

## History of Barrowsville

# The History of Barrowsville

As Reported by George Faber Clarke  
and

Remembered by  
Jeannette Hudson, Philip Dion,  
Lucille Charette, Louise Marchant, Eloise  
Allard, Philip Stepanek and Mary Gonsalves

Presented by  
Janice Burkhart

This presentation concerns the History of Barrowsville. Some material has been taken from Rev. Clarke's *History of Norton* but it also contains information from people who have lived most of their lives in Barrowsville. They have related memories about growing up in the

village. Their stories are very interesting and nostalgic. Some details cannot be found in books but rather, they are recollections of how things were. We hope when you hear these stories you will be encouraged to add any other stories of the village that you might recall.

**POWER STREET**

**SO. WORCESTER STREET**

**BARROWS STREET**

**DEAN STREET**

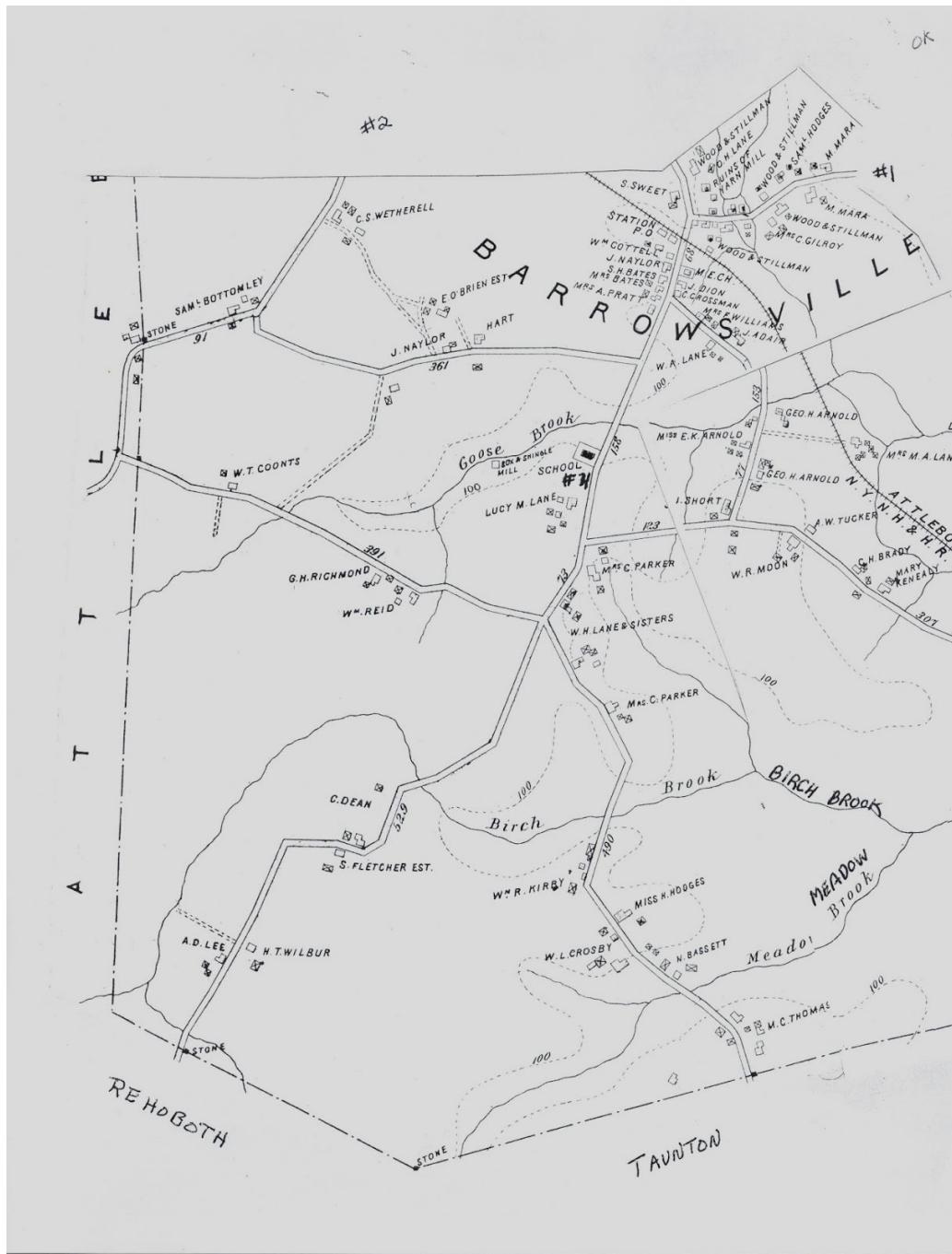
**HARVEY STREET**

**EAST HODGES STREET**

**WEST HODGES STREET**

For the purposes of this presentation, we have included parts of Barrows

Street, Power Street, South Worcester Street, Dean Street, Harvey Street, John Scott Boulevard, East Hodges Street and West Hodges Street.



Barrowsville is one of Norton's villages. It is adjacent to Chartley, Messengerville, Norton Furnace, Attleboro, and Rehoboth.

Although written documentation has not been found, it is thought that Barrowsville was named for one of the Barrows' families. We know that in 1833 Albert Barrows bought into the Norton Manufacturing Company and owned it for several years along with Samuel Crocker and Charles Richmond. Later, in 1844, The Wheaton Manufacturing Company was owned by Albert Barrows, Samuel B. King, and Laban M. Wheaton. It made cotton cloth and batting. These mills were located where Defiance Bleachery and later Tweave stood. We will continue to research how Barrowsville got its name in hopes that written documentation can be found, but for the time being, we will assume it was named for Albert Barrows.

## **Wading River**



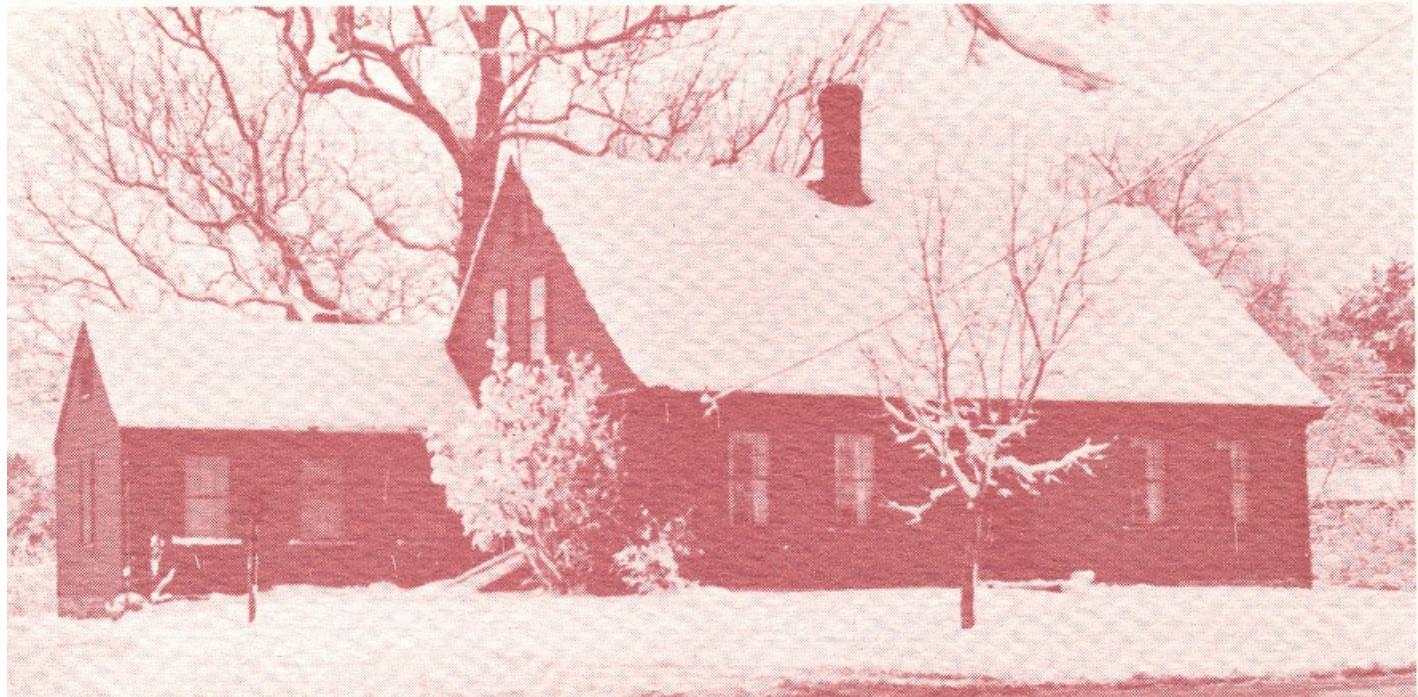
There was activity in the Barrowsville area prior to 1711 as you will see

later in the program when we discuss Thomas Braman's house. As early as 1711, there was a grist mill, a saw mill and a cotton mill all operating from the power supplied by the Wading River. These endeavors did provide employment for the families in the area.

In the 1850's, George Faber Clarke, in his *History of Norton*, describes Barrowsville in this way : It consists of about twenty-five houses, a store, a Wesleyan Methodist chapel and a large cotton factory. At least half of the population consists of foreigners. We think at the time he was referring to Irish folk but Barrowsville will continue to have a large immigrant population as you will see later in the program.

But, despite this early start, Barrowsville remained a small farming village. Most residents had backyard gardens and animals on their land, sold dairy products and produce, worked at one of the nearby mills or in establishments such as saw mills, forges, shingle mills, and the like.

### #1 Dean Street



We are fortunate that a few of the early Barrowsville dwellings exist to this day, some in better condition than others but there none the less.

Here are a few but not all of those old houses.

Number 1 Dean Street was built by Abiel Hodges in 1765.

## #1 Dean Street



It has been a farm, a blacksmith shop, a cooperage, a tavern, a stagecoach stop either on the Worcester run or the Rehoboth run, an antique shop and now an auto repair shop.

## Miville's House



The Miville's, a French-Canadian couple, lived in this house on Dean Street. It is remarkable because it was 1 of only two houses in Norton made of brick.

## 47 Dean Street



47- 49 Dean Street was one of the #4 schoolhouses. It was built in 1853 at a cost of \$1100.00. In our survey of old houses, it is reported that it was Norton's first two room schoolhouse but we are not certain that that is accurate. None of the written descriptions we have read supports that as being true. The first teacher was Miss Amelia O. Blanding of Rehoboth. It is now a private home.

## **78 Dean St**



78 Dean Street was built circa 1775 and was a Lane family house.

As long as we can remember, it has always had a big red barn. For many years there was also a very big St. Bernard dog named Buttons that let his owners know when someone was walking by. People stepped lively when passing the Red Barn House.

## Goose Brook Farm



Perhaps you will recognize the Goose Brook Farm. This home was built around 1700 by Thomas Braman years before Norton became a town. Thomas was a drummer in the French and Indian Wars and settled in the area in the late 1600s. For 230 years the house remained in the family, passing to direct descendants and close relatives. It was at one time used as a tavern and inn on the road to Rehoboth. The last family members to own the house were Abby and Ella Lane. One was a farmer, the other a seamstress. They died in the 1930s. Both were in their late 80s. At that time the house was very rustic with no plumbing, no electricity and no central heating.

The Nivens family purchased the house, did renovations and

established a nursery. The Best family lived in the house for a time.

Then the Congdon family bought the house and made more improvements. The current owners are Finnian Depont and Beverly Northam. We are so fortunate to still have this beautiful old house in town.

### Saw mill



This saw mill was on the property and remained active for many years. It is one of several small mills built along Goose Brook and powered by the force of the water.

## **186 Dean Street**



186 Dean Street is the site of the Sam Fletcher House. It was built in the 1700s.

## **250 South Worcester Street**



The George Hodges House is now the home of Richard Turgeon. It is located at 250 South Worcester Street. It was built sometime after 1770. The exact date has not been found. This property is beautifully kept and the wonderful gardens are a treat for the eyes.



George Hodges and his brother Jonathan Hodges, Jr. were children of Jonathan Hodges, Sr. who built and ran the first fulling mill in the town of Norton. It was located just down the road from George's house on the banks of Goose Brook. When Jonathan Sr. died, his son Jonathan, Jr. carried on the business. Jonathan, Jr. and George were descendants of Major Joseph Hodges who was in the Continental Army. George married

Phoebe Arnold on July 1, 1784. Older residents of Barrowsville will recall that until the 1940s, much of the land on both sides of South Worcester Street from The Goose Brook to John Scott Boulevard was still owned by the Arnold family.

The house changed hands many times until it was purchased in 1920 by Victor and Rose Bellavance.

## 255 South Worcester Street



Abbie and William Allen Lane lived in this farmhouse at 255 South Worcester Street. William was the brother of Abbie and Ella Lane who lived at Goose Brook Farm. He was a farmer who was quite active, serving on several town committees. He was also past master of the Grange.

In later years, the house was owned by Louis and Germaine

Champagne and is now owned by their daughter Louise and her husband Joe Ramos.

### **301 South Worcester Street**



This house at 301 South Worcester Street was built by the Arnold family. The Dion family bought the house from John Arnold. Mr. John Arnold was involved in many activities in the Barrowsville area. He had a small saw mill near the Goose Brook. He also ran an ice house on Arnold's pond which is now called Madden's pond.

### **Alma Dion**



The Dion family had 13 children. One of them, Alma, married a Joseph Brown and they moved to Pawtucket. In 1929 Alma became very ill. The Dions brought her home so they could nurse her, never suspecting that she had typhoid. As a result seven members of the family were hospitalized, three of them, Alma, her father and her grandfather with

fatal cases of typhoid. Philip Dion, one of our reporters, has lived in this house for more than 91 years.

## 114 East Hodges Street



114 East Hodges Street was known as the Seth Hodges House. Sometime before 1910, the property was sold to Yaacov Von Dreizenstock and his wife Esther. Yaacov was a Jewish pioneer farmer who began a commercial dairy operation at the site. In 1910, he sold the farm to his son-in-law Joseph Rubin and their daughter Ada Von Dreizenstock. The Von Dreizenstocks then began another farm about 4 miles down the road.

Joseph Rubin's farm consisted of 2 silos, a barn which could hold 30 cows, an ice house, a grain shed, and a milk house where the milk was

strained, cooled and bottled.

## Rubin Boys



Joseph Rubin's sons became well known in Norton. One son, Arthur Rubin, moved across the farm's meadow and started a very successful egg business in 1954. Their trucks boasted that they sold 100% hen laid eggs.

Louis Rubin became a very successful lawyer in town.

And of course we must mention Ralph Rubin who became a teacher and was a former President and Vice President of the Norton Historical Society. Louis Rubin's daughter, Ellen Ahern, also lived in the Rubin

Homestead for a while.

Alvin Rubin, son of Arthur, believes that the family may have been influenced to come to the area by the Fine family who were farmers in Attleboro.

## 96 East Hodges Street



96 East Hodges Street was built circa 1712 by Major Joseph Hodges, son of Elder Henry and Esther Gallup. Twice married, he had eight children. The house was built from wood cut in the cedar swamp and milled at his saw mill located there. He participated in the expedition to Cape Breton against the French and died there.



The home remained in the Hodges family until December 30, 1940 at which time it was sold to John F. Doherty who used it as a gambling establishment. Cock fights were held in the barn across the street.

The house was later owned by Homer Roy. The McAlpines are the current owners.

## Train depot



The first Post Office in Barrowsville was located in the old depot at the railroad crossing. The postmaster was S. H. Bates and he served from 1887- 1892.

## Freeman Farm



Henry S. Freeman was the second postmaster and served until 1915 assisted by his daughter Florence. The post office was located in the Freeman homestead on South Worcester Street.

## Barrows Street Post Office



From 1915 to 1920 Frank McGinn and his wife Mary operated the post office and had a general store on Barrows Street. In 1920, Joseph Bartley was appointed postmaster and served in that position until his death in 1953. His daughter Anna Shea was appointed Postmaster following her father's death and served until her retirement in 1972.

Now, receiving letters and packages at a post office is an everyday

event, but a country post office sometimes receives unusual items. Mrs. Shea used to receive boxes of baby chicks that had been ordered from Sears Roebuck! When they arrived, she would notify the owners who would come right over and pick them up. Good thing Sears didn't carry cows!

## Post Office Closing



Raymond Anderson was the last person to serve at the Barrowsville Post Office. The post office was closed at the end of 1972. With the closing, Barrowsville lost its zip code and maybe some of its identity.

Children couldn't wait until they had saved up a quarter and could take it to Mrs. Shea who would give them a stamp to paste into their bond book. When the book was full, she would give them a bond. Those were exciting days.

## #4 Schoolhouse



The number 4 schoolhouse served the children of Barrowsville. The first District 4 schoolhouse was erected for the district by Joseph Hodges in 1801 and cost a little less than \$200.00. Reverend Clarke reports that it was moved in 1838 and repairs were made to it. Finally in 1853, a new schoolhouse was erected on the same site.



Miss Amelia Blanding was the first school mistress in this new building. It still stands on Dean Street and, as mentioned earlier, is now a private home.

## New Barrowsville School



A new Barrowsville School was built in 1907 just down the road from the old # 4 schoolhouse.



There were four rooms in the new school. In 1925, when Jeanette Hudson and Philip Dion attended school, Grades 1,2 and 3 were taught by Miss Carp. Grades 4 and 5 were taught by Miss Cramer and 6, 7 and 8 were taught by Miss Hickey. The fourth room was used during bad weather as a recess room and a gym room during the winter months.



Of course, boys and girls were expected to use separate doors when entering the building. In those days, the restrooms were in the basement so you really did ask the teacher if you could go to the basement when Nature called.

When the town closed this school, it was occupied by a private school - The Hamilton Country Day School. This building burned down in the 1960s. Lion's Field, a Little League Field, now exists at this site.

## Ted's House



Some Barrowsville teachers boarded at Louise and Dan Dubuque's house. Mrs. Dubuque was a very neat housekeeper. When she made her bed she used a yard stick to smooth the covers and make sure everything was lined up straight and even.

## Aunt Rosie

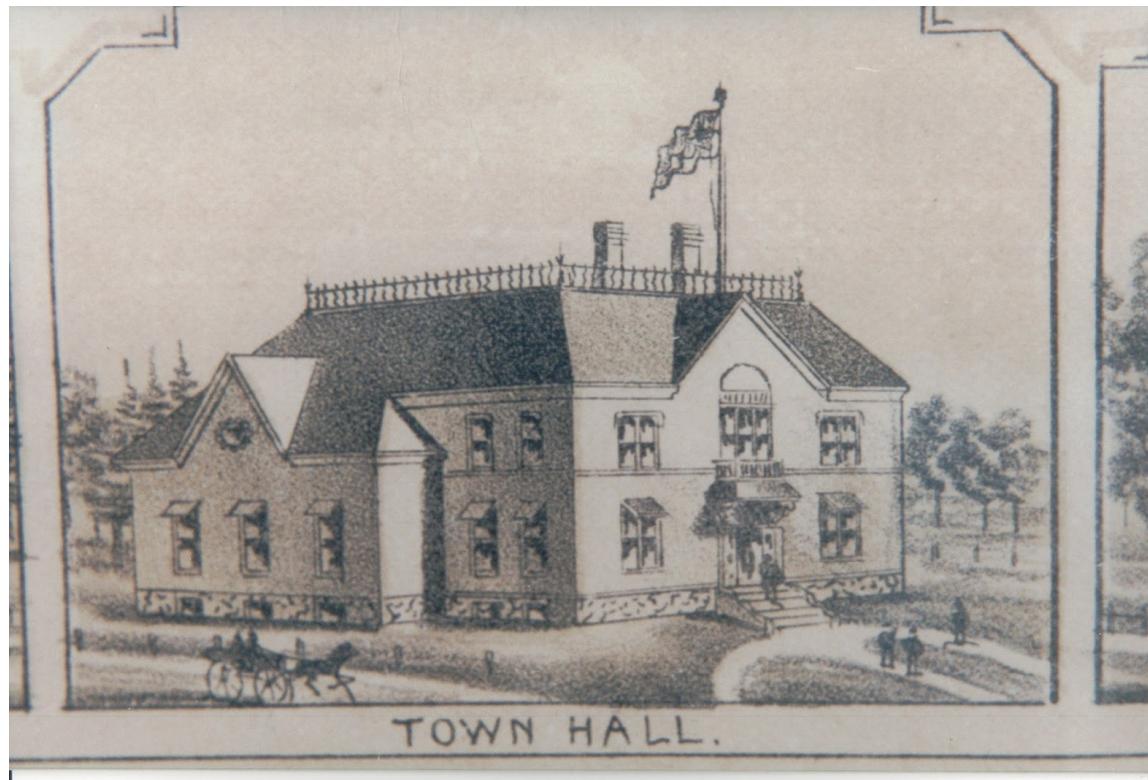


Almost everyone walked to school and came home for lunch. Since many of the fathers worked at Defiance Bleachery, the whole family

would have lunch together. Later a lunchroom was added to the school and a hot meal would be served to those who wanted it.

Rose Bellavance, known to every child in the village as Aunt Rosie, was the chief cook and bottle washer in the late 1940s and early 50s. She was so kind that all the children loved her. Rose Bellavance was a wonderful and remarkable woman. Unable to read or write, she was, nevertheless, a very smart person. She could knit, crochet, tat, braid rugs and hook rugs simply by looking at a finished piece. She couldn't read the pattern. She was a wonderful cook and could reproduce any recipe simply by tasting it. She baked wonderful bread, beautiful cakes and desserts and the most wonderful gullettes you would ever taste - all without a recipe. A favorite pastime was fishing for eels and horned pout (which she ate) in nearby Madden's pond.

## The Town Hall



The classes would occasionally have a minstrel show at Town Hall. Later, the classes would put on annual Spring shows which were held at the House in the Pines gym (our current Town Hall building.)

## **World War II**

During World War II, the children could buy stamps and bonds at the school. They also brought in metal. Lucille Charette recalls a large pile of scrap metal that had been collected. It was taken away to be used in projects that supported the war effort.



Sometimes convoys from Camp Myles Standish would come through the village. Soldiers would be posted at the intersections to stop traffic.



Seeing these trucks rolling through our sleepy village was really exciting.



The younger children didn't realize the significance of these trucks but

we are certain that their parents knew only too well what their presence meant.

## New Bus



Mr. Herbert Honey, who lived on East Hodges Street, had the first motorized school bus service in Norton which was started in 1924. When it was time to go to the High School, Mr. Honey would take the Barrowsville scholars to school in his bus - made from a 1 ton Chevy truck. Mr. Honey eventually bought a new bus and was very proud of it. When school started at what is now the Henri A. Yelle School, Mr. Honey was the Barrowsville bus driver. He was a most kindly

gentleman who was very reassuring to the children he transported to school. Williston Holbert, well-loved teacher and Principal, lived on Harvey Street.

## Charette boys



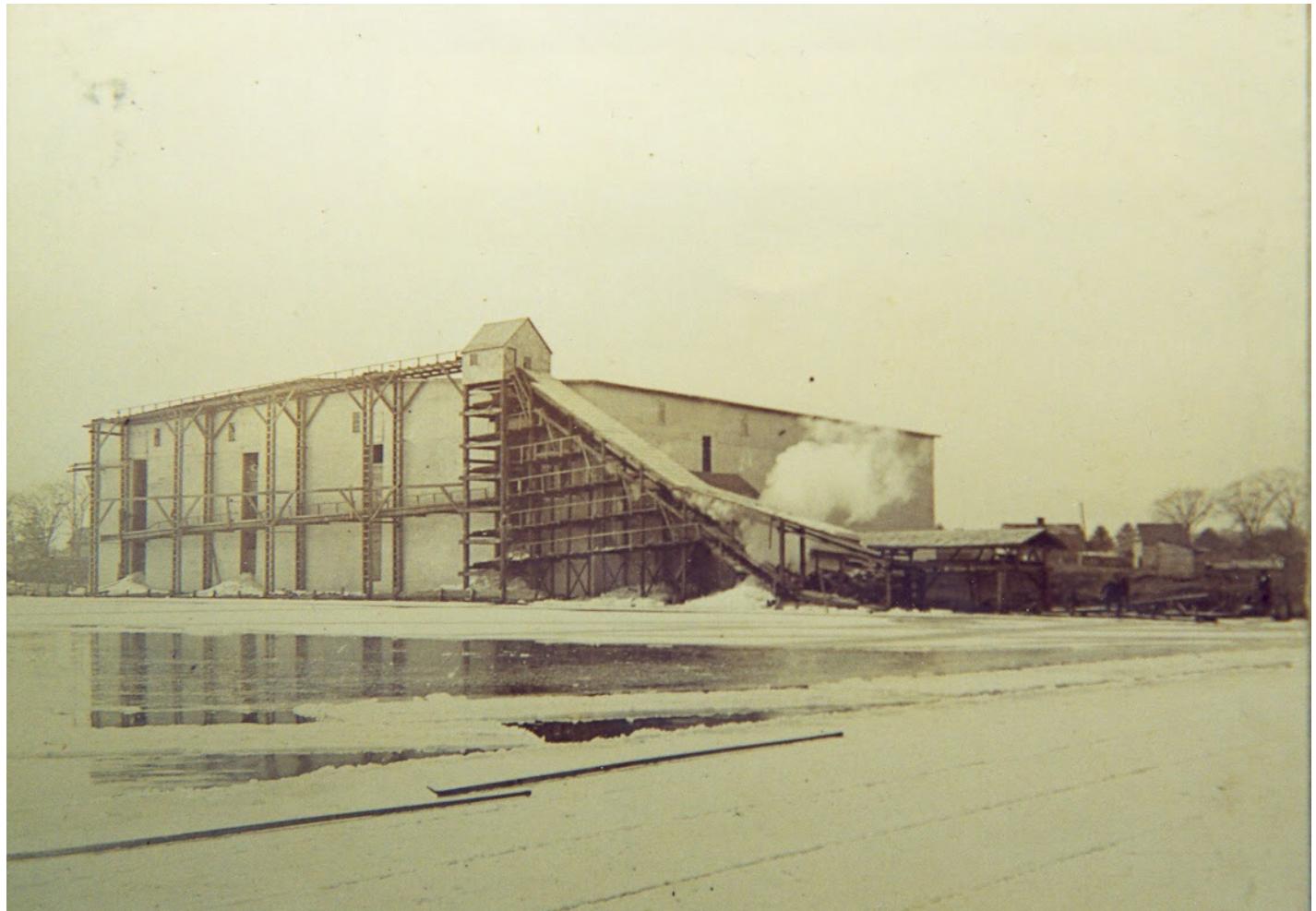
Around 1936, Norton had a polio epidemic. John Titus, Norman Charette, George Charette and Gerard “Stewie” Roberge, all of Barrowsville, were treated at Children's Hospital in Boston. It affected John’s legs, George’s jaw, Stewie’s arm and Norman’s leg. Not much was known about polio in those days and the community was cast into worry because no one knew how you got it. In the summer children were all told to stay out of the brooks and avoid crowds. Staying out of the brooks on a warm summer day was difficult but avoiding crowds in Barrowsville was quite easy to do.

## Foster House



This house on South Worcester Street belonged to a number of families. Ralph Foster, one owner, built beautiful model trains and all the buildings, trees and accessories that went with the trains. He was unbelievably talented. Another owner was Mrs Johanson. She lived here with her brother Tom who was blind. He walked to church everyday with his little dog. One day a car hit the little dog and killed it. The driver never stopped the car. People talked about that event for years.

## The Ice House



There were several ice houses in Barrowsville. The largest was located at Barrowsville Pond and was run by the Providence Ice Company. A railroad siding ran right up to the ice house. These tracks were still visible in the 1950s. You could see them peeking through the tar at the corner of South Worcester and Barrows Street.



The ice company played a big part in keeping Barrowsville pond clean because every spring and fall, they would use big rakes to pull out all of the weeds. They wanted their ice to be nice and clean. The weeds were carted over to Mr. Ulmer's fields near Austin Street and he would use them to enrich his land. This clean water encouraged fishing and the pond had bass, pickerel, eels, hornpout, perch and large turtles. Many people around the pond used the fish to supplement their diets. Later, as more chemicals, dye, potash and other industrial waste were dumped into the Wading River, the quality of the pond was greatly affected. Phil Stepanek tells of a large fish and turtle kill that occurred on the river between T. J. Holmes and the Power Street Bridge. How did it happen? We leave it to you to decide.



There were also ice houses at Arnold's Pond, now called Madden's Pond and on Dean Street where Davis' woodworking shop is now located. The Ice House at Arnold's pond was rather small. It only took three or four days to fill it. The ice was sold to the Chartley Ice Company. Philip Dion recalls working for the ice company. It was his job to lead the horses as they pulled the big blocks of ice to the ice house. The picture above illustrates how the ice was moved.

## Meeting House



A Wesleyan Methodist meeting house was built on South Worcester Street. In 1850, Reverend Solomon P. Snow became the minister. There were 10 members of the congregation - 4 of them Snows. It is interesting that in 1858 the Sunday School had sixty students and about 500 books.

The Wesleyan Methodists are different from regular Methodists. According to Reverend Clarke, they excluded from membership all slave holders and apologists for slavery and all distillers, dealers and drinkers of ardent spirits. Laity as well as ministry took part in the government of the church and the churches in different localities were distinct churches unto themselves.

In the 1900s, the meeting house stood as an abandoned building. Local

children loved to sneak into the building through a hole in its side. Our reporters remember that it had become a home for pigeons who had left a lot of deposits on the floor. Yet it was an intriguing place for the youngsters because there was an old piano in the building and they liked playing it. Of course the fact that they were forbidden to go there made the forays even more enticing.



Later the building was torn down and the lumber was used to build these garages on Dean Street. These garages later burned down.

## Ann Cobb's Bridge



Power Street has three points of interest. The first is Power Street Bridge which was originally known as Ann Cobb's bridge. Ann Cobb was thought to be a witch and in league with the Devil. Although no stories were ever revealed about her powers or the deeds she was supposed to have committed, her neighbors truly believed in her black arts. The unfortunate woman died in 1798.

## Bill Dunn's House



It seems there are other supernatural stories in Barrowsville. Louise Marchant reports that children on Barrows Street were afraid to walk past Bill Dunn's house because they were convinced that it was haunted and the ghosts would get them! The house is gone but Paul Helmreich now lives in the converted barn.

Alfred and Ernest Bellavance told us that as boys they would avoid Barrows Street in the evening because they were afraid of the loups-garous that lived in the woods. A loup-garou is a french term for a werewolf. Parents knew a perfect method for making sure their sons were home before dark!

And at least two families on Dean Street report that their old houses

have spirits living in them.

## Power Station



Power Street's second point of interest is the power station for which the street is named. This station made power to run the trolley cars. Water was taken from the pond and heated in big boilers fired by coal. The steam created was used to generate electricity. The hot water was deposited in a large cistern to cool it. Then it was directed back into the pond. It was closed in the early 1920s when power was purchased from the utility company.

After the station was abandoned, Mr. Bannon, mill owner, purchased the property for Defiance Bleachery. The Bleachery used the building to store paper and other odds and ends. An abandoned building invited vandalism then as it does today. The building became an eyesore.

Someone went into the building to remove the copper in the old wires. Sparks from the torch being used set the paper on fire and the building burned.

People then began to pick over what was left, mostly scrap metal, granite window sills and bricks. Philip Stepanek, as a child, would take the bricks, chip off the cement and sell them to a company in Attleboro.



There is a little bit of the Power Plant left on Power Street because the front steps on the Stepanek homestead are made from these old bricks.

## Stepanek saw mill



The Stepanek family also salvaged wood from the old barracks at Camp Myles Standish. They brought the wood home by the truck full. All the nails had to be removed of course.



Then they used the lumber to build Mr. Stepanek's saw mill



...and woodworking shop.

Just as an aside, Phil Stepanek mentioned that a Ukrainian settlement developed along a small section of Power Street and it numbered about 7 families. This would make an excellent future topic for research.

## Paille House



Armand Paille built this house on South Worcester Street in the same way. He shared a barrack with Joseph Brown who built a home on Barrows Street.



Janice Burkhart remembers removing those nails as a child. Her father paid her 1 cent for every 100 nails removed. Good pay for a kid as it was enough to buy herself a piece of bubble gum!!

## Norton Dairy Farm



The third point of interest on Power's Street involves the Gonsalves family. Daughter Mary tells us that when the family came to America from Madeira, their last name was Camara, but Mr. Gonsalves changed it. The Gonsalves owned a 29 acre dairy farm on South Worcester Street which extended down Power Street. It was called "Norton Dairy Farm." The farm had 27 cows, gardens, and orchards. Mr. Gonsalves sold the milk from the farm.

Mr. Gonsalves had many stone walls on his property. When St. Mary's Church was being built next door, he gathered up the stones from the farm and gave them to the church to be used in the foundation.

Mary reports that every Fall, gypsies camped on the big field next to the

house. Mrs. Gonsalves would give them food from her gardens and orchard. One day a gypsy woman told her that her sons would go to war but that they would all come home safely. That prediction came true. Gypsies also camped on Barrows Street near the home of Mrs. Dion.

Apparently, the farm was also a frequent stop for hobos who would come by and ask for a meal. Mrs. Gonsalves was, it seems, a very generous woman.



The Gonsalves also leased land to the baseball team. Baseball was very popular and Norton had a number of teams. This is a picture of the Defiance Team. One day, the team sent home three of the Gonsalves boys who had gone to watch them practice. They didn't want kids hanging around. So, when the lease came up for renewal, Mrs. Gonsalves refused to renew the lease.

In the 1950s, a large tract of the Gonsalves farm was developed into homes by Edward Gonsalves, one of Peter Gonsalves' sons. The streets of the development were named after Mr. Gonsalves' relatives. Peter Street was named for Mr. Gonsalves. Francis Street, Stephen Street and Michael Street were named for Mr. Gonsalves first three grandsons. This large tract of houses was the first such development in Barrowsville. It was a boon for the children in the area who made a beeline for the development at Halloween.

Mary Gonsalves still lives on the family farm and raises a few sheep. She spins the wool and makes her own yarn.

### **St. Mary's Church**



As stated by Rev. Clarke, many people in Barrowsville were foreigners. We believe, at the time, in the 1850s, he was speaking of Irish folks. As time went by, Barrowsville became home to a large group of French Canadians as well as Portuguese, Germans, Swedish, Ukrainians and other nationalities.

What was left unsaid is that many of these foreign people were also Catholic. They attended St. Mary's Church. The first St. Mary's was a small chapel located at the end of Barrows Street and built in 1864. At the time it was a mission of St. Mary's Church in Taunton. Later it became a Mission of Immaculate Conception Church in Taunton. Finally, in 1904, it became a mission church of St. Paul's in Oakland. People would walk to church, take a horse and wagon or even a trolley. Later in its life, the church building would be used as a church hall for dinners, whist parties and other functions. Up to the 1960s, boys would use the building to play basketball.



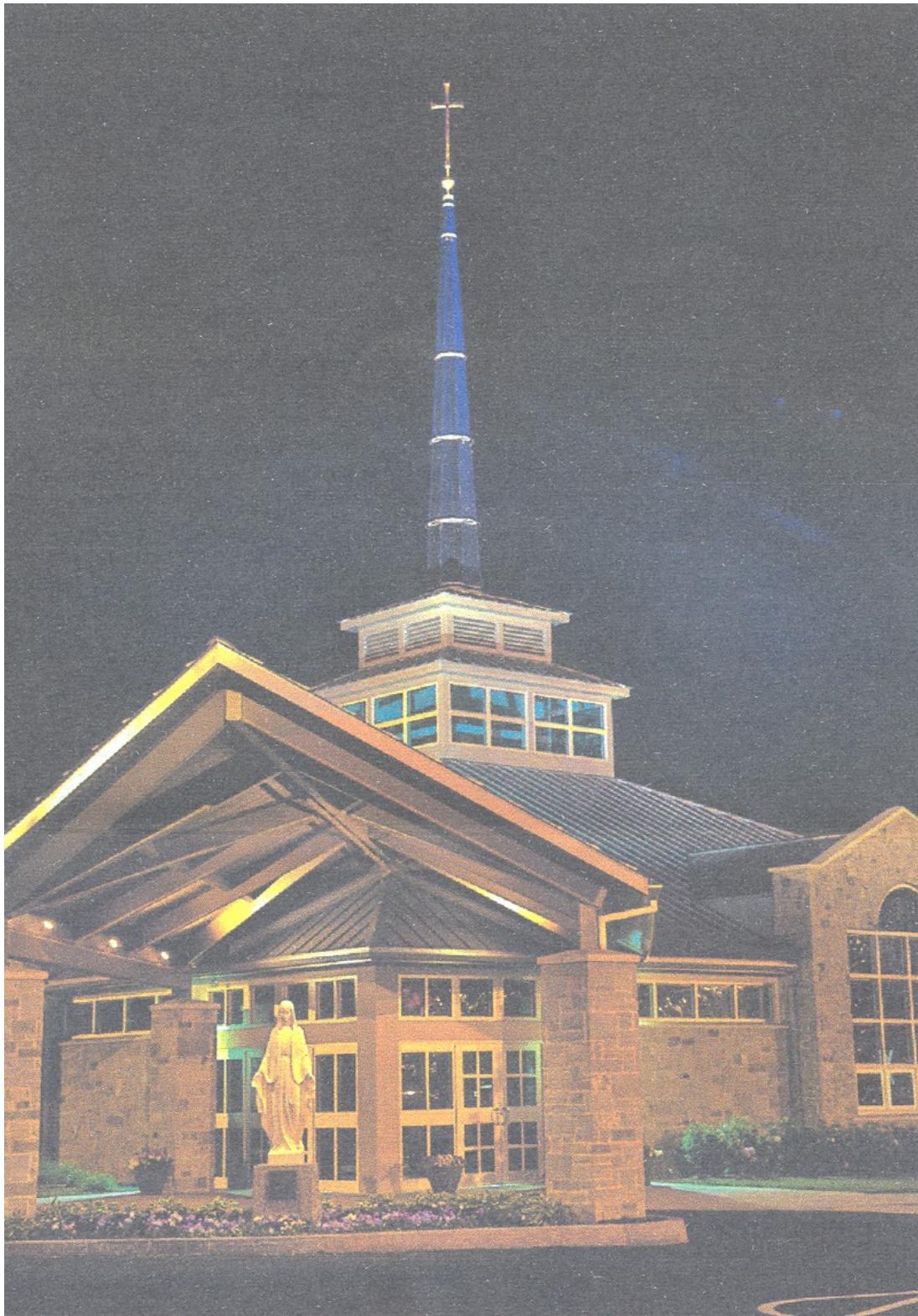
Father Fox was one of the priests who would come to the chapel and say Mass.



When the congregation became too large for the building, a new church was built on South Worcester Street on a piece of land sold to the diocese by Eugene Pike. This building was opened in 1924.



Father McNamara was the first priest assigned to the parish. Many of the French speaking people in Barrowsville were disappointed that an Irish priest, not a French priest, had been assigned to the new church but Father McNamara soon won everyone over. He was a very fine priest.



In 2010, a new St. Mary's Church was opened at 1 Power Street. This new building is quite beautiful and very comfortable. Many artifacts from the old church have been used in this new building. Father Marc

Tremblay was instrumental in building the new church.

## The Railroad



Barrowsville residents were very fortunate to have train access. From the Barrowsville station, residents were able to ride to Taunton or Attleboro and from those two cities they could travel on to other locations. Philip Dion's father traveled to Pawtucket every day where he built houses. Many villagers traveled to Attleboro where they were employed in various factories.



The village ladies and sometimes Wheaton girls would take the train to “the city” on Saturday and do some shopping. During the depression, when steam engines were in use, children would search the tracks for coal that had fallen off the coal cars.



The trains were a great convenience for the Barrowsville people but they also posed a danger. Mr. Tremblay, who owned a large dairy farm on East Hodges Street, stalled his truck going over the tracks in Barrowsville and was hit and killed by a train. Only a few months earlier, Mr. Trembley's assistant was killed in the same way. Also Ted Salley was hit crossing the tracks on his way to Island Farm. He had a number of children in the wagon he was pulling. His daughter had a serious leg wound and several of the other children were injured.

## **Island Farm**



Island Farm was a large island in the Wading River. It was originally owned by the Lane family. The last family to live in the house was a Coubron family. In the 1930s, they were scraping paint from the house before repainting it. They were using some type of torch to make the job easier when suddenly the house caught fire. It burned right to the ground.



For years people would walk on this land. There were lots of flowers such as lilac, iris, myrtle, lily-of-the valley and flowering bushes. The canal built to bring water to the copper works was visible. It was, by all accounts, a perfect, quiet spot to hike, walk your dog or ride your horse.



Now the land has been developed and holds a very large number of houses.

## Ted's Store



The railroad station on S. Worcester Street had a depot where you could buy tickets and a freight house. When the station closed, the two smaller buildings were turned into residences.

The freight office was moved down the road and became a convenience store run by Ted and Evelyn Mohr. It still remains at this location.

The people in Barrowsville also had access to bus transportation. The busses stopped at the corner of Barrows Street and South Worcester Streets.

This is all a far cry from today where you really need a car to get out of the village.

## Mr. Adair & Other Merchants



Various merchants serviced the Barrowsville neighborhood. Mr. Adair was a butcher. He had a meat wagon and peddled meat. His house on South Worcester Street was the last house on the street to receive town water.

# E. Boivin's Nation-Wide Service Grocers



48-50 Danforth St. Taunton, MA

June 8th 1938

Mr. Euclid Boivin had a grocery store at 50 Danforth Street in Taunton. It was called the National Grocery Store. Because he spoke French, many of the French families got their groceries from him as many of the French women had not learned to speak English very well. He would come to the village one day to collect the orders and would return the next day with the groceries. All of this would be done after the store had closed for the day. Since he would work well into the night, he was known as the midnight grocer.

His granddaughter said that in the early days they used a horse named Molly and a wagon to make their deliveries. Mr. Boivin and his son, also named Euclid, would say the rosary on the way home. If they fell asleep, the horse would keep going until he brought his passengers safely home. Molly would then stamp her feet until the men woke up and put her in the barn.



This old truck was called the St. Mary's express and was one of the early vehicles used by the Boivins.

People also ordered from the Cobb and Bates store in Taunton. Sort of an early "pea pod" service.



Mr. Mondor peddled fruit and Mr. Sears delivered fish.

A rag man would come by and collect rags and there was a dry goods store in the Honeymoon Hotel on South Worcester Street. This building got its name because it became the first home to many newly wed couples.

Mr. Bailly from Chartley delivered ice.



The Lane Brothers wet laundry would pick up laundry and deliver it back to families.

Philip Dion reports that Pop Davis would come by and pick up the garbage. He fed it to his pigs.



Henry Dion had a barber shop, convenience store and liquor store. He was widely known in the village as Uncle Henry. As you can see, he was a very patriotic veteran. Here is his store decorated for the nation's bicentennial celebration.



The store has been enlarged and is now called Barrowsville Crossing. They sell liquor, great take out food and a few groceries. It is quite popular in the village.



The Davignon family had a gas station on South Worcester Street. They also had a small convenience store.



Oscar Bellavance ran a lunch counter on Barrows Street. He sold sandwiches, ice cream, soda, soup, light lunches. and gasoline.



His wife Blanche was the cook and his children helped out behind the counter. Many people from the mill would have their lunch there.



Adelard Bellavance had a billiard parlor, bowling alley, barber shop and a convenience store on South Worcester Street. At some point, there also was a slot machine in his store. One day when he and his wife were out, Janice Burkhart's mother and aunt decided to play the slot machine, something they were forbidden to do! Wouldn't you know it? The first coin in the machine hit the jackpot. There were coins all over the floor. They knew they were in trouble so they put the coins in a glass jar and buried it in the garden. Her grandfather always thought that his father had hit the jackpot and didn't want to admit it. In the meantime, the culprits bought penny candy for all their friends at Mr. Dion's store!



Adelard Bellavance was always involved in village activities. He helped raise money for the new church, loaned his benches to the school when they had programs for the parents and he also became the first commander of the Harold Healy American Legion Post in Norton. The article announcing the appointment mentioned that Norton sent 112 men to WWI and 111 came back. The one who gave his life was Harold Healy. We have not had time to research this but only losing one person

in such a horrible conflict seems improbable.



After Adelard died, his business was bought by Arthur Leroux. It became a bar and a restaurant named the Palace Club.



It has also been known as Johnny's Way, The Village, Patty's Place and an Italian Bakery. For a while, it was also a Social Club for the Norton Police Department.



At one point it was destroyed by a fire thought to be started by a  
frialator. After many months in this condition, it was rebuilt.



Other merchants included Mr. Deeb and John Thomas, who had stores in their automobiles. They would sell blankets, sheets, pots and pans, cloth, thread, yarn, tablecloths, watches, just about anything you might want. In addition, many farmers sold their produce and dairy products. In later years there was Gene the bread man and Bob the milkman (Bob

Eddleston). Mr. Eddleston was so kind. He always managed to give children hunks of ice in the summer and we would wait eagerly for his truck to arrive.

Over the years there were many peddlers in Barrowsville. We are interested in compiling a list of their names. If you know of any of these people please let us know.

## The Mills



Many of the Barrowsville people worked in Defiance Bleachery, Freeman Doherty, Kilburns and a few in the Woolen Mill.



Defiance bleachery was a cloth finishing company and was located on Barrows Street. The mill would wash, bleach, dye, starch, and stretch the cloth. It was running 24 hours a day during the war.



It finished so much cloth that it had a railroad siding that ran right up to the building.



The mill depended upon Barrowsville Pond and the Wading River at first for power, then later for water in the processing that went on in the plant. This is the building that held the equipment for generating the power.



The Wading River runs through the manmade Barrowsville pond. At one point the Bleachery raised the water level by two feet to insure that there would be enough water for the mill's operations. As part of this process, the Army Corps of Engineers built a rolling dam. This helped to control the water flow.



When water is going over the dam, the spillway is a sight to see. When children went swimming in the pond, their parents always warned them to stay away from the dam.

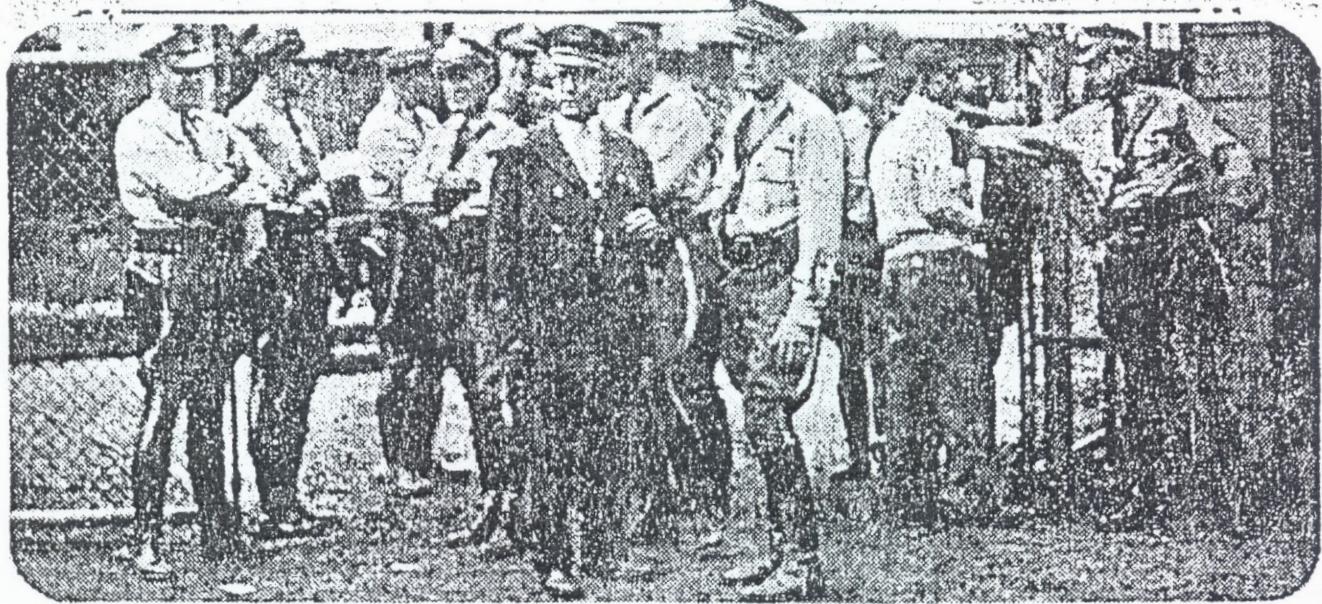


It is easy to see how water was such an important part of generating power to run mills. Also, to keep the water clean, no power boats were permitted on the pond.



Robert Garrity wrote his impressions of the mill as it was in 1934. This is what he said. "I remember that the place had very few toilets and they were despicable. There was no lunchroom, no first aide station, no nurse on duty. Most of the time it was a hot suffocating, humid, smelly atmosphere accompanied by unrestrained noises incurred by the many pieces of operating machinery." There was no lunchroom and people ate their lunches in their area of work. The mill was infested with rats that were attracted there by the starch used in the processing of the cloth. The average weekly wage was about \$12.00. Is it any wonder that the workers tried to organize a Union in 1934 and finally went on strike?

## Mass. State Police Arrive on Strike Scene in Norton



State troopers talking with Norton police chief yesterday on their arrival at the Defiance Bleachery plant. This is the first time so far in the strike that state troopers have been called.

In those days, it was illegal to strike and the State Police came to make sure workers from Mansfield were allowed into the building and that the strikers kept in line. If you would like to know more about the strike, there are two very good accounts written by Leo Bellavance and Robert Garrity. They are filed in the Defiance files in the Society archives.

# STATE TROOPERS WATCHING PARADE OF PICKETS AT BARROWSVILLE



Unbeknownst to the strikers, Mr. Bannon, owner of the mill, paid Mr. and Mrs. Bellavance, to make sandwiches for them so they would not go hungry. He knew they would refuse them if they knew he was paying for the sandwiches. It is hoped that working conditions improved once the strike was over.



In any event, the Bannons were good to their workers and to the town in other ways. Every year there would be a big outing, usually a clambake. All the workers and their families were invited to attend and would look forward to receiving the annual group picture!



The food was always very good. All types of games would be arranged including gifts for the children. It was always a fun day spent with family and friends.



The Bannons had the Barrowsville Fire Station built and donated it to the town. They felt this would help if a fire broke out at the mill. It would insure fast response to the mill and the surrounding properties.



The Bleachery had a number of mill houses where their employees could reside. One large house on South Worcester Street was used to house the mill Superintendent. It was occupied for many years by the Flaherty's. This house was torn down and a newer house was built. It is now owned by the Sousa family.

## **Gary Rocks**



In Barrowsville pond are some glacial rocks. They are called Gary Rocks because a woman, Mrs. Gary, was found dead in the pond, her body wedged between these rocks.

## The Hermit



Somewhere on Harvey Street, there was a gold mine. It seems when things were rough, people would try to find gold there. Jeanette Hudson never heard about any gold being found but not far away on Maple Street there was a hermit who lived in a cave. The young people called

him “Seldom Fed.” In the Spring he would come out of his cave and occasionally wander down into the village. He was a curiosity to the children.

## Barrowsville Farms



There were many farms in the village. We have already mentioned some of them. Mr. Freeman's farm on South Worcester Street had cows and he sold milk. He always had kittens in the barn. Children were constantly bringing them home but were not always allowed to keep them. In this picture you can see an ice wagon decorated for the 1911 parade.



Wilfred Paille's farm was also on South Worcester Street. He sold milk and if he didn't have enough he would buy some from Mr. Roy who had a farm on Barrows Street. Mr. Paille also sold strawberries and corn which he grew on his farm. His wife, Georgeline, was a hard worker and

fed her family from her well kept garden.

It is interesting to note that the house Mr. Paille lived in was moved to South Worcester Street from Barrows Street. It sat on the corner of Barrows and Summer Streets. Mr. Paille bought the house from Mr. Bates, the first postmaster of Barrowsville.



After Mr. Paille died, the house was sold to Mr. Beaman. Mr. Beaman had a serious motorcycle accident shortly after buying the farm and had a leg amputated. Over the years the farm fell into great disrepair.



It was finally abandoned. The fire department burned the house and barn. They used this as a training activity.



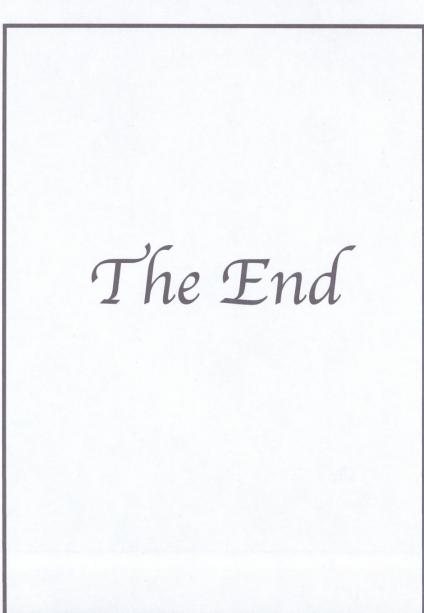
The heat from burning these buildings was very intense and there was a little damage done to the buildings that were close by to the fires.



Mr. Keough had a farm on Harvey Street and sold milk in the village. He delivered it with a horse and wagon. Annie Dabney, a black woman, worked on his farm. People remember that she was always singing and happy. In the yard on Mr. Keough's farm, there were some nut trees. In the fall, the children would go pick up the nuts that fell on the ground. There were pig nuts, box nuts and butternuts. There were also beautiful flower gardens all around the house. Apparently there was no lack of fertilizer. This house burned down and has been lost to us.

## In Summary

During the early to mid 1900s, people did whatever they could to live off the land. They fished in the ponds. They hunted wild game. They cultivated and canned vegetables. They picked blueberries in the swamps and grew fruit in their gardens and on trees in their yards. They raised chickens for meat and eggs. They raised cows for meat, milk, butter and cheese. And of course there were pigs, goats and sheep. They cut wood in wood lots. They worked hard, worshiped God, raised families and rejoiced if they had a little land and owned a home. They had bus and train transportation and had available jobs in nearby factories. Almost everyone knew their neighbors. No one locked their doors. Not everyone spoke English but that didn't seem to matter. Life was hard but there was a real sense of community. It was a wonderful place in which to grow up. Sometimes we wonder what our early settlers would say if they could see Barrowsville today.



*The End*