



Fall 2018

Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org

MUSEUM & LIBRARY HOURS

The Jacobs Farmhouse is open by appointment only. Please contact the Society for further information or to schedule a tour.

The Norwell Historical Society Library at the Norwell Middle School (328 Main Street) is open on Wednesdays from 2:30 to 3:30 during the school year or by appointment.

The Norwell Historical Society Archives Center on the 3rd floor of the Sparrell School is open by appointment only.

The purpose of this Society shall be: a.) to plan and arrange for the promotion of knowledge about the Town of Norwell by discussion, research, meetings and publications; b.) to collect, solicit and preserve documents, manuscripts, charts, maps, records, photographs, relics, and items of local interest; c.) to arrange, index, catalog and file/maintain such material for use by the members of the Norwell Historical Society and other interested parties; d.) to work with and cooperate with other entities, groups, organizations, and individuals directly and indirectly.

MEET DOLLEY MADISON AT THE ANNUAL MEETING ON OCTOBER 28TH

False advertising? Not really. While you will not, in fact, go back in time and meet the fourth First Lady of the United States, those who attend the **October 28th Annual Meeting** of the Norwell Historical Society will be entertained by Janet Parnes, an actress and historical expert on Dolley Madison.

Please join the Norwell Historical Society at the James Library & Center for the Arts (24 West Street in Norwell Center) at 3:00 that Sunday afternoon for a brief Annual Meeting, a presentation and performance on Mrs. Madison, and a reception with the actress afterwards.

An Afternoon with
Dolley Madison
with actress
Janet Parnes

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28TH

3:00 83rd Annual Meeting
3:15 Presentation
4:15 Reception

at the James Library & Center for the Arts
24 WEST STREET, NORWELL CENTER

Actress Janet Parnes has done extensive research on Mrs. Madison, who was born in 1768—making this year the 250th anniversary of her birth.

Attendees will learn about this influential First Lady who used her charm and status to become a force

for women's rights, to facilitate political connections for her husband, and to transform the White House into an exquisite national home.

Dolley Madison may be known for saving the George Washington portrait during the burning of Washington, but there is far more to her story than that. This performance reveals the fashionable, gracious, and politically astute Dolley few of us know.

This event is free and open to the public, but members of the Society will be given priority admission to ensure we have a quorum for our Annual Meeting.

Please RSVP via the Society website (use the Upcoming Events tab or call 781-659-1888 and leave a message.

The James anticipates the installation of its new elevator in time for this event. If the elevator is, indeed, up and running, this event will be handicapped accessible. If you have concerns about accessibility, please call the James the week before the event to inquire about the elevator's progress. You may reach the library at 781-659-7100 every weekday afternoon except Mondays, and on the Saturday before the event from 10:00 until 2:00.

The Historical Society would very much like to encourage new members to join. Please consider bringing a friend to this event—it is free—and we will have a membership table on display.

If you are interested in providing a refreshment for the reception, please send an email to the Society at info@norwellhistoricalsociety.org.

PLEASE NOTE: Historical Society Library hours at the Norwell Middle School have changed from Wednesdays at 2:00-3:00 to Wednesdays at **2:30-3:30**.

THE SHOE BUSINESS ON RIDGE HILL

by Jeff Keller

Society member Jeff Keller lives on High Street in the Charles Grose House (circa 1867). Jeff has done extensive research on the Grose family and the shoe industry in Norwell. Much of Jeff's research was done with the assistance of Grose family descendants Janet Shelton Blair (now deceased), her daughter Katie Blair of Texas, and former director of the Hingham Historical Society Suzanne Buchanan. Jeff also perused old issues of the Rockland Standard, which used to serve as the primary newspaper for the South Shore area.

This article is one of two. The next issue will feature Jeff's research on the High Street trolley, the Ridge Hill Shoe Company, and the demise of shoe manufacturing in Norwell.

In 1828 Charles Grose was born in Hanover on a farm, the second of twelve children to Ansel G. and Rebecca (Wilder) Grose. As Charles was born in the second year of their marriage, his parents probably lived on a farm owned by Ansel's father and mother, Samuel and Submit (Gardner) Grose. Within a few years, Ansel and his family moved to the Ridge Hill section of what was then Scituate (now Norwell) where he farmed land of his own.

At an early age, Charles, like his older brother Henry, decided that farming was not for him. "Charles began by working in the long winter evenings when a small boy at the shoemaking trade, attending school during the day." (*Rockland Standard*, December 9, 1892)

In July of 1847, at the age of nineteen, Charles married Mary Ann Hobart of Hingham in a double ceremony in Hanover along with his older brother Henry, who married Julia Curtis of Scituate. About four months afterward, Charles bought about an acre of land in Ridge Hill from Martin and Eunice Stoddard, the first of several real estate transactions. Four years later in 1851, Charles bought eleven more acres that abutted the first parcel. Charles and Mary built their first home and stable on one of these parcels, located on the westerly side of High Street close to where the Ridge Hill and Cole Schools are today.



A later photo of Charles Grose

Early in February of 1860, Charles mortgaged his property for a loan of \$1500 from his wife Mary's father, Elijah, which he repaid in full within six months. Less than a year later, Charles and his younger brother, Dexter formed a partnership and began manufacturing shoes together.

Just as their business was underway, Charles with his brothers, Dexter and Henry, were called to serve

in the Union Army to fight in the Civil War. They all enlisted on September 2, 1862 and served in the 43rd Regiment, Company F, of the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry for ten months. The regiment returned to Massachusetts at the end of that time; brother Dexter had made sergeant, all of the brothers had seen some action, and the war was now over for the Grose brothers. They were all discharged and the regiment was disbanded in Boston on July 30, 1863.

Returning to Ridge Hill, Charles and Dexter continued with their shoe manufacturing business. Their partnership lasted until early 1865 when Dexter moved to Abington and formed a new partnership with W.E. Putnam.

Charles Grose & Son

Charles' younger brother, Nelson (also a shoemaker), wanted to be in business for himself and decided to become a shoe manufacturer. In 1858 at the age of 26, Nelson purchased "... a certain lot of field consisting of 1 acre and 83 rods situated in South Scituate with the buildings thereon" from Rufus Farrow for \$100. However, things didn't go well and eleven months later Nelson was forced to mortgage the property to his father, Ansel for \$300.

Five years later, after the addition of a new stable, Ansel sold that property to Joseph Thomas for \$500. The deed on the property refers to the "insolvency of Nelson Grose." This took place in 1864, just before Joseph Thomas went off to serve in the Civil War in the Union Army—a cause from which Joseph would not return. Records state that Joseph Thomas died in a Confederate prison for lack of care.

On April 2, 1866, heirs of Joseph Thomas' estate sold to Mary Grose, wife of Charles, the same property now described as "... a certain lot of land with a stable with shoe manufacturing thereon" for \$535. Charles and Mary had the stable moved across High Street to land they already owned where it sat on high ground, visible



(continued on next page)

SHOE BUSINESS, CONT'D.

for miles around. They named the shoe business “Charles Grose & Son.”

The now vacant land, a little over an acre, was divided into two parcels. On the larger piece, Charles and Mary built a handsome bracketed Victorian home with an attached two story barn, complete with cupola, facing the road and the factory on the other side (circa 1866-7). This was a home in which no expense was spared.

On the smaller parcel, Charles and Mary built a second home in the French Second Empire style with a mansard roof for their son, Charles Webster and his new bride, Elsie F. Twombly of Somerville (Charles Webster and Elsie were married on November 28, 1871). Parents Charles and Mary sold the property to son, Charles, on October 24, 1872. On the deed, the property was described as “... one half acre with the new French roofed dwelling house thereon lying in South Scituate on the easterly side of High Street.”

The attached barn on the Charles W. Grose House was added and completed three years later. Of note, in late August, 2005, during a floor repair on the second floor of the rear of that barn, workers discovered shreds of newspaper used as padding between the floorboards. Pieces of *The Boston Daily Globe* dated, Friday morning, April 30, 1875 and of *The Boston Journal* of June 12, 1875 helped date construction of the barn toward the end of this year—pinpointing it as being built three years after the house. Also found was a label, “... for Mr. A. Cushing, Hingham, Ma, from Dwight Wheelock & Co., Fancy and Staple Dry Goods, No. 118 Hanover Street, corner of Friend Street, Boston.” Could A. Cushing possibly be the builder?

It was also during this time period of the mid-1800s that a second son, Ansel Hobart Grose, was born—in 1866.

In 1872, “Charles Grose & Son” began to appear in the Massachusetts Business Directory of Boston under “Boot and Shoe Wholesalers.” Charles and his eldest son, Charles Webster, rented a storefront and drove their shoes into Boston where they were sold to retail merchants. Business was good, and Charles Grose & Son was becoming one of the biggest employers in the area.

Word of the Groses' family's prosperity spread. In the neighboring town of Rockland (then part of Abington) there toiled a young shoemaker working in a loft by the name of Elwin Temple Wright who, with his father Lorenzo, had heard of the Grose's large shoe operation on Ridge Hill. He had also seen Mary Frances Grose, daughter of Charles, and thought her



Mary Frances Grose Wright

quite attractive! Being impressed by both, Mr. Wright arranged to meet Charles and soon afterward his daughter—a courtship ensued.

In 1874, Mary Frances Grose married Elwin Temple Wright of Abington. In 1876, Charles Grose and Elwin Wright together bought a small factory near the corner of Liberty and Webster Streets in what is today Rockland, and they began manufacturing shoes under the name “Wright and Grose.” By 1879, their partnership had advanced and was formalized under the name “E.T. & Company.” This name lasted until June of 1884 when Grose and Wright separated their business interests. E.T. Wright then formed a new partnership with New York investor, Charles Richards, in 1855 and did business as “Wright & Richards.”

Charles Grose & Sons

Benjamin Young and his family lived on Ridge Hill and were neighbors of Charles Grose. In 1869, Benjamin bought 2 acres of land (with the buildings thereon) from Charles and Mary Grose for \$500 with a mortgage. Through this financial assistance, Benjamin Young built what was one of the first large shoe factories in the area. Young's business prospered until his untimely death from tuberculosis in October of 1885 at the age of 48. [Of note, the Benjamin Young House at 15 High Street is slated for demolition by its current owners.]

Prior to Benjamin Young's death in October of 1884, Charles and his sons, Charles Webster and Ansel, bought Benjamin Young's shoe factory (which was situated adjacent to theirs on the westerly side of High Street) from the South Scituate Savings Bank who held the mortgage. They renamed it “Charles Grose & Sons.” A much larger factory, it allowed them to expand their manufacturing capabilities.

It was during the same period (1886-8) that Charles' youngest son, Ansel, distinguished himself in the sport of baseball. A sickly child and slight in build and stature, Ansel was nonetheless tenacious in his desire and quick on his feet. Ansel played for the Hanover town team in 1886 and led the team in batting. His fielding was also first rate, so much so that the following year in 1887, he moved over to Hingham where by the fifth game he was installed as a starter at first base. The following year in 1888, he was installed in left field where he led the team in fielding with a .950 average. The 1888 season, noted in the *Hingham Journal*, “... was the best one the team had..., winning 17 out of 22 games,” with



Ansel Grose, baseball player extraordinaire!

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SHOE BUSINESS, CONT'D.

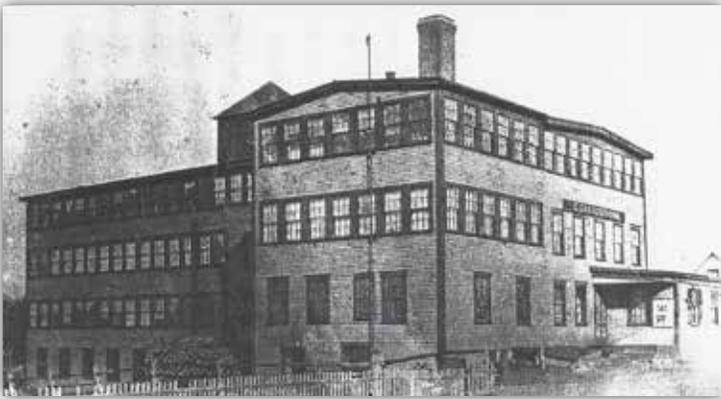
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credit given to the extensive use of home grown talent and players playing the same positions throughout.

Unfortunately, 1888 was the last year Ansel was able to play baseball. In 1889 he suffered from the rupture of an artery, effectively ending his playing career. Then he developed tuberculosis. Despite the "... healing climate of Southern California, the bracing air of Colorado or the fragrant breezes of the tropics nothing seemed to restore his former health." (*Hingham Journal* November 6, 1891). Ansel Hobart Grose died on October 27, 1891—nine days shy of his 25th birthday—at Lake Saranac, New York (a renowned tuberculosis recovery center).

Ansel's demise was preceded by his grandfather, Ansel G. Grose, who died on March 29, 1891 at the age of 88 years old from "congestion of the lungs."

Unfortunately for the Grose family, Charles Grose died the next year, on December 4, 1892, at the age



The Charles Grose & Sons Factory on High Street

of 64 from a "complication of diseases." Charles died at home, a possible aftereffect of the death of his son, Ansel?

After his father's death, Charles Webster Grose took over the family shoe business—but things were different. In the July 14, 1893 edition of the *Rockland Standard*, there appeared the following:

"Stitchers refuse to be docked. The piece stitchers at Charles Grose & Sons' shoe factory at Ridge Hill left their work on Monday owing to a reduction in prices. The firm claims that the grade of shoe on which the reduction is made is of a cheaper grade than formerly and cannot therefore pay the same prices as for the other grade."

Then, a month later, on July 28th:

"All edgemakers at C.W. Grose's shoe factory have been docked on some grades of work."

Then, on January 12 of the following year:

"C.W. Grose & Sons shoe factory has started again after several weeks' layoff."

And finally, on April 27th:

"The cutters commenced work at Charles Grose W. Grose's shoe factory last Monday. A busy season is looked forward to at this factory."

But bad news followed on September 16th:

"Owing to the boiler's being disabled, Charles Grose's shoe factory at Ridge Hill has been shut down this week."

It was apparent that Charles Webster had not inherited his father's managerial ability. It is not surprising, given the hard times that he was experiencing at the shoe factory, that Charles Webster would look elsewhere for business opportunities. In the May 15, 1896 edition, the *Rockland Standard* reported:

"Charles W. Grose returned last week from a transcontinental trip, the main purpose of which was an inspection of the gold mines of the Mother Lode of California, particularly the Pioneer property. Mr. Grose is a director in the company [Mother Lode of California] ...the development of the Mother Lode mines is ...a genuine investment development on business principles. Mr. Grose and party representing a Boston syndicate have bonded the famous Golden Rule mines of California. It is the intention of the syndicate to organize the company at once and subscription books will be opened in a few weeks."

(to be continued in the next issue)

THROWBACK
PHOTO OF THE MONTH



These two homes still stand in Norwell today, but the house on the right no longer has its Victorian-era front porch (which was not original to the circa 1838 home) and the third floor dormers are no longer there. The large elm trees, sadly, no longer stand (probably as a result of the Dutch Elm blight throughout New England in the mid-1900s). Do you know where these two homes are located in Norwell today? (Answer at the bottom of page 5)

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE _____ NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP

3-Year Membership (\$35) _____

Life Membership (\$350) _____

Please make checks payable to the *Norwell Historical Society* and mail to: NHS,
P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061

OR YOU CAN JOIN ON-LINE 
www.norwellhistoricalsociety.org

AREAS OF INTEREST

Newsletter _____ Research Library _____

Tour Guide _____ Program Planning _____

DR. CHASE'S RECIPES

Society Board member Jody Vermette recently transcribed some passages from a historic volume she owns, published in 1870, with the title of:

Dr. Chase's Recipes or Information for Everybody An Invaluable Collection of About Eight Hundred Practical Recipes for Merchants, Grocers, Saloon Keepers, Physicians, Tanners, Shoe Makers, Druggists, Harness Makers, Painters, Jewelers, Blacksmiths, Tanners, Gunsmiths, Farriers, Barbers, Bakers, Dyers, Renovaters, Farmers, and Families Generally.

If your current occupation doesn't fall within that mouthful of a title, rest assured. You, too, can benefit from the recipes of Dr. A.W. Chase—whose mantra is “We learn to live by living to learn.”

Since Halloween is fast approaching when witches boil up potions with eye of newt and toe of frog, here is an examples of one of Dr. Chase's Recipes in keeping with the season.

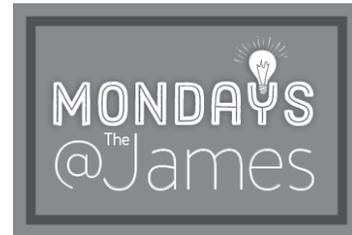
Toad Ointment

For sprains, strains, lame back, rheumatism, etc.

Good size live toads, 4 in number; put in boiling water and cook very soft; take them out and boil the water down to ½ pint, and add fresh churned unsalted butter 1 pound and simmer together; at the last add tincture of arnica 2 ounces.

This was obtained from an old physician who thought more of it than any other prescription in his possession. Some persons may think it hard on the toads but you could not kill them quicker in any other way. Remember the butter must be newly churned and unsalted.

[Editor's Question: Drink, or rub on the affected area?]



The James Library & Center for the Arts (24 West Street in Norwell Center) invites local experts and leaders for this Monday night series of informational and educational events. Many of these events feature historic topics that may be of interest to Society members.

Reservations are not necessary, but are encouraged (call 781-659-7100). **All programs begin at 7:00 p.m.** For more information, see www.jameslibrary.org.

ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE EASTERN PEQUOT TRIBAL NATION

November 5th at 7:00 pm

Dr. Stephen Silliman is a historical archaeologist who studies indigenous people and colonialism, especially looking at the cultural continuities and changes in Native American groups as they navigated the challenges of colonial activities.

PLYMOUTH COLONY IN 10 OBJECTS

November 12th at 7:00 pm

Norwell resident and historian Stephen O'Neill (current Executive Director of the Hanover Historical Society) will showcase ten objects from Plymouth Colony and explore the familiar history of the Pilgrims and America's first colony in a different and thought-provoking way.

Answer from page 4: The Dr. Joseph Whittemore House (on the right) is at 647 Main Street and was recently on the Norwell Historic House Tour. The house on the left is the Barnes-Fogg House at 637 Main Street.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS AND MEMORABILIA

A NARRATIVE OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL

\$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!

SHIPBUILDING ON THE NORTH RIVER

\$45

by L. Vernon Briggs

The definitive index of ships built on the North River and the shipyards that lined its shores was written in 1889 and re-printed in 1988. Lists interspersed with an occasional tale.

HISTORIC HOMESTEADS OF NORWELL

\$15

Learn more about our stately houses and the people who lived in them. This book, well-illustrated with drawings, discusses architectural features and includes genealogical information.

NORWELL 1903 MAP

\$25

This 16" X 20" reproduction of the 1903 Plymouth County Atlas map of Norwell is a high quality digital copy of the original hand-colored version. Suitable for framing.

MARYJANE CLARK-INSPIRED TRAVEL MUGS

\$15

Choose the Jacobs Farmhouse or the James Library.

Artist Erica Vermette created these original pieces. (2 for \$25)

THE ABCs OF NORWELL

\$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 famous personalities and historical features.

HISTORY OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL

\$25

by Joseph Foster Merritt

This history of the town to 1938 was republished in 1988. A unique narrative written by Norwell's Town Clerk, it is considered to be an invaluable account of Norwell prior to WWII.

MORE THAN JUST A COOKBOOK

\$5

This book is full of time-tested favorite recipes submitted by locals. Beyond the gastronomic delights, we have included sketches, interesting narratives and accounts of historic events.

THE WAY WE WERE

\$20

by Jeanne Garside

This book is a series of articles written for Norwell's Centennial Celebration in 1988. Illustrated with old photographs, it tells what times were like in 1888.

All the above items are available at the Society Library in the Middle School on Wednesdays during the school year (2:30-3:30 p.m), or you may call Wendy Bawabe at 781-659-1464, or you may request a publication using this form and enclosing a check (made payable to NHS). Mail to: NHS, P.O. Box 693, Norwell, MA 02061.