



Spring 2021

# The Swift River Diary

*Mixed Emotions*  
*We watched the snowflakes*  
*hit the ground*  
*With feelings mixed*  
*but candid.*  
*We love them while*  
*they're swirling round*  
*But dread them*  
*when they've landed!*  
*Author Unknown*

Dear Readers,

January was a blast in New England but now the real winter begins. Sadly for many of us it means more social isolation.

How many puzzles can we do? How many books can you read? How much tv can you stand? Questions for us all! Many kind and good things are happening. Enjoy and appreciate them and think spring!

Elizabeth Peirce  
Historian/Curator

*She turned to the sunlight*  
*And shook her yellow head.*  
*She whispered to her neighbor:*  
*"Winter is dead".*  
*AA Milne*

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## MUSEUM OPENING UPDATE 2021

We are in the discussion stages of whether or not we will be able to open for the 2021 season. So much depends on the coronavirus, CDC, Massachusetts and our local Board of Health's protocols. Preliminarily we are looking toward being open on our usual Wednesday and Sunday afternoons by appointment only. We are also pursuing scheduling some hikes. Please stay in contact with our website and facebook page for updates. Thank you for your understanding.

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# Of Interest

## THE “RABBIT TRAIN”

by Elizabeth Peirce

The “Rabbit Train” also called “Bunny Hop” or “Soapstone Limited” was so called because of frequent stops. It was established in 1871 and demolished in 1935. It was 50 miles in length with 19 regular stops, making the trip each day each way.

It was vital to the Valley as a way of sending and receiving goods and services, transporting students to high school, carrying mail and for pleasure. Many charming stories are told concerning its service to the Valley.

The “Rabbit Train” will come alive again inside the Carriage Shed in the near future. Stay tuned!

## NEW MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The SRVHS Board of Directors would like to introduce you to their



newest member, Elena Palladino. Elena comes to us from Ware and is experienced in the workings of a non-profit board of directors. She also has a deep appreciation of the museum and the resources available here. Welcome Elena!

The full board consists of: Judith McIntosh, President; Fred Heyes, Vice President; Jane Peirce, Treasurer; Clifford Fountain, Secretary and members Elizabeth Peirce, Helen Towne, Shelley Small, David Frye and Elena Palladino.

## SASHA AND ZAMANI AT QUABBIN

by Jon Melick

In some of his books, author and historian James Loewen quotes an African philosopher, John Mbiti as saying that the Kiswahili language, of eastern Africa, has two words describing the dead. “Sasha (sasa)” refers to the “living dead”, for those who are still remembered by living people; and “zamani,” which is for people for whom the last living person who knew them, during their lifetime, have died.

It recently occurred to me that we can apply this story to the old Swift River Valley. Those who knew the “living Valley,” who are still alive in 2021 and can remember it, are at least in their late 80s; so the “sasha” phase of the Valley is swiftly drawing to a close. Now that the “zamani” phase of the Valley is all but total, it is for those of us who heard these stories, from “sasha” storytellers, to keep the story of the Valley alive. To borrow a term from a friend of mine, we are now the “keepers” of those stories; and we must make sure that we pass those stories along to those younger than we are, so that when we ourselves become “sasha”, there will be those who will remember our stories. We must not allow the story of the Valley to pass into “zamani”, forgotten and lost.

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## Affiliations



## TREASURER'S REPORT

by Jane Peirce

Hi everyone! Our annual appeal caused a few of you to contact us with questions about SRVHS finances, and I am so pleased to tell you a little bit about that.

SRVHS is a 501c(3) charitable organization, and your contributions are tax-deductible. We rely on donations to help us meet our expenses. Our annual budget is about \$70,000, which pays for 2 part-time staff people (Administrator Dot Frye and Archivist Megan O'Loughlin) as well as a handful of dedicated docents. The balance pays for office expenses, utilities, insurance, and maintenance of buildings and grounds. The income from programs primarily offsets the expense of the program, such as buses, presenters, and handout materials.

We are extremely fortunate to have a modest investment portfolio. Eleanor Schmidt was a resident of the Valley who helped to establish SRVHS. Her love of the Valley made her a fierce advocate of historical preservation, and upon her passing she left funds in trust that continue to support historical societies all through the watershed. Each historical society that attends the Memorial Day service at Quabbin Park Cemetery and marches with a banner in the parade receives a stipend from the Schmidt Trust. Not surprisingly, SRVHS was a special favorite of Eleanor, and SRVHS also receives an annual distribution from the Trust of about \$23,000 per year, paid every quarter. The Trust is administered by Bank of America.

For many years, this income was largely unspent by SRVHS, and today we have an investment portfolio valued at around \$500,000. Our financial advisors, Havican Wealth Strategies in Wilbraham, MA, have been resourceful and responsive to our needs, and we are very happy to be seeing our investment continue to grow. This allows us to draw a small monthly income when we need it. We also relied on this fund to provide \$20,000 when we suddenly realized that the Whitaker-Clary House roof needed a total replacement.

The accounting firm of Rainford and Rainford, P.C., in New Bedford, has provided accounting services ever since I can remember (a long time!) They take care of our taxes, auditing, reporting, and everything else that accountants do. Our checking and savings accounts are at Workers Credit Union, headquartered in Fitchburg with a local branch here in Orange.

IRS rules dictate that 1/3 of our income must be from donations in order for us to preserve our 501c(3) status. In addition, we could not continue to maintain our buildings and grounds, nor could we serve our core mission to preserve the artifacts and memories of the Swift River Valley, without your generous help. In the next newsletter, I'll provide additional details about our finances. Thank you for your support!

## INFANT WHEELER

by Dorothy Frye

To read a true story, a highlight from my personal pandemic 2020 year please see my article entitled *Gravestone and Clamshell Honor Those Who Came Before*, which can be found at [UniquelyQuabbin.com](http://UniquelyQuabbin.com), Issue 3 of Volume 5, January – April 2021. Thank you.

# Construction Projects

## PRESCOTT CHURCH & WHITAKER-CLARY HOUSE

by Dorothy Frye, Administrative Assistant



Cupola repair underway

Normally the fall season at the museum is quiet as I close up the house and the carriage shed for the winter. It is business as usual in my office in the church. This fall was anything but quiet though and .....

I am pleased to report that at long last, after three years of fundraising to replace the north side of the church roof and repair the cupola, we reached our goal and hired a contractor. The price tag for this was \$12,660.00. Much to my delight and surprise an anonymous donor came forward with \$5,000.00 to re-roof the south side of the church as well. Many thanks to all of you for your generosity.



House roof replacement



After repair

Our contractor, Bruce DuBrule of K&B Construction out of Shelburne Falls and his amazing crew of talented craftsmen began work immediately and everything was complete before snow fell!

As set up for the church project began plans started to unravel when a water leak in an upstairs room of the house made itself known. Our contractor took a look and gave us the grave news that the entire roof of the Whitaker-Clary house required immediate replacement. Assorted layers of wood shakes, slate and asphalt shingles, as well as plywood underlayment, were a total loss. The price tag for this project was \$24,450.00. Jane Peirce outlines in her article on page 3 how we were able to accomplish payment for this unexpected development.



New roof



War memorial

In addition to the roofing and cupola work Bruce also took the time to reset one of our war memorials which had been previously dislodged. He also repaired and replaced the rigging on our flagpole which had been broken for some time.

And while he and his crew were busy with their projects Geoff Nelson of Orange replaced the rear door to the barn which had rotted, casing and all, and had left the back of the barn open to the elements.



New barn door

It was a very busy fall season, crucial needs were met and we move on into the next era of caring for this museum; this treasure.

# Out of the Past

New Salem 1947      Electricity was first turned on in June 1947. Telephones came in 1910.

New Salem 1985      In January 1985, \$12,213.39 had been contributed by 171 donors to the fund for moving the Prescott church from Orange to it's new home in New Salem.

November 1911      Rev. Frederick C. Taylor has accepted the call to the Prescott and Pelham Church and will move his goods into the Prescott Parsonage at once.

North Prescott Nov. 1911      About 60 friends and neighbors of Mr. and Mrs. E.P. Mitchell gathered at their home on Saturday evening to give them a surprise party. Mrs. Mitchell had been let into the secret in the a.m.

Dana 1938      Hadwen Congregational Church has the 800 lb. 86 year old bell which has been in the tower of the United Church in Dana. It was cast in 1852.

Prescott Nov. 1910      W.H. Peirce is so much better that he sits up.

Greenwich 1912      Mrs. Aiken who has been ill is now on the road to Wellville.

Cooleyville Jan. 1924      Dr. Myron Chapin, 55, veterinarian of Cooleyville was a victim of three bandits about 10 o'clock Tuesday night at his home, the hold-up men getting about \$90 in cash and 100 hens threatening the doctor with death until he delivered more cash. Dr. Chapin heard a knock at the door and when he opened it saw three men. One pointed a pistol at the doctor ordering him to hold up his hands but doctor instead of complying tried to slam the door. He was unsuccessful and was knocked down by the bandits who tied his hand and foot to a chair. The men ransacked the house but got no more money and it was then they tried to kill him. He was left blindfolded and tied.

He was later discovered by a neighbor who gave an alarm. The bandits cleaned the henhouse of 100 hens when leaving and it is supposed made their escape in an automobile as one was heard near the Chapin house about the time of the hold-up. The State constabulary was notified and has a squad of officers investigating. The bandits were masked but a fair description of at least one was obtained.



Highland Telephone Company switchboard operator. Circa 1910      SRVHS Photos



Dr. Myron Chapin was a horse and buggy veterinarian.      SRVHS Photos

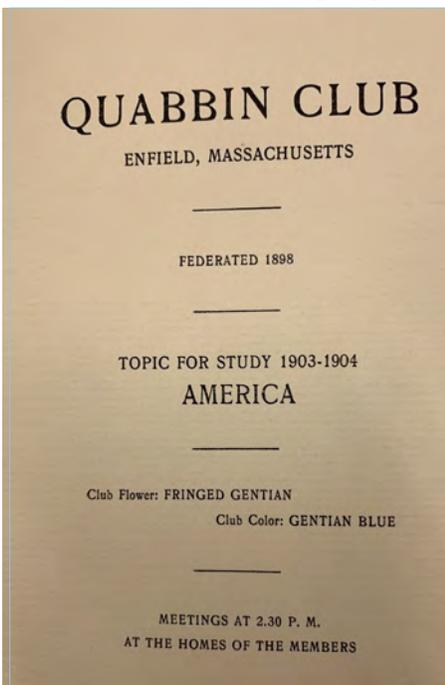
*Items copied exactly as found*

# The Quabbin Club

by Elena Palladino

The Quabbin Club was founded in 1897 by Marion Andrews Smith and her mother, Loraine Andrews Smith, both of Smith's Village, Enfield, Mass. The club's founding was part of the social movement of women's clubs that took place during the Progressive Era, from the 1890's to the 1920's. The club joined the State Federation of Women's Clubs in 1898 and the General Federation in 1926.

The Quabbin Club, like many women's clubs, began as a social and literary organization that took on community welfare issues such as education, civic engagement and public health, including support for the local Red Cross. According to its constitution, the Quabbin Club's objective was "the mutual improvement of its members in literature, art, science, and all the important questions of the day." The club's flower was a fringed gentian violet and the color was gentian blue.



Annual Booklet cover SRVHS Collection

The club's meetings took place in the homes of its members, and the club produced an annual booklet that outlined the overarching topic of study for the year along with membership, dates of meetings, issues to be discussed, musical selections to be played, poems and books to be read, and other news of the day. The club's topics of study centered around a country in the early years (e.g. Holland in 1897-8, America in 1901-2) and eventually included broader topics such as "Art and Miscellaneous Topics," "European Travel," and "The American Woman."

According to Donald Howe, author of *Quabbin: The Lost Valley*, the Quabbin Club "was the mecca of thousands of club members throughout the state during its forty-one years of activity. Speakers of wide renown were heard at the Enfield gatherings, and the club also maintained a vigilant eye on the town's civic affairs." The club

sponsored a small plot of land in the center of Enfield that its members would "beautify yearly." This included a community Christmas tree, which the club would decorate and light at the holiday season.



The final meeting of the Quabbin Club in 1938. SRVHS Photo Collection

After 41 years of service, the club's final meeting took place on April 12, 1938 at The Homestead in Ludlow and was attended by 55 current and former members along with the State Federation President from Boston. Mrs. Edwin

Howe, charter member and former president, was in attendance and presented the club's gavel to Mrs. J. Frederick Zappey, whose mother, Mrs. Martha Thayer, played an active role in the club's early years. It was determined that the decorations for the community Christmas tree would be donated to Mary Lane Hospital in Ware. And the poem "Quabbin Elegy" by Mrs. Mary Cushman Hardy was read at the final meeting.

The club's records are now with Swift River Valley Historical Society.