



December 2015

Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

NORWELL HIGH SCHOOL

3 STELLAR CLASSES: 1938, 1939, 1940

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P.O. Box 693
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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.

by Samuel Olson

The mid- and late-1930s was a time when a great deal of adaptability was required of Norwell young people.

A planning committee had been appointed to update the 1922 school building (approximately where the present town hall is now located) which housed pupils from grades 4-6 on the first floor and grades 7-12 on the second. An early decision was made to replace the wood-burning furnace with coal.

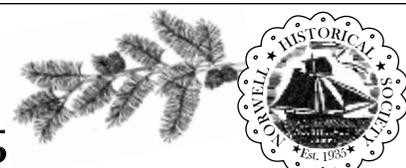
On Friday, December 20, 1935 (the day school had been dismissed for Christmas recess) townspeople were stunned to see the high school

and the adjoining 1885 town hall erupt in flames at about 10:00 pm. Nearby brooks contained inadequate water to save the two buildings. A subsequent investigation pointed to a malfunctioning electrical system as a probable cause.

Plans were immediately made for the displaced Norwell pupils to attend Hanover schools from 1:30 to 5:30 in the afternoon. In January, the town voted to build a combined upper-elementary and high school on Main Street, property formerly owned by the family of William Penn Brooks.

The architect named was B.H. Doane with Irving P. Rocheford, contractor. Work commenced on May 15, 1936. The class of 1938 was the first to graduate from the new building, now called the Sparrell Building. The '38 class thus was to attend *three different buildings* in their high school years! The new building, costing approximately \$130,000, was built without Public Works Administration (PWA) federal funding.

A big divergence from the present day for the three classes that graduated in the last years of the Great Depression was the significant number who left before graduation to go to work or move to other towns. The Class of '38 (graduating 25 total) lost four boys to jobs in their sophomore year and two boys at the beginning of their junior year. Several others were lost to neighboring towns for better jobs or cheaper rentals. Today, a few students might leave for private school but seldom for the afore-mentioned reasons.



2015
**Christmas at the
FARMHOUSE**
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13TH
Open House from 2:00 'til 4:00
at the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum

FREE
for members
\$35 for non-members
INCLUDES 3-YEAR MEMBERSHIP!

Tour the Jacobs Farmhouse decorated for the holidays, enjoy old-fashioned victuals and mulled cider, chat with fellow historical buffs, buy Historical Society items as holiday gifts, and enjoy Christmas caroling around the antique home organ!

For more information visit www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org

(continued on page 2)

3 STELLAR CLASSES, CONT'D.

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In reviewing the yearbooks for 1938 (the first yearbook since 1935), 1939 and 1940, I was impressed by the high level of school spirit. There were relatively few interscholastic sports and other extracurricular activities offered, but practically everyone participated in some way. The only athletic teams were boys baseball and boys and girls basketball. Other activities included Student Council, Glee Club, *Shipbuilder* (yearbook) Staff, French Club, and Minstrel Show. Particularly impressive was the quality and originality of student writing in the yearbook.

Very successful activities during these years were both the interclass and the tri-town (Norwell, Marshfield, and Scituate) competitive plays. Virtually every student participated in theatrical productions either on stage or behind the scenes.

The year ended for the 38ers with commencement exercises for twenty-five students (fourteen boys and eleven girls). Commencement week concluded with the senior prom and a class outing. An unusual feature of graduation that year was dropping the customary senior speeches and instead having a dramatic presentation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

In 1939, there were also twenty-five graduates: nine boys and sixteen girls. Their senior year had begun with a new principal, Gordon Thayer (later headmaster of Thayer Academy) and six new faculty members. Principal Thayer introduced the National Honor Society which required for membership a grade of at least 85% in all subjects. Foreign language teacher Marion Hurley was the advisor.

That year the seniors won the tri-town dramatic competition. A unique feature of the class graduation was an ambitious production, "A Page of Norwell's History." There were seven student-researched and skillfully-staged scenes which included a pageant featuring shipbuilding on the North River, a Civil War prison scene where the boy hero (D. Willard Robinson) died, and "Town Meeting, 1888" in which South Scituate became Norwell. There were seven episodes in all.

The Class of 1940 was the first to attend all four grades in the new school. They came as freshmen for the last few school days in 1937. Unfortunately, jobs had been a main attraction for four boys leaving at the end of freshman year and another boy at the beginning of the junior year. Nine boys and fourteen girls remained to graduate in June 1940.

The Class of 1940 was distinguished for its athletic prowess. As juniors, Eugene Duncan was cited as the star pitcher and Wesley Osborne as the most outstanding catcher in the South Shore Baseball League. Robert Mott was named the outstanding guard in the Basketball League.

The 1940 *Shipbuilder* included an alumni column featuring the graduates of 1939. There were five members unemployed, seven working at jobs, two

in the armed service, and eight (a third of the class) pursuing some form of post-graduate study. Of these eight, two were attending four-year colleges: one at Cornell and another at Mass. State College. Compare these figures to Norwell's 2015 class which numbered 172 students. In 2015, ninety-seven percent were planning to attend college or some form of post-high school degree.

Information for this article came from the 1938, 1939 and 1940 Shipbuilders. The author, possessing a vantage point of nearly eighty years, formed various interpretations.

Below, an excerpt from the 1940 Shipbuilder yearbook

CLASS STATISTICS

Class Mosts as Voted by the Girls

Most Popular	Wesley Osborne
Best Looking	Warren Merritt
Best Natured	Joseph Paradis
Class Sheik	Donald Burnside
Most Studious	Stanford Luce
Most Likely To Succeed	Stanford Luce
Best Athlete	Wesley Osborne
Best Dancer	Donald Burnside
Woman Hater	Linwood Sousa
Best Actor	Robert Newcomb
Done Most for Class	Stanford Luce
Class Vamp	Mary Skelding
Biggest Bluffer	Robert Newcomb
Class Chatterbox	Barbara Scott
Class Wit	Robert Newcomb
Class Pests	Howard Maybury, Miriam Perry
Most Musical	Wesley Osborne
Class Baby	Howard Maybury

Class Mosts as Voted by the Boys

Most Popular	Bethany Gleason
Best Looking	Bethany Gleason
Best Drag with Faculty	Bethany Gleason
Best Dressed	Bethany Gleason
Most Studious	Gertrude Goldman
Most Likely to Succeed	Marjorie Stoddard
Best Athlete	Virginia Gaudette
Best Dancer	Bethany Gleason
Man Hater	none
Best Actresses	V. Gaudette, M. Skelding

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

THE JACOBS' FAMILY HISTORY

by Bill Slattery

Editor's Note: The following is the third 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 to help with context.

In 1839, Ichabod [Jacob's] son, Benjamin (born 1815), married the local Universalist pastor's daughter, Maria M. P. Killam (born 1820), and they needed a place of their own. There were then four children of Ichabod's large family still living at the [Jacobs] Farmhouse. So, Ichabod obtained a house of somewhat inferior quality, and had it moved and attached to the old Homestead around 1840. The exact age or former location of that house remains a mystery. The attached house was made to appear as though it had always been a part of the original Homestead, at least as it was seen from the road (now Main Street).



The Main Street view of the Jacobs Farmhouse clearly shows the two separate houses that were adjoined.

Benjamin Jacob had two children, a son who would grow up to live in New York, and a daughter who remained an unmarried schoolteacher and inherited her uncle's house in Hanover where she lived most of her life. Benjamin's first wife, Maria, died in 1846 and he married Sarah Hatch two years later. With Sarah, Benjamin also had a son who left for New York after

his marriage, and a daughter who was a schoolteacher. Benjamin's second wife also preceded him in death, dying in 1886. Benjamin himself would die in 1891, leaving his daughter, Sarah Barton Jacobs (born 1853) alone in the east side of the Farmhouse [the recently moved side] until she married and went with her husband, Frank Edgar Swift (born 1853), to Brockton four years later.

In the 1840s, Ichabod decided to divide his house between his sons Barton and Benjamin, but continued to live with them. In 1855, Ichabod's youngest son, Barton Richmond Jacobs (born 1823), married Frances Almira Ford (born 1828), and at Ichabod's death on November 6, 1856, lived in the older section of the Jacobs Homestead. Benjamin and his family continued to live in what was always called "the other house" on the East side.



Barton Richmond Jacobs

During the Civil War (1861-1865), there were Jacobs in the military, but they were not from the Homestead.

However, there is an interesting genealogical link to the Jacobs clan. A direct descendant of one of the first mill builders and his wife, Joseph Jacob and Mary Foster, was Relief Jacob (b 1785). She was their great granddaughter, and was the mother of the famous anti-slavery United States Senator from Massachusetts, Charles Sumner, who was a close friend to President Lincoln and his family.

(to be continued in the next issue)



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PAID

Norwell, MA
Permit No. 10

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Christmas at the
FARMHOUSE
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

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.*



Give the gift of
MEMBERSHIP

Buy a membership in the Norwell Historical Society as a gift and receive (this December ONLY!) either a NORWELL TOWN SEAL PIN or a NHS COOKBOOK as a FREE GIFT. Please indicate whether you would like the membership card and gift mailed directly to the recipient or mailed to you for direct giving.

VIA MAIL: Fill out the enclosed member form and note your choice of free gift on the form

ON-LINE: Go to www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org, choose the "Become a Member" tab and donate, then use the "Contact Us" tab to note gift choice, and recipient name and address.