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The Black Social Clubs of the Circuit Street Neighborhood

When a Boston Globe reporter contacted the Society about the Norwell Pines Campground, a new research project was born. Concerned that the Archives had no record of the camp, Archivist Janet Watson sought to remedy that gap in our town's historic record.

by Janet Watson, Society Archivist

If you turn onto Circuit Street from Main Street, drive eight-tenths of a mile, and look intently into the woods to your right ... you can make out the remnants of a small cabin that is now nearly collapsed.

This is the only remaining structure of a camp that was built in the early 20th century as a destination for Black families from Boston who wanted to head to the country for a summer vacation.



The lone cabin still standing on Circuit Street.

In January, 2025, the Norwell Historical Society was contacted by Emily Sweeney (a reporter from the *Boston Globe*) inquiring about the Norwell Pines Campground. Emily told us the camp was featured in *The Negro Travelers' Green Book* from 1957 until 1962.

Known as the "Green Book," this publication listed hotels, restaurants,



"Carry your Green Book with you... you may need it!" says the front cover of the 1959 edition.

service stations, campgrounds, and resorts that welcomed people of color. Published in the era when people were taking to the roads for vacations, the Green Book provided information about how Blacks could travel safely in a segregated America.

The Historical Society had heard stories about other Black clubs in the Circuit Street area, so research began to try to untangle the history of the recreational and social organizations in the Circuit Street neighborhood.

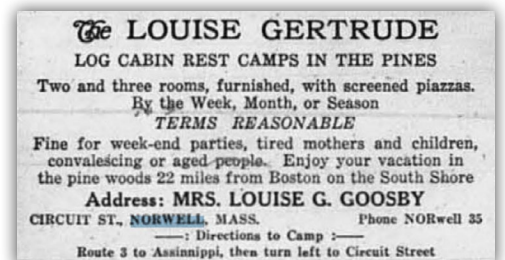
THE LOUISE GERTRUDE REST CAMPS & THE 1st SOCIAL CLUB

It may come as a surprise that Norwell in the early 20th century was a summer vacation destination. With a population of only 1500, Norwell had open spaces, natural beauty, and the recreational opportunities of the North River, ponds, and streams.

Circuit Street had only a few homes when Robert and Sarah Goosby, a Black couple, bought three acres of land (now located at 202 Circuit Street) in 1908. Sarah died in 1922, and in 1923 Robert married his second wife, Louise Gertrude.

During the early 1900s there was a rise in popularity of the automobile, and camping became a popular vacation option. In the 1930s booklet *The Norwell of Fifty Years Ago*, Joseph Merritt wrote "Robert Goosby and his wife... have built a place here; they have also built some overnight camps."

The cabins were probably built in 1931, the same year that Robert and Louise purchased 7 additional acres of land.



An advertisement for the camp (shown above) was published in 1932 in the *Boston Chronicle*, a Black newspaper. The ad noted log cabins with two to three furnished rooms and screened

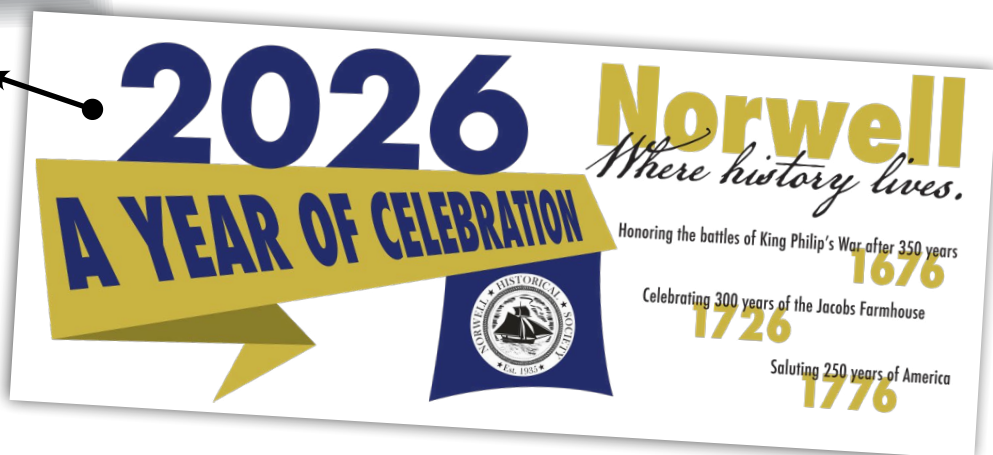
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FROM THE ARCHIVES

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

Not an old item, but a new logo for 2026!

2026 will be a year of celebration for the Norwell Historical Society as we commemorate three milestones: **350 years since 1676**, when the battles of King Philip's War were fought in today's Norwell; **300 years since 1726**, when the Jacobs Farmhouse was built; and **250 years since 1776**, when America declared its independence. Check out the many planned celebrations on the [EVENTS](#) page of our website.



Volunteer Jon Bond recently digitized many old slides in the Society's Archives. Among them were many photos of the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration party hosted by the Tedeschi family on the grounds of their home, Tara. A (very!) large red and white striped tent was erected, and many guests dressed in costume, including Pat and Bruce Donahue (at right).

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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 & 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.

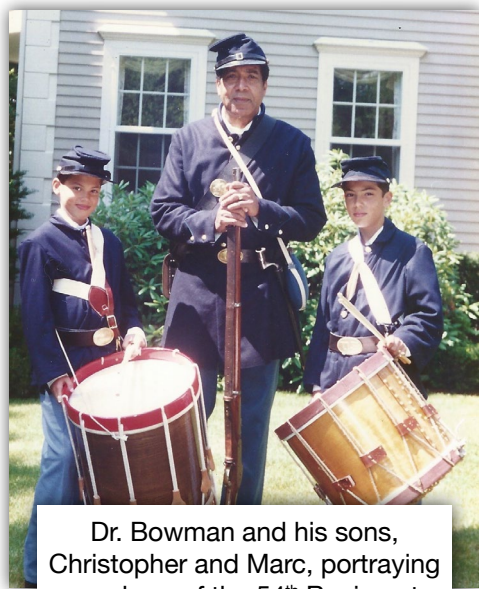
“A Brave Black Regiment”

The gift of a complete set of Mass. 54th re-enactment clothing and accessories prompted Society Board member Chad Forman to research this remarkable regiment and learn why his friend, Dr. Arthur Bowman, chose to honor their service.

by Chad Forman

A Brave Black Regiment: that is the title of the book on the history of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment written by Captain Luis F. Emilio about the Regiment's service in the Civil War and published in 1891.

I was inspired to write this article as a result of a recent donation to the Norwell Historical Society from the family of the late Dr. Arthur J. Bowman, Jr. Dr. Bowman passed away on October 24, 2024 at the age of 84 and is interred at the Washington Street Cemetery.



Dr. Bowman and his sons, Christopher and Marc, portraying members of the 54th Regiment.

Some readers will remember Arthur Bowman as a resident of Norwell for nearly 50 years, where he and his wife Debbie raised their five children. Or readers might remember

his involvement in many civic undertakings like service on the Board of Health or coaching youth sports.

Still others might recall Dr. Bowman as the first Black doctor on the staff of South Shore Hospital, serving as an orthopedic surgeon from 1974–2024.

And some will even remember seeing Dr. Bowman walking to and from his old office on Washington Street to his home on Main Street.

I will always remember Arthur as a history buff, as a Civil War re-enactor and, most importantly, as a friend.

Dr. Bowman's Union “bummer cap” is just one of the many items donated to the Society.



In a recent conversation with his son, Thomas, I was told that family trips often revolved around history. Trips included Fort Ticonderoga, Fort Warren on Georges Island, Williamsburg, and Gettysburg.

Thomas went on to say that the 1989 movie *Glory* was the motivation for his father to join the 54th Massachusetts Company A re-enactment group shortly after its formation in 1992.

The 54th group is headquartered in Hyde Park and participates in re-enactments, parades, special events, and public education. Thomas told me his father liked to “bring history alive.”

The donation includes the following:

- kepi cap
- nine-button frock coat
- four-button sack coat
- overcoat
- wool pants
- brogans (shoes)
- belt
- cap box
- bayonet and scabbard
- cartridge box with a sling and a haversack.

kep-i/kepē/ *n.* a wool forage cap (typically dark blue) worn by Union Army soldiers and officers during the Civil War for fatigue use.

scab-bard/skabərd/ *n.* a sheath for the blade of a sword, dagger, or bayonet, typically made of leather or metal.

These thoughtful gifts will be used for display purposes as well as for Civil War costumes at the First Parish Cemetery Comes Alive! tour.

One might ask how the Mass. 54th Regiment relates to Norwell. The answer: a lot!

The 54th was the first Black regiment in Massachusetts, followed by the 55th and the 5th Mass. Cavalry. All three regiments were composed of soldiers of African-American descent.

The 54th was the first Black regiment in the northern states and the second such unit to enter into combat.

The formation of the 54th was led by Massachusetts Governor John Andrew (of Hingham), the famed Black

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Black Social Clubs, cont'd.

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piazas. The 1941 USGS map shows a grouping of five structures in the area of the existing cabin. As William Gunderway (who grew up in the Circuit Street area) remembers being told, these cabins were rented by “city folk.”

In 1925, prior to the establishment of the camp, Robert Goosby also deeded the property at what is today 301 Pine Street to three trustees: his wife Louise, John Gardner, and Frederick Douglass Lee. This deed contained a declaration stating that the purpose of the trust was “to allow the members of said club to use the premises for social purposes.” The members of the club were presumably local residents, but the club may have also been an amenity for people renting the nearby cabins.

What activities did the social club offer? Louise Goosby was mentioned frequently in the newspaper for organizing social events for her Church, the Messiah Baptist Church of Brockton. These events included clambakes, fashion shows, and a pop concert of “race music.” We can assume Louise used these same talents to organize events for the social club.

During Prohibition in Boston, Black nightlife centered around speakeasies that offered live music and dancing. Did the music of blues and jazz filter through the isolated woods on Circuit Street during that time? Since Prohibition in the United States extended from 1920 to 1933, is it possible that the Norwell club also served illegal liquor to weekend party goers... or did Mrs. Goosby's Baptist affiliation exclude that? Since there are no firsthand accounts of the club, these details are unknown.

In 1945, the trustees sold the property with the following notation:

“...the premises described being no longer used for the purposes set forth in the Declaration of Trust and not having been so used for a long time prior.”

The building at 301 Pine Street is now a private home.

NORWELL PINES

Robert Goosby died in 1939, and in 1941 Louise Gertrude Goosby sold their home and the cabins to Boston residents Nadine and William Goodman.

In 1942 an ad was placed for the camps announcing a new name—Norwell Pines—and a change in management.



In 1950, 1957, and from 1959–1962, Norwell Pines was advertised in the Green Book. Mr. Goodman worked at SS Pierce in Boston, and Nadine was an educator.

A Radcliffe graduate, Nadine Goodman had taught in the Cambridge public schools for 20 years, and in the early 1950s she was one of a few teachers in Massachusetts trained to teach children with cerebral palsy.



Nadine F. W. Goodman (at left), the first teacher in Massachusetts to receive a grant to study Cerebral Palsy. (Courtesy of the *Boston Globe*, May 30, 1951.)

In 1952, Nadine converted at least some of the cabins on Circuit Street into a summer camp for children with cerebral palsy. See-saws, swings, slides, and sandboxes were set up. A *Boston Globe* article announcing the opening of the camp said:

“the program is much like that of any other summer camp. Swimming at

the beach, fishing, visits to nearby farms, play hours, and a few duties in their dormitories are on each children's schedule.”

The food offered to the children, as noted in the article, sounded particularly mouthwatering:

“Pasteurized milk, fresh meat, fresh country butter, vegetables, eggs, and poultry grown on our place.”

“Did the music of blues and jazz filter through the isolated woods on Circuit Street...?”

Jim Spencer, a nephew of Nadine and Bill Goodman, has idyllic memories of visiting them in the summers from the 1950s through the 1970s. Jim remembers beautiful ponds and smells, possibly just of the fresh air or maybe apple blossoms (since he was served apple cider made from apples picked on the property). He recalls the Goodmans didn't have children but treated all the children who attended the camp as their own.

The campground in its entirety probably closed in 1962, because in 1963 the property with the cabins was sold to David and Elvold Mayers, and advertisement in the Green Book ended.

SOUTH SHORE ACTIVITY CLUB

But the campground's closing was not the end of Black recreational activities in the Circuit Street area.

Albert Gunderway was a well known resident of the neighborhood, and in 1940 he and his young family were living in the large Pine Street home of Frederick Douglass Lee, a trustee of the original social club.

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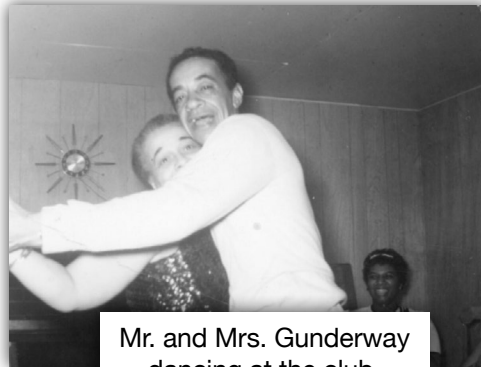
Black Social Clubs, cont'd.

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Perhaps Albert Gunderway was advised by Mr. Lee, because he later organized the South Shore Activity Club in a similar manner to the 1925 Pine Street Social Club trust. In May 1956, three new trustees purchased property on Pine Street (next door to the former social club) from Robert Goosby's son for the purpose of leasing or renting the premises to the South Shore Activity Club. The members, primarily Black families from local towns, built the clubhouse themselves.

Albert's son, William Gunderway, described the Activity Club as a place where once a month on Wednesday night, people got together for food, live music, and dancing.

In 1970, the club applied for a liquor license. The *South Shore Mirror* reported on the Norwell Selectman's hearing in September 1970. Most



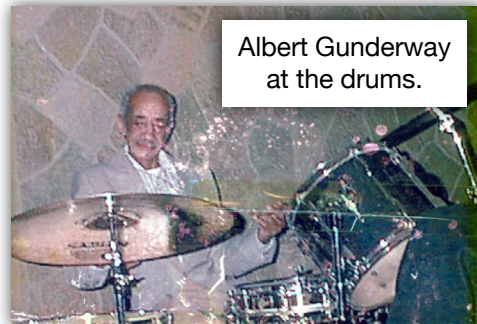
Mr. and Mrs. Gunderway dancing at the club.

residents were opposed to granting the license, but Tom Tolman of River Street spoke in favor saying,

"I have heard disturbances from liquor parties in private homes, you don't have to have a club to have a lot of noise."

Tolman added,

"I watched the members of the South Shore Activity Club build their club, they have worked hard."



Albert Gunderway at the drums.

Besides being an on-call fireman, a Norwell Water Commissioner, a member of the Board of Health, and a Tree and Park Commissioner, Albert Gunderway was a drummer and the leader of "Al's Trio," a group that frequently performed at the club.

The Selectmen took the matter under advisement but eventually denied the license. Without proceeds from the sale of liquor the club had difficulty covering expenses and, in 1979, the trustees sold the building to the Town of Norwell where it is now the home of the Norwell Council on Aging.

The camps and clubs are gone from the Circuit and Pine Street area, but the neighborhood is still used for many of the same purposes. Walkers stroll the Donovan fields and enjoy the natural beauty of the area, children play at the Albert H. Gunderway Sr. Memorial Field, and liquor is still not allowed in the Council on Aging building, so "music and mocktails" are a regular summer activity. 🍂



THE NORTH RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
present

The North River
HISTORY + HERITAGE
POP-UP MUSEUM

Saturday, March 7th

11:00 am – 3:00 pm

at

Cushing Memorial Hall

673 Main Street (Rte. 123) | Norwell

- ♦ Interactive exhibits for kids of all ages!
- ♦ Shipbuilding tool demonstrations
- ♦ Aerial tour of the river on view
- ♦ Rarely seen private collections
- ♦ Native history with the Mattakeeset Tribe
- ♦ And much more!

\$10 suggested donation/adult

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Visit the Society's [EVENTS](#) page to see the 2026 events where t-shirts will be sold for \$25.

Black Regiment, cont'd.

(continued from page 3)

abolitionist Fredrick Douglass (whose two sons were volunteers in the 54th), and its eventual Colonel, Robert Gould Shaw (formally Captain in the 2nd Mass. Infantry).

Organized in early 1863, the 54th would see its first significant combat on James Island near Charleston, South Carolina on July 16, where the 54th had 14 killed, 18 wounded, and three missing.

The most significant combat took place two days later on Morris Island, South Carolina with the disastrous Union assault on Fort Wagner. The 54th,

“Although the Union was defeated in this battle, it proved that Black soldiers could fight in combat.”

under Shaw's command, led the assault on the well-fortified Confederates. With a depleted regiment of only 600 men, the 54th had 54 men killed in the valiant assault, including Colonel Shaw on the ramparts. Another 125 were wounded and 100 more went missing after the battle. Many of the missing were captured and some possibly executed. In all, the 54th regiment lost about 45 percent of its numbers that one day.

The importance of the assault of Fort Wagner cannot be understated. Although the Union was defeated in this battle, the important role of the 54th proved that Black soldiers could fight in combat.

The first Black Medal of Honor recipient was the result of the Battle of Fort Wagner. Sgt. William Carney, who saved the colors of the 54th, later declared:

“The old flag never touched the ground, boys.”

The battle led to a large increase in recruitment of Black soldiers into the Union forces and, eventually, over 180,000 Black men would serve.

With replacements needed to fill out its ranks, six Black men from South Scituate (today's Norwell) would enlist and serve in the Mass. 54th. At least five of those men were related to each other by blood or marriage.

JASON PRINCE

The first South Scituate Black man to enlist in the 54th would be Jason Prince of Company G. A 24-year-old farmer, he was drafted and mustered in on August 25, 1863 and mustered out two years later in Beaufort, SC due to a disability from injuries sustained during the battle of Olustee, FL. Prince also saw combat at Boykin's Mill, SC. He was a laborer who later lived in Hingham and died at age 39 from a spinal cord injury. Jason Prince is buried at the High Street Cemetery in Hingham.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN LEE

A 19-year-old shoemaker, Benjamin Lee volunteered and received a \$325 bounty that the Town of South Scituate was offering to fulfill its quota. He was mustered in on December 10, 1863 and mustered out two years later in New York City. He was a private in Company G and also saw combat at Olustee and Boykin's Mill. His cousin, Henry Lee, and his brother-in-law, Richard Winslow, also served. Benjamin Lee died in a house fire at the age of 68 and is buried in the Hanover Center Cemetery.

WILLIAM H. FREEMAN

A 22-year-old farmer, William Freeman enlisted as a Private in Company H and also received a \$325 bounty. He was mustered in on December 10, 1863 and mustered out with his regiment (and with his brother Warren) two years later. Freeman saw combat at Honey Hill, SC; Olustee, and Boykin's Mill. Freeman died at the age 50 from marasmus, a

ma-ras-mas/mə-'raz-məs/ *n.* a condition of chronic undernourishment usually caused by a diet deficient in calories and proteins.

result of malaria contracted in the war. He is buried in the Colebrook Cemetery in Whitman.

WARREN F. FREEMAN

An 18-year-old farmer, Warren Freeman is the younger brother of William. He enlisted as a Private in Company H and also received a \$325 bounty. He was mustered in on December 10, 1863 and mustered out of service with his regiment two years later (with his older brother). Warren Freeman also saw combat at Honey Hill, Olustee, and Boykin's Mill. He died of consumption at the age of 28 and is buried at the First Parish Cemetery in Norwell Center.

A note of interest regarding the Freeman brothers: their great grandfathers Asher Freeman (enslaved) and Richard Gunderway (a free man) were both veterans of the Revolutionary War. Gunderway was also the great grandfather of Benjamin Lee.

HENRY T. WINSLOW

An 18-year-old shoemaker, Henry Winslow enlisted as a Private in Company H and also collected a \$325 bounty. He mustered in on December 11, 1863 and was mustered out two years later with his regiment. Winslow was the nephew of soldiers Richard Winslow and Benjamin Lee. He saw combat at Honey Hill and Olustee. Henry Winslow died at the age of 31 and is buried at the First Parish Cemetery in Norwell Center.

RICHARD S. WINSLOW

A 33-year-old shoemaker, Richard Winslow enlisted as a Private in Company H on December 10, 1863, a day before his nephew Henry. Winslow also received a \$325 bounty and saw combat at Honey Hill, Olustee, and Boykin's Mill. Winslow was accidentally wounded in his foot by a comrade cleaning his gun in April of 1865 (just 16 days before Gen. Joseph E. Johnston surrendered his army of 90,000 Confederate troops across the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida to Union Major General William T. Sherman). Following his recuperation,

(continued on page 7)

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NHS, P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

_____ Researching at the Archives _____ Other:

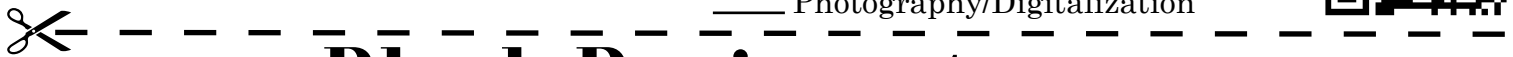
_____ Organizing at the Archives

_____ Farmhouse Tour Guide

_____ Farmhouse Maintenance

_____ Event Planning

_____ Photography/Digitalization



Black Regiment, cont'd.

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Private Winslow would be mustered out of his service on September 11, 1865 in Beaufort, SC.

Richard Winslow was a descendant of Hingham's Benjamin Ward, who served in the early stages of the Revolutionary War.

From *Norwell Beautiful* by
Ruth Winslow Perry.



Richard Winslow, Flag Bearer, Horace Fogg (1900).
Courtesy of Edna and Mildred Winslow.

Following the Civil War, Winslow lived in Hanover and was very active in the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a Union veterans' organization. Winslow was a member of the GAR Posts in both Norwell and Hanover and served as their color bearer. He died in Hanover from "a shock" at the age of 73 and is buried in the Hanover Center Cemetery.

A BROKEN PROMISE


A controversy that enveloped the 54th early after its formation involved the Black soldiers' pay. Each was promised \$13/month equal pay (which was standard for all soldiers). However, the federal government reneged on that plan and offered only laborers' pay, citing an 1862 law which set the rate at \$10/month. This lower rate did not apply to the white officers in the 54th.

In an 1863 letter to a friend while on Morris Island, Richard Winslow wrote the following:

"...in united protest of equal pay, all soldiers of our regiment have yet to receive pay. While I cannot agree on provision and condition of uniforms and equipment, which have been comparable [sic] to white regiments, we continue to decline pay until the U.S. Government or the Almighty himself seem fit to ammend [sic] this terrible injustice. How right you are in acknowledging the hardships that have befallen our families. Whom suffer the greatest. Fear not my friend, on our circumstances. Instead be part of our cause! There are forces on earth that moves mountains and so shall we overcome... remember our families and our fallen brothers in your prayers.

Your friend, Richard Winslow
Co. H. 54th, 1 Mass. Vols."

In protest, both officers and the enlisted men refused to accept any pay for over a year, and this created hardships for many of the families. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts intervened and offered to make up the difference in pay, but the soldiers refused on principle, saying it was the responsibility of the federal government to bear the cost. Congress finally passed legislation in June of 1864, and all soldiers in the 54th were retroactively paid what they were originally promised.

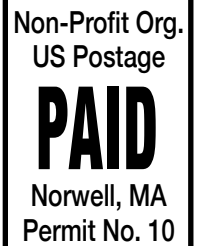
In closing, I would like to thank the family of Private Arthur J. Bowman, Jr. of Company A of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry for allowing the Norwell Historical Society to continue to "bring history alive" through Dr. Bowman's Civil War re-enactment uniforms and accessories. 



Read about William and Warren Freeman's great grandfather, [Asher Freeman](#), who served during the American Revolution starting on page 3 of the Winter 2022 issue of the North River Packet.



Norwell Historical Society
P.O. Box 693
Norwell, Massachusetts 02061
NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Winter 2026

2026 *Upcoming Events*

A YEAR OF CELEBRATION



For an up-to-date listing of events with detailed descriptions, see the website ["Events"](#) page or use this QR code



NORTH RIVER HISTORY + HERITAGE POP-UP MUSEUM

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

Saturday, March 7th

Five North River Historical Societies, the Mattakeeset Tribe, and the North River Watershed Association join to celebrate our beloved North River and its history with interactive exhibits. **(\$10/adult suggested donation)**

KING PHILIP'S WAR: INDIGENOUS SLAVERY, INDENTURE + FREEDOM

6:00 to 7:30 pm at the Norwell Public Library, 64 South Street, Norwell

Wednesday, March 25th

Historian Marjory Gomez O'Toole will discuss slavery, the little-known secret behind the fighting during King Philip's War. Learn why history rarely mentions this troubling fact. [\(Free, but sign up through the NPL website\)](#)

FIRST SUNDAYS OPEN MUSEUM DAY

3:00 to 5:00 pm at the Jacobs Farmhouse, 4 Jacobs Lane, Norwell

Sunday, April 12th

Come for a tour of the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum (2nd Sunday this month only!). **(Free)**

ANTIQUES APPRAISAL DAY

1:00 to 4:00 pm at the Hanover Four Corners Phoenix Lodge

Sunday, April 26th

It's a historic year! Learn more about the antiques in your home by making an appointment (available online on April 1) to have them appraised. Or just stop by to watch the action and hear the amazing stories. **(\$25/item appraised or \$5/non-member adult to watch)**

MAY DAY BASKET-MAKING

3:00 to 5:00 pm at the Jacobs Farmhouse Museum, 4 Jacobs Lane, Norwell

Friday, May 1st

Come to the Jacobs Farmhouse and make a basket for your neighbor's door. **(Free)**