

October 2009 Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

COME SEE THE NHS AT THE SCIENCE CENTER ON OCTOBER 23RD!

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CONTACTING US

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

MUSEUMS & LIBRARY HOURS

The Jacobs Farmhouse is open by appointment only. Please call the Society for further information.

The Norwell Historical Society Library at the Norwell Middle School (328 Main Street--Route 123) is open on Wednesdays and Thursdays: from 1:30 to 3:30 during the school year, and 10:00 to noon during the summer.

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.

Our annual election meeting of the Society will introduce a month-long exhibit on Norwell history at the South Shore Natural Science Center starting on Friday, October 23rd. Our business meeting will convene at 6:30 p.m. and, rather than follow with a guest speaker at 7 p.m., members and the general public will be introduced to a collection of Norwell artifacts that are usually (and literally!) kept under wrappings of some sort. Over the years, these artifacts have been generously placed in the care of the Society by families and organizations as a way to celebrate their connection to Norwell's past. They are largely prints, photographs and documents that have been framed.

The exhibit will be divided into three areas. One side of Vine Hall will have artifacts relating to Scituate and South Scituate before the Civil War. Another side will be from the Civil War Era, and a third side will take Norwell's history through the 20th century.

A highlight of this evening's exhibit will be the presence of "Mr. & Mrs. Henry Norwell" (played by his grandson and wife who reside at the Norwell Homestead on Norwell Avenue). They shall be pleased to become part of your family's photo album, if that is your pleasure. While there will not be a dinner available, the event is being billed as a family-friendly Ice Cream

Social with old-fashioned ice cream donated by our local Hornstra Farm. As this is a family event, children are welcomed to find answers to questions on Norwell history from the exhibits and spin a game wheel (generously donated by president Bob and Peg Norris) to win prizes including candy, books, and a few memberships in the South Shore Natural Science Center and Norwell Historical Society.

The current plan for the exhibit includes such items as pictures of shipbuilders and their vessels; memorabilia of the Jacobs, Cushing, Otis, and Torrey families, who were prominent in the old town; a child's sampler; an Indian arrowhead collection from the North River area; a display of shoe shop tools; 36 of our Civil War veterans; and a large picture of Andersonville Prison in Georgia (a place from which two of our veterans never recovered). The Society's Board of Directors recently voted to assist the preservation of the Andersonville print by having it professionally framed. The results will be there for all to see.

The officers and directors of the Society hope there will be a good turnout, not only to keep the Society moving forward but also to enjoy a family evening with some of our Norwell artifacts that are usually hidden away.

A GLIMPSE OF THE LIFE OF CHARLES SIMMONS, SOUTH SCITUATE FARMER

When you volunteer at the Historical Society Library, it is often quiet--a chance to peruse the Society's many collections on Norwell history. A recent slow afternoon had me reading through pamphlets published by the Norwell Historical Society over the years. One such publication piqued my interest: "Forgotton Families of Valley Swamp." "Where is Valley Swamp?", I wondered. "And why are these families forgotten?"

It seems that in "the nineties" (1890s, that is) an old trunk of the late Charlotte Simmons went up at public auction. In this trunk were a number of valuable old documents, journals and school books dating from 1762 to 1863. Among the items found were the diaries of Charles Simmons from 1825-1860. In 1937, George Clarence Turner compiled information from Mr. Simmons' diaries and wrote the "Forgotton Families" pamphlet.

Charles Simmons, a South Scituate farmer, lived in the Valley Swamp area (which is located at the intersection of Prospect and Grove Streets). The Simmons Farm lay on Prospect Street near the Hingham border and (according to a 1902 map which still shows the property owned by the Simmons) was quite alone in this section of town.

What Mr. Turner (and I, the reader) found most striking about the diaries was their account of

the mundane, everyday activities. Chores, not the Civil War, are the focus of his entries. His accounts of daily activities give the reader an accurate depiction of life on the farm in the 1800s.

Some of my favorite entries (misspellings and all!) are the following: Nov. 8, 1842--tied up the cows, first time; Nov. 11--tied up the four oxen; Nov. 26--batening the east end of the barn; Dec. 2, 1843--killed my beef, weighed 443 lbs; Dec. 12--killed the hog; Dec. 13--salted it; March 27, 1844--went a-clamming, got 1 bushel; June 12, 1845--went after herring, got none; Feb. 5, 1849--went to town meeting for the first time after the town was divided (this is his only reference to the big split with Scituate in 1849!); Dec. 9, 1952--went to Briton and bought a yoke of oxen; Dec. 18--sledded up four ox loads of fire wood; Oct. 30, 1853--put on my draws; June 4, 1856--pulled of my draws (It seems he regularly put on his red flannels around November 1st and removed them about June 10th each year!).

This glimpse into 1800s farm life shows how hard the work was: Farmer Simmons often referred to shoveling snow for 6 hours at a time! But reading through the booklet also reminded me of how many treasures the Society Library has. Consider stopping by on Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons and discovering for yourself.

Did You Know?

...the answer to the last issue's Trivia Corner Question? The question was: **There are three homes in Norwell on the National Register of Historic Places: the town-owned Jacobs Farmhouse, the town-owned Stetson-Ford House, and...** What is the third?

The answer is: The Bryant-Cushing House at 768 Main Street is the third home in Norwell on the National Register for Historic Places. The home, built in 1698 for Deacon Thomas Bryant, stands well back from the road and is a pristine example of a 17th century English manor house. Many of its architectural details closely resemble the noted Winslow House in Marshfield. The house was later purchased by Hawke Cushing in 1769, hence the name "Bryant-Cushing".

TRIVIA

QUESTION:

In 1883, South Scituate made a move to change the town's name by petitioning the State Legislature. No action was taken. What was the proposed name? (Hint: the name is not Norwell!)

ANSWER: in the next issue!

Trivia Corner

The Society received a very nice thank you note from Robin Levine, 2009 Haskins Scholar from the Norfolk County Agricultural High School. Miss Levine was very appreciative of the scholarship!

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE _____ NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

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: _____

PAPER READERS NEEDED to read local newspapers and clip articles relating to Norwell notables. Clippings can be dropped off at the Historical Society Library at the Norwell Middle School or picked up by an NHS volunteer--whichever is more convenient. Newspapers to be read include *The Boston Globe*, *The Patriot Ledger*, and *The Norwell Mariner*. If interested, please contact the Society at 781-659-1888 and leave a message.

**JACOBS FARMHOUSE
OPEN FOR TOURS**

Please note an increase in publicity for the Jacobs Farmhouse appointment-only tours. *The Norwell Mariner* and the Town of Norwell website will both be promoting tours over the course of the next few months. If these tours are frequently requested, the Society may consider opening the Farmhouse on a regular, monthly basis. Stay tuned!



The Jacobs Farmhouse on Main Street was originally built in 1726 by the Jacobs Family, who lived in the home continuously until 1934. Housing many artifacts related to Norwell and maintained as a glimpse of farm life in the 1800s, the house currently serves as Headquarters for the Norwell Historical Society.

It is open for tours by appointment only. For information on tours, please call the Society at 781-659-1888.

**HISTORIC
CEMETERY
BROCHURE
NOW AVAILABLE**

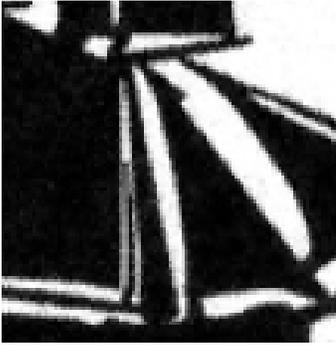
The Norwell Cemetery Commission and the Norwell Historical Society recently updated a brochure on cemeteries in Norwell.

Pick up a copy at the NHS Library (at the Middle School) and tour the cemeteries in time for Halloween!



*Historic Cemeteries
in Norwell*

Produced by
The Norwell Historical Society
and
The Norwell Cemetery Commission



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NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS AND MEMORABILIA

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. Second reprinting in 1981.

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.

HISTORIC HOMESTEADS OF NORWELL ——— \$15
published by NHS, 1992
We are proud of our lovely town. 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. It was drawn by Anne Henderson and first issued in 1967 by the NHS. A favorite depiction of the location of historic homes.

THE WAY WE WERE ——— \$20
by Jeanne Garside
This book is a series of articles written to preview Norwell's Centennial Celebration in 1888. Read what times were like when Norwell came of age. Illustrated with old photographs.

MORE THAN JUST A COOKBOOK ——— \$5
This book, expectably, is full of time-tested favorite recipes submitted by local people. Beyond the gastronomic delights, we have included historical sketches, interesting narratives and accounts of historic events. It is amply illustrated by local artists.

HISTORIA ——— \$7.50
A gem of local history for the people of the Norwell/Scituate area. George C. Turner's six pamphlets, written in 1898-99 have been re-printed for our enjoyment. Read about Norwell 100 years ago from the man on the scene.

All the above items are available at the NHS Library in the Middle School on Wed. & Thur. (1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., see summer hours on front), or you may call Gert Daneau at 781-659-2226, 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.