



NORTH RIVER PACKET

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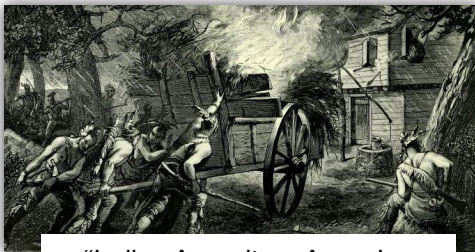
The Raid on Scituate/Norwell/Hanover in King Philip's War

In 2026, the Norwell Historical Society and others will commemorate the 350th anniversary of the fighting in Norwell during what is known today as King Philip's War. The following is a compilation of written histories of the Native attacks on Old Scituate (today's Scituate, Norwell, and Hanover) during that fateful year.

by [Stephen C. O'Neill](#), Executive Director, Hanover Historical Society & Board Member, Norwell Historical Society

The late winter and spring of 1676 was a grim time for the settlers of Plymouth Colony. The residents of Old Scituate, which included the present day towns of Norwell and Hanover stretching out along the North River, feared attack by the natives any day.

The "Great Indian War" (later known as King Philip's War) had been raging for ten months. The war quickly spread throughout southern New England, and there were many reports of towns being attacked.



"Indian Assault on Ayers Inn [Brookfield, MA], Aug. 4, 1675," engraving by F.O.C. Darley (1822-1888), from *Soldiers in King Philip's War* by Bodge (1906)

Nearby Weymouth in the Massachusetts Bay Colony was attacked in late February of 1676. On March 12th the Clark Garrison House on the Eel

River in Plymouth was burned and eleven colonists were killed by a band of native warriors under the leadership of Tototsan, a leading native captain. Bridgewater was attacked on April 9th and again a month later on May 9th under a force lead by Tispaquin, the "Black Sachem" and one of the leading native captains and brother-in-law of Philip. Halifax, then still a part of Plymouth, was burned on May 11th. On May 20th, with the coming of mild weather and the Spring planting well underway, Scituate settlers' worst fears were realized when the town was attacked, with most of the destruction taking place within the current borders of today's peaceful town of Norwell.

The story of the attack (or "raid") on Scituate during King Philip's War is known to very few residents of the Old Scituate towns. There is no eyewitness account of the attack, but an outline of the event can be drawn from various sources.

The attack was colorfully described by Samuel Deane in his *History of Scituate* in 1831. Deane added several stories and embellishments to his version. Some of these may have been based on oral traditions—stories passed down through local families—for which no evidence survives in the primary sources. These colorful stories were repeated by later historians like

Henry Pratt in *The Early Planters of Scituate* (1929) and Mary Power in *Old Scituate* (1921). The primary sources that do exist, published in *The Seventeenth Century Records of Scituate* (2001), provide little more than the barest details of the attack and some confusing discrepancies. The main primary document is the "Report of Scituate Victims, 16 January,

“Old Scituate settlers' worst fears were realized when the town was attacked, with most of the destruction taking place... in Norwell.”

1676/7," a letter written to Plymouth Gov. Josiah Winslow by Isaac Buck, Sr., Jeremiah Hatch, and John Cushing, the Selectmen of Scituate. The original manuscript is in the John Davis Papers collection at the Massachusetts Historical Society. The document mentions "13 dwelling houses burned," but only twelve are listed. Even with this fragmentary evidence, however, it still makes for a powerful narrative of a little known story of early Norwell.

(continued on page 4)



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.

This photo of a class at Ridge Hill School in the West End of Norwell was recently scanned into the Society's digital archives. The photo of the "No. 1 School" (as noted on the 1903 map of Norwell) is from the early 1900s.



The cleaning and reorganizing of the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum following the accessibility project had volunteers assessing items whose provenance was unknown. Among those items were many pieces in the "Buttery" (see photo above) near the Dining Room. Historical stoneware (including a valuable beer crock), sausage stuffers, a rat trap, a Swedish cheese press, and meat grinders were among the newly-identified (and labeled) items.

Use the QR code at right to view the [interactive video of the 2nd floor of the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum](#). As part of the accessibility project, the 2nd floor is now viewable to those who cannot climb the steep stairs.

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.

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

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Norwell, MA 02061
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DISCOVER MORE ONLINE!

Look for the magnifying glasses or the QR codes in this issue to discover more online.

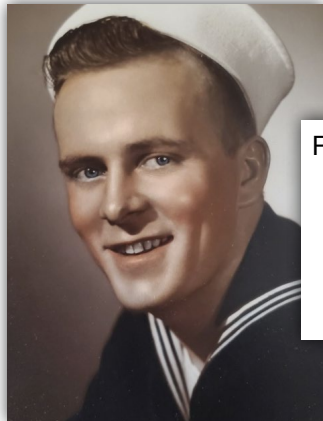
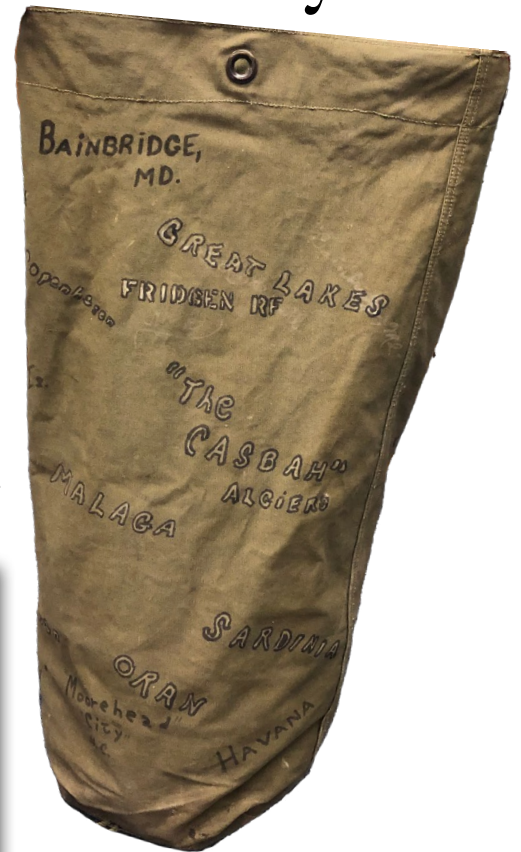
An Exciting Donation of Norwell Military History

While “military history” is often thought of as only related to the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, or the World Wars, the Society welcomes donations of military items from Old Scituate/Norwell residents who were involved in any conflict.

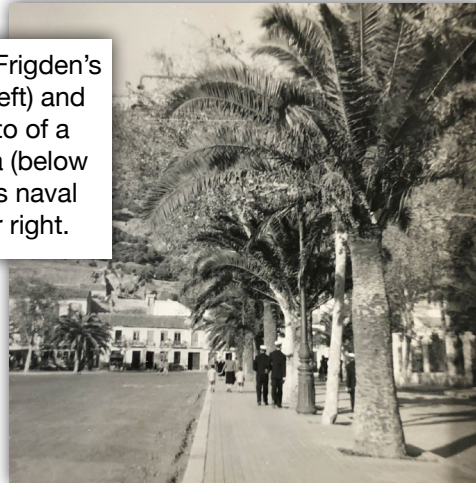
A recent gift from Anne Frigden-Traft and Donna Frigden, daughters of Richard Frigden of Norwell, a Veteran who served his country during the Korean Conflict, highlights how important historical items are for telling the story of our town and the people who lived here.

as attested to by his military bag which is artistically festooned with the names of those locations. Mr. Frigden passed away in 2020, and his naval bag and uniforms were donated to the Society.

Among the items shared was a photo labeled on the back with “a street in Malaga [Spain].” Looking at Frigden’s bag (at right), Malaga is listed as one of the many ports his ship visited.



Richard Francis Frigden’s Naval portrait (left) and Frigden’s photo of a street in Malaga (below right). Frigden’s naval gear bag is far right.



After enlisting in the Navy to “see the world,” Rick Frigden served aboard a supply ship during the Korean Conflict that stopped in many ports—

Do you have photos, letters, or military paraphernalia related to Norwell that you could loan (for scanning) or give to the Society? If so, please contact us with the information on our [“Donate” page.](#)

THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The Ridge Hill School (see close-up photo on the previous page in “From The Archives”) still stands today. Do you know where the school is located and what it houses now?

(answer on page 7)



King Philip's War, cont'd.

(continued from page 1)

King Philip's War began in June, 1675, when indigenous forces under the leadership of Wampanoag Sachem Philip (also known as Metacomet), the son of the famous Massasoit, started fighting against the English settlers of western Plymouth Colony. The war quickly spread, involving the other English colonies of Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut, while Rhode Island stayed neutral. Other native nations like the Nipmuck, traditional allies of the Wampanoag, joined the war early. Other tribes like the powerful Narragansetts attempted to stay neutral but were later drawn into the conflict on the side of Philip. Still other native tribes stayed neutral or allied themselves with the English colonists.

Native tactics, called "the skulking way of war," were highly effective—taking the form of hit and run strikes on English forces and towns. The natives' most powerful weapon was fire. Dozens of towns, settlements, and farms across Southern New England were partially or completely burned along with livestock and stores, and many people were killed. In retaliation, English and allied native forces used fire to destroy native villages, most notably in the attack on the Narragansetts in December, 1675.

Old Scituate was not a fortified town, like early Plymouth with its wooden palisade. Instead there were

pal·i·sade /pal·e'sād/ *noun*

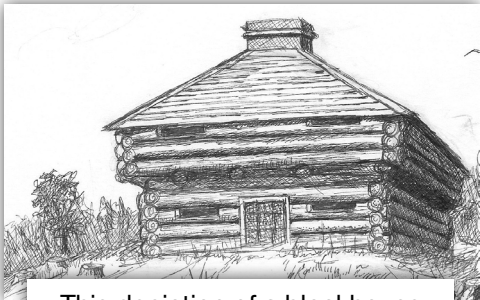
a fence of wooden stakes or iron railings fixed in the ground, forming an enclosure or defense.

four garrison houses throughout the town. Three of these were residential houses reinforced with brick nogging in the walls, and the fourth structure was a blockhouse made of heavy logs. Supplies of powder, shot, and provisions were stored inside each structure. The garrison houses in Old Scituate in the Spring of 1676 were:

1. John Williams house at Scituate Harbor

2. William Stockbridge's house at Greenbush
3. William Barstow's house at Four Corners (Hanover)
4. The blockhouse located at the bend of the river in Norwell Center (near today's Block House Lane)

These were the assembling points for the militia during times of trouble and places of refuge for families during attacks.



This depiction of a blockhouse was drawn by artist Erica Vermette for the *ABCs of Norwell* book by Gertrude Daneau.

The first attack on Old Scituate occurred on April 21st and was then followed by the more serious and devastating raid on May 20th (Hingham was attacked May 19th by native warriors who then moved south to Scituate the following day). Although not known for certain, it may have been either Totosan or more likely Tispaquin who led the assault on Hingham and Scituate, as both knew the area well. Whomever led the attack, it showed all the signs of a skilled and experienced tactician, and the warriors were most likely Wampanoag followers of King Philip.

The nearby Massachusetts natives of the Pembroke and Hanson area stayed neutral under their Sachem Charles Josias Wampatuck, son of Josiah Wampatuck and grandson of Chickatuabut.

The Scituate attack began with burning a mill on the Third Herring Brook near the Church Hill area [1 on map at right]. The natives "fell to burning, beginning with Mr. Tilden's saw-mill, and Jos. Sylvester's house, and barn," wrote Gov. Josiah Winslow. The saw mill was on Third Herring Brook where East Street crosses into Norwell. It

was built by Timothy Hatherly, Cornet Robert Stetson, and Joseph Tilden. The natives may have split into two groups, with one following Tiffany Road to Common Street where they burned Joseph Sylvester's house and barn. According to the "Report of Scituate Victims" Sylvester's home was the most expensive property lost, worth an estimated £80 [3 on map below].

Another group of natives headed south along the brook where the militia "had sight of a party of the enemy at Will Barstow's, but being unhappily discovered by them also," wrote Gov. Winslow, "they ran away, leaving some horses and cattle they were about to carry away, and those houses at that time secured from the flames." This was William Barstow's garrison house in Hanover Four Corners [2 on map below].



This portion of the 1831 map of Old Scituate notes the various attacks detailed in this article.

Regrouping, the natives then turned north, traveling parallel to River Street [4 on map above], avoiding homes closer to the North River. Reaching the vicinity of today's Norwell Center, they launched an unsuccessful attack on the Block House, killing John James who lived nearby [1 on map on next page]. The natives then moved on to burning houses in the area of Norwell from the intersection of Main Street and Bridge

(continued on page 5)

King Philip's War, cont'd.

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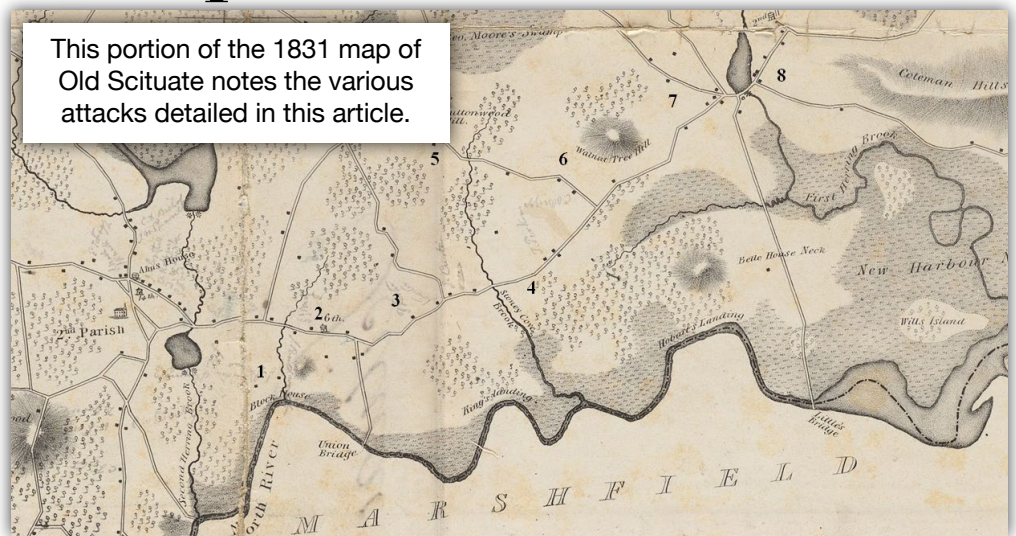
Streets east to Greenbush in Scituate [2 on map at right]. The house and barn of "Widow Blackmore" was burned, valued at £40. This house was located near 841 Main Street on the property later known as May Elms Farm. The Widow Blackmore's husband, William, was killed during the earlier April 21st raid. Edward Wright's house and barn worth £40 was burned followed by the tiny house of Nicholas Albeson (the "Swede") which "stood on a small hill thirty rods [165 yards] north-east of Parker Lane" [3 on map at right]. The value of Albeson's house was just £6 suggesting a one room, thatched building and similar barn.

The natives avoided the small Second Parish Meetinghouse located at the corner of Main Street and Old



Memorial at the site of the first meetinghouse of the Second Parish on the corner of Meetinghouse Lane and Main Street, Norwell. Photograph ca. 1920 by Charlie Gleason, courtesy of the Hanover Historical Society.

Meetinghouse Lane [4 on map above]. Moving east, the natives burned the houses and barns of John Curtis, Sr. (valued at £40) and John Bumpus (valued at £35) near Buttonwood Hill east of the intersection of Winter Street and Cross Street [5 on map above]. The houses and barns of James Torrey (valued at £45), the Widow Torrey (valued at £40), and John Buck (valued at £40) were the next ones burned. These homes were located just west of Walnut Tree Hill (roughly the location of Inly School today) [6 on map above]. The last houses burned were those lying near the intersection of Old Oaken Bucket Road and Main Street, just east of the Greenbush Rotary—the



house and barn of Sargeant Abraham Sutcliffe (valued at £50), the house and barn of Henry Ewell (valued at £10), and the house of Thomas Woodworth (valued at £40) [7 and 8 on map above].

The sequence of which house was destroyed is unclear. Author Samuel Deane added the names of other houses destroyed, but without evidence. Deane also adds two embellished stories to the attack. One is that the natives assaulted the Stockbridge Garrison House where they were repulsed after several hours of fighting and sustaining heavy losses, beginning their eventual retreat. Deane also adds the story of how Henry Ewell's wife left her grandson sleeping in his cradle when she fled the native attack for the safety of the Garrison House in Greenbush, returning later to find the child still sleeping and that the Indians had only taken bread from the oven. The house was presumably torched when the natives retreated hours later.

Scituate's response to the attack was slow. The town had already supplied men to the war effort, serving in various companies attempting to engage, capture, or kill Philip. And the town had already suffered serious loss—forty-nine Plymouth Colony militiamen (including fifteen from Scituate) and their commander, Captain Michael Pierce, were killed in action near Cumberland, Rhode Island on March 26th, just two months prior. Many other Scituate militiamen were

still scattered across southeastern Massachusetts at the time of the Scituate attack. The defense of the town was left to Lieutenant Isaac Buck and Cornet Robert Stetson, capable military men but hindered by

“*[Leaving] her grandson sleeping in his cradle... she fled the Native attack... returning later to find the child still sleeping and that the Natives had only taken bread from the oven.*”

a lack of forces. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of the fire at the Stockbridge Garrison House described by Deane or of Lt. Buck and Cornet Stetson rallying the militia to defend the town.

(continued on page 6)

King Philip's War, cont'd.

(continued from page 5)

The fanciful story elements aside, it is clear that the area of Old Scituate had suffered a devastating attack. Thirteen houses and barns destroyed was a major blow to the town. The "Report of Scituate Victims," lists seven names of men who were wounded, six women made widows, and others who lost valuable crops, although the record is unclear whether this loss was from the May 20th attack or over the entire duration of the War.

It is also unknown how many natives were involved in the attack or how many may have been killed. This Scituate event was just one in the larger conflict of King Philip's War, overshadowed by far more devastating and horrific events. But for those people who lived through it, they probably never forgot the memory of the burning buildings and the smoke rising all around them.

Besides the contemporary documents and the accounts of the local historians, little trace of the May 20, 1676 attack remains today. But in at least a dozen locations across Norwell, there is a layer of charred ashes, melted glass, and broken shards hidden just beneath the surface soil.

For the colonists of late 17th century Scituate and New England, the war was seen as a harsh punishment by Divine Providence for their failings. For the natives of Southern New England, it was a last stand for their traditional culture and ways of life. For both sides, the war changed everything, and their lives would never be the same afterwards.

For more information about King Philip's War see:

George M. Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War: Containing Lists of the Soldiers of Massachusetts*

Colony, who Served in the Indian War of 1675-1676, 1891

Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War*, 2019.

James Drake, *King Philip's War Civil war in New England, 1675-1676*, 2000

Douglas Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War*, 1958

Jill Lepore, *In the Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*, 1999

Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England.*

Use the QR code at right to visit Wayne Tucker's website, [Eleven Names Project](#).



Question: Why Did the Natives Fight?

by Wayne Tucker

Wayne Tucker is a South Shore native currently residing in Rockland and an Associate Research Fellow at the Harvard Slavery Remembrance Program. His research and writing on slavery in Plymouth County and beyond can be found at his website, called **Eleven Names Project: Recovering Enslaved People of Massachusetts** (use the QR code at the end of this article for a direct link to his website).

Many factors motivated native combatants to take up arms in King Philip's War; among them was their desire to resist English encroachment on their lands and sovereignty and to curtail the disruption of traditional lifeways.

The threat of enslavement by the English, however, is rarely talked about.

African chattel slavery began in Massachusetts when Pequot men captured in the Pequot War were loaded on the vessel *Desire* and sent to the Caribbean in exchange for enslaved Africans. Unlike the fighting in Scotland and Ireland, where the English only took male combatants as prisoners of war, New England broke convention and also captured native women and children. While New Englanders sold most captive men to the West Indies, they forced native women and children to labor in settler households, which increased English domestic productivity.

The practice of native enslavement that began with the Pequot War (1636-1638) exploded after King Philip's War. Historians estimate that 20%-40% of the surviving

native population of New England were living in English households in bound servitude.

Native enslavement happened in Scituate, too. Captain John Williams, whose home served as the Scituate Harbor garrison house, left legacies in his 1696 will to his "two Boys and children George and Thomas, Whome I obtained with my Sword and with my Bow." In other words, these were likely Wampanoag children that Williams captured during King Philip's War. The fate of these boys' parents is unknown; but if Williams and his troops didn't kill them, it's doubtful they consented to this arrangement.

For further reading on native enslavement: Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery*, 2016



This line engraving depicts a captured Native American being sent into slavery by colonists in the 1600s. Courtesy of *The Granger Collection*, New York.

An Indian sent into Slavery.

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PHOTOS FROM SPRING SOCIETY EVENTS
AT THE JACOBS FARMHOUSE MUSEUM
(clockwise from upper left):

One of the May Day baskets, including an explanatory card and [QR link to the history of May Day](#) on the Society website; volunteer Sarah Baker helps May Day attendees assemble their baskets; Board member Pam Bower-Basso checks the details of the Election Day Tea spread; volunteer Cara Hamilton, who portrayed Juliette Hammond (the first woman to vote in Norwell) and former Society president Bob Norris talk to a group of attendees at the Election day Tea.

Answer from page 3: Today the Ridge Hill School stands on the corner of Oak and Washington Streets. Known today as 164 Washington Street, it houses a number of businesses, including Norwell Pediatrics.



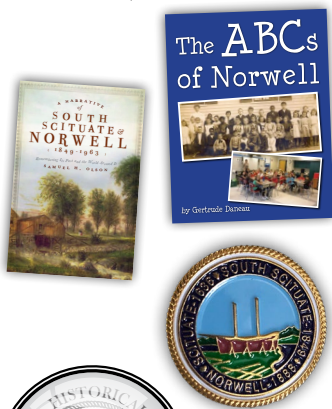
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Spring 2024

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.

More Than Just a Cookbook **\$5**

This book is full of time-tested favorite recipes, historical sketches, interesting narratives, and accounts of historic events.

Norwell town seal pin (*shown at left*) **\$5**

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

Looking for more items?
 Visit our website to see all of the items available for purchase.



All the above items are available for 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.