



# NORTH SMITHFIELD HERITAGE ASSOCIATION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume V Issue VI November/December 2024

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NORTH SMITHFIELD HERITAGE ASSN

## HOLIDAY SHOP

Get started on your holiday shopping with wonderful NSHA merchandise such as ornaments, hand crafted birdhouses, calendars, jigsaw puzzles, books, map, and cozy North Smithfield throws.

Stop by to enter the NS throw raffle!



Forestdale School, 190 School St  
November 16th, 10-3pm



*Join Us*

# NSHA Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner

6pm Friday, December 13, 2024

Heritage Hall  
101 Green Street  
Slatersville

All members welcome

Optional Yankee Swap  
for each member who brings a gift to  
exchange.



NSHA Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner, 6 pm on Friday, December 13 at Heritage Hall.  
**All members are welcome!!**





# NORTH SMITHFIELD HERITAGE CALENDAR 2025

\$10



Upper Slatersville Mill Pond - Victory Highway  
This is the most recent mill pond created by the upper dam on Main Street.  
-Image by Larry Smith

Available at the following locations: Wright's Dairy Farm, Village Point, Memorial Town Building,  
and the NSHA online Store [www.nsheritageassn.org](http://www.nsheritageassn.org)

NSHA 2025 calendars are available now!  
Purchase yours before they are gone.  
They make a great gift too!



# GET READY FOR **Spring** WITH DAFFODILS

Join the North Smithfield Heritage Association and your neighbors in planting our yards, street sides and public spaces with thousands of daffodils.

We have ordered yellow Dutch Master daffodils this year which are superb naturalizers. DutchMaster yellow daffodil bulbs packaged in 50 count bags. We're offering them to you at cost - \$20 per bag of 50.

Besides this modest outlay, you will have to plant them in a site that offers full sun or part shade. Most daffodils tolerate a range of soils but grow best in moderately fertile, well-drained soil that is moist during the growing season.

If you refrain from cutting the foliage until it naturally dies back, your daffodils will return year after year, offering an incredible return on your invested time and money.

If you'd like to donate a little extra, we'll use it to plant daffodils in public spaces.



\$20

Please contact Ann Lilley to order or questions  
at [jslilley@yahoo.com](mailto:jslilley@yahoo.com) or 401-556-0853





## Annual Appeal 2024



# COMMUNITY ANNUAL APPEAL

We rely on you to help preserve North Smithfield's amazing heritage!

## WAYS TO DONATE

- Scan QR codes for PayPal or Venmo
- Mail check payable to NSHA to P.O. Box 413, Slatersville, RI, 02876
- Drop off at the Memorial Town Building
- Call 401-447-6394 to arrange doorstep pickup



For any questions or inquiries please email:

[nsha@nsheritageassn.com](mailto:nsha@nsheritageassn.com)

or visit:

<https://www.nsheritageassn.org/>



**Make a 2024 donation!** Please help fund our preservation efforts. Renovations are underway on the second floor of the Memorial Town Building, one of Slatersville's most iconic historic buildings. When finished, it will become a museum and large group meeting room.

You may make a tax-deductible donation via mail, PayPal Giving Fund, or Venmo. Or you can simply drop off your donation or pay with a credit card at our headquarters at the Memorial Town Building, 1 Main St. during our weekday morning business hours:

Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10:00 am- 12:00 pm.

We will also pick up donations at your door!

**Any amount helps enormously!**



## Thank You



We thank Stanley Tree who helped to remove the remnant of an old fire escape ladder and to remove a damaged roller assembly from the top of the flag pole.

The team appreciates the opportunity to scan any photos or yearbooks from local schools that you may keep at home. Our oldest school newsletter dates back to the Kendall Dean School in 1946.



We thank Bob Mowry for cutting down several trees in the Smithfield Friends Cemetery on Smithfield Road. This is the oldest church cemetery in northern RI dating to 1713 when a member of the Arnold family donated the land to the Quaker Meeting House.

### *Your family photos and old letters contain our local heritage!*

Please allow us to scan them to maintain a digital copy in our archives.

**Important!** Too many wonderful photos get thrown away because younger generations don't know who is in them. Images of ancestors are then lost forever. Please write the names on the back of your photos of all the people photographed and the location if possible. Use a pencil as ink may damage photos.

Please contact us at [nsha@nsheritageassn.com](mailto:nsha@nsheritageassn.com) or call [401-376-2927](tel:401-376-2927)

The NSHA archives and the research center is open at the Memorial Town Building every Monday through Wednesday from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm. Stop by and visit or contact us to make an appointment to visit on another day.





## *From the Archives*

Eva May Robbins Pitts, first woman elected in North Smithfield

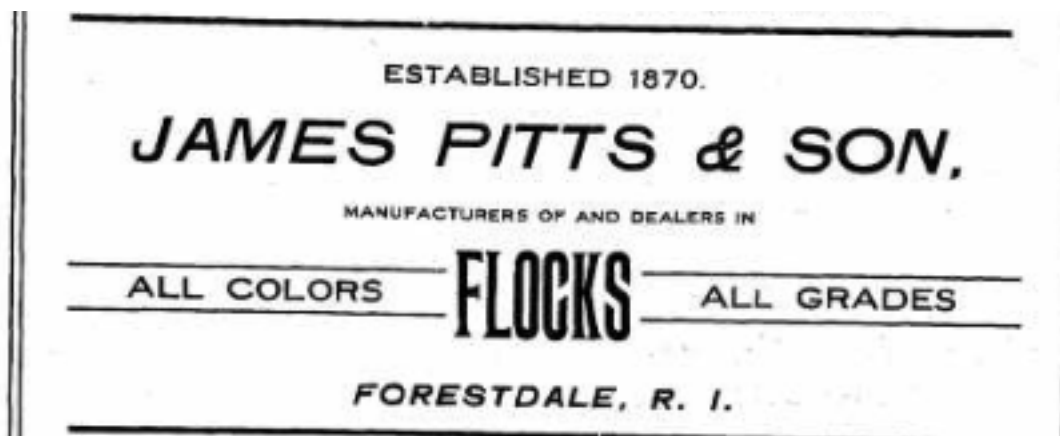
by Al Menard

The Women's Suffrage movement finally triumphed in 1920 when the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified. Women finally had the vote. However, a new challenge emerged: gaining election to public office. It was almost impossible for a woman to get elected to public office in the existing male-dominated sphere of partisan politics.

Nevertheless, in the same year Women's Suffrage was attained, a woman named Eva Pitts was elected to the North Smithfield School Committee. Although she had no children of her own, she was committed to community service and believed in the importance of good works. Little did she know that she was the first woman to be elected to a public office in North Smithfield!

Eva was born in Worcester, MA. in 1869. Her father was Henry Merrick Robbins. He was a shoemaker and a Civil War veteran. Her mother was Ann Flynn. We know little of Eva's early life. The only insight we have into Eva's character comes from her husband's obituary in the Providence Journal, which described her as "a lady of refinement and culture and takes deep interest in all good works."

In 1882 she married Frederick James Pitts from Blackstone, Ma. The couple settled in Branch Village, North Smithfield where Frederick's father, James Pitts, was a successful flock manufacturer. After the death of his father, Frederick continued to manage the mill, now known as "James Pitts & Son," until his own death at age fifty-five in 1913. In addition to being a successful manufacturer, Frederick had also been regarded as a leader in Republican politics. He served two terms as state senator, was on the town council for seven years and was elected town council president in 1900. He also held the position of president of the First National Bank at Slatersville.



Eva's father-in-law began the Flock manufacturing business in 1870. Her husband, Frederick became owner and ran the business until his death. This ad comes from the 1920 Burrillville Directory.



### *From the Archives*



Following the passage of the Presidential Suffrage Bill in 1917, this broadside notified Rhode Island women to register to vote for the next presidential election. It would be three more years before ratification of the 19th amendment. From the Russell DeSimone Collection

After the death of her husband, Eva moved to School St. in Forestdale. With her longstanding interest in community service and likely influenced by her husband's political legacy, she decided to run for a seat on the School Committee. In 1920, she successfully won a position on the School Committee. She was immediately appointed as chairperson and retained that position for the next nine years! During this time, she also owned and managed a large boarding house on Main St. in Slatersville.

In 1933, at the age of sixty-three, Eva tragically died from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. She was in her garage washing the interior windows of her automobile, which was running. She had opened the doors of the auto, but the garage door was closed. She succumbed to the fumes. Eva is buried alongside her husband and his parents in the stately Pitts family plot in Union Cemetery.

Today, we look back and salute this simple lady who, because of her dedication to community service and her compassionate nature, has earned the distinction of being the first woman elected to a political position in North Smithfield! Hurrah for Eva May Pitts!



The Pitts family plot at Union Cemetery, an elegant tribute to a successful family.





## *Fifty Years Ago*

The following 50 Years Ago story comes from the NSHA's July 1974 newsletter. The author, Walter A. Nebiker, presents his research into the name, "Woonsocket" and its many spellings and locations.

The Indian word "Woonsocket" has been spelled in a variety of ways and has been used to identify several places and structures for more than 300 years. Originally it was applied to Woonsocket Hill and the locality around the hill, including the present-day Union Village. Woonsocket was the name for that small crossroads hamlet until sometime in the early 19th century, when the name kept sliding down-hill to lodge in the valley of the Blackstone River at the falls.

Roger Williams is credited with first using the term in about 1660 when he suggested that "Niswosaket" and "Wayunckeke" (a locality in the northwestern part of present-day Smithfield) might afford, "...a comfortable plantation." In all deeds and early records to about 1720, all references to Woonsocket are applied to hill or land, except for a reference to the "Wainsocitt Cader Swamp" in 1680.

By 1720, the name was applied to an iron mill (Winsokett) which was first located at the falls of the Blackstone River. This is the first known reference to the term Woonsocket being applied to the locality of the falls. A 1733 deed from John Arnold to his son Anthony, refers to the falls, but, in 1736, another deed from John Arnold to son Anthony conveys property at "Wansocket" falls. The name was commonly applied to the falls throughout the 18th century and by the early 19th century, when the small settlement about the falls began to grow as industry developed, the name was applied to the village on the eastern, or Cumberland side of the river, which was referred to until the 1830's or so as Woonsocket Falls.

Thus, the name has not only changed its spelling, it has migrated from the top of a hill to a river valley. Since the name was not applied to the falls until 1736- some 76 years after it first appeared in print- the popular translation of Thunder Mist for Woonsocket is inconceivable.  
by Walter Nebiker.



**The Village of Woonsocket, 1870.**



## *NS Historic Cemeteries*



Little by little, volunteers are restoring Hotchkiss Cemetery to its pre-Victorian look and feel of more than two hundred years ago. Thank you to Lori Couture, Kathy Wilkins and Ed Walker for building and painting the fence. In the spring, pickets will be added.



Since the cooler weather has arrived, work has begun to re-set foot stones that have shifted over time. Kim Walker is preparing a firm base for this foot stone.



Many hands and a tripod make light work! Ed Walker gave pointers as Gayle O'Donnell, Mark Laprade and Kim Walker re-set three heavy pieces of this monument.

**Check out all of the cemetery restoration work on our NS Heritage Assn. Cemetery Group Facebook page.**





## *Historic Cemetery of the Month*

### The Smith-Harris Lot by Lynne Pelletier



Rhode Island Historic Cemetery NS 25, the Smith-Harris Lot, is located approximately 150 feet west of Providence Pike in a wooded area. The 25' x 25' cemetery is enclosed by granite posts with iron chains, however, there is no gate. The cemetery is fairly overgrown with brush and weeds. There may be as many as ten individuals buried here with burial dates ranging from 1851 to 1995.

Stephen Smith, known as Stephen Smith 2nd, was born in about 1802 to parents, Oliver Smith and Eleather Herendeen who married in 1777. Oliver was a Revolutionary War veteran who received a pension for service in Capt. Joseph Sprague's Company, Colonel Chad Brown's Regiment, Rhode Island Militia. Stephen married Mercilia Marvella Ballou on October 10, 1841 in Smithfield. Mercelia, who was born on October 18, 1825, was the daughter of Dennis Ballou and Mercy Tefft. Stephen and Mercilia had four children: David Irving, Stephen H, Horace Greely, and a daughter named Oreanna. Stephen Smith 2nd was a farmer who died of heart disease on March 16, 1877 at age 74. His wife, Mercelia died of "La Grippe" (flu) on August 26, 1899 at age 74.

Buried close by are: David Irving born April 6, 1842 and died September 21, 1851 at age 9, Stephen H. born March 5, 1848 and died October 21, 1865 of typhoid fever at age 17, and Horace Greely who was born on January 28, 1854 and died of diabetes at age 47 on May 31, 1901. Horace served the town of North Smithfield in the General Assembly and as a member of the town council.

Stephen and Mercelia's daughter Oreanna is not buried in the family cemetery but three of her children are buried with their grandparents. Eleather Harris was born to John A. Harris and Oreanna Smith in 1869. She died on December 23, 1886 of a stroke at age 17. A infant son, Stephen S. Smith, was born sometime in 1872 and later died on October 29, 1872 of meningitis. Finally, a second son, John Albert Harris Jr., who was born January 15, 1874 in Smithfield and died on March 5, 1950 in North Smithfield.

John Albert Harris Jr., married Martha Brown prior to 1907 and they had three children, John Brown Harris, Louise Wilson Harris, and Oreanna Ballou Harris. John Albert Harris Jr. served the town of North Smithfield as a town moderator and a member of the school committee.

The final two graves in the family belong to John Brown Harris who was born on September 4, 1907 and who died on February 4, 1995 at age 87. Anna Isabelle Tarmey was his wife and she was born in Woonsocket on January 10, 1907 to parents James Henry Tarmey and his wife Mary E Newman. John B and Anna had no children. John B. and his father, John Albert ran a dairy farm in town for many years.





## *Veterans Memorial Program*



### **Veterans Memorial Program**

The U.S. Flag will fly at the Memorial Town Building each month in honor of a deceased local veteran. The VFW and NSHA will conduct a brief flag-raising ceremony in honor of the veteran as well as publish a brief biography of the honoree's military service in the NSHA newsletter. Families can use the honored veteran's Memorial Flag or the VFW Flag. Family or friends may contact the NSHA to nominate a veteran.

### ***Research Team***

The Research Team continues to locate and document local colonial, indigenous and other historical stone features.

The Research Team generally meets at 6:00 pm at Heritage Hall on the second Friday of each month.

***Please contact NSHA or just show up if you'd like to participate!***

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Congratulations to team member Ron Lapierre who will succeed team member Harvey Buford as RI Coordinator for the New England Antiquities Research Association (NEARA). Harvey devoted many years to NEARA as the RI Coordinator and as President. We thank him for his dedicated service.

Ron shared the following video with us from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor:

*"A new documentary on the Whitin family was released on Friday. This 30-minute film tells the story of the Whitin family, their companies, and the village of Whitinsville. It follows this history from the late 1700s to the present while drawing in the perspectives of local historians, members of the Whitin family, and individuals from the Northbridge community."*

Here is the You Tube link : <https://youtu.be/s0tPdf6az14>







### ***Monthly Board Meeting***



The Board of Directors will meet at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at Heritage Hall, 101 Green Street. Members are welcome to attend in person or via Zoom. Zoom information is included in the email notification.

### ***Genealogy***

Would you like help to conduct research on your family tree?

Lynne Pelletier has extensive experience and access to several databases. Please contact [nsha@nsheritageassn.com](mailto:nsha@nsheritageassn.com) to coordinate an appointment.



### ***Ghosts and Paranormal Activity***



Kara Pessia, a local spiritual medium continues to help with spiritual research!

Have you heard about or seen a ghost in North Smithfield? We would like to document it! Anyone interested in joining the Paranormal Research Team please contact us at [nsha@nsheritageassn.com](mailto:nsha@nsheritageassn.com).



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*CHAIR LIFT ACCESSIBLE*



## ***Heritage Hall Rentals (101) Green Street***

***Rent the newly renovated upper and lower halls!***

Visit the NSHA website for a rental application and rules: <https://www.nsheritageassn.org/general-3>

Call Jeanne at (401) 447-1801 to make a reservation or send an email to [nsha@nsheritageassn.com](mailto:nsha@nsheritageassn.com)





## *Preservation and Restoration*

### *Memorial Town Building (1 Main Street)*



Second-floor renovations at the Memorial Town Building continue. APG started to strip the chair rail and baseboard trim. Once they stain the trim and apply two coats of polyurethane, they will start to paint the ceiling and walls in the main hall.

### *Forestdale School (190 School Street)*



**We need members to help open the Forestdale school to the public.** Please contact us if you can spare a couple of hours a month. Meanwhile, we will open the building by appointment



**We thank Mark and Charlie for replacing part of the Memorial Picket Fence at the Forestdale School.**



### *Heritage Hall ( 101 Green Street)*

Please contact Charlie Dubois at 401-741-8022 if you would like to help with routine maintenance!



## *Events and Activities*



**NSHA members enjoyed a Potluck BBQ lunch at Heritage Hall in September.**



**We thank our dedicated volunteers who helped make Spooky Spirits Night 2024 a resounding success!**



**The National Park Service conducted a Ranger Walk recently in the Slatersville Cemetery.**





SEASON TWO

NEW EPISODES



NOW STREAMING ON **tubi**

NEW



EPISODES

EPISODE 6  
**They Will All  
Be My Friends**

EPISODE 7  
**The War Years**

EPISODE 8  
**The Power  
of Nostalgia**





### *November/December Mystery Photo*



This mystery photo comes to us from the Forestdale Schoolhouse. It was found in a cabinet in the library. Can anyone identify this house? What was the occasion for the patriotic decorations? Was it the Fourth of July, Memorial Day or ? If you can help, please let us know!



Lucien Benoit gave us a clue to last month's mystery photo. He states: "The young lady on the right with her hands folded has a strong resemblance to Eleanor Peloquin. If it is Eleanor, the date would be about 1952."

If you can help identify anyone else please let us know!

The NSHA often receives photos without any type of identification which is why we post them here. Please help us to identify them for our archives!





### *NSHA Merchandise*

#### **NEW!! 2025 Calendars and Birdhouses!**

We offer a wide range of merchandise including calendars, books, maps, puzzles, ornaments and much more! Get 2024 calendars at a 50% discount.



View our entire inventory at the **NSHA On-line shop** at <https://www.nsheritageassn.org/shop>

### *NSHA Payment Options*

1. **PayPal Giving Fund:** search for [nsha@nsheritageassn.com](mailto:nsha@nsheritageassn.com), select “**Donation**” and type the purpose for the payment on the memo line.
2. **Venmo:** Open the Venmo app and search for North Smithfield Heritage Assn@NorthSmithfieldHeritageAssn. Tap on Pay, enter the dollar amount to be paid, and fill in the field what’s it for (ie., dues, merchandise, donation etc). Tap on Pay and select your payment method you have established in the Venmo app.
3. Give **cash or check**. Make checks payable to “NSHA”. Note “**Dues, Annual Appeal or Merchandise**” on the memo line.
4. **Mail Checks** to NS Heritage Assn, P.O. Box 413, Slatersville, RI 02876.
5. We will also pick up payments and deliver purchases at your door if you live locally. Contact [nsha@nsheritageassn.com](mailto:nsha@nsheritageassn.com) or call [401-376-2927](tel:401-376-2927).



### *The North Smithfield Heritage Association Fund*

Estate planning? Need to make a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA? Consider making a donation to this fund to avoid paying higher taxes. The RI Foundation manages the fund, helping it to grow every year. Annual disbursements fund the NSHA’s preservation activities and our town’s wonderful heritage.

Click on the link for more information:

<https://rifoundation.org/giving/funds?q=north+smithfield+heritage+&s=3>



## Outreach

~ We welcome new members: **Donna Kaehler, Marcel Labrecque, and Carolyn Faubert.**

~ We thank our wonderful members for their vital support! Our membership now stands at **175** including 42 life members and 6 students. Some members live as far away as NH, CA, WA and AR.

~Your \$20 annual dues help significantly to fund our local preservation activities. You can become a member by filling out an application found on our website:

<https://www.nsheritageassn.org/membership>

~We thank the members who joined or renewed this year! We will send an email notice to members who haven't renewed yet. Seniors over 75, high school students and full-time college students pay no dues. **If you are not sure of your status, please contact us.**

~You may pay membership dues online via the PayPal Giving Fund, or Venmo, by mail to P.O. Box 413, Slatersville, RI 02876 or in person on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings at the Memorial Town Building. You can also drop off a check in our mailbox in the rear of the Memorial Town Building.

### **You Can Help!!**

**Join:** Membership costs just \$20 each year!

**Volunteer:** Help with any of our ongoing activities and events. No need to make a steady commitment. We appreciate whatever time you can spend with us!

**Donate:** Our Annual Appeal runs all year long. We accept local artifacts. We appreciate whatever you give!

**Share:** Share this free newsletter with family and friends. Encourage them to subscribe. Only shared history can preserve our heritage!



**Instagram (nsha1970)**  
*Please follow us!*

**Instagram followers:294**

Visit our **Facebook Page** to learn about our events and activities. Get acquainted with some of our members and supporters. Like and share with friends and family!

[www.facebook.com/northsmithfieldheritage](http://www.facebook.com/northsmithfieldheritage)



**Facebook followers:1,422**

We thank Julie Tilley for making posts to all of our social media platforms,

We continue to see steady follower growth!

Website visitors: 275 site sessions in last 30 days.

**Visit our website! Read past newsletters, learn about our organization as well as our many ongoing historic preservation activities.** <https://www.nsheritageassn.org/>

**NSHA Newsletter Subscribers:1,535**

**To join our mailing list, simply contact us at [nsha@nsheritageassn.com](mailto:nsha@nsheritageassn.com) or [401-376-2927](tel:401-376-2927)**





## 2024 NSHA Calendar Sponsors

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*This newsletter is published by Lynne Pelletier. The editorial team includes Beth Faricy, Jody Lamoureux, Linda Rawlings, Al Menard and Rich Keene.*

*Please share this free newsletter with family and friends!!*