



Newsletter

June 2013

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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Norwell, MA 02061
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MUSEUM & LIBRARY HOURS

The Jacobs Farmhouse is open by appointment only. Please call 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 and Thursdays from 2:00 to 3:00 during the school year, and from 10:00 to 11:00 am during the summer 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.

THE STETSON CLAN STILL GATHERS

By Sam Olson

Cornet (an old British cavalry rank) Robert Stetson was Norwell's (formerly Scituate's) first settler. In 1634, he received a grant of land on the North River consisting of a clear spring, a salt marsh field, and lumber for shelter. Water power lay nearby for his first mill. He became Scituate's first elected Selectman becoming well-known for his fair dealings with the Wompanoag Indians.

His nine children, the first American Stetson descendants, carried on his tradition after his death at the age of ninety.

The Stetson Kindred of America was formed in 1905, purchasing forty-six acres of the original grant surrounding the homestead. They later built a

pavilion nearby. They will gather this year on August 18th for their annual family reunion.

Below are the lyrics to the "Stetson Reunion Song" sung to the music of "America the Beautiful," as printed in the *Rockland Standard* on August 25, 1932.

*On soil made sacred by the Past
We meet again today.*

*And can it be a year, since last
We gathered in this way.*

*The shrine to which we come from far:
A cottage sun caressed,
Which shelters founders of our hue
By fame and fortune blest.*

*The mates who built this forest home
And faced life's dangers here,
Are part of us, where'er we roam
Our inspiration dear.*

*May all the smiles which greet us here:
The kindly words we say,
Help light us through another year
Till next reunion day.*



The Stetson
Family Crest



STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

Sunday, June 9th

at the Jacobs Farmhouse

3:00 - 5:00 pm

- Tour the Jacobs Farmhouse
- See the arrowhead & antique tool collections
- Compete in sack races, egg relays & donut chomps
- Pet the animals
- Visit the Norwell Farms' fields and greenhouse with Farmer Scott
- Eat lots of old-fashioned Strawberry Shortcake
- Drink homemade lemonade

ALONG THE NORTH RIVER

Editor's Note: The following is the fifth installment of an article titled "ALONG THE NORTH RIVER: Stream of Indian Canoes, Pioneer Ships, and Modern Craft" by Margaret Crowell (later Margaret Crowell Dumas) written for the May 27, 1938 edition of The Hanover Branch and Norwell Advertiser (7th Annual Edition), and transcribed with parenthetical notes by Society Archivist Bill Slattery. The remainder of the article will appear in future editions of the Society newsletter.

Sometime later [in the mid-1700s], the Wanton yard was divided by a stone wall, the Fosters building on one side, and the Delanos on the other.

Benjamin Delano, a descendant of Philip de la Noye, the lad who came to this country on the "Fortune" in 1621, was the first of this family to live in Scituate. The Delanos were of French Huguenot stock, in contrast to the majority of the Scituate settlers, who were of English derivation. They were a distinguished family in France, and one branch befriended the Pilgrims during the stay in Leyden, Holland. Young Philip was a passenger on the "Speedwell," the companion ship to the "Mayflower" which was unseaworthy and had to put back to England. The next year he came on the "Fortune," settled in Plymouth and married. One branch of his family migrated to Fairhaven, numbering among their descendants, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Benjamin Delano built ships at the Wanton yard and lived in the Paul Skelding house [owner in 1938]. It is not just certain whether he built the house when he came in 1770 or if Richard Dwelley, of whom he bought the land, had built the house some time before. In any event, the house is a gem, with some unusually fine paneling.

William Delano, Benjamin's son, was also a shipbuilder using the Wanton yard, as his father had before him. He evidently was quite ambitious for he is sometimes referred to as "Lord North," and he built the two largest vessels ever to leave the North River. Also, his is the only three-storied house in the North River Valley. He married Sarah Hart, a daughter of Edmund Hart, the master builder of the frigate "Constitution," the anchors for which were forged up river at Luddam's Ford, now the site of the Clapp Rubber Works at Curtis Crossing.

In 1803 William Delano built the beautiful mansion now owned by Mrs. Gutterson [owner in 1938], the dignified front portico with its delicate carving and fanlight being a fine example of North River craftsmanship.



This portrait of Sarah Hart Delano, wife of "Lord North" William Delano, now hangs in the James Library Victorian Room.

The two vessels built by William Delano, which were the largest to leave the river, were the "Mt Vernon" and the "Lady Madison." The latter had quite an interesting career. She was built in 1810 for the whaling industry, and proved to be a very fast boat in those days. For seven years, she held the record for the westward passage, having made the trip in eighteen days. Her owners were Thomas Hazard and his son-in-law, Jacob Barker of New Bedford and New York. Jacob Barker was a member of the Society of Friends, and also a friend of James Madison with considerable influence in the affairs of government. The "Lady Madison" was 112 feet long, 450 tons.

The story is told that the "Lady Madison" was quite a bit overdue, and Jacob Barker was naturally rather disturbed, as she was not insured. At length, he went to an insurance agent, and, after explaining the situation, suggested the agent prepare a policy, but defer signing it, that is making the contract valid, for a few days. A short time later, Jacob Barker received a report that the "Lady Madison" was lost, so he called on the insurance agent, saying, "If thee has not signed the policy, thee need not do so as I have heard from my ship." The agent thought that he had heard the vessel was safe, and, being eager to collect the premium, which was a large one, he told Mr. Barker that he had already signed the policy. Mr. Barker paid the premium, pocketed the policy, and, as he turned to leave, he remarked, "Yes, I have heard from the 'Lady Madison;' she was lost on the Goodwin Sands." The agent eventually settled for one half the face value of the policy, I believe.

William Delano died in 1815, leaving his widow with seven children, three boys and four girls. For a time, Mrs. Delano was in rather straitened circumstances, so, she continued to keep store in the south wing of the house. But, later, she inherited a comfortable fortune from the Harts, who had been engaged in the China trade.

The three sons followed the shipbuilding trade, like their father, and they were all quite successful. William Hart Delano built in East Boston.

Of Note...

As part of their Preservation Program Series, the Hingham Historical Commission is sponsoring a "Sustainable Preservation" program about adaptive reuse of historic resources. Preservation Architect Jean Carroon will discuss how reuse benefits our environment, our economy and our society. This program is presented free of charge, but please RSVP to help manage seating. Call Andrea Young at 781-749-1492 or e-mail younga@hingham-ma.gov.

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE _____ NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP

Individual (\$15) _____ Business (\$40) _____

Family (\$25) _____ Life (\$200) _____

Benefactor (\$500) _____

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

AREAS OF INTEREST

Newsletter _____ Public Relations _____

Hospitality _____ Program Planning _____

Library Volunteer _____ Historical Research _____

Photo Cataloging _____ Process Archival _____
Material

Other: _____

REP. JOSEPH F. MERRITT: A POPULAR LEGISLATOR!

The following is a portion of Norwell Historical Society Archivist Bill Slattery's transcription of an article from The Rockland Standard of September 22, 1911. The article was titled "What Our Representatives Did."

Joseph F. Merritt: Alert, conscientious, energetic, unassuming, and possessed of a pleasing disposition which won him many friends, Rep. Joseph F. Merritt of Norwell, who looked after the interests of the second Plymouth district in the House of 1911, had all the qualities which go to make the ideal legislator. Elected as a Democrat from a strong Republican district, Rep. Merritt voted independently upon all matters of legislation and his record should commend him to his constituents as worthy of being in public office.

count on for their support of any piece of legislation in which he or his constituents were interested. He was appointed to the committee on towns and his clear sightedness and ability to get at the roots of a question was quickly shown with the result that he became one of the influential members of the committee, although but a first-year man.

In the way of local legislation, Rep. Merritt secured the passage of a bill authorizing the town of Marshfield



Joseph F. Merritt

to issue notes or bonds for the purpose of paying off certain outstanding debts amounting to \$20,000. Every measure affecting Plymouth county came in for Rep. Merritt's careful and undivided attention.

Rep. Merritt was recorded on every important measure that came before the legislature. He supported the Donahue resolutions in favor of the direct election of United States senators by the people; the federal income tax resolutions; the 54-hour bill for women and children, the initiative and referendum; the public opinion bill, the eight-hour bill, peaceful picketing, anti-injunction and various other labor measures.

Rep. Merritt was born in South Scituate, (now Norwell) July 26, 1872. He is a graduate of the Derby Academy at Hingham. He has served his town as town clerk for eight years and as treasurer two years. He is a member of A.F.A.M. [Masons]. *[Editor's Note: Did Rep. Merritt's mother write this flattering article? One has to wonder!]*

Popularity counts for a great deal on Beacon Hill and in this respect there were few members of the legislature of 1911 who had anything on the representative from Norwell. He made a host of friends in both branches whom he could

TRIVIA QUESTION: 2013 is the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War. How many South Scituate (Norwell) veterans are memorialized on the Civil War Monument on the Common?

ANSWER: in the next issue! OR... Read Chapter 7 in Sam Olson's *A Narrative of South Scituate & Norwell: 1849-1963, Remembering Its Past and the World Around It* to find out the answer right now!

Trivia Corner



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 **STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL**
SUNDAY, JUNE 9TH
AT THE JACOBS FARMHOUSE



**Perry and Mary Frances outside
 32 Winter Street in 1937**

The Life & Legacy of

*Mary
 Osborn
 Knapp*

An Estate Auction
 by Caddigan Auctioneers
www.caddiganauktioners.com

Saturday, June 22nd
 10:30 am

32 Winter Street
 Norwell

A preview of items
 will take place
 on premises at 3:00 pm
 on Friday, June 21st

A portion of the proceeds of
 this auction will benefit the
 Norwell Historical Society.

**NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 PUBLICATIONS (AN ABBREVIATED LIST...)**

THE ABCS OF NORWELL _____ \$10

by Gertrude Daneau

This coloring book is 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.

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.

A NARRATIVE OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL _____ \$20

by Samuel H. Olson

This book chronicles the life and times of our town from 1845-1963 through a collection of articles previously published in *The Norwell Mariner*.

HISTORY OF SOUTH SCITUATE-NORWELL _____ \$25

by Joseph Foster Merritt

A recently re-published history of the town to 1938. A unique narrative considered to be an invaluable account of Norwell prior to WWII.

All the above items are available at the NHS Library in the Middle School on Wed. & Thur. (2-3:00 p.m.) or you may call Gert Daneau at 781-659-2226, 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.