

Quabbin Voices

The Friends of Quabbin Newsletter



Summer 2022
Vol.35 No.2

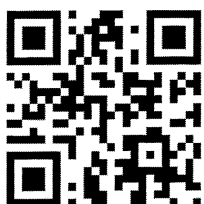
We must hear and listen to all of Quabbin's many Voices. Voices of the Past, as well as Voices of the Present and of the Future. Voices of the Trees, the Sky, the Rain that falls, and all the Wild Things; Voices of the People who depend on this valuable resource for their daily needs of clean water,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



Memorial Day Services at Quabbin Park Cemetery

by Paul Godfrey



For those who attended the 2021 Memorial Day services, the 2022 services were a very welcome change. In 2021, it was a cold, raw and, then, drenching experience. For 2022, it was a beautiful, sunny day, even hot. Improvements were made in more than the weather.

The Administration Building had a new look with fresh paint and general improvement all

over. The trees that used to divide part of the cemetery where the ceremony is held were gone. Thoughtfully, DCR had placed some tents to replace their shade. Refreshments were abundant and people were ready to both remember those lost over the years and enjoy the company of friends, unrestricted by COVID or bad weather.

As usual, the ceremony started with the short march of veterans and historical groups from the front of the Administration Building to the rotary area and behind the Civil War monument and memorials to the towns.

Keith Poulin, Past Commander of American Legion Post #239, presided as Master of Ceremonies for the event, as he has for many years. He gave the invocation

and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Gettysburg Address *(Continued on page 4)*



Parade to the Town Memorials



Array of Historical Society banners



Gene Theroux

President's Message

Summer 2022

There are numerous heroes who are interred in Quabbin Park Cemetery. Some of those who were wounded in combat or died of their wounds and were awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

If you have wondered about the origin of the Purple Heart Award, you may be surprised to learn that its predecessor was awarded to a local resident.

What now is known as the Purple Heart began as the Badge of Military Merit, established by George Washington on August 7, 1782. At that time, and for many decades afterwards, there were very few awards that common soldiers could receive in service of their country.



An artist's rendition of George Washington presenting Badges of Military Merit to Sgt. Elijah Churchill (pictured on right) and Sgt. William Brown, a member of the 5th Connecticut Regiment, Continental Line, on May 3, 1783. (Center of Military History).

Recognizing that the Continental Army was fighting a tough campaign, in which supplies were scarce, and pay was low, Washington felt a need to encourage his troops by establishing an award for valor and meritorious service. This

established a precedent within awards systems for valor, defined as heroic actions in combat and merit, i.e., proper performance of military duties not related to combat.

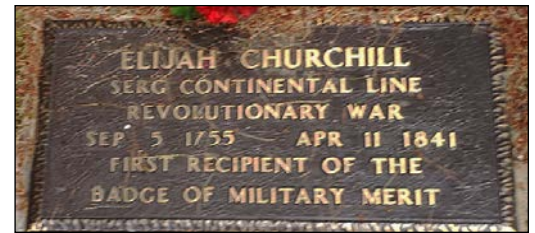
On August 7, 1782, while at his Newburgh, New York headquarters, General George Washington created the Badge of Military Merit. This award was to recognize "singularly meritorious action" by enlisted soldiers, marking the first time that soldiers below the rank of officer were so honored. Sergeant Elijah Churchill of the 2nd Continental Dragoons and



Badge of Military Merit in the shape of a purple heart.

Sergeant William Brown of Connecticut Line Infantry were summoned to Washington's headquarters in the spring of 1783 to be presented the Badge of Military Merit.

Once the American Revolutionary War was over, Churchill moved to Massachusetts and in 1784 he possibly lived in what would become



Marker at foot of Elijah Churchill's gravesite at Bell Cemetery, Middlefield, Massachusetts.

Enfield. He soon moved to Middlefield, Massachusetts where he died on April 11, 1841. He is interred at Bell Cemetery, Middlefield, Hampshire County, Massachusetts.

After the Revolutionary War, the Badge fell into disuse. In 1932 it was revived, redesigned, and renamed the Purple Heart by General Douglas MacArthur to honor the memory of George Washington on his 200th birthday. On May 28th, 1932, 138 World War I Army veterans who had served meritoriously received the first Purple Hearts at the New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site, the final encampment of the Continental Army. In 1942, by Executive Order, President Franklin Roosevelt expanded the award of the Purple Heart to include all branches of military service and approved a posthumous award for any military service member killed in combat on or after December 6, 1941. The Purple Heart now honors any member of U. S. military forces wounded, killed, or who died of wounds while serving under competent military authority in any capacity, retroactive to April 5, 1917. An interesting article: "The Purple Heart, The Story of America's Oldest Military Decoration and Some Soldier Recipients" by Fred Borch (<http://armyhistory.org/the-purple-heart-the-story-of-americas-oldest-military-decoration-and-some-soldier-recipients/>).



Current Purple Heart medal with Washington's likeness.

There are numerous Purple Heart recipients interred at Quabbin Park Cemetery, including some Killed-in-Action in America's wars and others from the Valley who have a cenotaph indicating that their remains are either buried elsewhere or their remains were never found. As we celebrate Independence Day, let us never forget those whose service and sacrifice made it possible for us to have a barbecue or to attend fireworks in our community.

Poet's Corner

by Anne Ely

Quabbin After the Rain

It's early morning and I'm starting my day with a drive through Quabbin. It rained pretty steadily yesterday afternoon and early evening and, even with the car windows closed, I can hear the roar of the water as it rushes down the Spillway. I roll the windows down and, oh my, how fresh the air is. The kind of fresh I wish I could capture in a big bottle and release in my house. It would put all those "fresh scent" air fresheners to shame. With the windows down I'm also aware of all the bird song floating through the air; music to my ears.

As I drive slowly along, a touch of lavender catches my eye; the single blossom of a wild geranium or cranesbill is poking up among a patch of new fern greenery. I pull over and snap a picture. It still has a couple of water drops on its petals as it greets the morning sun.

A loud, strong whee-eep sound draws my attention and, although I don't see him, I know a great crested flycatcher is awake and waiting for his morning meal. As the air warms and insects take wing, I'm sure I'll see him and other flycatchers as they spring forth from various perches and, with arial agility, nab insects in mid-air, often returning to the same perch to await their next grab-and-go meal.

A short way down the road I pull off onto one of my "bird spots" and turn off the car. I have seen numerous birds here in the past... flickers, redstarts, towhees, as well as the usual catbirds and robins. I get out my binoculars and have my camera at the ready, although I'm not really expecting any of the avian visitors to find an open branch and pose for me. But if I'm not ready, one of them surely will.

Mostly, I enjoy just sitting here with my windows open, listening to the various songs. I try to locate the particular bird based on where I think the song is coming from. I'm not really good at this, so I practice every chance I get. The small, colorful redstarts hang out here, always singing cheerfully from somewhere in the trees. I hear them clearly, but can never seem to spot them unless I catch their movements, or see them fly to a new location. Even then there's usually a leafy branch in front of them.

The sun has warmed the air and I'm now aware of the fragrant scent of the pines which is just as pleasing as the freshness after the rain.

They say time flies when you're having fun, and suddenly I realize it's almost high noon. The birds have quieted down,



Great crested flycatcher
-photo by Anne Ely

so I guess I'll move along and see what flowers the warm sun has coaxed open.

It's been a great morning. How privileged we are to have this beautiful place to enjoy where we can learn of the life around us and, at the same time, refresh our bodies, minds and spirits.

About a Pony

**"Mom, please can I get a pony; I'm now ten;
I'll take care of it and even help build a pen.
A pony doesn't eat that much anyhow
And Dad has that good new job at the railroad now.
Sarah got one last year and she was just nine."**

"We'll discuss it later, now's not a good time,
And don't bother your father about it now."
Oh Lord, help us to get through this nightmare somehow.
"For now, this talk about a pony must end."

**"All right, Sarah'll let me ride hers, she's my
best friend.**

**Tomorrow I'll go see her; it will be neat;
I'll take her pony a carrot for a treat."**

*How do we tell her... there's so much she doesn't know;
What will we do, we don't even know where we'll go;
They said they'll pay us, but will it be enough?
Everyone here got the same news; it will be tough.
We've talked with the neighbors and they're worried, too.
It is such a shock, coming right out of the blue.
All four towns, everything, I can't comprehend;
For this beautiful valley it will be the end.*

"Liz, come and sit down, we have something to say;
We've sad news to tell you... we have to go away."

"What? You're going away, but what about me?"

"No, don't cry dear, of course you're coming, too,
you see..."

You've heard of Boston, the city miles away;
It's growing fast, and in order for people to stay
They need more water for the people to drink;
There's water here and our town's an important link.
The state's buying our house, so we have to go,
That's why... about a pony, we have to say no.

Where we go there may not be a barn just now,"

"But, but, what about all our chickens, and the cow!"

"I don't know right now, dear, but they'll be ok."

"Maybe Sarah's dad will take them while we're away."

"Sarah's family will be going away, too."

"But she has a pony, what are they going to do?"

"We don't have all of the answers, but we'll pray,
So go to bed, tomorrow'll be a better day."

"Ok, but I'm taking my swing and big ball!"

She's finally asleep, so now the tears can fall.

Memorial Day

(Continued from page 1)



Keith Poulin, American Legion Post #239

was read by Charly Oliva, Belchertown Veteran’s Agent. The Belchertown Community Band, directed by Mike Bauer, played musical interludes at several points in the ceremony.

To commemorate the sacrifices, a wreath was placed at each town’s monument by former residents and/or their

descendants. Additionally, a wreath is placed at the Eleanor Griswold Schmidt bench to remember her passion for Swift River Valley history and for keeping its history alive for future generations. The list of town representatives is: Dana – Cooley family represented by Ann Clark; Enfield – the Hall/Hunt family represented by Laura Hall; Greenwich – Moore family represented by Linda Morse; Prescott – Jones/Thresher family represented by Richard Jones; and the Schmidt bench – Eleanor Schmidt family represented by Ronnie Wagner.



After these solemn placements, there was a four-gun salute, followed by the playing of Taps by Carter Masse and Forrest



Gene Theroux, Friends of Quabbin President, reciting “In Flanders Fields.”

Sherson, one playing close-in and the other away for an especially somber effect.

As is customary, “In Flanders Fields” was recited by Gene Theroux, President, Friends of Quabbin. “In Flanders Fields” is a war poem in the form of a rondeau,

In Flanders Fields

***In Flanders Fields, the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.***

***We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.***

***Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.***

written during the First World War by Canadian physician Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae. He was inspired to write it on May 3, 1915, after presiding over the funeral of friend and fellow soldier Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, who died in the Second Battle of Ypres. It became the unofficial anthem of the soldiers in the trenches.

Following his recitation, Gene, the Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Massachusetts and a Past Commander of American Legion Post 124, presented something special to Ann Gobi, whose father was a Seabee in WWII. It was a U.S. Navy Seabee WWII flag holder for her use on her father’s grave in Spencer, MA.

This was followed with brief comments by Senator Ann Gobi, Rep. Todd Smola, Rep. Susannah Whipps, Rep. Jacob Oliveira and Dan Clark, DCR Quabbin/Ware Regional Director. Keith Poulin gave the Benediction and thanked everyone for attending.

The Saga of the Keystone Bridge 2022-2023

by Paul Godfrey

It has been a year since the damage to the Keystone Bridge in New Salem was first noticed by Janice and Randy Stone. In the spring President's Message, there was a brief update that



Michael Weitzner explaining dry stone construction to Scott Campbell, DCR Regional Engineer and Dan Clark Quabbin Regional Manager. -photo by Lindhult

described action by DCR to assess the damage and recommend future steps by an engineering firm. That firm recommended the removal of the bridge as a safety concern, but they admitted they had no experience with dry-stone masonry (i.e. no cement is used), the type of construction in the Keystone Bridge. DCR sought an assessment by such a specialist but was stymied by the Massachusetts vendor code requirements when it located one in Vermont who did not have a Massachusetts vendor code. At that point, the Friends of Quabbin stepped in to circumvent that requirement and get the best possible assessment. That much awaited assessment was held on June 17, 2022 and was attended by Michael Weitzner, Thistle Stone Works; Dan Clark, Regional Director, Quabbin/Ware Region, DCR – Division of Water Supply Protection; Scott Campbell, DCR Regional Engineer, Paul Lapierre, Field Operations Team Leader, DCR; Drew Forest, Civil Engineer, DCR; Jason Cebula, Construction Maintenance Foreman, DCR; Fred Heyes, Swift River Valley Historical Society Board of Directors; Mark Lindhult, Friends of Quabbin Board; and Paul Godfrey, Friends of Quabbin Treasurer/Newsletter Editor.



Michael examining the shape of critical elements in the arch. -photo by Godfrey

Mr. Weitzner (Michael) began by giving us a primer on keystone bridge construction. While parts may be obvious, the detailed attention that must be paid to the shape of each stone and its

size, I think, surprised us all. Then, the fact that an arch-like wooden structure must be placed over the stream to hold all the stones up as they are piled up, arching over the wooden structure until the last ones are in place and the wooden support can be removed and the bridge, hopefully, left to stand on its own. We began to see both how impressive this structure was and its many small but significant flaws. We saw that many of the flaws were the result of a farmer's first efforts at dry stone construction and others the effects of time. The two add up to the current concern.



Michael with a few observers on the north side of the bridge. -photo by Godfrey



Michael Weitzner talking to group of DCR, FOQ, and SRVHS observers. -photo by Lindhult

various members of the group were talking about their concerns and hopes for the bridge. These could be generally categorized as concerns for the safety of bridge users and concern for bridge history. The chemistry was good between participants



The ongoing discussion about what to do. -photo by Lindhult

A subset of the group accompanied Michael down to stream side on the north side of the bridge. This is currently very difficult to access with no path and much undergrowth. But it was needed to see the complete picture. There it was learned that the same thing now causing a problem on the southeast side of the bridge seemed to have happened on the northwest side at some time in the past and was repaired.

Equally important, as Michael was conducting the first part of his assessment, various members of the group were talking about their concerns and hopes for the bridge. These could be generally categorized as concerns for the safety of bridge users and concern for bridge history. The chemistry was good between participants with honest questions and propositions in the air.

After a few hours, those with other commitments began to slowly trickle away, but a core were still considering solutions. Someone distilled the goal down to allowing people to

appreciate the history, as we just had, while not being in any danger. Someone said that many people traversing the bridge had no idea what they were on because it couldn't be seen from above. Someone else proposed that might be solved by constructing a boardwalk down to the stream below the bridge with a small observation platform where one could look up at the structure. Another proposed signage to explain what could be seen and couldn't be seen along with some history. A sign at the start of the boardwalk and one at the platform would accomplish that. Another added that a sign in the parking lot at the edge of Rte 122 would be good too, telling people what they might not know about. Michael suggested that even more information could be made available by using QR codes for smart phone users to connect to a web site, an idea proposed by the Friends of Quabbin for several sites in the Quabbin. I think it is fair to say there was general concurrence in this plan. Then there was discussion of the need to close the bridge to traffic, at the very least, vehicular traffic. Some thought that this had to happen, even closing it to foot traffic. Others thought this would anger many who love to walk the road. The group did not resolve that issue. Michael also proposed that keeping a close eye on any movements of the bridge would be the best way to evaluate the future likelihood of collapse. He asked if anyone had the capability for laser scanning on an every 3 month schedule. Mark Lindhult (FOQ) knew of someone at UMASS using this technology. That possibility has continued to develop in conversations between DCR, UMASS and FOQ.

I talked at length with Michael after the others had left, continuing to brainstorm what we had seen and what we had discussed. One topic that concerned us both was the conflict between repairing the bridge for safety and maintaining its historical integrity. The first would require significant reconstruction with improved concern for the shape and size of the stones, i.e. a nearly total rebuild. It would be very expensive and be a different bridge. Maintaining the historical integrity would be leaving the bridge mostly untouched but that probably could not be done while ensuring user safety.

I felt Michael had a very good understanding of all sides and that the effort would be worthwhile regardless of the final conclusion. He appreciated our need to fully explain the analysis and the conclusion to all. In fact, our contract with him requires both a presentation to the Friends Board and DCR-Quabbin but also a video for public viewing. And I think that the spirit of cooperation that has developed between all parties is a very positive development for many issues in Quabbin.

As I drove home, leaving Michael to complete his assessment, my thoughts went to ways to solve the various issues, particularly the probable need to close the bridge to all traffic. Then, it occurred to me that two problems could be solved inexpensively by building a wooden bridge forty or fifty feet for foot and bicycle traffic upstream and clearing the underbrush between the wooden bridge and the Keystone Bridge. The Keystone Bridge could be appreciated from all sides without endangering anyone. I emailed Michael my idea and he liked it. He also promised to provide a brief summary of his assessment for this newsletter. It follows.

Preliminary Keystone Bridge Assessment

by Michael Weitzner, Thistle Stone Works

As many of you probably already know, the stone arch bridge that carries the former Orange to Millington Road over the Middle Branch of the Swift River in New Salem was built over 150 years ago and carried traffic for many decades until the Quabbin Reservoir project turned it into part of



Arch voussoirs on the southeast side of the arch. -photo by Weitzner

a recreational trail. Recently, part of the Southeastern spandrel wall collapsed, and this was brought to the attention of the DCR; an engineering study was commissioned to assess the structure. The study concluded that the bridge is not safe and recommended that a mason should be consulted to determine whether the bridge could be repaired and, if so, what the repairs should consist of; if repairs were not possible, the mason should suggest what it would take to rebuild the bridge. Scott Campbell and Dan Clark reached out to me to see if I would be able to help.

On a warm and humid 17th day of June, I was joined by a number of people to look at the bridge. As I noted at the time, the fact that it remains standing today suggests that it was reasonably well-built. However, that is not the whole story.

The vault is made up of rough-cut voussoirs, which are wedge-shaped stones; that wedge shape can be seen in the outer edges of the arch, which are called the arch rings. A number of the voussoirs were set with their widest ends "looking" toward the arch center, which is the exact opposite of how one would expect them to have been placed. Many of the voussoirs are very long and narrow as well as being rather thin as measured along the arch radius. Many of them have cracks which are the result of the long, narrow shape: stone is strong in compression but weak in tension and it doesn't tolerate bending movements. There are also several running joints in the vault itself. In other words, the vault is not very stout.



Arch on the north side. -photo by Weitzner

Looking at the arch rings, it is easy to see that there is an uneven flattening of the (presumably semicircular) original shape; measurements confirm this. Some of the voussoirs at/near the crown (top) of the vault have slipped downwards. It appears that there has been some slippage



*Arch ring showing flattening on south right side.
-photo by Weitzner*

lower down as well, particularly near the bottom ends of the arch; the reversed voussoirs appear to have played a role in this.

Another possible factor in the flattening of the vault, which is more pronounced at the Northern (upstream) end of the barrel than at its Southern end, might have been insufficient mass to counterbalance the lateral thrust of the vault. The currently-collapsing SE spandrel wall may be involved here; the collapse of the NW spandrel wall that occurred in the 1940s might also have been a factor. (It should be noted that the spandrel walls are very poorly built.)

At this point, it is safe to say that the engineering assessment of 2021 concluded correctly that the bridge is not in good condition.

However, we still don't have a clear picture as to whether it is about to collapse or when; there is evidence that it is unstable and in a process of collapse. But it appears that it has been in this state for some time (based on what is visible in the few photographs that we have from the past). It is also safe to say that, short of a full reconstruction (with better materials and techniques), the vault is not repairable. Once we have determined whether the structure is indeed unsafe, we can proceed to look at whether it can be stabilized and made safe as is and, if so, at what sort of cost. During the lively group discussion of the bridge's condition on the 17th, I suggested that a monitoring programme would be a good idea to see whether there is any active movement in the vault. One way to achieve this would be to use a 3D laser scanner such as the ones used for the Historic American Engineering Record. Scans could be made every three to six months for a period of time (possibly several years) until we see whether



*Collapsing southeast spandrel.
-photo by Weitzner*

there is indeed movement and, if so, how much and where in the vault it is happening.

I will have more to say about the condition of the bridge after considering the data that I have collected in more detail. Until we have developed a clearer view of the situation, my recommendation is that the bridge should remain closed to pedestrian access. Permanent closure might be necessary to ensure public safety if it is determined that stabilization is not possible (whether for technical reasons or concerns over cost). One option that was discussed on the 17th is to leave the bridge untouched but closed and to provide access to viewpoints downstream and upstream so that visitors can see it without being in danger.

During the discussion on the 17th I also addressed the question of whether reconstruction would be appropriate. Apart from the obvious issue of the cost, which would be very high, rebuilding the bridge would involve changing its character significantly. There would be little point in replicating the approach used; to be safe it would have to meet current, higher technical standards and would look quite different. While it certainly would still be a beautiful bridge, it would not be original. If the goal is the preservation of this historic structure, it might be preferable not to touch it except for rebuilding the collapsing spandrel wall and possibly providing support for the vault.

The Next Steps

by Paul Godfrey

According to our contract with Mr. Weitzner, he will next prepare a written report in draft and final versions to be followed by 1.5 hour video conference with DCR, FOO and other interested parties to review the findings. Options for remediation will be discussed and cost estimates will be developed for the part that Mr. Weitzner would do. They will be presented in a written report in draft and final version. After our review, he will prepare a PowerPoint presentation to use in 2 video conference meetings for other interested parties. He will continue to respond to email/telephone questions.

The Friends of Quabbin feel that our major contribution has been the initial field assessment and these follow-up steps. What remediations steps if any that are decided in the process will largely fall to others (DCR), but the Friends anticipates that it might be able to continue helping by seeking outside donor contributions and developing publicity avenues that can help generate legislative support.

Beyond the specifics of the Keystone Bridge effort, I believe that an important example has been created for the benefits of cooperation between the Friends and DCR (and others) that can be a positive influence in other areas in the future. In this specific Keystone case, we managed to break a red tape stalemate and get the assessment done speedily. And we got the parties together where ideas flowed freely and built upon each other to what might become a win-win solution for all. I believe that is our goal for the future.

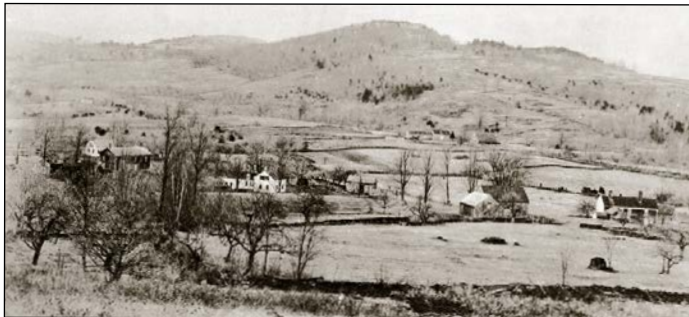
Remembering Prescott, Part 3

by Gene Theroux

In what would have been the bicentennial of Prescott, we continue to provide a look back at Prescott before the flooding. Part 1 – Before Incorporation and Part 2 – Participation in America’s Wars appeared in the Spring 2022 issue of *Quabbin Voices*. It is still available on the Friends of Quabbin web site (www.friendsofquabbin.org).

The Prescott Historical Society

The Prescott Historical Society was organized in Prescott, August 26, 1932, at the Old Home Day celebration, and, with the assistance of Jennie Shaw, 28 members were secured. Frank Allen was put in as temporary chairman, and the following officers were nominated and elected: President, Harrison Peirce, Greenwich; vice-president, Ellis A. Thayer, Brookfield; treasurer, Jennie Shaw; secretary, Henry A. White, the latter two from Orange. The purpose of the Society “shall be to engage in historical study relating to the town of Prescott and especially of individuals and families identified with its early history; to establish and maintain an historical building; and to collect, hold, preserve, and exhibit letters, books, papers, relics, and other objects that may be of historical value and interest to the people and friends of Prescott; and for such other purpose not inconsistent with law as may be reasonable, incident, and necessary to the promotion of such objects.”



Atkinson Hollow looking east. The house on the right was originally Atkinson Tavern and became the home of Dr. Walter Clark. The prominent hill is Fish Hill. Photo on glass negative by Dr. Walter Clark.

The second annual meeting of the society was held at Atkinson Hollow, on Friday, August 25, 1933, on Old Home Day. The members of the Prescott Historical Society (P.H.S.) thought it would be pleasant to have the Old Home Day observance and the Historical Society meeting on the same day and in the same place, but some of the Old Home Day members did not approve of this idea, so the P.H.S. voted to have its meeting on the first Saturday in August, wherever the directors chose to have it. The officers elected in 1933 were as follows: Harrison Peirce, of Greenwich, was re-elected president; Edgar Wood, of Athol, Vice President: Henry White and Jennie Shaw, both of Orange were re-elected secretary and treasurer, respectively. Lillie Coolidge of New Salem was elected historian. The society had about 40 members at that time. In 1934 the annual meeting was held in Moore Hall, Millington. The following officers



Atkinson Hollow looking north. The home on the left is the Harrison Peirce home with the Etta Jones home, known as “the Henry House” on the right.

were elected: President, Lester Lincoln of Athol; vice-president, Edgar Wood, Athol; secretary, Henry White, Orange; treasurer, Jennie Shaw, Orange; historian, Lillie Coolidge, New Salem.

The executive committee included The New Salem Historical Society and invited the Prescott society to join with it and have an historical building on New Salem Hill. The Prescott society agreed to the union if the designation of the society could be changed to include both names—New Salem and Prescott. At this time Dr. Thompson, who organized the New Salem society, thought his group would be willing to be incorporated under that name. But later the members changed their minds. The Prescott society then suggested to the New Salem society the name, United Historical Societies: New Salem, Dana, Prescott, and Greenwich. None of the towns would then lose its identity. But this did not seem to appeal to the New Salem society, and it subsequently was incorporated under the name of the Swift River Valley Historical Society. The Prescott group, not wishing to lose the identity of its town, incorporated under the name of The Prescott Historical Society, Inc.

Nevertheless, a joint meeting was held; the seventh annual meeting of the Prescott Historical Society, was held in Hunt’s Grove, Orange, August 6, 1938, with a good number of members and friends present from Athol, Orange, Warwick, Springfield, Montague, Middleboro, Elmwood, New Salem, Lynn, Canton, and Plainfield. A basket lunch was partaken at noon. In the afternoon there was an entertainment and a business meeting. Lester Lincoln was elected President at this meeting. The entertainment consisted of The Sailorettes (a young girl orchestra from Orange) and a talk by Arthur B. Haley of Orange on the purpose of the society which was very much appreciated.

The following are excerpts from the paper read by Mr. Haley:

“That which happens today is History tomorrow; or, to express it more briefly—Tomorrow, Today will be Yesterday. Tomorrow is our goal. Today is ours. Today and Tomorrow are in the making. Our opportunities lie at hand and ahead. Our castles in the air are possible History Tomorrow. The foundations of these castles are in the deeds of Yesterday. History is the story of Yesterday told today or tomorrow.” “Historical societies should assume the responsibility of passing on traditions of the past and discover methods and means of uncovering new stories of facts and persons and passing them on to posterity.

Historical societies need an organization and an historic building for a meeting place, which is a safe repository for antiques and valuable documents and letters.” “Youth must be enlisted in historical societies’ programs or the meetings become as lifeless as the old-fashioned parlor where the clergy used to visit. Youth needs live subjects or enlivened presentations of historical subjects to be enlisted in interest.” “Historical society buildings should be centers for the diffusion of knowledge about the past. The building should have a custodian who will open the building at any time for visitors. This is one of the best ways to advertise the society’s belongings and program. The museum should be arranged in good taste. Reports of meetings should be sent to newspapers and to all members of the society and to friends. Gifts should be acknowledged by a letter from the secretary. A program of tactful approach for gifts should be well planned. Genealogical records are a vital part of the program. Enrollment of members and a sound financial set-up are problems that are to be keenly attended to. Preservation and perpetuation of Yesterday’s historic lore go hand in hand.”

Prescott Schools

The first schoolhouse consisted of but one room with pupils of all ages attending. Each class was taught separately. There was a small entrance hall where the scholars kept their hats, coats, and dinner pails. There were many of these picturesque country schools in the valley. The teacher at the early schools were



The Underhill School #5 with class in front and kin behind.

boarded in families who sent children. The more children the farmer had going to school, the longer he must board the teacher. Green wood for the schoolhouse stove was furnished the same way. Were the family to fail to send wood, their children had to sit the farthest from the stove and shiver. This rule proved an asset in keeping the wood supply plentiful. The job of schoolmaster was not a sought after one as the pay was very small. Those teachers who were the strictest were considered the best. For at that time, “spare the rod and spoil the child” was the motto.

Prescott had, at one time, five school districts, with a reference for a brief time to a sixth district in the eastern part of the town

(but that is debatable). #1 was north of Atkinson Hollow, and closed in 1920. #5 was known as the Underhill school, or red schoolhouse, and closed in 1915. #2 was the Tinkey school;

Lois Doubleday Barnes remembered going there. #4 was the Hannum, or North Prescott school. #2 and #4 closed in 1928, leaving only the #3, or the center school district remaining until 1930.



Last school in Prescott, School #3 closed in June, 1930

Coolidge’s book says “Miss Grace Southworth of Dana was the last teacher to teach in Prescott. She taught from September 3, 1929 to January 1, 1930. There were 10 pupils — six boys and four girls”. It was cheaper to transport Prescott elementary students to school in Enfield. High school students went to Belchertown High School, via the school bus.

Prescott Poor Farm

For many years, it was the responsibility of each city or town in Massachusetts to take care of its own poor citizens; but poor people could only “go on the town” in a place where they had a “settlement” — in other words, where they, their husbands or fathers had owned property.

Towns were also responsible for providing for the care of those of their settled residents who had mental challenges and needed care, either in town or at a state institution; and while some towns listed money so spent as being spent on behalf of, say, “Case No. 6”, some Prescott town reports listed, by name, those people for whom such care was being paid. Clearly, the concept of privacy, back in those years, was quite different from what we now know.

Coolidge’s book says that the town bought the farm from Euclid Owen in 1863 for a poor farm. She states the buildings decayed because there were no poor in the town for several years. As in the case of other Valley towns, Prescott chose to close its poor farm around 1889, because it had proved to be unprofitable. It auctioned its town poor off to those who were willing to give them room and board. It is likely that most of the poor farm’s buildings burned about then; subsequent town reports mention only a barn after that time. The Town Report for 1890 is the first town report which mentions boarding out the town poor in private homes. It is not hard to guess that the people so auctioned off were expected to work very hard to compensate their hosts for the auction expense. The extensive stonework at the site of the Poor Farm makes clear that this farm once consisted of many buildings; but no one knows if any of them were built when the place was a poor farm or existed when the Town of Prescott acquired the property, because no photographs of the place are known to exist. Most likely, the farmhouse looked like many others did, with a central core and an ell extending straight out from the rear of the house.

(continued p.10)

Quabbin Interpretive Services Summer 2022

by Maria Beiter-Tucker

The past few months have been very busy for the Interpretive Services Staff. We were happy to be included in the NBC 10 documentary: **The Quabbin Reservoir and The Four Lost Towns of Massachusetts – NBC Boston** (<http://www.nbc-boston.com/news/local/the-dividing-scar-massachusetts-and-the-four-lost-towns/2702103/>) about the reservoir and to share the perspective of the DCR and our stewardship of the watershed area.

Programs:

1. We finished up our series of remote programs in March with two focused on the natural history of the Quabbin. Jim Lafley offered one about the Bald Eagle Reintroduction and Nancy Huntington presented on Pollinators.
2. Justin Gonsor continued his very successful hiking series exploring the newly redone trail system in Quabbin Park throughout the months of March, April and May.
3. I offered two tours of the Quabbin Park Cemetery (one with a special focus on veterans for Memorial Day), a hike to Dana Common and explored the Webster Rd trail.
4. Nancy offered a series of habitat walks on the first Thursday of the month. These were a little less well attended as week-days are a little harder to attract visitors but as she continues them I am sure we will see an increase in interest.
5. We have the ability to create a list serve, so we will work on that to create an email list to share with potential visitors. We will be planning out the fall and winter schedule this summer and hope to be able to build on the success of this past year.
6. Our events will be listed on the DCR Quabbin website here: [Events | Mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov/locations/quabbin-reservoir/events/past?_page=1) (http://www.mass.gov/locations/quabbin-reservoir/events/past?_page=1), in local papers, on social media, and we will have flyers in the Visitor Center.

School Visits

Although we have not seen the numbers of schools visiting the Reservoir that we did prior to COVID, we have been visited by a good number of schools from the area and have offered a number of both tours and presentations. As we head into the next school year, we hope to see more students return. We will be focusing on outreach for certain grades as we develop programs that connect with the curriculum offered for those years.

Memorial Day

This year we were able to offer a full Memorial Day program, including the Belchertown Community Band. It was great to have music back! We had beautiful weather and an excellent turnout. Thanks to the DCR staff and the local veterans' groups that made the program possible.

Visitor Center

We are in the process of making some updates to the Visitor Center. The goal is to make our center more dynamic and a place that people would seek out to learn more about the Quabbin Reservoir. Stay tuned for the future!

Staffing

As I mentioned in the last interpretive report, I was hired as Interpretive Services Supervisor. My old position of Visitor Center Manager was posted, and I am happy to report that Nancy Huntington was hired in the position. She has worked at the Quabbin Visitor Center as a Visitor Services Supervisor for close to 10 years and has a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with the public

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Remembering Prescott (Continued from page 9)

Sources

- The History of Prescott Massachusetts*, Lillie Pierce Coolidge
- Official Town Reports of Prescott
- History of Pelham, Mass. From 1738 to 1898, including the early History of Prescott
- Quabbin, The Lost Valley* 1951, Donald W. Howe
- American Civil War Data Research
- Quabbin Time Travel Tour – Prescott*, Jon Melick
- Ghost Towns 'Neath Quabbin Reservoir*, Evelina Gustafson
- Digital Commonwealth, Massachusetts Metropolitan District Water Supply Commission Real Estate photographs
- Griswold family photos from Eleanor Griswold Schmidt collection

Results of the 2022 Election for Board of Directors

by Paul Godfrey, Membership Director

We conducted our first mail-in ballot ever in 2021 and, because of its success in increasing voting privileges for all members and the larger vote, decided to do it again. Requests to vote with an enclosed ready-to-mail ballot were sent to all members. The results are: 157 of our 290 members voted and provided the needed consent information on the ballot; 4 did not provide sufficient information. In other words, 54% of members voted. The vote tally showed strong support for the entire slate; 94% or higher positive votes. All those on the ballot were elected to two-year terms. Those people are: Gene Theroux, president; Paul Godfrey, treasurer; John Zebb; Elena Palladino; and Mark Lindhult. Congratulations to all.

For next year, we intend to ask all members to consider other nominees for the Board and to send those names to us for inclusion on the ballot. We ask only that nominees be able to attend Board meetings in person.

Meetings & Events

Quabbin Visitor Center Programs and Hikes

Saturday September 10, 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Trail Maintenance Volunteer Opportunity at Quabbin Park (tools will be provided). Old Stone Trail, Quabbin East Gate Entrance, Rt. 9

Sunday September 11, 1:00–2:00 p.m.

Quabbin Park History Detectives
Hanks Meadow, Quabbin Park (easy .5 mile)

Sunday October 8, 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Soapstone Hill Foliage Hike
Gate 37, Petersham, 3 miles (moderate to difficult)

Saturday, October 22, 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Exploring Quabbin Park via Webster Road and the Tower Trail
4 miles, Hanks Meadow, Quabbin Park. (moderate to difficult)

Sunday October 23, 1:00 p.m.– 2:00 p.m.

Quabbin Park Cemetery Tour
Quabbin Park Cemetery, Rt 9. (easy walk, uneven ground)

Sunday November 6, 2:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

“Where do They Go? New England Pollinators in Winter”
REMOTE PROGRAM. Join the staff of the DCR Quabbin Visitor Center for a program or hike this fall. Visit <https://www.mass.gov/locations/quabbin-reservoir> and look for the link to upcoming events for full details; Email QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov for information on registering

Swift River Valley Historical Society

JULY

Sunday, July 24 **DANA VESPERS** – Prescott Church–on the grounds of SRVHS at 2:00 p.m. Cake and lemonade served after the concert. Free

Sunday, July 24 **SUMMER HIKE** Gate 22 Puppyville to the shore. Limited parking so please meet for car pooling at New Salem Common for 11:00 a.m. departure.

AUGUST

Sunday, August 7 **OPEN HOUSE** 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, August 21

PRESCOTT BI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION with a Time Travel Tour presented by Jon Melick. In the Prescott Church on the grounds of SRVHS at 1:00 p.m. Free

SEPTEMBER

Sunday, September 4 **OPEN HOUSE** 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 10 **ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING** on the grounds of SRVHS at 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 14 **MUSEUM CLOSING**

Sunday, September 18 **PRESCOTT HIKE** area t/b/d. Car access through the gate, meet at Cooleyville Crossing for 11:00 a.m. departure.

OCTOBER

Sunday, October 16 **FALL HIKE** interior Prescott Loop. Car access through the gate, meet at Cooleyville Crossing for 11:00 a.m. departure.

General Information for hikes: Bring a lunch and prepare for insects/ticks. Follow all DCR rules. Light showers do not cancel a hike. Donations to SRVHS for these hikes would be greatly appreciated. *Any necessary changes, cancellations, or postponements in scheduling will be posted on our Facebook page.*

Swift River Valley Historical Society, P.O. Box 22,
40 Elm Street, New Salem, MA 01355; Tel. 978-544-6882

Dana Reunion

The Dana Reunion has been cancelled for 2022 due to road work.

Tuesday Tea

The Tuesday Tea group met for the third time since COVID restrictions were lifted. The group was a little larger this time and Paul Godfrey was this month's speaker. Paul gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Rabbit HO



From left: Laura Hall, Gene Theroux, Alberta Martin, Francis Martin, Paul Godfrey (back to camera), Bev Dempster, Deanna Krusiewicz. –photo by Anne Ely.

model railroad, open for viewing at the Swift River Valley Historical Society Carriage House. The presentation, done with Ken Levine, who built the model,

showed the historical context for the model, still closeups of various scenes on the model and a video of an unusual “engineer’s eye” view of the model taken from the front of the locomotive as it went around the track. Following the Rabbit presentation, he gave us a brief update on the developing situation with the Keystone Arch Bridge in New Salem.



Join us for the next Tuesday Tea on the first Tuesday of each month, 1:00 p.m. at the Visitor Center, Quabbin Administration Building.

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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



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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