



NORTH RIVER PACKET

For the latest online news and events, visit norwellhistoricalsociety.org

Spring is here AND so are the Victory Gardens!

You may have heard of “Victory Gardens,” but do you know when and how the term originated? With interest in home gardening at its height during the pandemic, consider growing your own small patch in celebration of those who came before us and sowed the seeds of victory!

written by Sarah Baker

Gardening made history this spring—evidenced by Burpee Seed Company selling more seeds in March 2021 than in any other month in their 144-year history! Johnny’s Selected Seeds of Maine noted a 270% increase in normal spring sales.

The COVID-19 pandemic has renewed interest in gardening, raising chickens, and canning and preserving as all yearn to get their hands dirty in the spirit of the Victory Gardens of the early 1900s.

Victory Gardening is a movement of people helping to produce food in a time of crisis.

Beginning in March 1917 (just weeks before the United States entered the First World War) Charles Lathrop Pack created the National War Garden Commission. This organization encouraged Americans to contribute to the war effort by planting, fertilizing, harvesting, and storing their own fruits and vegetables so that more food could be exported to our allies in Europe. All Americans were urged to utilize idle land that was not already used for food production—including school and company grounds, parks, backyards, or any available vacant lots.

Promoted through propaganda posters advocating that civilians “sow the

seeds of victory” by planting their own vegetables, the war garden movement was spread by word of mouth through numerous women’s clubs, civic associations, and chambers of commerce. Amateur gardeners were provided with instruction pamphlets on how, when, and where to sow. They



This WWI-era poster offers free books on gardening, canning, and drying.

were offered suggestions as to the best crops to plant and tips on preventing disease and insect infestations.

The Victory Garden movement was so well received that the government then began to distribute canning and food-drying manuals to help people preserve their surplus crops. In addition to encouraging *adults* to garden, the Federal Bureau of Education initiated

a U.S. School Garden Army to mobilize children to enlist as “soldiers of the soil.” As a result of these combined efforts, 3 million new garden plots were planted in 1917, and more than 5.2

“ The federal Bureau of Education initiated a U.S. School Garden Army to mobilize children to enlist as soldiers of the soil. ”

million plots were cultivated in 1918. These gardens generated an estimated 1.45 million quarts of canned fruits and vegetables.

By the end of World War I, the Victory Garden campaign had dropped off, but many people continued to maintain their new plots.

Victory Gardens were employed again when the United States entered World War II when, in early 1943, civilians were encouraged to begin growing fruits and vegetables themselves. At their height, an estimated 20 million Victory Gardens were in existence,

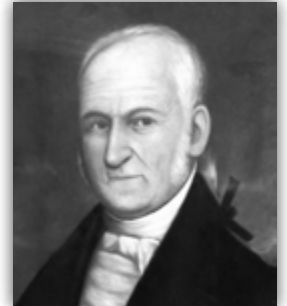
(continued on page 3)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

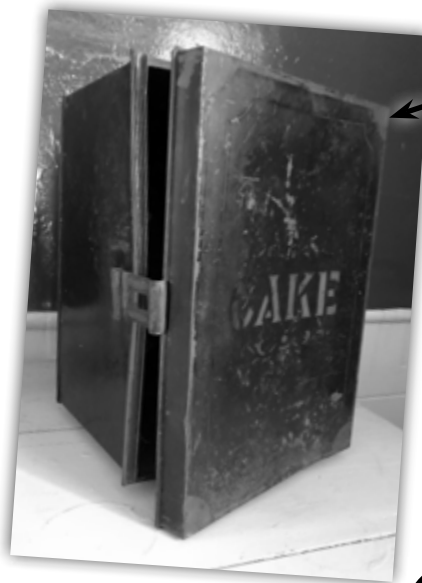
Treasures known and treasures found in the Norwell Historical Society Archives, in the Society Research Library, and in the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum are featured here in each issue.



This original copy of Robert Thomas's (see his portrait at right) *Almanack* from 1797 is in the Historical Society Archives. Mr. Thomas began what is today known as the *Old Farmer's Almanac* in 1792—five years before this particular issue was published.



The Historical Society received a shoebox full of these old publications dating from 1793 until the early 1800s. The unknown farmer who carefully kept the *Almanacks* made notes in the margins about the weather (March 1807: “The weather this month has been rough and cold beyond all example.”); his oxen (Amy, Fred, Flora, and Dill); his appointments (“My turn at the Almshouse”); and his garden notes. For an excerpt from this farmer’s planting schedule for May & June 1797, see page 5 of the newsletter.



This antique pie and cake safe is on display at the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum. Why would one need such an item? To protect baked goods from hungry children and husbands? No. These safes were used to hold items particularly susceptible to vermin attacks. While the family cat was helpful in keeping mice away from the kitchen, this safe worked better. Mice, ants, and flies had finally met their match!

Learn more about the history of the *Old Farmer's Almanac* here.



Just The Facts

Officers

Wendy Bawabe, President
Sarah Jane Baker, Secretary
Marybeth Shea, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Laurie Detwiler
Chad Forman
Christian Jevne
Stephen O'Neill
Alan Prouty
Janet Watson, Archivist

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.

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 on-line and at the Society’s website NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG.

Victory Gardens, cont’d.

(continued from page 1)

supplying more than 40% of the fresh fruits and vegetables consumed in the United States. During World War II, Victory Gardens appeared on the lawn of the White House and in community plots like the Fenway. Founded in 1942, the Fenway Victory Gardens had 500 garden plots spanning 7.5 acres. The site is still an active community garden today.

In the 1800s and 1900s, Norwell was known as a farming town with many chicken and dairy farms dotting the landscape. Most residents at the time had small farms and raised crops to support their families. As historian Joseph Merritt recalled in his *History of Scituate/Norwell* book: “Most people kept a horse, one or two cows, a pig and poultry.”

Founded after the Civil War, the Grange provided farmers with not only social opportunities, but the means of sharing agricultural wisdom.

The Grange Hall, located on Main Street, was a place to gather both for veterans in the American Legion Post 192 and for farmers in the local chapter of the Grange—an agricultural advocacy group.



The Norwell Grange Hall on Main Street.



Charles Berry’s farm on Main Street between Lincoln and Circuit Streets.

The Satuit Grange was established in Norwell on August 14, 1890. Meeting first at J.W. Sampson’s farm on Cross Street, they eventually moved to Fogg Hall in Norwell Center. The Satuit Grange disbanded in the late 1890s after a couple years of declining membership. A second Grange, the Norwell Grange, was incorporated on July 28, 1941—two months after buying the District #2 Schoolhouse from the Town. A fire on the second floor temporarily set back the rebuilding process, but two years later, on May 6, 1943, the Norwell Grange held its first meeting at the new hall. Although not very active now, the Norwell Grange is still in existence today and District #2 School House is better known as the Grange building.

During the 1900s, other groups came together to share their love of gardening and to raise funds for the war efforts.

The North River Gardeners was founded in 1940 by 14 charter members for the purpose of cleaning up the Kent House Gardens in Norwell Center and raising money to support the U.S.O. and the “Seeds for Briton” campaign. The club raised money in many ways. An early fundraiser was titled “Frolic on Wheels” and featured games, a White Elephant sale, and a bicycle parade to raise money for the Red Cross and the Kent House gardens.

The club also raised money with creative events such as a production of the play “Arsenic and Old Lace” in 1945 at the Cushing Memorial Hall to benefit disabled servicemen. Members of the North River Gardeners continue to raise money for worthy causes today, and page four of this newsletter features a transcription of an oral history interview with one of the group’s founders: Mildred Hastings.

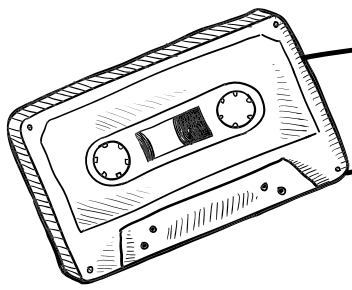
Today, organized gardening and agricultural groups are not as common, but farmers certainly have other means of sharing information today. The techniques we use now are “rooted” in our history, so in the tradition of early Victory Gardens, consider growing your own small patch this spring!

Read more about the Norwell Garden Club here!

THE NORWELL GARDEN CLUB

Established in 1950, the Norwell Garden Club became a member of the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts, Inc. in 1957. The purpose of the club is to promote the education of horticulture, to contribute to the beautification of Norwell, and to advance horticultural interests in the community. The Club has an active group of members today.





Oral History Transcription

Mildred Hastings
1890-1993

Below is an edited interview with **Mildred Hastings** conducted by Norwell students Jason Thornton in 1985 and Tim Ayers in 1987. Mildred Hastings was born at the turn of the century into a wealthy family. Her parents moved to Norwell in 1922 and bought the rundown Riverdale Farm on River Street as a summer home and renamed it "The Hollow." Mildred never moved away and after World War II, she turned the property into a working farm where she raised animals and was known as the "Strawberry Lady" for the large crop of strawberries that she grew. She was beloved by the town for her gardening expertise and her eccentricities (often dressing in a flowing red cape and large brimmed hat, she would drive her Studebaker convertible around town!). She was a longtime member of the Norwell Conservation Commission-- known for her intense interest in protecting the land, the North River, wildlife, and wildflowers. She was one of the founders of the North River Gardeners, a garden club that is still active today. In 1981 she entered into an agreement with the Trustees of the Reservations to control future development on her 90-acre farmland along the North River. She died in 1993 at the age of 102.

My mother never held any occupation except as a wife and mother. My father was a stock broker in Boston for a great many years. My father graduated from Harvard University in 1878. My mother went to a finishing school in Boston. I had three brothers, who are all gone long ago.

We came to live in Norwell mainly as a summer place. This was a rundown farm and we bought it for very little money in those days. We had a house in Boston and we wanted somewhere to go for the summer. To tell the truth we bought it because there was a lot of water on it. The summer before we'd hired a house in Marshfield, and within about 24 hours the well went dry and we had a terrible, terrible summer.

After a while we sold the house in Boston and my mother and I ended up here during [WWII] alone. The house, I figure it [was built in] at least 1770. The [men who built it] all worked in the shipyards at that time--the Wanton shipyard was next door.

[As a child] I always loved horses and was able to have a horse and drive it when I was a schoolgirl. When I came here [to Norwell] there were no automobiles, and I



Mildred Hastings and her horse

remember horses drinking out of a drinking trough [in the town center]. There was a store where the bank is in the village and you walked over there and got your things, or if you had a horse, you went and got them. We used to call [Norwell Center] the Hill then, and you went "down on the Hill." It had one store and there was something called the poor farm [called The Almshouse] and it was really a beautiful and great old building that housed residents who were too poor. The poor farm had a garden and a cow to help feed these people. The cow gave the milk and the garden was exactly where the police station is today.

We had things then like a butcher cart and a fish man who drove a horse in a covered wagon. They came around to your door and cut off a piece of meat or cleaned the fish.

When I very first came [to Norwell], I wanted to go to Boston and I had no car at that time. I drove the horse and carriage

to Hanover. There was a railroad station in Hanover near what is now Rte 53. Across the street, there was what's called a livery stable. Well, I would drive over there, put my horse and carriage there; they'd take care of the horse and I could take the train to Boston. When I was ready to come home, I'd come home on the train and they would harness the horse for me and I'd come back. Neat, wasn't it?

I've been in lots of clubs and organizations. I never had a job. Girls then if their fathers could support them they stayed home until they got a man to support them. I never achieved that. I stayed at home and had a very interesting life doing many things. In those days a girl such as I was did charitable work. We went into the slums of Boston. Then as the years went on I was on the board of a children's charity and helped to run a big old ladies' home. I never worked for money. Girls didn't back then unless they had to.



Portrait of Mildred Hastings by Mary Lizotte that hangs in the Norwell Conservation Office at Town Hall today.

You've really got a beautiful world to live in and do keep it nice. One thing that bothers me is the things being built up, for instance the buildings out on the North River. So if you keep doing that, you won't have a river, that's all. So I'm tremendously interested in that. Of course people want things and they do it without thinking. I guess we're all alike. Funny world. Golly, I wonder if we'll ever not do it. I don't think we ever will, do you?

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?

_____ Researching at the Archives _____ Other:

_____ Organizing at the Archives

_____ Farmhouse Tour Guide

_____ Farmhouse Maintenance

_____ Event Planning

_____ Photography/Digitalization



Exerpts from a farmer's notes

May & June 1797

May 5th - Planted in new garden, 5 rows white bush beans of Boston and one row creeper peas

May 10th - Planted 2 rows pole beans in new garden, one bed Beats and early carrots, 1 bed parsnips

June 3rd - I sent my oxen to pasture

June 4th - 2 rows cucumbers

June 14th - peppers and parsley and squashes; Elijah Sampson put his cow in my pasture

June 22th - 3 rows Water millons, 3 rows bush beans

June 24th - Planted small turnips

TRANSLATION OF THE FARMER'S PLANT NAMES:

White Bush Beans of Boston: Most likely *Phaseolus vulgaris*. It is a dry white bean that has an oval, slightly flattened shape and was used for dishes such as baked beans.

Creeper Peas: climbing peas

Water Millons: watermelons!

THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH



This photo was donated to the Historical Society by Norwell resident Marie Molla. It shows her grandparents and their horse Mike in the early 1900s.

Where is this house today? (See the answer below)

The clue to the current location is the barn (which looks exactly the same today) and the house's setting at the corner of two roads. Do not look at the shape and style of the home for a clue because the Molla family made significant changes to the structure in the early 1900s—adding a second story to a portion of the home and facing the exterior with local stone.

The current owner will be receiving a 2021 Preservation Award from the Norwell Historical Commission for the recent restoration of the barn.

Answer from above: This photograph shows the Eunice Clapp House (built circa 1805) at 127 Main Street, on the corner of Prospect Street.

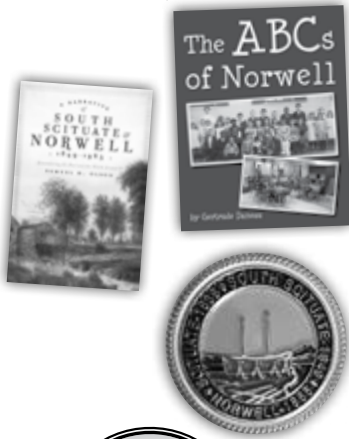


NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 693
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061
www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org

Non-Profit Org.
 US Postage
PAID
 Norwell, MA
 Permit No. 10

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ITEMS FOR SALE



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.

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.

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.

Norwell town seal pin **\$5**

Looking for the perfect teacher gift for the end of the school year? Since all faculty wear lanyards, the brass and enamel town seal pin (1-inch wide) is a great gift for your child's teacher.



Looking for more **Historical Society Items for Sale**? You can find a complete listing on our website. On our home page, go to the "Merchandise" tab and follow the instructions.

All the above items are available for contactless delivery (within Norwell) or will be mailed (for a \$5 fee). You may purchase items online or you may use this form and mail a check (made payable to NHS) to: NHS, P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061.