmhouse for tea and treats. This event is \$10/adult, children are free.