



# NORTH RIVER PACKET

For the latest online news and events, visit: [norwellhistoricalsociety.org](http://norwellhistoricalsociety.org)

## Shipyard Plaques Restored

*After a year of planning, funding from the Community Preservation Act, and lots of sweat equity, the North River shipyard plaques are ready for another 100 years of viewing.*

After over a year of collaboration with Pembroke, Hanover, Scituate, and Marshfield Historical Societies, the Norwell Historical Society is celebrating the completion of the restoration of the North River shipyard plaques.

Originally erected by the North River Historical Association in 1919, the four plaques in Norwell (Fox Hill Shipyard, Wanton Shipyard, Chittenden Shipyard, and Block House Shipyard) have been restored to their original glory.

In 1871 the *Helen M. Foster*, the last large ship built on the North River, was launched—ending the era of shipbuilding on the river that had lasted over 200 years.



The original Fox Hill Shipyard sign was precariously close to the River's edge. Its text was weathered and almost unreadable, and its post was deteriorated.

In 1918 a group of prominent businessmen formed the North River Historical Association to ensure that the history of the shipyards was not lost.

The minutes of the first meeting are documented in the records of the Association, which were found in the Archives of the Norwell Historical Society. The original group met for only one year and, after the plaques had been erected, disbanded.

*“To commemorate the completion of the project, the new NRHA is planning a celebration on Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>.”*

100 years later Hanover Historical Society Board member Caleb Estabrooks, who lives on the site of the Barstow Shipyard in Hanover, convened a group of area Historical Societies in the hope of resurrecting the North River Historical Association. This group could organize the restoration of the signs, but also reinvigorate interest in the shipyards and their rich histories.

Estabrooks has been instrumental in arranging the restoration of the signs. Along with the landowners, on whose property the signs are located, Estabrooks supervised the removal



The new Fox Hill Shipyard sign is easily readable from the River and features a new cement post. It has been placed a bit further up the bank to prevent future decay.

of the original decayed cement posts and the installation of the newly-made ones. He then affixed temporary corrugated signs to the posts. These signs had the original wording, but noted that the project was made possible with financing from the Community Preservation Act.

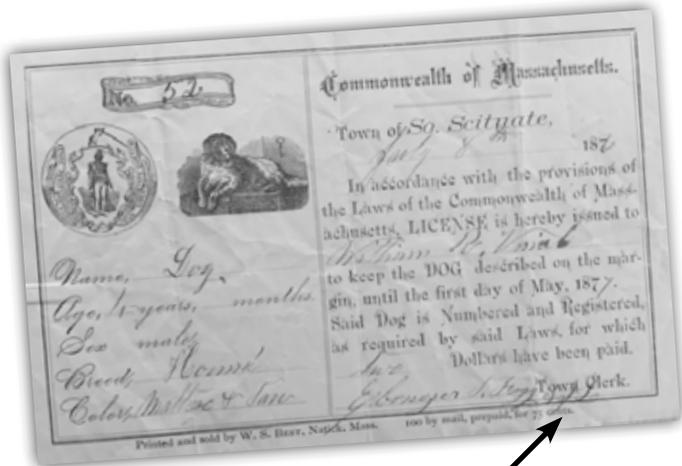
Many residents commented that for the first time in years, the new (temporary) signs were again readable from the River! After the restoration of the original iron signs and their subsequent repainting, Estabrooks installed the refurbished signs on the new posts.

To commemorate the completion of the project, the new North River Historical Association is planning a celebration on **Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> from 3:30 until 6:00** at the North River Grille at the Widow's Walk Golf Club in Scituate. This event will feature appetizers and a talk about the history of the shipyards and is \$20/person.

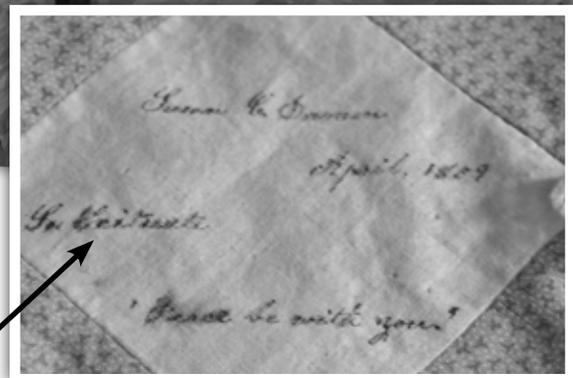
To RSVP, please see the Norwell Historical Society's website.

# 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.*



Found in the Society Archives, dog licenses were necessary—even in 1876. Town Clerk Ebenezer Fogg, who also served as president of South Scituate Savings Bank, granted this license to William R. Vinal (father of Professor William G. Vinal after whom the Vinal school was named). William Vinal's naming skills were clearly lacking in 1876. His dog's name: Dog.



Textile Conservator Marie Schlag has recommended a group of quilts, owned by the Historical Society and previously on display at the Jacobs Farmhouse, for a future Society quilt exhibition. Marie has chosen the best of the Society's many examples, including a pink and white "Signature Quilt" from 1889. The top photo shows the quilt—laid out in one of the bedrooms at the Farmhouse. The inset photo shows one of the dozens of signatures on the back of the quilt: Susan Damon, April 1889, South Scituate, "Peace be with you."

## Officers

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Sarah Jane Baker, Secretary  
Marybeth Shea, Treasurer

## Board of Directors

Laurie Detwiler  
Chad Forman  
Christian Jevne  
Joan Vermette  
Janet Watson, Archivist

## Mailing Address & Phone

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

## Just The Facts

### 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

*The above new Mission Statement is pending final approval at the October Annual Meeting.*



## 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](mailto:watsonje@comcast.net) and join the team!

# Henry “Stony” Ford Builds a Wall

*Farmer “Stony” Ford could build a wall. When he retired and donated his stone-cutting tools to the Society, he left a “How To” on stone walls and old-fashioned techniques.*

*Editor’s note: William Gould Vinal, 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the Norwell Historical Society, cut out this article written by Henry C. Ford. The article was found in 2017 by Archivist William Slattery in a book from Vinal’s private library that was donated to the Society.*

*Transcribed from The Hanover Branch of Thursday December 29, 1966:*

Henry C. Ford of Stony Brook Farm, Main Street, Norwell, has retired from farming. Now in his 90s, he recalls a New England skill that has practically disappeared from use.

[The following is a primer, written by Ford, on the ancient skill of stone removal and wall building.]

Having given the stone drilling tools to the Norwell Historical Society made me think how little the present generation knows about the method of clearing

land of stones for building walls, for fences, cellars, stoning wells, etc.

Folks of today can see bulldozers push stones around but never saw a pair of horses snap a boulder from the ground onto a stone drag.



Oxen on May Elm Farm in Norwell.

The earlier generation moved the large stones [prevalent in Norwell soil!] with oxen, as in the 1800s there were very few heavy horses and many farmers had only one horse to go ahead of them. Most of the land was clay bottom and many of the boulders were near the top of the ground.

The number of stones on a field often gave the idea of the size of land to be walled in.

### THE FIRST STEP

The first thing to do was to dig around the stone and if it could be loosened, a pair of horses could tip it out to drag it away.

If it was too large, it had to be drilled and blasted with dynamite to just break up the stone. That method ruined the surface.

[Drilling] was done by two men, one to set [sit] on a bag of hay and hold a drill every blow and often taking out the dust with a long narrow spoon to keep the drill clear.

A very good idea was for the holder of the drill to wear buckskin mittens as they took the shock of the hammer and saved wear on the hands.

If the stone was the right shape for door steps, one man could drill with a smaller drill, holding with one hand and striking with the other, spacing the holds so as to use wedges and shims to crack the stones in two. This was the method for getting out stone for building face walls for cellars...

### FIELDSTONE WALL

And it was a good man that could lay a good fieldstone wall. Almost any three-foot stone would make a good “binder” when placed good side out. Then came a size smaller to go on top of that, then a smaller size to top off the wall. It was very necessary to have these stones have a boring in three places and make what was called a balanced or face wall. To lay a long-lasting wall, it should not be chinked by small stones that would work out and cave it down in time.

To get out the stone after digging around it..., a ten-foot chain was hooked around the stone.... Then, if you were lucky, the chain would bite onto rock and turn it out to be loaded onto a drag, or as some called it, a stone boat, to be taken away.

*(continued on page 6)*

“ ...go around every spring and lay up the fallen ones and every August cut the hedge rows of bushes that grow...” ”

# What IS this thing?



In preparation for Halloween, the item above would seem appropriate, given its name: **BONECRUSHER**.

A bonecrusher is, however, much tamer than its name implies. In the “olden days,” recycling and reusing were required. Although eating meat was not as common as it is today, when a family had meat for dinner the bones were not “thrown away” but instead recycled for the chickens.

The farmer would insert leftover bones into the top, turn the handle to activate the gears, and produce a fine bone meal to feed the chickens.

Why feed chickens bone meal? In those days, hen feed was whatever leftovers a farm produced and threw out to the barnyard. Often, necessary calcium (to strengthen the egg shells) was missing from the hens’ diets. Bone meal provided the needed nutrients AND made use of kitchen scraps.

This tool was originally used by the Morton family when they lived in the Stetson-Ford House and now resides at the Jacobs Farmhouse.

## What's in a Name:

# JACOB OR JACOBS

The surname Jacobs was originally patronymic—derived from the name of one’s father. Of biblical origins, the Hebrew name Jacob means “heel” because in the Bible, Jacob, the younger twin brother of Esau, was said to have been born holding on to Esau’s heel.

### How far back do the Jacobs/Jacobses go in town?

Historian Samuel Deane included the Jacob family in his “Family Sketches” in the *History of Scituate*. The first Jacob in the South Shore area was Nicholas Jacob, who sailed to Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1633 with his wife, son John, infant daughter Elizabeth, and a cousin named Thomas Lincoln. Nicholas first settled in Watertown, but soon moved to Hingham.

### Creating what is today Main Street in Norwell:

Nicholas Jacob’s grandson, David, was the first Jacob to move to (what is today) Norwell. By age 36, David was a Town Surveyor and laid out a road where Indians had traveled on a path from winter to summer camp sites. This road is documented as existing in 1704 from Greenbush in Scituate to Assinippi—today’s Main Street in Norwell.

### What began as Jacob slowly became Jacobs...

While David Jacob’s sons’ names had no “s” at the end, David’s grandsons refer to themselves in official records as “Jacobs.” While it is unclear why the family name added an “s” in that generation, it is believed that the two Jacob’s mills (one saw mill and one grist mill) built by David’s sons were always referred to *together* as the Jacob’s mills. From that requisite pluralization, the apostrophe was dropped and the name, perhaps, evolved to “Jacobs.”

### A wayward son travels to Chile to make his fortune:

Around 1830, 22-year old Bela Tower Jacobs was loaned money by the wealthy, soon-to-be bank owner, Ebenezer T. Fogg of South Scituate. The money was “enough funds to travel to Chile to make his fortune,” according to historian Margaret Dumas-Crowell. Bela’s parents refused to invest in his adventure and discouraged the trip. In Chile, Bela made coffins for the many victims of yellow fever and, after having made \$40,000, had to smuggle his gold in the hold of his returning ship (it was against Chilean law at the time to take that much gold out of the country). Bela succeeded and returned to South Scituate to live until age 80.

### The Jacobs Mills and their demise...

According to a diary entry of Harwood Smith (age 16) of Hanover, who ice-fished on Jacobs Pond with his brother on the clear and cold Saturday, December 17, 1887: Barton Jacobs came out to give them a friendly warning that his mill would be operating for a couple hours that afternoon. Specifically, he told them “not to be alarmed at what would seem to be a general cracking up of the ice, which he said might occur due to drawing down the pond with his water wheel.” Unfortunately, the Jacobs’ mills succumbed to fire on July 4, 1920 when children celebrating Independence Day burned them down.

# Planning for the Society's Future

*What are the critical issues facing the Norwell Historical Society? What are our strengths and weaknesses? After defining our Beliefs, the Society's board and community members wrote a new Mission Statement that will guide the Historical Society into the future.*

For two nights in August, Norwell Historical Society Board members and community members gathered at the Norwell Fire Department with former Norwell School Superintendent Don Beaudette. Dr. Beaudette guided the group through a Strategic Planning process that produced a set of Beliefs, a new Mission Statement (to be officially approved at the October Annual Meeting), and proposed Strategic Goals.

Community members who generously donated their time and expertise to the process were:

- Katie Campbell, Executive Director of the Sandwich Glass Museum
- David DeGhetto, Norwell Historical Commission member
- Becky Freed, former Selectman
- Art Joseph, Owner of Joseph's Garage
- Jeff Keller, Publisher, New England Real Estate Journal and historian
- Martha Twigg, Former Director of the SSNSC and volunteer at the Scituate and Norwell Historical Societies
- Rachel Wollam, Community Preservation Committee member

These community members, along with the Society Board, completed much in two short nights. As Dr. Beaudette warned the group, Strategic Planning is preparation for work still to be done. Focusing our mission will allow the Society to plan events and activities that align with its new

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

—Abraham Lincoln

Mission Statement. The Strategic Planning sessions are “sharpening the axe” (see Lincoln quote above that Dr. Beaudette showed the group). Now that the Mission Statement is written, the actual work within the Strategic Goals can begin.

The new Mission Statement proposed by the group is based on a set of

Beliefs—also written at the Planning Sessions. The Beliefs of the Norwell Historical Society are the following:

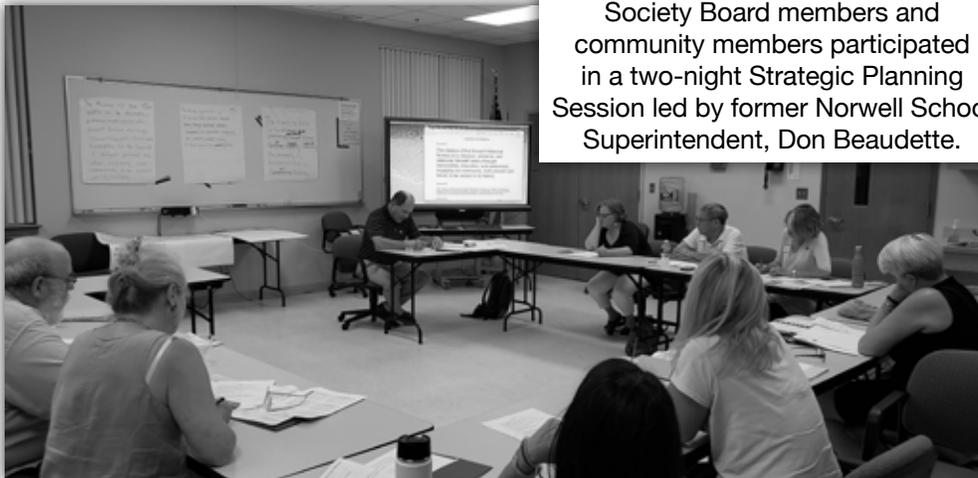
- Learning about and preserving history links the past, present, and future
- History is created every day.
- Appreciating history is for all ages.
- Every life story is a thread in the fabric of history.
- Towns with well-defined heritage enjoy direct economic benefit.
- Stewardship is essential to preserving history.
- Historic property provides continuity and connection to the past.
- A thriving organization grows.
- Business partnerships strengthen community organizations.
- Effective communication engages community.
- A broad variety of programs attracts and engages a diverse audience.
- Organizations that connect people encourage involvement and volunteerism.
- Resources increase opportunities.
- Collaboration broadens perspective and encourages participation.
- There is history still to be discovered.

The proposed Mission Statement, based on these Beliefs, is the following:

***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.***

Strategic Goals in the areas of “Stewardship,” “Awareness & Engagement,” and “Resources” have also been identified. If you are interested in joining a subcommittee to brainstorm Operational Objectives within these three areas, please contact the Society at [info@norwellhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@norwellhistoricalsociety.org). We welcome input from our members!

Society Board members and community members participated in a two-night Strategic Planning Session led by former Norwell School Superintendent, Don Beaudette.



# Bible Found in Archives Donated to First Parish

Along with a cadre of volunteers, Historical Society Archivist Janet Watson has been reviewing and organizing the contents of the Society's Archives over the course of the past year.

While looking through archival storage boxes, the group came across an ancient Bible that once belonged to Rev. David Barnes, minister of First Parish church from 1754-1811.

Inside the tome was a letter that read:

*This ancient Book was used by Rev. David Barnes D.D. who was settled over the second Parish in Scituate, now the first Parish in South Scituate, November 27, 1754, and deceased April 26, 1811, having completed eighty years, of which fifty seven had been the term of his ministry.*



The Rev. Barnes Bible is now residing at First Parish in Norwell.

*At the annual meeting of the members of the first Parish in So. Scituate, held April 7, 1860, it was voted that this Bible be placed in the Library of the Pastor of the Parish, to be there preserved, as a memorial to the olden time.*

*Attest. H.A. Turner, Clerk*

The Historical Society Assesions Committee voted to donate the Bible back to First Parish and brought the book, in its special archival box, to the church this summer.

If you, too, would like to search the Archives for more treasures, please contact the Society via our website and sign up to volunteer with Archivist Janet Watson and her team.

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## Stone Walls, CONT'D

*(continued from page 3)*

Another method was to place dynamite under a boulder and blow it out, if possible. I have tried it but with poor success, as the blast blew the stone up a ways and it fell down farther than before. I have also tried the "mud blast" without much success, using the powder buried under mud on the stone. Sometimes, if things worked right, a stone could be broken after a fashion.

### HAULING WITH DRAGS

For hauling away the stone, a drag was made of oak. We used 2-inch oak, three feet wide by five and a half feet long, as a longer one handled too hard and was too heavy to turn over when not in use. It is unbelievable how quickly a drag will rot, left on the ground.

Another must for laying up stone was a skid ladder made of white cedar, as that was not so slippery for stones. It made a good way to roll stones to the top of the wall binders... .

The law of stone laying was to break joints and always have a three-point

resting place for every stone..., then go around every spring and lay up the fallen ones and every August cut the hedge rows of bushes that grow now that we don't pasture any cows.



The fieldstone walls at the corner of Lincoln and Main Street used to contain the cows from Currie Farm.

A few rods south of the stone bridge over Stony Brook in the corner of a small, walled-in pasture, are the remains (covered now) of a granite ledge that was ideal to split out underpinning

and bridge covering. All of the farm buildings have granite foundations and a number of stone steps are in use on the farm.

At one time there were two bridges in the lane from Main Street to the house. As late as 1897 we found new pieces for the foundation of new barn and it is doubtful if any other property can show so much granite boulders split in half and never used. They can still be seen by the brook.

There is hardly a blacksmith nowadays that can do a good job at sharpening a stone drill and temper it to stand the pounding. ...No one drills stone on farms now, so I pass along the tools.

Henry C. Ford ("Stony")  
Stony Brook Farm  
Norwell, Mass.

*[Stony Brook Farm is close to the Norwell-Scituate line off of Main Street; the brook originates in a pond on Cross Street.]*

 **JOIN or RENEW online**  [NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG](http://NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG) or fill out this form:

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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:

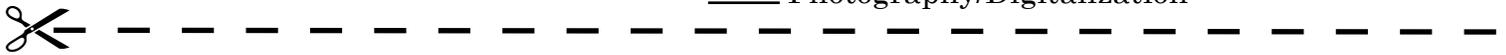
\_\_\_\_\_ Staffing the Research Library

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

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

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

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



The NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
presents

# COLONIAL BURYING GROUNDS

of the  
NORTH RIVER  
TOWNS

with Stephen O'Neill  
Executive Director,  
Hanover Historical Society  
Lecturer in History,  
Suffolk University, Boston

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20<sup>TH</sup>  
3:30 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
3:45 Presentation ☞ 4:30 Cemetery Tour

at the First Parish of Norwell Parish Hall  
24 RIVER STREET, NORWELL CENTER

*In the North River towns of Scituate, Marshfield, Norwell, Pembroke, and Hanover, there are two dozen burying grounds dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This illustrated talk will look at their locations and landscapes, gravestones and markers, and how people were buried in them—to document the transformation of Puritan colonists to provincial subjects and finally to American citizens.*

This event is free.

NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG



accessible

## Recipe

In preparation for Thanksgiving next month, here is a recipe from the Norwell Historical Society's **More Than Just A Cookbook**. Former Society president Alice Hyslop contributed this prepare-in-advance side dish:

### LOUISIANA YAM PECAN CASSEROLE

#### Yam mixture:

4 medium yams (do not use canned yams), cooked, peeled, and mashed.

1 T lemon juice

2 tsps. grated lemon rind

1/2 cup chopped pecans

2 T butter

1/2 tsp. salt

1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar

#### Topping:

2 T chopped pecans

1 tsp. grated lemon rind

2 T brown sugar

Combine the yam mixture together—mix well and spoon into a lightly buttered 1 1/2 quart casserole.

Combine topping ingredients and sprinkle over the yam mixture.

Bake at 350° for 20 minutes or until hot.

This casserole can be prepared in advance, refrigerated, and baked at serving time—just add 15 minutes to the baking time.

Serves 4.



NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 693  
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061  
[www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org)

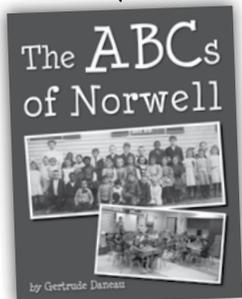
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## HISTORICAL SOCIETY ITEMS FOR SALE



**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 (2:45-3:45 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.