

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

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BLANDFORD

Legislators file joint petition for town

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

State Sen. Paul Mark and State Rep. Nicholas Boldyga filed a joint petition with the legislature in 2023 for Blandford to be “authorized to establish a program for certain members of the Blandford volunteer fire department to reduce the real property tax obligations or the motor vehicle and trailer excise tax obligations of such volunteers in exchange for their volunteer service.”

Just this past Tuesday, Feb. 18, the bill, House No. 2716, was put on the docket for the current legislative session. Rep. Boldyga said, “I’m in full support of the town’s initiative to provide tax relief to our volunteer firefighters. Senator Mark and I will do everything we can to steward the bill through the legislative process so it becomes law as quickly as possible. These brave individuals serve their community selflessly. Not only does this initiative honor their service, but it will help to encourage reten-



State Sen. Paul Mark



State Rep. Nicholas Boldyga



George Reichert



Bradley Curry



Raymond Hultay

tion and attract new volunteers to this critical role.”

The legislation caps the real property tax reduction for the volunteer firefighters at \$250. Once the bill has passed, it will take effect immediately.

Sen. Mark represents 57 municipalities in his Berkshire, Hampden Franklin and Hampshire County district and Rep. Boldyga represents the 3rd Hampden district towns of Agawam, Blandford, Chester, Granville, Montgomery, Russell, Southwick and Tolland, Hampden County and Huntington and Middlefield, both Hampshire County.

George Reichert, recognized for his community involvement project at the

Fire Department Training facility, Post Office and Bicentennial Park last summer, has accepted the appointment by the Select Board as the town’s representative for the second half of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant under the Resilient Dirt Roads project.

“I’m glad to see the Dirt Road project moving ahead,” said Reichert. “I am hoping that a new Highway Department Superintendent will have a passion for dirt roads as well as paved roads,” he added.

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrara said that the Highway Department received “lots of kudos for the Highway Department plowing for the recent snow

storms.”

The town department budget hearings have concluded and the Finance Committee will wrap up the budget for the coming fiscal year. This will be presented at the May informational meeting before the Annual Town Meeting in June.

Ferrara said the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Recreation Committee both need additional members.

The Select Board conducted interviews of the two candidates put forward by the Highway Department Superintendent selection committee Monday night. They are Bradley Curry and Raymond Hultay, both of Blandford. No further information was available at press time.

HUNTINGTON

Library launches two-part program for aspiring writers

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Huntington Public Library announces a two-part program with Jan Kardys, a literary agent with 35 years of experience.

Part I, called “You wrote a book, now what?” will take place on Saturday, March 8 at 2 p.m. In this workshop, Kardys will discuss traditional and self-publishing methods, as well as how to leverage technology and social media. Instructions on writing a query letter to a publisher will be covered.

Kardys returns on Saturday, March 29 at 2 p.m. for the second session of her program, called “Query & Manuscript Feedback.” Writers are invited to submit their query letter and the first 15 pages of their manuscript to Jan.

Kardys@gmail.com with Huntington Library in the subject line. Writers can also bring a hard copy of their first 15 pages to leave with Kardys at the first session on March 8. Feedback will be given to all writers who submit. Both sessions are free of charge, but require advance registration, which can be done online at huntingtonpubliclibrary.org.

Also kicking off in March is a new monthly series called, “A Day in the Life”, which will feature residents of Huntington and surrounding communities and their stories. In celebration of Women’s History Month, Family Nurse Practitioner Brenda Chaloux will share her experience as an Air Force Flight Medic in Kosovo, Qatar, Germany and Washington

LIBRARY, page 3

HUNTINGTON

Gateway hires independent investigator

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

In a unanimous decision, the Gateway Regional School Committee voted to approve a request by Superintendent Kristen Smidy to assign an outside investigator to manage all pending investigations.

At the heart of the request is the leave of absence of Chester Elementary School Principal Vanna Maffuccio, who left the school on Dec. 20.

The remote meeting was held on Wednesday, Feb. 19 at 6 p.m. Nearly 30 people attended including 10 school committee members: Chair Jason Forgue, Brian Forgue, Jeana Briggs, Keri Morawiec, Lisa Goding, Alex Seid, Tasha Strong, Peter Degregorio, Tara Balboni and Lyndsey Papillon.

After reviewing the agenda item, Forgue opened it up to questions and discussion. In response to Strong, Forgue affirmed that

the choice of investigator would be the school committee’s decision. He said that the district’s attorney Russ Dupere, also in attendance, was on and had a suggestion, as did Balboni.

Teacher Jim Duggan asked if this special investigator was sought only for the ongoing situation at Chester Elementary School. Despite the wording of the agenda item, Forgue said it would be limited to CES.

Briggs, a Chester parent who serves on the School Committee, asked why an impartial investigator was not brought on two months ago. Forgue responded that the idea had come about from several mentions of bias at the last two school committee meetings, and the insinuation that a personal vendetta could potentially cloud judgement in the final outcome.

Briggs followed up, asking what would happen to materials collected thus far. “Do they start from scratch? Or do they take what’s been gone through over the past two months?” Dupere said that districts don’t always use outside investigators. “But when you do, you’d provide all of the information that has been gathered so far,” he said. Even with the use of an outside investigator, Smidy would still make the final decision on the outcome based on the investigator’s

findings of fact.

In response to other questions, Forgue said the cost would be determined by how long it takes to gather all of the facts. “I know everybody wants a fast decision, but it is important to do due process,” Forgue said.

Dupere further clarified that the investigator’s role would be to act as a principal or superintend: examine the facts, evidence, give information to the decision maker and identify possible outcomes.

Papillon asked how the investigator would be funded. Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fisk said it would come out of Rural School Aid, but they were also looking into whether or not there could be insurance coverage.

The motion to hire a special investigator passed with Briggs abstaining. Forgue then asked for recommendations on who to hire. Balboni had a recommendation, but it was somebody, who had already worked locally for It Takes a Village. She said she preferred going with Dupere’s recommendation, to avoid any conflict of interest.

Dupere recommended Mary Lou Rup, a retired judge, who now works for the firm Bulkley Richardson in Springfield. Her rate would be \$275 per hour.

INVESTIGATOR, page 3

BLANDFORD

Reminiscing about the ‘bleak mid-winter’

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Trees twinkling in the sunshine.

Limbs layered in icy covers.

Bend and sway in that oh so cold wind.

How do you know the wind is ferocious in Blandford? The water in

the toilet bowl develops little tidal waves. This has been noted by more than one resident, “The wind swipes at the stack,” and there you are.

Libby Peebles once referred to the westerly blowing winds as “Blandford Bed Shakers.” The name was apt.

And indeed, while



Ice glistens on the tree tops after the weekend storm on Feb. 15 and 16.

Turley photo by Mary Kronholm

perhaps not shaking beds, the wind off the Herrick Road ridge certainly rattled windows as it battered homes on Main Street and Glasgow Road. Local lore would have you believe that the now omnipresent wind was not apparent until the Mass Turnpike was constructed, which created a funnel/tunnel that captured west blowing currents.

Then there is the temperature. Not above freezing for many days. Icicles, formed when the sun melted snow on rooftops, cling to window ledges and gutters. The shortest month of the year takes the longest time to get through.

Spring.

Is.

Coming.

It’s not that far away. The vernal equinox will happen Thursday, March 20 at 5:01 a.m., Eastern Daylight Time. The days are getting longer.

Then the Hilltowns will get ready for the onslaught of Mud Season, when the dirt roads are deeply rutted and not easily traversed. The Highway Department will have its work cut out as March and April reign.

Reign? Yes, rain. April showers bring so much more than May flowers. It will be a time to start seeds, rake up all the ice created lawn debris and tackle the burn pile before May 1.

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SUMMER CAMP GUIDE

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GOSHEN

Council on Aging announces upcoming March events

GOSHEN – A St. Patrick’s Day themed luncheon will be held on Tuesday, March 11 at noon at the Goshen Town Hall in the downstairs area.

It is a wonderful tradition that Goshen’s Bill O’Riordan plans a wee bit of Irish entertainment for this special lunch. This lunch for seniors will be the traditional corned beef dinner with all the fixings and there will also be a vegetarian Irish stew. Seniors should let Kerry know their choice of meal so there will be enough. And, as always, they will serve a delicious Irish themed dessert. People should email Kerry at coa@goshen-ma.us or call 413-268-9354 by Tuesday, March 4 to let her know they are coming. Until then, may the lilt of Irish laughter lighten every load.

Seniors may pick up the pen and start their writing project on Saturday, March 8 from 2-3:30 p.m. at the Town Hall upstairs dining room. Author Lara Tupper returns to Goshen to lead this free, fun, supportive workshop. Learn practical tips and easy prompts that will allow you to develop a writing routine and complete your writing project. No prior writing experience needed, just bring a notebook and a pen. Please sign up at Lara’s website: www.laratupper.com/contact This program is supported by a grant from the Goshen Cultural Council and Mass Cultural Council.

On Thursday, March 20 from 6-7:30 p.m. in the Goshen Town Hall upstairs Dining Room, the Council on Aging will be hosting a creative candle making class by Goshen resident, Jana Rosewarne. Rosewarne will bring all the materials needed including various scents and materials to embellish and decorate the candle vessels. Class is free and limited to 15 people, people may email or call Kerry by Thursday, March 13 if they would like to attend. In case of inclement weather, class will be held on Thursday, March 27 at 6-7:30 p.m.

Exercise classes continue with Joan Griswold on Wednesdays at 10:15 a.m. in the Goshen Town Hall. The instructor will continue to focus on functional movement that enhances the physical strength and balance, allowing for ease and comfort with daily tasks. Participants should wear supportive footwear and bring water and free weights if they have them. There is a brief health questionnaire Joan will have them fill out. This class is also offered simultaneously on Zoom, so if people prefer this method, they may email Joan at joan@bybhealth.com.

On Wednesday, March 5 crafts group month meets in the library or the upstairs dining room attached to the library. This month the group welcomes people to bring their own craft project to work on in community with others. Doing creative projects is good for brains and bodies.

On Friday, March 7 Community Connections Group will be held in the Goshen Town Hall upstairs dining room from 10-11a.m. This month the conversation is about travel. People should bring their favorite travel story, picture or memento and let’s share the gift of fabulous memories with each other.

On Tuesdays, March 18 and 25 Highland Valley Elder Services delivers grab and go lunches to Goshen COA on the third and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Participants pick up their hot lunch at the Goshen Town Hall from 12:30-1 pm. The lunch for March 18 is a choice of spaghetti with meat sauce or tomato basil quiche and the choice for March 25 is Cobb salad or Greek chickpea salad. The meals also include milk, vegetables and dessert. There is a suggested \$4 donation given to Highland Valley Elder Services to offset the cost of the meal. Seniors should call Kerry at 413-268-9354 if they would like to sign up to get these nutritious and delicious meals.

On Wednesday, March 19 from 2-4 p.m. games group will meet in the Goshen Free Library, 42 Main St. This is a fun way to spend an afternoon. They have games available, but people may bring a favorite they would like to play. The group is always open to learning new games, as well as playing old favorites.

On Thursday, March 20 from noon-2 p.m. there is technology help in the library with Goshen resident, Stephen Morley, who volunteers through the Tech Connect Program.

People may bring any and all questions regarding their computer, phone or tablet to Morley and he will help problem solve. Goshen is lucky to have this volunteer program.

Henrietta Munroe is the coordinator of the Goshen Age Friendly Group. She can be reached at 413-268-7465. Munroe is the one to connect to borrow medical equipment free of charge.

HILLTOWNS

MassDOT hosts billboard design contest for college students

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces the launch of its third annual National Work Zone Awareness Week billboard design contest, exclusively for Massachusetts college students.

The contest aims to raise awareness of work zone safety and encourage drivers to exercise caution when passing through active construction and maintenance projects.

“MassDOT is excited to invite submissions for our third annual National Work Zone Awareness Week billboard contest,” said Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt. “Innovative designs and impactful messaging are a creative way to engage the public and reinforce the importance of keeping our construction crews safe.”

National Work Zone Awareness Week is an annual event that brings attention to work zone safety and education around preventing crashes and fatalities in these areas. The theme for NWZAW 2025 is “Respect the zone so we all get home.” It emphasizes the shared responsibility of drivers to follow traffic laws, reduce speed and stay alert in work zones to protect both themselves and the workers maintaining and improving roads.

MassDOT is taking an active role in promoting work zone safety to protect the men and women working out on the roadway and would like to invite all Massachusetts college students interested in participating to create a billboard design that promotes the theme and encourages drivers to be cautious when driving through work zones. Massachusetts college students interested in participating should create a billboard design that includes the theme and promotes work zone safety. Students should review the MassDOT Digital Billboard Design Specifications before preparing their submission.

The contest is open to all students, who are currently enrolled in Massachusetts colleges. The winning designs will be selected based on creativity, impact and relevance to the NWZAW theme. The contest ends on Friday, April 11 and the winning designs will be announced on Tuesday, May 6 during the 2025 MassDOT Transportation Innovation Conference.

The top three designs will be displayed on a series of digital billboards along the highways in Massachusetts throughout the 2025 construction season. The winning designs will be awarded a scholarship generously provided by Construction Industries of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Aggregate and Asphalt Pavement Association. As staunch advocates for roadway safety, CIM and MAAPA recognize the importance of raising awareness about safe driving behaviors in work zones to ensure that everyone gets home safely.

Firar place ia \$1000 and three-month billboard display (June, August, November). Second place is \$600 and two-month billboard display (July, October). Third place is \$400 and one-month billboard display (September).

The contest is open to all students who are currently enrolled in Massachusetts colleges. Participants are permitted to work in groups.

No more than three entries may be submitted by any one individual/group. If more than three entries are submitted, some or all of the submissions of the individual/group may be excluded. No illegal, offensive, or obscene content of any kind. All designs must include the NWZAW theme and promote work zone safety.

Each submission must be the original work of the participants. Designs utilizing professional or non-student support will not be eligible for entry. If it is discovered that a winning design used outside assistance, the design and participant(s) will be disqualified from the contest.

The use of AI-generated imagery, language or other elements, either partially or fully, is strictly prohibited. Entries found to contain AI-generated imagery, language or other elements will be disqualified from the contest. Submissions that do not follow the design specs will not be considered. Winner’s names will be posted and shared publicly. Winners hereby authorize MassDOT to publish, reproduce, disseminate and use their names by all written, spoken and filmed media provided that the purposes are publicity and information related to this contest. If a winning student is underage, the party holding parental authority or legal representation of the winning student will provide such authorization on the student’s behalf.

Contest submissions will be accepted through April 11 at 5 p.m. (EST). To submit an entry, contestants should visit <https://www.mass.gov/work-zone-billboard-contest-2025>.

MassDOT Digital Billboard Design Specs

Please prepare each design as JPEG files in RGB color @72 dpi.

Full bleed to edges with NO crop marks, and NO surrounding border.

Designs must include the MassDOT logo, the CIM logo and the MAAPA logo. MassDOT, CIM and MAAPA logo may only be used in the original colors, all black or all white.

Avoid large white background areas, as it can result in exceeding acceptable brightness standards in certain communities.

Put the size of the artwork in the file name (i.e.: NWZAW_LastName-1400x400.jpg). Files should not exceed 14 mb.

Participants affirm their submissions are their own original work, have not been copied from others or from previous designs, including their own, and do not violate the intellectual property rights of any person or entity.

Submissions become the sole property of MassDOT and may be used for any MassDOT purposes, including, but not limited to, display on websites, billboards, press releases, social media and other materials. CIM and MAAPA will also be permitted to use the winning submissions for its business purposes including but not limited to, display on its website and in its advertising.

MassDOT shall have the right to adapt, edit, modify, or otherwise use any winning submission in part or in its entirety in whatever manner it deems appropriate.

The winning entries will be selected by a panel comprised of MassDOT, CIM, MAAPA senior management. Panel members will not include any MassDOT, CIM, or MAAPA employees who have a family member currently enrolled in a Massachusetts college.

Entries will be judged on their visual appeal, adherence to the NWZAW theme, quality of design, and ease of reproduction for the purposes stated above.

The winners will be notified via email and announced during the 2025 MassDOT Transportation Innovation Conference, Mass.gov website and MassDOT social media accounts.

If a winner is determined to have violated any rules, MassDOT reserves the right to rescind the award from the winner, even if the determination is made after the winner has been awarded.

BLANDFORD

Clerk offers census, caucus info

BLANDFORD – Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo said that the town’s annual street list/census forms have been mailed to every residential household.

“It is critical,” she said, “to include every member of the household, parents and children as well as cats and dogs.” “You cannot register to vote, or change voter registration on these forms,” she added and cautioned registered voters that in order to maintain that status, the street list form must be returned. The forms may be hand delivered or dropped in the grey box outside the Town Offices.

If anyone has not received their form, they should call please Jemiolo at 413-848-4279, extension 203.

Also, Jemiolo reminds everyone that the caucus for nominations for ten elected positions is coming up on Monday, March 3 at 7 p.m. at the Town Hall. Nominations will be open for Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Fence Viewer (two), Field Driver, Municipal Light Plant Board, Select Board, Water Commissioner, Library Trustee and Cemetery Commissioner.

Political rally to take place March 9

BLANDFORD – U.S. Senator Ed Markey will headline the “No Kings in America Rally for Democracy” at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 9, at the Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield.

Blandford Democratic Town Committee Chair Lloyd Martin said, “This is an opportunity to listen to state leadership and listening may give you guidance for how to cope.” He added, “The past months actions affect everybody and this is a chance to hear, in person, from people who have similar concerns.”

The recently formed Democratic Town Committee in Blandford is doing just that. According to its advisor, Pamela Dirschka, the committee has provided members a community to share concerns, plan and take action. “We are looking forward to the Rally for Democracy in Pittsfield as it will be an opportunity for Western Mass residents to join together to express strongly that we will not tolerate a king.”

She added that the group will reach out to other towns in Western Massachusetts so they too can create their own organizations and assist them in the process.

The event is sponsored by a Four Freedoms Coalition led by Berkshire Democratic Brigades and the Rural Freedom Network in conjunction with Greylock Together (North County), Left Field (South County), Berkshire Indivisible, Progressive Democrats of America and the NAACP.

“Americans take our Constitution and the rule of law for granted,” said Berkshire Democratic Brigades chair Jim Mahon. “We rarely think about what life would be like if instead of laws, we had to live according to the will of one man, but here we are. All Americans need to pay attention and defend the Constitution before it is too late.”

The “No Kings in America. Rally for Democracy” is open to the public and is free of charge. However, because seats are limited, tickets are required. People should visit tinyurl.com/47z37778.



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MONTGOMERY

Music in Montgomery hosts four concerts set in March

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

MONTGOMERY – The March line up for Music in Montgomery has been announced.

These free concerts take place each Thursday of the month at 3 p.m. in Montgomery Town Hall, 161 Main Road. Kicking off on Thursday, March 6 are Barry, Sarah & Pete, also known as “We Three.” Barry Searle (guitar and vocals), Sarah Miller (percussion and vocals) and Pete Rzasa (vocals, pedal steel and harmonica) will return to perform a variety of music styles. Searle also performs with a number of area musicians and ensembles, including Ravenwood and released “The Awakening,” his first album of original songs last February.

Mother and daughter singer/songwriters Helen and Ursula Elmes will reunite with Joe Nerney on Thursday, March 13. Helen Arbour Elmes has performed with bands Skyline, Sure Shot and Liquid Floyd. Ursula Elmes is a member of the Mad Habits and is known for her soul-

ful vocals with a honky tonk influence. Saxophonist Joe Nerney studied music education at Boston Conservatory at Berklee; in addition to performing with Helen Arbour and Ursula Elmes, he can be seen performing throughout the area with the likes of Seth Glier and as part of the duo the West Hill Two and his larger ensemble, West Hill Groove. He also hosts “Podcast from Joe” on apple podcasts.

Singer, guitarist Larry Southard, who organizer Dalen Rogers says “always bring a heart-warming, singing along, tapping, clapping good time,”-returns on Thursday, March 20. Like this months other artists, Southard can also be seen with Papa and Friends, a rock-country-folk band who include Lesley Friedman Rosenthal (violin, harmony), Terry AlaBery (Terrance Hall on drums), Mike Patoniac (bass and harmonica), Andy Gordon (pedal steel and banjo). Papa and Friends performs locally at the Knox Trail Inn or Chester Common Table.

The month closes on Thursday, March 27 with perpetual favorites Jerry and

Kara Noble. Jerry is a well-known pianist, guitarist and composer; his wife Kara joins him on bass. They are known for great music and stories across the decades. Ten years ago, they formed the Bob Sparkman (clarinetist) Trio and released the CD “Tunes in the Key of Three” in 2018. Currently, the couple manages their company Artist Tec, which supports creative people in sharing their art through the use of technology. In describing their performances, the Nobles say, “We are the people our parents warned us about.”

This series is co-hosted by the Montgomery Public Library and by Gray Catbird Pottery Studio. Attendees are invited to bring baked goods to share. Donations are accepted for the refreshments with money split between the Montgomery Volunteer Firemen’s Association and the Town Library. Donations are also accepted to tip and thank the fabulous musicians, who perform each week.

Montgomery Town Hall. This event is open to all, who are interested. For more information, people may call Dale Rogers at 413-875-5205.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

COLLEGE NOTES

Colleges and universities announce Dean’s List

DEAN’S LIST
St. Anselm College
Manchester, New Hampshire
Caela Scanlon of Easthampton elementary education major

Sienna College
Loudonville, New York
Rachel Bonfitto of Westfield
Rebekkah Clauson of Westfield

Tufts University
Medford
Natalie Nicoletti of Williamsburg, Class of 2025
Ruby McElhone Yates of Easthampton, Class of 2025
Annika Von Schoeler-Ames of Williamsburg, Class of 2026

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst
Emil Sanchez of Becket
Nicole Hannigan of Chester
Liliana Manley of Chesterfield
Greta Muellner of Chesterfield
Ori Sussman of Chesterfield
Byron Dudas of Cummington
Jeremy Dus of Cummington
Isabel Dwight of Cummington
West Williams of Cummington
Nickolas Borowski of Easthampton
Kailyn Cabrini of Easthampton
Ellianna Chappuis of Easthampton
Kunden Chumego of Easthampton
Emmalee Connly of Easthampton

Elleana Denis of Easthampton
Rosemary Follet of Easthampton
Mark Gardyna of Easthampton
Deidre Kelly of Easthampton
Vihdydevi Lalchand of Easthampton
Cynthia Maddison of Easthampton
Alexander Major of Easthampton
Evan Omalley of Easthampton
Sonam Ottaviani of Easthampton
Cameron Powers of Easthampton
Barinder Saini of Easthampton
Dylan Schmidt of Easthampton
Ethan Silluzio of Easthampton
Melanie Smith of Easthampton
Jenna Wooster of Easthampton
Jacob Penn of Huntington
Rowan Boyer of Otis
Catherine Consolati of Otis
Mya Martin of Otis
Mia Gozgit of Russell
Kota Rinaldi of Sandisfield
Cadence Loven of Westhampton
Kira French Williamsburg
Sarah Guiel of Williamsburg
Katherine Joyner of Williamsburg
Mikayla Joyner of Williamsburg
Isabella Kosiba of Williamsburg
Madison Marney of Williamsburg
Charles Por of Williamsburg
Shane Prusak of Williamsburg
Charles Strate of Williamsburg
Katherine Towler of Williamsburg
William Towler of Williamsburg
Eamon Dwight of Worthington
Hannah Matica of Worthington
Olivia Millis of Worthington

HUNTINGTON

INVESTIGATOR

If she had a full caseload, another colleague at that firm might be available sooner. Either candidate would have to be checked for a potential conflict of interest.

Dupere recommended that the committee vote to authorize Forgeue to sign an agreement with the law firm, which was unanimously approved.

Before closing the

meeting, Forgeue said that he also shared concerns over the cost but is happy to move forward and put to rest concerns over a vendetta or bias. The meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

LIBRARY

D.C. Chaloux-currently the Family Nurse Practitioner at the Gateway School Based Health Center-will speak on Saturday, March 15 at 2 p.m.

The library’s monthly book club will meet on March 6 at 4 p.m. to discuss The First Ladies by Marie Benedict. This book tells the story of the unlikely friendship between Eleanor Roosevelt and Civil Rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune. Readers are invited to read Fresh Water for Flowers by Valerie Perrin for the rest of the month, in preparation for April’s Book Club Meeting. This book tells the story of Violette Toussant, who marries young, has a child. With her husband’s infidelity, she learns to support herself as

a caretaker of a cemetery in a small town in France. Copies can be picked up at the library (while available), ordered via interlibrary loan, or borrowed for e-readers through Libby. This book will be discussed in the monthly book club meeting on Thursday, April 10 at 4 p.m.

Regular monthly offerings include Story Hours for kids of all ages on Mondays and Saturdays at 10 a.m. The Book Swap Club-where people bring a favorite book to share info and titles with other attendees-meets on Tuesday, March 11 at 4:30 p.m. This month’s Crafternoon for all ages will be held on March 13 at 4 p.m. You can bring your own project or make use of the

library’s various craft supplies in a relaxed and fun environment. Game Night will be held on March 20 at 4 p.m. This event is for all ages; patrons can bring their own game to play with others or make use of the games available at the library. Registration is required to take part in free pizza and soda at Game Night.

New members are always welcome to these activities. Events are free but some require registration at huntingtonpubliclibrary.org. “We are always looking for input on new programs and ideas for the library,” said Library Director Amanda Loiselle. People may call her at 413-512-5206 or email library@huntington-ma.us.

Nomination papers available

HUNTINGTON – Town Clerk Michelle Fieldstad-Booth announces town election information.

Nomination papers are available Feb. 12 through March 20 for the Annual Town Election on Saturday, May 10. The

open positions include Board of Selectmen, Board of Health, Board of Assessors, Water and Sewer Commission, Regional School Committee (two positions), Tree Warden, Moderator, Trustee: Alphonso Pettis

Fund, Constable, Trustee: Huntington Library and Trustee: Whiting Street Fund.

For more information, people may call the Town Clerk at 413-512-5209 or visit the town website at www.huntingtonma.us.

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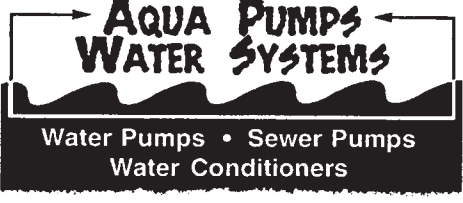
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PUBLIC NOTICES

Huntington Conservation Commission Notice of Public Hearing

The Huntington Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing during their regularly scheduled meeting on **March 5, 2025 at 7:30 pm** in the Town Hall to review a Notice of Intent submitted by Salvini Associates, LLC, representing Jonathan Groff. The proposed activity is limited tree cutting and minor site work within the riverfront at 38 Russell Road. This hearing is in accordance with M.G. L. Chapter 131 Section 40 of the Wetlands Protection Act.

02/27/2025

Commission will make its determination in accordance with the provisions of the Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. c 131, Sec. 40 (as amended).

Plans and additional informa-

tion are on record in the Office of the Conservation Commission.

Richard Gates, Chair
Town of Blandford Conservation Commission

02/27/2025

NOTICE


ERRORS: Each advertiser is requested to check their advertisement the first time it appears. This paper will not be responsible for more than one corrected insertion, nor will be liable for any error in an advertisement to a greater extent than the cost of the space occupied by the item in the advertisement.

Town of Blandford Conservation Commission Public Notice

At its regularly scheduled meeting on **Monday, March 10, 2025, at 6:00 PM** at the Blandford Town Hall, 1 Russell Stage Road, the Blandford Conservation Commission will consider a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) received from the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (SWSC). The RDA is related to proposed General Watershed Maintenance Work in the Town of Blandford within SWSC Watershed. The

Public Notice CHANGES

Deadline has changed to **FRIDAY at 3 p.m.**



GUEST COLUMN

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor



Can I get extra Social Security for military service?

Dear Rusty:
Please help. I served from 1964 to 1966 in the US Army.
I have been trying to contact Social Security in order to request extra benefits for veterans. The telephone is a recording and you never get to speak to anyone. The web site at www.ssa.gov is useless to me. I went to the SS office and there was a huge line outdoors in the freezing cold. I am disabled and cannot stand on a line in this cold. Please advise me about my options. Financially, is it worth the trouble?

Signed: Disabled American Veteran

Dear Disabled Veteran:
My profound thanks for your service to our country.
FYI, the “special extra credit for military service” you refer to does not provide an incremental Social Security benefit amount for military veterans. Rather, it adds an additional amount to your recording earnings for the years you served, which may or may not affect your Social Security benefit. FYI, I’ve written numerous articles on this topic, one of which you can read at this link: www.socialsecurityreport.org/ask-rusty-older-veteran-asks-about-special-social-security-credit-for-military-service/.

In your case, serving between 1964 and 1966, if you told Social Security of your military service when you applied for benefits or gave them a copy of your DD-214, they would have added up to \$1,200 per year to your recorded military pay record (FYI, those who served after 1967 were automatically given earnings credit for their military service years).

However, whether those special extra credits would affect your SS benefit depends on what your lifetime earnings record was when you later claimed SS. When you applied for benefits, Social Security reviewed your lifetime earnings record and used the highest earning 35 years of earnings over your lifetime (adjusted for inflation) to calculate your “Primary Insurance Amount” or “PIA,” which is what you get if you claim

benefits to start at your SS full retirement age.
If, after your military service, you had 35 or more years of earnings which were higher than what you earned while serving, Social Security would have used those later higher earnings to calculate your benefit, and your military earnings wouldn’t affect your benefit. If, however, any of your military earnings including the “special extra credits” were among the highest over your lifetime, then those higher military earnings would be included when calculating your benefit.

So, whether you will benefit from these “special extra credits for military service” depends largely on your post-service earnings history. If your military earnings were among the highest earning years over your lifetime, and you provided SSA with a copy of your DD-214 when you applied for Social Security, then your current SS benefit already includes consideration of your military service.

Social Security should have asked about your military service when you applied. If you didn’t advise SS of your military service when you applied for Social Security, or if you aren’t sure, you should contact the SSA at 1.800.772.1213 and ask if you were given those “special extra credits for military service” when you applied. However, if you had at least 35 years of higher earnings after you left military service, your current SS benefit is already based on those later higher earning years, and you will not get anything additional from those “special extra credits” for your military service years.

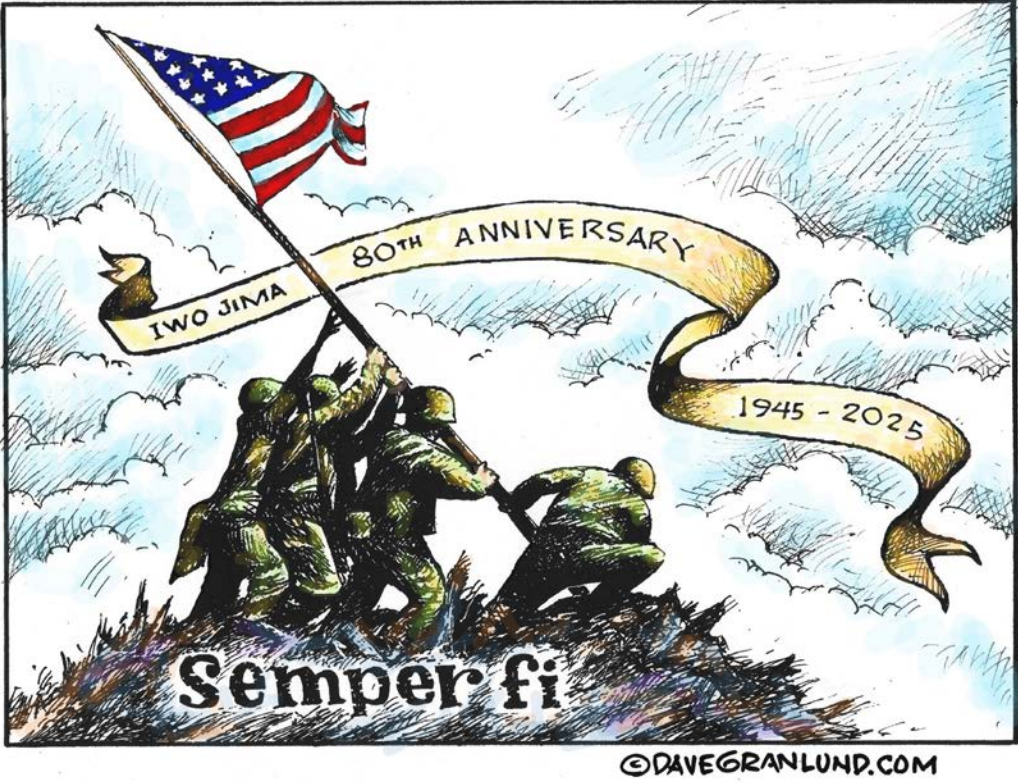
FYI, we know it is often difficult to contact the Social Security Administration by phone, as well as trying to visit SSA offices without an appointment, which is why our AMAC Foundation provides this free service). SSA is now allowing in-person visits “by appointment only” and you can call the above number to schedule an in-person appointment at your

SECURITY, page 5

Corrections policy

If you notice a factual error in our pages, please let us know, so that we can set the record straight. Email information to countryjournal@turley.com, or call us at 413-283-8393.
Corrections will be printed in the same section where the error originally occurred.

OPINION




GUEST COLUMN

in my

BACKYARD

By Ellenor Downer



I received an email from an Oakham resident said he and a friend on Feb. 12 startled a flock of about eight snow buntings as they drove along Adams Road in New Braintree.
He said, “The buntings are seen here every winter.” On Feb. 18, I drove over Adams Road and saw the same flock of snow buntings. Their white bellies will visible as they flew up from the side of the road.
The snow bunting is seven inches long with a plumpish body. In winter, snow buntings are streaked with buff and black. The ear patch and the back is streaked with buff as well as the flanks and breast. The belly is white and the bill yellow-orange. The male’s crown is black and the female’s buff.
The male in summer is a striking white and black. The head and breast are white and the back, tail and bill are black. The female in summer plumage is a more subdued version of the male with her

head a gray color.
Snow buntings summer on the tundra and rocky shores, their breeding grounds. The female lays three to nine creamy blue or gray eggs in a nest of moss, grasses and earth placed on rocky ground. Their song is a musical warble and calls include “tew” and soft, buzzy notes.
In winter, they inhabit open fields, roadsides and beaches in the southern Canada and the United States.
Brown creeper
Last week, I saw a brown creeper moving up a tree near one of my bird feeders and suet cakes. When they get near the top of the tree, they fly down to the base and climb up the tree in a different spot on the tree.
Birds and more at my feeder
Sunday during the storm, I spotted an opossum under my feeder digging in

Snow bunting
the snow for seeds. At this point, it switched to rain and the opossum had wet fur. Besides the opossum, I had squirrels and the usual black-capped chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, tufted titmice, downy woodpeckers, dark eyed juncos, bluejays and mourning doves.
Bald eagle
An Oakham resident saw a bald eagle land on the ice on Lake Dean. Late last month, fishing derby participants saw an eagle at Lake Dean.
Loon facts
The Loon Preservation Committee newsletter mentioned facts about the first migration and acquiring breeding territory. Each fall, juvenile loons undertake their first migration to their wintering grounds. The article said, “First, they have to manage the energetic costs of migration—sadly, not all

BACKYARD, page 5

Backyard sugaring a fond memory to revisit

It has been a few years since we tapped our maple trees and boiled down the sap.
My husband and I agreed that with the upcoming forecast of cold nights and warm days it was time to get out our supplies and give it another go ‘round.
Our backyard syring days go back to the dating phase of our relationship. Enjoying homesteading activities together made me certain that he was a “keeper.”
I’m pulling this column straight from the archives and rereading it to be sure we get off to a good start.
Maybe you too will give sugaring a try!
Although the sap from most native species of maple

can be used to make syrup, sugar maple sap is most desirable because it has a high sugar content. Sugar maples also bud out later than other species, a good feature considering sap from trees that have begun to break bud will produce syrup with an off-taste.
The trees you tap should be at least 10-12 inches in diameter at 4.5 feet off the ground. One tap is sufficient for healthy maples that

size, three for those over 25” in diameter and two for those that fall in between.
Tapholes are usually made 3-4 feet from the ground for ease of maintenance. You’ll want to drill slightly upward 2.5-3 inches into healthy sapwood (not dark heartwood).
Space taps evenly around the tree. The metal spout or spile is inserted into the taphole and set in place with a gentle tap.
For small scale production, clean water or milk jugs with work great to collect the sap— simply cut a small hole to accommodate the spout. Over the years we have upgraded to plastic spiles

GARDEN, page 5

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Letters to the editor should be 500 words or less in length. We require letter writers to include his or her name, town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources.
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Election letters to the editor welcome

The Country Journal welcomes readers to participate in this year’s election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to *The Country Journal*, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to countryjournal@turley.com. Please

include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by **noon Friday** to be considered for the following Thursday’s newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right

to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election. For more information, call 413-283-8393.
Campaign news
As part of its election coverage, the newspaper plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor’s Council during the weeks leading up

to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.
Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in *The Country Journal*.

OPINION

HILLTOWN HISTORY

Westfield known as Whip City

By Deborah Daniels
Correspondent

My mom knew the value of a whip. My uncle enabled her by giving her a whip he brought back from a trip to Argentina. I don't know if she asked him to bring her one, but let's just say she wasted no time steering us kids with it.

Without further ado let's turn to some history about whips. So you know whips have been in use controlling herds of animals and people (slaves) since ancient times. We know this from scenes painted on large Greek and Roman vases.

That is a lot of time to perfect the art and science of whip making. And the place to get a whip in 1880 was Westfield aka Whip City. This is where Henry Martin Duesen established his whip manufacturing business, U.S. Whip Company, which became the largest in the world by 1910. You can see his original building on 42 Arnold Street in Westfield. Consider if you will the thousands of cattle and oxen driven across America to reach the West and the millions more cattle driven from Texas to Kansas and how they were controlled in transit by whips. And lest we not forget the U.S. Cavalry actively using horses and whips until 1942.

Every one of those bullwhackers had a whip as well as everyone, who got around on a horse. And that was everyone because we didn't get off our horses until the 1920s, when cars made their debut. If you had one whip chances are you had two to four because one size did not fit all modes of horse travel. So whips, which had been hand made prior to 1880 were in big demand as the wild west was tamed.

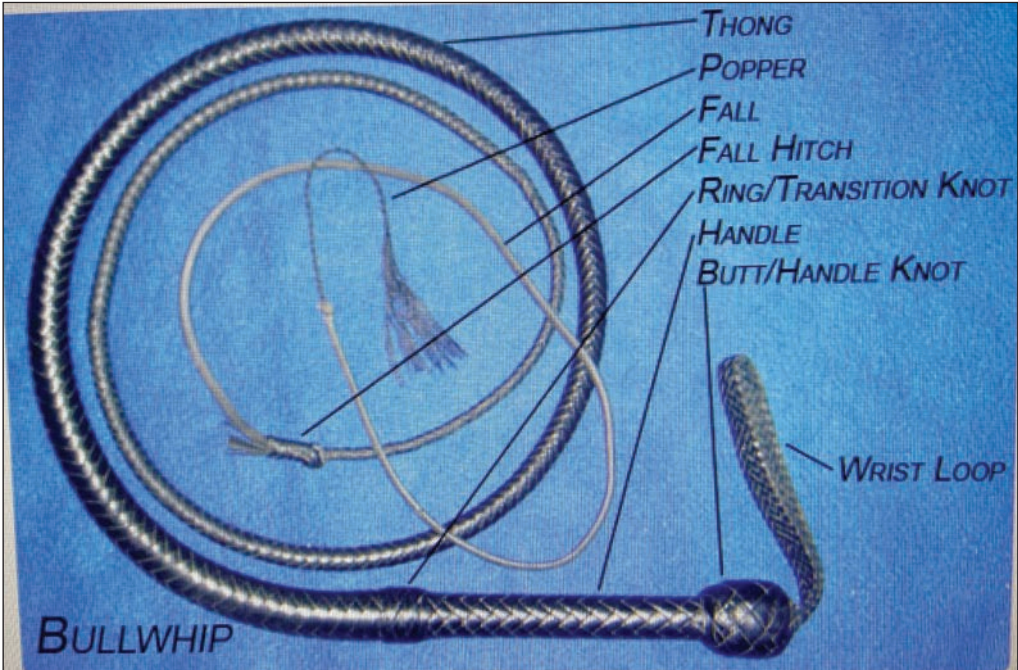
Whips are made of mostly rawhide. Leather strips were wrapped around a wooden handle, then many thin, leather strips were braided into a thong which is the long line of the whip. Then a last bit of leather or "fall" as it is called was woven onto the whip. If the whip is going to be used for whip cracking, which is



The photo shows some 125 year old whips made in Westfield. Photo courtesy of Westfield Historical Commission and Westfield Athenaeum



These young oxen typify those that would have been driven as adults in cattle drives out west. Photo courtesy of Hollowell Horse Ranch



This diagram shows the anatomy of a whip.

when the snap of the whip breaks the sound barrier, then an additional "cracker" bit of leather is added to the end. Yes the end of the whip moves faster than the speed of sound. Do watch the whip cracking videos on the internet, you will be entertained. And if you watch the videos you will learn that the loud crack is all in the elbow movement, no wrist snapping involved. Raise your whip up over your head, let your elbow drop down and straighten it out quickly and a loud terrifying whip crack will result. This really is a sport at western rodeos.

Back to whip making, the U.S. Whip Company had seven buildings in Westfield. There were 40 manufacturers of whips in Westfield during the early whip making days. Some 25,000 whips were shipped out daily. They used whale baleen or the whale's mouth filter filaments to make the long whip and rawhide and rattan as well as goose or swan quills to join whip parts together. The whale baleen was prized for its control of the long whip thong. The whip handle was preferably made of mountain ash wood that would have been well seasoned, about

three years drying before being cut, trimmed, sanded and polished. The leather laces that formed the thong were cut, beveled and tapered then braided over the baleen whip. Vellum (cotton based) was also used to make the thong. Then the thong was joined to the stock base (handle) by goose quills and bound by linen thread. Later a knob was added to the end of the handle to facilitate the wrist rotation done when whip cracking. Amazing how this process was successfully mechanized in the 1880s.

There are many types of whips from dressage whips,



This is a Lyndonville, Vermont street scene in February 1945 with horses still in use as transportation. Submitted photos



Original Van Deusen whip making manufacturer building in Westfield today. Several other whip making buildings were located nearby on Elm and Main Streets, Westfield. (crop out top and bottom thanks)

which are usually short whips, 48 inches in length to bullwhips that can be three to 20 feet long, used for driving cattle, with many whip variations in between. Whips were used to control horse carriages such as the four in hand carriage, this was a whip long enough to direct four horses out in front of the carriage to the single Pony Express riders. Everyone had a whip including many teachers.

It is hard to believe how much farmers and ranchers depended on well behaved,

whip controlled horses back in the day. As "horseless carriages" replaced horses as the main mode of transportation, the end of whip making came about. Whips hand-crafted by artisans are now in demand. You know what that will cost you, right. So you might want to take good care of grandpa's whip. But some say whisper softly and you won't need a whip. My mom would have advised, use the whip and forget about sparing the child. Tough times call for tough love.

GARDEN

from page 4



that attach to tubing inserted into a hole in a five gallon food-safe plastic container.

Whatever containers you use, be sure to make sure they are covered to prevent rain and debris from getting inside.

When the weather is perfect, i.e. warm days and below freezing nights, sap will flow. On really good days I remember dumping the gallon jug mid-afternoon to make room for more!

With our new set-up we usually collect 3-4 gallons per tree on a good day. When my kids were little they would graph just how much each tree produced!

Don't let too many days go by before you begin to boil down your sap, though, or it will spoil.

For our evaporator we rigged up a commercial stainless steel pan that fits over a stone outdoor barbecue that came with the property. It has worked out quite well for us.

Whatever you decide to use, be wary of boiling indoors – I have heard horror stories of the sticky steam doing a great job of lifting kitchen wallpaper!

As I recall, my urban sister-in-law once boiled sap down on a gas camp stove out on her deck. We weren't talking hundreds of gallons here, but just enough to show my nephew how it's done!

I kept notes from the last time we tapped our trees. Once we had collected 21 gallons of sap to boil down. My husband started with

about 15 gallons of sap in the pan and as the water evaporated he added more – there is a careful balance between scorching and adding too much, not easily explained unless you've had the experience and monitored the candy thermometer.

Finish your syrup by no longer adding sap and waiting until the syrup is 7.1 degrees higher than boiling water. Then, syrup can be filtered and stored in sterile containers at 185 degrees or higher for proper seal.

Forty-three gallons of sap are needed to make 1 gallon of syrup. It takes about 7 hours of boiling to get that precious gallon if you use a rectangular pan 2 foot wide by 1 foot deep.

Let these statistics be

your guide so that you won't get in over your head the first time you try it. Nothing is worse than having sap go to waste because you are too darn tired to boil into the late hours of the night.

Nothing is better, however, than the first bite of maple syrup drenched blueberry pancakes the following morning!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

SECURITY

from page 4

local SSA office. But before you do, please consider what I've said above. And remember that your SS benefit is based on the highest earning 35 years over your entire lifetime and each year represents only 1/35th of your benefit amount. So, is it worth the trouble? That depends on whether your military earnings, including the "special extra credits for military service," are among

the highest over your entire lifetime. If the answer is "yes" then it is likely worth it; if "no" then perhaps not.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guid-

ance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

BACKYARD

from page 4

survive the trip from their lakes to their wintering grounds. Those that make it to the ocean encounter a new and unfamiliar world, filled with prey species that they have no experience catching and predator species like sharks and seals that they have no experience evading. Without their parents to show them the ropes, they have to quickly learn where to forage and

how to evade these new predators. And carry-over effects resulting from the environmental conditions they experienced on their lakes during development can also influence their survival – those juvenile loons that were raised on lower quality territories may start off in worse shape than others, which can reduce their chance of survival. All of these factors combine to

mean that there is a 53% chance that a loon will survive from hatch to adulthood (age three)."

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

CHESTERFIELD



The Rolling Scones will provide music at the St. Patrick’s Day special breakfast at Chesterfield Church, 404 Main Road, Chesterfield. Submitted photo

Chesterfield Church hosts special breakfast March 9

CHESTERFIELD – The First Congregational Church of Chesterfield, 404 Main Road, will have a special breakfast Sunday, March 9 from 8-10 a.m. in celebration of St. Patrick’s Day with music by The Rolling Scones.

The menu will include pancakes, French toast, eggs (any way), eggs Benedict, biscuits and gravy, corned beef hash, home fries, breakfast sandwiches and coffee, tea, and juice. Locally-made maple syrup is available along

with home-baked Orange Almond, Lemon Ginger and Cranberry Orange scones. Cost is by donation.

This is an opportunity to enjoy some great food and listen to the Rolling Scones.

CHESTER

Hamilton Memorial Library announces upcoming events

CHESTER – Hamilton Memorial Library, 195 Route 20, holds Story and Fun Time every Thursday at 11 a.m.

This is a great opportunity to foster a love of reading in young patrons while providing an opportunity to socialize with others and learn new skills through crafts and play.

The library will be holding a PG rated comedy for children entitled “The Secret Life of Pets” on Tuesday, March 4 at 4 p.m. as their next winter season feature. This one hour, 30-minute, animated film is about a pair of spoiled New York City pets, who meet up with some not so friendly local alley cats and end up in a heap of trouble. Snacks and cocoa will be served. RSVPs are helpful.

On Saturday morning, Feb. 8 between 10 a.m. and noon, the library will host a winter social. There will be a warm beverage and light refreshments. Library staff will have a puzzle on the table and a deck of cards but people may bring along their



knitting, coloring book or other activity to enjoy while chatting with friends.

The Book Club meets every third Wednesday of the month at 4:30 p.m. This month they meet on Wednesday, March 19 and will be discussing the mystery thriller, “Thin Ice,” the first book in the Alaska Wild series by Paige Shelton, and beginning the WWII historical fiction novel, “The Postmistress” by Sarah Blake. Light refreshments

will be served. Extra copies are available.

A Decluttering / Organize Your Space Talk will take place on Saturday, March 22. This is for those Feeling overwhelmed in their living space or looking to downsize. A special guest presenter will share her expertise in helping others declutter and organize their home. People may visit www.hamilton-library.org for more information or call 413-354-7808.

STOCKBRIDGE

Dr. Edward R. Shapiro, named Austin Riggs Center Medical Director/CEO

STOCKBRIDGE – The Board of Trustees of the Austen Riggs Center has appointed Edward R. Shapiro, MD, as Medical Director and Chief Executive Officer, effective Jan. 1.

Shapiro, who previously led the Center from 1991-2011, succeeds Eric M. Plakun, MD, who held the post from 2018 through 2024. Shapiro will serve as Medical Director/CEO while the Board of Trustees conducts a search for a new Medical Director/CEO.

“We selected Ed for this role based on his unique combination of expertise as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst and his deep knowledge of Riggs, its staff, and the distinct treatment that the Center provides. Ed also has considerable experience advising CEOs, corporate

directors, and other senior leaders,” said Board Chair Lisa A. Raskin, PhD.

“As the pandemic recedes, we are seeing increasing numbers of people struggling with social isolation, psychological disturbance, and despair,” Shapiro said. “Riggs’ mission to help patients better understand themselves, deepen their relationships with others, and take up authority for their lives is a unique contribution to the world of psychiatric treatment. Our patients continually educate us about the internal and external pressures they are up against. My goal is to help us to deepen that mutual learning, further develop our treatment capacity, and advance Riggs’ mission,” he added.

Shapiro has dedicated his career to understanding

and treating complex psychiatric conditions. A graduate of Yale College, Stanford University, and Harvard Medical School, he completed his psychiatry residency at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center and psychoanalytic training at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute.

Prior to coming to Riggs, Shapiro was a Clinical Associate in the Adult Psychiatry Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health and directed adolescent and family treatment and psychosocial training at McLean Hospital in Boston. He is a recognized leader in the field of psychoanalytic psychotherapy and has been instrumental in bridging clinical practice with organizational and systemic thinking. Under his leader-

ship at Riggs, he expanded the range of programs to meet the resource limitations and clinical needs of patients and families, founded the Erikson Institute for Education, Research, and Advocacy, helped to develop the International Dialogue Initiative, and expanded research efforts, solidifying the Center’s commitment to the integration of psychodynamic psychotherapy with psychosocial and medical care.

After stepping down from his leadership role, Shapiro continued to serve as a consultant, author, and teacher, influencing the fields of psychiatry and psychoanalysis both nationally and internationally. His recent book, Finding a Place to Stand, outlines a developmental understanding of

the individual’s capacity to assume authority and voice, from family role through organizations to society. His return marks a continuation of his lifelong dedication to patient-centered care and the advancement of a psychoanalytic systems approach to mental health treatment.

The Board is in the initial stages of launching the search for a new Medical Director/CEO and anticipates meeting with candidates over the first part of 2025.

The Austen Riggs Center is a vital therapeutic community, open psychiatric hospital, and institute for education, research, and advocacy in the field of mental health. Located in the Berkshire Hills of Western Massachusetts, Riggs has been serving adults since its founding in 1919. In addition to its residential program, Riggs also offers a fully online course of treatment for college students and other emerging adults in MA via its Online Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP). Riggs’ mission is to promote resilience and self-direction in those with complex psychiatric problems—to help people take charge of their lives when other treatments have not worked. In addition to the clinical mission, the Erikson Institute for Education, Research, and Advocacy of the Austen Riggs Center studies individuals in their social contexts through research, training, and education, and conducts outreach programs in the local community and beyond. For more information, people may visit www.AustenRiggs.org.

LENOX

Berkshire Lyric to host ‘Kick the Winter Blues’

LENOX – Berkshire Lyric is presenting their annual “Kick The Winter Blues” pop concerts on Saturday, March 15 and Sunday, March 16 at 3 p.m. in the auditorium at the Lenox Town Hall, 6 Walker St.

This year’s program is titled Genius on Broadway: The Music of Richard Rodgers, Stephen Sondheim and Stephen Schwartz. The two identical concerts will feature music from The Sound of Music, Godspell, Wicked, South Pacific and more. The Berkshire Lyric Chorus, the Lyric Children’s Chorus and Melodious Accord will be led by Berkshire Lyric’s Jack Brown and accompanist Joe Rose.

For several decades, Lyric’s KTWB concerts have been a chance for the chorus to let their hair down and explore widely different styles of music as a chorus: Academy Award Songs, Music from the Islands, Cowboy Songs, Irish Music, An Outer Space Odyssey etc. The Masterworks Concert on June 1 will feature the big three of the Viennese classical world: Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. This KTWB concert celebrates the big three of the American musical: Richard Rodgers, Stephen Sondheim and Stephen Schwarz.

The 80 voice Berkshire Lyric Chorus will sing lush arrangements of some of the most beautiful and well known standards by these

iconic composers. They will be joined by two choruses for young people and a small band.

The annual KTWB concerts support the year round educational efforts of Berkshire Lyric including three tuition free choruses for young people.

They will join the one hundred voice Berkshire Lyric Chorus for the Spring Masterworks Concert at Tanglewood’s Seiji Ozawa Hall, performing Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven with orchestra on June 1. Recent KTWB concerts have been standing room only. Tickets are \$25 with children admitted free for this family friendly concert. Please visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/berkshire-lyric->

EASTHAMPTON

bankESB donates \$50,000

EASTHAMPTON – bankESB and its employees recently made donations of \$50,000 to the United Way of the Franklin and Hampshire Region.

Employees pledged over \$15,000 of their own funds in the bank’s United Way workplace campaign. Combined with the bank’s dollar-for-dollar match and additional corporate contribution, the campaign total of \$50,000 will be donated to the United Way of the Franklin and Hampshire Region. The campaign lets employees donate and direct funds, advocating for causes that are most important to them.

“bankESB and our employees are proud to support the United Way in its mission to unlock the full potential of our friends, neighbors, and communities in need throughout Western Massachusetts,” said bankESB President and CEO Matthew S. Sosik.

As a long-time contributor, the bank and its employees have donated over \$740,000 to United Way organizations in Western Massachusetts in the last 13 years. The United Way is a volunteer-driven organization that serves residents through its

own programs and services as well as those of its partner agencies. The organization works to advance the common good by focusing on the building blocks for a good life, education, financial stability, health, and basic needs.

Founded in 1869 as Easthampton Savings Bank, bankESB is headquartered in Easthampton. They have \$1.9 billion in assets and offer a complete line of consumer and business deposit and lending products and services through 11 branches located throughout Western Massachusetts.

Applications due by April 1 for Art In the Orchard sculptures

EASTHAMPTON – Park Hill Orchard announces a “Call for Entries” for the eighth Biennial Art In the Orchard exhibition, which will be held from Saturday, Aug. 16 to Thanksgiving Day 2025.

Artists worldwide are invited to submit proposals for large, durable, outdoor sculptures and installations to be displayed in the scenic landscapes and fruit gardens of Park Hill Orchard located in Easthampton. The exhibition will showcase 34 remarkable works that engage and inspire audiences set amidst the orchard’s natural beauty during

the apple picking and leaf-peeping seasons.

Selected sculptors will receive a \$750 honorarium and significant exposure through extensive event promotion, media coverage and interaction with tens of thousands of attendees. Art In the Orchard is committed to fostering creativity, supporting the arts, and connecting artists with the community.

Applications are due by Tuesday, April 1. Artists can submit their proposals through the Art In the Orchard website at artintheorchard.org/apply. Since its inception in 2011 Art In the Orchard has presented 15

unique sculpture shows and has become a well-known Western Massachusetts destination, attracting art enthusiasts, families and visitors of all ages.

Whether one is an established artist or an emerging talent, Art In the Orchard offers an environment to share their vision and creativity with a vibrant and appreciative audience. Art In the Orchard is a community-supported event. Sponsorship opportunities are available to local businesses, who wish to support this unique exhibition. For more information, people may visit artintheorchard.org.

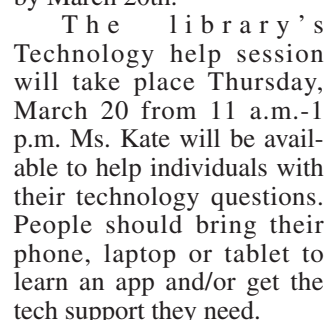
Friday Night Cafe to be held on Feb. 28

The event is free and

Friday Night Cafe receives promotional support from the Cummington Cultural District and is supported in part by grants from the Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Hinsdale-Peru, Plainfield, Williamsburg, Windsor, and Worthington Cultural Councils, local agencies which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Library announces upcoming events

The first Monthly Book Club for adults will on Tuesday, April 8, from 6-8 p.m. with the book "James" by Percival Everett. People



An abstract water-color painting with Susan will take place on Tuesday, March 11 from 6-8 p.m.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO
RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

SUMMER CAMP GUIDE



MacDuffie offers fun summer camp

Come along and join
Camp MacDuffie this sum-
mer.

- Skill development & fundamentals
- Game strategy & IQ training
- Conditioning & foot-work drills
- Competitive games & scrimmages

#MacDuffieHoops
#TrainWithCoachSteiner
#SummerBasketball
#GetBetter

Day and overnight camp for girls

Summer camp is a great way for girls to explore leadership, build skills, and develop a deep appreciation for nature. In a girl-led environment, all campers are able to challenge themselves and take healthy risks while

Camping has been a cornerstone of the Girl Scout experience for more than a century. While girls are swimming, hiking, and honing their skills on the archery range, they're also achieving valuable life skills whether at Day Camp at Lewis Perkins in South Hadley or Overnight Camp at Bonnie Brae in Otis. Girl Scouts' dedication to progression in outdoor programming means campers practice age-appropriate skills and gain experience

Camp Lewis Perkins and Camp Bonnie Brae are American Camp Association Accredited. More information and sign up here: <https://www.gscwm.org/en/members/for-girl-scouts/camp-and-outdoors/summer-camp.html>.



SUMMER CAMPS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  <p>FARM CAMP</p> |  <p>WILDERNESS CAMP</p> |  <p>CREATIVITY CAMP</p> |
|  <p>CODING CAMP</p> |  <p>COUNSELOR IN TRAINING (CIT)</p> | <p>JUNE 23 to AUGUST 1</p> |

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hartsbrook.org/summer-programs





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DAY &
OVERNIGHT

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2025 Summer Riding Sessions

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July 28 - August 1 • August 18-22

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| Week 3: July 14 - 18 | | |

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DEATH NOTICE

KELLY, ELAINE M. (YESKEWICZ)

Died Feb. 13, 2025
Private Ceremony followed by Mass of Christian Buriel
St. Mary, Mother of God Church in Lee
Interment in St. Mary's Cemetery in Lee

Country Journal

OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.
One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.
The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.
Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

OBITUARY

Elaine M. (Yeskewicz) Kelly, 78

July 18, 1946 – Feb. 13, 2025

BLANDFORD – Elaine M. (Yeskewicz) Kelly of Blandford passed away peacefully after a long illness on Feb. 13, 2025.

Born in Uxbridge on July 18, 1946, the oldest daughter of Joseph and Helen (Murphy) Yeskewicz, Elaine was educated in Uxbridge schools, graduating in 1964. Elaine spent much of her working career at Honeywell in Framingham and Benjamin Moore Paints as Logistics Manager in Milford.

Her post retirement career was spent as a partner with her husband at Kelly Green Acres Farm and raising her beloved



Tibetan Terriers at Sno Tshal Kennels and as a member of the Bay Colony Tibetan Terrier Club. Active in civic affairs, Elaine served on the Board of Selectmen in both the towns of Uxbridge and Blandford. She loved reading, crossword puzzles and the great outdoors especially the sea.

Elaine is survived by her husband, John E.; two step children: Timothy and Brigid Kelly of New York; five siblings: John and his wife, Patty of New Hampshire; Joseph and his wife, Sandy; Linda and her husband, John Gianetti and Deborah Frasier, all of

Massachusetts and Peter and his wife Cheryl of Connecticut; many nieces and nephews and a large extended family and many dear friends.

Arrangements are under the direction of Kelly Funeral Home of Lee. A private ceremony will be held at the convenience of the family, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at Saint Mary, Mother of the Church in Lee. Interment will be in St. Mary's Cemetery, Lee. Donations in her memory may be made to the charity of ones choice.

If you would like to leave a message of condolence or share pictures with the family, please visit our website at www.kellyfuneralhome.net.

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| 59 | | | | | 60 | | | | 61 | | |
| 62 | | | | | 63 | | | | 64 | | |

CLUES ACROSS

1. Greek mythological figure
5. Small amount
8. Play a role
11. River in Georgia and Alabama
13. Water in the solid state
14. Ancient Greek sophist
15. Having a strong sharp smell or taste
16. Fleece
17. Writer/actress Dunham
18. Behave in a way that belittles
20. Comedienne Gasteyer
21. Zoroastrian concept of holy fire
22. Conceits
25. Slowed down
30. Nourishment
31. Midway between east and southeast
32. Fights
33. Comedienne Tyler
38. Standing operating procedure
41. Locks
43. Old
45. Song sung to one's lover
47. Whale ship captain
49. Moved quickly on foot
50. Volcanic craters
55. Large musical instrument
56. Liquefied natural gas
57. Ethiopian town
59. Not closed
60. A team's best pitcher
61. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
62. Disfigure
63. Prefix denoting "in a"
64. Sleep
2. Soul and calypso song
3. Fruit of the service tree
4. Continent
5. Albania's capital
6. Poisonous plant
7. Argues
8. Assists
9. Town in Galilee
10. Russian leader
12. Promotional materials
14. Wings
19. Not odd
23. Expression of creativity
24. Conceptualize
25. A digital tape recording of sound
26. Peyton's little brother
27. Cost, insurance and freight (abbr.)
28. Difference in potential
29. Owner
34. I (German)
35. Chinese conception of poetry
36. The world of the dead
37. Sign language
39. Coincide
40. Religious observance
41. Confined condition (abbr.)
42. Polite interruption sound
44. Texas ballplayer
45. Type of sword
46. Abba __, Israeli politician
47. Basic unit of a chemical element
48. Native American people in California
51. Swiss river
52. Hebrew calendar month
53. Easily swindled person
54. One point south of southwest
58. Small island (British)

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

People are not mind readers, Aries. If you want others to know how you are feeling, you are going to have to give them some sort of indication this week.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

You may discover that you enjoy a great deal of support from other people right now, Taurus. This includes those who you didn't realize are on your side.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

Even though it can be challenging at certain times, try to see the positives in every situation, Gemini. This may make it easier to overlook some of their faults.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Try to stretch beyond your comfort zone and limits this week, Cancer. This likely will involve meeting new people and asking a lot of questions along the way. You will develop and grow.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, this is a great time to communicate with friends and socialize. Put aside any worries and engage in lighthearted activities that will enable you to laugh and smile.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

The more peaceful and understanding you are this week, Virgo, the more you will get along with the other people in your life. Be the diplomat instead of a warrior this time around.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, this is a good week for cleaning up your space and devising a better organizational system at work. You might be so good at cleaning up that you forget where you put things.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

Do not feel like you have to change your personality to fit certain situations this week. Just be yourself. Those who want to be around you will naturally gravitate to you.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21

A great deal of information is available if you simply request it, Sagittarius. Word your request in a way that guarantees cooperation from others.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, you are so focused on a personal project that you may completely forget about the needs of others. Make a change this week to be more receptive to others' needs.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, take a look at the bigger picture to identify what you will need for the next few months. Then discuss your ideas with others to see if what you have planned is plausible.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

Your good mood will be elevated for much of the week, Pisces. Don't fret about a little hiccup along the way. You will bounce back quickly with a smile on your face.

answers

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| 6 | 8 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 9 |
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| 8 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 1 |
| 7 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 8 |

SUDOKU

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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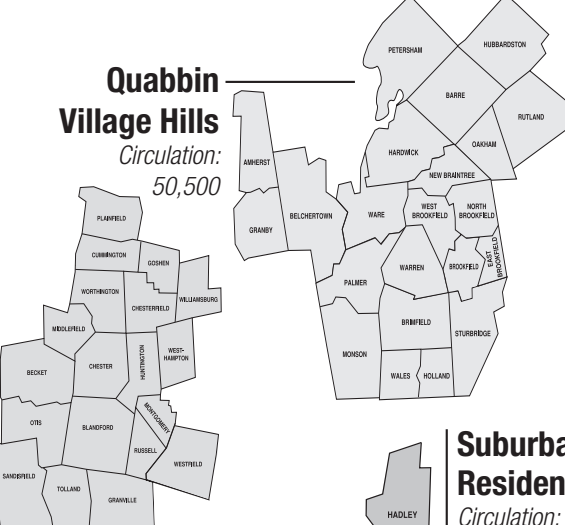
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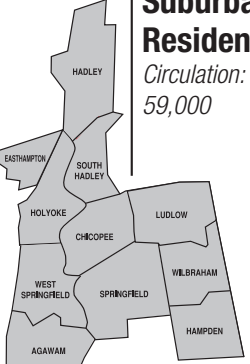
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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES

Hikers visit Black Panther Lost Ski Resort 1937–1950

By Elizabeth Massa
Guest Columnist

In the winter of 2022, myself and several of the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers directors spent months in the woods of the Knightville flood plain mapping the old Black Panther Ski Resort.

Many relics were found and using lidar mapping, GPS and old newspaper stories some of the pieces of the puzzle came together. As always, Hilltown History is best learned with feet on the ground hiking the beautiful hills and hollows.

Construction started on Jan. 15, 1937 at Burr's Maple Grove Farm on Worthington Road in Huntington by Wendell "Sid," Joseph, their father and Russell Burr. They started with two ski jumps and a twenty-acre beginners area for downhill skiing. Wendell Burr was the physical education instructor at Technical High School in Springfield and both he and his brother were skiers so naturally they hosted competitive meets with students at American

International College in Springfield including downhill ski races, cross country ski runs and slalom downhill course and ski jumping. Silver cups were given to winners.

In 1939 Burr improved the slopes of Black Panther by pulling rocks and grading ridges and improving bad curves and widening corners on the Dipsy Doodle expert trail, which was wildly popular. Lights were installed along the tows and ski slopes; busses were provided from Springfield and Westfield enroute to Huntington as it was the largest tow ski slope in the Pioneer Valley and one of the largest in the Berkshires.

In 1940 the Knightville Dam was built to control water flows on the East Branch of the Westfield River and to prevent flooding downstream and it wiped out the original practice slope and sliced off the bottom half of the expert trail. However, to make up for the change in layout the ski resort was improved by building a new 1,200foot ski tow, a new lodge and two

new trails with the help of the Army Corps.

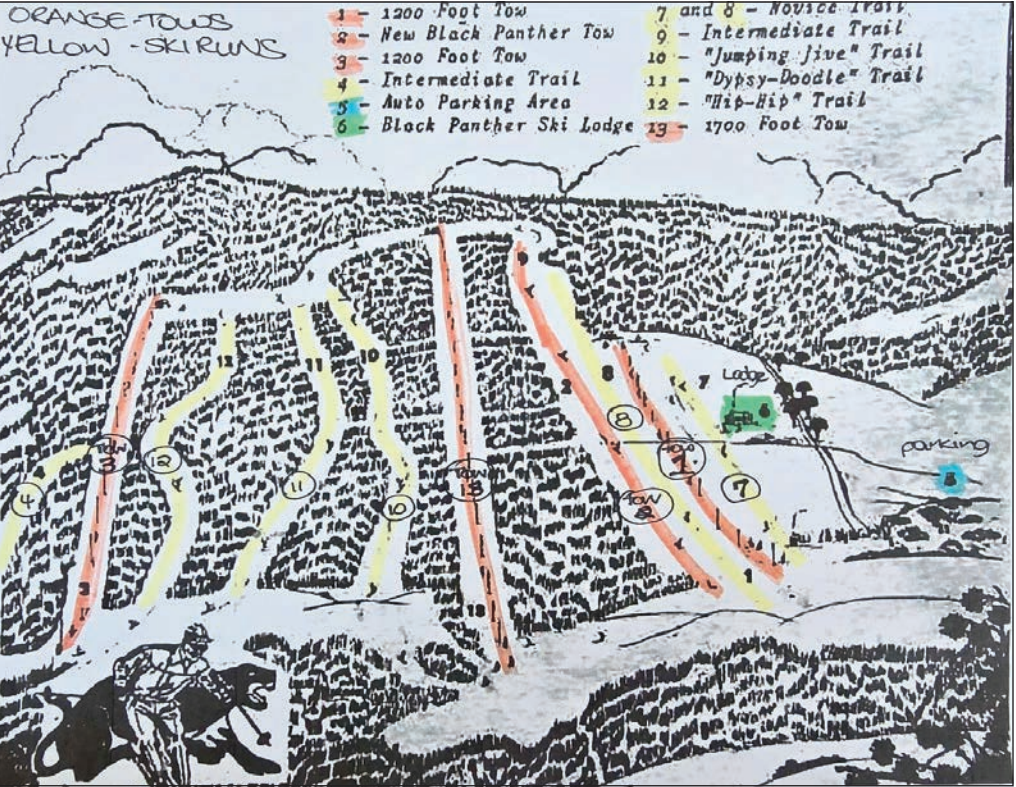
When the dam was built the state highway was moved and a new road was built swinging sharply to the right and going up the hill to connect with the upper part of Black Panther. All this was promised by the engineers including grading the area for a new and larger parking lot. Some of that happened including an informal right of way was given for access.

In 1941 competing ski resorts were Blandford Ski Club, Mt. Greylock, Brodie Mountain, Cheshire, Pittsfield State Forest, Bousquet, Lenox, Beartown and Bar S Ranch in Great Barrington. All depended on natural snow to operate.

In 1942 the Federal Government fenced off Black Panther at Knightville in the name of national security and Joseph Burr filed suit to petition a right of way to gain access to his property. Joseph Burr also lived on the property and could not access it, the fence included a padlocked gate.

Shortly after the Army closed Black Panther entirely in the name of national defense and stated that it is an important Federal facility, a flood control project first of its kind in New England. It even had hydroelectric machinery installed for future electricity production so with all of this importance it was deemed a no trespass area and the right of way access was terminated, they even posted guards.

Joseph Burr was an airplane spotter who manned the observation tower on Goss Hill across the river from his home every Friday hiking three miles up the hill to his post. On this day across the path to his home was a stout fence with a padlocked gate, he said there was no advance notice



Hilltown Hikers color coded the old ski map and hiked the ski runs and tow lifts.

of the action.

Four days later he received a letter, which stated the reservation around the dam was closed to the public and skiers would not be allowed to park there, so Black Panther was closed for the winter, if not longer. Knightville Dam was saved from a horrible fate, no doubt.

In 1946, the victorious Black Panther re-opened, World War II was over and the Burrs won the right to stay on their property. They were back in business. High School students paid just \$1 to ski all day and free group instruction was offered. Black Panther was located only 25 miles from Springfield, 40 miles from Pittsfield and 50 miles from Hartford. It was the largest tow area reached from the Pioneer Valley, open to the public with free parking and plenty of refreshments and the oldest ski development in the four counties.

Dec. 13, 1950 marked

the end as the Burr's were ready to retire and the competition was stiff with new resorts opening in the Berkshires with new technology including chair lifts. The Pioneer Valley Association posted notice that they were in charge of

finding new management to take over instead the ski resort was taken back by the woods with the tow wheels still perched high up in the trees, rope piles and remains of oil cans and tow shacks here and there if people know where to look.



Russ finds two pulley from the rope tow.



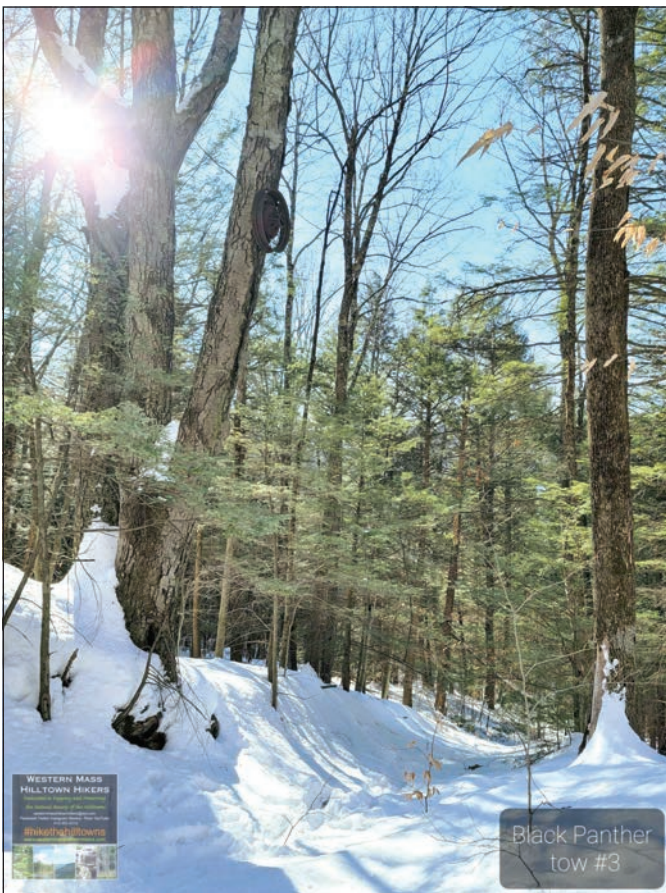
Huntington Historical Society has the original signs that once were at the ski restoration.



Karen, Russ and Liz hold original signs at the Huntington Historical Society. They spent the day with Dave Norton at the Historical Society, who showed the group many relics.



Some tow pulleys still remain in trees and buried in leaves.



A tow pulley on the lift is shown on a tree.

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