



NORTH SMITHFIELD HERITAGE ASSOCIATION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME I, ISSUE 10 ~ DECEMBER 2020

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Local Santas From the Past Make Headlines Today

This year, the local Valley Breeze on December 22 featured an article highlighting the stories of North Smithfield residents reminiscing about their parents' days as Santa Claus for a holiday feature in this newsletter. The children of Fred Carter (pictured here in his sleigh) and Newton and Sandra Whipple were quoted



in that article, sharing memories of those days when their parents brought joy to children and families over several decades, in North Smithfield and beyond.

Today, let's hear those stories in their own words. Thank you to the Carter and Whipple families for documenting your precious memories and for sharing them with us all. In addition, we wrap up 2020 and discuss our plans for next year's preservation efforts. Enjoy!

Visit us on Facebook for updates throughout the month.



DECEMBER SPOTLIGHT: NSHA ARTS & CULTURE PRESERVATION

NSHA recently began a new initiative to collect, preserve, and promote stories and artwork of local artists in all its forms. Each month, we plan to feature a story about a local artist, and we are asking for your help!

We featured our first story last month about renowned folk singer, David Rawlings, who had his start in the North Smithfield School music program. Michael Boday, retired North Smithfield music teacher, has begun to write a history of the program and will ask former students to write a short autobiographies. Mr. Boday also donated four picture albums of former music students who earned their third badge in the program. This month, read about the history of the NS music program, on page 12!

Recently-retired Judy Beauchemin has agreed to write a biography about her father, Edward Tenczar, who owned and operated a photography studio in town for at least a generation. Additionally, NSHA owns two oil paintings, of Thomas Dorr and local supporter Dr. Metcalf Marsh, as well as two more of 19th-century local officials. NSHA also recently collected two paintings by local artists, Beverly Caya and Elaine Demers Boucher. Mrs. Boucher during her life worked for the State of Rhode Island and for the North Smithfield School Department. She was a communicant of St. John the Evangelist Church in Slatersville and was a member of the Women's Club there. She was an avid painter and quilter. One of her oil paintings is shown here. Mrs. Boucher died in 2016 at the age of 91.



1995 Painting by
Elaine E. (Demers)
Boucher

NSHA endeavors to recognize other artists and craftspersons, former and current, who have a town connection. We ask for a short biography, a picture, and an example of their work, if possible. NSHA will display artwork in one of our public buildings. Contact nsha@nsheritageassn.com for more information.

Help Promote Local History

Please share this newsletter with family and friends! If you have questions or want to learn more, please contact us at nsha@nsheritageassn.com or call 401-447-6394. You can also help by liking and sharing our website and Facebook page! They contain a wealth of information about our local history, our organization and its many ongoing historic preservation activities. See page 5 for details.



SANTA CLAUSE aka FRED CARTER

From Helen Lavallee, daughter of Fred Carter:

“It is extremely difficult to find someone who loved Christmas more than our Dad. Once the internationally recognized ‘red suit’ was on, every ounce of his being transformed into Santa Claus. Our Mom, being an accomplished seamstress, lovingly took on the project of creating his official suit. She made sure it was ready for Dad to spread his holiday cheer, for the young and old alike, each Christmas season.

“Dad had a great sense of humor and it didn’t stop when he put on his Santa suit. We were still teenagers at the time, but before Santa went out the door he still somehow felt the need to give us his best ‘Ho, Ho, Ho.’ He would remind us every time that if you didn’t believe in Santa, he would not bring you any gifts. Being typical teens, we took the risk and responded with a roll of the eyes. Many of the town’s children were fortunate enough to have the ‘real’ Santa visit their homes during this incredibly magical time of the year. He especially enjoyed his trips around town. He would suit up, harness up the horses and hitch up the customized buggy to tour town and distribute candy. This brought him as much joy, as the joy he brought to local families. In later years, we really came to appreciate all of the time and effort he put into transforming into Santa and spreading Christmas cheer.

“It was truly one of his greatest pleasures in life. He continued his Santa visits until he passed in 1997. All of the Santa stories continue to be fondly told at our family holiday gatherings. Thanks for the memories Dad!

“Happy Holidays from the Carter Family.”





The Carters: Service and Sacrifice

NSHA notes that, born in Ayer, Massachusetts, on June 2, 1922, Fred Carter served in the United States Navy during World War II. His father, Frederick Weir Carter, born in 1894, had served in the United States Navy during World War I. Likewise, Fred's eldest son, Frederick Thomas Carter, born in 1946, served this country in Vietnam, making the ultimate sacrifice. He was killed in action in Long Khanh, South Vietnam (now Dong Nai, Vietnam), on January 12, 1967, at the age of 20.



PFC Frederick Thomas
Carter, 1946-1967



Stay in the Know About NSHA

You can help to preserve our town's history by liking and sharing our page on Facebook and by being a frequent visitor to our website! Those pages contain new information about our local history, our organization, and our many ongoing historic preservation activities.



Visit the New NSHA Website at this link:
<https://www.nsheritageassn.org/>





SANTA & MRS. CLAUSE aka THE WHIPPLES

*Santa must be very happy in the pleasure he has given others.
He seems to have discovered that the best way to be happy
Is to make others so: that the best way to get is to give;
that life itself means service.*

*So when I give my Christmas gifts I know that, like Santa Claus,
I shall receive a greater blessing than those to whom I send them.*

—Edwin Osgood Grover



*From Debra Whipple Malcolm and
Scott Newton Whipple:*

“In the beginning, when the kitchen reeked of hairspray, we knew it was a night out for Santa and Mrs. Claus. At that time, Newt and Sandy Whipple were in their late thirties and faced some significant challenges when they decided to answer the calling. Newt sported a full beard but it was still quite dark due to his age. Wearing a wig to cover her dark hair would be an easy solution for Mrs. Claus, but coloring a full beard from black to white was a formidable challenge.

“Since a real beard reinforced the believability of Santa, they decided to go the silver-tinted hairspray route. The hairspray proved to be smelly and messy but it was effective. Mrs. Claus wore a sprayed-silver wig to complete the illusion and to visually unite them. She was fond of matching Newt in everyday life. They frequently wore matching shirts (despite the discouragement of their children) so matching as The Clauses brought them even more joy which they gleefully shared. Mrs. Claus consistently carried a giant open picnic basket loaded with miniature candy canes as a reward for good little girls and boys.

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“Unless memory fails, their very first appearance was at a school function at Woonsocket High School. The school was struggling to find an available Santa but Mrs. Whipple, who also happened to teach business at the school, knew someone who ‘fit the bill’ – her amiable and kind-hearted husband. Of course, he agreed and they started what would become a lifelong tradition. Their sparkling eyes and easy smiles were infectious and spurred on numerous additional requests.

“Within a couple of years, their calendar was filled every Holiday Season with multiple events including school concerts in North Smithfield and Woonsocket, tree lightings at Slatersville Congregational Church, and appearances at Primrose Fire Station – which included an arrival riding atop a fire engine, and making rounds from classroom-to-classroom to spread good cheer and holiday spirit throughout many local school systems.

“As his children, we were grateful not only for the good fortune of having kind, generous parents but also for only being asked to play elves a handful of times. Dressing as an elf only became fashionable with the cosplay associated with The Lord of the Rings trilogy. As kids in the 70s, we did not share their enthusiasm for the North Pole characters.

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“Through nearly two decades, they would annually spread Holiday cheer during the season while the necessity of silver hairspray diminished as Santa and Mrs. Clause embraced the grey. Public appearances multiplied and popularity increased due to their reputation as authentically kind, understanding, and forgiving people... exactly the characteristics, we expect from The Clauses. With the lightening of their hair, their suits also improved and became richer and more authentic over the years.

“After Sandy’s unexpected death in 1989 at the unfair age of 44, Newton doubled-down on his commitment to Santa by creating a scholarship fund in his late wife’s name and donating all proceeds from Santa appearances to increase the base-funding for those scholarships.

“For 30 years following Sandy’s passing, Newt continued to warm the hearts of children and adults with countless appearances and a solid commitment to his alter ego, Santa Claus. His beard continued to lighten into the bright white we grew accustomed to seeing in his later years, and his compassion and empathy seemed to grow stronger with each passing year following the death of his beloved. His hugs grew tighter and warmer.



“Most families in Northern RI have at least one photo of Santa in their family albums. Multi-generational photos and stories of parents sitting, as children, on the same lap as their own children, became commonplace.

“In early December of 2017, Newt and his family faced the heartbreaking news of stage-four bone cancer. Through a hard fought and brave battle, he continued with his Santa commitments. One of his final appearances was witnessed by Principal Debra Malcolm at JJM Cumberland Hill Elementary School. Without hesitation, Newt welcomed and encouraged the students to share their Christmas wishes as they sat upon his remarkably strong knee. If he was experiencing any pain, it did not show. Bringing joy to children was one of the final acts of kindness Newt experienced prior to his passing.

“In our lives, we were blessed with caring, giving, and humorous parents who consistently opened their lives and hearts to everyone they encountered both in and out of their holiday personas. We were and will always be blessed to have called them ‘Mom’ and ‘Dad.’ The Sandra H. Whipple Memorial Scholarship continues to annually impact the lives of young college-bound students.

“Wishing a very Merry Christmas to you and yours.”



Upcoming Events

Be sure to like our Facebook page to receive updates about upcoming events

Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021 ~ 9 a.m.
North Smithfield Heritage Hike
Harkness Conservation Area
Meet at Forestale Schoolhouse
190 School Street

~

Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2021 ~ 6:30 p.m.
NSHA Board Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
~ open to all members ~
Email nsha@nsheritageassn.org

~

Friday, Jan. 15, 2021 ~ 7 p.m.
*History Night: Native Plants
for New England Gardens*
Zoom Presentation
See NSHA website or Facebook page
for viewing information.

NSHA History Nights

NSHA Director of Programs Freya Hainley continues our monthly History Nights tradition by using virtual Zoom presentations. Visit the NSHA website “Programs and Events” tab for links to these presentations.

Freya will continue History Nights at 7 p.m. on the third Friday of every month. See the NSHA Facebook Page event for sign-in instructions.



View SLATERSVILLE
Thank You Video here:
<https://vimeo.com/220802775>

New SLATERSVILLE Work-In-Progress Screenings in 2021!

SCREENING #6 - The Museum of Work & Culture in Woonsocket, RI will be hosting SLATERSVILLE’s first screening of the year on the afternoon of Sunday, February 7, 2021. The title of this screening is Henry Plimpton Kendall: “They Will All Be My Friends.”

SCREENING #7 - For the first time, Slater Memorial Museum at Norwich Free Academy will host the screening of “The John Fox Side” on the afternoon of Wednesday, March 24, 2021.

Audiences will have the opportunity to view these screenings for a limited time. Vimeo links will be made available to the public for up to 3 days after the events. Details on event times and registration will be announced after the New Year.



NSHA Properties Update

Forestdale School (190 School Street)

NSHA Director of Preservation Jeff Harris continues to work with Architectural Preservation Group to restore the exterior of the school. Work temporarily halted due to snow. Workers will restore the exterior siding and trim as well as replace one of the front doors and the side door. We also hope to install an underground electrical service to the building once we receive two more quotes. Then we will turn our attention to the interior!



We continue to offer calendars, ornaments, maps, books and other items that reflect our local history. To make an appointment, contact Louise at 401-769-8177.



Heritage Hall (101 Green Street)

This building remains closed until the COVID crisis passes. The loss of rental revenues curtailed many of our preservation activities. However, revenues raised by membership dues, 2021 historic calendar, and ornament sales and donations will enable us to paint the hall ceiling and interior walls in the coming weeks.

Memorial Town Building (1 Main Street)

We sincerely thank Charlie Desmarais for donating enough new carpet tiles to replace the worn-out carpets in the former Planning Department spaces on the first floor. NSHA Director of Maintenance Charlie Dubois and his team of crackerjack assistants have completed renovations to the vault space as well as the office at the front of the building. They will now turn their attention to the middle office area. After they apply a fresh coat of paint to the walls and ceiling and install new carpet tiles, it will look as good as new. Next Saturday, we will move our archives from Heritage Hall into the vault. We can finally store our relics and artifacts in a climate-controlled space. Christian de Rezendes will soon film a video tour of the building that we'll post to our Facebook Page and website. Then we'll schedule an Open House followed by a virtual Zoom Meeting to receive feedback from the community about other possible uses.





HISTORIC CEMETERY OF THE MONTH: DARIUS MOWRY LOT

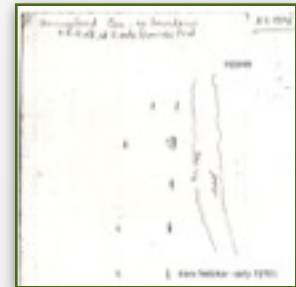
Thank you to Rich Keene for his work on this story.



Located in the backyard of 11 Pond House Road is the Darius Mowry Lot, marked as NS49 by the Rhode Island Historic Cemetery Commission, which now consists of just four visible gravestones. In past surveys, there were five field stones noted. The cemetery was transcribed by Irene Nebiker in early 1970s, and transcribed and registered by Roger Beaudry on March 2, 1997. One gravestone, probably Darius and Lydia Mowry's 21-year-old daughter Lydia (1819-1840), is inscribed. When NSHA inspected the lot in 2019, we could only see four stones. The homeowner had laid the stones down to protect them and to make it easier to mow around them.

Darius Mowry (1782-1850) was the son of Richard Mowry. Richard lived a short distance south on a farm located on the former Indian Planting Grounds, along the west bank of the Woonasquatucket River near present day Material Sand & Gravel on Greenville Road. He gave each of his sons a well-provisioned farm. A 1850 census indicates that Darius was a farmer. He and his wife, Lydia Colwell, are probably buried with fieldstone grave markers in the same lot.

Richard Mowry is buried in NS22, the Richard Mowry Lot, near his farmstead. The cemetery is fully enclosed with mostly inscribed gravestones. It's curious that Darius and his family weren't buried there.



Cemetery burial map of the Darius Mowry Lot created by Irene Nebiker in the early 1970s.

Register for Amazon Smile Today!

Want to help NSHA's work preserving historic cemeteries and other properties? NSHA is listed as a charity on Amazon Smile! Amazon will donate .05% of your eligible purchases to NSHA. Shop as you normally would at [amazonsmile.com](https://smile.amazon.com), choose NSHA as your charity, and NSHA will automatically receive a donation! If you are interested in joining, go to <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/51-0187598>





THE NORTH SMITHFIELD MUSIC DEPARTMENT

“Memories of past years”

by Michael J. Boday



MICHAEL J. BODAY B.S.
Band, Chorus, General
Music, Instrumental
Classes, Junior Chorus

Movement One – “The First Years”

With the opening of the North Smithfield Jr.-Sr High School in 1966, the music department was now established to address students in grades K-12. Alfred Lague and Gene Paquin were hired as co-directors. Their mandate was to create a superior music department with an emphasis on band. This plan was supported by the school administration, which scheduled the band classes first, and then all of the other classes. This schedule avoided any class conflicts, allowing all of the students seeking instrumental instruction to participate in band five days a week.



ALFRED LAGUE B.S., M.M.
Band, Chorus, General Music,
Instrumental Classes

At the elementary level (grades 5 & 6), Bill Gilbert (Concordia Music Co.) and Nado Pandolfi were in the process of starting a beginning instrumental program. Pandolfi departed (in about 1966?) to become music director at Ponagansett High School, and Gilbert departed (in 1968) when the members of the N.S. music department assumed the teaching of beginning instrumental classes.

When co-director Gene Paquin departed from the department, I was hired in August of 1968. Alfred Lague conducted my first interview, and I was introduced to the newly-hired high school principal, Wallace Whitelaw. (I believe the photos in this article are from the 1968-69 yearbook.)



Stay tuned for future stories about NS students who have pursued careers in music!



2020 Roll-up by NSHA President Rich Keene

“As crazy as 2020 has been, it’s still been a remarkably good year for historic preservation. Al Menard took charge of our archives and made significant progress towards digitizing all our documents and photos. Just as importantly, Sarah McConnell Dubois was able to preserve local history by promoting it in our newsletter. Current and former residents donated some amazing relicts and artifacts that we will save for future generations. Next year, we will apply for a grant to conserve our Thomas Dorr Flag, one of most valuable artifacts.

“We were able to finish the exterior restoration of Heritage Hall and begin restoration of the Forestdale Schoolhouse exterior. Most significantly, we were able to lease the Memorial Town Building from the Town, ensuring its preservation for years to come.

“Understandably, volunteer work has dropped off a bit but we’re still able to maintain the large and abandoned Hotchkiss Historic Cemetery on Smithfield Road, the cemeteries located in the vicinity of Sayles Hill Road, as well as a handful of others.

“Freya Hainley was able to continue our monthly History Nights by making them virtual. Our monthly History tours also attract interest from the community. Our Facebook Page, administered by Jen Bolduc, enjoys almost 800 followers. Our new website displays amazing content. Larry Smith and the Research Team made remarkable stone feature discoveries and diligently documented them.”

Historic Residence Tax Credit Ordinance

Have you heard the other exciting news from 2020? Recently, the Town Council made a serious commitment to preserve our surviving historic houses by passing the tax credit ordinance. The ordinance provides for a 20 percent tax credit for 5 years to eligible property owners for preservation work done to the exterior of their houses. Since current state enabling law gives the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) jurisdiction, the North Smithfield Historic District Commission (HDC) and Tax Assessor must coordinate with RIHPHC to establish the process to apply and administer the program. This will likely take some time. Interested property owners should contact the HDC for information about eligibility. Those outside of a local historic district can apply through them for individual property historic designation. In the meantime, we will ask the state legislature to amend the enabling law to give the HDC local jurisdiction.



Update on North Smithfield 150th Anniversary Celebration in 2021

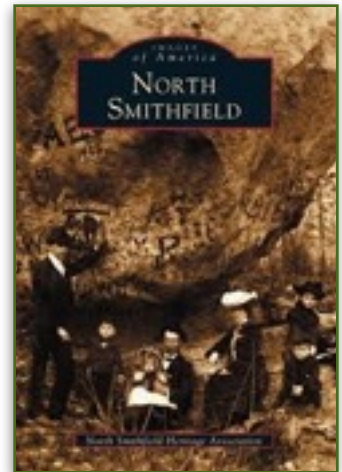
Despite COVID setbacks, planning continues for at least some events to celebrate North Smithfield's 150th Anniversary. School Superintendent Michael St. Jean's son, Jacob, has taken charge of writing a history of the town for the past 50 years. We're looking for pictures of local businesses and owners/workers, so please send them along if you have any.

Jody Lamoureux and Liz Keene will design a 150th anniversary Christmas ornament. Middle School students will create a time capsule. We plan to celebrate the town's 150th birthday in some fashion on March 24, 2021.

We need men to join the Brothers of the Brush! The group pledges not to shave for the entire year of 2021 (trims are okay) to mark the town's milestone. The year starts with burying a razor. The group meets monthly, virtually at first, and then in person when conditions allow. Join in whenever you can! Fun and frivolity is mandatory.

Likewise, we need women to join the (Sesqui)centennial Belles. Like the men, the group meets monthly, virtually at first, and in person when conditions allow. Fun and frivolity is also mandatory.

Stay tuned to our Facebook page and this newsletter for more information, and contact us with any ideas or artifacts in the meantime.



2021 Historic Calendar

Our beautiful 2021 Calendars are still available at Wright's Dairy Farm, L'il General Convenience Store (Great Road), Leeway Ace hardware, Village Paint Store (Slatersville Plaza) and the Forestdale School (by appointment, nsha@nsheritageassn.com or call 401-447-6394). The calendars only cost \$15. We will deliver locally for free or mail one out of state for an extra \$5 shipping cost. See further details on the next page. Thank you for your support!



Please Support Local Historic Preservation



North Smithfield Heritage Association

2021 Calendars

\$15



Created by local artists and published by
New England Image and Print.

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