

# Quabbin Voices

The Friends of Quabbin Newsletter



Winter 2019–2020  
Vol.32 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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## A Worrisome Worm

by Nancy Huntington, DCR Visitor Service Supervisor

This past spring, I got a new garden planter. It's a huge tower with multiple planting holes, and the center is meant to be filled with vermicompost to feed the plants as a self-contained system. For those who might not know, vermicompost is compost/manure made from earthworms. Most people are aware that having earthworms in the garden is extremely good for the soil; they aerate the soil by crawling through it, break down organic materials into usable nutrients and leave behind dark castings. You'll know if you have earthworms even if you don't see them, as the soil is rich and moist. Like all beneficial garden creatures, they thrive best in a chemical-free environment—no herbicides or pesticides.

I have made a commitment to having a natural, chemical-free, wildlife safe habitat in my small backyard. As a result, I have been amazed at the diversity and beauty I have seen—dragonflies, different species of bees and butterflies; the past few years, I've even had a consistent stream of Monarchs. When I dig down into my soil, I see the wriggling, reddish colored friends that help my plants thrive. I also have a manure pile, thanks to my horse/lawn-mower, that is loaded with worms and makes the best natural compost that money can't buy. So when I was setting up my new garden tower I headed right to the manure pile to get worms for the vermicompost part. It took a little digging—our common earthworm, *Lumbricus terrestris* or *Lumbricus rubellus*, like to burrow down into the soil a few inches below the surface. I admired the rich brown earth as I was digging into it, content with my little natural, healthy ecosystem.

Fast forward 4–5 months to September. On a routine trip to the manure pile the wheelbarrow scuffed up the top of the pile, and I noticed a whole bunch of worms right there, just under the top layer and more of them than normal. I dismissed it as odd, nothing more. A week or so later, another routine trip to the manure pile, and I saw a worm laying right on the top of the ground, on the path to the manure pile. I didn't want to crush it with the wheelbarrow, so I stopped to move it, and something made me pause; it looked different.

Suddenly I remembered a conversation with our DCR Quabbin Aquatic Biologist, Paula Packard, from about a month previous. I brought the worm inside, took a picture and texted it to her. Not patient enough to wait to hear back from her, I Googled it, got details, went back out to the manure pile and really LOOKED. My heart sank.

The Asian Jumping Worm, *Amyntas agrestis*, is the most recent destructive species to invade North America (our common worm is itself a transplant from Europe, and technically invasive also, though not highly detrimental). It is suspected they have been here for decades, but we are just recently starting to see their effects on soil and ecosystems, particularly in the Midwest, and here in the Northeast. Unlike their deeper dwelling cousins, these worms reside near the top of the soil, where they "...devour organic material more rapidly than their European counterparts, stripping the forest floor of the critical layer for seedlings and wildflowers. Jumping worms grow twice as fast, reproduce more quickly and can infest soils at high densities. In areas of heavy infestations, native plants, soil, invertebrates, salamanders, birds and other animals decline. Jumping worms can severely damage roots of plants in nurseries, gardens, forests and turf." <http://ccecolumbia-greene.org/resources/jumping-worm-fact-sheet>. In Vermont, they are already seeing the adverse effects of these worms on the shallow roots of Sugar Maple trees. (continued on page 4)





Gene Theroux

## President's Message

Winter 2019–2020

My wife Marianne and I spent a week at Jiminy Peak in late October. We made two trips to Vermont. Our second trip was to Dorset, Vermont. My interest in visiting Dorset was spawned by comments by former Friends of Quabbin President Joseph William Russell in his book, *Vestiges of the Lost Valley: Buildings and Bells from the Quabbin*. Joe Russell wrote that at the time when the state was auctioning off buildings in Quabbin Valley, Charles A. Wade purchased a number of the homes and relocated them elsewhere. One of the major relocations was Dorset, VT. The Dorset Historical Society identified fourteen buildings from the Quabbin Valley that were purchased, disassembled and reassembled in Dorset.

Our travel to Dorset to see for ourselves began after an earlier in the day visit to the Hemmings Motor News museum in Bennington, Vermont, a story in its own right. Upon our arrival in Dorset, we stopped at the Dorset Historical Society & Museum; we were pleasantly surprised to find open. On the grounds of the museum were a few exhibits about quarrying marble. Dorset, Vermont is the location of one of the oldest Marble Quarries in the United States. It is located along Rt. 30 in Dorset; it is now known as a swimming hole and is surrounded by huge blocks of granite.

The Dorset Historical Society building itself, once stood in Hebron, NY. Charles Wade had also deconstructed it, moved it, and reconstructed it in Dorset for Mrs. Agnes Houghton on a lot that she had previously purchased from Mr. Wade a year prior to the stock market crash on Black Thursday (October 24, 1929). Since 1991, at the bequest of the last owner, Miss Elsa Bley, this house has been the home of the Dorset Historical Society. I must have been in the museum for thirty minutes examining exhibits about funicular railroads at local quarries and other displays and thought I was alone until I made it to the second floor where there were more exhibits as well as an office and library. In the office was Jon Mathewson, a Curator at the Dorset Historical Society.

After introductions and a lengthy discussion, Jon took me into the library and showed me their sizable collection of Quabbin books. Many of the Quabbin books in their collection were written by Quabbin Historian J. R. Greene. In addition, they possessed the 1986 Quabbin History Calendar and the PBS video, *Under the Quabbin*. Among the Quabbin books, was a booklet, *Quabbin to Dorset* which local Dorset historian Terry Tyler had researched, written, edited and published; a second edition was printed in 2015. I was quite impressed with the content and detail of Mr. Tyler's in the 53-page booklet. It was quite clear that Mr. Tyler had spent a great deal of time in his research for

## Friends of Quabbin Website Changes— We Need Your Input!

By Kevin Kopchynski, Gene Theroux, and Paul Godfrey

We are moving our website to a new platform that will allow us to add and update content more easily as well as make content easier to find. You will see a notice on the site as we make this change. We welcome your suggestions about the content you would like to see and how we can enhance your experience on the site.

Contact us at: [kkopchynski@verizon.net](mailto:kkopchynski@verizon.net); or [gene.theroux@verizon.net](mailto:gene.theroux@verizon.net); or [godfrey@tei.umass.edu](mailto:godfrey@tei.umass.edu).



Gene Theroux & Jon Mathewson, a curator at the Dorset Historical Society & Museum

this fine historical document that so thoroughly documents the work of Charles A. Wade, his wife, Agnes, who cooked for the crew of 35 men while they were away from Dorset, and his crew of artisans who moved and rebuilt so many Quabbin structures. The booklet is filled with photographs of Charles and Agnes Wade, the work crew disassembling a home in Belchertown, and before and after photos of the homes in Quabbin Valley and, after assembly, in Dorset. There is a list of the known houses dismantled and reconstructed by Charles A. Wade

that included the town of origin, family name, date, purchaser, location in Dorset and subsequent owners to date. Most of all, this is a story of how the enterprising Charles Wade took advantage of opportunities that helped many of Dorset's artisans to survive and support their families during the years of the Great Depression. For those who have an interest in this aspect of the Quabbin story, this is a great resource to own. Terry Tyler's booklet, "From Quabbin to Dorset," is available for purchase at the Dorset Historical Society's Gift Shop.

I was quite pleased with the hospitality shown to us and the overall interest of the Dorset Historical Society in keeping the Quabbin story alive. To me, it appeared obvious that Terry Tyler and the folks of the Dorset Historical Society share the same views as the Friends of Quabbin.

My wife and I look forward to a return trip to Dorset, Vermont in the summer so that she may swim in the Norcross-West Marble Quarry, and I may spend more time in Dorset Village and at the Dorset Historical Society & Museum.

# A Quabbin Birthday Celebration

by Edwina Hodgkins

Growing up in Ware in the '50s and '60s in the shadow of the Quabbin Reservoir, my twin sister Alberta and I often traversed the roads of Quabbin around the Enfield Lookout on our Sunday afternoon drives with our Mom and Dad... it was what families did together!!! I can still hear our mother's words... "Why would anyone travel to other locations when they have the beauty of Quabbin here...free for the taking!"

Fast forward sixty plus years and we both have come full circle, realizing our mom's simple country words of wisdom. After years of exploring the beauties and wonders of other states and

countries, we have grown to appreciate this "hidden jewel" of our childhood, this beautiful "accidental wilderness" of



Edwina Hodgkins (in baseball cap) and Alberta Martin (also in baseball cap but on right).

Quabbin. In retirement, we have each pursued different wonderful avenues that

Quabbin has to offer. Alberta with her husband Francis and their loyal, dedicated involvement with their Tuesday Tea gatherings and myself (Edwina) with my husband Dennis and our almost daily, untold countless explorations and adventures hiking Quabbin gates!!!

It seemed fitting to celebrate our birthdays at Quabbin... sharing and reflecting on memories and stories of our youth combining these with new loves of nature and hiking, history and lore of Quabbin. I wanted Alberta to experience one of my favorite hiking jaunts exploring Soapstone Hill with its magnificent views of Quabbin. After entering the Woman's Federated Forest off Rt. 122, we trekked to the summit of Soapstone, affording us perhaps the most beautiful and spectacular views of Quabbin waters and environs. After a stop for a photo op, we descended viewing the old Soapstone Quarry, numerous beaver lodges, dams and other handiwork of beavers. We continued trekking at Gate 35 and enjoyed the calm, serene waters along the sandy, rock strewn borders. A few more stops for photos and we ended our adventure coming full circle back to Gate 36,



Edwina & Alberta on Soapstone Hill

logging three and a half hours and six plus miles hiking. The skies remained overcast, but our spirits and hearts soared. We felt heightened and brightened having shared this beautiful, peaceful solitude together. Thank you Quabbin for the best birthday present ever!!!



Alberta and Edwina on the shore of Quabbin Reservoir

## Poet's Corner

by John Walter, Shutesbury

### Naturalist Poem

Taking a break from life,  
To walk in the footsteps  
Of deer, rabbit and bobcat,  
I traversed the ancient  
Settlement sights of the Nipmuk people.  
The ever flowing spring,  
Beside the bold round hilltop  
Where a stone effigy of Turtle,  
Faces the southwest,  
The direction from which  
The first people came.  
Not all is lost.

## A Worrisome Worm (continued from page 1)

Here at the Quabbin Reservoir, the forest understory is one of the main sources of natural filtration for the water supply. The plants act as a barrier against erosion. If this understory is destroyed and unable to regenerate, it can cause runoff which will increase sediment and the inflow of nutrients which will decrease water quality.

The worms rapid consumption of the top layers of soil not only removes the protective layer of leaf litter and debris that many other species need to survive, it decreases the time it takes for nutrients to pass through their system and back into the soil. This may sound like a good idea, but it causes a sudden release of concentrated nutrients into the environment, much like a fast-release fertilizer. Those nutrients can overwhelm some species, or, can be flushed away quickly in a rainstorm and become a serious threat, particularly in the case of nitrate, which dissolves and moves readily in water and can become a groundwater contaminant. Additionally, the castings the worms leave behind are dry and crumbly, often compared to coffee grounds or ground beef consistency, and do not retain the necessary moisture. Often, the only plants that can survive in these disturbed soils are invasive plants that are already a threat.

When I went back out to my manure pile that day, I used my foot to brush the top layer away and immediately saw about a half dozen worms (compared to the spring, when I had to dig for them). I did this in several spots. As I was brushing the soil, I suddenly noticed the soil structure—dry and crumbly. I looked around me and it looked like I was standing in a pile of coffee grounds. Why I hadn't noticed this before, I couldn't tell you, because now it was so obvious. I walked to another section of my yard, away from the manure pile to where there were trees and a thick layer of leaf litter. I brushed the leaf litter away with my hand and uncovered more worms, just under the leaves; the soil beneath them dry and crumbly.

The worm itself resembles the common earthworm we are used to, with a few notable differences:

1. They are called “jumping worms” because that is what they seem to do. They are also called “crazy worms” or “crazy snake worms”; they thrash around so much they almost “jump” out of the soil when they are disturbed. They are sometimes called Alabama Jumping Worms, but that is a different though closely related species, *Amyntus Gracilus*.
2. They are a more brownish-gray color than the common worms, which tend to have more of a red tint to them (though there is a wide range of color variations, so this should not be the only thing used to identify).
3. The **clitellum**, which is the band that encircles their body, is much lighter than the body (cloudy white or light gray) and is also closer to the head. This lightness in the clitellum is what made me stop and check the worm I found on the path.
4. In a common worm, the clitellum is raised and segmented; in the jumping worm it is smooth. The best way to check this is



Image courtesy of the Government of Maine

under a microscope, as it is challenging to tell with the naked eye.

The worms die off in the winter, but the eggs, which resemble

their castings, can survive extreme temperatures. When they hatch in the spring, they are small and look even more like the common worms, but they multiply very quickly and can grow to 6 inches long by August. That is the best time to try to identify them, prior to that you can observe changes in your soil structure to determine if they are there. They infest very quickly—I had none in the spring yet was overwhelmed in just one season. Their eggs can live in any soil, mulch, potted plant, compost etc., thus can be easily transported and re-homed. Another way they can spread, and a cause for concern here at the Quabbin Reservoir, is from fishermen/women using them as bait, then dumping any unused worms with soil that may contain eggs in the woods before they leave.

As they are a newly discovered problem there is not a lot of information about them readily available. They are only just beginning to be studied here; most of our information has come out of research from Cornell University and studies done in a few other states. Unfortunately, there is currently no known way to control or eliminate them once they are established. There are no biological controls, and the use of chemicals will always have negative effects on other species and may not even be effective against a large population. Like so many other invasive species, both plant and animal, the best means of control is vigilance and keeping them out in the first place, though that may not always be possible. Since this is a recently emerging issue and there is much that is not known about the extent of the problem or the worm's distribution, the state is currently trying to figure out how to respond.

### Additional information:

Science Daily, “Voracious Asian jumping worms strip forest floor and flood soil with nutrients,” 2016

Josef Gorres, “Invasive Earthworms in the Northeastern USA and the Horticulture Industry,” 2014

Cornell University, “Underground Invaders: Impacts and Implications of Non-native Earthworms in North America,” 2016

<https://www.nps.gov/grsm/learn/nature/dff-earthworms10.htm>

<https://ecosystemsontheedge.org/earthworm-invaders/>

[https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/soils/health/biology/?cid=nracs142p2\\_053863](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/soils/health/biology/?cid=nracs142p2_053863)

# Planting of the Memorial Worden Tree

by Mark Thompson  
with an added message by MaryAlice Worden

November 12th was a gray day, overcast, and filled with biting winds, sleet and snow squalls. A perfect day to plant a tree. Well, maybe not, but it was a fine day to complete a journey. This journey began a decade ago when the Friends first received



*The Wordens, Mark Thompson & Clif Read with the Worden tree*

donations in honor of one James “Tree” Worden, who, after a three-year battle had passed away August 9th, 2009. In the months that followed, his love for the Quabbin became evident. As president, I was moved by this generosity and understood it as a testimony to a man whose life was both well-lived and



*MaryAlice Worden*

admired by many. My admiration resulted in a “President’s Message” column (Fall 2009) in our newsletter. In the article I found an apt comparison between James and a maple tree that I had named the “defiant tree” for its fight against the elements. Each had fought to the end with perseverance and dignity.



*Bruce Worden*

It seemed to me, at the time, that it was only fitting to replace the maple tree with another one. This tree, however, would symbolize the spirit of “Tree” Worden.

A long and difficult path of red tape, politics, unfriendly weather and professional, per-

sonal, and family obligations for all involved seemed to detour this effort at every turn. One situation after another derailed every attempt at a planting. The irony was never lost on me—how hard can it be to plant a tree in the Quabbin park? There are forests of them there. I see them every day. Humor sometimes turns up in the strangest of places.

All the pieces of the puzzle finally fit together when, after 10 years, November 12th found us shivering in Hank’s Meadow for the planting ceremony. Clif Read (DCR Interpretive Services), Paul Godfrey (FOQ Treasurer and intrepid photographer), myself, and James’ siblings, MaryAlice and Bruce, reminisced about James love of the “Bin.” How he always designated the biggest catch of the day “the corker,” and how much the tranquility of Quabbin was, for him, a tonic. Together we understood why here was his “favorite place on earth,” a place filled with warm memories that seemed especially meaningful on such a cold day. I look forward to the spring when this maple tree with its budding leaves, once again, will remind us all of the cycles of life and the importance of the seasons that we in New England embrace so willingly, a promise finally fulfilled, and a new tree with a unique meaning.

As the words of author Al Boudreau reminded me, “Your dreams are merely seeds. Hard work and perseverance are the water and sunlight that allow them to grow to fruition.” May the memory of James “Tree” Worden never fade.

And from MaryAlice Worden, after the ceremony:

*The tree planting was really lovely and I wish my other brothers could have joined us. I am sure they will be happy to see the photos (sent by Paul Godfrey shortly after the ceremony). It was so kind of Mark and Friends of the Quabbin to arrange for this—and it was all the more meaningful to me as it coincided with the 10th anniversary of my brother’s death and came shortly after my mother’s this summer. They both, like all of us, loved Quabbin. Even as my mother’s health was failing, a ride through Quabbin was a happy respite that she could enjoy. The spot chosen is also meaningful as we had many happy family picnics in Hanks Meadow. Thank you again. —MaryAlice*



*The Wordens placing the final few shovels of soil on the memorial James “Tree” Worden tree.*



## Interpretive Services Report

Winter 2019–2020

by Clif Read

After a lovely fall season with spectacular colors and moderate temperatures, it seems as though someone threw the meteorological switch in mid-November

that changed the weather patterns to a cold and snowy trend. Then came the rains and warm temperatures that greatly reduced the snowpack, followed by cold temperatures once again. This reminds us what living in New England is all about and keeps us on our toes!

In late September Commissioner Leo Roy announced his retirement from the DCR after three and a half years at the helm. In December 2015, Commissioner Roy was tapped by the Baker-Polito Administration to lead the more than 450,000-acre state parks system, which includes parks, forests, reservations, pools, beaches, watershed lands, rinks, and thousands of miles of trails. Before joining the DCR, Roy served as Massachusetts Undersecretary of Environmental Affairs from 1992 to 1997 and was most recently a Principal of an infrastructure planning, design, engineering, and environmental firm. As Commissioner he visited Quabbin several times during his tenure including two appearances at the Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee where he announced the appointment of Dan Clark as Regional Director at the first and then discussed and fielded questions/comments about the Quabbin Public Access Plan at his second visit. Jim Montgomery, Director of the Administration and Finance for DCR, was named as Acting Commissioner upon Mr. Roy's official retirement on September 27th. Mr. Montgomery will lead the DCR during the transition period until a permanent commissioner has been announced, which is expected soon.

The Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee received a briefing on the updates to the Ware River Public Access Plan earlier this month. Upon the completion of the Quabbin Plan the Ware River update was next in the queue for these plans which are required as part of the filtration waiver for the DCR/MWRA water system. There are some proposed changes with the Plan including road access within the Reservation and boat motor size on some of the ponds. A draft of the Plan and Access Policies is anticipated to be completed and made available to the public for review by the end of the 2019 calendar year followed by public hearings and a comment period in January/February of 2020.

There has been a lot of activity at the Quabbin Park Cemetery this fall. In addition to the normal maintenance work regularly performed, there has been work on the water system and the buildings. A new well for the Quabbin Park Cemetery Water System was drilled in early November near the Cemetery Administration Building. After drilling down 420' they hit a water seam that appears to have a substantial yield and will

address the historically low yields that have been a problem in the past. The plan is to establish a new distribution system to send water out to four different spigots located in the cemetery. The nearly 90-year-old system was no longer viable and could not be used. Plans are to have this new system up and operating for next spring. A building assessment was also conducted to determine the extent and scope of work needed to repair and improve the stone Cemetery building and the adjacent shop/garage building.

In mid-November the DCR announced it was placing a moratorium on expanding the annual Quabbin Reservoir controlled white-tailed deer hunt into Quabbin Park. As mentioned in the Fall Issue of Quabbin Voices the agency had planned to expand the controlled hunt into 2,400 acres of previously un hunted land within the 3,200 acre area referred to as Quabbin Park. After further consideration, the department will continue to study the issue, including deer population numbers and their impacts, following the conclusion of the 2019 Quabbin Reservoir controlled hunt. In spring 2020, DCR will continue analyzing the area, and if deer populations remain high, the agency will again consider opening Quabbin Park for a controlled deer management hunt. Prior to finalizing a plan to expand into Quabbin Park, the DCR will meet with stakeholders and conduct public outreach, which will include a public meeting and comment period.

DCR staff will conduct deer surveys to get updated deer densities numbers. The impacts of sustained high deer densities on forest and other plant regeneration and survival can greatly impact forests, and the DCR remains committed to protecting the watershed lands to ensure the water supply is properly protected. Hunters that were selected for 2019 Quabbin Park Hunt will automatically receive a permit if the decision is made to hunt the Park in 2020.

The Swift River Real Estate Photographic Collection that I mentioned in the last edition of Quabbin Voices is slightly behind schedule, but it should be available through the Digital Commonwealth website this winter. Once the entire collection is uploaded to the website, links will be provided on the Friends of Quabbin website and Facebook page to notify folks of its availability.

The Visitor Center has a nice variety of programs lined up for our Sunday Afternoon Series this winter, including a presentation on the Digital Commonwealth project by DCR Archivist Sean Fisher on February 23rd (see the Meeting & Events section in this issue). I hope that you will take the opportunity to attend some of the excellent presentations on the schedule!



## Ah, Winter!

by Anne Ely

The gusty winds of autumn are gone now, having stripped the trees of their leaves, blowing them into every nook and cranny of our yards, forcing the annual resurrection of rakes and leaf blowers. All too soon, the winter winds will come. Not just the hat snatching, great-for-kite-flying gusts of fall; these winds will have teeth! Nipping at and stinging our exposed skin, reminding us that we need to dig out our winter wardrobe. Stat!

Yes, winter is finally here and, yes, these bone chilling winds will often be accompanied by sleet and snow, but there will be good days, too. Days of warm sun. “Warm” is, of course, a relative term, but even though the mercury column in thermometers may be short, it’s still great to get out and enjoy the beauty of winter. Maybe there is even the remainder of a recent snowstorm with snow still clinging to the evergreens, so take the camera along. Perhaps the snow is deep; snowshoes anyone? A winter walk warms one up quickly, but how about finding a sheltered spot among some trees and just waiting and watching? It’s amazing what one can see by being still for a few minutes. Do keep an eye on the weather, though, as winter weather can change quickly. A sunny day can turn nasty in a hurry and, in that case, the best place to be is inside looking out. On the other hand, a light snowfall is something to be enjoyed. It seems to turn off all sound so that one can actually hear the snow falling. Bare branches are turned into works of art; a cottontail suddenly appears, then mysteriously disappears as if it were never there.

I always hate the coming of winter. The thought of having to put on a heavier coat, shoveling, being house-bound waiting for the plow, cancellations, and getting dark early, are just some of the reasons for pre-season stress, but year after year, once that first snow arrives (and sometimes it’s a doozy!), I begin to relax and enjoy it. It has its own special beauty... and it will be gone in about four months. I can live with that. Winter is here, take time to enjoy it.



## The Rabbit Run in Miniature

by Ken Levine

The nickname “Rabbit Run” or “Bunny Hop” evokes so many mental images, none of which probably includes a smoke-belching commuter railroad line from Athol to Springfield in the days before Quabbin was constructed. But that was the nickname of the railroad line that



*Site of the future model ‘Rabbit Run’ in the Carriage House*

was the lifeblood of the people and industries of the Swift River towns of Enfield, Dana, Prescott, and Greenwich. If you read a little history of the line, such as J.R. Greene’s two books, you learn that soapstone was transported from a mine in the North Dana; woolen mills, box and hat factories shipped their products out on the Rabbit; ice, hay, butter and cream went North to Athol and South to Springfield; and turkeys, cattle, lamb, eggs and chickens all traveled aboard the railroad. Since there was no high school in the Valley, the Rabbit Run provided vital transportation for students who traveled to Athol High School. Special religious and festive excursion trains left Athol for the different camps and ponds with pavilions or other entertainments. And even circus trains came through the valley on the same right of way as the Rabbit, heading for points west and east.

Wouldn’t you like to go back and take a look? Soon you will be able to. Ken Levine, member of the Amherst Railway Society has received a grant to recreate the Rabbit Run in HO scale. The model railroad will be located in the Carriage House of the Swift River Valley Historical Society at 55 Elm Street, New Salem. It will be 24 feet long and 3 to 4 feet wide and will have engines and rolling stock typical of the late steam era between the 1890s and 1920s. It will be prominently displayed during Museum open hours (Sundays and Wednesdays, 3 seasons) and for special programs. It will serve as an educational tool, attracting the public to see and understand the important history of these once vibrant communities and the importance of the railroad to commerce and society. While depicting an older time, the controls of the model will be of the modern age with digital controls, LED lights and digital sound effects plus interactive audio interviews of past residents’ stories. Work is underway on portions of the model layout. The site is prepped. Materials for the benchwork have been delivered; hills are being cast of plaster; buildings are being built and mounted on styrofoam for transport to the site.

# Quabbin in Classical Music

by Paul Godfrey



Photo by Les Campbell

Quabbin moves many people and moves them in very different ways. It is not surprising that the composers of classical music and the librettos for choral pieces experience those same feelings. I am not a composer of either music or poetry, but I very much appreciate classical music. So when I came across this piece, I had to listen. The piece is called the “un/bodying/s” and is composed by Gregory W. Brown who grew up in Exeter, New Hampshire, attended Philips Exeter Academy and was an undergraduate at Amherst College. His older brother is Dan Brown of Da Vinci Code fame. The text was written by Todd Hearon, an award-winning poet and teacher at Exeter Academy. The music is gorgeous, but I can’t give you that experience on this page. It is on the album “If There Were Water” by the Crossings, available at Amazon and elsewhere. To quote from Amazon:

**“un/bodying/s by composer Gregory W. Brown explores the history of the displaced populations of Quabbin, the Swift River Valley in Western Massachusetts, including the Native Americans moved by incoming Europeans, and then those Europeans relocated by the State when creating the massive reservoir that supplies Boston with water. Gregory and librettist Todd Hearon tell these stories from a variety of perspectives.”**

I can give you a flavor of the music in the text. Below is the text for the second and fifth movement of five by Todd Hearon. The five movements are titled: 1. The Meeting of the Water; 2) The Valley of Lost Names; 3) Questions for a Disincorporation; 4) Atlantis; and 5) Poem with Any End.

## 2. The Valley of Lost Names

*Think of a time our own names conjure  
nothing but a body of unbroken water*

*(Moon over Quabbin. Body of bottled light  
poured across the body of the water,  
something far, at the surface—finned or feathered?  
rolling in distress—)*

*at dawn the sudden, trumpeting eagle strikes.*

*The drowned towns, four-square, hymned in stave  
& stanza,  
swallowed walls on walls of song, each stone a tongue  
where the salmon canter over the meadow baffle dam  
& small-mouthed bass hosanna . . .*

*Too deeply now for any to remember  
so why does it seem important to remember  
when we will ourselves, these fluent selves, like water  
subsumed in greater water be impossible to remember  
to distinguish the veins in the hand that worked the lathe  
wove the straw, rippled at morning into a gesture of love or  
praise*

*or clipped the dewy lilac from its stem  
or turned the fieldstone into the sunken wall*

*of a cellar hole, the jam jars lined within  
the vagrant bittersweet unwinds among*

*when the shore recedes (in the twinkling of an eye)  
the tombs stick out like knees.*

*Deep in a time that is no longer time  
but the greater dissolutions of the water*

*within whose workings ever unspool our names  
as it were (as it will be) upon a ghostly bobbin . . .*

## 5. Poem with Any End

*When all this All doth pass from age to age—*

*this City on a Hill, its golden dome  
and cupolas a quiet sea floor,  
the crabbed, neurotic streets still disentangling  
obsessive thirst, obsessive westwardness . . .  
what is a city without water?*

*Rome, its spidered aqueducts  
bearing the bounty of barbaric springs  
down mountaining arches, a song in the valley  
sempiternal waters sing*

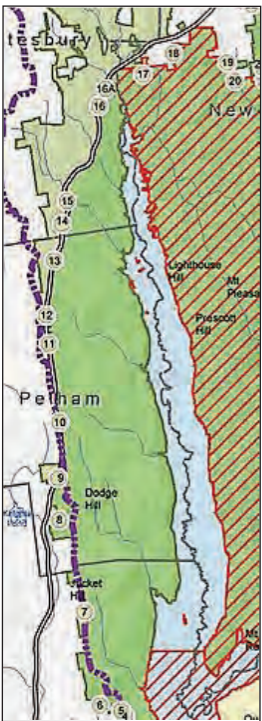
*over the sunken ponds & soapstone quarry,  
the Dipper rising with inscrutable stars  
over the village where they made the bobbins  
to slip down dark, infernal aqueducts  
(like shades to slake the high, titanic thirst  
of Boston) to Boston.*

Do you know of other musical pieces specifically about Quabbin?



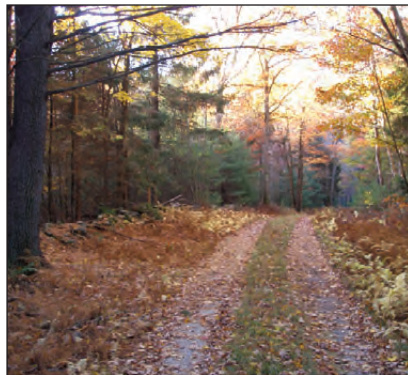
# Hike Along the Northwest Side of the Quabbin

by John Zebb



This year's lengthy hike in the Quabbin covered the bulk of the west side flanked by Rt. 202. It began at Gate 6 and ended at Gate 16A. Gate 6 is at the top of Juckett Hill Road in Belchertown, approximately opposite the south end of Prescott Peninsula. Gate 16A is at the bottom of a dangerous dip on Rt. 202 getting pretty near South New Salem and at the very northern end of the west branch of Quabbin. It is one of those spots going north on Rt. 202 that we all know that as difficult to approach and slow down simply because nobody wants to slow down behind you. You know the feeling.

The hike from Gate 6 to the intersection of Gate 11 is a straight shot north and has no complexities. It is a wonderful stretch of undulating classic Quabbin roadways. From Gate 11 to Gate 16 took some work and effort over the years to get straight. It involves two pieces of off-trail hiking and that is at another level in the Quabbin. However, there is a bit of excitement in the thought that you may be walking where nobody has stepped in eighty years, with the exception of the most ardent and determined hunter.



*The roadway from Gate 6 to Gate 8*

The effort from Gate 6 to Gate 12 yielded two man-made structures that I cannot with any confidence assign an historic use. The first photo reveals four posts seemingly too close to each other for a pen or building supports. I am open to suggestions on this little Stonehenge visible between Gate 8 and Gate 10 from the trail. The next image has the look of a tomb or massive well cap. I doubt it is either. This took some effort to



*Four closely spaced stone posts between Gate 8 and Gate 10*

construct and there are no other stones in the immediate area. It is off-trail between Gate 11 and Gate 12 south of the year-round deer weigh-station on the Gate 12 descent.

Comments welcome.

The real harvest of the day is to traverse the water's edge along all the most northern points adjacent to Prescott Peninsula. I have included pictures of the rarely photographed mouths of Briggs and Atherton Brooks as they flow into the main water basin. They develop some powerful flow after significant storms and spring melt. Much of the west side of Quabbin has a sharp bowl-like drop down towards the valley water accumulation.



*Mysterious site located between Gate 11 and Gate 12*

The shoreline requires agility and attention by the hiker but the alternative is dense pine and undergrowth that very often decides where you can go and becomes time consuming. The water level clearly dictates if this



*Mouth of Briggs Brook*

is possible from year to year.

One of the nicest long views of the reservation. The bottom of Gate 16 scanning the entire western water terrain with the Enfield Tower in



*Desolate beauty at the mouth of Atherton Brook*

the middle of the southern ridge line. The heavily forested water's edge to the right is where I hiked from in the previous pictures. Gate 16A is often shunned by day hikers in preference of entering at Gate 16 due to a sharp incline at the start. However, coming from the south as I was, it is a nice smooth decent and a welcome finish to the day.

I have done this hike before as part of a crazy marathon effort year's ago and parts of it many times before. My intent this season was to capture a photographic memory of the landscape and "smell the roses" on the way. (see photo page 11)

## Holiday Party 2019

by Anne Ely

This year, the Visitor Center was again host to the annual Friends of Quabbin Holiday Party. Thanks to Nancy Huntington for her cheery, seasonal decorations (even the deer and other critters around the room sported Santa hats).

The fifteen folks attending this year, although perhaps small in number, were by no means any less enthusiastic, or hungry. Everyone was anxious to try all of the interesting and delicious dishes which were spread out over two long tables. It was hard to curtail the munching on the always welcome appetizers, most of which I shouldn't eat, but I love kielbasa!

Main dishes were, as usual, of great variety. Who would think combining noodles with apples and raisins would make one forget they were eating pasta! Yeah, probably the bathroom scale would be a reminder. But then, if one also loaded up on a delicious meat and rice casserole, some Asian style dumplings, a large spoonful (or 2) of a curried chick pea dish, as well as several other yummy ones, I guess the noodle dish can't take all the blame. Actually, it's probably not the dishes that are to blame, but the partakers.

A video display on the TV monitor presented a view of the new postcards recently made for sale at the Visitor Center. This running slide show gave folks, who may not have been aware of them, a view of the 28 new cards which are a mix of historical photos and beautiful new images from local photographers, most of whom are members of the Friends of Quabbin.

After relaxing, perhaps with some coffee, tea, or hot spiced cider, and chatting for a while, there began a migration toward the dessert table. "Oh, maybe just a tiny slice of that pie.", "Are



those chocolate and peanut butter, wow.", "Oh, bread pudding, I haven't had that in ages." "No, gotta save room for the cake." were among the mutterings heard around the table.

The above-mentioned cake being the delicious fruit-filled cake, to which every year, the first cuts are made by any former residents of the four "Quabbin towns" in attendance. This year Deanna Krusiewicz was the only former resident present, and she did the honors beautifully. Some folks enjoyed their cake there and then and others, like myself, took theirs home to enjoy later. Why I took mine home, I don't know, as I ate it almost as soon as I got in the door.

And so, another Holiday Party came to a close. Everyone seemed to enjoy it from the oldest, Paul Godfrey's mother-in-law, Sylvia Sherwood (one month shy of 95) to the youngest—me, of course. Ha! Don't I wish.

## Meetings & Events

### Tuesday Teas

Tuesday Teas are held at the Visitor Center on the 1st Tuesday of each month from 1 to 3 p.m. For each Tuesday Tea, we try to have a relatively short segment, usually a video, helping us learn more about the Quabbin history and environment. We try to give you early notice of topics and speakers for these. But sometimes, opportunities or problems occur in the short term and cause changes in the schedule on short notice. Tuesday Teas are **not** for "Members Only." All are welcome, regardless of your connection to the Quabbin Valley. Magic often happens.

### Photo Club Meetings

**The Quabbin Photo Group** (<http://www.quabbinphotogroup.org>) meetings are on the 4th Monday at the Hope United Methodist Church, 31 Main St., Belchertown, MA beginning at 7:30 p.m. Meetings alternate between guest speakers and member's nights where members and guests can bring 10 to 15 images for sharing, either in digital or 35mm slide format. The event schedule is: January 27, 2020 – Members Night (bring 10 to 15 images to share); February 24 – Marvin Moriarty (title TBA); March 23 – snow date for Marvin, otherwise Members Night (bring 10 to 15 images to share); April 27 – Steve Gingold (title TBA).

**The Pioneer Valley Photographic Artists** (<http://www.pvphotoartists.org/>) meet on the last Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Hope United Methodist Church, 31 Main St., Belchertown, MA. The annual meeting is in January. Check their website for more information.

### DCR Presentations

Quabbin Reservoir will offer several free presentations this winter. All ages are welcome. Programs are scheduled on Sunday afternoons from 2–3 p.m. (413) 323-7221 for more information.

**Sunday, January 19, 2–3 p.m.**

**Unlocking the History of the Earliest Registrants of Automobiles in Central Massachusetts** – Join collector Alan Young to learn about the history of license plate issuance and automobile registration in Massachusetts. With a particular focus on an actual 1910 license plate that was issued to a prominent Enfield registrant, the presentation will be interactive with trivia questions and vintage license plates given out as prizes. Attendees are welcome and encouraged to bring examples of early license plates that they may have for discussion and questions.

**Sunday, February 9, 2–3 p.m.**

**Regional Consequences of Global Warming** – How is global warming due to human activity impacting us here in New England? How will we mitigate future climate change and adapt to changes already underway both regionally and around the world? Join Ambarish Karmalkar, Research Fellow at the Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center and a Research Assistant Professor at the Department of Geosciences at UMass

*Hike continued from page 9*



*Gate 16 beach vista to Enfield Tower on the horizon*

Amherst for this presentation as well as a discussion on some of the current advances in climate change science.

**Sunday, February 16, 2–3 p.m.**

**Discovering the Other Lost Valley** – Before the Swift River Valley was cleared and flooded, 23,000 acres were taken along the Ware River in Barre, Oakham, Rutland, and Hubbardston in a project designed to supplement the waters of the new reservoir. 350 people lost their homes in this project and three villages were removed. Join Maria Beiter-Tucker, Quabbin Visitor Center Manager, to learn more about the other lost valley, why it was cleared and the role the Ware River Watershed plays in protecting the water supply of 3 million Massachusetts residents.

**Sunday, February 23, 2–3 p.m.**

**Quabbin Enters the Digital Age** – As part of the Quabbin Project, thousands of photographs were taken of the properties purchased and removed by the Metropolitan District Water Supply Commission to build the reservoir. The photos are a fascinating window into the world of the Quabbin Valley as it existed prior to 1938. In the next year, the photos will finally be widely available to view through the Digital Commonwealth project. Join the DCR Archivist and MWRA project intern metadata archivist to learn more about the project and how to access the photos.

**Sunday, March 1, 2–3 p.m.**

**Voyagers, Visitors and Home** – Join our former colleague Dale Monette as he debuts his newest book of wildlife images. This book focuses on birds that visit New England just for a stopover during migration, birds that spend months here, or birds and mammals that live here and call New England home. Five years in the making and many miles traveled, not to mention the gallons of blood lost to mosquitos in ponds and swamps! Here are the images and the stories behind them. Also included is a section on the successful bald eagle introduction as a nesting species to Massachusetts that took place at The Quabbin Reservoir during the 1980s by MassWildlife.

**Sunday, March 8, 2–3 p.m.**

**The National Ecological Observatory Network:**

**Open data to understand how our aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems are changing.** Land use changes and habitat loss have resulted in an overall loss of biodiversity across much of the country. Kristin Godfrey (the Northeast regional manager for the project) will discuss how NEON collects and provides open data from across the U.S. that show how our nation’s ecosystems are changing. NEON hopes to contribute to a better understanding of how human activities impact ecology and how our society can more effectively address critical ecological issues.”

**Sunday, March 15, 2–3 p.m.**

**“Fabric, Factories and Fashion” A history of textiles in the Quabbin Valley** – Fabric manufacturing was a staple of many small Massachusetts towns, including Enfield, MA. Join DCR Interpreter Nancy Huntington to discover the impact of these businesses on the growth of the Quabbin Valley towns and the lives of their residents.

**Sunday, March 22, 2–3 p.m.**

**Ticks and Tick-Borne Disease in Massachusetts and Across the US** – The Laboratory of Medical Zoology based at UMass Amherst receives over 15,000 ticks from across the country and abroad, and tests those ticks for over twenty pathogens they may carry. Join Paul Killenger to learn about results of tick and pathogen passive surveillance the lab provides as well as tick infection rates and other risk factors that contribute to tick-borne disease in humans. He will also offer practical advice on preventing tick bites and follow-up steps in case a tick does bite.

**Sunday, March 29, 7:30 p.m. Quabbin Park (RESERVATIONS REQUIRED) Walk the Milky Way** – Professor James Lowenthal of the Smith College Department of Astronomy will discuss recent results on distant galaxies over 10 billion light years away. We’ll then step outside for a short walk in the night-time environment when 80% of mammal species and many birds and insects are active, and we’ll observe our own Milky Way Galaxy if skies are clear. Bring sturdy waterproof footwear and winter clothing, and only red flashlights please to preserve our night vision. Call 413-323-7221 for reservations. Reservations will be taken after March 15.

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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](mailto: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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**Quabbin Voices**

is the periodic newsletter of the Friends of Quabbin, Inc.



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