



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

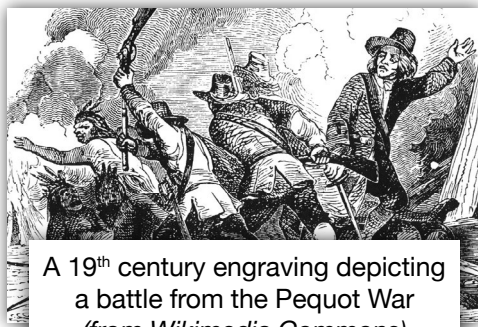
Native American Enslavement: Another Aspect of King Phillip's War

2026 will be a celebratory year for the Norwell Historical Society, and research is currently being conducted to publish a book of compiled articles written on the events to be commemorated that year: the 250th birthday of America, the 300th birthday of the Jacobs Farmhouse, and the 350th anniversary of King Philip's War—in particular, the fighting in Old Scituate (today's Scituate/Norwell/Hanover).

by Betsy Baldwin Brink

In the Spring 2024 newsletter, the Norwell Historical Society featured an article on the impact of King Philip's War on Old Scituate, particularly the area known today as Norwell.

A sidebar to that article, written by researcher Wayne Tucker, posed the compelling question: Why did the Natives fight? Noted among those reasons was Native Americans' desire to resist English encroachment on their lands and sovereignty and to curtail the disruption of traditional lifeways. Also noted was the threat of enslavement by the English. This reason is rarely noted or talked about.



A 19th century engraving depicting a battle from the Pequot War (from Wikimedia Commons)

While King Philip's War is well documented, one scholar in particular—Margaret Ellen Newell—delved deeply into the threat of enslavement feared by New England Native Americans

in her 2016 book *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of America Slavery*. Newell writes that “Indian slavery turns out to be a significant ingredient in colonial warfare rather than a footnote to it.”

Newell notes that “somehow Indian slavery virtually disappeared from post-World War I scholarship on New England.” American historian Edmund Morgan famously joked that “historians have produced almost as many books about New England as there were English colonial residents.” While such books covered everything from the Puritan migration to the English immigrants' religious and intellectual life and the economy they helped create, “with a few notable exceptions,” notes Newell, “the history of slavery in general and of Indian slavery in particular remains stubbornly absent from these narratives. We still know more about the relatively few Euro-American captives among the Indians than we do about the thousands of Native Americans who served European masters.”

Newell finds the absence of this history surprising because “Indian slavery intersects with...

- the development of the colonial economy;

- the creation of legal codes;
- the motives behind the evangelization of Indians;
- the core role of households in shaping colonial society and culture;
- the causes and consequences of warfare with indigenous groups and imperial rivals;
- and the changing imperial relationship with England.”

Newell argues that including Indian servants and slaves in the story of New

“Indian slavery turns out to be a significant ingredient in colonial warfare rather than a footnote to it.”

England's history helps illuminate all these subjects.

She posits that “any discussion of New England society must consider its hybrid quality—the fact that Indians, English, and eventually Africans created it jointly.”

In the face of the “persistent historical myth about New England [colonists

(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.



Norwell Veteran's Agent David Osborn is retiring after serving in that role for many years. He generously donated this WWI uniform to the Norwell Historical Society—just in time for it to be displayed at a Veterans Day event. Worn by Fred Frederickson (shown wearing the uniform at right) of Norwell, the donation also included his field coat, an Army Song Book he carried, and his veteran's hat.

The Society would like to increase its collection of Norwell veterans' memorabilia, especially from WWII. Please [contact us](#) if you have Norwell-specific items we should consider!

Nancy Joseph, a 4th generation Norwellian, has generously donated a collection of Native artifacts which were found on her ancestors' property. Her grandfather, Harry P. Henderson, and her father, Lloyd B. Henderson, collected these items between 1890 and 1965 on their farm and near their home at the end of Block House Lane (at the bend of the North River)—a popular Native fishing and home site. Found in fields and in the roots of uprooted trees, they collected spear heads (used for fishing), arrowheads, tool heads, hoes, and decorative stones.

The Historical Society is in the process of identifying, cataloging, labeling, and preparing these items for display.



Just The Facts

Officers

Wendy Bawabe, President
Christian Jevne, Secretary
Marybeth Shea, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Pamela Bower-Basso
Chad Forman
Dianne Forman
Rebecca Freed
Daniel Neumann
Stephen O'Neill
Alan Prouty
Karl Swenson
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.

Administrative Consultant

Rebecca Griffith

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
781-561-1161



DISCOVER MORE ONLINE!

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

Christmas Week at the Jacobs Farmhouse, 1894

While cleaning out the Jacobs Farmhouse, the Historical Society was delighted—if a little overwhelmed—to find hundreds of letters saved by Frances Ford Jacobs, the last Jacobs family member to live full-time at the Farmhouse. Written from the 1870s until the time of her death in 1921, they are mostly correspondences between her and her two sons: Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs and Fred Jacobs.

In honor of the holiday season, Society Archivist Janet Watson has chosen some excerpts from letters written from Mrs. Frances Jacobs to her son, Fred. They offer a window into the life of a South Scituate family during Christmas week of 1894.

Tragically, at the time these letters were written Fred (age 30) was suffering from advanced tuberculosis which would eventually kill him in 1896. In order to escape the cold northern winter, which was harmful to tuberculosis sufferers, Fred had gone to stay with his brother Henry and Henry's wealthy employer, Robert Garrett, in Augusta, Georgia.

Mrs. Jacobs' letters are full of news about family visits, housekeeping (which she undertook with the help of her new housekeeper, Fanny), news of Uncle Henry Curtis who lived down the road with his neice, Maria Jacobs (Fred's cousin), and Christmas activities. But the letters also always reflect the anxiety Mrs. Jacobs felt about Fred's health.

December, 23, 5 pm, 1894

Dearest Fred,

...Uncle Henry and Maria were over and spent the evening. Today has been a very bright clear cold day with a high wind thrown in. Just the kind which blows the cold into the house. We however shall have no trouble in this way with all the outer windows

but the [Assinippi Universalist] Church was rather cold. Tonight there is to be a concert and I think I will go over and so take any letters along. There is but little to write tonight. We are well. Fanny went home this morning after doing her work as I had nothing for her to stay here for today, and I have been trying to read Barrabas [Written by Marie Corelli, Barrabas was a popular Victorian novel written in 1893 about the thief who was crucified with Jesus] but as usual after having been at church and getting pretty cold then to sit down in a warm room I have become too sleepy to accomplish much reading.

Yesterday Uncle Henry sent a traveling stationer here with whom he trades and I purchased stationery in the amount of two dollars worth so that I shall not have to run over to Mr. Killiam's store [located on Washington Street in Assinippi] for it for some time to come. I hope most earnestly you are still getting on well and can eat well and that the time will pass very pleasantly.

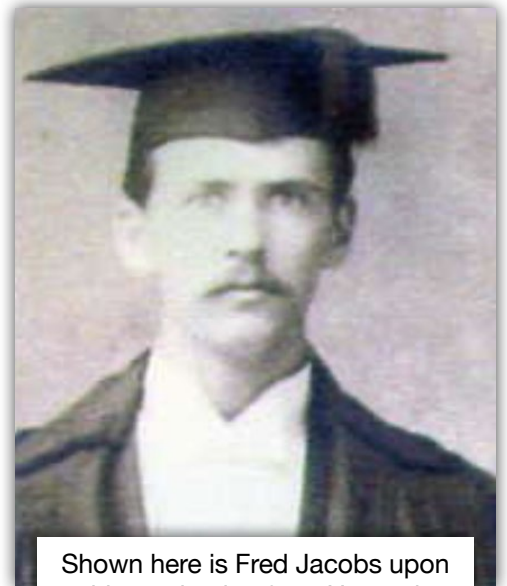
*With love abundantly, Good night,
Affectionately, Ma*

December 24, 5 pm

My dearest Fred,

Your two nice letters came this morning. I am glad to hear you are well and to be lying on the ground is

something we can scarcely comprehend with the glass [thermometer] here this morning only six above zero. Still this afternoon it is again up to thirty and the sky threatens snow. Your Pa and I had a \$50 check [equivalent to \$1,833.15 in today's money] from [Fred's brother] Henry. ...Well to use



Shown here is Fred Jacobs upon his graduation from Harvard Law School in 1892.

Uncle Henry's oft quoted saying "Tis more blessed to give than to receive" and so we after all are less blest than the giver. Anyway I felt no envy toward him that he is in a way to do as he does and but think he deserves all the blessings and think too that were we in his place and he in ours at the present time that we would do as he does and give the greater share. How is your appetite by this time and can you continue to eat without as much trouble afterward?

Lovingly, Ma

(continued on page 6)

Native Enslavement, cont'd.

(continued from page 1)

that they] preferred to rely on wage laborers, neighbors, European indentured servants, and their own large families for workers,” Newell reveals that New England colonists “made conscious decisions to exploit local Indians as a labor force.” She writes, “Forced Indian labor augmented the colonial workforce in important ways. ...They toiled in ironworks, fisheries, livestock raising, extensive agriculture, provincial armies, and other enterprises that required unusually large workforces.” And they also made critical contributions to small-scale household economies because women produced many goods for market by the mid-17th century.

As noted in the Spring 2024 Society newsletter, the Native Americans of New England had reason to take

“why shall wee
have peace to bee
made slaves, &
either be kild or
sent arway to sea
to Barbadoes &c.
Let us live as
long as wee can
& die like men,
& not live to bee
enslaved.”

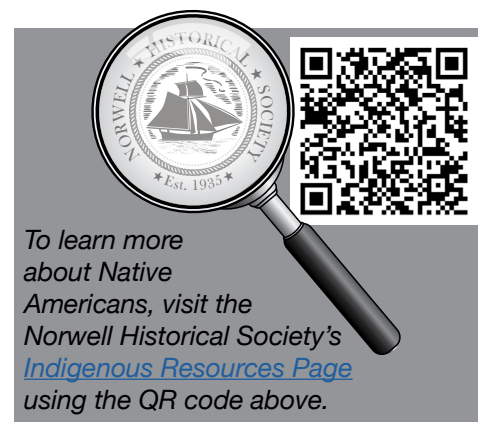
up arms as the practice of Native enslavement that began with the Pequot War (1636-1638) exploded after King Philip's War.

Not only did the Natives fight, they also often surrendered (according to Brown University scholar Linford D. Fisher), hoping “perhaps for protection or as a statement of neutrality, sometimes out of fear, and sometimes to offer their services to the English in the war.” But surrender sometimes led to new or continued enslavement rather than protection.

Fisher recounts the story of two Christianized Indians—James Quannapaquait and Job Kattenanit—sent by colonial magistrates into enemy territory during the height of King Philip's War in January 1676. When James and Job returned from their dangerous month-long trek from Deer Island in Boston Harbor west into Native territory, they brought news that did not favor the English. Quannapaquait reported the following:

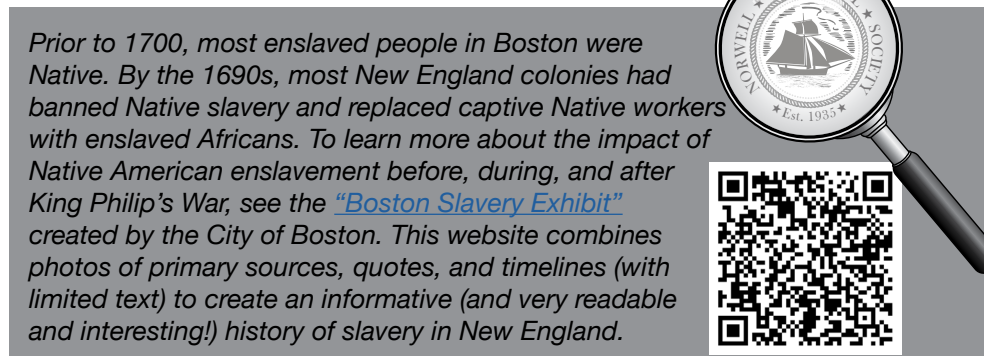
“he understood by the cheefe men & old men [that] they were inclinable to have peace again with the English, but the young men [who are their principal soldiers] say we wil have no peace wee are all or most of us alive yet & the English have kild very few of us last summer why shall wee have peace to bee made slaves, & either be kild or sent away to sea to Barbadoes &c. Let us live as long as wee can & die like men, & not live to bee enslaved.”‡

Brown scholar Fischer writes, “Despite the rich scholarship on King Philip's War, historians are only beginning to adequately recognize the full trauma and long-term effects that this and



many other wars represented for Native nations—psychologically, spiritually, materially, politically, and socially. At the center of this monumental disruption were enslavement and the threat of enslavement, especially for those surrenderers who turned themselves in precisely to avoid slavery and death. The threat of enslavement and the reality of slavery and forced long-term servitude for many Natives echoed in the memories and psyches of individuals and communities well into the eighteenth century, if not far beyond.”

‡ From Temple and Adams, *History of North Brookfield, Massachusetts*, 115–116. Daniel Gookin's account of this fact-finding mission focuses on the circumstances surrounding the event more than on the contents of the report itself. See Gookin, “An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England,” p. 486.



Answer from page 7: Today the District #2 School houses the Norwell Grange.

The Life of Anson Robbins

During the 2024 First Parish Comes Alive! Cemetery Tour, actor Frank Mellen portrayed Old Scituate resident Anson Robbins who is buried at the cemetery. Robbins was known as a staunch proponent of the temperance movement and a founder of the Scituate Savings Bank.

*written by Davis Yarranton,
2024 Summer Intern*

My name is Anson Robbins and I was born in 1781 in Marshfield, Massachusetts, the son of a ship captain. My mother raised and educated me while my father traveled the seas. Sadly, he drowned in Cohasset when I was just nine years old. Following his death, we moved to Scituate (today's Norwell) where I continued my education and eventually trained to be a carpenter.

In 1803, I married the love of my life Rachael Silvester and, four years later, I purchased land from her parents and built our home where we would eventually raise our eight children.

Friends and coworkers described me as a man of many talents; in addition to building houses, I worked as Town Clerk in Scituate and for five years as a Justice of the Peace—helping solve petty criminal cases (mostly regarding financial disputes). In that role I learned of the rising anti-alcohol movement in Scituate, also called the temperance movement.

In case you didn't know, alcoholism was a prominent issue in early America. My mother would tell me stories of how her family, neighbors, and community members feared the possible dangers in drinking water and instead chose a safer alternative to satisfy their thirst—spirits and beer! Every American (especially the men) existed in a perpetual state of drunkenness. It was a required stimulant to help working men get through the day—whether it was after a long day at sea, on the farm, or in the office—men would also celebrate the day's conclusion with a bottle in their hand to boost morale.

17th and 18th century temperance movements attempted to reduce the quantity of drunken men in America by

introducing liquor laws that required a license to sell. Politicians attempted to enforce high taxes on certain spirits such as whiskey. Despite all of this, alcohol remained a prominent beverage even as I came of age in the early 1800s.

Even in my town of Scituate, the effects of alcoholism were visible. Naturally, I wanted to contribute to the betterment of my community and promptly joined my local temperance movement, the Scituate Auxiliary Society, where I was voted as treasurer in 1818. As a member of the Society, I vowed to abstain from drinking, attended weekly meetings, and worked with fellow board members to create policies that reduced alcoholism. Some of the policies we proposed were:

- That all military officials, ship-builders, and house builders refrain from drinking entirely due to the seriousness of their occupation and dangers if they were drunk at their job.
- For pubs to post a list of names and descriptions of their common customers inside and promptly refuse service to the offenders.
- To discontinue the distribution of spirits at funerals due to the occasion's solemn nature.

Although we proposed these policies to our local selectmen, it was their decision to actively enforce them... and most of the time, they didn't! However, we were able to convince local selectmen to distribute fewer and stricter liquor licenses, which decreased the amount of available alcohol in Scituate.

Eventually, I stepped down from my role as treasurer and acted as a regular member of the Scituate Auxiliary Society to focus my attention on my growing family and occupation. By building houses, I expanded my local community by helping countless families establish themselves in town.

In 1832, President Andrew Jackson began his "war on the Bank of the United States" where he dismantled the national bank. Without a federal bank to regulate fiscal matters, investors feared that banks would fail and began withdrawing cash, resulting in an economic panic. The effects of this "Panic of 1837" was immediately felt by Old Scituate residents. Although my family was secure due to the money I saved as a carpenter, I wanted to again ensure the prosperity of my entire community. Alongside Ebenezer T. Fogg and Samuel A. Turner, we founded the Scituate Savings Bank in 1833. Fogg assumed the role as President, and Turner and I acted as Vice Presidents of the bank (located in the town center where today's Coastal Heritage Bank resides).



Frank Mellen portraying Anson Robbins at the 2024 First Parish Comes Alive! Cemetery Tour.

As the town's population grew and recovered from the economic depression, the townspeople advocated for the division of the town from greater Scituate. I, like many other residents, rejoiced at the idea of a "South Scituate" and participated as Moderator at the meeting to vote for its division. We amicably voted to separate from Scituate, and I was named to the Prudential Committee, which handled the new town's finances though the transition.

For the next twenty years of my life, I enjoyed the years I had left with my beloved wife, Rachael, and our family. I passed away in 1866 at the age of 86.

Friends described me as a useful man in public business and a man of many talents: a cabinetmaker, ship painter, and surveyor. I like to believe that they were right! 🍀

Jacobs' Christmas, cont'd.

(continued from page 3)

December 25, 6 pm

My Dearest Fred,

It is nearly six and your Pa and I have but just returned from Uncle Colman's [The Colman Ford family is Frances' brother Colman, his wife Arabella, and their daughters Fanny and Carrie.], where we have been during the afternoon. Fanny and family were there and they had their usual Christmas tree and the many little gifts from one another. Fanny is looking very well and has new upper teeth which change the looks of her mouth somewhat but do not disfigure her. Carrie has lost so much flesh that really she is looking comparatively slight in figure and to me she is really pretty. Aunt Ara and Fanny in particular wished to be remembered to you with love. It has been very mild again today and extremely muddy...

“... [there] were spread two tables... with confectionery of many kinds—cakes, fruit, peanuts, sugared corn, corn balls, etc., in abundance.”

The wind is blowing outside at this time and sounds as if it means zero [degree] weather again for the morning. I went over to see the children and their tree last night. It looked very pretty and every child had one or several presents. After they had been distributed they adjourned to the upstairs room where were spread two tables the length of the room with confectionery of many

kinds—cakes, fruit, peanuts, sugared corn, corn balls, etc., in abundance. Then after the children were satisfied the older people went up and when all were through eating there was still a quantity left and we did up packages and sent wherever we could think of children who were not there. I took quite a large package to the Hines children and carried it in on the way home. [This is perhaps the Charles Hines family that rented a house on South Street. Census records show Charles was a day laborer, and he may have struggled financially and occasionally worked for the Jacobs on the farm, just down the street.]

...Sarah gave me last night a bottle of violet water. I carried Ara the little doily I had been working on which, after being pressed, was very pretty... But what can you care for all this unless you can imagine you are with your mother in reading of these little nothings!

Violet Water

In 1893, a way to successfully synthesize and enhance the sweet, woody, floral aroma of the violet was discovered. Called Violet Toilet Water, it is best suited for scenting and freshening rooms and linens and is still [available for purchase today](#).

Hope with all my heart that this may find you as well or better than when you wrote last which letter was written four or five day ago.

Very lovingly, Mother

December 26, 6 pm

My dearest Fred,

I went to the [post] offices myself this morning and was paid by finding three letters —yours, one from Henry, and the third from Clemmie Tucker [a cousin of Fred].

[...Your letter] spoke of my cleaning your room. I felt that it was necessary it should be done and so went right about it as the day was so fine to put out the beds and beddings, carpets, etc. and as winter might be upon us very soon and then such work could not be done. I felt

at first that I could not do it but getting begun I was so interested that I felt better than I should had I been sitting around. I have been covering the old 'round about' [probably a duvet cover] with a bright, pretty creton [cretonne, a floral printed fabric used for draperies, slipcovers, and curtains]. So you see the room will be all fresh and clean and of course it was very dirty, the stove smoked so in the fall.

Much love and good night. Will certainly write every day.

Affect'y Mother



Frances Almira Ford Jacobs, mother of Fred and Henry Jacobs.

December 28, 5 pm

My dearest Freddy,

Your two good letters of Mon & Tue came this morning and found Aunt Clara here. ...I am so glad to hear that you think you are improving... As I looked at the weather report in the paper last night and found that many of the southern towns were having weather corresponding to our weather here, I wondered if you were getting a share of the same sort. I hope not. Am glad you fared so well for Christmas... It seems as if everything was favorable for your improvement if you will only take things easy and not overdo in any way.

...Fanny and I have baked some today and made soap and I think I am getting to like her for help quite well. I am getting more used to her ways and she perhaps is getting more accustomed to mine and begins to conform somewhat to some of my Old Maidish notions.

(continued on page 7)

 **JOIN or RENEW online**  NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG or fill out this form:

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



Jacobs' Christmas, cont'd.

(continued from page 6)

Mr. Swift [fiance of the Jacobs' niece, Sarah] has been out gaming [hunting] this PM and brought home a rabbit. He said it was very pleasant in the woods and he intends to go again tomorrow...

Very lovingly from your own affectionate, Ma

December 30, 3 pm

Mr dearest Fred and dutiful little boy, I enjoyed [your letter] which came last night and all the good cheerful news we receive from you. Today is cold although not as cold as yesterday. I did not go to church thinking it would doubtless be cold in the church...


Aunt Clara came Friday morning and your letter to her was forwarded from Stoughton yesterday. She was much pleased to get it... I am all dressed for

dinner in The Other House. So is your Pa. Aunt Clara has already gone in...

...I failed to write any letters yesterday afternoon. The time sped before I was aware and it was too late to get them over when I got ready. I felt very sorry and blue about it and hope not to neglect it again. After I have been to dinner I may have something new to write.

[The Jacobs were attending a holiday dinner with Uncle Henry Curtis, Maria and Sarah Jacobs and Sarah's fiancée Frank Swift...] Well the dinner is over and was a success. The turkey was nice, the vegetables, and pudding and cranberry sauce, pickles, etc. all very good. After the plum pudding we had nuts, raisins, and white grapes. Mr. Swift was quite entertaining and sociable as usual. I think Uncle Henry and Maria are quite pleased

with him and really there is nothing very objectionable in his manner, to me he seems very kind and attentive to Sarah's friends. Let your friends write you but you need not feel that you should reply to all. They would rather you would not so, to gain your strength the faster.

Your very loving,
Mamma 

The BIG SPLIT
Celebrating 175 years of our town leaving Scituate!
Wednesday, Nov. 20th 6:30 pm



The Society celebrated the 175th anniversary of "The Big Split" (when South Scituate split from Scituate in 1849) with a Big Split Cake!



THROWBACK PHOTO OF THE MONTH

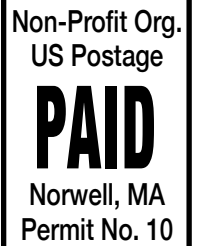
The former District #2 School still stands today. Do you know where the school is located and what it houses now?

(answer on page 4)





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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

December 2024

Upcoming Events

For an up-to-date listing of events, please see the Society website "[Events](#)" page or use the QR code at right.



Christmas at the Farmhouse

Jacobs Farmhouse, 4 Jacobs Lane

Sat., December 14th

The Norwell Historical Society will have exclusive access to the Jacobs property this day and, weather permitting, will provide tours of the Carriage House and Cider Room. Come celebrate the holidays with a tour of the festively decorated museum! **(FREE)**

North River History + Heritage Pop-Up Museum

11:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Cushing Center in Norwell Center

Sat., March 8th

Local historical societies, organizations, and private collectors will have displays at the 2nd Annual Pop-Up Museum—a one-day exhibit focused on our beloved river. Learn through interactive exhibits and hands-on activities. Perfect for historians and budding shipbuilders of all ages! **(\$10 SUGGESTED DONATION/ADULT)**

Homes of Norwell Tour

9:00 to 2:00 pm beginning at the Cushing Center in Norwell Center

Fri., April 11th

Benefiting the James Library, this fundraising House Tour features many historic homes researched by the Historical Society. A unique opportunity to see the interiors of some of the beloved antiques in town! [Tickets at the James website.](#) **(\$50 IN ADVANCE)**

Patriots Day Celebration in Scituate & Norwell

at First Parish of Scituate & at First Parish of Norwell

Mon., April 21st

This joint program with the Scituate Historical Society will feature a short, 15-minute interactive play... in the room where it happened! Two days after the Battles of Lexington & Concord, the townspeople gathered in the Meetinghouse to discuss next steps, tell stories, and express concerns about the future. More information and registration to come. **(FREE)**

Antiques Roadshow-Style Appraisal Event

1:00 to 4:00 pm, location TBD

Sun., April 27th

Join the appraisers from J. James Auctioneers & Appraisers of Plymouth to learn more about your antique treasures and find out their value. Proceeds benefit the Norwell + Hanover Historical Societies. Online sign-up will be available in March. **(\$25/ITEM APPRAISED)**