



Newsletter

Winter 2017

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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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 3rd 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.

NAMING SOUTH SCITUATE'S STREETS AND OTHER TIDBITS FROM AN OLD TOWN REPORT

Norwell has a small group of citizens to thank for the names of our streets today. We often take these names for granted, but it is fascinating to note how they came to be and how some of the names have changed since their first "official" naming in 1870.

Although town reports are often dry to read and fragile to hold, the fascinating tidbits within can bring you back in time to how life must have been in the earlier days of our town. If you are interested in perusing old town reports, please call or visit the Historical Society and we will be happy to oblige.

It is fascinating to notice small details such as the name of (what is today) the Board of Selectmen: "Selectmen, Assessors, Overseer of the Poor." Apparently, the Board of Selectmen also served as the Board of Assessors and *also* served as the Overseer of the Town Almshouse (located at the site of the Cushing Center today).



The Almshouse (shown in the photo above) was the home for the poor in South Scituate, and taxpayers funded all of the home's expenses. In exchange for food and a place to sleep, the residents worked as they were able. The Almshouse was supervised by a Superintendent, and it was noted in the 1870 Town Report that:

The Overseers of the Poor take great pleasure in calling the attention of the town to the faithful manner in which the Superintendent and his Wife have discharged their duties during the past year. No word of complaint has passed the lips of the feeble and helpless ones who have been under their charge, and the tender care which has been shown them is worthy of praise.

Each Almshouse resident is listed by name in the Town Report, and it is fascinating to note their ages range from 56-84. Knowing the need for senior housing in Norwell *today*, it is clear this issue has long been at the forefront of town concerns.

Also of note in the 1870 Town Report is the "Report of the Committee Chosen by the Town to Name the Streets" (not exactly a catchy title for a Committee, but it aptly describes their duties!). The size of our small town is quite apparent in the descriptions of the street names, such as:

CIRCUIT STREET—From Main Street, near the house of Sylvanus Clapp, past the houses of Andrew Green and George Torrey, to Forest Street.

Clearly there was no intention of the Clapps, the Greens, or the Torreys ever moving, so the description is written as such.

Other interesting streets to note are:

CEDAR STREET—From Summer Street, near the house of Paul D. Briggs, east to Scituate line. (This is today's First Parish Road, the street was later named "Ocean Street" on the 1903 map of Norwell)

(continued on page 3)

"TELEPHONE COMPANY TO GIVE MODERN SERVICE" IN 1937 NORWELL

The Rockland Standard newspaper used to print a Hanover/Norwell edition titled The Hanover Branch and Norwell Advertiser. The following is a transcription of an article from that paper from May 27, 1937.

TELEPHONE COMPANY TO GIVE MODERN SERVICE

Central Office, Norwell Center, Has Up-To-Date Switchboard Installed

The 245 telephone subscribers in Norwell will be served beginning June 29 by an up-to-date common battery office in place of the magneto type exchange with which they are now familiar. With the new type of service, customers will no longer have to turn cranks on their bell boxes to signal the operator. Instead, they will lift the receiver and the operator will answer, "Number, please."

Donald C. Walton, Manager, explains that in the common battery type of office, lifting the receiver lights a lamp on the switchboard, signaling the operator to plug in on the line. When the light goes out, the operator knows that the party is through talking and the line is disconnected.

The new switchboard will be located in a cottage type house on Main street. In addition to providing common battery service for its customers in Norwell, New England Telephone will change from the post-payment to the pre-payment type. This change will give Norwell the same type of pay stations as are used in the larger cities of the Bell System.



This photo was taken in the "cottage type house" on Main Street in Norwell where phone operators worked in 1937.

The new type switchboard is one of the most modern in any community of its size.

Norwell has had telephone service for 36 years, since the original exchange was opened in the year 1900 in the old Turner house. Edwin A. Turner was chief operator at that time, and, the switchboard was of the so called "F" type with only four keys.

Two years later, in 1902, a 10-line "village" board was installed in the same offices, and in 1906, a 30-line board was installed to keep up with the increasing telephone needs of the town. Later, a 60-line board was installed.

In 1926, a fire destroyed the board, and, for two months, Norwell was served by a temporary board in the Post Office building, until the telephone quarters on West Street were completed. This board, of the magneto type, served 125 lines up to last summer, when its capacity was increased to 199 lines.

To illustrate the growth of telephone traffic in Norwell, the following table gives the number of stations [customers] in each period:

1900	8
1908	89
1916	125
1920	129
1925	190
1930	225
1935	227
1936	236

At the present time, Norwell has 245 telephone subscribers.

During each day in Norwell, there is an average of 689 calls, according to Miss Elizabeth Turner, the agent. Of these 420 are calls made from telephones in Norwell, 243 are inward toll calls from points outside Norwell, eight are calls from Norwell pay stations, and 18 are requests for information.

One of the principal advantages to telephone customers of the new switchboard will be the substitution of letters for ring numbers. Subscribers on four-party lines will have numbers designated by the letters J M R or W. Subscribers with J or R numbers will answer on two rings, and parties having M or W will answer on one ring. On this four-party service, a subscriber will hear only his own ring and that of one other party. Thus, a subscriber with the letter J will hear only his double ring and the single ring for the M party.

On eight-party rural lines, the subscribers' numbers will be designated J1, J2, J3, J4, and W1, W2, W3 and W4, and those in each group will hear the rings of the others in the same group.

The Norwell central office will have direct circuits to Brockton, Rockland, Scituate, Hanover and Marshfield. Brockton is the toll center for the district.

The new switchboard is known to telephone men as a one-position Number 12 multiple board, and is one of the most modern in telephone service. Careful plans and considerable work have gone into completing the arrangements for the cutover, and, it is expected that it will be accomplished without trouble.

For the story of Norwell telephone service, we thank the executives of the New England Tel. & Tel. Co., and especially Manager Donald C. Walton of Rockland.

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE _____ NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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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

AREAS OF INTEREST

Newsletter _____ Research Library _____

Tour Guide _____ Program Planning _____

TOWN REPORT TIDBITS, CONT'D.

(continued from page 1)

DOVER STREET—From River Street, past the house of Hannah Dover, to Main Street. (Hence, the name)

ELM STREET—From River Street, past the house of Eben Stetson, to the Methodist Church on River St. (This is today's Stetson Road, presumably it was renamed when Dutch elm disease killed all of the elm trees in town)

JACOBS AVENUE—From Main Street, past the house of Loring Jacobs, to Prospect Street. (Interesting that Jacobs Lane used to be an "Avenue")

MILL STREET—From River Street, near Neil's Corner, past the house of Samuel Tolman, Jr., to Hanover line. (This is *not* today's Mill Lane, but instead today's Tiffany Road—renamed at a later time)

NEAL STREET—From Main Street, towards Little's Bridge, to Scituate line. (Little's Bridge was located about where the 3A bridge crosses the North River today. This road is Neal Gate Lane today)

NORWELL'S AVENUE—From Central Street, past the house of Henry Norwell, to Bryant's Corner. (Interesting that it used to be named "Norwell's" instead of "Norwell." Also, Bryant's Corner is the intersection of Lincoln Street and Norwell/Grove where Snow Bryant's Tavern used to be)

SCHOOL STREET—From Grove Street, near school house in Dist. No. 3, to Mount Blue Street. (If you've ever wondered why School Street has no school on it...

see photo at right showing the District No. 3 schoolhouse located at the intersection of School and Grove Streets.



The Committee consisted of townspeople whose names are still well-known today, including: William Collamore, Benjamin Jacobs, Abel Vinal, and Charles A. Litchfield.

Also of note in the 1870 Town Report is the listing of Town Officials. Following the list of Selectmen (Assessors, etc.), was Ebenezer T. Fogg, "Town Clerk, Treasurer and Collector." Mr. Fogg also served as president of the South Scituate Savings Bank—clearly a busy man. Also listed was the School Committee, and the Constables (since there was no official police department, the Constables served as such).

Most interesting was the listing of twenty-four (yes, 24!) Highway Surveyors. This report shows that our town originally had 24 individual surveyors of the highways and as the job has developed into one position, Norwell chose to retain that historically-charming title.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Do you have an email address that you would like to share with the Historical Society? Having up-to-date emails for our members allows us to share last-minute news and events. Please use the "Contact Us" link on the website and send us your email so we can update our records.

Answer to the Throwback Photo on page 4: 687
Main Street, offices of Cavanaugh Consulting (the former telephone exchange building, see article on page 2) and Aveni Cleaners.



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NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS (AN ABBREVIATED LIST...)

THE ABCs OF NORWELL _____ \$10

by Gertrude Daneau

This coloring book is 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.

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 on over 45 antique houses in Norwell.

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!

NORWELL 1903 MAP REPRODUCTION _____ \$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.

All these items (and more!) are available...

at the NHS Library at the Middle School on Wednesdays (2:00-3:00 p.m.) **OR** you may e-mail the Society via our website and arrange local delivery, **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.

THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Where was this photograph taken?

The original photo title is "The Village Spa and Telephone Exchange Building," but where is that today? Taken in the 1940s (evident from the car), this is still commercial space today and looks quite the same. See article on page 2 for more details.

(Location/ Answer at the bottom of page 3)

Do you have a "Throwback Photo" that you'd like to donate to the Historical Society to be scanned? Email us at info@norwellhistoricalsociety.org.