



December 2012

Newsletter

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 693

NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

WWW.NORWELLHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

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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--Route 123) is open on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 to 3:30 during the school year, and from 10:00 to noon during the summer.

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.

A REVERED NEW ENGLAND HOLIDAY REMEMBERED BY A SOUTH SCITUATE CLERIC

By Samuel Olson

In reading Governor William Bradford's journal entries compiled in his *History of Plymouth Plantation*, one might note that December 25th was just another work day. The Puritan Separatists, only beginning in the 19th century referred to as Pilgrims, felt that Christmas practices smacked of papist idolatry and pagan customs. In fact, Christmas was banned in Massachusetts by the religious/political authorities.

The holiday one associates with the "Pilgrim Fathers" is Thanksgiving—first celebrated at Plymouth in 1621 by the forefathers and their native guests in gratitude for the gift of survival and a bountiful harvest. Over the succeeding years, Thanksgiving would be proclaimed periodically for these and other blessings such as deliverance from a small pox plague.

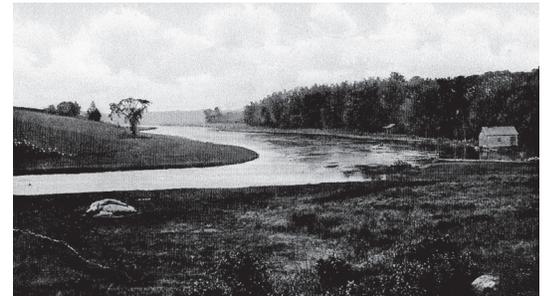
By the first quarter of the 19th century, Puritan influence in New England was waning. By the 1830s, the Puritan theocracy in the Bay State no longer received tax support as the established religion. The descendants of the Puritan settlers now referred to themselves as trinitarian Congregationalists.

But the holiday we associate with the Pilgrims first became a national one in 1863. President Lincoln, at the bequest of *Ladies Book* editor Sarah Josepha Hale, called for a national day of thanksgiving for the last Thursday in November in gratitude for the Union victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

In 1939 and 1940, President Roosevelt defied tradition by declaring the third

Thursday as Thanksgiving thinking an earlier date would result in earlier Christmas buying in a nation still beset by economic woes. The resulting outrage over what many felt was a virtual sacrilege resulted in a return to the fourth Thursday thereafter.

A charming description of an early 19th century Thanksgiving full of



An old postcard depicting Block House Shipyard on the North River—this is near the site of Rev. Tilden's boyhood home.

family love and warmth appears in the autobiography of Rev. William Phillips Tilden (of South Scituate/Norwell), which was published posthumously in 1890.

It is Thanksgiving week, and the merry sounds of the ship saw, axe and maul are heard: the strokes all the quicker and the music all the sweeter for the thoughts of Thanksgiving and home joys that give vigor to the blows and hope to the heart.

But I must take you into the house, our home! It belongs to us all, just as all true homes do. We will go in at the end door, we seldom used the front one. We enter a long spacious kitchen with painted floor, large open

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ALONG THE NORTH RIVER

Editor's Note: The following is the third 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.

In contrast to the "Columbia," the privateer, "Grand Turk," was a money maker. This vessel was built by Thomas Barstow at the Two Oaks Yard in Hanover on land now owned by Edmund Q. Sylvester, a short distance down the river from the bridge. The owner, Elias Hasket Derby, of Salem, paid for her principally with rum and butter, both commodities being much in demand in 1781. In a little over a year, the "Grand Turk" had captured sixteen British vessels [privateering during the Revolution], which not only paid for her cost but also earned a considerable fortune for her owner and the crew. She seems to have been built under a lucky star, for after hostilities ceased, she made a number of profitable trips to the West Indies, also sailing to St. Helena, which at that time was a port of considerable importance. There, she was the first vessel to display the stars and stripes.

Two years before the "Columbia" sailed on her first trip to the Northwest coast, the "Grand Turk" headed for Canton, China, being the first vessel from New England to enter that far-off port. In commemoration of this event, the Chinese merchant, Pinqua, who took charge of the cargo, gave the captain, Ebenezer West, a huge punch bowl to be presented to Mr. Derby, the owner of the "Grand Turk." It is a beautiful thing with a picture of this North River vessel on the side, and, also inside, as you may see for yourself, if you visit the Peabody Museum in Salem, where it is displayed in a special case.



Punchbowl on display at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. The bowl depicts the ship "Grand Turk" which was built on the North River.

A short distance down river from Two Oaks Yard, on the Pembroke side, near Dr. Low's house, is the site of the Brick Kiln yard, which Ichabod Thomas built about the time of the Revolution.

His principal customer seems to have been the Friend [Quaker], William Rotch, of Nantucket, who was engaged in the whaling industry. One vessel Ichabod Thomas built here for William Rotch was the

"Beaver," which, in 1773, sailed from London with a cargo of tea. When the ship arrived in Boston harbor, naturally, the patriots were much disturbed, since, at that time, the tax on this commodity was quite a subject of annoyance. Shortly after the "Beaver," the "Dartmouth" and "Eleanor," also owned by William Rotch, arrived with more tea. There were mass meetings in the Old South Meetinghouse in an attempt to have the ships sent back to London without landing the tea, but the Royal Governor [Thomas Hutchinson] refused clearance to the ships, and, after about three weeks of fruitless negotiations, the patriots took matters into their own hands, and, in the early evening of December 16, 1773, took part in the most famous tea party of history. So, again, a North River built vessel played a part in an interesting episode of our nation's history. After that exciting interlude, all three ships resumed their customary activity of whale fishing, but it has been said that the London firm which owned the tea still carries that item on their books! That is true British conservation for you.

Another whaler built at the Brick Kiln yard for the Rotch family was the "Bedford," which was the first Yankee vessel to enter the port of London after the Revolution, and display the flag of the new nation. There was considerable excitement, when the "Bedford" appeared with a cargo of whale oil, which doubtless brought a huge price. One of the crew, a hunchback, was walking about the docks when a Britisher taunted him by asking what he had on his back. Quick as a flash, he replied, "Bunker Hill, be damned to you, will you mount?"

Ichabod Thomas built the "Maria" also for William Rotch, and, this ship was in actual service for ninety years, a remarkable tribute to the skill of the builder, and the quality of the oak planking. The "Maria" was quite speedy for her day, and once made the passage from Nantucket to Dover, England in twenty-one days. She, too, was used in the whaling industry, and is said to have earned \$250,000 for her owners. Later, she was sold, and continued her career under the flag of Chile. Captain Mooers, who was in command of the "Bedford" on her epoch making trip to England, was the master of the "Maria," and, a story is told that one time he was forcing the "Maria" with all sails set, perhaps the time she made the record trip. The owner, Mr. Rotch, with some friends, were passengers, and, they found it most uncomfortable in the cabin as the "Maria" forged her way through the sea.

At last, Mr. Rotch climbed the companionway and addressed the master thus, "Captain Mooers, it would be more conducive to our comfort if thee would shorten sail."

The request did not have the desired effect, however, for Captain Mooers replied, "Mr. Rotch, thee has the cabin, I have the deck."

NORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE _____ NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP

Individual (\$15) _____ Business (\$40) _____
Family (\$25) _____ Life (\$200) _____
Benefactor (\$500) _____

AREAS OF INTEREST

Newsletter _____ Public Relations _____
Hospitality _____ Program Planning _____
Library Volunteer _____ Historical Research _____
Photo Cataloging _____ Process Archival _____
Material _____
Other: _____

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

NEW ENGLAND HOLIDAY, CONT'D

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fireplace with brick oven one side, a good white oak back log, with backsticks to match, and fore stick to keep the white oak chips in place, which are laid on so as to invite the flame, all ablaze now with a cheery welcome. You see that beautiful woman in middle life, with a face as warm and genial as the blaze on the hearth, the presiding genius of the place. She is made for a queen, failing of it only because she was born in America. This is Mother, that is my own dear loving

Mother. That man about her age just coming in at the end door with a basket of chips on his arm, with a green baize jacket and sateen pants, that Mother made with her own hands, that is my father, and a smart fellow he is. He was not only a good carpenter, but a good shot, one of the best. The coots and ducks he used to bring home in the fall of the year made us children rejoice in view of the savory pot pies coming.



The Or' Riddler
Last Issue's Question: Mr. Turner, Property Manager at the Jacobs Farmhouse, thought he was pretty clever by rigging up his 3 barn lights so he could turn them on and off from the Farmhouse kitchen. He had one switch for each light, but he never knew which switch was for which barn light, and you cannot see the lights from the switches.
It was a cold winter night, and Mr. Turner wanted to make ONE trip out to the barn, and he wanted to



figure out once and for all which switch was for which light. What could Mr. Turner do to the switches so that he could walk out to the barn and be able to tell which switch was for which light (for all 3 lights) in one trip?
Answer: Mr. Turner must turn on 2 of the switches for long enough that the bulbs heat up, then he must shut one off. When he goes out to the barn, he will find that there will be 1 light on, 1 light off and cold, and 1 light off and warm.

at the **CHRISTMAS FARMHOUSE**

Sunday, December 9th
2:00-4:00 pm

The Norwell Historical Society will host its annual "Christmas at the Farmhouse" event at the Jacobs Homestead on the corner of Jacobs Land and Main Street. Everyone is invited to come and tour the house (decorated for the holidays!) and enjoy some hot cider and victuals. No RSVP is necessary—just drop in for a tour and a treat.



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CHRISTMAS AT THE FARMHOUSE DECEMBER 9, 2012

Of Note...

To follow up on the Annual Meeting topic, there is an upcoming lecture in Holyoke that may be of interest to Society members with old homes:

Energy Efficiency & Historic Preservation: Weighting Risks & Opportunities

A talk by Sally Zimmerman from Lexington, Massachusetts.

Saturday, December 1st at 11:00

Free admission, donations accepted

Location: GATEWAY CITY ARTS, 92 Race Street, Holyoke. www.gatewaycityarts.com

Questions? Contact Vitek at 413-539-0385

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. (1:30-3:30 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.

NORWELL YEARBOOKS NEEDED for the Society Library collection. Please consider donating a yearbook from the following years: pre-1927, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1968, 1978, 1981, 1983, 1988, 1989, or post-1990. Yearbooks are a popular research tool at the Library.