

# Quabbin Voices

The Friends of Quabbin Newsletter



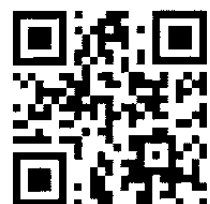
Fall 2023  
Vol.36 No 3

*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

## CONTENTS

Swift Removal . . . . .	1
President's Message . . . . .	2
Quabbin Park Trails . . . . .	6
Elizabeth Peirce . . . . .	7
Nature's Fall Concert . . . . .	7
Monarch Monitoring . . . . .	8
Interpretive Services . . . . .	9
Meetings/Events . . . . .	10
New Books . . . . .	11



## Swift Removal: The Effects of Reservoir Construction Upon the People of the Swift River Valley

### Part 1: A Growing City Thirsts by Rob Lewis

In the early 20th century, the state of Massachusetts faced several monumental dilemmas. By 1920, the city of Boston swelled to over 700,000 people<sup>1</sup>, and state officials had been struggling for years to ensure citizens had an adequate supply of fresh water before the situation became dire. By 1927, the state legislature had theoretically solved the water dilemma in passing the Swift River Act, paving the way for the construction of a massive reservoir.<sup>2</sup> Passage of the Swift River Act created a second dilemma: What would the state do with approximately 2,500 people who lived in the area which they planned to flood?

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Quabbin Reservoir construction project forced thousands of residents of the Swift River Valley of western Massachusetts to give up their homes to the state and start new lives elsewhere, some willingly and others unwillingly, often at the cost of losing homes and businesses which had belonged to families for generations and the destruction of four towns and parts of others. Forced removal of Americans to clear the way for large water projects is not unique, occurring numerous times throughout the country. Holly Sims describes the experience



Quabbin Reservoir view north from Winsor Dam.

of dam building in the United States as attesting to a long-standing ability of democratic political leaders to mobilize support for dam construction notwithstanding the social costs associated with it. Dams loomed ever larger in size and symbolic importance beginning in the 1930s with construction of the massive Hoover Dam and establishment in 1933 of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Massachusetts government garnered support for the Quabbin Reservoir project, convincing citizens of the much more densely populated Boston area that it solved their water supply needs. The Massachusetts District Water Supply Commission (MDWSC) was Massachusetts' version of the TVA and the mechanism tasked with doing everything necessary to create the reservoir.

(continued p.4)



Gene Theroux

## President's Message

Fall 2023

On September 30, 2023, a small group of volunteers met to continue recent efforts to fulfill a promise made more than 80 years ago—a promise by the

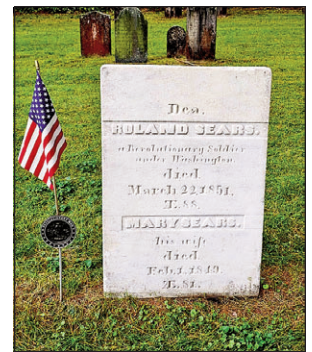
Metropolitan Water Supply Commission and printed in the *Springfield Union* to create a cemetery, Quabbin Park Cemetery (QPC), that is one of the newest, largest and most beautiful and that will contain the bodies of 7,550 persons formerly buried in 26 different burial grounds. For the first few decades that description fit, but for the last few decades, the promise has been largely given low priority. Meticulously kept records were stored in an old-fashioned way and not easily available to legitimate users, contact information for families with ancestors interred in QPC were not updated, memorial stones were covered with biological growth and many others were broken by falling trees, lawn-mowing or age. The mechanism for families to maintain family burial plots was not defined and permissions nearly impossible to obtain, yet no one else accepted the responsibility. It seemed like a discouraging and hopeless downward spiral.

It all began to change in 2017 when the Friends of Quabbin tried to get answers and action on increasingly obvious problems with cemetery maintenance. At first, that effort put the Department of Conservation and Recreation, caretakers of the QPC on the defensive, but, after a time, they began to realize that we were offering help. We got permission and began to clean gravestones and memorials; they began to update their records and make them more available in internet databases. They also developed straightforward procedures for families to maintain their family plots and FOQ began to spread the word and help families to do the cleaning or enlist volunteer efforts using the specified materials and techniques for state-of-the-art preservation. Memorial plaques have been cleaned, trees threatening grave sites have been removed, and efforts are underway to get the QPC placed on the Registry of National Historic Places.

In the last newsletter, we reported on the Oakham boy scout troop effort led by R.J. Tucker to clean veterans headstones and with training and materials provided by the Friends of Quabbin, 25 to 30 were cleaned. One of the markers cleaned by RJs group was a Revolutionary War patriot. The results of that cleaning are stunning.

In this issue, we are pleased to report that a new partnership has been forged with the Massachusetts Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) with a focus on the 41 gravesites of Patriots of the American Revolutionary War. The Massachusetts Chapters are part of the National

Society Daughters of the American Revolution, a women's service organization dedicated to promoting historic preservation, education, patriotism, and honoring the patriots of the American Revolutionary War. I was honored and humbled to work with ten members and volunteers from the Betty Allen Chapter and four from the Duxbury/Plymouth Chapter on the cloudy morning and early afternoon of October 1st. This new partnership goes beyond a one-day cleaning project because the DAR will now be included in the 2024 Memorial Day Services at Quabbin Park Cemetery scheduled for Sunday, May 26, 2024.



*Roland Sears memorial cleaned by RJ Tucker's scout group in Spring 2023.*



*From left to right: Eileen Lavin, Pam Aieta, Tim Shipee, Terah Harrington, Colleen Brayer, Debbie Windoloski, John Orrell, Sheree Brown, Cher Nicholas, Wendy Campbell, Denise Gosselin and Gene Theroux [not pictured: Sandy & Bill Hubbard].*



*Bill Hubbard applies D/2 Biological Solution to the lichen-covered black slate gravestone of Patriot Benjamin Skinner, Jr.*



*The Skinner gravestone after cleaning. The slight mottling is natural variation in the black slate.*



On behalf of the DAR, the SAR, and Friends of Quabbin, we wish to thank Maria Beiter-Tucker of DCR for her assistance with acquiring permission for preservation of these Patriots of the American Revolution completed on September 30, 2023.

Additionally, there was one member of the Massachusetts Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), Seth Pomeroy Chapter at the September cleaning. That chapter is working with the overall Massachusetts Society to have a bronze plaque manufactured to honor the 41 patriots of the American Revolutionary War that would be mounted on a granite slab and placed in the QPC; DCR has already given permission for the placement. FOQ has been seeking funding for the granite slab and have just received word that a state program will be providing a check for the lion's share of the cost. The check will be presented on October 27th at the QPC.

Looking into the future a bit for additional partnering efforts with these groups, we are rapidly approaching the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolutionary War (July 4, 2026). Events leading up to the Revolutionary War such as the Boston Tea Party that occurred on the night of December 16, 1773 in Boston Harbor. The May 26, 2024 Memorial Day Services at Quabbin Park Cemetery will begin our celebration of America on the 250th anniversary of its founding. Nationwide a commission has been formed, the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and America250 Foundation (America250). America250 is a multiyear effort to commemorate the semi-quincentennial, or 250th anniversary, of the United States. The purpose of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, created by Congress, and the corresponding America250 Foundation is to catalyze a more perfect union by designing and leading the most comprehensive and inclusive celebration in our country's

history (<http://america250.org/americas-250th/>). America250 represents a coalition of public and private partners all working to create initiatives and programs that honor our first 250 years and inspire Americans to imagine our next 250. The commemoration period began in 2020, culminates on July 4, 2026, and officially concludes in 2027. To me, this is an exciting time in history, and I am pleased that FOQ now has an America250 event in the schedule of celebrating America's 250th prior to July 4, 2026.

The Friends of Quabbin has a lot of irons in the fire. For example, the Keystone Bridge is an ongoing issue that the Friends is trying to save from collapsing. The Keystone Bridge is discussed at each Board of Directors meeting. The conservation of the bronze plaques and Soldier Monument bronze sculpture at Quabbin Park Cemetery is a project that we were hoping to have accomplished in 2023, but it did not happen due to lack of funding. The conservation of the Dana Honor Roll, the Enfield Soldier monument bronze sculpture and plaques, and other plaques was previously discussed in the winter 2023 issue of the *Quabbin Voices*. The Dana Honor Roll is in dire need of conservation because the corrosive patina on the plaque has leached onto the granite boulder. And lastly the goal of the bronze plaque and granite slab for the 41 Patriots of the American Revolution interred at Quabbin Park Cemetery. Rest assured, the Friends of Quabbin will be addressing these bronze artifacts at QPC and will not rest until they are conserved.

And be assured, the Friends of Quabbin will continue to seek and enhance partnerships that contribute toward the overall betterment of Quabbin in all its manifestations.



*Left to right: Gene Theroux using a natural soft fiber brush to gently scrub the monument of Joshua Crosby, rinsing with clean water and flagging the site. The D/2 Biological Solution will continue to clean and brighten in the days to follow.*



## Swift Removal

*Continued from page 1*

Almost immediately upon colonists settling in Boston in the 17th century, the demand for freshwater became a priority to satisfy the thirst of a rapidly growing population. Bostonians got their water from wells and cisterns from 1630 until 1796 when they began using a local pond as a water supply. It became rapidly apparent they needed a more abundant and cleaner water supply for drinking, as well as to fight fires in the city. Sanitary practices, including the cleaning of city streets, created a publicly recognized and endorsed need for purer and more abundant water supplies.<sup>4</sup>

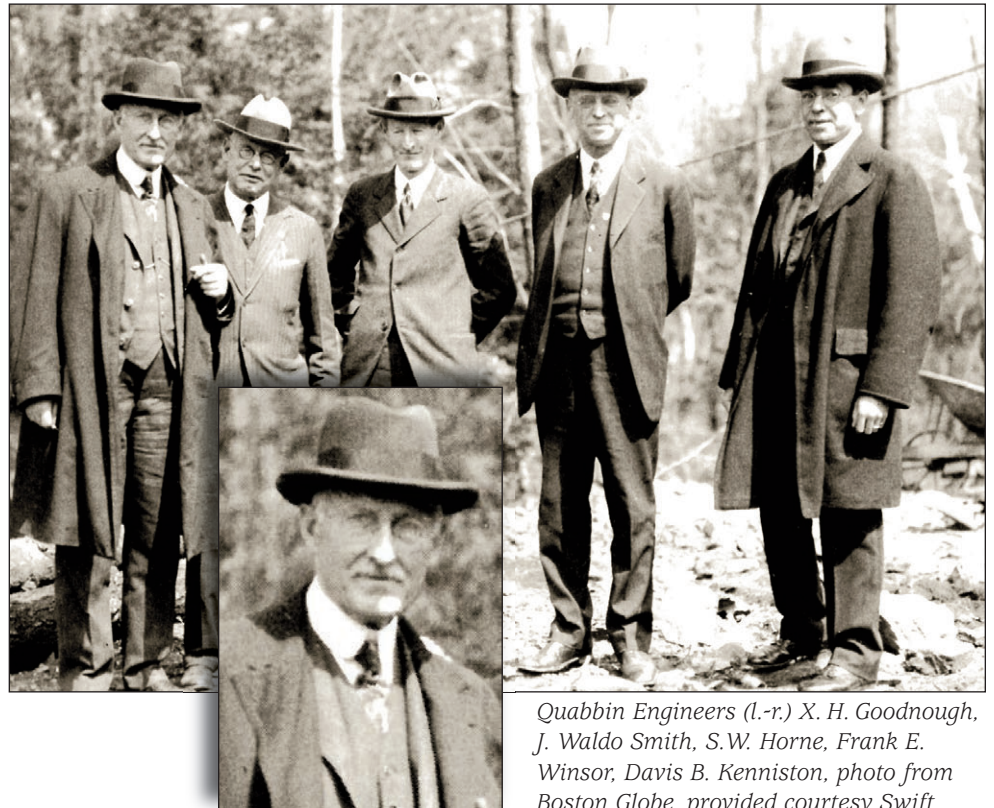
Engineers and public officials periodically identified new sources of water and created mechanisms to move that water to the city of Boston. With the completion of the Lake Cochituate water supply system in 1848, the focus of debates over water supplies changed from being a popular, political issue to a technical issue. Because the Cochituate Water Board, which built the system, did such an outstanding job, the Boston City Council delegated responsibility of operating the Boston water supply to the Water Board, relying heavily upon engineers to ensure that Boston never again suffered a water shortage and that purified water would be delivered to the city to eliminate disease transmission.<sup>5</sup> Rapid growth, combined with a dry period in the early 1890s created a renewed sense of urgency. Boston's water consumption dramatically increased for several reasons. There was virtually no metering of water, and people commonly kept their taps running all night to avoid freezing pipes.<sup>6</sup> Even much smaller Springfield, Massachusetts sought additional water supplies in the late 1890s and had considered using water from the Swift River, discounting the idea because it was too expensive to pipe the water from the Swift River Valley eighteen miles to Springfield.<sup>7</sup>

As Boston's population grew ever larger in the late 19th and early 20th-centuries, engineers worked to identify additional water supplies. In 1895, Massachusetts created the Metropolitan Water District to ensure an adequate supply of water for the Boston area. As a partial solution to ever-growing water needs, the district planned and built the Wachusett Reservoir in a sparsely populated valley approximately forty miles west of Boston. Construction of the reservoir resulted in the eviction of hundreds of people from the towns of Boylston and West Boylston when the Nashua River was dammed to flood the area.<sup>8</sup>

The damming of the Nashua River was the first proposal which necessitated flooding a town to create a reservoir, leading to fierce opposition by the people of West Boylston, who argued that no amount of money could pay for the destruction of homes and "the misery that will ensue."<sup>9</sup> By this time, government leaders relied almost exclusively on the technical expertise of engineers like Wachusett chief engineer Frederick P. Stearns. Stearns argued that the benefits of reservoir construction outweighed the drawbacks.<sup>10</sup> Western Massachusetts historian J.R. Greene opines that with the Wachusett project "the small town, and its ways lost out to the overwhelming power and pervasive influence of cities." Greene argues that engineers became entrenched as bureaucratic elites and realized that they no longer had to answer to the public.<sup>11</sup>



*Frederick P. Stearns*



*X. Henry Goodnough*

*Quabbin Engineers (l.-r.) X. H. Goodnough, J. Waldo Smith, S.W. Horne, Frank E. Winsor, Davis B. Kenniston, photo from Boston Globe, provided courtesy Swift River Valley Historical Society*

And thus with complete dependence on technical experts without much regard for the human factor, the precedent was set for the creation of what was deemed inevitable — a larger reservoir farther west to forever satisfy water needs. Thomas Conuel lists four primary reasons why state water planners chose the Swift River Valley: No major businesses were ruined; no major highways disrupted; no prominent landmarks buried, and the people of the valley lacked political power.<sup>12</sup>

Stearns' successor as chief engineer to the State Board of Public Health was X. Henry Goodnough. Goodnough, also held in high esteem by the engineering field, advocated the use of unpolluted water sources like reservoirs over filtration and pumping of existing river water (a technology available at that time).<sup>13</sup> The state created a joint board to investigate possible water supplies and the board ultimately narrowed the potential list to two viable sources: the creation of a reservoir in the Swift River Valley (Goodnough's plan) and filtration of the Merrimack River which was much closer to Boston. Goodnough's reputation and influence swayed the board to choose the Swift River project.<sup>14</sup>

Public concerns over the potential of polluted water reaching customers caused engineers to select a more conservative and traditional plan to create a vast reservoir, sending water using gravity feed from much higher western Massachusetts to Boston. A February 1922 *Springfield Republican* article discussing the board's investigation shows evidence of the public's concern over pollution, stating, "In fact, analyses of the waters of the Swift River indicate that above the point where it is joined by the Ware and Swift River receives very little pollution of any kind."<sup>15</sup>

Future articles will continue to describe the plight of people living in valley. Topics will include political opposition and social resistance to the reservoir project which was eventually silenced by more powerful political forces in eastern Massachusetts. The wide spectrum of feelings expressed by valley residents, often based upon their age, financial situation, and professions, will be discussed in greater detail. Also included will be the concept that memories of people's final years in the valley varied greatly depending upon age, social status, financial status, and family situation. How people coped with the inevitable end will also be discussed; former residents established meeting groups, held reunions and collected documents and artifacts to help preserve the memory of their drowned towns. Finally, the discussion will include how

Massachusetts created thousands of new jobs to facilitate the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir and the inevitable corruption that accompanied such a massive project.

Elena Palladino's recent book *Lost Towns of the Swift River Valley: Drowned by the Quabbin* provides numerous personal perspectives of residents of the former Swift River Valley.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1920 Census: Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts Acts of 1927, Chapter 321, 1927 Senate Bill 0260, An Act Making Additional Provision For The Water Supply Needs Of The Metropolitan Water District And For Communities Which Now Or Hereafter May Require Water Therefrom, By The Development Of An Adequate Future Water Supply From The Swift River, (1927).

<sup>3</sup> Holly Sims, "Moved, Left No Address: Dam Construction, Displacement and Issue Salience." *Public Administration & Development* 21, no. 3 (2001): 187, 189.

<sup>4</sup> Fern L. Nesson, *Great Waters: A History of Boston's Water Supply*, (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1983), viii-ix, 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Nesson, 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> J.R. Greene, *The Creation of the Quabbin Reservoir: The Death of The Swift River Valley*, (The Transcript Press, 1981), 11.

<sup>7</sup> "Westfield Water Streams for Springfield's Water Supply, The Swift River was Considered," *Springfield Republican*, December 9, 1899, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Conuel, *Quabbin, the Accidental Wilderness*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Nesson, 22, 28-9.

<sup>10</sup> Nesson, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Greene, *Creation of the Quabbin Reservoir*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Conuel, 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> Nesson, 37-42.

<sup>14</sup> Greene, *Creation of the Quabbin Reservoir*, 22-3.

<sup>15</sup> "Enfield Basin to Take Care of Ware Water," *Springfield Republican*, February 22, 1922, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Elena Palladino. 2022. *Lost Towns of the Swift River Valley: Drowned by the Quabbin*. Arcadia Publishing Inc.

*Swift River Valley Town of Greenwich, photo by Burt Brooks*





## Quabbin Park Trails Update— Pioneer Valley Hiking Club Partnership

by Justin Gonsor  
Program Coordinator 1  
Department of Conservation and Recreation

Hello friends of Quabbin! I hope everyone had a great summer. As usual, it has come and gone too fast. With fall in New England around the corner, prime hiking weather is upon us. Quabbin Park's trail network is currently in great shape and ready for folks to come out and view the fall colors and stone walls.

Over the past few years, if you've hiked any of our trails in the park you've probably noticed our improved signage at trailheads as well as the new trail names and blazing system. With our trails being better advertised and more visible to the public nowadays, it's more important than ever to keep them maintained and in good condition. For decades, our main trail maintenance partner for the park has been Americorp's Student Conservation Association (SCA). Each summer an SCA crew visits Quabbin for a 10-day work hitch. They conduct general trail maintenance as well help us with special projects such as buildings bridges, steps, switchbacks, and helping with other trail related issues. Our partnership with SCA has been such a benefit to Quabbin and is expected to continue.



*PVHC group at Quabbin Hill: (l-r) Brenda Douquette, Jim Tibbitt, Lori Tisdell, Diane Brown, Chip Pray, Heidi Zajonc.*

But more help maintaining our trails is always welcome. With that I wanted to talk about a new group who is partnering with us. Back in April we entered into a yearlong Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club (PVHC). The club was founded in 1991 as a way for outdoor enthusiasts to meet and share their passion for hiking and nature. They schedule group hikes year-round for all ages and ability levels across New England. The PVHC has also maintained sections 1 and 2 of the Massachusetts portions of the

New England Trail for many years. I've met a number of club members and they truly are a passionate and dedicated group.



*PVHC group in front of Quabbin Tower: (back) James Brown, Jim Tibbitt, Chip Pray; (front) Lori Tisdell, Heidi Zajonc, Brenda Douquette.*

On one of the Quabbin group hikes I offered last year I met Jim Brown, longtime member of the PVHC, who regularly leads and organizes his own hikes with the club at Quabbin.

Together we came up with the idea of possibly having the club conduct trail maintenance in the park in an official capacity, which ultimately ended up happening. Their first trail day was on Saturday, June 3rd. About 10 of us met at the Visitor Center parking lot; all club members brought their own hand tools. We split up into teams of two and cut back overgrowth on multiple trails on the west side of Quabbin Park. PVHC returned for their next trail day on Sunday, September 17 when they worked on trails at the east side of the park. Another benefit of the partnership is that club members who regularly use our trails and can pass on information on downed trees (that need chainsaw work) to the appropriate DCR-DWSP maintenance staff that can then handle those larger issues.



*Justin Gonsor (DCR) conducting trail maintenance on north end of the tower trail.*

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**For more information on the PVHC, check out their website: <https://pioneervalleyhikingclub.org/>**

Happy Hiking!

## Elizabeth “Zib” L. (Ballou) Peirce

### April 18, 1924 – July 6, 2023



ORANGE, MA – Elizabeth Lorraine (Ballou) Peirce, known to most everyone as “Zib,” passed away on July 6th, 2023 while bravely battling old age. She was born on April 18, 1924, in Orange, MA, to parents Cecil and Mary (Richards) Ballou. She leaves behind her brother Richard Ballou, daughter Jane Peirce, son Peter Peirce, grandsons Michael Peirce and Ruslan Peirce, son-in-law Keith LaRiviere, daughter-in-law Jill Esterson, and a freezer containing a dozen pints of Häagen-Dazs

Dulce De Leche ice cream which she absolutely had planned to finish. She is preceded in death by her husband Clifton Waldo Peirce (d. 1992,) sister Betty-Sue (Ballou) Pratt (d. 2018,) and brother Derrill Henry Ballou, (d. 2021.)

Zib grew up in Orange, meeting her future husband Cliff in Leavitt’s store, Orange, where both were employed while attending Orange High School. She attended North Adams Teachers College, and after graduation began her teaching career at Feeding Hills School in Springfield, MA. Zib and Cliff were married in 1947 after Cliff returned from WW2, and they started their family in 1952. Soon after, they began construction on a house barely a mile from the house where she was born, where they lived happily from that time on. In 1959 she and Cliff purchased a brand new VW Bug, and at the age of 35, Zib learned how to drive. In the early 60’s, inspired by Lyndon

Johnson’s war on poverty, she founded the Head Start Kindergarten Program in Orange, with the Congregational church providing the classroom. She taught kindergarten at Dexter Park School in Orange from the mid 60’s until she retired in 1987, able to recall every student she ever taught. She kept every class picture in a notebook, and followed her students progress into adulthood, saving clippings about them whenever they appeared in the news.

Zib loved animals, and no stray animal that came to her door was turned away on an empty stomach. Civilizing cats, dogs, horses, donkeys, goats, rabbits, squirrels, skunks, foxes, and ill-behaved children was her special talent. She also tried to bend adults to her will, serving on committees for the town of Orange, local schools, Congregational Church, and Lake Mattawa Association, among many others. She knitted, quilted, collected dolls, enjoyed jigsaw puzzles, rode a bicycle, enjoyed the outdoors, was quick to help or offer support for any worthy project, and was particularly thrilled to be a grandmother. Active in the preservation of Quabbin town history since the 1960’s, she served as volunteer, president, and/or curator at the Swift River Valley Historical Society well into her 90’s, authoring several books on Quabbin history, including *The Lost Towns of Quabbin Valley* (2003), *Quabbin Valley: Life as It Was* (2015,) and *Quabbin Valley: People and Places* (2006). She was meticulous, sharp as a tack, had an encyclopedic knowledge of everything that happened in the last 200 years, a dry sense of humor, a deep appreciation for friends, family, animals, one particular flavor of ice cream, and enjoyed a good, long, life.

*Reprinted from the Witty Funeral Home obituary.*

## Mother Nature’s Fall Concert

by Anne Ely



There is a free concert at Quabbin today. Mother Nature is performing and I have a front row seat here in my car parked at the Enfield Look Out.

Puffy white clouds against a bright blue sky

are the perfect backdrop for the dark green of pines and the touch of color beginning to show on trees which are changing their summer wardrobe from its varying shades of green to their soon-to-be brilliant reds and golds. All that, combined with areas of blue-green water provides a pleasing prelude.

For this late mid-season concert, Mother Nature has planned a wide range of music, complete with special effects. It opens with a roar that grabs my attention right away as the fall wind does that for which it’s best known. It gets to me and I can feel every beat as it buffets my car. The nearby tall pines join in with a snappy performance of shadow dances that twist and turn across the ground, moving in perfect time to the wind

gusts. Then suddenly they slow and the wind softly murmurs through the trees as the conductress calls for a slower tempo.

Just as I begin to relax to those soothing sounds, she again raises her baton and for several bars the pine tree shadows again dance their fiery flamenco this time not followed by a soft lullaby, but by complete stillness and silence... but no, not complete silence, for a clear voice fills the air, and then another and another – the back-up singers. A tufted titmouse belts out its strong, clear “Peter-Peter” solo, and is quickly joined by a back-up chorus of mixed bird voices. I don’t know who they all are, or where they were during the loud crescendos, but evidently somewhere safe and they continue to sing as the gentle breeze begins its soft murmurings again. Then, after a few bars it fades and all song disappears as the roaring finale begins. It’s a good one, livelier and more varied than the overture, with oak leaves flying sideways and even upward as they dance their way to the ground; tall grasses seem to bend and sway in all directions at once. I listen and watch in awe until the final beat.

I would love to stay for the second half of the concert, but must move on. I’m sure it will be just as spectacular as the first half. Mother Nature gives wonderful performances all year ‘round. I hope you’ll be able to stop long enough to catch one sometime.



# Monarch Monitoring Project

by Nancy Huntington  
Program Coordinator  
Department of Conservation and Recreation

Nowadays, Monarch Butterflies need no introduction. They are as iconic a symbol for pollinator protection as giant pandas are for world wildlife conservation. In the past few years we've seen the rise of "No Mow May" and "Monarch Waystations." People post photos of monarch caterpillars in their gardens and get heart emoji responses. In short, there's a lot of love out there for this beautiful invertebrate!

And thankfully that love often goes hand in hand with an interest in how the populations are doing and if all the press and conservation efforts are making a difference. The answer, of course, is complicated. Populations vary from region to region and year to year, so sometimes things are looking great, other times deplorable. A sampling of studies shows both cause for excitement and cause for concern:

**Monarch butterfly populations are thriving in North America (uga.edu)**

**Western monarch populations grew over 100-fold in 2021. Why? | NOVA | PBS**

**Monarch butterfly populations may be more stable than previously thought (nbcnews.com)**

**Troubling news for monarch butterfly populations | Stories | WWF (worldwildlife.org)**

One of the challenges to studying any species population is getting an accurate count (Monarch Conservation Science Partnership | U.S. Geological Survey (usgs.gov), Improving the monarch count | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (fw.s.gov) ). This is where citizen science can really make a difference. Scientists and biologists cannot be in every habitat all season, but the hundreds and thousands of everyday people who love nature and being outdoors can!

This year, DCR, Division of Watershed Protection (DCR-DWSP) staff invited members of the public to assist in the International Monarch Monitoring Blitz, an annual citizen science monarch count that takes place around the first week of August throughout Canada, the US and Mexico. The count can be done by anyone in any place that has milkweed, individuals just have to submit their data online through one of the participating organizations. DCR-DWSP submitted data through Journey North (07/19/2023 Join the 2023 Monarch Blitz! (journeynorth.org)). This is the first year DCR Quabbin has participated.

August 2, 2023 was selected as the date, but it was harder than expected to find an appropriate milkweed field. For all the thousands of acres of land in the Quabbin & Ware River watersheds, there is startling little milkweed. Sure, there are little pockets here and there, but not enough to support a whole group of people trampling through to check every plant. Most

pockets could be done by one person. Eventually it was determined that the best space was one of the fields on the south side of the former common for the town of Prescott. In order to protect the field, the number of participants was limited to both reduce the amount of foot traffic and to give the participants enough to do. Turns out, that would not be a problem!



Participants met with DCR staff at Gate 17 at 9 a.m. and all drove as a group to the site. There they were given a brief introduction to the history of Prescott and then their instructions for the blitz. The goal was to check every milkweed plant and log any phase of the monarch lifecycle found — egg, larvae, chrysalis or adult. If a participant found something, they would call out to one of the DCR staff logging in the data, who would go over and record what was found, then place a piece of flagging around the plant so it would not be double counted.

It was immediately apparent that the field was bigger than it looked and could have sustained a few more participants. There were 6 DCR staff and 6 members of the public. With 2 DCR staff acting as data loggers, that left 10 people actively looking for monarch sign. The duration of the blitz was desig-



nated for only about 1.5 hours before everyone had to head back to the gate, and the field was not completely checked by the time of departure. A few more people would have gotten it done in one shot. Instead, DCR staff went back two days later to finish. Lesson learned for future monitoring!

The final counts for the blitz were: 23 eggs, 16 larvae, 2 adults and no chrysalis.

While it may not be clear if monarch populations are improving, it is clear that every little bit an individual can do helps. Whether it's planting a few milkweeds in your yard, leaving part of your lawn un-mowed, participating in a citizen science event or even just submitting sightings through an app like iNaturalist, everyone can be a part of the solution. Conservation is in our hands!



# Interpretive Services Report

## Fall 2023

by Maria Beiter-Tucker

Summer at the Quabbin is over and we are heading into Autumn. All the seasons are beautiful at the Reservoir, but fall may be our favorite. The reds, oranges and yellows of maples and birches will color the forest in late September and October but it's in the muted gold of the oak trees where Quabbin really shines late in the foliage season.

Many visitors travelling to Quabbin Park to see the beautiful waterfall created by the Winsor Dam Spillway have been surprised that spillway is not active. Despite the amount of the rain, we have received this year the Reservoir has not (yet!) reached full capacity.

As a quick reminder, Quabbin Reservoir is measured not in gallons of water, or in water depth, but in feet above the Boston City Base (BCB). BCB is an elevation equivalent to Boston Harbor at low tide. When the water elevation is listed (for instance) 525.75 feet that is the reservoir's current elevation above the Boston City Base. When Quabbin Reservoir is at 100% capacity it measures 530 feet BCB.

Dams, unlike Dikes, are designed with an outlet for water. Winsor Dam was designed with a spillway on the east side. Designed to allow water to be released from the reservoir by gravity, the spillway is activated when the Reservoir reaches capacity at 412 billion gallons. The 400 foot long spillway was constructed of rectangular blocks of natural stone and varies in height from 1 to 17 feet, is 3 to 23 feet wide and rises 155 feet above the river bed. When active, water pours over the wall and plunges dramatically down an 80-foot cascade under the arched



April 22, 2022 – Winsor Dam spillway

spillway bridge. It then travels a half mile through an excavated channel to the original stream bed of the Swift River at the Y pool where it joins water released daily through the Power House at the base of the dam.

Spring is the traditional time for the reservoir to be - replenished, or recharged, through snow melt and spring rains. Tracking the reservoir elevation through the year shows that by summer the reservoir level is dropping. Trees are in full leaf in summer, drawing more water from the ground to produce food. As well, water evaporates more quickly in the strong sun of a summer day. However, the major contributor to the drop in elevation is from water users watering lawns, gardens, and filling pools while they enjoy the warmer months.



So although the reservoir has been gradually gaining elevation throughout this summer, the higher water use in these months means that we are still hovering around 2.5 feet below capacity or about 95% full. Considering that the reservoir surface area is 25,000 acres and (when full) the top inch represents 750,000 gallons it is easy to understand why, despite the record amounts of rain, the reservoir hasn't reached capacity.

If you are interested in tracking the reservoir elevation, this website has real time data [https://stevens-connect.com/public/project/440/dashboard#profile\\_id=1068](https://stevens-connect.com/public/project/440/dashboard#profile_id=1068)



## Annual Holiday Party

December 3, 2023, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The Board of Directors cordially invites you to join them for an early celebration of the holiday season at the Friends of Quabbin Annual Holiday Party at the Quabbin Visitor Center from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided. RSVP to Paul Godfrey: [godfrey@umass.edu](mailto:godfrey@umass.edu), 413-253-5686, or 47 Harkness Road, Pelham, MA 01002 before November 11th. (If you want to bring something made from a recipe in the new Quabbin Cookbook, let us know in your RSVP.)



## Meetings & Events

### The Quabbin Interpretive Services Fall Programs

Below is our list of upcoming public programs for the fall months. New tours this fall include two scheduled for the Ware River Watershed area. We will also be offering our usual series of winter presentations in a hybrid format. We will have a limited number of seats in the Visitor Center that people can reserve and we will also be sharing the program remotely. For more information or to be added to our mailing list please email [QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov](mailto:QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov)

All ages are welcome. For more information email [QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov](mailto:QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov).

**Please dress appropriately for the weather and bring water.** All ages are welcome. **Dogs are not allowed anywhere at the Quabbin Reservoir.**

#### **Saturday, October 14, 2023 11AM–1:30PM** ***Exploring the North Side of the Quabbin Watershed via Gate 35***

*5-miles – Moderate*

**Quabbin Reservoir Gate 35, From Rt 122 in New Salem take Old North Dana Road to Gate 35**

**<https://goo.gl/maps/x3djiRBJCMEbduif7>**

Join us for a 5-mile out/back hike on Quabbin's north side of the watershed. We will be walking down to and along the water on a dirt road through the forest. We will cover 5 miles and the slope remains relatively flat the entire time. Hike begins at Quabbin Reservoir's Gate 35. The parking area for Gate 35 is located at the end of Old North Dana Road in the town of New Salem.

To register, enter the following on the **search line** of your browser: **Quabbin's Exploring the North Side of the Quabbin Watershed via Gate 35 10/14/23 smartsheet.com**

#### **Sunday, October 22, 1PM–3PM** ***Quabbin's Hidden History: Webster Road***

*2.5 miles round-trip – Easy*

Meet at Hank's Meadow parking lot.

**<https://goo.gl/maps/4RiEq17PCNEf6s9E7>**

Quabbin's ghost towns are hiding in plain sight—if you know where to look. This two-hour guided interpretive walk will teach you how to read the natural landscape as you uncover clues that reveal the hidden history of Webster Road. Explore old cellar holes and historic stone walls, get to know some native and invasive plants, and learn more about the families who

lived in the town of Enfield a hundred years ago.

To register, enter the following on the **search line** of your browser: **Quabbin's Hidden History: Webster Road 10/22/23 smartsheet.com**

#### **Friday, October 27, 9AM–1PM** ***Exploring Watershed Forestry: Understanding Forest Growth in the Pottapaug Natural Area***

*Approximately .5 mile – Moderate*

**Quabbin Gate 40- located off Rt. 32A in Petersham**

**<https://maps.app.goo.gl/Dmpunf14zxsG1B2x7>**

In 1991, the 1,183-acre Pottapaug Natural Area (PNA) in Petersham was deliberately set aside from typical forest management. Currently designated as an 'Area of Special Management Restrictions' at Quabbin, the forest here will eventually develop old growth characteristics that are not commonly found in younger forests. Come join us to learn about the history of this area and see some of the interesting landscape features it contains. We'll also explain how DWSP is collecting long-term data to help us and other researchers understand forest growth and development and the variety of ecosystem benefits provided by both managed and reserved forests across Massachusetts.

We will be carpooling on dirt or gravel roads to the location of the PNA. We will be walking both on trail and off trail through the woods. Please dress appropriately for weather and insects, wear safe, suitable footwear, and bring water.

To register, enter the following on the **search line** of your browser: **Understanding Forest Growth in the Pottapaug Natural Area 10/27/23 smartsheet.com**

#### **Sunday, November 12, 2023 11AM–12.30PM** ***Rutland Prison Camp***

*Easy, uneven ground*

**Rutland Prison Camp, main parking lot**

**299 Intervale Rd, Rutland, MA 01543**

**<https://maps.app.goo.gl/J1iuV7QGB3rEAbxJ9>**

Fresh air, three home-cooked meals a day, comfortable sleeping quarters and a private hospital - sounds like a delightful retreat for a prison?? Indeed, it was! Join DCR staff as we explore the remains of this surprisingly successful social experiment. Ticks are still active, so protection is advised, as is wearing orange during hunting season.

To register, enter the following on the **search line** of your browser: **Rutland Prison Camp 11/12/23 smartsheet.com**

The Quabbin Interpretive Services program operates the Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center, offering public and school education programs, teacher workshops, and general information about DCR's water supply resources and watershed management, the history of the Quabbin Valley and wildlife of the area. Staff members are available to assist with visitor information and services. **An automated telephone system—(413) 323-7221—provides 24 hour access to current information on fishing, hunting, programs, rules and regulations, and public access. You can also reach the Visitor Center by email at [QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov](mailto:QuabbinVisitor.Center@mass.gov).**



## Quabbin Photo Group

The Quabbin Group (QPG) will be returning to meeting in person this Fall. The meetings will be hybrid, so those who can't attend in person may still join via Zoom by contacting Gail Platz at gspqpg@gmail.com. We will be meeting at 7:00PM for refreshments with the meeting starting at 7:30 at the Hope United Methodist Church, 31 Main St., Belchertown, MA 01007.

**Sept. 25, 2023 Program: Dale Monette will present "I see you. Stories of my favorite nature images from around the Quabbin and how I made them."**

**Oct. 22, 2023 Members Night**

**Nov. 27, 2023 Program: Underwater Photography by Norm Vexler, "Another World"**

**Dec. 18, 2023 Members Night**

Our meetings will be via Zoom for December, January and February to avoid the difficulties of winter weather.

## Pioneer Valley Photographic Artists

www.pvphotoartists.org

**Oct. 26, 2023 Theme: Changing Colors**

**Nov. 30, 2023 Theme: Very Barren**

**Dec. 28, 2023 Theme: Snow Scene**

**Jan. 25, 2024 Theme: TBD**

PVPA is still meeting via Zoom at 7:00PM on the last Thursday of the month.

## Tuesday Tea

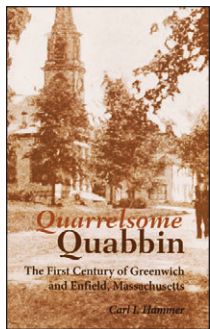
Tuesday Tea meets the first Tuesday of the month from 1:00–3:00PM at the Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center. Meeting dates and cancellations will be announced on the Friends of Quabbin website: www.foquabbin.org under Tuesday Tea.

## Newly Available Books

at the Les and Terry Campbell Visitor Center

by Paul Godfrey

There are three books newly available at the Visitor Center. The first is a new book, **Quarrelsome Quabbin** by Carl Hammer,



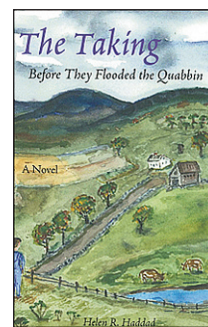
**\$18.95.** I recently attended a book launch at Collective Copies/Levellers Press in Amherst, MA. This book fills a void in our array of historically focused books on the Quabbin; detailing the period in the 19th century when the small villages in the Quabbin Valley were growing and sorting out their differences in philosophies, politics and personalities. To quote the book jacket:

*There is a large literature on the Quabbin towns, but virtually all of it concerns the last*

*years of their existence. This is the first book that looks in depth at their first century, a quarrelsome century which was marked by the Revolution, Shays' Rebellion and the prolonged contest over parish and town division. During that period, the two towns developed distinctive personalities and mutual antagonisms which were well remembered by their most distinguished son, Francis Henry Underwood, in his personal remembrance of Quabbin.*

The second book hasn't been available at the Visitor Center since about 2019. We got those copies from the author. She has since died and it was never clear where or if we could get more. I recently attended the Hammer book launch at Collective Copies in Amherst. The owner of Collective Copies/Levellers Printing happened to be placing a pile of books on Quabbin out for the audience to consider. I looked and saw the long-sought book: **The Taking: Before They Flooded the Quabbin** by Helen Haddad, **\$16.95.** I had found its publisher!

*The Taking* is a finely crafted story revealing the human side of a perplexing episode in Massachusetts history. This book belongs in

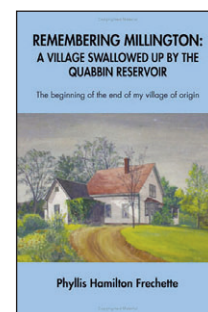


every Massachusetts public and school library. It is destined to become a Quabbin area classic. –Rosemary Heidkamp, Library Director, Wendell Free Library

**The Taking**—a window into the 1920s, this novel opens when young Josiah loses his parents and has to leave the city of Boston, moving to rural western Massachusetts.

There, he struggles to adapt to life on his aunt and uncle's farm and to adjust to a one room school, where he meets Addy, who becomes a friend, and Alvin, the

school bully. As his sense of belonging slowly grows, so does his realization that the Swift River Valley, where he now lives, may be destroyed to create an enormous reservoir to supply water to Boston. The largely untold story of life in the towns flooded to create the Quabbin Reservoir is presented as a back-drop to Josiah's story, as is a picture of traditional New England farming through the seasons.



The third book new to our shelves is **Remembering Millington: A Village Swallowed Up by the Quabbin Reservoir** by Phyllis Hamilton Frechette, **\$11.96**

is a personal story of a young girl's life in a small, rural community, Millington, at the very north end of what is now Quabbin Reservoir, a story of those unique memories about a place that exists now only at the bottom of Quabbin Reservoir. This is a story written for the author's children,

grand-children and great grand-children, but, while it may be unique in some aspects, it is hauntingly common in the feelings and emotions of anyone trying to impart childhood memories to their descendants.

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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](mailto: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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