



NORTH RIVER PACKET

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The Humble North River Gundalow

Being the only practical transportation available to navigate the North River with heavy cargoes, gundalows were the work trucks of the olden days.

by Joe Chetwynd

Joe Chetwynd is a Pembroke shipwright and maritime historian who graciously assisted the Norwell Historical Society in evaluating the maritime documents and photographs which were unearthed in the recent inventory of the Society's Archives. Joe wrote this article to answer the questions about gundalows that arose when we discovered the photo shown below.

Among the endless models of purpose-built boats, the humble gundalow may be the most common and ubiquitous of all ancient watercraft in history.

“ Gundalows were employed by locals to transport their hay off the salt marshes that lined the meandering North River. ”

Most prevalent along the Atlantic coast of Western Europe since ancient times, and in North America since colonial times, the boats were typically flat-bottomed, straight-sided, with sloping bows and stern. They were generally employed in tidal rivers, estuaries,

and bays for the transport of hay, cordwood, livestock, horses, carriages, and the citizenry. They were the only practical transportation available for crossing and navigating tidal rivers with these usually heavy, cumbersome cargoes, since early roads were little more than worn cart paths.

Gundalows on the North River were employed by locals to transport their hay off the salt marshes that lined the meandering river. The hay was stored away in the hay lofts of cold weather barns to feed animals. Gundalows were also most probably used for the transport of cast iron products from upriver locales like the Hanover Anchor Works and a host of lesser chores that such a simple mode of transport facilitated.

While gundalows were built in various sizes, the North River model might have been something akin to 6 feet beam by 18 feet bottom measure, with slab sides of 24 to 30 inches high, and with both ends sloping about 45 degrees.

The ends were either partially decked or were fitted with a wide pine plank for a seat. Their construction would most probably be rough-cut pine of about two inch thickness for the bottom planks and one and one half inch thickness for the bulwark (side) planks. The squarish bow structure would be reinforced by natural crook [see inset] white oak, or hackmatack

crook, *n.* a naturally growing bent or angled tree root, limb, or branch that is used in boat-building for adding strength to a certain area.

[see inset below] “ship’s knees” and internal lateral framing to which the planking would be fastened by means of white oak or black locust “treenails.” Treenails are secured by means of small, thin wood wedges being driven

(continued on page 4)

hack'mà'tack, *n.* a conifer tree also called larch found in coastal wetlands from Maine to the Maritimes in America which furnished a knot-free wood suitable for planking and decking that was very rot resistant.

This photo of a gundalow carrying salt marsh hay was found in the Historical Society Archives. Although the picture was determined to have been taken on the North Shore, Bill Vinal and Joseph Merritt both give accounts of the use of the gundalow in the North River for transporting salt marsh hay.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Treasures known and treasures found in the Norwell Historical Society Archives, in the Society Research Library, and in the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum are featured here in each issue.



Henry Norwell, our town's namesake and founder of Boston Dry Goods store "Shepard, Norwell & Company," mailed these quaint holiday cards in 1881—to commemorate Christmas and to celebrate the New Year of 1882. Many examples of historic holiday cards (Christmas, Valentine's, and birthday greetings) are in the Society's Archives.



Another cache of clothing was recently found in a trunk at the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum. Textile Conservator Marie Schlag inventoried the items and found this interesting quilted petticoat. The long underskirt is a brown silk with a brown and cream plaid cotton quilted lining with cotton batting. It was hand sewn sometime between 1860 and 1890, and it would have been worn underneath a skirt to keep a (Jacobs?) lady warm in the winter. With cold weather on the way, it's fascinating to see how our foremothers dressed on chilly days!



Homestead Farm, Currie Farm, Cushing Farm—all names of the farm located on Main Street in Norwell Center. The dairy provided local milk and cream. This ad from the 1930s was found in the Archives.

Just The Facts

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Museum & Research Library

The **Jacobs Farmhouse Museum** is open at scheduled events and by appointment only. Please contact the Society to schedule a tour.

The Norwell Historical Society **Research Library** at the Norwell Middle School (328 Main Street) is open on Wednesdays from 2:45 to 3:45 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.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Norwell Historical Society is to discover, preserve, and celebrate Norwell history through stewardship, education, and awareness—engaging our community, both present and future, to be vested in its history.

Mailing Address & Phone

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



INTERESTED IN RESEARCH?

The Norwell Historical Society has regular research hours at our Archives where volunteers sort artifacts, identify photos, and share stories. Interested in helping? Please email Archivist Janet Watson at watsonje@comcast.net and join the team!

When Norwell Had a Department Store

The Society's website invites questions from around the world—people connecting with their hometown, researching ancestors, or trying to solve riddles.

by Janet Watson, Archivist

Questions and comments on our website have been leading the Norwell Historical Society volunteers into unexpected research. In July we received a question from Adrienne Weber of Austin, Texas, asking if we had any information about the Norwell Department Store which was owned by Adrienne's great grandmother, Dora Moskowitz.



Linda Moskowitz (mother of Adrienne Weber) with her dog Frankie in 1949 in front of the Norwell Department Store owned by her grandmother, Dora Moskowitz (shown in ad at right).

Adrienne was not sure when the store was in business, but she had a photograph of her mother, Linda, posing in front of the store's sign (see photo below left).

We were surprised that Norwell ever had a department store, but looking through old newspapers, volunteers found a clipping from the May 23, 1941 issue of *South Shore Life* magazine announcing the opening of the store!

The Norwell Department Store was a traditional dry goods store specializing in clothes and fabrics in an era when people still sewed their own clothing. It was located on the corner of Washington and Grove Street—at the site of the current Seven-Eleven Plaza today. The last advertisement for the store that could be found was in the Norwell High School Class of 1949 yearbook. We don't know when the Norwell Department Store finally closed.

While doing our search, other ads were found, and the volunteers were struck by how shopping has changed. Norwell businesses tended to specialize—in dairy, produce, poultry, baked goods, and even frozen foods—prior to the time when these departments were brought together under one roof in modern supermarkets.

In this issue of the newsletter, we have included a few ads from bygone stores of the 1930's and 40's where Norwellians might have shopped for their holiday meals.

To my Friends on the South Shore and vicinity:
I wish to express my deep gratitude and warm thanks for the wonderful response at the opening announcement of my new store. Those of you who have not visited me will be surprised at the wonderful values you will find here at savings from 25 to 50%. I added several new departments such as Hosiery in chiffon and service up to size 11, from 65c to 79c, as well as Nylon at 2.29; Slips from 94c to \$1.59, in sizes 22 to 32; Dresses at \$2.79 in Du Pont Rayon washable materials, sizes 12 to 32, also Play Suits and Slack Suits. Come in and browse around.

DORA MOSKOWITZ,
Formerly at Saffier's, Whitman



AMAZING SPECIALS
For This Week End !!

DRESSES RAYON SHARKSKIN **\$1.89**
White, Pink, Blue, Aqua, Yellow, \$2.98 Value — Sizes 10 to 18

SKIRTS Spun Rayon, Gabardine, Sharkskin, Summer Weight **\$1.79**
All Colors — Sizes 24 to 32. Pleated

BLOUSES SHEERS, RAYON SILK **89c**
Sizes 32 to 40

Large Assortment of Cretonne, Drapery Materials, Percales, Rayon Silks At Great Savings!

Also Headquarters for Rug Materials and Patchwork

Norwell Dept. Store
ON ROUTE 1 SOUTH OF QUEEN ANNE'S CORNER
Open Daily From 9 A. M. to 9 P. M.

Because of on-going construction at the Jacobs Farmhouse...



at the **CHRISTMAS FARMHOUSE**

was canceled this year. We anticipate opening the Museum again in Spring, 2020, once the most-invasive restoration work is complete.

Gundalows, cont'd

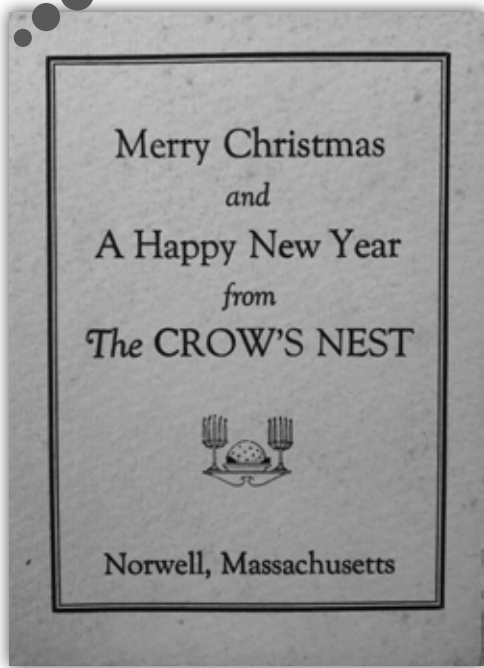
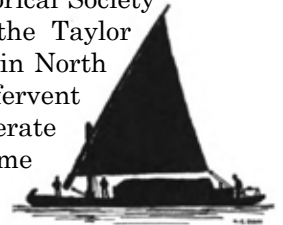
Where is this place?

(continued from page 1)

up the end grain of those “pegs,” which acted to spread the ends. Everything was kept tight and swollen by the brackish waters of the North River. Little, if any, iron was used in the construction of gundalowsy.

The ungainly, boxy, slab-sided unpainted “scows” were moved about the river by means of long spruce poles driven into the river bottom and pushed forward by the pole-man. Gundalows built for other larger (deeper) waters employed long oars called “sweeps,” and others employed a short, stubby mast with a square or triangle shaped cotton duck sail bent to catch whatever wind they could capture in the low river valleys.

Unfortunately there is little physical evidence left of the simply-built gundalow on the North River, nor have we yet to find even a tiny image of one taken with a glass plate from that time in our river’s history. The only such evidence exists in the form of a partially drawn and “measured” sketch of a probable gundalow which was discovered and then duly recorded by Mr. Taylor, a member of the Pembroke Historical Society and owner of the Taylor Brass Foundry in North Quincy and a fervent and inveterate amateur maritime historian.



With the holidays forthcoming, the item above would seem appropriate: a Christmas and New Year greeting card from The Crow’s Nest.

But where is The Crow’s Nest? This card was found amidst the belongings of Margaret Crowell Dumas, and the interior of the card shows a quaint, historic fireside scene. The handwriting on the card says “We thought you would be interested to see this special card which we are sending our friends this year.”

We were unsure if The Crow’s Nest was Mrs. Dumas’ home or a local restaurant! A bit of sleuthing brought us to 152 River Street—the current home of Laurie Detwiler, Society Board member. Laurie lives in Mrs. Dumas’ home, which was referred to as The Crow’s Nest. Laurie has a lot of Crow’s Nest memorabilia in her house, collected over the years.

\$20 each
 Add a little North River history to your holidays...
 AVAILABLE FOR SALE from the Norwell Historical Society at the James Library Holiday Marketplace on Saturday, December 7th | 9 - 3

Answer from page 4: Bryant's Corner is the intersection of Lincoln Street, Norwell Avenue, and Grove Street. It is a quiet area (certainly no retail at this intersection today!), but a very dangerous intersection for traffic.

DATE _____ NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL _____

3-Year Membership (\$35) _____

Life Membership (\$350) _____

Donation (any amount) _____

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

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

_____ Organizing the Archives _____ Other:

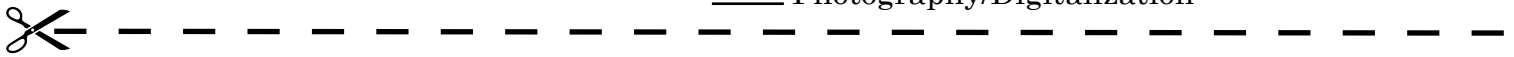
_____ Staffing the Research Library

_____ Farmhouse Tour Guide

_____ Farmhouse Maintenance

_____ Event Planning

_____ Photography/Digitalization



THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH



The above ad from the "Norwell Souvenir Supplement" of the *Rockland Standard* newspaper is for Austin Lincoln's store in Bryant's Corner, Mount Blue. The store (shown in the above photo) closed in the 1930s and was one of two stores at this intersection. Where, exactly, is Bryant's Corner today?

(answer at the bottom of page 4)

Recipe

In 1908 *The Gnow Well Cookbook* was published, containing "two hundred, tested cooking recipes compiled by the Ladies of Norwell."

A whole section is devoted to chafing dish recipes. The chafing dish was a cooking utensil heated over a spirit lamp used to cook delicate dishes at the table.

Julie Brown-Micko in her book *Culinary Curiosities: The History of the Chafing Dish* writes, "In the late 19th and early 20th century, the popularity of chafing dishes was at a near fever pitch. Whether rich or poor, every householder was enjoined to have a chafing dish, and not just for parties. Its uses were manifold: ideal for late-night meals, for those who kept late or odd hours, for picnics, for the cook's day off, and for the 'sick room,' tempting the ill person with tasty morsels cooked in front of their eyes."

Here is one recipe from *The Gnow Well Cookbook* "Chafing Dish" section, suitable for your holiday entertaining.

OYSTER Á LA BECHAMEL

Drain 1 pint oysters and save the liquor; for twenty-five oysters, add milk to the liquor to make half a pint.

Put 1 tablespoon of butter and 1 of flour in a chafing dish, light the lamp, then mix thoroughly; add oyster liquor and milk, stir until it reaches the boiling point.

Add oysters, 1-2 teaspoons of salt, 1-4 teaspoons of black pepper, a dash of red pepper. Cover dish.

When boiling, stir in the yolks of 3 eggs, beaten with 2 tablespoons of cream. After putting out the light, add 1 teaspoon of lemon juice and 1-2 teaspoons of onion juice.

Serve on toast.

Elizabeth G. Osborne

Serves 4.



NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 693
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061
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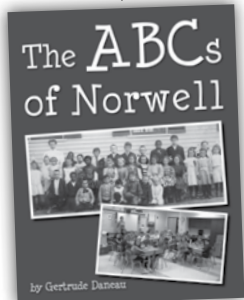
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HISTORICAL SOCIETY ITEMS FOR SALE

(perfect for holiday gift-giving!)



The ABCs of Norwell *(shown at left)*

\$10

by Gertrude Daneau

A coloring book 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 historic people and sites.

Historic Homesteads of Norwell

\$15

Always wanted to know the history behind the antique homes in town? This book delves into the background of many of Norwell's historic houses and the people who lived in them.

History of South Scituate-Norwell

\$25

by Joseph Foster Merritt

This history of the town, originally written in 1938, was republished in 1988 by the Society. A unique narrative with illustrations, it is an invaluable account of Norwell prior to WWII.

A Narrative of South Scituate & Norwell *(shown at left)*

\$20

by Samuel H. Olson

This book chronicles the life and times of our town from 1845-1963 with a collection of articles previously published in *The Norwell Mariner*. Each chapter is its own story, so this book is very readable. Looking for a single book to summarize Norwell's more recent history? This is the one.

Shipbuilding on the North River

\$45

by L. Vernon Briggs

This large book is the definitive listing of ships built on the North River and the shipyards that lined its shores. Written in 1889 and re-printed in 1988, this book also contains stories of colorful South Shore characters and harrowing sea tales. *Limited copies available.*

 **MORE ITEMS**
available online 
norwellhistoricalsociety.org

All the above items are available at the Society Library in the Middle School on Wednesdays during the school year (2:45-3:45 p.m), or you may call Wendy Bawabe at 781-659-1464, or you may use this form and mail a check (made payable to NHS + add \$5 for shipping) to: NHS, P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061.