



# February 2018 Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

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

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Norwell, MA 02061  
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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.

## A HIDDEN TREASURE IN PLAIN SIGHT

by Janet Watson

The front room of the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum is home to a carpet that is drab and frayed and has seen better days.

The only information available to the Society was a hand-written label that described it as Brussels Carpeting "of the period," and noted it as originally from the front chamber of the Hatfield home on Old Washington Street in Hanover (see that label below).

According to the Hanover Historical Society, the Hatfield House was built



between 1810 and 1814 by Albert Smith, a man of means who had interests in the ship building industry. Mr. Smith's daughter married Samuel Salmond, owner of the Salmond Tack Factory in Norwell, and they purchased the house from her father. Through subsequent marriages, the house came to be owned by the Sylvester and Hatfield families until the 1970s. According to this research, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), which owned the Jacobs Farmhouse at the time, preserved the wallpaper from the front parlor of the Hatfield House during the mid-1900s. The wallpaper was a very rare depiction of the Greek tale of *The Odyssey*. Perhaps while preserving the wallpaper (which was being removed by the current Hatfield owners), SPNEA asked to also preserve the Brussels

carpeting and installed it in the Jacobs Farmhouse.

The Society board decided to do some research to answer questions about the value and care of the carpet. Our research led us to John Burrows, a period rug and floor covering consultant and owner of JR Burrows in Rockland, Massachusetts. Serendipitously, John happens to be the foremost expert on Brussels carpets in America. He said he had driven by the Farmhouse on many occasions and always wanted to see it, so he was happy to stop by and appraise the carpet for the Society.

During the Federal period, Brussels carpets were the height of luxury for wealthy homeowners. Brussels carpets were made throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, so dating the carpet was the first task. When we first contacted him, John expected to find one of the mass-produced carpets that were common in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century—but what he found was a surprise. John determined that the weft material was linen, meaning that the carpet was woven *before* 1870, and the carpet was *hand* woven, not machine-made. Next John compared the Farmhouse's carpet's pattern to patterns that have been cataloged by museums, and he determined that the design was from the early 1800s.

After assessing the structure, material, and design, his opinion is that it is probably 200 years old and may be one of the oldest existing Brussels carpets in North America. The Jacobs Farmhouse has a rare example of an early American floor covering of historic value.

John explained the process for weaving the Brussels carpets was complex. Up

(continued on page 3)

# SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW IN THE NORTH RIVER VALLEY

by Margaret (Dumas) Crowell

*On occasion the Society will come across interesting pieces of history in our Archives that should be shared with our members. The following is an article from South Shore Life And Associated Papers of Rockland, Massachusetts that was originally published on Friday March 20, 1942. Society Archivist Bill Slattery has transcribed this article with parenthetical editorial notes, and it will be presented in two parts.*

In these days of stress and anxiety [during the Great Depression and start of World War II], it is interesting as well as rather reassuring to hark back to early days in our North River valley, for they too were anxious times. However, despite the anxieties, the men who lived here accomplished many things, and, in several cases, managed to create modest fortunes despite economic uncertainty.

Some histories rather erroneously give the impression that from the time Columbus discovered the New World until Mary Chilton hopped onto Plymouth Rock, no one had visited these shores, which is far from the actual facts. A number of explorers followed the coast line of Massachusetts, fished for cod off shore, and were quite familiar with this section. In fact, a settlement was made on Cape Ann before the coming of the Pilgrim fathers. The first settlers came to Plymouth and Boston seeking religious freedom, it is true, but those who came soon after had no such pious views. They came to better themselves financially by participating in the profitable enterprise of cod fishing.

Now, it is not possible to go cod fishing unless one has a boat, so by 1660 we find men busy on our North River constructing ships for this activity. Massachusetts was ever a maritime settlement, for farming was far from easy while the lure of the sea was strong and the chance of profit much greater. The cod fish were dried and salted, and then shipped to foreign ports to be exchanged for various products which the colonists needed. There were three types [of cod], one of which was called dun fish and was sold in Spain, Portugal, Southern France, and the "Wine Islands," which meant Madeira and Canary. Then, a Yankee ship would take in exchange wine, Malaga grapes, Cadiz salt, and Valencia oranges, a welcome cargo in the colonies. A medium grade of cod fish would be used at home, while a third type was used in trade with Cuba and the other islands of the West Indies.

This trade flourished up to the time of the Revolution and, in addition, a number of enterprising men from Nantucket, members of the Society of Friends [Quakers], were engaged successfully in the whaling industry. In fact, these Yankees did entirely too well, so that the British resented their success, and attempted to curb their activities. Any restrictions only spurred the colonists to greater efforts, and it

was this shortsighted policy which caused maritime Massachusetts to be such an active participant in the events leading up to the Revolution.

Now, during these busy days, the shipbuilders of the North River had been far from idle. They built a number of vessels for the West Indies trade and also whale ships, including the *Beaver*, which was one of the three "Tea Ships" which brought the cargo of tea to Boston, which precipitated one of the most famous tea parties in history. The "Beaver," built at the Brick Kiln Yard in North Pembroke by Ichabod Thomas, was used in the whaling trade by William Rotch of Nantucket.

In 1773, the canny Friend [Quaker Rotch] sensed that it would be well to have his ships near the home port, so had them discharge their cargoes of oil in England and take on tea for the trip back to the colonies.

Accordingly, the *Dartmouth*, *Eleanor*, and *Beaver* brought a large supply of tea to Griffin's Wharf, Boston. The colonists would not permit it to be unloaded, and the British Governor would not allow the ships to depart without unloading, so, after three weeks of fruitless negotiation, and growing ill-feeling, the famous tea party took place. Some say the water of Boston harbor still has a flavor of Old Hyson [a brand of green tea produced in China]! Anyway, one of our North River ships participated in this stirring event.

*(article to be continued in the next issue)*

THROWBACK  
PHOTO OF THE MONTH



"The Village Spa" is still in commercial use today in Norwell. This undated photo (circa 1940s or 1950s given the era of the car) is from the Society archives. The building to its left was the Norwell telephone exchange and the telephone operator's residence.

Can you guess where this small building is today and the name of the business it houses?

*(Location/ Answer at the bottom of page 4)*

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 \_\_\_\_\_

**HIDDEN TREASURE, CONT'D.**

*(continued from page 1)*

to five colors of dyed wool were used in a single row of weaving and were drawn to the surface to create the pattern, much like needlework. Originally the Farmhouse carpets' colors were vivid, but 200 years have taken its toll on the dyes. John was able to find original colors in corners and areas where the top had frayed, and was able to determine that at one time the carpet had an off-white background with flowers of purple, red, blue, orange, and yellow. The 19<sup>th</sup> century dyes used for the leaves in the design originally produced a vibrant green, but the dye was unstable and the greens quickly turned a golden brown.



*Brussels carpeting in the front parlor of the Museum (above).*

Now that the Historical Society understands the historical importance of the rug, we plan to protect it with custom-made runners and create educational materials to explain its significance.

The Society's goal is to help visitors appreciate the importance of this rug and imagine what it looked like when its vivid colors and intricate pattern adorned an early 19<sup>th</sup> century parlor.



**Damon-Waugh  
Wedding Dress  
Back in Norwell**

The *Wedding 396: Four Centuries of Wedding Fashion* exhibit at the Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth has ended, and the Norwell Historical Society's prized Damon-Waugh dress is back in our Archives.

A centerpiece of the exhibit and placed next to the Scituate Historical Society's newly-acquired Lawson gown (featuring ermine trim), the Damon Waugh dress was thought by many to be the showpiece of the display!

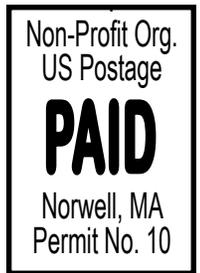
Below is the Museum's written description of the dress.

*Lucy Ada Damon wore this silk faille dress at her marriage to Varnum Waugh on February 7, 1888. This was the year that the Damon family's hometown of South Scituate changed its name to Norwell. Lucy Ada has been called the Town of Norwell's first official bride. Her wedding was actually held in Roxbury, however.*

*This exquisitely made outfit would have made a stir in any town. It is heavily ornamented with pearlized beads, a newly fashionable trimming for bridal wear in the 1880s. Pearls are worked into lavish dotted and feathery borders on the bodice and fringed three-dimensional figures on the skirt. The skirt ornaments would have glistened and trembled as the bride proceeded down the aisle.*



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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

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## NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS AND MEMORABILIA

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| <p><b>A NARRATIVE OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL</b>      \$20<br/>       by Samuel H. Olson<br/>       This book chronicles the life and times of our town from 1845-1963 with a collection of articles previously published in <i>The Norwell Mariner</i>. Each chapter is its own story!</p> | <p><b>THE ABCs OF NORWELL</b>      \$10<br/>       by Gertrude Daneau<br/>       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.</p> |
| <p><b>SHIPBUILDING ON THE NORTH RIVER</b>      \$45<br/>       by L. Vernon Briggs<br/>       The definitive index of ships built on the North River and the shipyards that lined its shores was written in 1889 and re-printed in 1988. Lists interspersed with an occasional tale.</p>   | <p><b>HISTORY OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL</b>      \$25<br/>       by Joseph Foster Merritt<br/>       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.</p>           |
| <p><b>HISTORIC HOMESTEADS OF NORWELL</b>      \$15<br/>       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.</p>                                 | <p><b>MORE THAN JUST A COOKBOOK</b>      \$5<br/>       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.</p>  |
| <p><b>NORWELL 1903 MAP</b>      \$25<br/>       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.</p>  | <p><b>THE WAY WE WERE</b>      \$20<br/>       by Jeanne Garside<br/>       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.</p>  |
| <p><b>MARYJANE CLARK-INSPIRED TRAVEL MUGS</b>      \$15<br/>       Choose the Jacobs Farmhouse or the James Library. Artist Erica Vermette created these original pieces. (2 for \$25)</p>   |   |

*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.*