



NORTH RIVER PACKET

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Scituate/South Scituate/Norwell's West End: A Center of Industry

When Art Joseph (of Joseph's Pontiac) approached the Historical Society with his collection of Hamblen figurines (made in Norwell's West End), our curiosity about the many industries in that part of town was piqued!

by Alan Prouty

From Accord to Assinippi, from a sawmill on the Third Herring Brook to industrial parks today, Norwell's West End has been a center of industry for over 300 years.

The "West End" of Norwell is the western corner of town which runs along today's Route 53 from Assinippi Corner and Jacobs Pond to Queen Anne's Corner and Accord Pond.

Historically, the area was strategically located halfway between Boston and Plymouth, while also having direct road access to Hanover, Hingham, and Rockland.

Early European settlers in the area made use of the native Indian trails. These centuries-old walking paths created by indigenous people were improved for wagons and horses. Today's Route 53 started as "the Country Road" and was improved to become the "Boston-Plymouth Road," then the "Boston & Plymouth Post Road."

“ Post Riders carried the mail and newspapers along today's Route 53 from Boston to Plymouth via Accord and Assinippi. ”

Originally a seasonal home to both the Wampanoag and Massachuset tribes, the West End was first settled by non-natives after the King Philip's War (around 1675-1678) by families from Scituate and Hingham who were

looking for land to farm. Growing corn, rye, oats, flax, vegetables, and fruits, their wagons and plows were powered by horses and oxen.

During the colonial period, Post Riders carried the mail and newspapers along today's Route 53 from Boston to Plymouth via Accord and Assinippi.

The earliest industries in the West End were mills: specifically the Jacob's Mills in Assinippi. In 1720, David Jacob planned and built the causeway, dam, and a sawmill on the Third Herring Brook—creating Jacobs Pond from the dammed stream. The timber milled at the sawmill was used to build houses, barns, and other buildings in the West End for the next 200 years.

Around 1730, David Jacob's son, Joshua, built a grist mill next to the sawmill. The grist mill ground corn, oats, rye, wheat, and flax seed into flour.

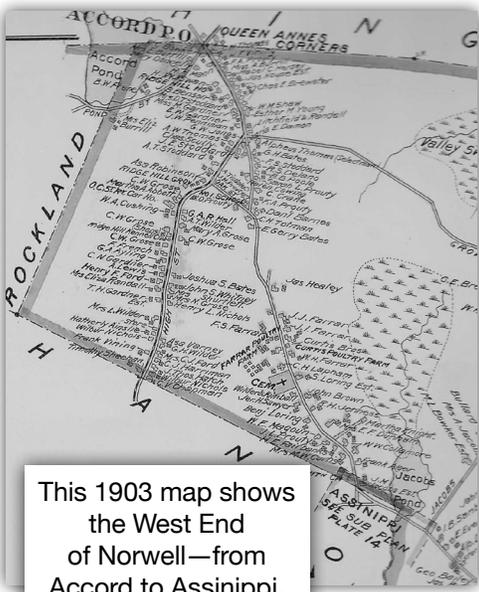
From 1820 to 1830, the Jacobs family established other businesses in the area including brick making and apple cider production. [see page 3 for "Jacob" vs. "Jacobs" information]

The Jacobs' saw and grist mills endured for two centuries, finally being destroyed by fire in 1920.

There were also a number of early home industries in the West End, including the spinning and weaving of flax, linen, and wool. Every household had a spinning wheel, and many had looms.

After the American Revolution, stage coaches ran on a regular route from Boston through the West End

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This 1903 map shows the West End of Norwell—from Accord to Assinippi.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

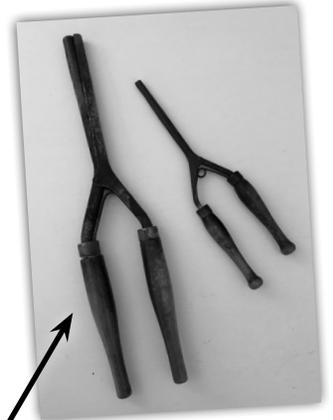
Treasures known and treasures found in the Norwell Historical Society Archives and in the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum are featured here in each issue.

In the photo collection at the Historical Society Archives, these pictures have been newly scanned to a high-resolution digital cloud service.

The photo at left shows a steel Union Street bridge that was built in circa 1898 by the Pittsburgh Bridge Company to replace an earlier wooden bridge. It washed away in a storm in 1917, and a concrete bridge was built in 1920 to replace it.



The photo below shows a group of riders in what is today the woods behind First Parish Church and the James Library. You can see those buildings (and the former Center School) in the distance.



These curling irons are typically on display at the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum. They are currently in the exhibit at the Norwell Public Library.

Heated over a fire or stove, these were used to make ringlets in ladies' hair, and are in the display to show items used at the West End's inns and taverns.



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 & Archives Center** on the 3rd floor of the Sparrell School (322 Main Street) is open on Thursday mornings from 10:00 am until noon or by appointment.

Administrative Consultant

Rachel Wollam

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)



DISCOVER MORE ONLINE!

Look for the magnifying glasses in this issue—that means there is more to discover online and at the Society's website NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG.

A Jacob Box in Hanover

An 18th century box from the Jacob family (who lived in the Jacobs Farmhouse) now resides in the Hanover Historical Society's collection and has become a useful tool for teaching history to the next generation.

by Stephen O'Neill, Executive Director
Hanover Historical Society
and Board Member,
Norwell Historical Society

One of the oldest objects in the collections of the Hanover Historical Society has a distinctly Norwell connection.

The object is a small 18th century wooden box given to the Historical Society by the heirs of Maria Jacobs (1841-1929). Family tradition relates that the box was made by or for Maria's great-great-grand-uncle Benjamin Jacob (1709-1792). It was Benjamin's older brother Joshua Jacob (Maria's great-great-grandfather) who built the Jacobs Farmhouse in 1726 and started the Jacob family mills on Third Herring Brook.



The Jacobs box in the collection of the Hanover Historical Society.
Photograph courtesy of
Abbey Knoll Photography

Maria Jacobs was descended from the owners of the Farmhouse and mills. Her father was Benjamin Jacobs (1815-1891) whose younger brother Barton Richmond Jacobs (1820-1898) lived

and worked at the Jacobs Farmhouse and Mill. It was Barton Jacobs' son, Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs, who donated the farmhouse in 1935 to SPNEA (now known as Historic New England). Historic New England sold the Jacobs Farmhouse to the Town of Norwell in the 1980s, and today it is home to the Norwell Historical Society's museum.

gim-mel hinge *'gi-məl hɪnj'* *n.* A jointed device, typically handmade pre-19th century, on which a door or lid moves that utilizes two interlocking bent rods.

The Jacob box is constructed of six, small pine boards with dovetail corners. It has handmade iron gimmel hinges and an iron plate with a handle on the lid.

The box is missing its front lock plate, but the inside lock portion is extant. Unfortunately, the original key is lost.

There are traces of black paint on the lid which indicates it may have been painted at one time.

The box's dimensions are 5" high by 8" wide by 8" deep, and it was most likely made sometime in the years from 1730 to 1775. Its diminutive size, light weight, iron handle, and ability to lock suggests it was used as portable storage for valuable items like money or paper documents.

Similar boxes with locks in other museum and historical society collections show a wide variety of sizes and decorations. A mid-18th century "document box" in the collections of the Morristown National Historic Park in

Morristown, New Jersey, is a similar example with an almost identical iron handle on the lid, but it is twice as large as the Jacob box, and retains its original red paint.

JACOB V. JACOBS

It is unclear when the Jacob family name evolved to "Jacobs," but we believe it occurred between Benjamin Jacob's generation and the next. To learn more, click here (online) or see the October 2019 newsletter (page 4) on our website.

The little Jacob box is often shown to the third grade classes who visit the Hanover Historical Society at the Drummer Samuel Stetson House in Hanover Center. The students are asked "What do you think was stored in this box?" and "What would you store in a box like this?" It provides these future historians with an opportunity to connect with the past, to consider how the box was used, and to wonder why it was preserved through the years.

Solidly made and extremely useful, the Jacob box is a rare survivor of an important domestic object from the 1700s—preserved through generations and valued for its craftsmanship, simplicity, and relation to the early history of Norwell and Hanover.



Want to learn more about the Hanover Historical Society? Scan this QR code or click [HERE](#) (online) to visit their website.

West End, cont'd.

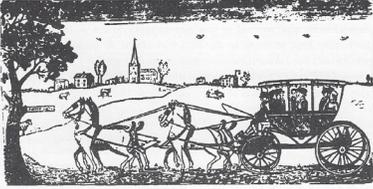
(continued from page 1)

to Plymouth and Sandwich (via the Boston and Plymouth Post Road). The stagecoaches made a scheduled lunch stop at Leonard's Half-Way House on the corner of Washington and Grove Streets (the location of the Mobil Station today). Leonard's also maintained a barn for horses of guests and the stage teams.

as the "Other Half-Way House") was located on Route 53 at the current site of the Citizen's Bank and the Urgent Care. The Davis Whiting Tavern (also known as Siveret's Tavern) was located at Queen Anne's Corner, and Collamor's Tavern was located in Assinippi. These inns welcomed travelers from 1800 until 1917.

shoes to be sold in retail shoe shops in Boston and beyond.

Originally called "Charles Grose & Son," the factory was later named "Charles Grose & Sons" and later called "The Ridge Hill Shoe Factory." When Charles Grose died at age 64 in 1892, his son Charles Webster Grose inherited the business. In 1901 a



**BOSTON,
Plymouth & Sandwich
MAIL STAGE,**
CONTINUES TO RUN AS FOLLOWS:

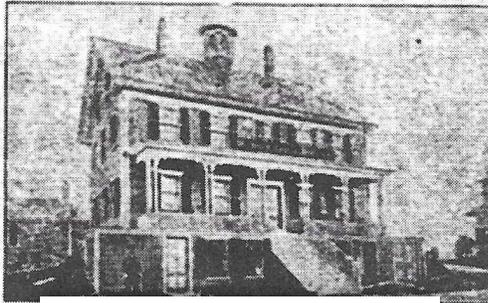
LEAVES Boston every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings at 5 o'clock, breakfast at Leonard's, Scituate; dine at Bradford's, Plymouth; and arrive in Sandwich the same evening. Leaves Sandwich every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings; breakfast at Bradford's, Plymouth; dine at Leonard's, Scituate, and arrive in Boston the same evening.

Passing through Dorchester, Quincy, Weymouth, Hingham, Scituate, Hanover, Pembroke, Duxbury, Kingston, Plymouth to Sandwich. *Fare*, from Boston to Scituate, 1 doll. 25 cts. From Boston to Plymouth, 2 dolls. 50 cts. From Boston to Sandwich, 3 dolls. 63 cts.

N. B. Extra Carriages can be obtained of the proprietor's, at Boston and Plymouth, at short notice.—
STAGE BOOKS kept at Boyden's Market-square, Boston, and at Fessenden's, Plymouth.

LEONARD & WOODWARD.
BOSTON, November 24, 1810.

This 1810 handbill advertised the Boston to Sandwich stage coach—making a stop to dine in Scituate (today's Norwell) at Leonard's Half-Way House.



RIDGE HILL HOUSE
J. B. BENSON, Proprietor.
First-Class Accommodations,
Best of Table Service,
Rates Reasonable.
STABLE CONNECTED:
Near Electric from Nantasket.
NORWELL, MASS.
P. O. Address, ACCORD, MASS.

An ad for the Ridge Hill House on Route 53.

Another West End industry was shoemaking. Historian and author Sam Olson noted the following in his book *A Narrative of South Scituate/Norwell*:

"William Gould Vinal (Cap'n Bill) reminisced that there had been small shops employing a few craftsmen in virtually every... home. ...The entire shoe was made by these craftsmen who were known as cordwainers. ...Vinal points out that these home-based shoemakers found it increasingly hard to compete with the advent of Elias Howe's sewing machine, which was later adapted to sewing leather. Now shoes could be produced one hundred times faster."

One of the last remaining individual "Ten Footer" shoemaking shops (which used to be a common site in the West End and across eastern Massachusetts) is still on High Street today.

By 1860, shoemaking was the main source of employment in the West End of South Scituate. One of the largest was the Charles Grose Shoe Factory. Established in 1866 and located on High Street (at 121 to 129 High Street today), the company used the new technology of the McKay stitching machine to manufacture boots and

fire broke out in the boiler room, and Charles Webster Grose announced the company would no longer operate.

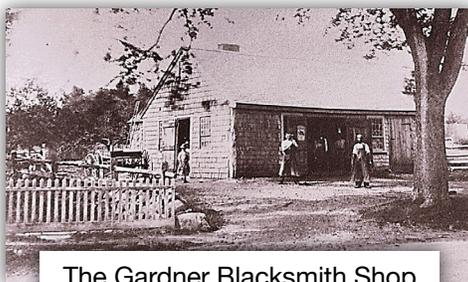


Want to learn more about the shoe industry in the West End? Scan the QR code (print version) or click [HERE](#) (online) to see the Fall 2018 Society newsletter (on page 2) for more information.

In the mid-1900s, C.B. Hamblen & Son produced miniature soldiers at two locations in Norwell, one in the West End. The figurines were sold by catalogue and formed dioramas of both the Civil and Revolutionary Wars.

The Hamblen business was originally founded by Carleton Hamblen, who operated a rigging business for sailboats in Boston Harbor during the 1920s. He moved the business to Norwell in the 1930s and switched to the manufacture and installation of flagpoles. The business evolved again in the 1950s as an installer of large-

(continued on page 5)



The Gardner Blacksmith Shop circa 1880 (on the site of Alfredo Aiello's today).

Leonard's Half-Way House was only one of four taverns in the West End. The Ridge Hill House (also known

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_____ Researching at the Archives _____ Other:

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_____ Farmhouse Tour Guide

_____ Farmhouse Maintenance

_____ Event Planning

_____ Photography/Digitalization



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West End, cont'd.

(continued from page 4)

scale displays of Christmas lights and decorations. Many Hamblen miniature soldier figurines, collected by Art Joseph, are currently on display at the Norwell Public Library in the West End Industry exhibit.

Industry in the West End continues today in Accord Park, Assinippi Park, and along Route 53. The total employment in both parks today is over 4,000 people.

Of note today is the Avedis Zildjian Company, which was founded as a family enterprise in the 1620s in Constantinople in the Ottoman Empire. The Zildjians were given their family name by the Sultan of Constantinople (today's Istanbul Turkey) in 1623, and the name translates from Armenian as "Maker of Cymbals." The company relocated to the United States in the 20th century and moved to Norwell in 1972.

In 1618, Avedis Zildjian was an alchemist trying to make gold. Instead, he accidentally formulated an alloy that he used to produce cymbals. Today, the company is the largest cymbal and drumstick maker in the world.

Norwell's West End has been an industrious section of our town since European settlement began. Today's businesses, from Accord to Assinippi, continue that long tradition.



Avedis Zildjian III in front of the Zildjian Factory in Quincy.

ITEMS FOR SALE: scan this QR code to visit the Society merchandise page on the website or click [HERE](#) online.



THANK YOU! ...to our 2022 SPECIAL DONORS



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Fall 2022



The NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
presents an
**ARCHIVES OPEN HOUSE
 & ANNUAL MEETING**
Archives Presentations, Brief Meeting & Social Hour



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH
*at the Norwell Historical Society Archives
 Sparrell School 3rd Floor, 322 Main Street, Norwell*

4:00: Archives Open House & Social Hour
 5:30: 87th Annual Meeting

Please RSVP via email to
NorwellHistoricalSociety@gmail.com
 or use the QR code at right
 or click on this graphic (online)



Parking available behind Sparrell School, accessible entrance through the rear door.

FIRST PARISH CEMETERY
Comes Alive!
 FEATURING GRAVESIDE PORTRAYALS OF
 FASCINATING PEOPLE FROM NORWELL'S PAST



FREE!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15TH
 NOON - 3:00
 RAIN DATE: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16TH

Join the Historical Society for its 3rd annual
 re-enactment tour at First Parish Cemetery.

Actors will portray a variety of historic
 individuals who are buried in the graveyard—
 telling their personal stories to groups of all ages.



REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.

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