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# A New Look for the New Year!

The Norwell Historical Society's newsletter, the Society logo, and the website have all been revamped for 2019!

by Wendy Bawabe, Society president

In honor of the new year, the Board of Directors of the Norwell Historical Society has decided to revamp the Society's look: from an updated website, to a revised logo closely based on the old design (see the old design at right and new design above), to a new name and look for our newsletter—the “North River Packet.”

**pack'et** (pak it) *n.* [also called **pack'et bōat**, **pack'et ship**] a boat that travels a regular route between ports, as along a coast or on a river, carrying passengers, freight, and mail.

While records about who created the original Society logo and when it was unveiled are vague, we've chosen to honor the original design but make it clearer and more readable. Thank you to Sarah Bawabe for creating the new design. To increase the new logo's clarity, the words “North River Packet” from the old logo have been removed as they were often hard to read.

To honor the North River Packet, the Board has chosen that name as the new title of the newsletter. As North River Packets were originally used to transport mail—specifically post office mail packets to and from British embassies, colonies, and outposts—this name is especially fitting.

The Society's website was also in need of an update. The new site will be easier for members to use: allowing email sign-ups, on-line book orders, and streamlined membership renewals.

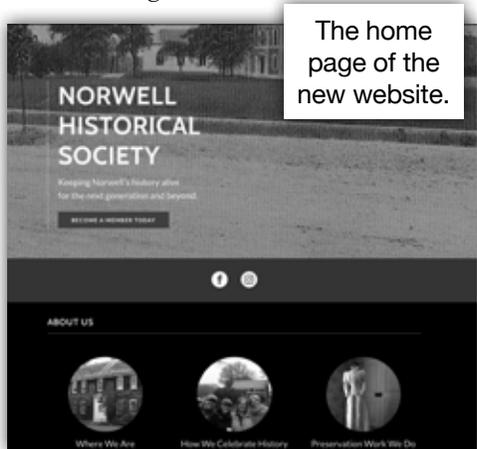
The new website will also allow us to post even more historic photos. As the Archive Clean-Up Project continues, more and more pictures are being discovered.

A large crew of volunteers is working with Archivist Janet Watson to identify the people and locations in each of the photographs, but having additional members' online help will speed up this process.

So hop on board the “North River Packet” and learn about the history of our amazing town!



The original Society logo



The home page of the new website.

## PHOTO CONTEST

*How do you remember Norwell?*

The Norwell Historical Society is looking for photographs of Norwell to create a display for SummerFest 2019. Chosen photos will be posted on our Facebook page and submitted to the Norwell Mariner as part of the contest.

Do you have photos that pre-date 1960? (We have lots of photos from 1970 to the 1990's). Please take a moment this winter to look through your collection and share them with us!

Topics to look for:

- Fires in Town
- Town Celebrations
- Storms
- Everyday Iconic Norwell
- Before and After (exterior) photos of homes that are renovated or moved

To submit photos, please scan and email them to [info@norwellhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@norwellhistoricalsociety.org), and include any details about the photos and your contact information. If you do not want the photos back, you can mail them to NHS, PO Box 693, Norwell, 02061 (please label them with any details, and include your contact information).

# 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.*



● This antique sewing machine is on display at the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum. This particular model was built in the 1880s and we've found an advertisement for this exact machine which shows it selling for \$19.50. The sewing machine is not believed to have been owned by the Jacobs family, but was gifted to the Society.



● Norwell resident Perry Osborn wore this doughboy helmet when he served in Europe in WWI. The helmet was donated by the estate of Mary Osborn Knapp.

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## Mailing Address & Phone

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

# Just The Facts



## Mission Statement

The purpose of the Norwell Historical 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; and
- d.) to work with and cooperate with other entities, groups, organizations, and individuals directly and indirectly.

## 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 2:30 to 3:30 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.

## What's in a Name:

# OSBORN OR OSBORNE

Osborn is a medieval English surname, but one with ancient Viking origins. The modern surname (in its many spellings) derives from the Norse personal name 'Asbiorn,' composed of the elements 'As' meaning 'god' and 'Bjorn' meaning 'the bear.' The name in America has been spelled many ways, but in early 1900s Norwell, the "Osborn" family and the "Osborne" family were distinctively different.

### How far back do the Osborn/es go in town?

Historian Samuel Deane did not include the Osborn family in his "Family Sketches" in the *History of Scituate*, and no Osborns are listed as captains or shipbuilders in Briggs' *Shipbuilding on the North River*. But Merritt's listing of WWI veterans includes five Osborn/es of the 55 Norwell men who served in that war, so the families had a formidable presence in town by the early 1900s. Merritt also mentions WWI veteran Perry Osborn (see helmet photo on the previous page) as a descendant of Israel Vinal, a Revolutionary War soldier. So the family, but not the name, has been around for longer.

### Chief Osborn, the Prohibitionist?

Historian Sam Olson wrote of Police Chief Walter Osborn's attempts at containing Prohibition in Norwell in the 1920s. "Walter Osborn... discovered 950 gallons of Belgian alcohol in the meadow below Union Bridge... On one occasion, a complete moonshine still was found in the swamp off Grove Street. Police chief Walter Osborn... followed a well-trodden path from the home of the suspect, where [he] discovered jugs, bottles, and a capper before arresting the suspect."

### When an Osborn loves an Osborne...

Osborn School (now Norwell Town Hall) was named for former principal Ella Osborne Osborn. A member of the Osborne family, she married Perry Osborn (same town, same pronunciation, no relation).

### Who Owns the Trucks?

In 1960, the Town of Norwell didn't own Highway trucks and plows. As Highway Surveyer, Perry Osborn provided his own. When Arnie Joseph (a kissing cousin of the Osborns) beat Perry Osborn in an election for the position, Aunt Ella was not happy. A storm was coming and Arnie asked if he could use the equipment as he didn't have enough of his own. Ella was reported to have said "No, Arnie, you can't. You should have thought about that before you ran against Perry."



**Christmas at the Farmhouse** saw over 100 visitors to the Jacobs Farmhouse! In this photo, young Brooks Buitta of Norwell points out the scratch marks on the door to the upstairs to his father. Each evening, before retiring, the family would strike their matches on the door to light their lamps because the house never had electricity.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
**wake up  
the farm**  
AT THE JACOBS FARMHOUSE

**Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>**  
8:00 - 11:30 am

*Answer from page 7: This water tower and windmill used to stand behind May Elms Farm at 841 Main Street. The tower was up on the hill so that the water pressure was adequate to reach teh barns. The tower is visible today from May Elm Lane.*

# PLAY BALL!

## 1880s South Shore Baseball

*1880s baseball was quite different from today's game. Without gloves, these young men entertained the South Shore crowds throughout the summer, and young Ansel Grose of High Street was one of the game's brightest stars.*

by Jeff Keller

*Norwell Historical Society member Jeff Keller lives on High Street in the Charles Grose House (circa 1867). Charles Grose was the father of baseball player Ansel Grose, who grew up in what is today the Kellers' home.*

It was the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and baseball was becoming increasingly popular in New England. Professional baseball in the mid-1880s had the Boston Beaneaters competing in the National League instead of the Boston Red Sox in the American League.

Amateur teams abounded in neighboring towns and played to capacity crowds. The South Shore of Boston was no exception. Some towns such as Hingham had several teams (the Hingham Base Ball Club, the Hingham Juniors, the Hingham Centres and the West Hinghams). Other towns had only one. South Scituate's team (Norwell was not named that until 1888) from Ridge Hill played at least some of their games in Hanover and at different times were referred to as the Hanovers. Their players' names were familiar though: in 1884 to 1886 we see local family names such as Farrar, Studley, Wilder, Stoddard and Loring.

Back then, these contests needed to draw as many paying spectators as possible to help defray expenses as the teams would split the gate. Ansel Hobart Grose, the youngest son of Charles and Mary Ann Grose of High Street, loved to play baseball. In 1886 we find Ansel playing first base for Hanover. "Grose led the batting of the Hanovers last year and his work last Saturday shows that he hasn't forgotten how." Fred Miller, editor of

the *Hingham Journal*, wrote on May 20, 1887. Grose switched teams and joined the Hingham Base Ball Club beginning in 1887. In the July 8, 1887 edition we read, "Grose, who has been covering first base in such fine shape, is a conscientious player and a gentleman in the bargain." Ansel Grose later went on to play center field.

In 1887, the Hingham Base Ball Club was anchored by the brothers Townsend: Mat and Fred. Fred pitched, Mat caught and filled in at other positions. Each week's games were published in the *Hingham Journal* and included the names of the players, a box score, and brief account of the contest. What was not apparent is that the rules of the game were a little different back then also. The umpire was positioned behind the pitcher to call balls and strikes.

*(continued on the next page)*

The photo below shows the **Hingham Base Ball Club in 1888**—the year that Norwell was founded and the last year for Ansel Grose before he became ill.

Author Jeff Keller believes this photo was professionally taken at a studio in Boston on the way to a game in Melrose. Fred Miller was also the owner and editor of the *Hingham Journal*, which is still published today. He published the box score and accounts of each game on the front page of the newspaper—listing player's names and their positions in the game, and making comments about their play. Keller notes that Fred Miller's commentary "made research here fairly easy."

Also of interest in this photo is the fact that Fred Lake (pictured below in the front row at left) went on to become the manager of the Boston Red Sox from 1908-1910.

Front Row: Fred Lake (C), Dwight Lincoln (Bat Boy) & Fred Townsend (P)

Middle Row: Herbert Bates (RF), Mat Townsend (C, SS), Jack Driscoll (CF, 3B) & George Rich (CF)

Back Row: Arthur Whiton (Asst. Mgr. & Scorer), Stewart Groves (2B), Harry Hough (1B), Ansel Hobart Grose (LF) & Fred Miller (Mgr. & Scorer).



# PLAY BALL! CONT'D

The umpire was allowed, during the game, to ask the spectators' opinion whether a catch had been fairly made before rendering a decision. Foul and fly balls could be caught on the first bounce for an out. No gloves were used by players at this point in time, resulting in sore hands (especially for the catcher!). In fact, it was not uncommon for the catcher to position himself 20 to 25 feet behind the batter.

“ *The umpire was allowed, during the game, to ask the spectators' opinion whether a catch had been fairly made before rendering a decision.* ”

In 1888, the Hingham Base Ball Club had a new manager: Mat Townsend. Fred Miller was also there, however, reporting on each contest. At the end of the 1888 season, the *Hingham Journal* noted, “We give to our readers this week a summary of the work done by the Hingham Base Ball Club. The Club, unlike those in surrounding towns, has been composed of Hingham boys, and no money has been spent hiring outside players. The Hinghams participated in twenty two games winning seventeen and losing five.” This was their best season ever.

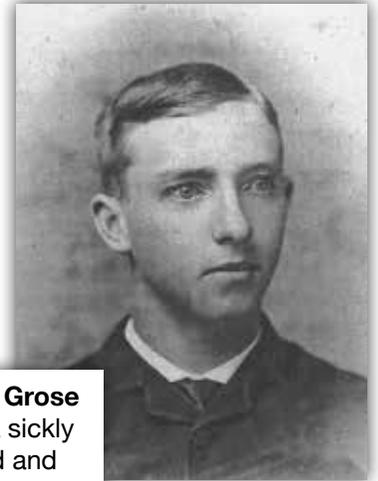
The professional Boston Bean-eaters, however, were not as successful. They never were a factor in the pennant

race that year—finishing in fourth place with a record of 70 wins and 64 losses.

Unfortunately this was to be the last season for High Street resident Ansel Grose. The following year, in 1889, he experienced a ruptured artery which hemorrhaged. His obituary read:

“Had he lived but nine more days, he would have been twenty five years old. His intention was to settle down here and continue in the manufacturing business being the junior partner of C. Grose & Sons.... He died at Lake Saranac, New York from acute pneumonia. Neither the healing climate of Southern California, the bracing air of Colorado, or the fragrant breezes of the tropics seemed to restore his former health.”

*Hingham Journal*  
November 6, 1891



**Ansel Grose** was a sickly child and slight in build and stature, but was nevertheless tenacious in his desire and quick on his feet.

## FOUND ON THE SOUTH SHORE: A BLACK BASEBALL

Hingham contractor Peter Bickford found this "black" baseball from the mid- to late-1800s when he dismantled the Thomas Fearing house (c. 1727) located at 10-12 Free Street in Hingham.



The ball is hand made and hand stitched and is referred to as a lemon peel design. It is actually brown in color and not quite round (although it was probably rounder originally). The ball was sewn turned inside out, and then turned right side out and stuffed. Note the cross stitching on it. In the 1800s, there was considerable variation in these balls. For instance they were stuffed with different substances such as cork or rubber which made them a lot more lively.

"A Brief History of the Baseball" by Jeremy Stamp (Smithsonian.

com) explores this type of ball in detail. He says the lemon peel ball was smaller in circumference, lighter in weight, darker in color, and softer than balls of today. In fact some rules allowed for the runner to be thrown out by hitting him with the baseball!

# DO YOU REMEMBER? Norwell Senior Citizens' Association

*In 1962, a group of seniors formed an organization—not remembered by most—which was the forerunner of the Council on Aging (COA) and many of the programs that serve seniors in Norwell today. This history of the Norwell Senior Citizens' Association was found in a scrapbook donated to the Society by the COA.*

*edited by Janet Watson  
from notes from the Norwell COA*

Mrs. Gertrude Whitcher moved to Norwell after the loss of her mate, to live with her daughter Mrs. Priscilla (Pat) Cushing at their home on Norwell Avenue. Although surrounded by children and grandchildren, Mrs. Whitcher wished for friends of her own age group with which to companion. Neighboring towns were forming senior citizen groups of retired and lonely persons to fulfill such a need. Consequently Pat Cushing invited several people to "Tea" at her home on September 2, 1962 for the purpose of organizing and forming a senior citizens' group for her mother's (and others') benefit. The Church Hill Methodist Church, The First Parish Church, and St. Helen's Church sponsored the group.

The next monthly meeting was held by invitation of the Women's Society of Christian Services of the Church Hill Methodist Church in their Education Building on October 16, 1962. It was noted that "Luncheon was served by the ladies of the W.S.C.S. (free) which was followed by group singing led by Mrs. Olive Coff with Dr. Orrin Coff at the piano."

Following the lunch and entertainment, Mrs. Cushing started on organization business. The first officers were voted in and the name of the group was voted to be "The Norwell Senior Citizens' Association." The group sent for the Senior Citizens' Charter from the White House Conference of 1961 and adopted it.

At the December meeting a handbag was presented to Mrs. Cushing in grateful appreciation of all she had done.

In April 1963 an auction was held at the Grange Hall which started the tradition of Spring Auctions. It was in the Fall of 1963 when Gertrude Whitcher married Joseph Souza, thus the first romance of two members.

It was in this year that the members felt a need for a central meeting place of their own and the Grange Hall allowed them the use of its building with 3 months rent free and \$5 per month thereafter.

A block and gavel were presented to the group and the story about it written by Eleanor LeDuc reads as follows:

*In 1907 while the Frigate Constitution was being repaired at the Charlestown Navy Yard, my father... salvaged some pieces of wood and from these pieces of wood the block and gavel were fashioned by Viking Kjillander the brother of our treasurer, Esther Nichols. The engraved copper plate was rolled from a bolt made by Paul Revere who made bolts for the Constitution...."*

Much help in entertainment was given by the Church Hill Methodist Church, including the offer to have a craft exhibit in April 1965 featuring items made by Seniors.

On October 27, 1965 the first meeting of the Norwell Council on Aging was held in regard to Housing for the Aged. The first item to be budgeted in 1966 was for "Senior Citizen recreation" in the amount of \$300.

On May 3, 1966 Pat Cushing, founder of the Norwell Senior Citizens' Association, was killed in a car accident. Shortly thereafter in July,

Mrs. Cushing's mother, Gertrude Souza, passed on.

Also in 1966 social gatherings were held in the town hall lobby on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month where Senior Citizens played cards and socialized on a drop in basis.

The Grange was asked to provide a Thanksgiving dinner, and this procedure became a tradition for almost ten years until the group became too large to serve at the Grange Hall.



One of the actors in **Days of Yesteryear**, which was performed by the Norwell Senior Citizens' Association in 1978.

*Do you know who this lady is? Email the Society and let us know so we can label the photo in our Archives!*

On November 19, 1970 the first hot lunch for Seniors was served for 50¢ at the Osborn School.

In April 1974 the first Blood Pressure clinic was started.

*(continued on the next page)*

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:

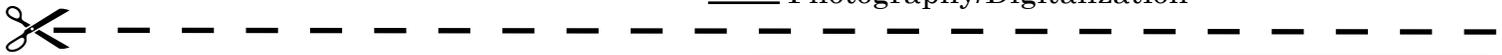
\_\_\_\_\_ Staffing the Research Library

\_\_\_\_\_ Farmhouse Tour Guide

\_\_\_\_\_ Farmhouse Maintenance

\_\_\_\_\_ Event Planning

\_\_\_\_\_ Photography/Digitalization



## Seniors, CONT'D

In the year 1975 the Norwell Senior Citizen Association became incorporated.

In May of 1978, the Association deviated from its usual auction held in the Spring to put on a show called "Days of Yesteryear" which brought in \$510 in proceeds—enabling the members to take more trips and have more recreation activities during the summer months.

In Spring 1978, the Council on Aging purchased a piece of property on Pine Street in Norwell which was to be converted to a "Drop in Center" for the Senior Citizens of Norwell. Once the Council on Aging Center was completed, the need for a separate Norwell Senior Citizens' Association was no more and the group disbanded.

Presidents of the Norwell Senior Citizens' Association were:

- 1962 Russell Goudey
- 1963 Thomas Coughlin
- 1966 Earl Nichols
- 1967 Florence Joseph
- 1969 Clarence Joseph
- 1974 Esther Fanall
- 1976 Joseph Dooley
- 1977 Anthony Sinatra
- 1978 Margaret Brennan



### THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH



**Water towers/windmills in Norwell:** Did you know there were four water towers in Norwell? The **first** is still standing (and recently restored!) at 143 Pleasant Street at the John Otis House. The **second** is beautifully-preserved at 625 Main Street at the Rev. Samuel Deane House. The **third** is located at the Whiting House at 36 Lincoln Street (although that water tower never had a windmill—but a gas-powered engine to pump the water into its storage tank). The **fourth** is now partially standing—only its rectangular base is visible today. In the 1970s, it caught fire and its wooden structure burned. The round stone base was badly damaged and soon dismantled.

This photo shows the tower and windmill in its full glory in the early 1900s. Where was this tower located?

*(answer at the bottom of page 3)*

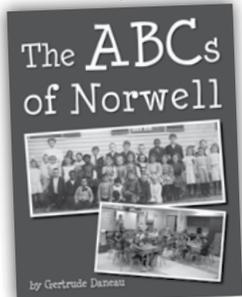


NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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## HISTORICAL SOCIETY ITEMS FOR SALE



**The ABCs of Norwell** (*shown at left*)  
*by Gertrude Daneau*

**\$10**

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 famous personalities and historical features.

**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](http://norwellhistoricalsociety.org)

*All the above items are available at the Society Library in the Middle School on Wednesdays during the school year (2:30-3:30 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.*