



Spring 2025

# The Swift River Diary

*Oft when I visit Quabbin's side  
And view the waters vast and wide  
I dream of towns that used to be  
Now immersed in an island sea*

*Within my mind I now behold  
Greenwich and Enfield, as of old,  
Dana and Prescott do I see  
Ever fresh in my memory*

*The scenic isles that dot the blue  
Are tops of Mounts that once I knew  
Pomeroy and Prescott, bold and free,  
With rugged Liz as company*

*On Quabbin's banks I sometimes spy  
The saddened face and wistful eye  
Of aged folk who, long ago,  
Lived in the valley down below*

*Neath the waters that overlay  
The remnants of another day  
Four little towns that stood with pride  
Victims, all, of a man-made tide.*

*Title Unknown  
by Robert E. Salisbury, Sr.*

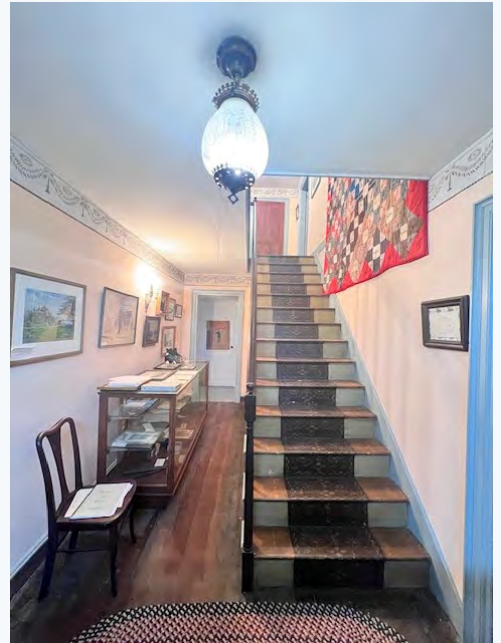
*Dear Readers,*

It has taken a few years... however...a project I have been advocating for was completed last month and I am happy to report that we now have overhead lights in all the rooms, hallways, stairways, and basement of the Whitaker-Clary House. Natural sunlight (or gloom light on rainy days) and a few woefully inefficient floor lamps have been replaced!

Many thanks to Tim Lyden (Senior and Junior) and the talented and able electricians of T.K. Lyden, Electric & Generator, Inc. of Templeton MA. Everyone was prompt, professional, skilled, courteous, and very respectful of our historic building.

On behalf of SRVHS I want to thank all the Friends and other donors to SRVHS who gave the funds which saw this project to completion. Please revisit the museum this season and see things you may have missed on your previous visit(s)!

Best regards,  
Dot Frye,  
Museum Administrator



Photograph courtesy of SRVHS

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# News

## Guideboard Restoration

Work has been done over the winter to stabilize the Guideboard. Plans for the future are to apply for grant funding to historically restore the guideboard.



Photograph courtesy of SRVHS



Photograph courtesy of SRVHS

## Guideboard Lamp History

*“last fall I inspected the lamp atop the guideboard and found it to be in an advanced state of deterioration.....”* read the complete report “New Salem Guideboard Lamp History” by Mason Colby, March 22, 2025 which is posted on our website at [www.swiftrivermuseum.org/](http://www.swiftrivermuseum.org/)

## Rabbit Run Diorama’s new ceiling & lighting



Photograph courtesy of SRVHS

## Just for Fun!



Photograph courtesy of SRVHS

Jane Peirce, treasurer of the SRVHS recently adopted a family member. Meet Fiona (left) who has come to join Isabella in Orange MA!

To insure the ever popular Rabbit Run Railroad will be preserved – a ceiling, complete with trac lighting has been installed over it.

## Contact Information

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Historical Society

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## Affiliations:

GIVING TUESDAY



# Of Interest

## The Roger Lannon Jr. Baby Quilt

The Roger Lannon Jr. baby quilt was crafted with love by his parents Ruby (Blackmer) and Roger Lannon Sr. in Enfield between 1932-1934. The quilt carries a particularly touching story - baby Lannon arrived into this world a little sooner than expected, leaving his mother without enough time to complete it. His father took it upon himself to finish the quilt. Oh, to be a fly on the wall during this hasty and nimble endeavor!

The quilt was kindly donated to the Swift River Historical Society by their great grandson Dale Lannon Pierce. It is made of cotton and thin cotton batting, embroidered and appliquéd depicting 20 animal characters from Thornton W. Burgess's children's stories. Burgess was a resident of Sandwich and Hampden Massachusetts, an American conservationist and author of approximately 166 children's stories.

A true piece of history, a symbol of family, storytelling, and the timeless art of handmade craftsmanship - the quilt has been documented by the Massachusetts Quilt Documentation Project (MassQuilts) in conjunction with The New England Quilt Museums of Lowell, MA.



Photographs courtesy of SRVHS

## Swift River Valley Bottle Collection

Mason Colby, Friend and volunteer of Swift River Valley Historical Society, has been sorting, researching and cataloguing our vast collection of bottles found in the Lost Valley over the years. He is planning a sample display of the collection in the Whitaker-Clary House for our 2025 season.



Photographs courtesy of SRVHS

# Out of the Past

February 21, 2025

Dear Dot,

I want to express my appreciation to you, the Board of Directors, volunteers, donors, and everyone who keeps the doors open and the lights on at the Swift River Valley Historical Society. Speaking of lights, I agree improved lighting (and a ramp!) will make the museum safer and more welcoming. I hope there will be funds to move these projects forward. It's retro in a bad way when a visitor with limited mobility can't get inside without assistance, especially when, as often is the case, their visit is a pilgrimage.



Photograph courtesy of SRVHS

As you know, since the first time I visited the museum several years ago, I have developed an interest in the Prescott Signature Quilt displayed on the stairway in the Whitaker Clary House. How I wish I could step into the past to learn about the fifty people whose signatures are embroidered in the quilt! I would ask them who the quilt was made for and how it ended up at the Hitchcock Chair Museum in Riverton Connecticut. Spending time at the museum is the closest I can get to time travel, so I happily applied to become a docent and for the past two summers have enjoyed giving tours, dressed in period costume when it's not too hot. I feel good when I'm at the museum. Call it my overactive imagination, but I feel myself among spirits happy to be remembered.

I recently learned that most of the people whose names are embroidered on the signature quilt lived in Atkinson Hollow and North Prescott and were family members of those who founded the Prescott Golden Rule Grange Number 52 in 1874, Pine Grove Cemetery in 1880, and the Prescott Historical Society in 1932.

Proceeds from the sale of the Pine Grove Cemetery to the Water Commission paid for the acre of land in south Orange (across from Mahar High School according to JR Greene in his book "Historic Quabbin Hikes") where the Prescott Methodist Episcopal church was moved in 1942 after being purchased by the Historical Society for \$5 to serve as a museum.



Photograph courtesy of SRVHS

The Pine Grove cemetery was established in 1880 by a society of members including Ellis White who donated the land and made the pickets for the fence. Daniel Pierce, Waldo Peirce, Fred Peirce, Edward Freeman, and others helped to paint and erect the fence. The stone posts were bought from Joseph Stone for two shillings apiece.

*(Continued on next page)*

# Out of the Past *(continued from previous page)*

Lillie B. Coolidge in her book "The History of Prescott, Massachusetts," wrote that when the cemetery was dismantled in 1942, "two days were spent taking down the fence around Pine Grove Cemetery, August 16th and 23rd and the fence was moved away to storage September 15th. It was saved with the plan in mind that it would eventually enclose the plot on which the museum would be erected."

While safety and accessibility are top priorities, I hope someday a group of volunteers will find the will and means to erect those stones in honor of the Pine Grove Cemetery society.

It's hard to imagine the grief and powerlessness people felt as families packed up everything they could take, said goodbye, and left their beautiful valley forever. After the flood, people who stuck together generally did better than those who ended up alone. Members of the Swift River Valley Historical Society, although they couldn't save their homes, did the best they could to keep the spirit of their towns alive. Can you believe on August 5, 1939, there were 150 people gathered for the Historical Society business meeting followed by a picnic lunch?!

Last summer I brushed a few dead ladybugs off the white tablecloth in the summer kitchen. I tried to sweep and dust when I wasn't giving tours. When you told me how Zib used to wash the curtains in every room in the Whitaker Clary house each spring, numbering each to keep track for rehunging, I was so moved by this big job that only gets noticed when it's not done, that I asked myself if I was up to taking on this task. We'll see.

Preserving the memories of the people of the Swift River Valley means keeping the museum in tip top shape and three cheers for every person who gives their time, talent, and treasure to the museum. It is a good feeling to contribute to the preservation of history. It is rewarding when a visitor puts some money in the jar at the welcome desk and then stops on their way out, says "this place is amazing," and puts more money in the jar.

I'm looking forward to the spring clean in April and the coming museum season.

Best,  
Karen  
Karen Traub M.Ed



Photographs courtesy of SRVHS

# Swift River Valley Historical Society

40 Elm Street, New Salem MA 01355

*Keeping alive the stories of the villages and four "lost towns" of the Quabbin.*

## **2025 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

Museum open Wednesdays and Sundays 1:00 – 4:00 P.M. June 18th through September 17th. Admission to the museum is free.

***SRVHS depends on donations to sustain their mission of preserving the history of the taking of the Swift River Valley***

### **APRIL**

Sunday, April 27<sup>th</sup> **EARLY SPRING HIKE of the RABBIT RUN.** Meet at Gate 35. Hike departs at 11:00 a.m.

### **MAY**

Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> **SPRING HIKE to GREENWICH VILLAGE.** Meet at Gate 43. Hike departs at 11:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 25<sup>th</sup> **MEMORIAL DAY COMMEMORATION** at Quabbin Park Cemetery. Refreshments at 10:00 a.m. Parade and services at 11:00 a.m.

### **JUNE**

Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup> **MUSEUM OPENING DAY**

Sunday, June 29<sup>th</sup> **OPEN HOUSE** from 1-4 pm. Visit and see all that is new for the 2025 Season! Free Admission and refreshments will be served.

Sunday, June 29<sup>th</sup> **RECONSTRUCTING the PAST through ARCHIVAL PHOTOS** presented by Peter Peirce, Professional Photographer will be held in the Prescott Church on the grounds of SRVHS at 1:00 p.m. Free Admission

### **JULY**

Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup> **PROJECT MISHOON** with David S. Robinson, Director, MA Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources and Cheryl Stedler, Director, Project Mishoon, Hassnamisco Nipmuc Band will be held in the Prescott Church on the grounds of SRVHS at 1:00 p.m. Free Admission

Sunday, July 20<sup>th</sup> **DANA REUNION** – Dana Common Gate 40 opens at 10:30 a.m. Event concludes at 3:00 p.m. Free Admission

Sunday, July 27<sup>th</sup> **DANA VESPERS** will be held in the Prescott Church on the grounds of SRVHS at 2:00 p.m. Cake and lemonade served after the concert. Free Admission

### **AUGUST**

Sunday, August 10<sup>th</sup> **THE RABBIT RAILROAD, LIFE BLOOD of the SWIFT RIVER VALLEY and a JOURNEY through the LOST TOWNS in MINIATURE** with Ken Levine – will be held in the Prescott Church on the grounds of SRVHS at 1:00 p.m. Free Admission

Sunday, August 17<sup>th</sup> **GONE A WHALIN': WESTERN MASS CREWS ON WHALERS** with Dennis Picard will be held in the Prescott Church on the grounds of SRVHS at 1:00 p.m. Free Admission

Sunday, August 24<sup>th</sup> **EAGLES, LOONS, and BEARS oh My!** presented by Quabbin Visitor Center, Visitor Services Supervisor, Brittany Guntor. This program will be held in the Prescott Church on the grounds of SRVHS at 1:00 p.m. Free Admission.

### **SEPTEMBER**

Saturday, September 6<sup>th</sup> **ANNUAL FRIENDS MEETING** will be held in the Prescott Church on the grounds of SRVHS at 2:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup> visit SRVHS's booth at **NEW SALEM OLD HOME DAY** from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the Common in New Salem Center.

Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup> **BIRDS OF PREY** with Tom Ricardi – on the grounds of SRVHS at 1:00 p.m. Rain or shine. Free Admission

Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup> **MUSEUM CLOSING DATE**

Sunday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, **HIKE to DOUBLEDAY VILLAGE in DANA.** Meet at the Petersham Common for caravan to Gate 39. Hike departs at 11:00 a.m. All hikers must enter and leave together due to DCR restrictions.

### **OCTOBER**

Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup> **FALL HIKE of the NORTH PRESCOTT LOOP to include NORTH PRESCOTT and ATKINSON HOLLOW.** Meet at Gate 20. Hike departs at 11:00 a.m. All hikers must enter and leave together due to DCR restrictions. **This hike is limited to 25 guests. You must pre-register by email to [dotfrvesrvhs@gmail.com](mailto:dotfrvesrvhs@gmail.com) or telephone 978-544-6882.**

**GENERAL INFORMATION for HIKES:** Light scattered showers do not cancel, steady rain does. Bring a lunch (optional) and prepare for insects/ticks. Follow all DCR rules. Dogs not allowed. All hikes meet for 11:00 a.m. departure. Hike lengths and times vary, due to either weather, "cellar hole poking", conversations, and terrain difficulty. The general window for most hikes is 4-6 hours. Donations to SRVHS for these hikes would be greatly appreciated.

**ANY NECESSARY CHANGES, CANCELLATIONS OR POSTPONEMENTS IN SCHEDULING WILL BE POSTED ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE. <https://www.facebook.com/swiftrivermuseum/>**