

Quabbin Voices

The Friends of Quabbin Newsletter



Winter 2014
Vol.26 No.4

We must hear and listen to all of Quabbin's many Voices. Voices of the Past, as well as Voices of the Present and of the Future. Voices of the Trees, the Sky, the Rain that falls, and all the Wild Things; Voices of the People who depend on this valuable resource for their daily needs of clean water, and Voices of those who draw upon it for deeper needs of the Soul.

—Les Campbell

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Stamp Killers

Philatelists and all others, take heed!

By

John Zebb, J.R. Greene, and Paul Godfrey

Philatelists? They are folks who like to collect stamps, unlike the rest of us who may have gotten a taste (literally, the stamp glue taste) of that as a child and are now content to use self-stick, "Forever" stamps to the dismay of those philatelists. As they will tell you, philately is an exciting world where miniature art of all kinds is placed on little squares with glue on the back, attached to envelopes and, when you drop it in the mailbox, your letter gets delivered in a few days. Before email, it was about the most common way to communicate long distances; sometimes, the only way.

Those miniature works of art have been the pride of nations with a heavy competition among some of the smaller ones to sell more stamps to collectors than anyone else, because every stamp purchased but not used is all money in the treasury. Those tiny art works represent the cost of the delivery service. We're sure everyone alive in the days before self-stick stamps has steamed off a stamp to use it again, unless the stamp was cancelled. Governments have been foiling our efforts to reuse stamps for a long time. The way it's done is to mar the art work so that it is clear

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75th Year Special Commemorative Envelope

On January 14, 1939, the last mail was sent from the Enfield Post Office. This special envelope commemorates that event. This special envelope brings together the extraordinarily lucky find of a picture depicting that last day with the equally extraordinary find of the actual cancelling device used that day and used again in creating the cancellation on this envelope. These two are combined with the Friends of Quabbin special 75th Remembrance Year logo. In addition, the envelope has a U.S. Forever stamp hand cancelled on January 14, 2014 at the Ware, Massachusetts Post Office, exactly 75 years to the moment. Don't miss out on the opportunity to purchase this limited production commemorative; only 200 are available.



President's Message

It's been quite a 75th Year of Remembrance of the former Swift River Valley, highlighted by the Remembrance Ball and *Quabbin: A Musical*. The latter, presented in early November, was just wonderful. I fully enjoyed each performance. Congratulations to: Friends

Vice President, Cindi LaBombard; the Music Director, Carla Newhart; the Play Director, Jane Sterndale (Jane was a cast member in the 1988 production); the Ware Community Theater and to the cast. The entire run was dedicated to Les Campbell, co-founder of the Quabbin Visitors Center and first President of its support group, The Friends of Quabbin. Next year (2014) will mark the 30th Anniversary of the creation of both the Quabbin Visitors Center and the Friends of Quabbin.

Les' consistent concern has been for the preservation of the visual photographic record of what was sacrificed and lost in this project. The Friends of Quabbin has recently completed scanning the entire series of contact print negatives from Les Campbell's Quabbin Collection. Thanks to Paul Godfrey, several hundred historic photographs have been printed and placed in notebook binders at the Quabbin Visitors Center. We encourage former residents, descendants of former residents or construction workers from the reservoir project who may help us to identify the "Who, What, Where and When" in these historic photographs. Our ultimate goal is "Lest We Not Forget:" to preserve the history of the Swift River Valley and to make it accessible to future generations. For us this means both making reminders of the past more available to the public and generating a sensitivity to the sacrifices of the past through education.

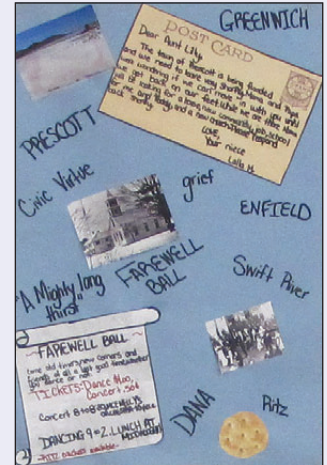
Another significant date in history is quickly coming upon us—that being January 14, 2014 which will mark the 75th Anniversary of the last mail leaving Enfield, Massachusetts. The Friends of Quabbin will be producing commemorative envelopes with a photo of this event from January 14, 1939 that will include the 75th Year of Remembrance Friends of Quabbin logo. It will be hand cancelled by the USPS on January 14, 2014—75 years to the day. These last day mailing commemoratives will be available for purchase at the Quabbin Visitors Center.

This past November, I was invited to provide a presentation on the former Swift River Valley at the Oxford Middle School. English & Social Studies teacher, Ms. Claudia Nash and the students submitted 18 questions prior to my visit

and included a question on *Quabbin: A Musical*. She and her class were thoroughly prepared for my visit with three walls of her classroom covered with material on the Swift River Valley and Quabbin. One of these, a poster, included a poignant postcard, created by one of the students, simulating one from a displaced resident of the Valley asking friends and relatives for a place to stay. The class was most generous in its hospitality and student gifts.

The students had been given several assignments in preparation for my visit. These were based on Jane Yolen's book, *Letting Swift River Go*. During my visit, I also noticed other books referenced or visible in Ms. Nash's classroom: Jackie French Koller's book,

Someday and Elizabeth Peirce's book, *The Lost Towns of the Quabbin Valley*. Ms. Nash provided me with her curriculum material; this material is now available on the Friends of Quabbin website (Links & Resources) for other educators to freely use. The Friends of Quabbin will update its website with resources submitted by educators to assist teachers with materials to use in classroom studies on the former Swift River Valley.



The Friends of Quabbin closed out 2013 with its Annual Holiday Party held on Sunday, December 8th. I'd like to thank all those who attended and offer special thanks to Celia Slozak and Cliff Read for the refreshments. The program included showing some historic photographs with a request to identify "Who, What, Where and When" in the notebook binders of these photos and the playing of the videos shown at the 75th Year of Remembrance Ball.

Quabbin Recollections...

Contributed by Edwina Hodgkins

Years ago, the Quabbin meant so many different things to me than it does today. I was born in Ware and raised in the stereotypical close-knit, sleepy, little mill town that was a stone's throw away from Quabbin. Growing up in the '50s and '60s, there was definitely a feeling of "family togetherness" and an emphasis on outdoor fun and neighborhood play. What was missing, however, was a more intense interaction with nature and the freedom to explore. Sure, we spent a goodly amount of time outside jumping rope, playing hopscotch, and riding bikes, but the idea of hiking and exploring in Quabbin never was a reality.

Quabbin was always a beautiful place, but then we twins viewed it from the back seat of Dad's '50s era vehicle with the hand cranked windows that provided a slight breeze and a brief glimpse of the passing Quabbin roads around Goodnough Dike and Winsor Dam. Dad was an outdoorsman...hunting for pheasant and grouse in fall and fishing for trout and bullhead in spring and summer; yet the idea of actually hiking Quabbin roads and trails never occurred to him. And so we sat in the car missing the true hidden beauties of Quabbin.

In our family we had a few annual doings whose destination always led to Quabbin. Every Easter Sunday morning after Mass at St. Mary's Church and our traditional Easter Sunday breakfast of "Polish inspired" breakfast treats of hard-boiled eggs, Babci's homemade *placzek* (ed. note: Polish coffeecake) and borscht with kielbasa, we would all pile into the car for a ride to the Quabbin. I still have a mental image of Babci in her navy blue suit with a beautiful live orchid pinned to the front lapel. Dziadziu always bought orchids from the old A&P on Main St. for "his dearies" to wear for Easter. Dressed in our Easter finery, we would drive around Quabbin, admiring the natural beauty. I can still hear Babci and Dziadziu saying, "Why do we need to travel elsewhere and spend all that money, when we have the Quabbin so close?" The ride always ended at the observation tower where we would climb to the top of the windy hill for a more panoramic view of all the lands that encompassed Quabbin.

On hot summer nights in early July, while Babci worked in Ware Woolen and Dziadziu babysat his "twinnies," we would often drive to Quabbin to pick buckets of blueberries from the fields close to Quabbin waters that is now Hank's Meadow. Dziadziu helped us cleverly rig up our red rubber buckets around our waists so both hands would be free for more and quicker picking! In about an hour's time we would quit with our buckets full and overflowing and our fingers and lips purple with the many tastings of fresh berries. I still remember leaving this booty of berries on the kitchen table for Babci to admire when she returned home late in the evening a reward for her long shift at Ware Woolen. By morning when we awakened, the berries were always washed and plans made for their use...usually drippy, sweet blueberry pie with Babci's signature crust coated with

sugar and the perfect tint of brown. Occasionally Babci was more ambitious and perhaps had more time available ...it was then that the berries were used for filling in the traditional Polish summer treat of blueberry *pierogi*!

Fast forward now to my retirement years! Three year's ago, upon retirement, my husband and I decided to challenge ourselves to explore the Quabbin as I was never able to in my



youth. Armed with a newly purchased Quabbin trail and gate map we began exploring and hiking all the hidden and glorious areas of this profound, serene, beautiful natural wonderland! Each season has brought a

myriad of opportunities for glorious natural beauty. Along the way we have encountered the wonderful beauty of butterflies such as Mourning Cloaks and Monarchs flitting aimlessly and teasingly among the wildflowers in spring and have had exciting encounters with wildlife as diverse as lethargic, fat porcupines resting in hemlock trees in fall; elusive but inquisitive mink scampering and playing "hide and seek" among rocks at the Quabbin water's edge in winter; majestic eagles soaring and diving above the Quabbin depths in Summer; sleek, acrobatic otters playfully diving and swimming along an icy patch of water in winter; and most prized of all a "face to face" encounter with a prowling coyote along Rattlesnake Hill one lonely, gray, solemn winter day. We have explored and successfully found such hidden treasures as the natural "Indian Kitchen," Wendell Farnsworth's grave, and the wreckage of an Air Force jet! We have yet to encounter the secretive but present moose... ahhhh! But one day soon perhaps...



The Quabbin of my unfulfilled youth has become a rewarding respite, a serene sanctuary and a meditative destination of my golden years!



Interpretive Services Report

Winter 2014

By Clif Read

The warm, golden days of autumn have slowly faded to cold, brisk days which carry with them a hint of winter in the air. Snowflakes fly as I write this article and bring with them a muted silence over the Quabbin landscape. The serenity of the scene stands in stark contrast to the view in early October when fall leaf color was at its peak and visitation at a similar level. The view of Quabbin from the Visitor Center provides a beautiful view of colorful foliage throughout October as the maples, birches and cherries give way to the golden hues of oaks. It is a stunning view, one of which I never tire. No wonder we are such a popular destination for folks!

Earlier this fall, DCR Director of Water Supply Protection Jonathan Yeo announced the hiring of Lisa Gustavsen as Assistant Regional Director for the Quabbin Section. The position had been vacant since last March when Dave Small retired. Lisa has worked at Quabbin for more than 18 years as an Environmental Planner and more recently as an Environmental Analyst. As part of her responsibilities she coordinated several updates of the Public Access Plans for both Quabbin and Ware River watersheds, so she is familiar with issues around public use of DCR lands. As Assistant Regional Director, she will now oversee about 45 full time and 20 seasonal staff in Watershed Maintenance, Forestry, Ranger Services and the Fishing Areas. With nearly two decades of experience at Quabbin, the transition into her new position has gone very smoothly and quickly. While Lisa does not directly supervise the Interpretive Services program, we all will be working closely with her on issues related to public access, education, signage, policy and a host of other matters.

Since last summer visitors walking across Winsor Dam have encountered a new landscape feature on the western end of the dam. For several years the Civil and Environmental Engineering units have been working on the drainage structures and water quality issues around the Quabbin Administration Building. In an effort to redirect flows from paved surfaces away from the reservoir, staff redesigned the drainage structures and constructed a rain garden to absorb heavy runoff from storm events. The garden lies in the area which had served as a parking area prior to 9/11 and became grassy area after. When the construction of the rain garden was done last summer, the lens shaped area was transformed to a large water retention basin during significant storm events. While there is not routinely standing water in the

swale, it is designed to absorb runoff from large storm events and then slowly percolate water back into the soil. In fact there was a intense rainstorm on July 1st last summer which dropped 1.8 inches of water during a three hour period. The rain garden performed perfectly, absorbing the water, filling



Before Rain July 1, 2013



After Rain July 1, 2013

the depression with water to capacity and then slowly releasing it back to the ground. This project was a creative in-house design that addressed water quality issues in a cost effective manner. Check it out next time you are at the Visitor Center!

Have you ever wished you could get a real time view of the Quabbin Reservoir from afar? The QuabCam now makes that possible through the Mass. Water Resources Authority website—www.mwra.com/qcam.html. A camera mounted on the front of the Administration Building provides a continuous video feed, with a snapshot taken every 20 seconds that is posted on the website. The QuabCam has captured some remarkable images over the years from weather events to sunsets, ice on the reservoir and groups assembled in front of



The QuabCam

dwarf the landscape. If you have not checked it out already, please do so.

The New England Water Works Association recently presented the 2013 “New England’s Best” drinking water award to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). MWRA jointly manages the drinking water system with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) with management of the water supply reservoirs under the purview of DCR and management of the distribution system under MWRA.

The Friends and Tuesday Tea Holiday Party was a great success with an excellent turnout, delicious food and wonderful imagery of the former Swift River Valley. As part of the Photo Restoration Project, there are a number of binders of Valley images that have been preserved, but are as of yet, not identi-

fied. Gatherings like the Holiday Party are great opportunities for those with connections to the Valley to assist in identifying people or places, but the binders are also available whenever the Visitor Center is open. Even if you don’t have connections to the Valley, the images provide a rich visual experience for anyone interested in history.



Friends and Tuesday Tea Holiday Party

The Quabbin Visitor Center Winter Program Series resumes in January with a series of programs about history, natural history and topics related to Quabbin. I hope you can join us for some of these over the coming months.

Happy Holidays from the folks at the Quabbin Administration Building!



New England’s Best Quabbin Crew

Stamp Killers

Continued from page 1



to all that the stamp has provided its service already. Known as cancelling, the marring process has come a long way since the early days of the first stamp, the “Penny Black,” when the postman simply made a mark through the stamp, to the present rapid machine processing. In the U.S. stamps were cancelled by each postmaster writing an “X” on the stamp until 1840. High speed cancellation began in Boston in the 1880s and spread throughout the country after that. Cancelling accomplishes two functions: 1) it labels the city and date and 2) it makes future use impossible. It is officially known as the CDS (city date stamp).

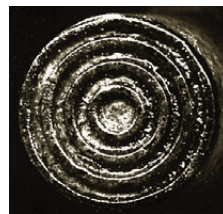
Machine cancelling was not practical in the small post offices of America. Also, it was and still is possible to have envelopes with special cancellations commemorating special events. But the fact that small post offices did not have high speed cancellation devices and were forced to use hand cancellation devices has recently provided Friends of Quabbin with a small treasure trove of memorabilia.

Our unwitting intermediary was John Zebb, long-time Friends Board member. He often gets Quabbin-related inquiries and comments of all kinds. These might cover topics as varied as wildlife, trails, school assignments, cemetery plot locations and all things historical, but on this particular day, Mrs. Nancy Brosseau of Westfield dropped by to say that she had come into possession of things from a relative, now deceased, and she placed a basketball-sized box on the table with a thump. “Assuming they were letters, I thought they must contain heavy thoughts,” mused John. He undid the flaps and was amazed to see that the box contained a variety of original Enfield, Massachusetts hand cancellation devices.

John brought them to the next FOQ Board meeting and passed them around. Most of us, knowing little about such things, nodded appreciatively. But our resident expert, J.R. Greene asked to take them to a local major authority on postal history, Elwyn Doubleday, who happens to be the nephew of the late Lois Doubleday Barnes, long-time editor of this newsletter.



Several devices show the town's name, Enfield, Mass. This one is particularly clear, but it is not so clear why the post office was cancelling letters on Christmas Day.



Other devices were sometimes used in tandem with the town postmark. These include a “target” mark, which is a series of concentric circles. This often appeared to the right of the town mark on an envelope, and was most useful if the sender affixed more than one stamp to the envelope.



Still other devices show “Due 3,” “Due 4,” and “Due 6,” indicating that postage was due from the recipient for underpaid postage. There is also a device with a “Paid 3” which could date back to the days before stamps were required on envelopes. That postmark would have indicated that the letter rate was paid by the sender.



The devices with the town name show five different versions, dating from the mid-1800s to the last years of the post office. Enfield was the last post office to close in the valley, on January 14, 1939. All of these devices feature the town name within the top of the circle, with the state name (“Mass.,”) inside the ring at the bottom. One device has the name “Enfield, Mass” at the top, with “Rec'd” at the

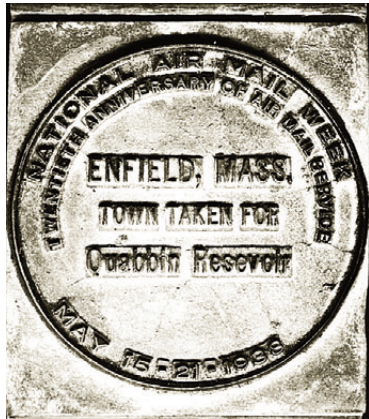
bottom. This was the receiving postmark for incoming letters, which was useful for registered or special delivery mail.



The Swift River Valley Historical Society has some Greenwich and Millington cancellation devices in their collection. An example of a stamp by one of those from the collection of Marty Howe, another Board member, is shown. It is the last day cancellation for the town of Greenwich, Massachusetts.



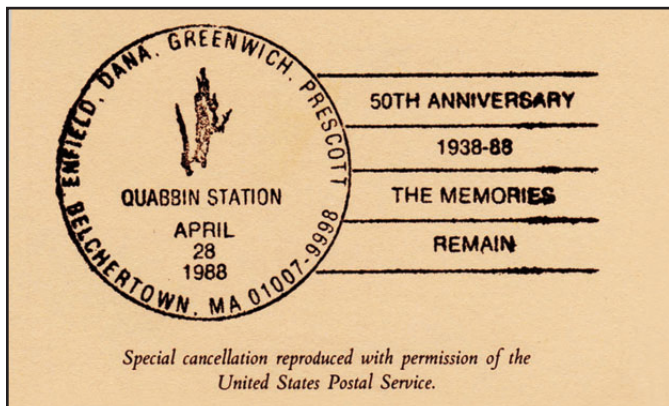
The most interesting device is a large oval (2 1/4" in diameter) postmark for the National Air Mail Week, held from May 16–21, 1938. This was applied to many outgoing letters during that



time. As recounted in the 2010 book, *From Valley to Quabbin 1938–1946* by J.R. Greene, Millington was the only other valley post

office to participate in this event with a special cancellation. The device reads, “National Air Mail Week / Twentieth Anniversary of Air Mail Service / Enfield, Mass. / Town taken for / Quabbin Reservoir / May 16–21, 1938.” Enfield, along with the other three doomed towns, had been disincorporated on April 28, 1938, hence the “Town taken...” phrase.

Such postmarking devices are very difficult to locate, making this a rare find indeed.



In 1988, in remembrance of the last mail from any of the four “lost” towns, an event documented in this photograph of the outside of the Enfield post office, the Friends of Quabbin had a number of envelopes struck with a special cancellation stamp.

Mark your calendars!

The Friends of Quabbin will have the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Cancellation available for purchase January 14, 2014 at the Visitor Center, Quabbin Administration Building, Belchertown, MA 01007. Price: \$5.00. Member discounts are applicable.

Meetings & Events

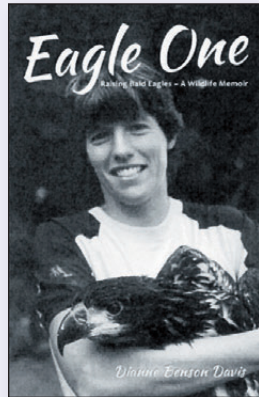
Visitor Center Winter Programs

Quabbin Reservoir will offer several free presentations this season. All ages are welcome. Please call (413) 323-7221 for reservations. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED.

**Sunday, January 19,
2:00-3:00 PM**

Eagle One – Author Presentation and Book Signing

Dianne Benson Davis spent four months living alone as the caretaker for eight baby bald eagles in the remote Quabbin Reservoir area of Massachusetts. *Eagle One* is the record of her time with the eagles, based on the letters and journals she kept there. It is also a personal memoir; the story of perseverance and struggle as a single mother, the joys of learning and teaching about wildlife, and of finding happiness and fulfillment in work and family. The author will be present and books available.



Sunday, January 26, 2:00-3:00 PM

Forest Invasive Species and the Quabbin Forest

Massachusetts forests are being affected by invasive insects such as Asian Long Horned Beetle and Emerald Ash Borer. Join Gregory Goodfellow, Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator with Massachusetts Department of Agriculture for a discussion on these threats to our forests as well as the ways to control or treat the outbreaks.

Sunday, February 2, 2:00-3:00 PM

Visions from the Past

During the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir, photographers were hired by the state to document the destruction of the Swift River Valley and the creation of the reservoir. Join Quabbin Visitor Center staff member Dale Monette for an exploration of these rarely seen photographs and compares the historic images with contemporary views taken from the same spot as the originals over 75 years ago.

Sunday, February 9, 2:00-3:00 PM

The Continuing Evolution of Dana Common: A National Register Story

In 2013, Dana Common was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Join DCR Staff Archeologist Ellen Berkland, MA, RPA for a presentation on the process of the nomination

and why Dana Common was ultimately chosen to be added to the list.

Sunday, February 23, 2:00-3:00 PM

Bald Eagles and Quabbin Reservoir

Quabbin Reservoir played a vital role in the reintroduction of the Bald Eagle to Massachusetts. Join Andrew Vitz, State Ornithologist with Mass Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, for a presentation on the extirpation of Bald Eagles and their steady increase since their reintroduction up through the 2013 breeding season.

Tuesday Teas

Remember family gatherings when stories were told that made you realize that history was your family's story, too? That is Tuesday Tea! Come learn about the Swift River Valley from those who lived there. Come reminisce about times past; this 75th Remembrance Year has evoked lots of memo-

ries. In the past two months attendance has been booming, but there is always room for newcomers. The next Tuesday Tea is February 4th at 1:00 to 3:00 PM. Future Teas will be held on March 4 and April 1 — that is, the first Tuesday of each month.



Photo Club Meetings

The Quabbin Photo Group meetings are on the 4th Monday at the Quabbin Visitor Center beginning at 7:00 PM. The Pioneer Valley Photographic Artists meet on the last Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Visitor Center.

Swift River Valley Historical Society



February & March 2013

A family-friendly exhibit of historic photos opens with a Community Reception from 1:00–3:00 PM on Saturday, February 8th, at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls. Focused on the children of the Swift River Valley, the exhibit will be open Fridays and Saturdays through the end of March. Check web site for details. www.swiftrivermuseum.org.

The Quabbin Visitor Center will have a small satellite exhibit from February through May and a presentation at 2:00 PM on Sunday, March 2nd, looking at how the experience of having a photograph taken changed from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first.

The Swift River Valley Historical Society (SRVHS) has been keeping the stories of the four “lost towns” alive for 75 years, maintaining a rich collection of artifacts, documents, and photographs. Focused on keeping the memories alive for the next 75 years, SRVHS is planning to build a climate-controlled structure to protect these irreplaceable records—now housed in an environment with neither heat nor air-conditioning. SRVHS must raise \$25,000 in matching funds to take this important step. To learn how you can help, visit swiftrivermuseum.org, call 978-544-6882, or email SRVHSMuseum@gmail.com or sdamkoehler@gmail.com.

QUABBIN

Once long ago, it seems so far,
I lived where now a reservoir
With dikes and dams and waters blue
Conceals a world that once I knew

A lovely world, it seemed to be,
Where people lived with spirits free
Blessed by the hand of nature there
Within a valley green and fair

Contented were the valley folk
Until the day that they awoke
To learn, at last, of man’s decree
That meant their world would cease to be

The River Swift was to be dammed
To overflow the valley land
To form a water-storage space
For people in a distant place

Ancestral roots were torn and frayed
As many left their homes dismayed
To seek another place to dwell
And to their land they bade farewell

Oft when I visit Quabbin’s side
And view the waters vast and wide
I dream of towns that used to be
Now immersed in an island sea

Within my mind I now behold
Greenwich and Enfield, as of old,
Dana and Prescott do I see
Ever fresh in my memory

The scenic isles that dot the blue
Are tops of Mounts that once I knew
Pomeroy and Prescott, bold and free,
With rugged Liz as company

On Quabbin’s banks I sometimes spy
The saddened face and wistful eye
Of aged folk who, long ago,
Lived in the valley down below

Neath the waters that overlay
The remnants of another day
Four little towns that stood with pride
Victims, all, of a man-made tide.

Anonymous

*This poem appeared in the program
for Quabbin: A Musical.*

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Call for Member Submissions

This is your newsletter. We invite members to submit stories, articles, or reminiscences about the human or natural history of the Swift River Valley and Quabbin Reservoir.

Please send e-mail to Paul Godfrey at godfrey@tei.umass.edu, or mail items to: The Friends of Quabbin
485 Ware Road, Belchertown, MA 01007



Quabbin Voices

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of Friends of Quabbin, Inc.

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