



# The Swift River Diary

Spring 2017



Young woman and child in a tree (Greenwich, Mass.), ca. 1910. Burt V. Brooks Photograph Collection. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries

Dear Readers,

We have all heard the expression "if you don't like the weather, just wait a minute!"

In the year 1816 summer never came.

In the year 1888 the great blizzard hit on March 11, and lasted until March 14, leaving 30 to 40 inches of snow distributed by high winds. Many stories have been passed down about this event.

In 2017 the big storm hit Massachusetts. But this time the media had alerted us in advance, and tho' inconvenienced, we were prepared.

And now, mid-March 2017 it is foggy, damp and the thermometer shows 68 degrees.

"What next" we say. New Englanders are tough!

E. Peirce, Historian

## Notices & Reminders

Our website is under construction but follow us on Facebook or call our office directly to get in touch! Leave a message and we'll call you back.

It's summer--check out our events schedule and join in the fun!

SRVHS welcomes newest Board members Emma Ayres and Karen Jennings, newest docents Lennon Stone and Jennifer Whitmore-Ames, as well as returning docents Sarah Aubuchon, Nate LaCroix, Christine Mullen and volunteers Mike Como, Steve Como, Karen Jennings, MaRyea Jennings, Elizabeth Peirce and Linda Smith.

*Pssst!* Don't forget the Prescott Church Museum is open by appointment year round for research in the archives and to connect with staff. Depending upon availability and the weather school tours and other events may be planned. Contact Dot Frye for more information: dotfryesrvhs@gmail.com or (978) 544 6882

### **Message from the President:**

We eagerly look forward to opening our doors to visitors old and new alike. Nearly all of last summer's docents will return to help **Elizabeth "Zib" Peirce** provide tours of the Society starting at 1:00 on June 11. **Zib** and **Cheryl Harned**, a graduate student at UMass, provided a refresher workshop for the returning docents. Special thanks to **Pam Morrisey**, **Christina Rini** and **Martha Hanks-Nicoll** for sprucing up the Whitaker Clary House and Prescott Museum in May.

**Megan O'Loughlin** continues to work on an inventory of the archives material at the Prescott Church. She describes one of the highlights of her work elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Dot Frye**, our administrative assistant, continues to keep our organization humming along. She has also republished our brochure and a 2017 program card for racking with the brochure. We look forward to sharing these with the Quabbin Visitor Center and other groups to help tell our part of the story to visitors.



Historic postcard from the SRVHS Collection

After last summer's successful theater production (Immersion: The Water Project) at SRVHS, producer **Emma Ayres** will offer a week long youth drama program at SRVHS for 8 to 15 year olds. More details are coming, but mark your calendars as the culminating performance of their original work will be open to the public July 28.

Be sure to also note on your calendar our annual fall meeting, on September 10, 2017. All members are welcome and we look forward to sharing an interesting program and connecting with other folks who sustain this organization and the memory of the Swift River Valley as it was. Our Board of Directors meets monthly, on the third Friday of the month at 4pm. (next meeting June 16). We invite all members to attend!

Shelley Small

# OUT OF THE PAST

Out of the Past items are chosen from the many clippings that have been saved over the years - the good, the bad and the ugly. It is intended to show readers what news was of interest in days gone by. Items are copied exactly as they are found. - E. Peirce

1928 Prescott -- A bill reported Wednesday by the Legislative Committee on Water Supply which in effect abolishes the town government of Prescott and places it in the hands of the Metropolitan Water Supply Commission. There are only five able-bodied men left in Prescott. There is only one pair of horses that could plow the roads.

1928 North Dana -- Harvey's Inn Tel 21-7 The Home of Good Eats. Chicken dinner with waffles \$1.25. Regular price \$1.50.

1921 Millington -- Christmas exercises by the school children will be held in Moore Hall Thursday evening. School will close Friday for the Christmas vacation.

Dec. 27, 1921 Enfield -- William Knowlton, 70, flagman at the Central Vermont railroad crossing at Belchertown was found frozen to death a short distance from his cabin Thursday. He apparently left the cabin to get a pail of coal, became confused and wandered away from the cabin, tripped over his cane which was found beside him, and exhausted by the cold, was unable to arise. His body was found by Paul Barrett who was to have relieved him from duty for a vacation. The mercury dropped to 10 degrees below zero here Thursday.

[SAVE ME! - I'm a recipe](#)

1846 -- From the Skilful Housewife's Book comes this recipe: Haymaker's Switchel:

(used as refreshment while haying). Combine 1/4 cup brown sugar, 1/8 tsp ginger, 1/8 cup molasses, 1/8 cup of vinegar and 2 cups water. Mix together and serve.

Thanks to the late Judy Croteau



"View of Men and Horses in Field Harvesting, Enfield, MA," Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries

June 27, 1926 Prescott -- The heated tem[erature] that we have to expect every summer despite all prophesies to the contrary struck us last week with full force. Close to the century mark was the rule for several days and it was a most uncomfortable week altogether.

1921 Greenwich Village -- Henry Taylor, having disposed of his farm, will hold an auction sale of personal property at his former place, one-half mile from Greenwich Village, known as the Daniel Fay place. A good work horse will be sold as well as much farm property, household goods, and other things too numerous to mention. Ellis Thayer, auctioneer. See posters.

1928 Greenwich -- There was a good attendance at the Women's Home Missionary Society last Wednesday at the home of Mrs. Nellie Vaughn, when they tied two quilts.

1921 North Prescott -- Mrs. Laura Barnes gave her grandmother, Hannah Haskins her first automobile ride on Saturday, taking her back to her old home.

1901 Dana -- Will Tyler was quite badly injured Saturday while riding his bicycle down Skinner Hill. The chain broke and he struck on his head on some stones.

1922 Dana -- Milton L. Vaughn was struck by an automobile while driving to North Dana last week. His buggy was broken and Mrs. Vaughn was badly shaken up. The driver did not stop and is unknown.

1901 Cooleyville -- This must be a profitable season for umbrella makers.

1901 Dana -- The mother of F.D. Stevens has braided 380 palm leaf hats inside of 12 months. This is a big year's work for a woman 83 years of age.

1922 New Salem -- In 1901 there were 227 horses owned in New Salem. In 1921 there are 152, a decline of 75.

The SRVHS Archives Room, thanks to our **generous donors**, has been serving our archival materials well for almost a year now by providing a well-regulated climate in a secure storage space. We routinely monitor the temperature and relative humidity within the room to ensure that we are maintaining an ideal environment for our collections. The inventory of the SRVHS archives has been progressing at a faster pace than expected. With the help of John Armstrong, a SRVHS volunteer, we finished inventorying the archives room. All of the archival collections in the Room have been listed and a paper copy of the inventory, with corresponding description and accession number, is available in the Prescott Museum.



Ruth Sylvia (Eaton) Seymour, circa 1930

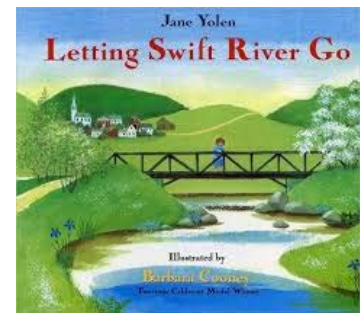
As we spend more time with the archives, we have been able to identify which of these materials have more urgent processing and preservation needs, which we have been tending to as we go. So far this has involved organizing loose materials into folders and replacing older, often damaged boxes with new archival ones. We have also been able to note in our inventory which materials need additional rehousing and/or processing to ensure that we are able to preserve the valuable information contained within these materials for years to come. Once the inventory is complete, our goals are to finish rehousing materials and make more information about our collections available to the public.

We have come across many interesting materials, including photographs from the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir, account books from stores and individuals of the valley, school records, and a collection of greeting cards. One of my favorite recent finds is a collection of Ruth Sylvia (Eaton) Seymour's diaries. This collection consists of 61 diaries written from 1926 to 2007. The diaries come in a variety of sizes, from small paperback books to larger hardcover ones, calendars,

and notebooks. Ruth was born on April 19, 1914 and lived in Millington, Massachusetts as a child. She attended grade school in a one-room schoolhouse and later went on to graduate from New Salem Academy in 1932. As a young adult, she worked as a live-in maid in Amherst and provided child care to the family she stayed with. She met her future husband, Stanley Seymour, in the spring of 1939 and they were married in the North Prescott Church on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1941. They had two daughters and one son together. In her diaries, Ruth writes about her experiences in school, work, family life, and travel. Some diaries recount her day-to-day activities, while other diaries are dedicated to recording her experiences traveling the world. Ruth's diaries in this collection begin when she is about 12 years old and continue on until she is 93 years old, months before she passed away in 2008. Diaries such as Ruth's are a great archival resource as they provide a first-person account of various experiences the author has been through.

– Megan O'Loughlin, Archivist

The Swift River Valley Historical Society is pleased to announce an exciting new summer theater program for youth, ages 8-15...



# THE WATER PROGRAM

WITH EMMA AYRES

July 24 - 28, 2017

Swift River Valley Historical Society has added a new program for our younger patrons—**The Water Program**—to the 2017 summer schedule. This summer, from **July 24 to July 28**, SRVHS board member **Emma Ayres** is offering this young people's program at the Society in New Salem.

The Water Program will enlist youth, ages 8 to 15, to create and present a musical theater event based on Jane Yolen's book, *Letting Swift River Go*.<sup>\*</sup> This program is targeted for any young person who has ever wanted to help craft and/or perform in a play, who likes theater, science, nature or history, and who would enjoy an exciting interactive learning experience.

The creation of the Quabbin Reservoir is an important water story of today. During the program participants will have the opportunity to explore the complex histories involved in the demise of the Swift River Valley and the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir through an interactive social and scientific lens. The participants will:

- **interview children of former Swift River Valley residents**
- **study with scientists who help maintain the Quabbin Reservoir**
- **learn the basics of improvisation, musicianship and acting**

They will use this information to build an original play documenting the demise of the Swift River Valley. **The week will culminate with the presentation of their play on July 28!**

This workshop provides a wonderful opportunity to expand literacy skills while diving into the beloved genre of musical theater as a vehicle for telling an original story. Every participant will leave the workshop with a solid foundation in songwriting. Theatrical performance nurtures a space for children to blossom individually while cultivating meaningful collaboration with peers. The Water Program is a whirlwind week-long adventure that will leave participants with a hands-on, active, and fun ownership of their local history!

**Register NOW! Space is limited.**

## The Water Program

**When:** July 24th - July 28th

9 am - 1pm Monday - Friday

**Where:** The Swift River Valley Historical Society  
40 Elm Street, New Salem, MA 01355

**Cost:** \$100 per participant (scholarships available)

**Ages:** 8 - 15 (negotiable)

To register email program director Emma Ayres  
[emmajunebotelhoayres@gmail.com](mailto:emmajunebotelhoayres@gmail.com)

Emma Ayres is a local playwright, director, musician and arts educator, a teaching artist for the Enchanted Circle Theater in Holyoke, MA, as well as a member of TheatreTruck, a local theater company. She wrote and directed "The Water Project Immersive" performed at Swift River Valley Historical Society in fall, 2016.

Questions? Call 413-992-7936.

<sup>\*</sup>*Letting Swift River Go*. Written by Janet Yolen. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Little Brown, 1992 <http://janeyolen.com/works/letting-swift-river-go/>

# SRVHS 2017

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Museum open Sundays and Wednesdays

1:00 - 4:00 P.M.

June 11 through September 24

## JUNE

Sunday, June 11 - **MUSEUM OPENING DAY**

Sunday, June 25 - **BUS TRIP** to New Salem and Dana with a walk to Greenwich Village and Baffle Dams. Meet at SRVHS for 11:00 a.m. departure. Bring lunch and tick repellent!

## JULY

Sunday, July 9 - **THEN AND NOW** with Dale Monette. Meet in the Prescott Church Museum on the grounds of SRVHS at 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, July 15 - **OLD HOME DAY** - New Salem Common.

Sunday, July 16 - **DANA REUNION** - Dana Common. Gates open at 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, July 22 - **DANA VESPERS** - Meet in the Prescott Church Museum on the grounds of SRVHS at 2:00 p.m. Cake and lemonade served after the concert to celebrate Mrs. Clary's 179<sup>th</sup> birthday. Mrs. Clary lived in the Whitaker-Clary house until she was 98 years old (1912).

July 24 - 28 - **WATER PROGRAM FOR YOUTH** see reverse.

## AUGUST

Sunday, August 13 - **BIRDS OF PREY** with Tom Ricardi. Meet in the Prescott Church Museum on the grounds of SRVHS at 4:00 p.m.

## SEPTEMBER

Sunday, September 10 - **ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING** at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 24 - **MUSEUM CLOSING DAY**

Sunday, September 24 - **FALL HIKE** to Doubleday Village. Meet at the Petersham Common at 11:00 a.m.

## OCTOBER

Sunday, October 1 - **BUS TRIP** to Prescott and Enfield. Meet at SRVHS for 11:00 a.m. departure.

Sunday, October 22 - **FALL HIKE** into Gate 21 in New Salem. Meet at the New Salem Common at 11:00 a.m.

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Admission to the museum, programs and hikes are free with the exception of the Bus Trips and the Water Program for Youth. Donations always welcomed to support future programming. Bus trips are \$30.00 per reservation. Please call the Museum at 978-544-6882 to reserve your spot!