Uniquely Quabbin magazine serving
THE NORTH QUABBIN: Athol • Erving • New Salem • Orange • Petersham • Phillipston • Royalston • Templeton • Warwick • Wendell
THE SOUTH QUABBIN: Barre • Belchertown • the Brookfields •Hardwick (Gilbertville) • Hubbardston • Leverett • New Braintree • Oakham • Pelham • Rutland • Shutesbury • Ware

Sunshine illuminates icy trees at Lake Rohunta, Athol.
photo © by Nancy Lagimoniere

ON THE FRONT COVER
Making Tracks
a watercolor by Elizabeth Callahan of Rutland

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volume 5, number 3 • January 2021-April 2021
this issue features virtual links, history, event listings, and sights to see in the uniquely Quabbin heart of Massachusetts

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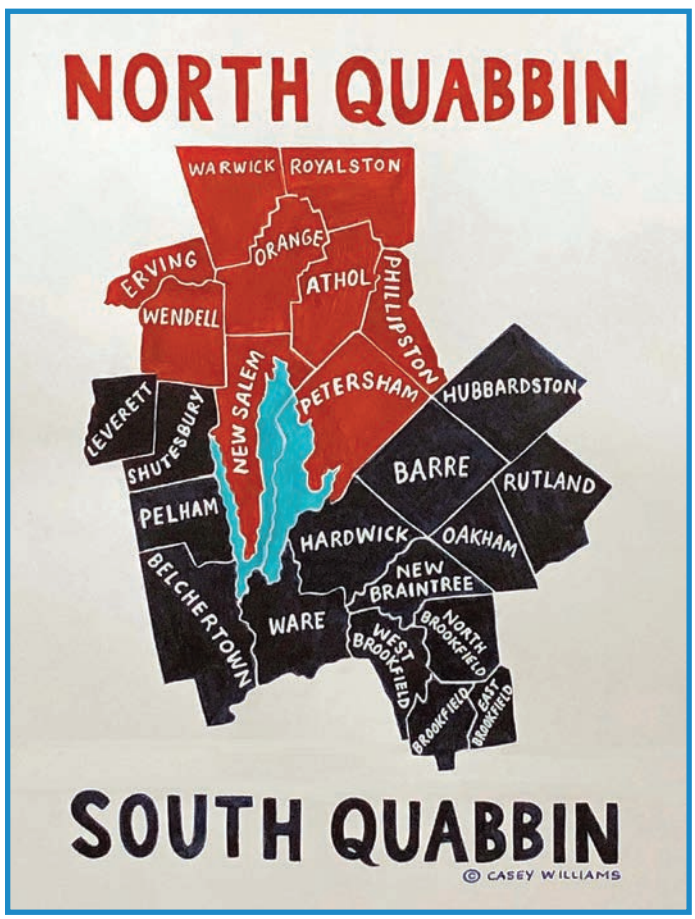

Quabbin towns past and present • maps © Casey Williams

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about *Uniquely Quabbin* magazine

Quabbin region, Massachusetts—*Uniquely Quabbin* serves the twenty-five Quabbin region towns. Athol Historical Society, Haley's Publishing, and North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau collaborate to produce *Uniquely Quabbin* in cooperation with writers, photographers, and artists from the greater Quabbin area.

Advertisers support *Uniquely Quabbin* along with earmarked donations made to Athol Historical Society, which will send a letter acknowledging a tax deductible gift. The International Music and Art Foundation provided a seed grant to support the magazine and evolving consortium of Quabbin region museums, historical societies, and arts centers.

FIND LISTINGS FOR EVENTS IN NORTH QUABBIN AND SOUTH QUABBIN BEGINNING ON PAGE 55

a note from Athol Historical Society

Thank you, thank you . . .

On behalf of Athol Historical Society, I want to thank the cultural councils of Athol, Hubbardston, New Salem, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Rutland, Templeton, Ware, Warwick, and Wendell for supporting *Uniquely Quabbin* magazine with Massachusetts Cultural Council Local Cultural Grants for 2020. Their support is vital to the life of our magazine.

I also want to say thank you to those supporters who have generously given donations to the magazine. It is so rewarding to know that you enjoy reading the magazine as much as we enjoy putting it together for you. Donations are always welcome, and you will find the magazine lists a couple of methods you can use to donate to the magazine.

I also want to thank our advertisers who play such a big role in the success of this magazine. An ever-growing list of businesses and organizations continuously support *Uniquely Quabbin*. Despite this difficult, uncertain time, they are *STILL* supporting us! Please get out there and support them as they support us.

I hope you enjoy this issue. After reading the articles about birds and beavers, I immediately wanted to go out and buy more feeders for my yard and then take a walk down the road to where I know the beavers have been busily working at the local pond.

We have so much beauty right here in the uniquely Quabbin area to be thankful for.

Enjoy!

Thankfully,,
Debra Ellis, treasurer
Athol Historical Society

***Uniquely Quabbin* magazine gratefully acknowledges the support of**

Athol Cultural Council • Hubbardston Cultural Council
New Salem Cultural Council • Orange Cultural Council
Petersham Cultural Council • Phillipston Cultural Council
Royalston Cultural Council • Rutland Cultural Council
Templeton Cultural Council • Ware Cultural Council
Warwick Cultural Council • Wendell Cultural Council

a note from the publisher of Uniquely Quabbin

Many of us have observed recently how lucky we are to live in this gentle, beautiful region where we don't have to go far—maybe don't even need to drive or hitch a ride—to find a pond to walk around, a friendly wooded path to hike, or a small-town center that welcomes shoppers appropriately observant of necessary cautions.

As winter progresses into spring, may we appreciate our surroundings bursting not only with natural abundance but also artists, machinists, writers, crafters, photographers, artisans, gardeners, mechanics, sculptors, musicians, and so many other creative neighbors.

We have enjoyed working with the articles and images that fill this edition of *Uniquely Quabbin* magazine, and we look eagerly forward to the day when we can present you with more listings of public events.

Sincerely,
Marcia Gagliardi, publisher
Haley's

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THANK YOU!

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We invite contributions to *Uniquely Quabbin* magazine. Contact Marcia Gagliardi at haley.antique@verizon.net or 488 South Main Street, Athol 01331 with proposals to contribute to *UQ* or for letters to the editor.

Uniquely Quabbin magazine serves the twenty-five communities of the North Quabbin and South Quabbin.

winter beaches silently beckon

by Dorothy Johnson

Dorothy Johnson

Winter driving is not my favorite thing. No matter how mild the season, ice might lurk at every curve of the road or street corner, so I try to stay close to home. Without challenging my willingness to drive, I decided to consider Quabbin region public beaches in winter as quiet places with sand and water.

New Salem, where I live, has no public beach. Of course, the nearby Quabbin Reservoir has ample water and both sand or, in warmer seasons, grassy shore but it's not designed for public recreation. Swimming, even in summer, is out of the question. You can walk (but never with a dog) past the gates leading to the water, a satisfying thing to do all year round, but I wanted to find beaches.

On a warmish day, I drove down Route 122 through Barre to the Lost Villages Scenic Byway not far from the Oakham boundary line. I stopped at a parking area and said to myself, "No beaches. What am I doing here?" But I did see an interesting area with picnic tables under trees, and I could walk along the shore of Ware River. Signs tell us that officials razed a nearby cotton mill in 1936 to make way for Quabbin Reservoir. The area belongs to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Another day, I journeyed to Wendell to look over Ruggles and Wickett ponds. Sad to say, Ruggles had closed up for the season and while Wickett Pond is open, it has no beach.

Since I was so close, I went on to Lake Wyola State Park in Shutesbury. You can get there from Ruggles Pond

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First Snow

text and acrylic painting on canvas by Susan Marshall

First Snow
acrylic painting on canvas © by Susan Marshall

Each year after leaves fall, temperatures drop, plants die, ice forms on water, and snow begins to fall. In the Quabbin region, as usual this season, the first snow made its appearance in the first weeks of December.

In my painting *First Snow*, I symbolize and encompass winter. Most important during winter is reflection, the quiet drawing inward, listening, watching, keeping warm inside, and enjoying closeness while observing luminous sunrises and sunsets outside. Especially in this winter, we reflect on our reliance on family, friends, and connections, treasures easily taken for granted.

We find special meaning this winter in the power of nature and relationships. We find new relevance in all that surrounds us as life takes on new meaning. Scandinavians call the darker, snowy, colder time of year *hygge* (pronounced hyoo-guh) or *hygge* mind-set. It translates as coziness. With the *hygge* outlook, winter becomes a kind, cozy season.

Lighting candles, making a warm drink, or pulling up by the fire with a good book all embody *hygge*. Though we may miss large gatherings of family and friends, we can look forward to a day when we again get together safely. Even so, we can remain safe and content at home as we watch beauty unfold outside.

Long blue shadows on snow and a glittering white world cast their magic spells before our eyes.

Award-winning artist Susan Marshall of Orange has degrees in art and theatre from UMass, Amherst. She specializes in designing interior and exterior spaces around artwork and murals.

beavers—North America's largest rodents—

by Dale Monette

While beavers have been engineering the New England landscape for thousands of years, I appeared on the landscape around the middle of the twentieth century. I can't remember when I first became aware of the furry animals, but probably it happened when my father took the family fishing on local ponds when I was about six or so. When I entered Bob Coyle's science class in the eighth grade, I became aware of the animals' activities during field trips when Mr. Coyle pointed them out and explained some of their biology to us.

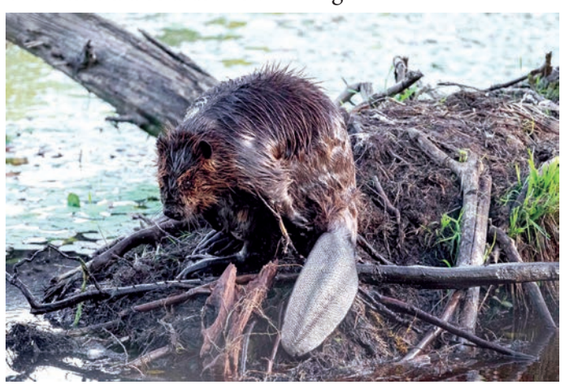
Slapping its flat tail, a beaver propels itself through a pond.
photo © by Dale Monette

After I took a job with the Metropolitan District Commission at Quabbin Reservoir in 1985, I really got to see how beavers master the environment. One of my job duties involved driving roads one or two days a week throughout the Quabbin watershed to clear culverts. In order to back up streams to build ponds to live on, local beavers stuffed sticks and mud into culverts under the roads. I had to undo what the mainly nocturnal animals did while most of us slept.

Beavers live throughout North America from Canada to Mexico. Although common to abundant in most of Massachusetts, they don't live in southeastern Massachusetts.

Weighing between thirty-five and seventy pounds, beavers qualify as North America's largest rodents, an order of mammals. Males and females do not differ in size and can grow as long as two-and-a-half feet, not including the tail, which can grow to from ten to eighteen inches. They have 177,000 hairs per inch of thick, dark-brown—to-reddish fur that keeps them warm as they swim in cold water and also insulated from harsh New England winters.

They have webbed feet and large, flat, leathery tails that regulate their temperature and store fat. The tail can communicate danger to other beavers when slapped on the water. It also aids in swimming.



A beaver forages a dead tree for a meal.
photo © by Dale Monette

have engineered the landscape for centuries

Beavers spend most of their time in water except when venturing out to gather food or branches and small logs to use on their lodge and dams. Crepuscular animals, they busy themselves most at dawn and dusk.

Strict vegetarians, beavers do not eat fish or frogs. They feed on aquatic plants and tubers, leaves, twigs, woody plants, and bark. Their well-developed teeth, sharp incisors, require constant sharpening by gnawing since they grow continuously.

Beavers pick and stay with mates for life. They mate in winter between January and March with young born in spring between April and June. Young beavers stay with their parents and litter mates for two years before setting off on their own. A typical beaver family consists of two adults, that year's kits, and one or two from the previous year.

Few predators stalk beavers, which may live to be twenty years old. I have seen beavers hit by cars in the North Quabbin area, especially on Route 122. It always makes me sad to see one dead along the side of the road. They could be young ones or adults out looking for food for the young, and they will never make it home.

Naturalists call beavers a keystone species because they create wonderful wetland habitats for numerous species of birds, mammals, insects, and plants. Those species rely on beavers to keep the land stable so they can survive. If beavers move out for some reason and habitats collapse, dependent species populations will also collapse.

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Beavers construct their lodge to shelter them in all kinds of weather.
photo © by Dale Monette

what causes one animal's demise

by Jim Morelly

A lone coyote heads away with a January breakfast.

photo © by Jim Morelly

What causes one animal's demise causes another animal's survival.

I witnessed something illustrating the phenomenon on an early January morning that turned into a two-day Quabbin wildlife experience. Hiking along the reservoir shoreline gave up the most unusual sight: a coyote jumping up and down on distant ice.

I found it a comical sight to watch as the coyote ran and jumped. What could it possibly be doing? Stalking closer revealed the wild canine harassing something called an unkindness, a group of ravens—like a pride of lions or a flock of geese, so an unkindness of ravens-attempting to feed on a deer carcass lying on the ice of a snow-covered cove. Likely coyotes had caused that deer's demise the previous night.

The sun's rays broke the horizon and would soon illuminate the cove. Naturalists know coyotes are extremely skittish when exposed in open, sunlit environments. It didn't take long before that canine ran for cover, which provided me a perfect opportunity to move closer and to camouflage myself against the hillside. It also didn't take long before the coyote reappeared and quickly moved towards the carcass. The coyote wasted no time as it pulled and ripped into the hind quarter, then darted away with a mouth full of meat and bone. That coyote's behavior in such an open area during daylight provided a perfect example of risk versus reward.

It may have been some time since that animal had eaten.

It wasn't long after the coyote left that I caught movement of a bobcat meandering along the distant

causes another animal's survival

shoreline when it spotted the deer carcass. I doubt coincidence, that the bobcat just happened to be walking the shoreline at the opportune time. It most likely caught scent of carrion long before seeing it.

As I watched, the wild feline stopped, stood motionless, and moved its head ever so slowly as it intensely scanned snow-covered ice, itself watching for danger.

Comfortable, the bobcat continued walking ever so slowly towards the waiting feast. Just short of the deer carcass, it stopped once again, apparently pondered for a moment, then turned and ran back in the direction it came.

Something wasn't right. The bobcat smelled danger in the wind and, in the blink of an eye, vanished.

Several hours passed since I saw that cat or any other wildlife, so I decided it was time to call it a day.

I planned to return the next day. Wondering what that following morning might hold, I realized that the day must start early. I would need enough time to hike back into that cove before first light.

It's a forty-five-minute drive from my home, and the next day I experienced it full of anticipation but also concern. I wondered if a pack of coyotes may have consumed the deer overnight. Coyotes can devour a deer carcass down to just bones very quickly. I often hear such stories each year from hunters.

Wary behavior demonstrated the previous day by both the coyote and bobcat could result in a short window for a photograph I might take.

The weather was windy and bitterly cold. I'd have to consider wind direction as I approached the cove. With the time and effort needed to reach that location, I certainly didn't want to make any mistakes nor alert any

Evidently confident that no danger lurks, a bobcat takes a break from feasting on a deer carcass.

photo © by Jim Morelly

predator to my presence. The setup would be déjà vu but also hidden from view with wind blowing directly at me.

All I needed was patience.

The bobcat showed up as the day dawned. With utmost confidence in the cover of predawn light, it walked a straight path from the shoreline to the deer, quite a different approach than I witnessed the previous day.

My excitement built as the cat fed intensely on the deer, unaware that I watched.

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winter shapes and sounds help discover new plants, animals, and not-often-seen birds

by Sue Cloutier

On winter walks, take time to slow down, listen, and look. Shapes and sounds give a sense of place while helping you discover new plants and animals. You can see signs of hungry animals gathering food. This winter, unusual birds may appear and even visit feeders near your home. A dearth of acorns, nuts, and berries in more northern areas encourage them to find this region's riches.

Flocks of pine siskins may descend on your thistle-Niger-seed feeders. The type of the goldfinches you often see, siskins, goldfinches' northern cousins, have heavily striped breasts. Another unusual so-called winter finch you may see is the evening grosbeak. That robin-sized bird has black and white on its wings, a yellow band on its head, and yellow on its body. A flock of evening grosbeaks will easily empty your sunflower-seed feeders in a short time.

If you venture down a woodland path to see other wild birds, you may observe the antics of and hear conversational calls of flocks of black-capped chickadees and white-breasted nuthatches. This year, the flocks

Unusually this winter, pine siskins flock to backyard feeders.
photo © by Sue Cloutier

will more than likely include a small and squeaky red-breasted nuthatch usually found further north or at higher elevations. Nuthatches stand out from other birds because they move along a tree trunk upside down as well as right side up as they glean insects hiding in crevices of tree bark. That ability to move either way may help them get more food as they can work all sides of cracks in a tree's bark.

As they do not visit every winter in the large numbers, pine siskins, evening grosbeaks, and red-breasted nuthatches promise exciting winter sightings this season. You may also see other avian visitors from the north as winter unfolds: snowy owls, bohemian waxwings, red- or white-wing crossbills.

You'll always find it worthwhile to search for native wildlife in our region. One of the most exciting to find is our largest woodpecker, the pileated. A loud "cuk, cuk, cuk" call or pounding with its beak can alert you to its presence. You can't miss the flashes of its black-and-white wings as it flies by. The pileated woodpecker creates large rectangular holes in tree trunks to find a meal of carpenter ants living within the wood. Pay attention! Those rectangular holes let you know that woodpeckers range nearby.

When walking through the woods, realize that trees provide for wildlife in many ways. Squirrels, turkeys, bears, and deer count on the seeds and buds of trees to survive the winter. Bears particularly favor beechnuts. Although disease has assaulted most of our beech trees, the roots of the beech can survive after the tree's top dies and, like the American chestnut, its roots send up new shoots.

Finding beeches in winter is easy. Beeches stand out because they hold their leaves even after oaks lose theirs. The shape of the beech's long, light tan leaves stands out against the snow or darker leaf litter. If you look closely at a branch, you will see a smooth, pale gray. As winter draws to a close, the long-pointed buds of the beech finally push off last year's leaf.

Also a distinctive tree, the shag-barked hickory provides for wildlife. Like oaks, its nuts furnish important food for wildlife. As its shaggy name indicates, the bark of the tree shreds in thick, gently curved strips. The brown creeper, a bird similar in size to the red-breasted nuthatch, makes its nest under the shag bark's curls. When growing at the edge of a field, the shape of the tree, even when seen from a distance, stands out. Maybe you will have good luck this winter and see a brown creeper seeking insects hidden in a shag-barked hickory.

Walking roads in the Quabbin woods, you know people lived not so long ago near stonewalls and big, old sugar maples that you pass. As deep winter cold starts to shift with freezing nights and warmer days, you may see signs of today's people gathering food—maple sap—from

Some Quabbin region aficionados collect sap the old-fashioned way.
photo © by Sue Cloutier

those trees. The old-fashioned way of gathering buckets of sap may be transitioning to sap lines and barrels, but I prefer the look of the old way. Sap buckets hung in rows along stately old maples gives you a sense of place.

Come visit the Quabbin region to walk in the woods, discover wildlife there, and see sap turned to maple syrup.

Experienced nature center director Sue Cloutier specializes in biodiversity and educational programs. She is inventorying living things on her New Salem property.

birds take themselves beyond normal range,

by John Burk

In 2020, rarely seen snowy owl reprised 2017 nearby sightings.
photo © by John Burk

On an unseasonably mild day this past November, a snowy owl made an unexpected visit to the northern end of Quabbin Reservoir in New Salem. Many naturalists, photographers, and hikers watched from rocky shores as the ghost-like Arctic migrant rested and staked out prey. Other birds from northern regions, including pine and evening grosbeaks, common redpolls, pine siskens, and crossbills, have also been conspicuous in central Massachusetts since autumn.

Such sightings make winter an exciting season for bird watching, with opportunities to discover species otherwise rare or uncommon in southern New England. Often traveling long distances from distant regions, a variety of nomadic fliers venture to the area during cold-weather months.

Widespread movements of birds beyond normal ranges, called irruptions, occur at irregular intervals. A species may be abundant in a particular area one winter and then absent in subsequent years.

Despite unpredictable nature, irruptions aren't random events but correlate with food availability.

Crucial winter staples such as tree seeds, fruits, and small mammals are subject to natural boom-and-bust cycles. For example, different tree species yield bumper seed crops at varying intervals, and droughts and other unusual weather events can also affect production. When resources diminish in home territories, irruptive birds adapt by dispersing in search of sustenance.

Canadian ornithologist Ron Pittaway helped solve the mystery of irruptions by comparing yearly seed crop observations with movements of finches and other species. Using field notes submitted by naturalists in northern forest regions, Pittaway created a popular and accurate annual forecast, now spearheaded by a collaborator at the Winter Finch Network, finchnetwork.org. This year's report indicates an active irruption year in the Northeast for several species because of poor to below average cone and birch crops.

Evening grosbeaks, one of several colorful finch species that brighten Quabbin area forests and yards during irruptions, have been migrating southward from Canada since autumn. Dave Small, Athol Bird and Nature Club president, reported, "For the first time in several years I've had evening grosbeaks in the yard, feeding on fruiting crabapple and winterberry bushes."

Despite declining populations in New England, grosbeaks can be locally common during irruptions.

Evening grosbeaks may appear frequently during irruptions.
photo © by Dale Monette

"Groups of from fifty to seventy-five grosbeaks regularly fed on fruit trees in Royalston center and at my feeders, where they consumed a lot of sunflower seeds, in the winter of 2018-19. During the 1970s, it was not uncommon to see flocks of that size, but they are rarer now," said ABNC officer and birder Ernie LeBlanc.

Red- and white-winged crossbills are also highly nomadic and notoriously unpredictable as they travel about in search of bountiful cone crops. Hooked beaks allow both species to pry open cones and extract seeds. Red crossbills feed on a variety of conifers, while their white-winged relatives prefer spruce. Some crossbills breed in northern New England after irruptions, but they are much rarer further south. The first known

an irruption during food shortages to the north

nesting pair of white-winged crossbills in Massachusetts wasn't confirmed until 2001 after a large irruption the previous year.

A female white-winged crossbill, left top, and a male feed on conifers, top. A female pine grosbeak, left bottom, and a male feed on crabapples.
photos © by John Burk

Pine grosbeaks, native to boreal or northern forests, venture south during winters with poor mountain ash berry crops to feed on crabapples, apples, and other fruiting trees as well as household feeders with sunflower seeds. Nicknamed mopes by some birders because of sluggish, tame behavior, pine grosbeaks are often easy to observe and photograph during winter feeding forays.

Common redpolls appear often quite conspicuous during irruptions as they group in flocks of hundreds or thousands of birds and frequently visit household feeders and fields. Their movements relate to seasonal birch-seed crops in northern forests. Though well-adapted to cold temperatures, redpolls need to eat almost continuously to offset hypothermia and rarely stay still for long.

Similarly active and gregarious, pine siskins also travel in large groups. The diminutive finches, identified by heavily streaked bodies with light yellow wings, often show up at bird feeders stocked with thistle seeds, Niger seeds, and small sunflower seeds. Pine siskins nest in northern New England and range widely across southern and eastern North America during winter in search of seed crops.

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Gravestone and Clamshell Honor Those Who Came Before

by Dorothy Frye

In early July 2020, Jim Ellis of Barnstable, Cape Cod, emailed me at the Swift River Valley Historical Society in New Salem. His question involved cemeteries moved from Lost Valley towns—Dana, Enfield, Greenwich, and Prescott, drowned to create Quabbin Reservoir—to Quabbin Park Cemetery. He inquired if any cemeteries had been relocated from New Salem. The state had relocated only one, Golden Lake Cemetery.

I wondered why he asked.

He said his neighbor Nicole Merriman had purchased a historic home in Barnstable and discovered a gravestone on the property for someone identified as Infant Wheeler. She asked Jim for help in discovering where the stone might have originated, she had no idea where it came from. Jim's research found that the parents named on the stone, Nathan and Esther Wheeler, lived in the New Salem/Shutesbury area in the early 1800s.

I confirmed Jim's information by examining records at Ancestry.com and at findagrave.com/memorial/129676123/infant-son-wheeler. Findagrave shows Nathan and Esther Wheeler listed in West Cemetery in Shutesbury with a picture of their headstone. Information with the listing cites the death of an infant with no picture of the infant's headstone. Through library research, a contributor to findagrave added a gravestone inscription on May 12, 2014.

Jim sent me a picture of the actual recovered slate stone with

In memory of
a son of Nathan Wheeler
and Mrs. Esther His wife
Born Aug 5, 1812
Ripe arrived for vital breath
But e'er enjoyed cut off by death

photo © by Jim Ellis

clearly visible engraving. Not able to contain my excitement, I asked my husband, David, to accompany me to Shutesbury's West Cemetery, where I found the family plot in the oldest section of the cemetery at the top of a hill covered with headstones from two hundred years ago. Certain that I had accurate information, I contacted Walter Tibbetts, cemetery commissioner for the Town of Shutesbury, and notified him of the discovery in Barnstable of the Wheeler gravestone.

Nicole Merriman's father-in-law, Peter Merriman, transported the stone from Barnstable to me. My grandson Hunter and I delivered it to Walter on August 12, 2020.

Soon, Walter informed me that TaMara Conde of New Salem, who operates the restoration company Historic Gravestone Services, would repair and reset the Wheeler stone as part of a gravestone conservation workshop financed through a grant from the Community Preservation Act to the Shutesbury Cemetery Department. Both Walter and TaMara said they would welcome my attendance at the workshop to photograph and chronicle the undertaking.

The workshop took place at Shutesbury's West Cemetery with twelve attendees. The hilly site made for a difficult climb, and uneven ground where I stood constituted a recipe for a long and painful day. I soon forgot my discomfort, however, as TaMara and her husband, Ricardo, gave an informative presentation on gravestone cleaning, repairing, resetting, and preservation. TaMara placed emphasis on conservation methodology and her firm belief that gravestones command respect and deserve preservation.

After a lunch break, Walter brought the infant's stone up the hill and gently placed it on the ground in front of the infant's parents' headstone. Standing beside Walter, I felt goosebumps wash over me. Tears sprang to my eyes, and a gentle peacefulness enveloped me. In that instant, I knew we all shared a very special and poignant moment not only with each other but with those who lived and died before us.

Soon Ricardo got busy digging in the area to the left of the family stone for placement of a new

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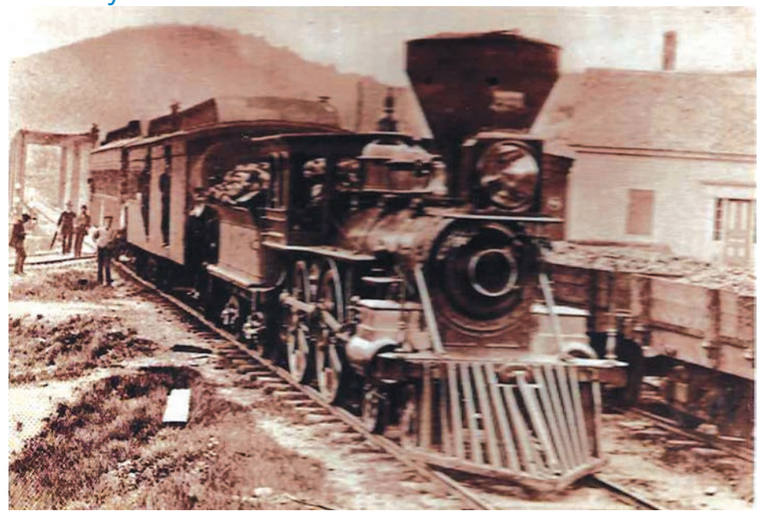
2021 marks 150th anniversary of railroad line called Rabbit Run

by J. R. Greene

In October, 1871, a railroad opened between Athol and a spot in the southeastern part of Belchertown known as Barrett's Junction. Called the Athol & Enfield Railroad, a thirty-mile-long, single-tracked line, it ended at a point on the New London & Northern Railroad, which connected to Palmer.

Agitation for the project began more than two decades earlier, and developers obtained a charter for a Swift River Railroad from the Massachusetts legislature in 1851, but that did not come to pass. In 1869, the legislature granted a charter for a railroad on a route between Athol and Belchertown. Towns along the line of the route were authorized to subscribe for stock in the new corporation at up to five percent of each town's property valuation. Several towns along the line did so, and some local residents agreed to purchase stock. Athol, the largest town to be directly served by the Athol & Enfield Railroad, voted in January, 1870 to subscribe for ninety thousand dollars in stock and bonds to support the project. Enfield, Greenwich, Prescott—which later reneged, and Petersham also voted at town meetings to subscribe for stock.

Willis Phelps, a Springfield railroad contractor, became the driving force behind the project, even though his brother Ansel was awarded the construction contract. Developers broke ground for grading the line in Enfield in late June, 1870. A local news account noted that



The first through train on the Springfield, Athol, & New England Railroad stopped in Enfield in 1873.

photo © courtesy of J. R. Greene

> it was a gay day for that staid village, A cannon was brought into service, good music was rendered, and speeches were made by Reverend Ewing and others.

Grading the northern section of the line began in early July.

South Athol was originally slated to be given only a shelter for a so-called flag stop, but the villagers successfully lobbied for a full station. Ironically, it is the only station on

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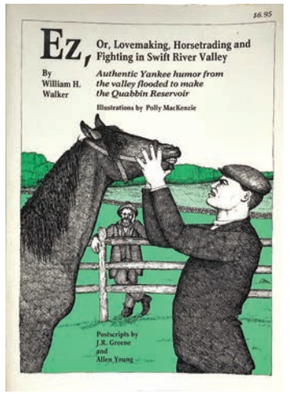
1930s Quabbin storybook Ez *focuses on tales of lovemaking, horsetrading, and fighting*

by Allen Young



In the 1980s, Millers River Publishing of Royalston republished William Walker's 1930s storybook, *Ez,* with drawings by Polly MacKenzie.

book cover scanned digitally with thanks to Allen Young

Numerous books depict Quabbin Reservoir and Swift River Valley, but a unique 1930s storybook focuses on tales told by a fictional Ez Williams.

William H. Walker (1857-1934), one of the most prominent citizens of the lost town of Greenwich, wrote the book entitled *Ez, or Lovemaking, Horsetrading, and Fighting in Swift River Valley.*

Ez gets mentioned in the first Quabbin book, *Quabbin: The Lost Valley* by Donald Howe, published in 1951. Howe states that Walker wrote the tales during construction of the reservoir. "In each instance," writes Howe, "the names of the persons are fictitious, but the incidents are regarded generally as true, with all identifications concealed as to both persons and places."

In 1984, while employed as a reporter at the *Athol Daily News*, I launched a part-time small press, Millers River Publishing Company. I had the good fortune of discovering *Ez* and publishing it. Patience Bundschuh of Royalston designed the cover featuring an illustration by Polly MacKenzie, who later married Tom Kiely, model for the drawing.

Howe dedicates the stories to Donald Walker, grandson of William H. Walker, who told the tales to the boy in his youth. On the manuscript of *Ez,* the author wrote in reflection of Howe's explanation: "These stories are part true, part fiction, but the characters really existed." I met Donald Walker, then living in Keene, New Hampshire, where he gave me a copy of the valuable Howe book and encouraged my effort.

William H. Walker prepared the original *Ez* in typewritten format with approximately seventy-five copies created, but the book was never published. Fifty years after William H. Walker's death, the Millers River edition came about after Dorothy Fittz of New Salem, a member of the Swift River Valley Historical Society, showed her own copy of the typed *Ez* to Dorothy Johnson, a New Salem neighbor. Walker had autographed the copy to Fittz's father.

My friend Dorothy, then owner of Common Reader Bookshop in New Salem suggested I republish *Ez*.

I contacted another friend, Polly MacKenzie, now Polly Kiely of Athol, an artist, and invited her to illustrate the book. Her nine detailed drawings of people and animals mentioned in the stories add considerably to the book's charm.

David Smith, professor of American Studies at Hampshire College in Amherst, wrote a back-cover blurb, placing *Ez* in literary and historic context this way:

Ez belongs to an earlier tradition of Yankee humor that entertained nineteenth-century readers with sketches of village life, type characterizations, pranks both cruel and fitting, set in a rural landscape where, since nothing much changed, people found their own amusements. The setting for the sketches in *Ez* is more in the woods, back roads, upcountry farms, and fishing ponds than in town, and one gets a vivid picture of the way small farm life was just before the coming of the telephone, the automobile, and—in the case of Greenwich—the Quabbin Reservoir and the town's demise.

Genuinely funny and authentic, *Ez* nevertheless conveys a secondary message of rural social history: of farms going under, a pervasive use of alcohol to drown the sorrows of misguided marriages, relentless poverty, scheming relatives, suicide. The book adds color and detail to our knowledge of what life was like in the Swift River Valley.

The Millers River edition of Ez includes a postscript about Greenwich by Athol author J. R. Greene, who has written many books about Quabbin, including *The Creation of Quabbin Reservoir*. J.R. has also produced an array of Quabbin-related photo calendars.

Among books with Quabbin-oriented fictional characters are *An Uncommon Spirit* by Cathy Stanton of Wendell and *Stillwater* by William F. Weld, former governor of Massachusetts.

Originally priced at $6.95, *Ez* has been out of print for decades, but Swift River Valley Historical Society has some copies for sale. To order a book, make a check for sixteen dollars, including sales tax, handling, and postage, payable to SRVHS, Post Office Box 22, New Salem, MA 01355.

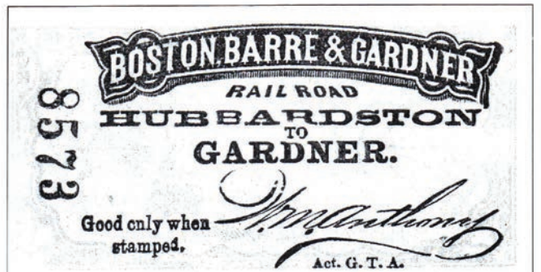
Allen Young lives in Royalston. He received the University of Massachusetts Writing and Society Award in 2004 and is author of the autobiography, *Left, Gay, & Green.*

villages Healdville and North Orange thrived in

by Carla Charter

In Hubbardston, Healdville once thrived as a factory village. Businesses included the Wilbur Tack Factory, according to Gary Kangas, Hubbardston resident and author of *Images of America: Hubbardston*.

Kangas said the waterwheel at the mill measured fifteen feet in diameter and took a whole winter and spring to build. Workers cut steel by hand with cold chisels. They made buckets in a blacksmith forge and used hand drills to make holes in the buckets. Then they put the wheel together with hot rivets and spokes attached to either side of the wheel. Once installed, the wheel powered several machines at the factory, and larger or smaller pulleys could be used to control the speed of the machine, Kangas said.



Riders presented late nineteenth-century conductors a stamped ticket in order to ride the Boston, Barre, & Gardner railroad.

photo courtesy of Hubbardston Historical Society

The Boston, Barre, & Gardner Railroad opened a depot in Healdville on July 4, 1871. The railroad resulted from a desire to build a line from Worcester to Gardner. The depot had both positive and negative effects on the town, according to Kangas.

"The railroad allowed people to work out of town," he noted. "It linked farmers and mills to provide their products and produce to distant towns. However it turned out detrimental to inns in town, as what would once be a trip of several days would be accomplished in one," Kangas said.

What became North Orange included parts of Royalston, Warwick, Athol, Erving, and later, south of the river, a piece of New Salem. Now a village component of Orange, the place once identified as Orange.

In 1783, Orange constituted part of the Warwick District.

"It took a long time to become a town," said Glenn Johnson, resident of North Orange who lives in the house his father built in 1940.

"Politics in Boston slowed the developments of individual towns," Mr. Johnson said. His family originally moved to Warwick in 1777, which then became North Orange before it became Orange in the mid 1800s when the road provided a main north/south transit.

Among early settlers in the village, Nathan Goddard acquired a two-hundred-acre grant in the 1740s. His home remains on a lot south of the common. In 1863, Nathan Goddard's brother David built a house at one of the sites now occupied by the Farm School, according to Mr. Johnson.

Businesses in the village primarily included farms, sawmills, and gristmills, he continued. The Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike, a toll road, went through North Orange from Boston to Brattleboro, and taverns

Hubbardston and Orange

and inns developed along the way. Franklin and Asuela Goddard operated a summer hotel, Overlook, owned now as a private residence by the Estabrooks family and retaining the hotel sign. North Orange also had the first post office in town. Cattle walked to and from Boston in herds. "There was a lot of business going back and forth," Mr. Johnson said.

The North Orange Church, now the Community Church of North Orange and Tully, began as a civic meetinghouse and church in 1781 in conjunction with creation of the new town. Sunday services lasted all day.

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The Community Church of North Orange and Tully includes United Church of Christ, Universalist-Unitarian Association, and interdenominational members.

photo by Marcia Gagliardi

villages of the Quabbin region

ATHOL
Athol Center
Eagleville
Fryeville
Hillside
Intervale
Lake Park
Partridgeville
Pinedale
Pleasant Valley
Proctorville
Riceville
South Athol
South Park
Sunnyside

BARRE
Barre Plains
Bogue
Center Village
Christian Hill
Coldbrook
East Barre Falls
Heald Village
Ryder Village
Mill Villages
South Barre

BELCHERTOWN
Bardwell
Chestnut Hill
Barrett's Junction
Blue Meadow
Dwight
East Hill
Federal
Franklin
Holyoke
Laurel
North Station
Pansy Park
Slab City
South Belchertown
Turkey Hill
Tylerville
Washington
West Hill

ERVING
Farley Village
Creamery Station
Millers Falls

HARDWICK
Gilbertville
Old Furnace
Wheelwright

HUBBARDSTON
Catville
Healdsville
Nicholsville
Pitcherville
Williamsville

LEVERETT
Dudleyville
Hillsboro
Moore's Corner
North Leverett
Rattlesnake Gutter
Slab City

NEW BRAINTREE

NEW SALEM
Cooleyville
Hagerville
Millington
Morgan's Crossing
Morse Village
New Salem Center
North New Salem
Puppyville
Quimby
Soapstone

OAKHAM
Coldbrook
Coldbrook Springs
Parkers Mills

ORANGE
Blissville
Fryeville
Furnace
Holtshire
North Orange
Tully
Wheelerville

PELHAM

PETERSHAM
Ledgeville
Nichewaug

PHILLIPSTON
Goulding
Powers Mills

ROYALSTON
South Royalston

RUTLAND
Muschopauge
New Boston
Rutland Heights
White Hall

SHUTESBURY
Baconsville
Lock Village

TEMPLETON
Baldwinville
East Templeton
Otter River

WARE
Brimstone Hill
Gibbs Crossing

WARWICK
Barber Hill
Brush Valley

WENDELL
Locke Village
Wendell Depot

The 351 towns and cities of Massachusetts have plenty of villages with no official or legal status. In our Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the concept of village remains undefined.

Francis Henry Underwood's 1893 memoir of Enfield looks back pungently on youth in what he calls Puckertown

by Carl I. Hammer

Enfield, largest and wealthiest of four towns submerged to create Quabbin Reservoir, separated into two parishes in 1787 and incorporated in 1816. Abundant waterpower from the two branches of the Swift River attracted many industries. During destruction of the town and construction of the reservoir, many large homes were used for offices and laboratories until the project neared completion in 1938 when, Enfield was the last of the four towns demolished.

photo courtesy of Carl I. Hammer

Shortly before his death, the lawyer and man of letters Francis Henry Underwood (1825-1894) published a book in 1893, *Quabbin: The Story of a Small Town with Outlooks upon Puritan Life,* a vivid memoir of Underwood's birthplace, Enfield, the last of four towns drowned to create Quabbin Reservoir.

Underwood entered Amherst College in 1843, but after a year, he left for Kentucky where he taught school and qualified in 1847 for the bar. His aversion to slavery caused him to return to Massachusetts, where he was admitted to the bar at Northampton in 1850. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Boston, where he combined legal work with literary pursuits as one of the founders of the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. In 1885 he sailed to Britain and died in Edinburgh in 1894.

Underwood bases his memoir of Enfield on youthful memories as well as any local lore related by his family and fellow townsmen. Shortly before leaving for Britain at age sixty, he apparently made a final visit to Enfield.

Underwood's portrait of his hometown is affectionate but critical, expressed in gently humorous satire. He clearly disdained what he perceived as his fellow townsmen's neglect of education and literature and what he identifies as religious bigotry, drunkenness, slovenly dress, and behavior, but he definitely respected the diligence and economy of what he referred to as farmers "of the better class."

He was not interested in Enfield's conventional history. But he was interested in historical change there, and much of his book chronicles the marked decline of Enfield during his lifetime. For Underwood, the railroad, which in 1841 bypassed Enfield to the south, was the primary cause. It improved access to cultural and intellectual influences from the wider world, but it drew commerce away and contributed further to the decline of local industry, already apparent by 1840, while facilitating emigration to what he calls better lands in the American West.

Underwood does, however, indirectly address one local historical event, Enfield's contentious separation from Greenwich in 1816. Although that happened nearly a decade before his birth, he clearly retained Enfield's prejudice against Greenwich, evident in his description of the Plains Village, Greenwich's southern settlement center near the Enfield line:

> The mother town [Greenwich] was, and has always remained, one of the most sluggish of rural communities. It did not appear poverty-stricken, but limp and lifeless. One might have walked the length of its ample common, around which a dozen close-blinded houses were dozing, and not have seen a human being abroad ... Even the old tavern had scarcely an eye open . . . So strong was the impression of this torpor, that to look for any gayety there seemed as impossible as to expect a blossom from a broomstick.
>
> Nevertheless it was averred that a stanza had once been composed there [in Greenwich], an actual stanza of four lines of verse. It might have been regarded as a lying legend had it not been for the evidence of the "local color." This is what the mockers were supposed to have said or sung:
>
> Let us go down to Puckertown,
> And see them raise the steeple;
> There we will stay, and hear Josh pray
> To save his wicked people.
>
> This effort was exhausting and fatal . . . the unknown and inglorious poet drooped, and never rhymed again.

"Local color" refers to the 1814 raising of the steeple on Enfield's church—then still the South Parish of

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"What's *new* around here?" you ask.

by Diane Nassif

The Quabbin area resonates with history, much of it visible in the landscape as stone walls, mills, old farms, forests, and fields.

New Braintree Town Hall surrondings resonate with vestiges of colonial and Native America.
digital drawing © by Jen Niles

Colonists initially settled many Quabbin region towns according to long-standing English land use practices after King Philip's War cleared land of indigenous inhabitants and encouraged settlement by the English. Only two towns in the area emerged as so-called new English versions of established coastal English colonies: New Braintree and New Salem.

Dioramas at Harvard Forest's Fisher Museum in Petersham provide a visually accessible rendition of changes to the landscape made by settler colonists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The dioramas reflect the perspective of colonists and their descendants. But one can look at that topographical history in a different way.

In a new book, Lisa Brooks, associate professor of English and American Studies at Amherst College, considers experiences of indigenous people who inhabited the area—and all of the Northeast—at the time of colonial settlement. *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War*, meticulously details an account of Native homelands in the Northeast as it focuses on the lives of Native leaders who shaped the period. Beginning in 1623 and to protect their extended families, communities, and culture, Native sachems interacted with the English. Brooks delves into evidence of what occurred "on the ground" for the Native and English players whose actions eventually led to war.

She describes how Native people lived on their land by following the rhythm of seasons for hunting, fishing, gathering berries, and agriculture. Native society saw women as equal partners in provisioning the community, and it was not unusual for a woman to take a leadership position in a tribe. Native leaders including women negotiated with other tribes' leaders and with the English when the colonists wished to acquire land traditionally held in common among indigenous inhabitants.

Brooks sensitively considers the complexity of life for Native people converted to Christianity by English missionaries. Educated and literate in multiple languages, Christian Natives often lived conflicting roles acting as intermediaries between tribal leaders and the English.

Initially, colonists wanted to extract valuable products from the forested land of New England (another significant "new"). They harvested trees, built sawmills,

"New Braintree and New Salem," she answers.

and traded with Native people for furs and fish. When colonists dammed streams and rivers or used them to transport lumber, the actions disrupted fishing.

As the English realized the extent of fertile soil, they wanted to own parcels of land to farm. From England, they brought cultivation practices antithetical to Native ways. For the English, farming was a man's job, soil required tilling in straight lines and not mounded, left fallow, or burned at intervals. For meat, the English imported cattle and pigs that destroyed Native agricultural fields of corn, beans, and squash. And Christian Native converts, assigned to live in "praying towns," had to follow strict gender roles of the new religion in their homes.

As more colonists expected they could claim Native land as their own, Natives made treaties and agreements with the expectation of peaceful resolution of disputes. The English, however, expected to dominate Natives by law and force.

Fighting broke out with notable battles and betrayals. Native people identified to the English as individuals, members of a friendly tribe, Christian converts, or part of a negotiated extended "kinship" relationship found themselves lumped into the category of "Indian." As war in southern New England progressed in 1667, the

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New Salem Town Hall marks a landscape reminiscent of colonial and Native America.
digital drawing © by Jen Niles

colonial records demonstrate "Negro baby Titus"

by Charlotte Westhead

It follows from colonial American cultural reasoning that someone identified by settlers in Petersham as "Negro baby, Titus," then six months old according to the records, or someone else simply as "Negro baby" in New Salem would benefit from being part of a minister's household. Both babies were *given* to Reverend and Mrs. James Humphrey of Athol.

But who were the parents of those babies? In Petersham, Titus may have been the first child of recently married slaves Rose and Tack.

In 1800 William Ebet, a Negro Revolutionary war veteran, and Roseanne Walker Powers married in Barre. They were the only two of eight "free others" in New Salem identified by name. One unidentified free other lived in the New Salem household of Reverend Samuel Kendall.

The identity of the New Salem baby remains unknown. And Roseanne may have been the daughter named Roseanne born to the enslaved Dinah and Mingo born in 1765 in Barre.

In the 1750s and 1760s, scattered English settlements occupied what became the Quabbin region. Representing the king, a provincial government controlled the distribution of land. The General Court of the Royal Province of Massachusetts Bay awarded large land grants and tax-free status to some men as rewards for services rendered, such as negotiating treaties with Native Americans or service in the French and Indian wars.

A settlement usually began when seven or eight English men gathered, often in a Boston tavern. An organized group, they had a parcel of land surveyed. Some bought the land from Native Americans.

Once the seven or eight English men owned or were granted surveyed land, they, often known as proprietors, had the land re-surveyed and divided into plots. The proprietors drew lots for the plots.

given to Christian minister

A grant gave official permission to form a settlement, usually requiring a specified number of settlers and a school and a church built within five years or the proprietors would lose the land grant.

New settlements needed ministers for their churches. Typically, a minister, often a young man nearing the time of ordination, visited the settlement and, after several trial sermons, the congregation there called him to serve. Ordination such as the one in Athol for James Humphrey in December 1750 constituted an important ceremony with costumes reflecting the elevated status of ministers in English colonial communities.

Literate, unlike some members of a colonial community, ministers often came from a family involved in government. A man with father, brother, or cousin in government could usually be counted on to support its policies.

The use of the settlement meetinghouse for town business and religious services strengthened connections between religion and politics. Congregants who could read often had only religious books in their homes.

Colonists from dispersed farmsteads came from near and far to the meetinghouse for religious services. The rules of settlement and of Massachusetts Bay dedicated Sunday, the Sabbath, for religion. The minister preached a sermon each Sunday morning and, after a meal, another in the afternoon.

In an era with no internet, social media, television, radio, or newspaper, the weekly gathering offered many the only time they met with nonfamily and the only way they shared news, gossip, and, of course, religious convictions.

Culture emphasized the verbal, and sermons rendered a major means of expressing and stressing cultural roles and norms of social behavior. One can easily imagine the elevated status of a minister who expounded such ideas.

Cultural values likely stressed may have included the idea that every adversity could lead to spiritual advantage and that following the master provided the God-given way to a heavenly reward.

Charlotte Westhead, retired registered nurse, spends time at Quabbin Region libraries poring through demographic records of the colonial era. She contributed to the books *Sandisfield Then and Now* (2012) and *From Schul to Soil* (2018), a history of Jewish farmers. She lives in Amherst.

a north field

a visual haiku with verbal haiku by Ami Fagin

a restless refrain

wanders across winter wood

echoing silence

Amy/Ami Fagin specializes in traditional manuscript illumination at her 20th Century Illuminations print studio in New Salem. She is author of *Beyond Genocide.* Find more of Ami's visual haiku at visualhaiku.graphics.

from the pens of *Uniquely*
compiled by Carol Mays,

For this issue, I selected poetry reflecting issues of uncertainty, changeability, and detachment, such as Walt Whitman describes so eloquently in "A Noiseless, Patient Spider."

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,
out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.
And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the
spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the
ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

From Joshua Michael Stewart's "purple abyss of winter" to Edward Bruce Bynum's "Rumors of missionaries from the distant stars" to Deborah Rolski's "fragile objects broken or hidden" to Diane Kane's image of winter harkening "to calls of the wild," I am reminded of that spider flinging out the gossamer thread, seeking a trustworthy anchor.

—Carol Mays, Poetry Editor

If you are a Quabbin area poet who would like to submit poems for possible publication in *Uniquely Quabbin*, contact Carol Mays at irisspring@hughes.net.

Carol Mays has been writing and compiling poetry for forty years. She has published eight books on various subjects. At her studio in Ware, she converts some of her paperbacks into ornamental hardcover versions. She has uploaded multimedia presentations of twenty poems to her YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/IdyllicProductions.

Snow Angels
by Joshua Michael Stewart

Each night they stare into the sky
and wonder why even with wings
they can never get off the ground.
Good reason for their creator
to take three steps, cock his head,
and disown his gift to the world.
Abandonment: a likely origin of anyone's
lack of faith. And faith: precisely what's needed
to soar in the purple abyss of winter.

We step out into our lives like sun slicing
between buildings and perform this one angelic
act that melts from our consciousness.
We return to our houses to accomplish
something important, leaving behind
the ones who don't know any better,
who see the wings as open arms,
snow as flesh, and are willing to lie back down.

A resident of Ware, Joshua has published poems in the *Massachusetts Review, Salamander, Brilliant Corners,* and *Talking River Review*. "Snow Angels" appears in his collection *Break Every String,* published by Hedgerow Books in 2016. His latest collection, *The Bastard Children of Dharma Bums,* is published by Human Error Publishing.

Walking a Country Road
by Edward Bruce Bynum

I walked the road in late autumn
Up from my house
Through an aisle of broken leaves like glass,
A burnt-out cathedral.
The wind had stolen most of the colors.
The crows black, ecclesiastical and solemn.
There were no fish, no offerings,
No cups of blood or warming communion,
Only the failing face of a defeated god,
Exploded porphyry, talk of strange unorthodox
biographies,
Rumors of missionaries from the distant stars.

Edward Bruce Bynam, a psychologist, has lived near the Quabbin for more than thirty-five years. His books on psychology include *Dark Light Consciousness* and *The Dreamlife of Families.* His books of poetry include *The First Bird, The Magdalene Poems: Love Letters of Jesus the Christ and Mary Magdalene.* "Walking a Country Road" appeared in his book *The Luminous Heretic.*

Quabbin poets
poetry editor

This Morning Is a Keepsake Box
by Deborah Rolski

This morning is a keepsake box;
I dust the small things.
The fragile objects broken or hidden-

What does snow taste like?
Will you warm me when I fall, my fingers freezing?
Face wet from snow angel-making?

The smell of metal smited fresh from Earth
lifts molecules of water from ice pockets-
persistent snow behind a home nestled in a forest,
redemption from a god of mirth-

Presently, a little boy dozes
beneath the sound of streams,
released from rivulets of Swift River's surface runoff.
Inside, the curtain closes.

Deborah Rolski lives in New Salem with her husband, son, and their pets. In her free time, she enjoys communing with owls. She teaches special education English in Barre.

Winter Eulogy
by Diane Kane

Winter whispers
soothing secrets,
landing lightly
on eyelashes.
It powders
hilltops with
a mother's love
And nips the cheeks
of children's faces.
Winter is brisk
with the voices
of youth, brazen
with the power
of the ageless.
Winter whips
among the trees
and harkens to
calls of the wild.
With fierceness
it threatens
and forgives
with equal mercy.
When you think
it's gone at last,
winter smiles.
It drifts and blows
in patterns inimitable.
And when winter
finally ends
it leaves
without goodbyes.
Melting like my heart
with promises
of new beginnings.

Diane Kane, longtime resident of Phillipston, is author of the children's books *Don Gateau, the Three-Legged Cat of Seborga* and *Brayden the Brave*. Her poetry has appeared in several anthologies and online journals. She is a founding member of Quabbin Quills nonprofit writers' group.

White Wings
oil painting on linen © by Gillian Haven

California music educator savors return to Quabbin region

by Leslie Gerbasi Schroerlucke

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately . . ."

—Henry David Thoreau

The reality of life in a pandemic abruptly halted my overly busy musical life and, surely, the bustling lives of musicians everywhere.

As a professional clarinetist and middle school band director in the Los Angeles area, I had interacted daily with colleagues and students making music together—in person.

Suddenly in mid March, venues and organizations canceled orchestra and chamber music rehearsals, as well as all live concerts, including my long-awaited performance at Carnegie Hall with a group of students. Making music with others became sadly not only logistically impossible but considered dangerous. And music education, a profession strongly based in the moment and physical space, became a vastly different experience online.

For a music teacher, the inability to play and perform together requires creativity and revised curriculum and philosophy. While educators all over the country face many obstacles as they navigate the challenges of online education, music teachers confront the same while daily having to reinvent themselves, their pedagogy, and their expectations for students.

Although perhaps not quite ready for it to happen as suddenly as it did, I had considered remote teaching long before the advent of the pandemic. Numerous challenges and some positives have accompanied implementation, and teachers can especially appreciate the ability to be location independent. After teaching from my home for a few months, my wanderlust tendencies made me stir-crazy, and I decided to expand my horizon.

I needed a new place to settle for a while as well as new perspective. Unable to visit the Quabbin region during autumn months for the past thirty-five years, I concluded that I wanted to see fall foliage in all of its splendor, the way that I remembered it when I was a kid. And in that spirit, I decided to experiment with the idea of a travelling virtual classroom.

With the help of a sympathetic Quabbin region band director who lent me several band instruments, a Quabbin region high school friend who retrieved them, a technologically savvy Quabbin

Ethel, feline girlfriend of artist Jen Niles of Paxton, stretches out on the September-December 2020 issue of *Uniquely Quabbin*

photo © by Jen Niles.

while virtually teaching students a continent away

region friend who lent me his spare monitor, and my willing father who installed the internet in his home, things have gone as smoothly as I could have hoped.

I haven't lived in the region for decades, and my infrequent visits have been brief. But my extended visit reminded me of the reasons that the Quabbin region still feels like home, even as I live on the other side of the country and travel abroad yearly. The Quabbin's Windsor Dam, for example, certainly did not disappoint. Once again, the majesty of the main gate impressed with a magnificent array of fall colors from the trail. Walking along a Quabbin beach in Petersham, my mind easily imagined the sunken towns, and I wondered if perhaps a teapot or an old floorboard might rise to float upon the surface of the water.

While teaching, I looked at my students on Zoom with one eye and, with the other, through the window into the woods so much a part of my growing up. In California, my yard is in close proximity to four different neighbors, yet we rarely speak to each other. We don't often open our windows because of air too smoggy or smoky depending on the season. Though leaves turn, colors are not spectacular. And when snow occasionally veils nearby mountains, the novelty attracts so many people that winter's tranquility diminishes even if seen as in a Rockwell painting or described in a Frost poem or experienced in townships around the Quabbin.

Though I notice signs of progress in the Quabbin region—new industries, shopping plazas, restaurants—I see them built tastefully.

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A frosty Quabbin morning takes the eye of a musician long relocated to California.

photo by Leslie Gerbasi Schroerlucke

videoconferencing with family across time zones

by Jane Gagliardi

As a child, I was haunted by the idea that people's homes had been flooded to create a reservoir for the people of Boston to use. I imagined watery deaths, but in later years I came to recognize some of the beauty of vistas, hiking trails, and even water sports (how funny to boat and fish in someone's drinking water!) in the Quabbin reservation.

My older sister Ann, younger sister Susan, and I grew up in the 1980s in Tully, a neighborhood of Orange. Years later, though, my sisters and I moved away. Ann and her family reside in Vienna, Susan and her husband live in Atlanta, and my family and I make our home in Raleigh. I most miss the Quabbin region in fall, when I know that colorful foliage embellishes the magnificent vistas.

Under normal circumstances, although separated by hundreds or thousands of miles, my sisters and I manage to see each other in person perhaps once or twice a year, and we chat via WhatsApp. In a pandemic, however, everything is different. With critically important public health recommendations, from avoiding being unmasked inside with people who do not live in your household to practicing physical distancing, many of us have experienced an unexpected benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic: the opportunity to become more socially connected via Zoom with family members who live remotely.

Susan and her husband, Chris, strict practitioners of all physical distancing recommendations, found many ways to maintain virtual connection. Beginning in March, Susan engineered weekly Friday Zoom meetups for Ann's and my children, ages from ten to fourteen, to watch movies with Uncle Chris. They organized a Zoom recital for the kids to perform for grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents. They produced a Zoom session for the kids to present on topics of their choosing: George Washington, United Parcel Services, and history of aviation. In an early spring family Zoom my husband, Carmelo, and I offered a talk on COVID-19. From there, our families established a routine of semiregular Zoom gatherings with extended members playing Bingo, Scribble, and Mad Libs, all endeavors requiring less preparation than recitals and presentations.

Recognizing the help they could provide to busy parents by keeping children occupied, Susan and Chris made time to cook with our sons in Raleigh. Despite their Sicilian Florida-dwelling grandparents, expert bakers who owned and operated an Italian bakery for decades, our sons have become accustomed to the kind of baking involving pre-made dough that comes out of a canister and takes from ten to thirteen minutes to bake.

Uncle Chris started Zoom cooking with our sons with a simple recipe for pan-fried flatbreads. The children achieved a sense of mastery and satisfaction from cooking and then eating delicious flatbread smothered in Nutella or cheese.

For the second baking foray, Uncle Chris offered to bake pretzels with the boys, who had enjoyed the same in-person activity when Uncle Chris visited Raleigh pre pandemic. With their parents presenting a webinar in another room, the children made pretzels with their uncle. My boys had fun, but they also made a bit of a mess.

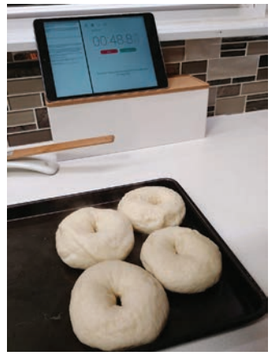
while making bagels

Remembering how the boys enjoyed baking bagels in person with their uncle, Aunt Susan and Uncle Chris agreed to try a Zoom bagel-baking session with the boys, with on-the-ground adult supervision a prerequisite for a potentially messy and somewhat time-consuming activity requiring dough rising, boiling, and baking.

Intrepid Aunt Susan enlisted Uncle Chris, who provided remote instruction from Atlanta, and me with no bagel-baking experience but nevertheless serving as support on the ground in Raleigh to bake bagels via Zoom with the kids.

We followed the recipe on this page.

Uncle Chris dubbed the finished product Zoogels.



In a several-part cooking process, bagels boil, upper left, then rest, upper right. After baking, they cool, at bottom.

boiling photo © by Jane Gagliardi • other photos © by Susan Gagliardi

Jane Gagliardi lives with her husband and two sons in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she is an internist-psychiatrist on faculty at Duke University School of Medicine. A graduate of Mahar Regional School, Orange, she grew up in Tully and swam on the Athol Area YMCA Swim Team.

BAGELS

Yield: 8 medium-sized bagels.
Recipe modified by Chris Higa from *Ultimate Bread* by Eric Treuille and Ursula Ferrigno

Ingredients

2 teaspoons active dry yeast
1 1/2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 1/4 cups warm water (or 1/4 cup more) in 1/2 and 1/4 cup portions
3 ½ cups (500 g) bread flour or high-gluten flour and extra for kneading
1 ½ teaspoons salt

You will also need: clean, dry, flat surface for kneading dough; clean, damp dish towel; cooking oil; baking sheet (to rest bagels before boiling); large cooking pot for boiling water; slotted spoon or skimmer; lightly oiled baking sheet (to bake the bagels)

Preparation

Pour sugar and yeast into 1/2 cup of the warm water. Let sit for five minutes, then stir the yeast and sugar mixture until it all dissolves in the water.

Mix flour and salt in a large bowl. Make a well in the middle. Pour yeast/sugar solution into the well. Pour half of remaining warm water into the well. Mix. Stir in the rest of the water as needed to create a moist and firm dough.

On clean floured surface (countertop, tabletop, cutting board), knead the dough for about ten minutes. The goal is to have smooth, elastic dough.

Try working in as much flour as possible to form a firm and stiff dough.

When using live videoconferencing to demonstrate and compare dough, it can be helpful for more experienced breadmakers describe to households with less experienced breadmakers what dough should look and feel like.

Lightly brush a large bowl with oil. Add dough to the bowl, and turn it in the oil to coat. Cover the bowl with a clean, damp dish towel. Let dough rise in a warm place for one hour or when dough has doubled in size.

While dough rises, members of different households may share stories, engage in conversation, sing, dance, or otherwise remain entertained via videoconferencing. Individual households may alternatively decide to bow out of videoconferencing while dough rises and rests. If videoconferencing while dough rises, make sure each household has a clear plan to reconnect at a specific time in order to proceed.

Punch dough down and let rest for another ten minutes.

It may be helpful to start filling the large pot with water and placing it on the stove. It will be time to boil bagels in about twenty or thirty minutes.

Carefully divide dough into eight pieces. Shape each piece into a round dough ball. One at a time, press each dough ball against the countertop until a perfect dough ball forms.

Perfect can mean different things to different households. Some may choose to carefully measure and weigh dough to ensure consistency in bagels, whereas others may adopt a less precise, more creative approach to achieving perfection. It can be helpful for less experienced bakers to receive advice from more experienced bakers.

Coat a finger in flour and gently press the finger into the center of each dough ball to form a ring. Stretch the ring so the center of each bagel is about 1/3 the diameter of the whole bagel. Place each bagel on a cookie sheet (the ungreased one).

After shaping dough rounds and placing them on the cookie sheet, cover with a damp kitchen towel and allow to rest for 10 minutes.

While waiting for bagels to rest, preheat oven to 425 degrees F.

Bring a large pot of water to boil.

When water boils, reduce heat to maintain boil without boiling over.

upcycling crafters and artists make most of their creativity

by repurposing discards and finding new uses for old things

by Carla Charter

Crafters and artists across the Quabbin area make the most of their creativity as they turn trash into treasure by upcycling as they create new items by using materials others would likely discard. Upcycling crafters and artists find new uses for old things, reconstruct things for new uses, and make a purpose of repurposing.

Upcycler Tracy Crane created a kingfisher from glass shards.
photo courtesy of Tracy Crane

Tracy Crane, a self-taught artist from West Brookfield, incorporates diverse items such as recycled bottle caps, buttons, and bullet casings into her work. "A lot of people bring me bins of their grandmother's buttons," she said. "I get that all the time."

Among her creations: a world atlas and satellite view of earth made of buttons, a cow created from hole-punched wallpaper, and an owl fabricated from bullet casings.

"I am always reaching to use items other people have discarded," she said. "Last year, I had a Christmas tree I made out of plastic bottle caps glued over a wire cone I made out of recycled fencing. I lit it from within. It looked like stained glass, kind of jewel-like."

Lou Leelyn of Wendell, owner of Lou's Upcycles, said she began upcycling while living in San Diego. "At a time when people did not even bring cloth bags to the grocery stores," she said, "I would go to the beach and notice all the plastic that washed up. Then I noticed all of the plastic in my own household trash. I was composting and recycling but I wanted to do more. I have background in arts and crafts, and I decided to see if I could combine the two."

She watched a few tutorial videos, including one demonstrating how to use a household iron to fuse plastic bags to make a new material. "That's what started it. It took me about a year of practice, and since 2008, I have made raincoats, backpacks, wallets, and tote bags."

The material feels almost like synthetic leather, according to the upcycler. She said she has used the material to create almost anything she could make from fabric. From fused plastic, she has made a shower curtain out of chip bags fused together and another out of necktie and tablecloth fused together," she continued.

In 2012, Leelyn started teaching upcycling classes at clubs, schools, and libraries. A recipient of Massachusetts Cultural Council grants, she acknowledged her gratitude that "those grants allow creative people to go into the community and teach others."

The Kramer-Hebert sisters felt wool sweaters to make mittens.
photo © by Raenette Kramer

Sisters Raenette Sadoski Kramer and Lettie Sadoski Hebert of Athol work together at upcycling. They take old wool sweaters and turn them into mittens. Kramer began making the mittens fifteen years ago after learning the craft from a woman in Winthrop, Maine.

"The process begins by washing a sweater in hot water to felt the wool so the knit does not come apart," said Raenette Kramer. "Felting makes the knitting tighter, warmer, and sturdier. Once felting completes, it takes from about a half hour to forty-five minutes to complete a pair of mittens."

The sisters sometimes make memory mittens from a loved one's sweater. The idea for memory mittens came to Kramer after she had made several memory quilts from loved one's t-shirts. Kramer said she also creates shopping bags from grain bags with proceeds benefiting North Quabbin Animal Control.

The pair sells mittens and has donated them to raffles and local events.

Find Tracy Crane's creations at West Brookfield Art and Frame or on her website, tracycraneart.com, Lou's Upcycles at Lou Leelyn's website, lousupcycles.com, and more about the Hunter/Kramer sisters' felted mittens at raenettekramer@yahoo.com.

Carla Charter is a freelance writer. She lives in Phillipston.

A female moose pauses during a frosty morning near Quabbin Reservoir.
photo © by Dale Monette

finding doors in unusual places

Doors leaned against a tree on West Pelham Road, Shutesbury, while two trees flanked a door on Wendell Road in the same town.
photos © by Mary Lou Conca

With gyms closed and people staying at home, how to keep training, stay fit, or reach goals?

by Gillis MacDougall

Ivan Ussach, director of Warwick Free Public Library, maintains a regular yoga practice as well as walking, running, and hiking.
photo © by Gilllis MacDougall

Many team sports have not happened normally during pandemic precautions. With gyms often closed and people staying home, how can you keep training, stay fit, or even start working toward a fitness goal?

You can find many ways to keep active and fit during restrictions. A plus in the Quabbin region with no cities: you can go outside for individual activities like walking, running, hiking, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing.

Before restricted activities, said Ivan Ussach of Warwick, his routine consisted of going to the Athol Area YMCA three times a week to walk or run on step machines and treadmills, semi-regular yoga at home, and hikes in the woods and mountains. He gave up the Y during the pandemic and got into a vigorous from two- to four-mile walking every day. He also increased the frequency of his yoga routine.

Ivan endorses walking, running, and hiking because, he says, "They're great for your body and mind, and they're free!"

Many athletes like me experienced cancelled sports teams with varying impact on personal training. My canceled baseball season didn't prevent me from hitting off a tee or throwing into a net. Soccer posed a more difficult challenge, but as a goalkeeper, I could continue reflex and agility training along with stretching and cardio exercises even though I couldn't run plays with teammates.

My main sport, disc golf, qualifies as an individual sport considered safe during the pandemic, although some courses have closed. Disc golf can get you outside and exercise all parts of your body. Walking around a course and throwing discs rewards with super fun, and anyone, at any skill level, can play. Two of my favorite local courses, Tully Lake and Barre Falls Dam, closed early on and have not reopened. Flat Rock, another Quabbin course, closed for a while but reopened.

To compete successfully at high levels of disc golf, I must stay in shape. I try to get out to local courses for at least two rounds a week. I can also work on improving away from a course. I can, for example, work on putting and different throws in my yard or at any sizable field.

The disc golf competition season shortened with fewer tournaments than normal, but I played in six events and placed in the top five in three.

Virtual fitness classes or online programs provide another way to stay in shape with a multitude of ways to stay active.

With extreme levels of confinement, you should listen to your body. If you don't feel like doing your normal personal workout, don't be afraid to change it up or figure out something totally different that will help you.

Exercise can boost mental health. If what you're doing to help your body physically stresses you out, switch it up. Enjoy doing things to stay fit and healthy, and try to do something active every day. Doing nothing all day may feel good in the moment, but in the long run, it won't serve well.

Also, be sure to eat nourishing food if you want your body to work well for as long as possible. With a plethora of organic farms in our region and cooperative food markets, we have access to great quality food. Consider a visit to Quabbin Harvest Coop in Orange, Leverett Coop, or Green Fields Market in Greenfield.

Maintaining a daily yoga practice offers many mental and physical benefits, according to Ivan Ussach of Warwick. He demonstrates a backward pose, above.
photo © by Gillis Mac Dougall.

You don't have to go on a diet to remain fit. Eating a balanced diet with all food groups in the correct amounts will work wonders.

Disc golfer, photographer, athlete, and student, Gillis MacDougall lives in Greenfield.

Quabbin region hikers of the Harty Party annually explore the Grand Canyon, even in winter, to honor the memory of the late Tom Harty of Orange who hiked to the bottom of the canyon for thirty-five years and into his nineties with friends.

photo by Carleton Lanou

looking for gnomes in all the right places

by Henry Wadsworth as channeled by Susie Feldman

Henry Wadsworth edits *Evangeline.*

I am Henry Wadsworth: my home is in Longfellow Grove among my fellow gnomes in the Quabbin region woodlands. We mostly tend to live among trees, thus avoiding the towns of our distant relatives, the humans. Should you encounter one of us in your wanderings, we'll probably stand very still, remaining silent. It's not that we're afraid, but most of us are very shy.

gnome photos courtesy of Susie Feldman

You may find a gnome perched atop a toadstool, observing the natural world. We gather small mushrooms, berries, ant eggs, and nuts for our meals, but we do not eat any meat. We are companionable with the forest creatures around us and live in harmony with them.

Gnomes' houses—burrows under trees—stay warm in winter and comfortably cool in summer. We build underground storage chambers nearby where we save nuts, seeds, and grains for hearty winter soups. Our tall bright hats, worn year round, remind large birds that we are indeed not mice or other prey!

We use squirrel and mouse furs to make warm clothing for cold weather. Gnomes never kill another animal unless necessary to end its suffering. When we come upon a deceased mouse or squirrel, we may harvest the furs, make tools from the teeth and bones, and use any other parts we can.

With an affinity for amphibians and reptiles, my friend Thorvald lives in a local wetland. He spent his youth near Belchertown. As a young adult gnome about a hundred years old, he went out hatless one hot summer day when a red-tailed hawk

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Quabbin region gnomes share secrets of gnomenculture in woodlands everywhere

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High-flying Thorvald makes his home at the Frog Bog near Petersham's Cutthroat Brook, where he gets about by turtle tram.

mistook him for what it considered an edible rodent. The big bird swooped Thorvald up and flew northwards. By the time Thorvald convinced the hawk that indeed he was a friendly gnome, they had arrived over Petersham, where the hawk gently deposited him at Harvard Pond. Roaming the woods until he found a community of his brethren, Thorvald eventually made his home at Frog Bog, where he remains until this day.

Hinkle and Posey Bandruff married, as typical for gnomes, at about 150 years of age. Among several couples who live in the local forest, hikers can find them sitting together sharing pleasure in the surrounding woodland. The Bandruffs particularly enjoy their bench on a rocky outcrop overlooking a deer trail. A spinner and weaver, Posey collects bits of animal fur left on twigs and brambles to create her yarns. Hinkle gathers reeds and grasses to make fine baskets.

Gnome children remain with their parents for the first hundred years of their lives. Youngsters do chores at the homestead, learn skills of living among wildlife, and play happily with smaller animals. You might find some of them romping about among the trees.

Ruffin, our entomologist, has acquired deep knowledge about insects. Although he finds butterflies very beautiful, the lives of ants fascinate him most. He has made it his mission to teach others the importance and helpfulness all such small creatures bring to the continuing circle of life.

Hopefully you've enjoyed meeting a few of my friends. I've left many tales untold but expect to share more in future issues of *Uniquely Quabbin*. I hope that you and the gnomes will soon become more closely acquainted.

Wrapped in brand-new scarves, Hinkle and Posey Bandruff settle in for a long winter's nap.

Entymologist Ruffin does his best work in warm weather.

Artist Susie Feldman and her husband, Ben, welcome hikers during daylight hours to their learning and educational trails on Briggs Road, Athol, where everyone respects the woods and woodland creatures on land conserved through the auspices of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.

Save Your Ass Long Ear Rescue protects endangered equine animals

by Ann Reed

Wearing a breezy smile, Jane Peirce saunters past little manure piles in her Orange pasture with the same contented abandon she exudes while strolling by exotic plantings gracing her landscaped backyard.

A carousel's worth of horses and donkeys instantly converges from a distance to surround their Lady Jane. It seems impossible to tell which two of the five enchanting creatures had been rescued a year earlier, emaciated and wounded, from a cold date with death.

An unidentified horse dealer had not quite gotten around to having Hobie, the donkey, and Walton, the horse, killed, explained Peirce. That's what the dealer is said to have told an inquiring customer who'd noticed the inseparable two captives cowering in a dirt lot, apart from the strong salable horses in stock. That customer consequently purchased the two and transferred them to Save Your Ass Long Ear Rescue, a nonprofit operation located in South Acworth, New Hampshire.

Peirce, a donor to SYA, followed publicized updates on the equine pair's recovery where—although Walton is not a "long ear" like Hobie—the rescue center accommodated the short and tall pals' obvious desire to stick together. Meanwhile, Peirce lost a beloved old horse and therefore needed a new donkey-friendly companion for her surviving horse, odd man out to a pair of female donkeys royally residing in her generous barn.

When, after several months, SYA deemed the rehabilitated Hobie and Walton ready for adoption, Peirce emerged as "this amazing woman who opened her heart and barn to them," according to an SYA epilogue.

More than half a year later, Peirce, a largely retired environmental professional, says, "Every night," while tucking in each of her barnyard kin, "I put my arms around Hobie and Walton. I make sure they know that they are home and they'll always stay here and they'll always have food and protection."

As for husband Keith LaRiviere's perspective on life shared with an equine majority, Peirce shares an anecdote illustrating his stouthearted caring.

Perhaps five years ago, LaRiviere was driving through Leverett when he encountered a mare running loose, dodging oncoming cars. He stopped and managed to approach and calm the horse, even securing his

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Horses Ricky, left, and adopted companion, Walton, booped noses in instant friendship upon meeting last spring according to owner Jane Peirce, whose herd also includes three donkeys . . . with tales intertwined.

photo © by Ann Reed

From French King Bridge, the East Mineral Road footbridge reflects in wintry waters.
photo © by Mitchell R. Grosky

Nature's Nuances

by Clare Green

a fond memory resurfaces

Aviator Amelia Earhart
a plaster bust by
Brenda Putnam

Peace silently emanates from within the earth once a blanket of white transforms the Quabbin Region.

Winter.

With the pandemic upon us, safely reach out to a neighbor to share. Be caring. You may be delightfully surprised, as I have been, with a story from their lives.

My childhood neighbor Brenda Putnam lived her life peacefully attuned to Mother Nature's changing seasons. Her presence, yard, and home welcomed childhood wonder and quietly taught us the beauty of observation.

A fond memory resurfaces from my childhood in Wilton, Connecticut . . .

Neighbor Brenda Putnam
drawing © by
Edward Davies

"Please take this meatloaf dinner to Brenda. I think she'll enjoy it," said Mom.

"Sure will!" I replied.

I wore my sturdy Keds, shorts, and a striped t-shirt. I loved walking the brief, wooded path to her cozy cottage of a home. My six-year-old frame and feet trod the direct, safe trail through gentle woods from our back door to her front door. A functional birdbath decorated her small front yard. Bird feeders hung from her kitchen windows. Squirrels scurried to forage dropped seeds. She loved to observe nature's many changes.

I knocked on the door and politely waited as I had been told to do.

"Come in, Clare. Thank you! Can you sit for a moment and visit?"

"Okay."

I remember that inviting comfy chair adjacent to the grand piano as perfect for my small body to sink into and feel at home.

Brenda asked questions about school and family. It felt luxurious to share a conversation with her. Back home, my siblings often told me, the youngest of five children, to quiet down.

Before the visit ended, I asked, "Brenda, would you please measure me again to see if I have grown taller?"

"I'd be delighted. Let's go to the kitchen wall."

There on the wall, she had all the neighborhood kids' names and heights.

"Half an inch taller. Yes!" Brenda marked it in pencil and wrote the date in her classic, cryptic handwriting. She had even measured my large baby doll and placed her name, Baby Doll, on the wall. She stood about as tall as the dogs Brenda measured.

"Bye, Brenda, thanks for the visit and have a nice dinner." In a minute's time, I ran the path to home, my arms free from holding the warm meal.

One of Brenda's pastimes was taking long walks in the woods with Shadow, our family collie. Through the fields of brightly colored phlox in summer or during the wintery snowscapes, she stood barely a foot above Shadow.

No matter my age, I always knew Brenda as the same—kind, interesting, and elderly.

to be continued in May, 2021

Clare Green, author and retired educator, from Warwick, welcomes folks to safely walk her outdoor Woodland Labyrinth.

Quabbin region winter beaches suggest sunnier prospects

continued from page 4

by going back toward the center of Wendell and turning right on West Street. That takes you almost straight to Wyola after a small right turn at the end of the road. The road divides beach from parkland with parking for the handicapped on the beach side. The grassy area has several picnic tables with stoves near them for charcoal fires.

There's something about a silent, empty picnic area that fills the imagination with groups in bathing suits at every table enjoying a summer outing. I could almost hear their laughter.

Opposite the beach area, a good-sized parking lot had one parked car. Another arrived simultaneously with me. Someone got out of the car, leashed a dog, and disappeared up the trail. I took time to read the prominent sign listing fees for parking during the summer. Like most state parks, the summer season begins on Memorial Day and ends on Labor Day.

Because a road divides the Wyola state park, officials can't easily prevent access to the lake.

I left by taking the first left turn and driving to the center of Shutesbury, then home to New Salem.

On another day, a friend and I drove out to see Laurel Lake in Erving. Even though I have lived in the Quabbin area for nearly fifty years, I had never been there. There are two possible ways to find it. On 2A near a crossroads, a sign for the Erving State Forest leads to it, and off Route 2, take a right on North Road toward Northfield and then you'll see another sign for the forest. You can see laurel, deep green this time of year, crowded along both sides of the road definitely worth coming to see again in the spring.

When you reach the parking lot, you can get to the beach by an easy stairway down to the water. The sand itself is a bit gravelly but clean, and the beautiful lake reflects its shore trees in the clear water. Opposite the beach stand some houses and a few camps, but it does not seem crowded at all. The picnic tables were empty. I suppose the idea of a winter picnic probably doesn't attract most people, but hiking trails stay open all year long depending on the amount of snow and the adventurousness of the hikers.

Next, my friend and I went to Silver Lake in Athol. It's a tiny lake. I heard that to walk around it four times

From a lone picnic table, winter walkers around Silver Lake can look across to the snow-covered beach.

photo © by Marcia Gagliardi

equals just three miles. You can reach Silver Lake by driving along Pequoig Avenue to Fish Street. Then turn onto Fish until you see a small sign, and there you are. It wasn't the quietest beach, but a charming number of people walked around the water getting in their three miles, and all along the way I saw story boards placed by the Valuing Our Children group so children and parents can read while distanced during the pandemic.

I heard that Canada geese like the small beach area, so people don't linger there. Also I gladly saw that dogs on leashes were welcome.

While 2020 presented an uncertain year for most of us there's hope for a new start. We can look forward to using the picnic tables at the state parks again with friends and family and the laughter my imagination heard will become real.

Playwright and director Dorothy Johnson seeks out quiet places. With Doris Abramson, she operated The Common Reader Bookshop on New Salem Common for many years.

body heat keeps beavers warm in winter cold

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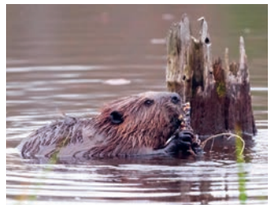

A beaver gnaws a stump.

photo © by Dale Monette

I have spent thousands of hours watching and photographing beavers during their lives, and I have documented all aspects of their behavior. In late October, local beavers store up winter food and put mud and sticks on their lodges to help keep them warm throughout the coming cold.

Beavers do not hibernate like bears. They spend winter months inside their lodges. Their body heat can keep the living cavity a warm thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit when wind howls outside on a cold winter night. Also to prepare for winter, they build what looks like a large brush pile called a cache alongside their lodges.

Beavers spend most of autumn building the cache from live branches they cut down along their pond's shore. The family will live on the cache through the winter. They keep an exit tunnel open so they can swim out and get branches to bring back to the family to feed on.

So, find yourself a beaver pond, sit yourself along the shore out of sight at dusk or early in the morning, and enjoy the show. And don't forget to bring along insect repellant!

Retired from the Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation, photographer and author Dale Monette does slide presentations about Quabbin features and wildlife and has two books, *Secret Lives of the Quabbin Watershed* and *Voyagers, Visitors, and Home.*

Enfield locomotive makes first run

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Smith's Village, Enfield, had a railroad station in 1871.
photo courtesy of mass.gov

that railroad still standing, now as a private home.

Willis Phelps was named president of the railroad in 1871. He was finishing up his other project between Winchendon and Peterboro, New Hampshire, the Monadnock Railroad. He looked into ways to unite the two lines, but that never came to pass. A twenty-five-ton locomotive, the *Enfield*, manufactured by the Hinckley & Williams firm of Boston, arrived in Athol in the spring of 1871 for initial use in laying track. On May 22, Charles Bannon, an Athol businessman, drove the first spike and gave the opening address during a formal ceremony in Athol. On the Fourth of July, a celebration in North Dana featured the *Enfield* bringing hundreds of passengers to that village for the event.

After completion of negotiations with the New London & Northern Railroad to use its track between the line's southern end at Barrett's Junction and Palmer, regular service began on the Athol & Enfield Line in October, 1871. The line ran a morning train south from Athol and one north from Palmer in mid afternoon. Willis Phelps's son Henry served the line's superintendent. The state railroad commissioners inspected the line and found it not "well or thoroughly built" but "sufficiently well—constructed for the traffic" expected upon it.

One local newspaper jokingly referred to the railroad as running from "somewhere to nowhere" with Athol as the northern terminus but the southern end literally in the middle of nowhere. With the help of his son John, a state representative, Willis Phelps sought to remedy the situation and got a legislative charter for an extension to Springfield in 1872. In order to fund the extension, railroad officials sought a subscription from the City of Springfield for three hundred thousand dollars. A great deal of controversy arose over the issue, but it passed a referendum vote by a more than two-to-one margin. Phelps completed the line to Springfield in 1873, and through service began before year's end on the renamed Springfield, Athol, & Northeastern Railroad.

After going through bankruptcy proceedings in 1878 bondholders renamed the railroad by dropping Athol from the name. In 1880, the Boston & Albany Railroad bought the line, and it became the Boston & Albany Athol Branch. In 1935, the Metropolitan District Water Supply Commission bought the railroad above Bondsville and dismantled it to make way for Quabbin Reservoir.

A small stub of the old branch line remains between Indian Orchard and Springfield, partly parallel to I-291. During sixty-four years of full operation, the line served Athol well as a route to Springfield and brought much business to Athol stores from residents of old Swift River Valley.

Lifelong Athol resident J.R. Greene has written twenty-two books, many about Quabbin Reservoir and towns flooded by it. One book is about the Athol Branch of Boston & Albany Railroad.

demise or survival?

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With brightening skies, I thought, would the bobcat continue to feed in the daylight?

The sun's rays luminated that cove to meet any photographer's camera needs. Showing no indication of leaving, the bobcat stayed feeding for hours.

Excitement paradoxically kept my shivering at bay.

Needleless to say, the events of that morning exceeded any expectation I may have had. Watching through my camera lens as that bobcat savoured its meal made for another incredible Quabbin wildlife experience.

Jim Morelly is an outdoor enthusiast with a lifelong passion for nature.

unanticipated email leads to return of infant's gravestone

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base to set the infant's stone. As he dug through well-packed earth, I turned toward the assembled group and told the puzzling story of a gravestone found on Cape Cod, uncertainty of how it arrived there, research in determining where it had come from, and its eventual journey home.

Suddenly a bemused exclamation came from the group as, from the freshly dug earth, Ricardo held up a clam shell for all to see. How peculiar was that—the infant's gravestone found on the Cape and a clam shell found in the Shutesbury gravesite?

I savored the imagery as I considered the twist of fate. Smiling, then, I welcomed you home, Infant Wheeler.

> *Today our hearts were touched*
> *By graves of tiny babies;*
> *Snatched from the arms of loving kin,*
> *In the heartbreak of the ages.*
>
> —from "The Recording of a Cemetery"
> by Thelma Greene Reagan

Dorothy Frye lives in Orange with her husband, David. She has revered cemeteries since childhood and spent hours exploring them. She appreciates epitaphs found on early American stones. She feels honored to have had the opportunity to collaborate with Nicole, Jim, Peter, David, Hunter, Walter, TaMara, and Ricardo in the successful endeavor to return Infant Wheeler's headstone to his family.

TaMara's website: Historicgravestone.weebly.com

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birds flock to Quabbin region as northern food supplies wane

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Appropriately named and photogenic Bohemian waxwings, distinguished from resident cedar waxwings by grey bellies and slightly larger bodies, wander long distances across the continent during scarcity of berries in their Alaska and western Canada range. Flocks often feed on fruits of ornamental trees and shrubs in yards, parks, and streets, sometimes with robins and cedar waxwings.

A Bohemian waxwing perches in a fruit tree.
photo © by John Burk

Red-breasted nuthatches, often the first species that heads south in years with poor cone crops, have been common to abundant in Quabbin region forests since summer. Easily identifiable characteristics include nasal calls, mask-like facial stripes, and unusual head-first movements down tree trunks. Unlike white-breasted nuthatches, familiar residents of southern New England deciduous forests, red-breasted nuthatches most commonly live in pine woods farther north. Both species frequently visit household feeders in winter.

Snowy owl irruptions occur in years during scarcity in the Arctic of lemmings, small rodents that constitute most of their diet. Most sightings in New England are in coastal regions where beaches, dunes, and marshes resemble barren Arctic habitats. Individuals periodically turn up in central Massachusetts, including a male that visited neighborhoods in New Salem for several days in November 2017.

The aforementioned snowy owl at Quabbin Reservoir abruptly took flight during a colorful sunset. A flock of red crossbills appeared in surrounding pine forests several days later. Such unexpected and often fleeting encounters characterize winter birding, adding to the season's appeal for naturalists.

Photographer and writer John Burk documents the Quabbin region wilds (and not so wilds) in image and word. He lives in Petersham.

sophisticated, unsentimental native offers witness about Enfield

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Greenwich–during the heated separation battle waged in the Massachusetts General Court as the two parishes became separate towns. Josh of the Puckertown rhyming ditty refers to Reverend Joshua Crosby, Enfield's first minister, whom Underwood remembered well for his old-fashioned appearance and strict Calvinist theology. Underwood's comments and the sarcastic Greenwich stanza mocking Enfield as Puckertown with its "wicked people," reflects mutual resentment between the old North and South parishes that lingered after many decades.

Parishioners raised a steeple on Enfields church in 1814. Later, they added a clock face.

postcard photo courtesy of Carl I. Hammer

Underwood was gifted with hindsight but not with foresight. As he looks back over sixty years, he sees both virtues and limitations of his hometown and its neighbors. His book provides a unique contemporary witness to the nineteenth-century Quabbin region and its communities from a sophisticated and sympathetic but unsentimental native. Moreover, it offers witness not colored by the sad circumstances of the towns' later destruction.

Northeastern University Press reissued *Quabbin: The Story of a Small Town with Outlooks upon Puritan Life* in 1986. Hathi Trust and Internet Archive websites have the 1893 text as an ebook download, which Amazon has available as a printed version.

A graduate of Amherst College and the University of Toronto, Carl Hammer has written widely on medieval and early modern history. Lexington Books published his *Pugnacious Puritans: Seventeenth-Century Hadley and New England* in 2018. Its sequel, *People, Politics and Society in Colonial Western Massachusetts: Old Hampshire County and Massachusetts Bay to the Revolution*, will appear in 2021. He lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Easthampton.

varied denominational North Orange churches began sharing a building in 1947

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The History of North Orange, Massachusetts, compiled and published by the North Orange Reunion Association in 1924, says

The church in North Orange was originally a Congregational church as was typical of all early churches. In the 1920s, they had a pastor who leaned toward Universalism, and the Orthodox congregation, who was pro-temperance, could not tolerate it. (The Universalists) were a little too liberal. That group acquired land and built a Congregational Chapel on the top of the hill. In 1857-1858, Congregationalists moved the building down to where the North Orange Library is now.

After set up of the building on rollers, the oxen drivers said they would not move without rum, which they received, and the church was moved, according to Mr. Johnson.

The two churches functioned in the village until 1947. The larger church needed repair work, and the two congregations reunited. Since then the church identified as United Church of Christ/Universalist-Unitarian Association/non-denominational. The town acquired the land where the Congregational chapel once stood and built the library.

In the mid 1800s, South Orange became Orange center. Eventually, businesses, including the now closed Rodney Hunt factory, began to develop in Orange center. The railroad went through Athol in 1847 and progressed to Greenfield through Orange center along Millers River, thus eliminating the importance of the route through North Orange.

The road in North Orange retains the name Main Street with the current Orange Center intersected by North Main Street, South Main Street, East Main Street, and West Main Street.

Carla Charter is a freelance writer. She lives in Phillipston.

Leslie Gerbasi Schroerlucke set herself up virtually to teach California students from her Athol music room.
photo © by Corlena Plotkin

challenges of teaching virtually bring unique rewards of regional visit

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If Quabbin had existed in Thoreau's day, I have no doubt he would have appreciated its untouched beauty and solitude even, perhaps, while mourning the loss of four vibrant towns to create a reservoir for the City of Boston..

I'm glad I took the opportunity to sojourn in the region while teaching music to students a continent away.

Professional clarinetist and instructor at the University of California, Riverside, Leslie Gerbasi Schroerlucke directs the Chaparral Middle School band and served as lead visual and performing arts teacher for Walnut Valley, California, United School District. Principal clarinetist for the Orchestra Collective of Orange County and former member of the Florida Philharmonic, she has performed extensively in Europe and South America. Also a composer of music, she grew up in Athol.

"new" colonial towns result of land grants from Native holdings

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English captured Native people, transported them to Boston, tried them, and disposed of them by execution, indentured servitude, or selling them into slavery. Some managed to move their communities north and west where "beloved kin" in other tribes welcomed and protected them.

Powerful English leaders in the established coastal colonies of what the English called Massachusetts and Plymouth waged war against Native people. Coastal colonies provided English-bred soldiers, weapons, and provisions necessary for excursions to inner woodlands and swamps in order to clear them for the settlers. Some coastal colonists participated in skirmishes in areas such as the Quaboag Plantation, traditionally held by Nipmuc Native people and today encompassing the Quabbin region towns of Brookfield, East Brookfield, New Braintree, North Brookfield, and West Brookfield.

In 1635, the English colonized the town of what they called Braintree on the coast south of the settlement the English named Boston. In 1669, the eastern Massachusetts town of Braintree voted a grant to each household of equal interest in six thousand acres to the west formerly part of Quaboag Plantation and purchased from Native people. First settled by colonists in 1709, it officially incorporated in 1751, according to English law, as New Braintree.

New Braintree became known for dairy farms and bountiful harvest. Thriving industries included a broom factory, blacksmith shop, sawmills and gristmills, and a shoe and boot factory.

The coastal town of Salem, north of Boston, took over the former site of a Native village and trading center. Colonists settled there in 1626. William Hawthorne, a prosperous businessman in early Salem, became one of its leading citizens. He led troops in King Philip's War and served as magistrate on the highest court of Massachusetts Bay Colony. Land that makes up the present town of New Salem, a parcel six miles square, constituted a 1734 grant to sixty citizens of Salem who began recruiting settlers. They arrived in 1737, and the town flourished as a rural community based on lumber and agriculture. Salem governed New Salem until its incorporation in 1753.

Today, organizations work to highlight the role of Native people on the region's land and to return some of it to them for education and cultural preservation. The Nolumbeka Project honors our Northeastern tribal heritage. According to a November 2019 "Land Acknowledgement Statement to the Nipmuc Nation, Nichewaug Region (Petersham)," Petersham's University of the Wild, led by Larry Buell, plans to transfer land to the Nipmuc Cultural Preservation Center.

Lisa Brooks has shone light on the role of indigenous people in our communities. That lens can encourage learning about Earth-centered Native culture and practices.

Diane Nassif moved to the Quabbin area ten years ago from the eastern part of Massachusetts. She has been curious about how New Salem and New Braintree got their names and has now found out.

Virtual Municipal Meetings in the Quabbin Region

Below are links to information about upcoming government meetings in each Quabbin region town. Information on how to attend meetings virtually when applicable can be found on each board or committee agenda at a town website.

Per state requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic, any in-person meeting requires that participants keep a six-foot distance and that they wear masks.

Athol
http://www.mytowngovernment.org/01331

Barre
www.mytowngovernment.org/01005

Belchertown
-https://www.belchertown.org/clerk/current_meeting_agendas_minutes.php

Brookfield
http://www.mytowngovernment.org/01506

East Brookfield
https://www.eastbrookfieldma.us/calendar/month/2020-09

Erving
https://www.erving-ma.gov/minutes-and-agendas

Hardwick
http://www.mytowngovernment.org/01031

Hubbardston
https://www.hubbardstonma.us/minutes-and-agendas

Leverett
www.leverett.ma.us

New Braintree
https://www.newbraintreema.us/

New Salem
https://newsalemma.org/, then drop down the START HERE menu

North Brookfield
https://www.northbrookfield.net/calendar/month

Oakham
http://www.oakham-ma.gov/

Orange
http://www.mytowngovernment.org/01364

Pelham
www.townofpelham.org

Petersham
http://www.mytowngovernment.org/01366

Phillipston
at www.mytowngovernment.org/013310

Royalston
http://www.mytowngovernment.org/01368

Rutland
www.townofrutland.org

Shutesbury
http://www.mytowngovernment.org/01072

Templeton
https://www.templetonma.gov/home/pages/meetings-calendar

Ware
www.townofware.com

Warwick
www.townofwarwick.org
Attend regular in-person meetings at Warwick Town Hall.

Wendell
https://www.wendellmass.us/

West Brookfield
https://www.wbrookfield.com/index.asp?SEC=B5FF2BE0-9AA4-49A0-9EA9-B218DB4F8E46

list of virtual meetings compiled by Carla Charter

adopter of long-ear equines identifies herself among "fortunate humans"

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belt around her neck. With help from another driver furnishing rope, LaRiviere led the horse to a grassy spot. He and Peirce, stationed at her workplace in Worcester, made phone calls—including to Joe Delano, "a fabulous horse trainer" in Leverett, relates Peirce.

"Animal Control just left here," Delano informed her. "They've been looking for that horse all day."

The confused runaway, a brand new transplant from out west, belonged to Delano's neighbor. She had run six miles from her new home when LaRiviere found her. A horse trailer soon arrived to take her home.

"And that is why Keith always travels with a halter and lead rope," Peirce concluded with a smile.

"What fortunate animals" are those that cross lives with Peirce and LaRiviere, I thought aloud.

"Fortunate humans," Peirce insisted.

Orange freelancer Ann Reed started out selling one-liners to comedienne Joan Rivers. She has written for newspapers as a columnist, art critic, and correspondent.

Uniquely Quabbin Calendar Listings

PLEASE DOUBLE CHECK DETAILS FOR EVENTS.

January 12, Tuesday
Scatology 101
6 pm - 7:30 pm
Walnut Hill Tracking
Online Event Meeting on Zoom
Registration Required
walnuthilltracking.com

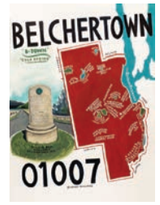
January 14, Saturday
Winter Wildlife Tracking Workshop
9am - 12 pm
Skyfields Arboretum
1461 Old Keene Road
Athol
Hosted by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.
Tracker Paul Wanta will lead an exploration of Lawton State Forest while looking for signs of wildlife.
All experience levels welcome.
Registration required.
mountgrace.org

January 16, Saturday
Claim Your Inner Goddess
6 pm - 9 pm
Green Karma Farm
210 Wheeler Avenue
Orange
Reservation required.
(978) 633--3045

January 19, Tuesday
Tree I.D. in Winter
6 pm - 7:30 pm
Walnut Hill Tracking
Online Event Meeting on Zoom
Registration Required
walnuthilltracking.com\

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many events locally and around the world to be cancelled, postponed, or modified. With safety in mind and changing state regulations on gathering sizes, we have sparse event listings.
We encourage you to continue checking your favorite local venues for virtual and in-person events that were posted after our calendar deadline.

Please submit calendar listings for the next issue before April 1, 2021, to UQCalendar@gmail.com.



January 24, Sunday
Winter Nature Walk at the Quabbin
8am - 11am
Quabbin Visitor Center
100 Winsor Dam Road
Belchertown
Walk in search of winter songbirds, bald eagles, animal tracks, and more.
Dress to be outdoors.
Registration required.
Massaudubon.org

January 30, Saturday
Sisterhood Golden Hour
3 pm
Green Karma Farm
210 Wheeler Avenue
Orange
One hour of Yoga with hometown Yogi Brandy Lefsyk and mini golden photo shoot. For women.
Reservation required.
(978) 633--3045

February 7, Wednesday
Virtual Craft Night
7 pm - 8 pm
Athol Public Library
Online Event Meeting on Zoom
Join Emily and Robin B. on Zoom for an hour of crafty fun.
Registration opens Monday, January 11, 2021.
athollibrary.org

Maps © by Casey Williams

Events compiled by Emily Boughton

Quabbin Region High School Winter Sports Schedules

Find local high school winter sports schedule updates and information at the school athletic sites listed below.

Athol Royalston Regional High School
www.arrsd.org/arrsd-sports/

Amherst-Pelham Regional High School
www.arps.org/amherst-pelham-regional-high-school/sports

Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical School
www.baypath.net/athletics/

Belchertown High School
www.belchertownps.org/belchertown-high-school/athletics

David Prouty High School
www.sebrsd.org/o/dphs/page/athletics--1776

Ralph C. Mahar Regional School
https://athletics.rcmahar.org/

Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School
https://www.montytech.net/domain/4196

Narragansett Regional High School
https://www.narragansettregional.portal.rschooltoday.com/

North Brookfield Jr. Sr. High School
https://www.nbschools.org/high-school/athletics

Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical School
https://www.nbschools.org/high-school/athletics

Pioneer Valley Regional School District
https://pvrs.pvrsdk12.org/athletics

Quabbin Regional High School
http://www.qrsd.org/our-schools/high-school/athletics/about-quabbin-athletics/

Quaboag Regional High School
http://quaboagathletics.weebly.com/

Tantasqua Regional High School
http://www.tantasqua.org/ths/athletics/index.htm

Wachusett Regional High School
https://wrhs.wrsd.net/athletics/athletics_home_page

Ware Junior Senior High School
http://whs.wareps.org/for_students/athletics

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THANK YOU

Be safe.

Stay well.