



NORTH SMITHFIELD HERITAGE ASSOCIATION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME I, ISSUE 8 ~ OCTOBER 2020

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2021 NSHA Calendars on Sale Now!
- *October Spotlight:* Memorial Town Bldg
- Upcoming Events
- Amazon Smile
- Memorial Town Building Open House
- Historic Cemetery of the Month
- *A Poem* by William Wordsworth
- A View from the Clouds
- The Blackstone House
- Thank you, Members!
- Calendar Information
- Contact NSHA



NSHA 2021 Calendars: Celebrating the Town's 150th Anniversary

On sale now! NSHA is selling high-quality wall calendars as its final fundraiser of the year. All proceeds fund local volunteer historic preservation activities. NSHA members maintain three historic buildings: the 1877 Forestdale Schoolhouse on School Street; the 1897 Heritage Hall on Green Street; and the 1921 Memorial Town Building on Main Street. NSHA also works on restoring over 50 abandoned historic cemeteries, including hundreds of broken and fallen gravestones, and volunteers maintain a historic archive that contains hundreds of local artifacts, photographs, and papers.

This is the last chance of the year to help us preserve this town's amazing history. Our volunteers do the hard work, but they need your support. Each month of the calendar highlights a photograph of a historic building or location, with a short story and beautiful images taken by local photographers Michael St. Jean, Larry Smith, Christine Keene, and Aleksandra Norton.

This is the last year New England Image & Print will create these stunning calendars, as owner Judy Beauchemin plans to retire at the end of the year. Buy yours now locally for the low price of \$15; mail one for a \$5 shipping charge. Purchase your calendar at Wright's Dairy and Bakery on Woonsocket Hill Rd, Village Paint at the Slatersville Plaza, Li'l General Convenience Store on Great Road, and Leeway Ace Hardware Store on Great Road, and on Saturdays from 10am to 2pm at the Forestdale Schoolhouse. Contact nsha@nsheritageassn.com with questions. Thank you for your support!

Visit us on Facebook for updates throughout the month.



OCTOBER SPOTLIGHT: MEMORIAL TOWN BUILDING



Last month, NSHA happily announced the five-year lease with the town for the Memorial Town Building. “Commanding a view over the mills to the top of Tab[o]r Hill, and over the reservoir to the west, the building housed all town functions until the closing of the Bushee School allowed it to serve as an annex for some services.” *Images of America: North Smithfield* (2003). This month, let’s learn more about the Memorial Town Building from Walter Nebiker’s *The History of North Smithfield* (Somersworth, NH: New England History Press, 1976):

“The North Smithfield Town Hall, officially named the Memorial Town Building, was funded by and built on land given to the Town by Henry P. Kendall in 1921 as a memorial to the Town veterans who had fought in the World War.

“Kendall had purchased the mills and Slater Village in 1915 and was determined to improve the physical appearance of the village and general area giving it more of a New England look. Many houses in the Village were renovated, particularly those on Green Street along the Common where mill managers had resided. On the interior they were changed from four-family houses to one, and sometimes, two-family houses. Houses that were formerly “bare and identical” were altered sufficiently to give them individuality – doorways were changed, porticos and side porches were added, and arbors built before many of them. Other buildings were constructed, singly or in groups . . . including the centerpiece, the Town Hall.

“For the Town Hall, Kendall’s architect, William Walker, copied from examples of colonial architecture to create a brick, neo-Georgian structure with a colossal pillared pediment porch which he placed in the center of Slatersville, on high ground giving it a commanding view of the river and land beyond.

“To make room for the new Town Hall, an old landmark of the Village, the company boarding house and tavern was torn down. That building is believed to have been built as a boarding house in about 1806 when Almy, Brown and Slater built their first mill in the Village. The tavern was added soon after. The stagecoach between Providence and Worcester stopped at the tavern to change horses and allow passengers to get their dinner. In 1826 John Quincy Adams, then President, took dinner there. The price of the dinner then was 25 cents. Everything was served in quantity, a whole roast pig or turkey, or a big roast of beef, was placed on the table and the last one in had the seat at the head of the table and did the carving.”



Upcoming Events

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

Ongoing

Historic Cemetery Cleanup

See NSHA Facebook page for information.

~

Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2020 ~ 6:30 p.m.

NSHA Board Meeting

Zoom Video Conference

~ open to all members ~

Email nsha@nsheritageassn.org.

~

Saturday, November 14, 2020

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Memorial Town Building Open House

~open to the public~

~face coverings mandatory~

~

Saturdays through December 19

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Open House - Forestdale School

190 School Street, Forestdale

~open to the public~

~face coverings mandatory~



AN EASY WAY TO DONATE TO NSHA!

North Smithfield Heritage Association is now 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>





Memorial Town Building Open House



**Presented by the North Smithfield Heritage Association
Saturday, November 14th, 2020 – 10:00am to 2:00pm**

Please join us in a tour of the newly stewarded Memorial Town Building. See where North Smithfield's civic gears have turned for nearly 100 years. Built in 1921, this building will soon be celebrating its centennial. Take a brief survey following a tour. What will the next 100 years bring to this beautiful building?

(Masks and Social Distancing required at this event.)



HISTORIC CEMETERY OF THE MONTH: **FRIENDS CEMETERY & SMITHFIELD MEETING HOUSE**

The history of North Smithfield is tied to the history of the Smithfield Friends (Quaker) Meeting House, which is actually located in the City of Woonsocket. The first settlers in what was to become Union Village and Woonsocket were Quakers Richard Arnold and Samuel Comstock. In 1680, Richard built a sawmill on the Blackstone River in what later became Woonsocket. Samuel settled near Premisy Hill. In 1713, local Quakers purchased land for a cemetery near “the crossroads,” Great Road and the road to Chepachet/Hartford now known as Pound Hill.

In 1719, the Quakers built their first Church. Historic records show that Stephen Hopkins, Signer of the Declaration of Independence and subsequent Governor of Rhode Island, was removed from membership in the Smithfield Meeting for keeping a slave. Residents would not build another church to service Woonsocket and North Smithfield for over 100 years.



Until 1871, this church and cemetery along with the rest of Globe Village were part of the Town of Smithfield. On March 24, 1871, the towns of Lincoln and North Smithfield were created, and Globe Village was added to Woonsocket. The Meeting House was destroyed by fire in 1881 and rebuilt in 1883. The restored building still stands today.

Regrettably, the cemetery was abandoned and became badly overgrown.

Today, Woonsocket Historic Cemetery No. 11 is the oldest church cemetery in what was originally Smithfield. There are a total of 313 burials: 59 inscribed and 253 fieldstones. Members of many prominent North Smithfield families are interred there, including the Aldrich, Allen, Arnold, Mowry, Paine, Read, and Smith families. Despite the Quaker’s proclivity for non-violence, five Revolutionary War veterans lie interred in the burial grounds, including freed slave James Brayton and his wife Lucy, and Walter Allen, prominent builder of at least four historic houses in Union Village.

For the past 3 years, volunteers from Woonsocket and from NSHA, as well as community service workers, have labored to clear trees and brush from this ancient and abandoned historic cemetery. They are making steady progress despite nature’s persistent efforts to reclaim it. Travelers along Smithfield Road can readily see groups of inscribed gravestones. Those who care



to make a closer inspection will find rows upon rows of unmarked fieldstone markers. Stop and visit—on Smithfield Road across from Union Cemetery!



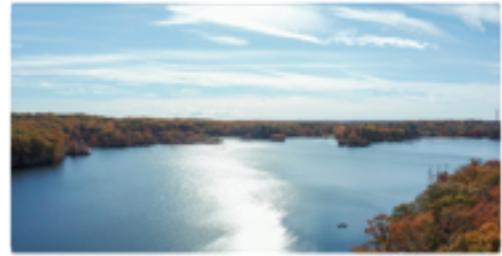
I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud *by William Wordsworth*

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.



A View From the Clouds

Last Friday, Mankato Saloio of Elevison Drone Services provided an aerial autumn tour of North Smithfield in a virtual live event.

You don't want to miss watching this awe-inspiring 3:25-minute video giving a birds-eye view of the spectacular Blackstone River at High Rocks Gorge, and a panoramic view of the Town of North Smithfield from Woonsocket Hill, the second highest elevation in Rhode Island.

Check out the drone footage at the below link. Enjoy!

<https://vimeo.com/471578293/294c4b00d2>





Recollections of the Blackstone House

By Michael G. Brizard - October 10, 2020

I was extremely fortunate in that I met her several times as a small boy while picking Blackberries in her yard. She often invited me into her home where she would give me some homemade bread and homemade jam. She was a short petit woman, almost frail in some respects, but very self-sufficient and independent. I was always told that she worked as a “domestic”.



The house built by James Brayton

Regarding her home, it was a simple 3 room house with a large kitchen area and two bedrooms. In front of the house, there was a sign that said it was built in 1796. If you entered her home from the front door (from Great Road), to the right side of the home were two bedrooms. There was a small fireplace to the left of the hallway with the two bedrooms on the right. Both bedrooms were heated by that single fireplace.

To the left of the front door was a single room with a small pantry. This would be the kitchen/dining area. This room was also heated by a fireplace. The fireplace from the bedroom and the kitchen was a dual sided fireplace with a single flue. The fireplace was larger than the bedroom side because it had bakers’ ovens on each side of the main fireplace. The kitchen area also had a set of stairs that went down to a small room she used to store vegetables and her canned goods. What we would call a root cellar. Eventually a coal chute was installed in this room when she went from burning wood to coal in the fireplaces.

Across from the front door was an unusually small staircase that went up to the attic. Attached to the back of the house was a small porch with a roof and a small storage area. Water was supplied from a hand dug well in the back yard. I do not remember her ever having running water in the house. Neither did she use electricity. There was no bathroom in the house. She used a three-seat outhouse attached to a small chicken house in the backyard up till the day she died.

Her property was bounded by 251 Great Road and Great Road and down to Cherry Brook on the backside. Eventually, Great Road was elevated in front of her house and a retaining wall was built to support construction of the road as well as the bridge. I suspect that this was done in conjunction with the Railroad when they laid their tracks and split her property in half. Just so you know, I was not born when this happened!

continued on next page



continued from page 7

If you go down by Cherry Brook, you can still see where some remnants of the walls and building foundations are still located. The last I remember is that she died at the age of 103 in Hospice St. Antoine. She would have been born around the time of the Civil War or shortly after. I have no knowledge if she was born in the south to slaves or always lived in the north.

Eventually, vandals broke into the home and destroyed or stole many of her possessions. There were numerous cases of small fires being set. Eventually, the home became a hazard, and a decision was made to let it burn to the ground.

In his book, *History of North Smithfield*, Walter Nebiker notes that James Brayton (1740-1801) was born in Newport to slave parents James Easton and Rose. When his father died, Rose was sold to Preserved Brayton in Rehoboth. Mrs. Brayton eventually convinced her husband to free all their slaves. They were all given money, the family name and the choice to leave or stay and work for pay.

James married Lucy Page in 1773 and subsequently served as a Private in COL Archibald Crary's Regiment of Infantry during the Revolutionary War. By 1777, James had moved his family to Union Village and built a house where 257 Great Road now stands. There they raised their family of two daughters. James and Lucy are both buried in the Friends (Quaker) Cemetery on Smithfield Road.

The Brayton House was passed along to subsequent generations of daughters and granddaughters until only two descendants, sisters Rebecca (1882-1959) and Ethyl Blackstone Lewis (1885-1965) were left. The NSHA book, *Images of America North Smithfield*, contains a photo of the Brayton House as well one with the two elderly Blackstone sisters. Sadly, the house was abandoned and after years of neglect, it was burned in the early 1970's.



Left:

The Blackstone sisters, Ethyl Lewis (left) and Rebecca Blackstone, whose great-great-grandfather was James Brayton. Photo taken in 1958 in the Brayton house on Great Road.



Members: Our Most Valuable Resource

We want to take time to thank our amazing members, without whom our town's history would vanish. The Officers and Committee Chairs invest an inordinate amount of time and energy to maintain our historic buildings, restore abandoned cemeteries, maintain the archives, raise money and conduct a growing series of events and activities. That does not diminish the importance of our other members that help in innumerable ways.

Just taking the time to become a member provides critical support. We derive 10% of our income from dues. Most importantly, our members allow us to keep our town's amazing history alive. Only knowledge and appreciation of our history will perpetuate its existence. Thank you to those members who are able to renew their dues during these difficult COVID times.

Those who want to join can do so in three ways:

1. In person: from 10am to 2pm, Saturdays at the Forestdale Schoolhouse.
2. PayPal: Log into your account and click on "**send money**" then type "**nsha@nsheritageassn.com**". Enter the amount, "\$20 for individual or \$40 for Family." Note "**Membership Dues**" as a note and then submit. Then send an email to the NSHA that provides your **contact information:**
name(s), mailing address, phones number(s) and email address(es)
3. Mail a check payable to "NSHA" to **P.O. Box 413, Slatersville, RI 02876**. Note "**Membership Dues**" on the memo line. Include a piece of paper with your contact information. **See 2. Above.**

*Thank you to all our members and prospective members
for your amazing 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.

CONTACT NSHA

Email: nsha@nsheritageassn.org ~ By Phone: (401) 477-6394

By Mail: PO Box 413, Slatersville, RI 02876

VISIT US AT

Website: www.nsheritageassn.org

Facebook: @northsmithfieldheritage