



April 2014

# Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

## A LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SCHOOL GIRL'S RECORDING OF INDIGENOUS PLANTS

### DIRECTORS & OFFICERS

Wendy Bawabe, President  
William Slattery, Secretary  
Robert Pashkowsky, Treasurer

### Board of Directors

Sarah Jane Baker  
Chad Forman  
Samuel Olson  
Joan Vermette

### CONTACTING US

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 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.

By Samuel Olson

From the *Rockland Standard*, April 13, 1901:

*There was a severe forest fire at the rear of Albert Farrar's on Washington Street. The alarm was sounded by the Universalist church bell, and a large number of citizens assembled to fight the fire. One hundred and fifty acres burned over the Mayflower district, so there will be few to gather this season.*

[Note by author: there wasn't the realization then that pulling up the Mayflowers would bring about their virtual extinction.]

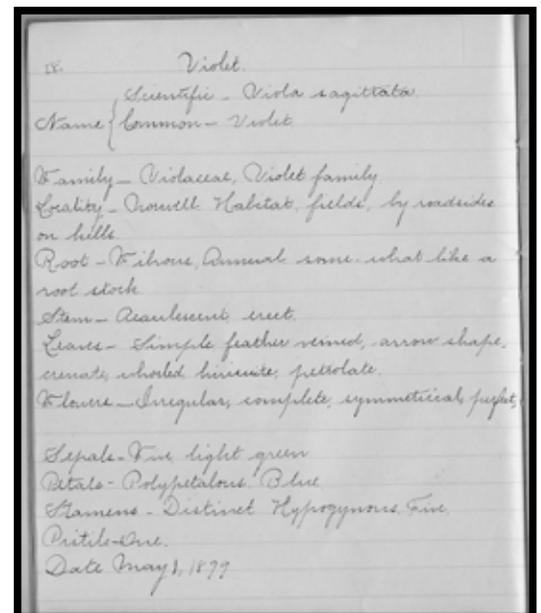
Recently, while surveying items in the William Gould Vinal Library at the Jacobs Farmhouse, I came across a Botany class notebook compiled by Edith Osborne in 1899 when she was a junior at Norwell High School. I was immediately impressed by the beauty of the cursive writing, now increasingly a lost art, and also by the meticulous analysis in her log book of twenty-eight species of plant life from Mount Blue and other areas of Norwell.

A further thought was this class assignment must have been an exception to the usual rote learning still favored by nineteenth century educators. Possibly, Norwell was in the vanguard of Dr. John Dewey's innovative approach to education--"we learn by doing."

Edith Osborne was born and raised on Grove Street ("Back Street") in Mount Blue. She attended the ungraded District Number Three as did her eight siblings. One of her near neighbors and

school mates was Willie Gould Vinal, who graduated from the high school (then located on the second floor of the town hall) a year earlier than Edith.

Having been acquainted with many Mount Blue people earlier in my life, I was well aware of how perceptive they were regarding the indigenous plants of the region. They knew the language



A page from Edith Osborne's  
Botany journal

of plants such as the spice bush (benzain) used for medicine. The first dandelions, or cowslip plant, were rich in iron. Rather than being regarded as a noxious weed, a mess of dandelions flavored with salt pork fried in the cast iron "spider" was universally regarded as a spring tonic.

Their perception of nature also extended from habits of wild creatures, birds, and

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Please join The Norwell Historical Society  
for a

# May Day Tea

in the historic  
Jacobs Farmhouse

Thursday

May 1<sup>st</sup>

3:00 - 5:00  
in the afternoon

*Drink a bit of tea from an antique cup.*

*Make a May Day Basket  
for your neighbor's door.*

*Enjoy spring at the Farmhouse.*

\$5/Historical Society member

\$20/non-member (membership included)

RSVP at [www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org) (space is limited)

## NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS AND MEMORABILIA

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*.

SHIPBUILDING ON THE NORTH RIVER \_\_\_\_\_ \$45

by L. Vernon Briggs

The definitive book on ships built on the North River and the shipyards that lined the shores. Written in 1889, and re-printed in 1988.

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.

HENDERSON MAP \_\_\_\_\_ \$3

Interesting hand-drawn map suitable for framing. Drawn by Anne Henderson and first issued in 1967, it is a favorite depiction of the location of historic homes.

1879 MAP \_\_\_\_\_ \$3

This map is reproduced from a hand-drawn map of South Scituate in 1879. It shows the locations of road, homes and their owners. Suitable for framing.

NORWELL TILES \_\_\_\_\_ \$10

These 6" X 6" white tiles depict various scenes: Kent House, Cushing Center, etc. *Limited number.*

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.

HISTORY OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL \_\_\_\_\_ \$25

by Joseph Foster Merritt

A recently re-published history of the town to 1938. A unique narrative considered to be an invaluable account of Norwell prior to WWII.

MORE THAN JUST A COOKBOOK \_\_\_\_\_ \$5

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.

THE WAY WE WERE \_\_\_\_\_ \$20

by Jeanne Garside

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.

JACOBS MILLS PAINTING REPRODUCTION \_\_\_\_\_ \$25

This 8" X 10" reproduction of the 1830s Jacobs Saw and Grist Mills painting is canvas-mounted on board and ready for framing. The original hangs in the Jacobs Farmhouse. (Framed copies available at the Society for \$75.)

*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 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.*

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP**

Individual (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_ Business (\$40) \_\_\_\_\_

Family (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_ Life (\$200) \_\_\_\_\_

Benefactor (\$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 \_\_\_\_\_ Public Relations \_\_\_\_\_

Hospitality \_\_\_\_\_ Program Planning \_\_\_\_\_

Library Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Historical Research \_\_\_\_\_

Photo Cataloging \_\_\_\_\_ Process Archival \_\_\_\_\_  
Material

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SCHOOL GIRL, CONT'D**

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insects to cloud formations and wind direction--all prognosticators of weather conditions both imminent and longer range.

In addition to dating her observations and describing their habitat--sandy fields, swamps and bogs, along roadways and adjacent to fences--she included both the scientific names and the common names. The Mayflower was scientifically the trailing arbutus; the anemone, or wind flower was *anemone nemorosa*; the wild columbine to botanists was *aquilegia canadensis*.

Also included in her mode of analysis were descriptions of stem and leaf form. Flower color, pistils, and petals were also noted with care.

After graduating from Norwell High, Edith worked at the Litchfield Shoe Factory until its closing in 1901. She married a few years later, became the mother of three children, and resided in a neighboring town. But the love of plants and all forms of nature remained throughout her long life. Visits from family and neighbors included garden tours. There was a lot of bragging about who grew the best vegetables or the

most prolific and beautiful flowers. The visit might end with a slip from a favorite plant and a share in a bountiful harvest.

She was very pleased in 1988 to be recognized as the oldest living graduate, Class of 1900, of Norwell High School as part of the town's centennial celebration. She died the following year at the age of 106, still in full possession of her mental faculties.

*Note: Edith Osborne Molin (1883-1989) was the great aunt of author Sam Olson.*



**STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL**  
**SUNDAY, JUNE 8<sup>TH</sup>**  
**AT THE JACOBS FARMHOUSE**  
**3:00 - 5:00 pm**  
Tours of the Farmhouse  
Strawberry Shortcake & Lemonade  
Children's Games



*(photo at left)  
Mount Blue School  
photo taken in 1891.  
Edith Osborne is on the  
left in the dress,  
Willie Gould Vinal is on  
the right in the bow tie.*



Ellen Merritt Joseph passed away this past Christmas Eve. Mrs. Joseph was the loving mother of 4, grandmother of 11, great-grandmother of 21, and great-great-grandmother of 2! Many gifts came to the Society in her memory.



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**PAID**

Norwell, MA  
Permit No. 10



and



invite you to a Dinner & Presentation by  
**Les Tyrala**  
Antique Clock & Barometer Restorer

# TIMEKEEPING

*An illustrated history of the clocks we love*

Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>  
6:00 pm

Phoenix Masonic Lodge  
Hanover Four Corners  
\$15/person (payable at the door)

*Bring Your Own Timepiece!*

If you wish to bring in a clock  
(be sure to unhook the pendulum bob  
before transporting and pack the clock  
well) or photographs, Les will provide  
comments about your piece in terms of  
its history and its general worth.

RSVP by April 23<sup>rd</sup>  
781-826-9575  
to reserve your place



accessible

