

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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CHESTER

Author talks on trolley book

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Local author Stephen V. Cormier has a new book coming out called, "Good Golly...Missed Trolley."

Known for his books on local history, this tome deals with the evolution of various trolley systems within Western Massachusetts and their direct impact on urban mass transit. Cormier's book details the rise and fall of early systems from the stagecoach in the early 1800s to the horse-drawn Omnibus (1826) and the horsecar (1865), which lost favor due to the "manure problem."

Cable cars were introduced and still run in San Francisco in 1875 and cable systems were soon used to go up to the Mt. Tom Summit House. The advent of electricity would lead to even more transit options, including trolleys.

"The book reveals, in detail, what I call the 'Hilltown Dilemma,' where the lack of trolley service within the greater area resulted in population loss and economic despair," Cormier said. "Unfortunately, the Huckleberry line did not provide the service that the hilltowns desperately needed."

One of the trolley's proposed in the Berkshire Trolley Merger Bill of 1910 would be from Lee to Huntington and be dubbed the Huckleberry Line. Designed to not only move passengers, potential benefits included transporting soapstone, hearthstone, local granite and produce from area farms. It was seen as having the potential to provide an economic boom

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CHESTERFIELD

Help sought to transform former scout camp

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

According to Jakob Palches, it took about 20 minutes to have the legal notices read aloud at the foreclosure auction of the Chesterfield Scout Camp on Oct. 3, and about three minutes to get to the winning bid of \$1.4 million.

It was not open to updating their facilities for the project's accessibility needs.

The Ashmere Project had been eyeing potential sites throughout New England during their rental years and learned last fall that the Chesterfield Scout Camp was going into foreclosure. The rest, as they say, is history.



Representatives of Ashmere Project look over plans of the former Chesterfield Scout Camp.

Thus ended a four-year search for a permanent site for "The Ashmere Project," a nonprofit group that runs summer camping retreats for adults, who have disabilities.

"It was a wild experience," Palches said. Palches has been part of this work for the past 20 years, starting at a camp on Martha's Vineyard. A group of volunteers broke off several years ago to begin a new enterprise in Western Massachusetts.

For the past four years, the group has rented space from Berkshire Lake Camps on Ashmere Lake in Hinsdale. While that location had a lot to offer,

Palches, otherwise known as the Camp Ranger, described how the group prepared for the auction. A Board of Directors had formed earlier and had already filed their 501(c)3; that letter of approval was dated the day before the auction demonstrating that sometimes things fall into place at the right time. They had done their due diligence ahead of the auction including having an inspector look through the facilities and reviewing the conservation restrictions on the property.

Property restrictions require that over half of the 200 acres have to be managed forest. Things

looked feasible on both counts and the Board voted to proceed. A combination of donations and debt got them to the purchase price.

Palches grew up on Martha's Vineyard and had first come to Western Mass to study wheelchair development and design. Under a self-developed major at UMASS, he worked with advanced students from its mechanical engineering department to design wheelchair innovations as their capstone projects. Some of those designs have since gone on to further development and possible manufacturing, he said.

There are several

Work is already underway at the former Chesterfield Scout Camp, which has been purchased by The Ashmere Project to run summer retreats for friends with disabilities and the volunteers, who support them. Submitted photos

aspects of The Ashmere Project that make it unique. Board of Directors Chair Maggie Moyers explained that a lot of people and organizations are passionate about the idea of enriching the lives of children with disabilities, especially in Massachusetts. "But few opportunities exist for adults, and very few where people are not paid," Moyers said. This model fits the organization's mission "to create a community of friends who celebrate diversity and foster inclusion, independence and equity."

"We have done a really good job creating a structure that's very different from many other non-profits," Moyers concluded.

During its renting years, the Project's annual budget was about \$100,000, which covered

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BLANDFORD

Select Board holds all board meeting

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The meeting of the Select Board on Monday, March 2 at 6 p.m. followed the meeting with the Water Department.

Instead of the regular meeting, this was an all-boards meeting with representatives from the Board of Health, Conservation, Council on Aging, Assessors, Town Clerk, Accountant, Water Department, Library and Highway attending. Budgets were reviewed and a few appeared to be over the line item, but reclassification of an incorrectly posted cost will fix any problems.

Library Director Nicole Daviau said the library is set to move into the town hall space before June 1. Chair Cara Letendre said this might be a good time to consider moving departments around, sharing space and when the library moves into its expanded quarters, a second room could open up for meetings, which is becoming a need.

The Board of Health would like to use the accountant's office and the building inspector's office could be available as well. If any department has any thoughts or suggestions, they may email the Select Board.

A fine tuning of the inclement weather policy according to Select Board member Jackie Coury is that if town hall is closed, anyone who is regularly scheduled to work on that day will be compensated.

Council on Aging Director Margit Mikuski said the COA telephone was not working; this has since been taken care of. There is a recall on the COA van for a small piece of plastic that needs to be fixed.

Highway Superintendent Ray Hultay said that the invitation for bids for the Russell Stage Road project had been posted. The highway garage is losing heat as the heating oil is gelling. The tanks need to be covered to protect them from the weather also they are directly under high tension wires and need the extra protection.

Hultay has two quotes for painting and refurbishing the tanks, both in excess of \$10,000. Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera directed him to get another quote because the cost exceeds the \$10,000 amount.

He also said there could possibly be a small

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BLANDFORD

Field Driver and Fence Viewer positions still remain open

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The elected position of Field Driver has not been filled for several years. It is a time-honored position. The first mention for the town, however, dates to 1946, when Blandford was undoubtedly more agriculturally based than it is today.

Fence Viewer is another position of the same era

and there are two positions still maintained by the town, each a three-year term.

There were no nominations for either Field Driver or Fence Viewer at the Annual Town Caucus March 2. Papers are available from Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo. She said, "If someone were truly interested in becoming involved in town politics, having their name on the ballot would provide recog-

nitiation down the road."

In recent years, the Field Driver was reduced to a single slot. This has become somewhat of an honorary position and frequently new residents have been nominated. The same for Fence Viewer.

More recently, but still several years ago, the Field Driver was contacted about a loose horse on North Blandford Road.

Massachusetts General Laws, Ch. 49, sec. 24 lists the duties of Field Driver as, "Every field driver shall take up horses, mules, asses, neat cattle, sheep, goats or swine going at large in the public way on common and unimproved land within this town and not under the care of a keeper and any other inhabitant of the town may take up such cattle or beasts so going at large on Sunday

and for taking up such beasts on said day the field driver or such other inhabitant of the town may in tort recover for each beast the same fees which the field driver is entitled to receive for taking up like beasts."

There are no longer many "beasts" and backyard egg-laying fowls don't count.

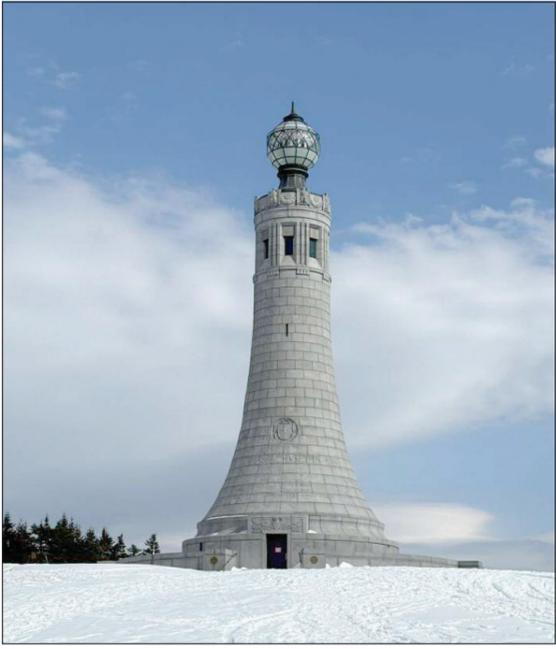
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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



The Mount Greylock Veterans War Memorial Tower, completed in 1932 and dedicated on June 30, 1933, stands at an elevation of 3,491 feet, making it the highest point in Massachusetts.



Bascom Lodge, located at the summit of Mount Greylock, was constructed between 1932 and 1938 and is a significant example of 1930s park architecture, named after John Bascom a DCR Commissioner.



Chet and Greg make their way up Bellows pipe on snowshoes.

Hikers trek to Mt. Greylock summit

Constructed in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corp, the Thunderbolt is a Class A backcountry ski trail from the summit of Mount Greylock to Greylock Glen.

Back in the day, this challenging trail hosted international downhill races. The official record of 2 min 8.6 sec was set by Norwegian Olympian, Per Klippgen in 1948, still stands.

Last winter we did this challenging snowshoe up to the summit in three feet of snow on the Gould Trail, now it's an annual event.

This year the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers took a relatively easier yet longer route following the Bellows Pipe Trail to the summit. The Bellows Pipe is used by the Thunderbolt Ski Club for getting to the top of the Thunderbolt Trail with "skins," which are covers for skis offering traction.

No hiking or snowshoeing is allowed on the Thunderbolt in winter to

keep the ski conditions prime.

At the summit, the hikers visited Bascom Lodge. It has been a retreat for hikers and travelers for nearly 80 years. The current structure was built in the 1930s to replace the original lodge, which burned down in the late 20s.

Bascom Lodge was designed in the craftsman style by Joseph McArthur Vance, an architect from Pittsfield, who designed several notable local buildings including the Colonial Theatre and the Mahaiwei Theatre.

The lodge was constructed by the CCC beginning around 1933 and was opened to the public in 1937. The most iconic structure on the Mount Greylock Scenic Byway is this 92-foot-tall stylized granite tower known as the Massachusetts Veterans War Memorial Tower.

It was dedicated in June 1933 to commemorate the courage, endurance, loyalty and self-sacrifice of all ser-

vicemen and servicewomen from the Commonwealth, wherever these qualities have been shown, in the uniform of the state or the nation.

In August 2018, it was chosen as one of the nation's official 100 World War I Centennial Memorials, a tribute marking the anniversary of the end of WWI. Because of its lighted memorial beacon, it is often mistakenly referred to as a lighthouse.

The memorial beacon is lit nightly except during bird migration in spring and fall and it can be seen from great distances. The tower, accessed by a circular staircase, provides a stunning 360-degree view across New England and eastern New York State, 60 to 90 miles away.

The Thunderbolt Ski Runners is a non-profit ski and snowboard club located in Adams. The club was established in 2008 by a group of northern Berkshire outdoor sport enthusiasts, who share a common love



Stephanie Greg and Chet are shown at the top of the Thunderbolt trail with views looking east.

for Mount Greylock and the Thunderbolt Ski Run.

Its members are united by a common mission in protecting, main-

taining and improving the integrity and legacy of the Thunderbolt Ski Run. The hike up to the summit on

Bellows Pipe has over 2,000 feet in elevation for a seven mile up and back this past Saturday.



Cybil reached the summit of Mount Greylock.



Skiers and snowboarders have a ball on the Thunderbolt.



The Greylock Glen Outdoor Center is owned by the town of Adams, recently built to house activities, events and a full kitchen. This centralized location offers parking and restrooms.



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