

Winter 2022 Vol.34 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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All meetings and events may be cancelled due to the Coronavirus. Check the organization's web page or call beforehand.



# Beavers at Quabbin by Jillian Whitney, DCR Wildlife Biologist

If you take a walk anywhere within the Quabbin watershed you will likely come across a beaver site. After being extirpated from Massachusetts for over two hundred years due to trapping during the fur trade era and loss of habitat, the beavers have returned. Beaver, North America's largest rodent and 'Nature's Engineer' are now abundant throughout many parts of Massachusetts. They create their



Beaver chewing tree. Photo by Dale Monette.

pond, an abandoned pond once occupied by beaver or even a beaver meadow, the remnants of a once active beaver site. These sites provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife and plants.

The Prescott peninsula located within the Quabbin watershed is an area that has been kept off limits since the creation of the reservoir. The area was set aside for ecological and wildlife research. In 1952 beaver were discovered on the peninsula. A long-term monitor-



North American Beaver, Castor canadensis. Photo by Dale Monette.

own habitat by damming streams to make a ponded area, or by building a lodge in a pond or lake that is already established. You may come across an active ing plan was developed and, since then, has been conducted. From 1952 to the present, the Prescott area has been surveyed 55 times for beaver activity. That makes the annual Prescott beaver survey one of the longest run-



*Beaver slapping its tail in warning. Photo by Dale Monette.* 

ning beaver surveys in the country. The shoreline is surveyed by boat each year and there are 39 interior routes that are surveyed. When the surveys began in 1952 there were two beaver colonies. The highest number of colonies recorded to date was 39 in 1981.



Gene Theroux

## President's Message Winter 2022

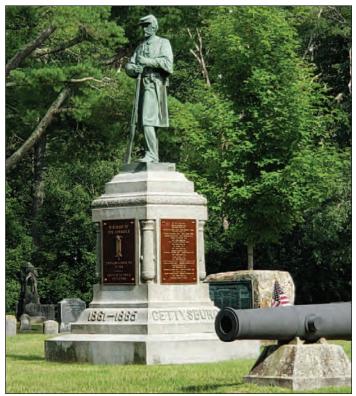
On behalf of the Friends of Quabbin, I hope that each of you have a healthy, rewarding, and Happy New Year! In reflecting on the last year, with the lin-

gering effects of the COVID pandemic, I gave some thought to quotes suitable for this New Year. Of the many quotes that might apply, there are a few that I like most, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson's, "Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.", J.P. Morgan's, "The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide you're not going to stay where you are." and lastly Brad Paisley's, "Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one." This forthcoming New Year brings some significant anniversaries of the Quabbin Valley to mind, such as January 28, 2022, both the bicentennial of the former town of Prescott, and the 38th year of the founding of the Friends of Quabbin.

There are a lot of initiatives and projects on the horizon for 2022 where members and volunteers will have opportunities to contribute. For example, to commemorate what would have been the bicentennial for the town of Prescott, the Friends of Quabbin plan to publish several articles throughout 2022 to celebrate Prescott's history and to highlight some of its former residents. There will also be postings to social media and the Friends of Quabbin website. There are many direct descendants from the former town of Prescott, and we are seeking their help with family stories and historic family photos that we can include as part of this Prescott series. Those interested in assisting with stories and photos of the three villages of Prescott are welcome to contribute. There are a number of resources available in the public domain for research such as the Internet Archive for the History of Prescott, the History of Pelham, Mass from 1738 to 1898 which includes the early history of Prescott, town reports, and interviews from the Friends of Quabbin Oral History collection, and other sources on Quabbin history.

Another initiative will include assisting the Ware Historical Commission in adding Quabbin Park Cemetery (QPC) to the National Register of Historical Places. The Ware Historical Commission invited the Friends of Quabbin to their November 22, 2021 meeting to discuss this initiative. The Friends of Quabbin was represented by President Gene H. Theroux and Friends Board of Directors member Elena Palladino. The Ware Historical Commission Chair Lynn Lak and members of the commission extended both hospitality and their willingness to engage on the National Register submission. The discussion included the many challenges and obstacles to overcome in preparing the comprehensive submission package for the National Register application for Quabbin Park Cemetery. Some of the challenges would include completing the registration forms with pages of descriptions on the cemetery, historical gravestones, the stonecutter if known, and much more including bibliographical and geographical information, etc. The Ware Historical Commission had previously done an inventory of sculptured monuments in QPC over 40 years ago. The Friends of Quabbin began a project with volunteers in 2018 to assemble a full inventory of the cemetery and some good work was accomplished through that effort. The results of that inventory indicated that there were missing gravestones, many fallen gravestones, leaners, and fragmented gravestones. The situation in the cemetery is not static and an annual survey needs to occur.

Since we brought the condition of QPC maintenance to widespread attention, other improvements have been made. These include automated cemetery records and visibility of the recorded interments which provide the capability to search for: ownership of deeds and lots, burials by name and to display the original burial card and map of grave location, burials transferred from the 34 former cemeteries to locations other than QPC, and a process to use for application for a permit to clean cemetery stonework. This database used by DCR provides the ability to share this information more effectively. And it is critical that the FOQ uses the same tools, software, and applications for an accurate and consistent geographic coordinate system for the position, status and condition of gravestones of those interred.



Dana Civil War Monument

The Friends of Quabbin is a support organization of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (Quabbin) and we have been working hard towards partnering with DCR for the conservation and preservation of QPC. The Friends of Quabbin can assist DCR/Quabbin by advocating for resources for conservation of the monuments, sculptures, and bronze plaques. The Civil War bronze sculpture at QPC is in dire need of conservation as is the bronze plaque of the Dana Honor Roll.



The Smith and Rindge sculptured marble statues are well overdue in conservation. These artifacts require a recurring maintenance or preservation schedule. It is incumbent upon the Friends to advocate and to solicit support from our representatives in the legislative branches of

> state government to ensure that these historical resources are conserved.

One of the tools that DCR and the FOQ have limited access to is Esri's *ArcGIS Survey* 123. It is a complete, form-centric

solution for creating, sharing, and analyzing surveys. *Survey 123* provides the ability to

Smith Family Monument

create smart forms so that we may collect data via the web or via mobile devices, even when disconnected from the internet. The Survey 123 device (tablet or smartphone) could be populated from data extracted from the QPC Grave Locator application and the tablet or smartphone could verify gravestones and to update the conditions of the gravestone photos which could be uploaded securely for further analysis.



Another issue that we remain vigilant on is

Rindge Family Monument

the state of the Keystone Bridge. We have highlighted the collapse on one side of the bridge in the summer 2021 as initially reported by Janice and Randy Stone. Since then, we have encouraged DCR to do everything possible to save this unique landmark in the Quabbin watershed. Two DCR





Keystone Bridge Collapse 2021

engineers have indicated that nothing can be done; Dan Clark, DCR is attempting to get funds to have an independent dry stone mason evaluate it. We seem to be stuck on that. It might be possible for FOQ to assist in funding this step and, possibly, even assisting in the reconstruction. The latter would require serious fund-raising.

In short, there are two ways that an individual can help. The first is to volunteer time and effort such as in cleaning gravestones or helping locate gravestones for the developing geographic database.

A second way is to donate funds that might be used to purchase supplies for the volunteers, facilitate the development of the application for National Register status, pay for the cost of an outside estimate by a dry stone mason to reconstruct the Keystone Bridge and, even, to pay for some of that reconstruction. Even if these contributions cannot pay the full cost, they send a very powerful message to others such as state agencies, state legislators and private entities that these are important community priorities. The Friends is a tax-deductible charity with the potential to assemble the individual contributions of many into a potent force that can make things happen that we all will look back on with pride.

To learn more of these initiatives or to volunteer, please send a brief description of what your interests are or how you'd like to help to **info@foquabbin.org**.

### Beavers in Quabbin

(Continued from page 1)

The annual survey consists of several parts. A key element of a long-term monitoring survey is a well-designed plan of conduct that is followed closely every year so that information from one year to another may be accurately compared. The Quabbin beaver survey consists of two basic parts: a shoreline survey and an interior routes survey. Both elements are conducted in the same week in mid-



Beaver lodge (right) with food cache (left), Photo by Jillian Whitney.



Beaver grooming its webbed feet. Photo by Dale Monette.

search of beaver and if they're lucky, they might get to see other wildlife like moose, bear, deer, coyote, birds, and many more of the critters that call the Prescott peninsula home. These internal routes are identical each year, a key factor in making year-to-year comparisons valid. Any routes that might not be covered by the researchers and volunteers are completed in the same week by Natural Resources staff and additional staff within the agency.

When walking along a route there are key signs to looks for. In the fall, beavers are preparing for winter. Once the pond freezes, they will spend the season in their lodge accessing the food they gathered and stored right outside the entrance to their lodge. This fresh bunch of collected branches is called a food cache. This is one of the key indicators that points towards an active beaver colony.



Photo by Dale Monette.

gists, other agency researchers and other trained volunteers. The shoreline survey consists of wildlife biologists in a boat examining the entire Prescott shoreline for evidence of beaver activity. In that same week, participants *Tree freshly chewed by beaver.* are separated into small groups and

November. An effort of this scale necessitates the use of both staff wildlife biolo-



Beaver working on a dam. Photo by Dale Monette.

given assigned internal routes to survey for signs of beaver activity. They take off into the woods in Additionally, surveyors will look for fresh mud on their lodge, fresh chew along the shoreline of their pond, and fresh mud on the dam to prevent water from flowing over or leaking through.

The 2021 Prescott beaver survey ended with 11 active beaver sites (9 active interior routes, 2 active shoreline routes). With the warm start to winter and the continua-





Two beaver swimming together. Photo by Dale Monette.

tion of rain, the beaver, are still active. But snow and freezing temperatures are just around the corner and the beaver should be ready to hunker down until spring. So, when you're out on a stroll in the woods, look around for some fresh chew, mud, and a food cache. And, if you're lucky, you might just see a beaver cruising around its pond.

Beaver dam in fall. Photo by Jillian Whitney.

### My Latest Adventure at Gate 5 Text and photos by Mark Lindhult

On a wintery Saturday afternoon I had a very eventful walk down Old Enfield Road to the Quabbin. As I got down to the water, there were two juvenile eagles flying by in opposite directions. One landed in a pine tree not far from my favorite cove where I sat to watch what might happen. After 20 minutes, the other eagle flew in and joined the first on the same branch. As I sat on a rock photographing the eagles, I heard a snort and looked over to see a river otter with its head way up and swimming by. He looked at me and then dove under and swam into the cove—mostly underwater. First two otters emerged at the far end of the cove where some ice had formed. A moment later there were three and then four and



they all began to frolic chasing one another and rolling around on the ice. After being entertained by them, two Mergansers



swam into the cove for the grand finale while the otters sneaked out on the opposite side of the cove. What a memorable Quabbin experience!

### Back Home to Quabbin by Mary L. Midura

The goal was to hike Camelback Mountain in Phoenix, Arizona, elevation 2,706'. To ensure we were physically prepared, my husband and I used our recently retired days from August to November for daily hikes in Quabbin, adding in hikes of Mount Greylock, Mount Wachusett, Doane's Falls, Mount Watatic, Norwattuck Trail, Mount Holyoke, Mount Sugarloaf and Peaked Mountain.

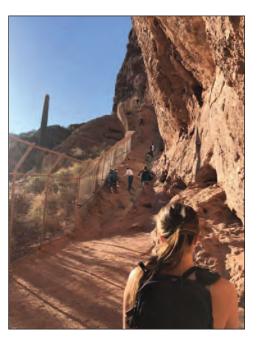
On the day after Thanksgiving, we hiked Camelback. The entrance sign states "Extremely Difficult", and it definitely was for me. A constant flowing crowd of climbers of all abilities and levels were on the mountain that day. A week later, we hiked Brown Ranch Trail to the summit of Brown Mountain, elevation 3,253'. The views and red dirt rock and heat of Arizona combined to make the strenuous climbs into truly wonderful accomplishments!

In contrast to the crowds and the physical strain of our western hiking, we felt happiness to return to "our" Quabbin last week on a chilly December morning. We had a fully renewed appreciation for the Quabbin and the serenity it constantly gives. It is so often possible to hike a trail here and only meet a pheasant or lone deer. On these treks, we carry the "ten essentials" and use our hiking sticks for those moments when the knee informs me that it is essential to my very existence. The Quabbin supplies us both with the attitude of gratitude.

Now we wait for that winter snowstorm that gives enough ground cover to strap on our snowshoes and pack the hot

cocoa for a full morning hike. To cross deer tracks in the snow, spot an eagle, or hear the obligatory airplane above (there is always an airplane above); this is what the Quabbin constantly gives to those of us who visit.

Echo Trail, Camelback Mountain, AZ and its warning sign.







Quabbin Reservoir from Observation Tower.

## More Friends Have Left Us

Longtime members of the Friends of Quabbin and regular Tuesday Tea participants, Earl and Lois Cooley have died in the last two years. Earl died April 25, 2020; he was 95 years old. Lois died August 9, 2021. She was 91. They were married) for 71 years. They were mainstays of Tuesday Teas.

They both loved the Quabbin, especially Dana where their daughter, Suzanne, worked to add Dana to the National Register and granddaughter Kayley won a Girl Scout Gold Award for her "pictures on a post" of the original buildings located at the remaining cellar holes and where Earl served as President of the Dana Reunion. Both were also regular attendees at the Quabbin Park Cemetery Memorial Services, placing a wreath at the stone commemorating the town of Dana.



Earl (known affectionately as "Bumpa") served in the Army Air Corp during World War II as crew chief on the Douglas C-47 Skytrain (known affectionately as "The Gooneybird"). Not long ago, he got a chance to take a remembrance flight with his daughter, Suzanne. Earl had flown missions in North Africa and Southwest Asia serving with the 1274th Army Air Force Base Unit.

After the

war, he worked for Massachusetts Electric as a lineman for 40 years. He was active in the Barre Congregational Church for 63 years, Barre Boy Scouts for 59 years, Post 2 American Legion in Barre, The Mason's and Barre Little League.

Earl married Lois Adams on July 31, 1949 and they celebrated their 70th anniversary in 2019. Lois Lois Cooley was also active in their church and a



regular at Tuesday Teas and Dana Reunions. At the March 2019 Tuesday Tea, her daughter, Suzanne, surprised Lois with a birthday cake. Tuesday Tea goers discreetly did not ask which birthday. They are survived by 6 children with another 1 deceased, a sister and brother, 12 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

They will be dearly missed by the Friends.

Recently, the Friends of Quabbin lost its eldest member. Harold Oehler died at the age of 104, being in good health until 2021. Harold was born in Holyoke in 1917 and grew



Lois and Earl Cooley watch their daughter, Susanne Martin cut the surprise birthday cake at the March 2019 Tuesday Tea.

up in South Hadley. He spent a good part of his teenage years hunting and fishing in the Quabbin area. He joined the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) at the age of 18 and studied and earned a degree in forestry management at UMass' Stockbridge School. In 1940, he enlisted in the

Army and during WWII was assigned to the South Pacific as an Artillery Company Commander with 150 men under his command and attained the rank of captain. He had a distinguished military career, earning a Soldier's Medal for heroism in November 1944 for saving the life of a fellow serviceman. He was a longtime member of the Stafford American Legion Post 26 and was



awarded a Certificate of Continuous Memberhip for 50 years of service as an outstanding contributor to their programs. In 1965, he bought Matteson Lumber in Stafford Springs CT and worked there with his wife, Gladys for 25 years. In 1997, Gladys and Harold celebrated 56 years of marriage; she passed away in November of 1997. He is survived by three children and three grandchildren.

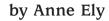
The FOQ was lucky enough to have him join us at Tuesday Tea several times thanks to his very good friend Rich Locke. Rich encouraged Harold to share his life experiences and brought Harold to Tuesday Tea from his home in Stafford, CT so he could visit with us and share wonderful memories from his life. Harold had a delightful sense of humor and could tell a story in captivating detail. We were pleased to celebrate his 102nd birthday in October 2019 and note his 104th birthday in Quabbin Voices in Fall of 2021. We now sadly note his passing.

## Quabbin's Peace by Anne Ely

How beautiful the Quabbin skies the sun smiles down again. The hills resound with glorious sounds from all the life within. It's both a wild and peaceful place; it makes our spirits sing Such beauty, though, came at a price, that of much suffering. It was a long, heartbreaking time, but perhaps of hope, too. For some, the hope of a new life; others lost all they knew. That city, oh so far away, needed water they had. It was the beginning of the end; even the land was sad. They say all wounds with time will heal I hope that this holds true, And that the beauty of this place will broken hearts renew.



## Mother Nature's "Still Life"





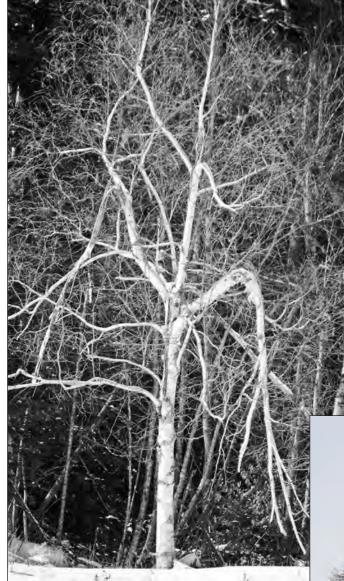
It's taken me a while, but I've learned when out on my Quabbin rambles to no longer say "There's nothing here today." If I exercise a bit of patience something always seems to come along. But recently I've discovered that sometimes there really isn't anything around, at least nothing shows itself. Even when I sit quietly waiting; no creatures, no birds, just a world of silence. In the past, I would have been discouraged because each time I venture out I love having what I would call a "successful" day with life bubbling up all around me. But, I've lately come to appreciate the stillness.

Some artists paint "wildlife" and some paint "still life." Mother Nature, I've discovered, has amazing models posing for each category. Sitting in the silence, with no movements or sounds to distract me, I find myself appreciating Mother Nature's "still life."

For example, that big maple tree in front of me; if I had been scanning it for some kind of wildlife to appear so I could photograph it, would I have noticed that small fungus growing on it? Probably not. But now my attention is drawn to the soft creamy white color of the, as yet unidentifiable, rounded shapes emerging from a crevice in the bark of the tree. I wonder what kind of fungus it is. I will have to return again to see what shape it takes as it grows.

Looking to my left my eye catches a bare, leafless crabapple tree. A recent light snowfall has outlined each branch, highlighting every crook and curve; not wildlife, but definitely a subject for a black and white photograph.





I'm so used to watching the skies for a glimpse of an eagle or hawk I don't think I've ever really looked at, or noticed, the beautiful artistic shapes formed by the trees in their winter nakedness. In their summer and fall finery they are grounded, part of the land around me. But in winter with their bare, gray branches (those same bare branches that often tend to bring on the winter doldrums), they seem to grow taller, stretching upward. Today I see them with new eyes. I see their individuality as they reach up to the sky; some beautifully symmetrical; some with tall upright bodies and small arching crowns while others appear scraggly and Halloween-ish, their angular branches like arms and bony fingers that seem to be reaching out ready to grab. Beech trees, always reluctant to let their leaves go, provide a touch of color to the overall gray landscape as many of their orange marmalade-colored leaves are still clinging to the naked branches.

I may not go home with as many photographs as I might were I seeing and photographing "wildlife," but every time I turn my head something new catches my eye and I can take my time with it. No need to rush, nothing's going to fly or run away. It's Nature's "Still Life," and it's really worth "seeing."





A dusting of that same snow along the nearby remains of an old stone wall with its varying shades of gray and black has created an interesting abstract. No matter that there's no chipmunk peeking out from among the stones, it's a worthwhile photo in itself.

## Quabbin Interpretive Services Winter 2022

#### by Maria Beiter-Tucker

After reopening this summer, the DCR Quabbin Visitor Center staff were able to offer programs to the general public and to a number of schools as well.





Dana Common walk participants

In September, October and November the Interpretive staff offered a number of outdoor programs, starting with a recreational hike in September. Justin Gonsor led a group of visitors on a hike up to the top of Quabbin Hill. The visitors were eager to explore some the Quabbin Park trails and learn more about what opportunities for recreation exist in the area.

In October, Maria Beiter-Tucker led a tour of the Quabbin Park Cemetery. The attendees were interested to learn some history about the valley towns and their residents as well as the history of the development of the cemetery itself.

> Lastly in November, Maria led a walk along the road to Dana Common. The tour focused on the history of the former residents and homes but also covered the history of the reservoir itself and the changes to the landscape and management of the watershed forest.

Besides offering public programs, Visitor Center staff were also excited to work with a number of schools who brought their students to Quabbin Park for outdoor tours.

Unable to welcome large groups inside the Visitor Center, instead the staff visited schools for presentations and met the students for hikes along Webster Road and Hanks Meadow. The staff hopes that this upcoming spring more schools will be able to return to Quabbin for field trips.

The Visitor Center continues to be open Thursday through Monday from 8:30 to 4:30pm. In January, the Visitor Center will also reopen on Tuesdays, i.e the Visitor Center will only be closed on Wednesdays starting in 2022.

Beginning on Sunday, January 23 a series of winter programs will be offered remotely (via the web) with topics ranging from the Ware River Watershed to Common Loons and an author Q&A with Elizabeth Rosenberg about her new book, *Before the Flood: Destruction, Community, and Survival in the Drowned Towns of the Quabbin.* Along with the winter remote programs, Visitor Center staff will also offer a number of outdoor programs, weather permitting.

Look for information on how to register for these programs in January at www.mass.gov/dcr/watershed or email QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov.

# ..... Visitor Center Winter Program Schedule.....

## Remote Winter Programs— Our Computer to Yours

#### Discovering the Other Lost Valley Sunday, January 23, 2:00pm-3:00pm, (Remote)

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.

Link will be provided via email.

Email QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov for more information

### Life of a Common Loon

Sunday, February 6, 2:00pm-3:00pm, (Remote)

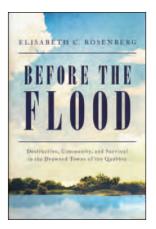


The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) watersheds are breeding areas for the largest concentration of Common Loons in Massachusetts. Join DCR Wildlife Biologist Jill Whitney for a program about these beautiful birds, how they are monitored and what we have learned about them.

Link will be provided via email.

Email QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov for more information

Before the Flood: Destruction, Community, and Survival in the Drowned Towns of the Quabbin: A Conversation with the Author Sunday February 20, 2:00pm-3:00pm, (Remote)



Elisabeth Rosenberg, author of Before the Flood: Destruction, Community, and Survival in the Drowned Towns of the Quabbin, will be discussing the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir and the Depression-era "communities of necessity" that developed between the residents of the doomed Swift River Valley towns and the engineers sent to the valley to remove them. The talk will be structured around audience Q&A.

#### Space limited. Registration required.

**Email QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov** for more information. Book for sale at the Visitor Center – \$27.95

## Outdoor Winter Programs

Saturday, January 22 11:00am-1:00pm (Outdoor)

Exploring Quabbin Park via the 'East Gate trail' and 'Goodnough Dike Vista Trail' 3.8 miles, moderate

Saturday, February 5 1:00-2:00pm, (Outdoor)

Exploring the History of the Quabbin Valley Through Gravestones: Walking Tour of the Quabbin Park Cemetery .25 miles, easy

WANTED!

by Paul Godfrey, Editor

Elsewhere in this newsletter is the statement "This is your newsletter. We invite members to submit stories, articles or reminiscences about the human or natural history of the Swift River and Quabbin Reservoir." It is in

tiny print and probably unnoticed by most (can you find it?), but I take it very seriously. Recent issues have had a number of articles by members: Moods of Light by Mark Lindhult, Further Detective Work by Marty Howe, Aunt Lottie by Barbara Baines, Quabbin Eagles Still Going Strong by Anne Ely, Memories of an Eight to Ten Year Old by Bradlee Gage and, in this issue, Back Home by Mary Midura. So let me encourage you, the reader, to think about your experiences at Quabbin and consider submitting an article. I will work closely with you to make your article something to be proud of.

## Friends of Quabbin 2021-2022 Officers and Board of Directors

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#### Call for Member Submissions

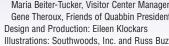
This is your newsletter. We invite members to submit stories, articles, or reminiscences about the human or natural history of the Swift River Valley and Quabbin Reservoir.

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



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

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