



Newsletter

Spring 2015

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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P.O. Box 693
Norwell, MA 02061
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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.

WHAT A WINTER!

Everyone in Norwell had a hard winter, including the Historical Society!

Our new member appeal, sent to *all* Norwell residents, landed in mailboxes on February 2nd--one of the many Monday storms that hit our town this year. Needless to say, the response to the mailing was less than hoped for.

Thankfully, the *Norwell Mariner* featured an article that both complained about the snow and highlighted the Society's need for new members. Here is an excerpt from that article by Caitlin Flaherty:

After a winter like this, Norwell residents probably don't want to hear stories about how their elders walked 5 miles up hill both ways in the snow to get to school every day. However, for Norwell Historical Society [members]... looking at the past is fun and can make [them] feel a whole lot better about the present—especially when it comes to the snow.

[Sifting] through a stack of town reports ..., some dating back to more than 100 years ago, they told quite a different

story of how snow was removed from the town's roadways.

In the 1915 town report, many locals submitted bills to the town for removing snow and ice. For example, in the snow account section, the report shows that the town paid residents such as Allen Mott \$2.38 for his services, William Jacobs was paid \$3.25, and Joseph H. Hatch "and a team" of horses were paid \$4.50. Overall more than 60 residents were paid a total of \$215— not a bad year for the town, which budgeted \$419 for snow removal. Back then oxen and horses were used to plow the snow.

Thank you to the *Mariner* for its interesting and informative feature, and a reminder to members to renew on-line or via mail today.



The article featured this undated photo of a team of oxen on Main Street in Norwell.

ABIAL FARRAR'S CIVIL WAR

by Bill Slattery

Editor's Note: The following is the fourth and final installment of a Society newsletter article originally written in 1990 by Society Archivist Bill Slattery. Because 2014 marked the 150th anniversary of South Scituate (Norwell) resident Abial Farrar's (pronounced "aah by'el fair'aah") entrance into the Civil War at age 17, we are re-publishing this article.

It was probably about this time [mid-February, 1865] that a neighbor from South Scituate [today's Norwell] in the

Union Army visited Abial [at his army camp in Virginia]. Orlando C. Prouty was about four years older and held the rank of sergeant in the 32nd Regiment of Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers. He wrote that he found Abial in want of shoes, shirts, and pants. He described Abial to his own sister as a good boy whom he loved and would do anything to help. After obtaining the needed clothing, Prouty advised him in all earnestness to refuse "to do any duty for any one" owing to his frail health.

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ABIAL FARRAR, CONT'D.

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On February 24th, Abial returned Prouty's visit. About this, Prouty wrote his sister, "he did not look as if he would live a great while."

By February 26th, Abial's much sought after box arrived from his mother. As another boy's box arrived at the same time, an impromptu party began. But, Abial only ate gingerly of its contents.

Two days later, on the last day of February, the 28th, Abial returned to the hospital. In the last and shortest letter to his mother dated March 1st, and in very shaky handwriting, he told her "the box looked very nise... I took the butter as I was going to the hospy."

Three days later, on Saturday March 4, 1865, Abial Farrar was dead. He was exactly 17 years, 8 months, and 14 days old. There was uncertainty as to what caused his death, but the report of the Town of South Scituate called it "fever." While that might be accurate, dysentery and possibly pneumonia were likely contributors. When his Sergeant finally got around to writing Abial's mother, he called his disease "consumption," now known as tuberculosis. Perhaps he surmised this from observing severe coughing.

It was actually Abial's mother who initiated contact with regimental Sergeant Charles Tolman of (south) Marshfield because she said she had not heard from her son. He responded that he was surprised that she was unaware of her son's death. Perhaps to mitigate this news, he added, "Farrow was a Soldier I thought a great deal of." And, again, "Abial Farrow was a Soldier who was liked by every man in Co. M."

Neighbor Sergeant Orlando C. Prouty, who had a visit with and from Abial and had prophesied that he might not live much longer, was deeply saddened. He wrote, "I felt as one would who had lost a brother." Wanting to learn more of Abial's final days, perhaps so as to satisfy a mourning mother and family as much as his curiosity, he approached Abial's tent mate, who was about Abial's age. Prouty wrote, "he told me all he knew about him and whilst he was telling me tears came to his eyes for he said he was like a brother to him." The soldiers of Abial's company told Prouty they did not know what he had died of, nor did the doctors. Nevertheless, Prouty scolded the company's lieutenant concerning the care Abial had received at the hands of his doctors.

Though many soldiers of the Peterburg Campaign were interred in a nearby national cemetery, Prouty must have known his family would have wanted the return of his body. It was likely for this reason that he carefully described the location of Abial's remains and requested of his sister to notify Charles Farrar should he wish to obtain the body. It was not until January 9, 1866, well after the War had ended in April of the

previous year, that Charles accompanied the body from City Point, Virginia, to return home.

Now most of the surviving Civil War veterans were back at their homes also.

One could imagine the scene of townspeople coming to



The Farrar gravestone at First Parish Church cemetery

pay their respects to the fallen boy soldier in his wood coffin on the front lawn beneath the crabapple tree and the assemblage following it, drawn by a horse and wagon, down the dusty road to the church in the center of town for

the funeral service. Then, in clear view of the church, he was laid to rest—the first occupant of a plot that would subsequently be occupied by later generations of Farrars and Vinals. Perhaps it was Abial's nephew, the respected naturalist and third president of the Norwell Historical Society, William Gould Vinal, who raised a new tombstone in the mid-twentieth century, and placed upon it the following epitaph as a tribute, reading:

A Private of Co. M 1st MASS

Young soldier rest calmly sweetly rest

Thy warfare and suffering are o'er

The turf lies now on thy peaceful breast

For Thy Country T'will throb never more

While in just four years, the Civil War caused the North or Union forces over sixty thousand killed in action, almost **four times** that number died of disease. Ironically, the invisible enemy was more deadly than the visible one, and somewhat more neglected.

Though it might seem far less glorious to die of disease than on the battlefield, this War was notable for undermining the idea that war was glorious at all. The technology of the times far exceeded the strategies employed by military leaders. The devastation raked by artillery fire was appalling, cutting men down like wheat before the reaper. All too often it was not a fair fight, but more like mass murder. Some veterans would refuse to discuss what they had seen.

This ruinous war that was in its final days by March of 1865 had not permitted young Abial Farrar to swagger back home to all his friends to relate his part in the great national struggle for unity and justice. Indeed,

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NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE _____ NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP

3-Year Membership (\$35) _____

Life Membership (\$500) _____

Please make checks payable to the *Norwell Historical Society* and mail to: NHS,
P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061


AREAS OF INTEREST

Newsletter _____ Research Library _____

Tour Guide _____ Program Planning _____

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





Please join The Norwell Historical Society
for a

May Day Tea

in the historic
Jacobs Farmhouse

Friday
May 1st
3:00 - 5:00
in the afternoon

\$5/Historical Society member
\$40/non-member (3-year membership included)

RSVP at www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org (space is limited)

*Drink a bit of tea from an antique cup.
Make a May Day Basket
for your neighbor's door.
Enjoy spring at the Farmhouse.*

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in short order, the War's ravenous appetite would even consume our sixteenth President, making of him another of its many casualties. Yet, his eloquence spoke for the people of his time, and granted a benediction to the soldiers who had supplied "the last full measure of devotion."

For this, and for their many and intense sufferings, have these men earned the retelling of their deeds, and the fond remembrance of grateful neighbors and countrymen of every generation.

 **DON'T FORGET...**

- 1) It is not nice to point, and
- 2) Renew your NHS membership on-line

www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org

Answer from page 4: Tiffany Road/East Street
bridge on the border with Hanover



NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

May Day Tea



Friday, May 1st
at Jacobs
the Farmhouse

**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!

SOUTH SCITUATE 1903 MAP REPRODUCTION _____ \$25

This 16" X 20" reproduction of the 1903 Plymouth County Atlas map of Norwell (then South Scituate) 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 is this bridge in Norwell?

This photo (taken by a "Mr. Packard" as noted in the corner of the original) was recently shown to the Historical Society by stonemason Rob Visser, and reveals a granite bridge spanning the Third Herring Brook--the border between Hanover and Norwell. Presumably taken in the late 1800s or early 1900s, it shows a single passenger in a chaise carriage (noted for its folding hood).

(Answer at the bottom of page 3)