



Fall 2015

Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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The Norwell Historical Society
P.O. Box 693
Norwell, MA 02061
781-659-1888
www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org

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.

OCTOBER 2ND: HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR

The 2nd Norwell Historic House Tour will take place on Friday, October 2nd. The Tour, organized by the Norwell Historical Commission, will benefit the James Library & Center for the Arts. The Norwell Historical Society provides all of the research and historic narratives for each of the houses.

Seven antique homes along Main Street will be featured this year, including "Riverdale Farm" at #869. Known by locals as the Dr. Cushing Otis House but referred to on its historic plaque as the "Joseph & Jonathan Turner House," this is the fourth antique that Trish and Joel Shepherd have restored in Norwell.

Although the original structure on the property dates back to the late 1600s, what you see before you was largely constructed in the mid-1700s. This gentleman's farm with its distinctive 5-bay attached barn is a fine example of exquisite period detail balanced with modern convenience.

The property has seen much change since its first settlement as part of an 80-acre land grant to Humphrey Turner in 1676. Humphrey's son, John Turner, established a homestead on the land after the Indian Raid of 1676 for two of his sons, Jonathan and

Joseph. In about 1701, Jonathan moved his large family to a new house closer to the North River (located today at 19 Upper Ferry Lane). Joseph Turner and his wife, Bathsheba Hobart, remained in the house with their small family. Turner family members continued to live in the house until about 1803, when the house and land was purchased by Dr. Otis. He extensively renovated the house and expanded the front west parlor for his medical practice. He added two

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Riverdale Farm at 869 Main Street and its equine residents in the late 1800s (above) and today (below).



Norwell Historical Society Annual Meeting

Thursday, October 22nd at 7:00 p.m. at the Norwell Middle School

The Norwell Historical Society will host its 80th Annual Meeting on Thursday, October 22nd at 7:00 p.m. at the Historical Society Library at the Norwell Middle School. The evening will begin with a coffee reception, the annual meeting will commence at 7:30, and John F. Gallagher (historian, researcher, and author) will speak at 7:45 on his book, *Arsenic in Assinippi*, which chronicles the trial of Jennie May Eaton for the murder of her husband, Rear Admiral Joseph Eaton in Norwell in 1913.

This presentation is free, but please RSVP so that we may plan accordingly. You may reply via the internet at WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG (and click on the "Events" tab) or leave a message on our answering machine at 781-659-1888.

OCTOBER 2ND: HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR, CONT'D.

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bedchambers on the second floor, and probably added the east porch with the Chinese Chippendale railing. Dr. Otis named the property “Riverdale Farm.”

The next major renovations to Riverdale Farm occurred in the mid-1800s when Otis’ daughter Abigail took over the house and added the large barn on the west end. Next, in the early 1900s (the Colonial Revival period), the flooring in the front two formal rooms was replaced with heart pine, the 3rd floor was made into living space, and the dormers and a porch on the west end were added to match the one on the east side (that porch has since been removed). Until the mid-1990s, there was still a working pump and well in the kitchen!

Up until the 1990s the only real window to the backyard was from the dining room, so the North Hall was expanded and a wall of windows was added in the

back of the kitchen to view the yard. A 1st floor bath was also created in the existing barn space using the flooring and bead board salvaged from the removed west porch. At this point, it was decided that the hand pump was no longer needed in the kitchen—the copper sink, however, remains in the butler’s pantry!

In 2014, the Shepherds and Buttonwood Renovations formally finished the 3rd floor, updated the bathrooms, and completed a major addition to the kitchen and master bedroom.

Visit Riverdale Farm and the six other homes along Main Street on October 2nd. Tickets are available prior to the Tour at WWW.JAMESLIBRARY.ORG and on the day of the Tour at The Cushing Center.

THE JACOBS’ FAMILY HISTORY

by Bill Slattery

Editor’s Note: The following is the second 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. Parenthetical notes have been added for to help with context.

One of John [Jacob]’s sons, David (1664-1748), married Sarah Cushing (1671-1723) in 1689. David had purchased land in Scituate from a relative, George Russell, in 1688. Russell had run a mill with the Stockbridges for many years. David was familiar with this grist mill. He also served as a church deacon and schoolmaster for Scituate’s only school.

By age 36 in 1700, David Jacob owned land around Third Herring Brook; as a Town surveyor, he laid out a road where Indians had traveled on a path from winter to summer camp sites. This road is documented as existing in 1704 between the Greenbush area where David lived and running west to the Assinippi area over the Third Herring Brook (the road being today’s Main Street, Norwell). This brook, along its long course, had seen duty in the 1600s for powering at least a couple gristmills. Sometime between 1700 and 1720, probably with much assistance, David cleared trees, and dammed up the stream to form what has become known as Jacobs Pond. Two of his sons, Joshua (b. 1702) and Dr. Joseph (b. 1707) are credited for building a grist mill and saw mill [on Jacobs Pond] by about 1725 (though they would only have been 23 and 18 respectively), each mill with its own flume [water chute]. The grist mill was just west of the saw mill. Reference was made to the mills in the incorporation papers of Hanover in 1727. Both mills were built originally within the bounds of Scituate [now Norwell],

but the brook became a boundary when Hanover separated. Except for southwest of the pond and west of the course of the brook south of it, the land would be called Scituate until 1849.

When Joshua Jacob married Mary James (b. 1704) April 7, 1726, the couple became the first to occupy the newly constructed two story house [known today as the Jacobs Farmhouse]. It was “built 60 rods to the east north east of the family grist and saw mills” powered by the water flowing beneath the main road from the Jacobs Pond.

Eventually, the Jacob family would be well represented in houses on what is now Jacobs Lane, Main Street, and Prospect Street (in what is now Norwell) and along Washington Street in Hanover and Norwell. In short, all around the pond.

Joshua’s brother, Dr. Joseph, was a physician. He was the father of Elijah (1735-1779), whose brick house, known as “The Line House,” is still standing on today’s Assinippi Avenue [currently Hingham Savings Bank].

“The Line House” striding the town lines of Hanover and Norwell, was built in circa 1759-69, constructed of brick made from the owner’s kiln on the property.



(left) An old photo of the Jacobs Saw and Grist mills. They burned on July 4, 1920.

(continued on next page)

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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MEMBERSHIP

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P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061



AREAS OF INTEREST

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 OR YOU CAN JOIN ON-LINE 
www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org

THE JACOBS' FAMILY HISTORY, CONT'D.

(continued from previous page)

Brick making would be a trade for Elijah and for subsequent generations, though perhaps more for chimneys and fireplaces than entire dwellings. His youngest son, Edward Foster Jacobs (1774-1853) would also raise a family in "The Line House." He served as a Scituate selectman, on the Governor's Council, and as a State Representative for Hanover and Scituate. He was also a sponsor of the nearby Universalist Church in Assinippi.

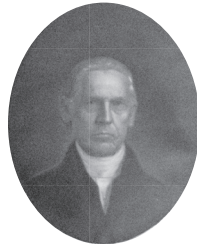
[Ed. note: circa mid-1700s, the "Jacob" family name became the "Jacobs" family name—perhaps reference to the two mills (saw and grist) helped the name evolve into a plural form?]

At the death of Joshua in 1784, what is called the Jacobs Farmhouse passed to James (b. 1742), who would marry Deborah Richmond (b. 1742) and have three children.

When James died in 1827, the Farmhouse was owned for about a decade by his son, Richmond Jacobs (1808-1838), who died on a trip to New Orleans—a very important port for shipping goods.

Richmond had no heirs, so the youngest son of James, Ichabod Richmond Jacobs (b. 1774) inherited the Farmhouse and his brother's mill shares. Ichabod had married Clarissa Richmond (b. 1778) in 1805, and served as a Scituate selectman in the years 1840-1841. While the families could make a living from their farms, the mills provided important supplemental income shared among the male heirs. According to historian L. Vernon Briggs, there were two other grist and saw mills belonging to other families further south on the swift-flowing five mile stream of Third Herring Brook in 1829.

Ichabod's eldest child, Mary Sheffield Jacobs (1806-1883) married the Rev. Massena Berthier Ballou



This portrait of Rev. Hosea Ballou hangs in the Jacobs Farmhouse today.

(1800-1881) on December 21, 1825. Massena was the son of the famous Universalist preacher, Hosea Ballou, who had spoken at the local Universalist Church and who would end his career at the Universalist Society's headquarters in Boston. His portrait (*shown at left*) remains at the Farmhouse.

The story is related by Margaret Dumas-Crowell that a great grandson of the first Joshua Jacob (a grandson of the 2nd Joshua, a son of the 3rd Joshua) by the name of Bela Tower Jacob (1806-1886), was loaned money by the wealthy and soon-to-be bank owner, Ebenezer T. Fogg—enough funds to travel to Chile to make his fortune at age 22. Needless to say, this was much to the dismay of his relations who had seen him grow up at his father's Cape house on Prospect Street and who refused to invest in his adventure. In Chile he made coffins for the many victims of yellow fever and did other carpentry, and, after having made \$40,000, had to smuggle his gold in the hold of his returning ship. It was against Chilean law to take much gold out of the country. He succeeded and lived in a two story house two houses east of the Jacobs Homestead.

For many years Bela was a farm laborer for relatives. By the end of his life, he lived in the east side of Jacobs Homestead and worked in the fields for Benjamin Jacobs (b. 1815).

(to be continued in the next issue)

*Answer from page 4: 427 Washington Street.
Today it is the home of Garden Craft.*



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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 through a collection of articles previously published in *The Norwell Mariner*. A wonderful read!

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 the above items are available at the NHS Library in the Middle School on Wednesdays during the school year (2-3:00 p.m.) or you may e-mail the Society via our website, 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 in Norwell?

This photo (taken circa 1900) is of the home of Admiral Joseph Eaton. Admiral Eaton died here... was it natural causes or murder with arsenic poisoning? Come to the Historical Society Annual Meeting on Thursday, October 22nd and learn more about this real-life mystery.

(Location/Answer at the bottom of page 3)