



Swift River Valley Historical Society est. 1936

Spring 2026

The Swift River Diary

Lonely Dream

*As I sit alone just dreaming
Of things that have gone before
My thoughts go back to Quabbin
And I wish I were there once more*

*I can see a long trail winding
And I know where the end will be
For it leads to that large old farmhouse
Where someone waits for me*

*I hear the coyotes howling
When the shadows start to fall
And the owl starts complaining
As darkness covers all*

*I recall the many hours
I have spent there in the past
In the quietness and coolness
And the time went all too fast*

*That's why I feel so lonely
With thoughts so far away
But with God's help I'll travel far
And see you all some day*

- O A King

Hidden Treasure



Image courtesy of Sothebys

The Horne valuables cabinet has rested in the archive room of the Swift River Valley Historical Society for decades. In early 2025, a volunteer grant writer suggested that the stained glass taken from Dana churches might be valuable. Lynne Shaw, grant writer, contacted Sotheby's Auction House and, at the last minute, decided to enclose pictures of the cabinet.

Erik Gronning, coordinator of Americana for Sotheby's, called the next day. He did not mention the stained glass but wanted to see the cabinet. Schedules were coordinated and Erik attended a Board of Directors meeting a few weeks later.

The Board meeting was bittersweet. Erik talked about the piece and set its reserve price (the lowest price accepted at auction) at \$600,000. The Board was amazed at its value and anxious to care for the fine cabinet. Everyone present also realized that we had no way to secure the treasure, as it would require around-the-clock security. And the museum could not afford to insure it. By a unanimous vote, the Board agreed to auction the cabinet. Over the next few months, the piece was cleaned and authenticated by Sotheby's experts. Late in 2025, the cabinet was featured on the cover of the Americana catalogue. Excitement built over the discovery of the cabinet, one of only five known to be in existence.

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Hidden Treasure — (continued from page 1)

The cabinet was made in Salem, Mass. in 1677. The Horne family commissioned it to celebrate the birth of a son. Within a few decades of its creation, the Horne widow married a Ballard from New Salem and brought the cabinet with her. A century later, the cabinet was donated to the Swift River Valley Historical Society.

On January 23, 2026, the auction began. Lynne Shaw, now a SRVHS Board member, went to New York to be present at the auction and to represent the museum. Several other Board members and friends of SRVHS watched the auction on a live feed. The bidding went quickly and the cabinet sold for 1.63 million dollars. When everyone caught their breath, we realized that the museum now had an endowment.

During the months before the auction, the Board of Directors developed a strategic plan, to best use the new funds. Most of the money will be invested, to ensure the viability of the museum in the future. As we are of New England, practical considerations came first. Plans are in place to make the buildings and grounds more user friendly by installing ramps, fixing uneven walkways, and upgrading electrical and structural elements. Longer term plans include increasing access to our archives and materials by upgrading and updating our online presence and increasing awareness of the museum and its resources. Outreach efforts, for adults and children, are ongoing.

Please join with us by becoming a member of SRVHS, by volunteering, by donating, or by telling your friends and relatives about the museum. We will embark on this journey together.

- Judith McIntosh, President

To read more about the history of this cabinet:

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2026/important-america-2/the-highly-important-symon-and-rebeckah-horne>

Annual fundraising letters will be going out soon. Though, as described in another section of the newsletter, we now have an endowment fund, contributions from Friends of the Swift River Valley Historical Society are still essential to our continued existence. To ensure that the museum is there for the next generation, and to preserve the memories and artifacts of the towns drowned by the Quabbin Reservoir, the museum will need additional income every year. Please consider becoming a Friend of SRVHS and donating generously during the annual appeal.

Contact Information

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Affiliations

GIVING TUESDAY





Afternoon Tea Party at the Revival Wheeler Mansion



Karen Traub & Cynthia Butler, Mistress of the Mansion

Last Sunday, to show my appreciation for the volunteers who keep the **Swift River Valley Historical Society** going, and because I was dying to have an event at the **Revival Wheeler Mansion**, I hosted a tea party. Don't you agree that a party is just what February in New England needs? I posted on social media "Volunteering

is its own reward but an elegant afternoon tea at a mansion once in a while keeps spirits high."

I am not a gambler, but I bet against the odds on the weather. Some thought it foolhardy to invite people from near and far at the time of year when it is most likely to be freezing temperatures, a blizzard, and/or slippery road conditions. Well, we hit the jackpot with a sparkling winter day of sunshine, warm temperature, and clear roads. The thirty-four guests arrived through the east door and I got to say, "Welcome to the mansion," and direct them to the refreshments in the dining room. Polly Wozny and her friend Taylor had baked carrot cake, almond treats, biscotti, and molasses cookies. Leslie Bracebridge brought peanut butter thumbprint jelly cookies.



Yummy Treats

Mara made her famous lemon squares and purple cookies made from ube, which I learned, is a kind of tuber like a sweet potato. My son Dante, who loved to bake as a kid but does not have much time these days, baked moist and chocolatey brownies. After people had time to mingle, enjoy the treats, and admire the amazing work

Cynthia Butler has done in reviving the mansion to its once elegant splendor, we adjourned to the parlor where I introduced Map Club members and presented a brief annual report.

I formed the club in January of 2025 after meeting a fellow map lover at the museum and thinking it would be fun to get together a bunch of people who love maps and put our heads together on how we could help the museum by making the map collection accessible to the public.

One of our members, Ken Levine, presented a beautifully framed portrait of the mansion to Cynthia, who then spoke about the history of the building, first as a showcase for the wealth of New Home Sewing Machine owner John Wheeler, then as a retirement home for ladies of the Order of the Eastern Star, which as you may know, is the women's version of the Freemasons. It was sad and astonishing to learn of the neglect by the most recent owners who let it deteriorate to the point that there was moss growing on a fireplace and a tree sprouting from between the floorboards.



Ken Levine presents framed picture of the mansion to Cynthia Butler

There are fireplaces in nearly every room, one made of imported jade, another crafted out of onyx. The rich dark wood with swirls and scrolls and exquisite detailed molding makes me yearn for days gone by. I remember driving by the old mansion when it looked like a haunted house and thinking "what an eyesore, and a glaring symbol of the decline of the town."

(continued on next page)



Afternoon Tea Party at the Revival Wheeler Mansion *(continued)*

Now it is a source of pride and serves as an event venue and bed and breakfast that brings visitors to the area. Cynthia is not only a visionary carrying out a monumental undertaking, but also a generous volunteer and caring community member who believes in the power of people pulling together. Her good work, positive attitude, and community spirit are just what Orange needs. May this good energy continue to grow; and hopefully spread to the Wheeler library which Almira Wheeler built to honor her husband.

Photograph courtesy of SRVHS

— Karen Traub, February 15 2026

Out of the Past

Seeking Identification - Paige Family

Alba Paige and his wife, Althea (Haskell) Paige were residents of New Salem. This photograph features Althea on the far left, with Alba standing beside her. We are currently working to identify the other individuals pictured. One possible surname may be "Meuse." We welcome any assistance from our readers. If you have information that could help, email us:

dotfryesrvhs@gmail.com

Thank you!



Photograph courtesy of SRVHS

Dear Readers,

As we look ahead to the coming season, I am filled with excitement and gratitude for all that lies before us at the museum. Each year brings new opportunities to share the Lost Valley history, welcome visitors and strengthen the connections that make this place so special. We are preparing a season rich with events, hikes and updated exhibits. Whether you are a long-time supporter or visiting for the first time, we look forward to welcoming you and making your experience meaningful and memorable.

Our work would not be possible without your continued interest and support. You are the heart of the museum and we are pleased to have you with us as we move into another promising year.

Regards,
Dot Frye, Museum Administrator

Corrected information for an article that appeared in the Autumn 2025 issue: Fay E. Bennett was not a resident of the Lost Valley; she was from New Salem. Fay E. Bennett of Greenfield was a descendant of the Ballard family of Wendell.



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*

2026 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Museum open Wednesdays and Sundays 1:00 – 4:00 P.M.

June 17th through September 16th

Admission is free.

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

Accessibility Notice:

Due to the historic nature of our buildings, certain areas of the museum may have limited accessibility. Visitors with mobility needs may encounter challenges in some sections. We appreciate your understanding and encourage you to contact us in advance with any specific accessibility questions or requests.

APRIL

Sunday, April 26th **SPRING HIKE to WEBSTER ROAD.** Meet at Hanks picnic area in Quabbin Park. Hike Departs at 11:00 a.m.

MAY

Sunday, May 17th **HIKE EAST STREET through ENFIELD & GREENWICH.** Gate 49. Meet at the East entrance to Quabbin Park (opposite Quabbin Park Cemetery) for carpool to the gate (limited parking available at the gate). Hike departs at 11:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 24th **MEMORIAL DAY COMMEMORATION** at Quabbin Park Cemetery. Refreshments at 10:00 a.m. Parade and services at 11:00 a.m.

JUNE

Wednesday, June 17th **MUSEUM OPENING DAY**

Sunday, June 28th at 1:00 p.m. **FIRING UP 225 CANDLES.** Join photographer Peter Peirce for a slideshow marking the 225th anniversary of Dana, Massachusetts. Dana didn't vanish, we have photographs of homes, families, cars, churches, and town buildings. We have names passed down, stories passed down, maps of where things used to be, and a museum of artifacts we can see and touch.

We know people whose families were "from there." In proper fashion, a birthday cake will be served in honor of Dana's 225th year. Free admission

JULY

Sunday, July 12th **WOMEN of '76** presented by Rita Parisi, Actress-Playwright-Touring Theatre Artist, and Founder of Waterfall Productions at 1:30 PM, in honor of the 250th anniversary of our country. A powerful solo theatrical performance that brings to life the remarkable women of the American Revolution. Free admission

Sunday, July 19th **DANA REUNION** – Dana Common . Gate 40 opens at 10:30 a.m. Event concludes at 3:00 p.m. The Dana Reunion Association sponsors this event. More information is available at danareunion1938@gmail.com

Sunday, July 26th **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 in honor of Mrs. Clary's 188th birthday. Free admission

AUGUST

Sunday, August 9th **QUABBIN QUILTS of OLD.** Our complete collection of Valley Quilts will be on display in the sanctuary of the Prescott Church from 1-4 pm. Quilts are artifacts of women's history with love sewn in every stitch. Whether created as a wedding gift, to celebrate the birth of a child, bid farewell to a cherished community member, or raise money for a worthy cause, every quilt tells a story. Free admission

Sunday, August 16th **QUABBIN QUILTS of OLD** continues from 1-4 pm.

Sunday, August 23rd Dennis Picard returns with **"DRAGOON, MUSKETEER, PRISONER: The HESSIANS of the REVOLUTIONARY WAR in WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS"** in the Prescott Church at 1:00 p.m. Even though there were no battles during the American Revolution in Western Massachusetts, there were, in fact, Hessians here. Hear how these men got to our area, why they were here, who they really were, and in the end, why some remained in our region. Free admission

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Sunday August 30th **VIRTUAL HIKE of the ROAD TO DANA COMMON** with Maria Beiter-Tucker of DCR in the Prescott Church at 1:00 p.m. Along the old road to Dana Common are foundations, fields, walls, and trees that tell the story of the towns now long gone. Take a virtual hike as we talk about the remnants of Valley towns and about the landscape of the reservoir today. Free admission

SEPTEMBER

Saturday, September 12th visit SRVHS's booth at **NEW SALEM OLD HOME DAY** from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the Common in New Salem Center.

Sunday, September 13th at 1:00 p.m. **BIRDS OF PREY** with Naturalist, Tom Ricardi brings you up close and personal with live raptors such as eagles, falcons, owls, kestrels, and hawks. On the grounds of SRVHS, rain or shine. Free admission. Bring chairs or blankets for outside seating.

Wednesday, Sept. 16th **REGULAR SEASON CLOSING DAY**

SPECIAL EVENT

Sunday, September 20th **NORTH QUABBIN HISTORY TOUR.** SRVHS will have an **OPEN HOUSE** from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Stop by and spend some time learning how the residents of the Lost Valley lived and what they gave up to create the great Quabbin Reservoir. SRVHS participation hosted by the Map Club. Refreshments. Free admission

Saturday, September 26th **ANNUAL FRIENDS MEETING** will be held in the Prescott Church 2:00 p.m. All Friends of the Museum and interested persons are invited to attend.

Sunday, September 27th **FALL HIKE to the PLANE CRASH SITE in DANA via COMEE & DANA-GREENWICH ROADS.** Gate 43 with drive and park at fishing area 3 (Hardwick). Hike departs at 11:00 a.m.

SPECIAL EVENT

Sunday, October 11th SRVHS is participating in **QUABBIN DAYS** from 1-4 pm. Free admission. Events taking place throughout the region can be found at www.QuabbinDays.org

OCTOBER

Sunday, October 18th **HIKE to UNDERHILL ROAD and MILL SITE in PRESCOTT.** Meet at New Salem Common with caravan/carpool to Gate 21. Hike departs at 11:00 a.m. All hikers must enter and leave together due to DCR restrictions. **This hike is limited to 25 participants. Pre-registration is required—please sign up by emailing dot-fryesrvhs@gmail.com or calling 978-544-6882. **NOTE: Members of the Friends of Swift River Museum will have a two-week priority registration period from the date the calendar is distributed. After that time, registration will open to the public.**

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.

Swift River Valley Historical Society
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