

Country Journal

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

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HUNTINGTON

Town Hall hours clarified

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

At their Feb. 26 meeting, the Select Board said that they’d received word from members of the public, who were having trouble speaking with various town departments.

They asked the chairs and heads of town departments if it was possible to establish evening hours for the public on the same days and times.

The answer, emphatically, was no.

Gone are the days when town officials were made up of individuals who didn’t hold jobs outside of town. The answer to the problem of informing the public as to how and when to meet with various officials and boards was to list each department’s availability on an insert that went out with the fourth quarter property tax bills.

Generally, the Huntington Town Hall is open Monday through

Thursday from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and it is closed on legal holidays. Due to limited staffing, individual offices may be closed due to things like illness or vacation, so it is recommended to call ahead. Meeting postings and additional information can be found by visiting www.huntingtonma.us. Below please find information on how to meet with town officials and boards.

Meeting with town employees

Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin’s office hours are the same hours that town hall is open to the public. The Select Board meets every other Wednesday evening at 5 p.m. From here, it gets more complicated. Her telephone number is 413-512-5200.

Town Clerk Michelle Fieldstad Booth has office hours by appointment on Monday and Wednesday

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GOSHEN

‘March for a Match’ organized for man in need of kidney

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Adam Gagne achieved the rank of Eagle Scout at age 15, the highest level of accomplishment in the Boy Scouts of America.

As an adult, he went on to lead Scout troops for 33 years and helped another dozen teenagers get to the rank of Eagle Scout. Each Eagle Scout gets a mentor pin and gives it to the non-parent who they feel helped them the most in their scouting journey. Three of Gagne’s 12 Eagle Scouts bestowed their mentor pins to him. Clearly, this was a man dedicated to children and an active, outdoor life.

Today, Adam wears a hat indoors, sits under an electric blanket and wears a heated jacket. His easy chair raises him to an almost standing position and Adam slowly leaves the room for a few minutes. When he returns, it’s clear that the short trip has taken a toll: he is breathing heavily as he settles back into his chair. Claudette



Adam Gagne and his wife Claudette at their home in Goshen. Friends have organized a March at Look Park and a GoFundMe site for Adam, who has stage 5 kidney disease.

Turley photo by Wendy Long

helps him with a wheelchair for anything beyond the house, as he is now too weak to walk very far.

Thirty years ago, Gagne was diagnosed with diabetes in his 20s and made an effort to eat better, lose weight, and become more active. Despite these efforts, he needed insulin in his 30s and by 2019 was diagnosed with kidney disease. Now in his 50s, Adam and his wife Claudette are facing the unthinkable: Stage 5 Kidney Disease.

“From what we’ve read, it’s not necessarily diabetes that’s done this to me. It could be the medications I had to take,” Gagne said. “But diabetes is a big play on kidneys.”

Kidneys serve a lot of functions in the human body, but their main job is filtering waste products, excess fluids, and toxins from the blood. When a person with kidney disease reaches Stage 5, the kidneys are no longer functioning and one needs dialysis to survive. At the time

MATCH, page 7

HUNTINGTON

Final canoe race clinic to be held on April 12

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Canoeists and kayakers took part in the opening canoe race clinic held on Sunday, April 6.

Originally scheduled for the April 5, the clinic moved to Sunday because the forecast was more favorable: less rain and higher temperatures. There, experienced racers were on hand to teach newcomers about proper clothing, safe boat setup, basic stroke techniques, how to run the rapids and what to do if you capsize.

Experienced paddlers also guided people down the river to learn more about the Classic Race: how to navigate the rapids, where to enter and exit the two portages and how to find the calmer option: a by-pass to the Hill and Dale Rapids.

The final Canoe Race Clinic will take place on Saturday, April 12 at 11 a.m. There is no advance sign up and it is free to racers, who are already registered for the race. If they haven’t signed up to race yet, there will be a \$10 fee and they must sign a waiver to participate.

Organizers suggest that paddlers not wear cotton jeans or tops if the weather is rainy; these will absorb water and have no heat retention factors. Wetsuits and drysuits with paddling gloves and booties are highly recommended. Lacking



Experienced paddlers Julie Marcoulier in the stern and her daughter, Jessie, take a run down the Westfield River in preparation for the annual canoe races.

Courtesy photo by Harry Rock

that, wool shirts, pants and socks (retain heat when wet) or synthetic clothing (dry quickly) may be substituted.

Also consider a neoprene or wool hat and wetsuit or other non-absorbent gloves. Those taking part should come dressed in paddling clothes, have a full set of dry clothes in their cars at the finish line and need to set up transportation back after coming off the river in Woronoco Village. In setting transportation up at the finish line, cars should park on the right hand side of Woronoco road as they head downhill towards the 25 mph sign. Clinic participants should meet at the Classic Race start line staging area by the MassDOT maintenance yard in Huntington, off of the

green bridge on Route 112 in downtown Huntington.

Personal floatation devices are required for all paddlers and helmets are required for all kayakers and stand up paddle boarders. Air floatation devices/bags are highly recommended for canoes and kayaks to assist with self rescue if they capsize. They should have a bailer and spare paddle in the boat and two eight foot lines attached to each end of their canoe. These lines can be coiled up and taped down to help pull their boat to shore if needed.

Organizers stress preparing ahead for the clinics and for race day. In their words, “It’s not a question of if you will flip but when you will flip.” They have posted the

following steps for what to do if this happens.

First: make sure their partner is safe before dealing with anything else. Partners should agree ahead of time which side of the river to swim to; heading toward the Route 20 side is recommended. Hang onto the paddle to use if they can retrieve their boat. Float on their back with their feet downstream to fend off the rocks.

If they can, pull the line attached to their boat with them to drag it to shore to empty the water out and resume the race. Do not try to stand until they can touch the bottom near a shore with their hands. The “paddler code” is to always help oth-

CANOE RACE, page 3

BLANDFORD

Town Administrator completes second series of classes

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera has completed the second series of classes to become the Certified Municipal Purchasing Officer for the town.

The third and final series begins April 22.

Engineering report

Engineering firm Weston Sampson relayed the information to Ferrera that there would be a cost to the town in the neighborhood of \$18 to \$20 million to refit the Town Hall for use as a fire station. To accommodate fire trucks in the gym would require considerable work and with that said, any construction would require the entire building being brought up to current code standards. Use of the Town Hall for that purpose is off the table.

Climate Change leader

Potential members or residents interested in participating in working on the town becoming a Climate Change Leader community include Pam Dirschka, Deb Lundgren and Chuck

Benson. There would have to be a bylaw change in order to permit the appointment of a committee to be responsible to lead the town forward and accomplish the requisite objectives.

According to Ferrera, the town would have to vote to adopt a specialized stretch energy code and create a plan for the required municipal decarbonization roadmap. The town already has in effect and adheres to the stretch code, but the one that must be approved is even more complicated. Ferrera said this has been an issue with several communities wanting to proceed to the Climate Change Leader status.

According to the DOER, “As a climate change leader, Massachusetts has adopted a “Specialized Stretch Energy Code” (also known as the “Specialized Code”) which builds on the updated Stretch Code and pushes new construction towards net-zero building performance through deep energy efficiency, reduced heating loads, and efficient electrification”

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HILLTOWNS

Tips for cold weather clothing for canoeing and kayaking

By Harry Rock

Congratulations on deciding to enter the Westfield Wildwater Canoe and Kayak Race.

While paddling white-water is both an exhilarating and challenging experience, you also need to be concerned with what to wear as April temperatures can still be chilly and the water quite cold.

Canoeing and kayaking are fun activities and an exciting way to enjoy the outdoors allowing people to develop new skills and provide a meaningful lifetime sport to one's lifestyle. However, because it is an outside activity that is highly impacted by the weather and the temperature of the water, paddlers need to educate themselves on how to properly dress for the variable conditions.

LL Bean always states that "there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing, which is very true." It is also widely known that the key to survival in the outdoors to staying dry. And likewise, because paddling is inherently a wet sport, the key to taking care of yourself in damp and chilly conditions is the ability to remain warm.

It is a generally well accepted fact within whitewater instructional classes that when the combined air and water temperature is less than 100 degrees, a person needs to strongly consider wearing protective clothing and gear to protect themselves from exposure and hypothermia. So let's explore all of these factors.

Heat loss

It is important to realize that the human body releases heat at a rate of approximately 25 times faster when it is wet than when it is dry. This heat loss is felt when you come out of the shower in the winter and you immediately feel quite chilly until you towel off, thus removing the source of heat loss. Contrary to this is the summer when you are hot and you begin to sweat which is the body's natural mechanism to cool itself to maintain the consistent core temperature of 98.6 degrees.

There are five means by which the body loses heat.

Evaporation - Body heat turns sweat into vapor, thus cooling the body.

Convection - Heat loss occurs by air or water moving across the skin surface and pulling heat away.

Conduction - Direct contact of the body with another object which transfers heat from the body to the object.

Radiation - Body radiates heat outward like a fire, trying to warm up the surrounding environment, either air or water.

Respiration - Air is warmed, then exhaled, resulting in a significant loss of heat.

All of the heat loss methods listed above apply in a water based environment such as paddling on a river. Paddling is a highly active and aerobic sport so there is considerable evaporation from sweat and respiration from heavy breathing. Because you are moving with the current and being exposed to wind,

there is heat loss through convection.

If you are unfortunate enough to experience an early spring swim out of your canoe or kayak, then conduction and radiation will cause heat loss from the body. You have to think of your body as a furnace that is constantly releasing heat and trying to increase the temperature of the outside environment (air and water) to equal your body temperature.

There is no way the body can produce and release enough heat to bring up the temperature of the river equal to that of the body, therefore hypothermia begins to set in which is the dangerous dropping of your core body temperature. To combat this, we must wear enough insulated clothing to hold in our body heat as well as protecting it from getting wet.

Clothing and proper insulation

What are the temperatures you will be exposed to throughout the day?

How long will you be away from dry clothes, hot beverages, food and a heat source?

What level of aerobic activity will you be engaging in for generating body heat?

Will you be in warm sunshine or chilly conditions that are overcast with rain and wind?

How high are your risk percentages for flipping your canoe based on personal experience, skills and water conditions?

When is the last time

you ate, providing fuel for the body to generate heat and energy?

Have you consumed alcohol or ingested other drugs prior to the race, thereby allowing blood vessels to dilate and release higher levels of heat during the event?

Do you have the ability to quickly vent heat from the body if you feel you are becoming overheated?

Recommendations

Wetsuits and dry suits are highly recommended when temperatures are cold and there is a strong possibility of flipping one's canoe or kayak.

At a minimum, paddling tops and bottoms should be considered for protection against the elements. Synthetic or wool based long underwear, both tops and bottoms should be considered for wearing under paddle jackets and pants.

Even if the air temperature is warm, take in consideration the water temperature if you do take an unexpected swim where you body is essentially trying to heat up all of the water around you. This will rapidly exhaust your ability to generate heat which will result in your core temperature dropping and thus becoming hypothermic. This should directly influence the type and amount of clothing you need to be wearing.

Cotton "kills" because it has absolutely no heat insulating value when it gets wet, as well as being very heavy. Think of how long it takes for cotton towels or jeans to dry. Cotton wicks water (think of

oil lamps) so that clothing will become very wet even if only the edge of it is in water. You need to be considering wearing high-tech synthetic fabrics as well as wool based products which don't wick water, that dry quickly, and maintain warmth even when wet.

Consider what to wear on your head and neck such as wool hats, skull caps and/or helmets to keep it warm as this area has the largest percentage of heat loss for the body because of how much blood travels to the brain and how close to the skin surface it is.

This makes the head the most important part of the body to insulate in an effort to keep the body warm. Likewise, in warm conditions, lightweight synthetic skull caps are recommended to help release heat from the head in order to prevent the body from overheating.

Consider wearing synthetic or neoprene paddling gloves to keep your hands warm and to prevent blisters.

Wool socks are crucial to wear for warmth under paddling booties or shoes as your feet are generally immersed in cold water in the canoe or kayak for the duration of the race, especially when exiting and entering the boat during portages. There are also waterproof socks that you can wear over your wool socks to help keep the feet warm.

Bottom line, sweat-shirts, sweatpants, tank tops and exposed skin are all bad choices when paddling in spring conditions, regardless of how warm the air might be as you need to consider the strong possibility of a canoe or kayak capsizing in very cold water. Take into consideration how long you will be in the water before getting to shore, how long it will be before you are reunited with your craft and how long it will be before you are able to change into dry clothes.

Do not drink alcohol or ingest other drug based substances that would prevent the body from functioning properly for creating and preserving heat. You also need to ensure that you have the best decision making ability possible when taking on a potentially risky activity such as paddling.

Always make sure you are wearing a Coast Guard approved Type III over the shoulder life jacket, and that you have an extra paddle and a bailer. It is a good idea to have painters (lines) attached to each end of your boat to help pull it to shore when you have wet exited your canoe or kayak. There should also be floatation in the canoe or kayak to help with rescue and to limit damage to submerged boats in the case of capsize and wet exits.

The wearing of helmets is strongly recommended for safety when paddling on a whitewater river.

Finally, have a great time. Paddling on the river is a truly fun and enjoyable experience and if approached correctly with the right equipment and clothing, it will become an outdoor activity that you and your family will want to participate in for years to come.

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For further information call Randall at (413) 436-5357 or email adventuretours@att.net or go to www.adventuretoursofwarren.com

Hilltown Hikers host group hike on April 26

MONTEREY – The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers will hold a group hike entitled "Bidwell Outside the House Hike" on Saturday, April 26 at 10 a.m.

This is approximately a 3.5 to 4 hour hike. People should park at 100 Art School Road. The hike rating is easy to moderate on a loop trail with little elevation.

Participants will join local historian, Rob Hoogs, on a hike through 18th and 19th century history following the 1760s colonial Royal Hemlock Road and visit several cellar holes and a charcoal hearth.

They will also follow the beautiful Loom Brook and cross the Boston-Albany Post Road all while listening to the history of the land they

are traveling.

The Bidwell House was built circa 1760 for the first minister of Township No. 1, the Reverend Adonijah Bidwell (1716-1784). He arrived in 1750 to be the first minister of this frontier region, which eventually became the towns of Monterey and Tyringham. The location of the house was the first town center of what was originally known as Housatonic Township No. 1.

The Bidwell House was the parsonage, and the first meeting house, located at the crossroads of the Great Trail (the Boston-Albany Post Road) and Royal Hemlock Road, was a short walk from the house. Rev. Bidwell farmed the property from 1750 to 1784. His eldest son,

Adonijah Bidwell Jr., developed the farm into a large and prosperous dairy farm, expanding the landholdings and building a compound of barns and out-buildings. His tenure was 1784-1836. The grandson, John Devotion Bidwell (1792-1867), continued to farm and also added a tanning yard. This event does not include a tour of inside the house.

The group will hike rain or shine. Registration is required. Participants should register per car load by visiting <https://westernmasshilltownhikers.ticketleap.com>. Maps and bottled water is provided. Well behaved dogs are allowed.

Event is volunteer lead. Suggested donation is \$15. More details are available by visiting www.hilltownhikers.com. People may email westernmasshilltownhikers@aol.com or call/text 413-302-0312 if they have any questions. As always be prepared for rocks, mud and roots and bring trekking poles.

People who want to hike every weekend year-round and become a Hilltown Hiker member may sign up by visiting www.HilltownHikers.com.

They may follow Hilltown Hikers on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Tees, hoodies, hats, patches and bags will be for sale by donation at the event. See all our events, maps, blog and photos at www.hilltownhikers.com. Please keep these beautiful places clean and carry in and carry out.

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HUNTINGTON

TOWN HALL

from page 1

evenings from 6-8 p.m. Walk-ins are welcome on Tuesdays from 10-3 and Wednesdays from 10 - 2. Email townclerk@huntingtonma.us or call 413-512-5209 if people need to schedule an evening appointment.

Tax Collector Sue Fopiano and Assistant Collector Anna Horkun have office hours that also mirror the town hall’s open schedule. They also provide evening hours for the public on Mondays from 5-7 p.m. They can be reached at 413-512-5208.

The Water and Sewer Department office hours are 10 a.m.-3 p.m.on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Evening hours are on Wednesdays from 5 - 8 p.m. Please call 413-512-5207 if you need additional information.

The remaining town employees are available by appointment. Call 413-512-5210 or email buildingcommissioner@huntingtonma.us to schedule with the Building Commissioner George Peterson. Please note that building permit applications are available online

at www.huntingtonma.us or by calling the office. For the police department, call 413-512-5213 to schedule an appointment. (If an emergency, dial 911). To schedule an appointment with Town Accountant Richard Buley call 413-512-5203 or email accountant@huntingtonma.us . For Treasurer Aimee Burnham, call 413-512-5202 or email treasurer@huntingtonma.us.

Boards with established meeting times

The Board of Health meets the first Monday of the month at 6 p.m. but will also hold office hours by appointment. To arrange an appointment call 413-512-5211 or email boardofhealth@huntingtonma.us .The Title V agent Charles Kaniecki may be reached by calling 413-695-0593.

The Conservation Commission (413-512-5214 or concom@huntingtonma.us) meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. Contact them to be placed on an upcoming agenda.

The Council on Aging

meets the first Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. at Stanton Hall. Office hours are by appointment (413-512-5205 or coa@huntingtonma.us). The Caregiver Support/Outreach Coordinator may be reached at 413-685-5283. COA events are listed in the quarterly community newsletter and on the town website.

Boards that meet as needed

The Board of Assessors meets as needed and can arrange appointments for office hours. They also offer an online chat Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at www.rrgsystems.com/Huntington/. Call 413-512-5201 or email assessors@huntingtonma.us.

The Planning Board (planning@huntingtonma.us) meets as needed and may be emailed for an appointment. The Zoning Board of appeals also meets as needed and may be emailed (zba@huntingtonma.us) for an appointment. Both boards also share a phone number with the Conservation Commission (413-512-5214).

COA lists upcoming May events

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Council on Aging will be hosting the Jack Kowal Swing Band on Saturday, May 3 at 2 p.m. at Stanton Hall, 26 Russell Road.

The band performs in the style of old time jazz big bands like Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington. All ages are welcome to attend this free event. This program is made possible by a grant from the Huntington Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. For more information, people may call Crystal Wright-Partyka at 413-685-5283.

The COA will be sponsoring a tag sale on Saturday, May 17 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on the Town Common and at Stanton Hall located at 26 Russell Road. Spaces are available for a suggested donation of \$10 on the Town Common

and \$15 inside Stanton Hall.

Vendors must provide their own tables, chairs and tents for rain/sun protection. No items shall be left behind. Set up will start at 8 a.m. on Saturday morning. People may call 423-512-5205 to reserve a space by Wednesday, May 14. Location of spaces will be on a first come, first serve basis the day of the sale. The sale will be held rain or shine.

CANOE RACE

from page 1

ers on the river; if hey come across someone who has capsized they are expected to offer help.

Also available at the final clinic will be race t-shirts, cowbells and hats for sale. These are cash only sales: shirts and hats are \$20 each; cowbells are \$10. Supplies are limited.

There’s still time to register for the 70th running of the Westfield River Wildwater Races. The annual races will take place on Saturday, April 19 with the Expert Race starting at Knightville Dam at 9:30 a.m. A racer meeting will be held there at 9 a.m. for everyone taking part. The Classic Race starts at the MassDOT maintenance yard under the green bridge on Route 112 at 11 a.m.

There will be a racer meeting for the classic racers at 10:30 a.m.

People can still register online at www.westfieldriver.org/races. Rates are currently \$45 per person, but will increase to \$75 on April 14.

A reminder that the Eras Dance originally scheduled for April 12 is cancelled.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

NORTHAMPTON

Fair food drive takes place April 19

NORTHAMPTON – The Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden Agricultural Society, the non- profit organization that manages the Three County Fair and fairgrounds, will be conducting their 2025 Food Drive on Saturday, April 19 outside of their main office at 54 Fair St.

The Three County Fair has collected over 2,000 pounds in food donations each year to contribute to the local food banks. They are seeking non-perishable, non-expired foods such as canned fruit, soup, tuna and vegetables, plus cereal, pasta, sauce and peanut butter for area food pantries, who have partnered with the fair including the Northampton Survival Center, the Easthampton Community Center, the Helping Hands Cupboard Food Pantry at BUCC in Belchertown and the Westhampton Food Pantry located at the Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ.

“A food drive is a reminder that kindness is powerful, generosity is contagious, and no act of giving is too small to make a difference. The Three County Fair recognizes that our food drive is more about just giving a meal – its about strengthening and nourishing our community,” said Taylor Haas, Executive Director of the Three County Fair. “This food drive is an annual community tradition, much like our fair”.

Vehicles can donate at least 10 items in exchange for a pair of complimentary tickets to the 2025 Three County Fair, Aug. 29 to Sept. 1. Donations can be dropped off at the Fair’s main office at 54 Fair St., on Saturday, April 19between the hours of 10 a.m.-1 p.m. The Fair requests that donations be compiled in disposable bags or boxes for volunteers to easily accept them from vehicles. Limit one pair of tickets per vehicle.

Zine club hosts exhibit in gallery

NORTHAMPTON – Forbes Library, 20 West St., in conjunction with its resident zine club, launches a newly cataloged and circulating zine collection.

To commemorate the occasion, Zine Club has invited several area libraries to exhibit a representative sampling of their own flourishing collections. Zines from University of Connecticut, Westfield State University, Flywheel Collective, Hampshire College, Greenfield Public Library, and the Vermont Center for Cartoon Studies will be on display in the Homer Gallery through the month of April now through April 29. An artists reception with the custodians of these collections will be held Saturday, April 12 from 2-4 p.m.

Hosmer Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

The gallery is closed Sundays and holidays. The gallery is located on the second floor. People may visit forbeslibrary.org/info/hours for any updates.

OTIS

Transfer Station closed April 20 and 21

OTIS – The Transfer Station will be closed on Sunday, April 20 for Easter and on Monday, April 21 for

Patriot’s Day. The station will open on Tuesday, April 22 from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

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GUEST COLUMN

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor



When is the best time for me to claim Social Security?

Dear Rusty:
I will be 66 ½ in June and would like to discuss when would be the best time for me to start taking my social security benefits.
I am still employed full time and don't want to be penalized because of that. Please let me know what I need to do to set up an appointment with you. I got your information from the AMAC website and I look forward to hearing from you.

Signed:
Ready to Claim

Dear Ready:
You can certainly call us on 1-888-750-2622 during normal EST business hours for a personal conversation.
But to facilitate that conversation, be aware that deciding when to claim your Social Security benefit normally depends on just a few factors, including your financial need, your health and expected longevity, and your marital status. A few things to be aware of: Born in 1958, your “Full Retirement Age” is age 66 years and 8 months. If you were born in October 1958, you will reach your FRA in June 2025, and that is the point you can get 100% of the SS benefit you’ve earned from a lifetime of working.
Once you reach your FRA in June, Social Security’s “annual earnings test” no longer applies. Thus, you can continue working after you start your SS benefits and your earnings will not negatively affect your monthly benefit amount. If you claim any earlier than your FRA, you will get a smaller benefit and also be subject to Social Security’s annual earnings test (which for you this year - your FRA year - is \$62,160, or \$5,180/month after you start your SS benefits). If you decide to claim before your FRA, your benefit will be reduced by .56% for each month early (a permanent reduction).
You can also wait beyond your FRA to claim and earn Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) at the rate of .667% per month (8% per year of delay), in order to get an even higher benefit later. If financially feasible, you can delay up to the age of 70 when your monthly benefit will reach maximum - about 27% more than it will be in June of this year.
0-If you are single and will not be eligible for a spousal benefit, then you should make your claiming decision based only on your own needs. If, however, you are married and your spouse’s FRA benefit is more than twice your FRA amount, you may be entitled to a “spousal boost” (a supplemental amount added to your own SS benefit).
Your life expectancy should be considered when deciding when to claim your SS retirement benefits. If you expect to enjoy at least “average” longevity (about 87 for a woman your current age), then you might also consider delaying your claim (if financially feasible) and that is often a prudent choice. If you don’t expect to achieve a long life, or if you need the money sooner, or if you are entitled to spousal benefits, then claiming at your FRA of 66 years and 8 months is likely your best option.
In the end, only you can decide when you should claim your Social Security, but we’re always here to answer any additional questions you may have. You can feel free to call us at any time (1-888-750-2622) during normal EST business hours to discuss your options directly with one of our certified Social Security advisors. Or you can also ask any additional questions via email, which we will be most happy to respond to promptly.
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 guidance. 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.

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

Eggplant parmesan anyone?

Just when you think you are done planning your garden you come across something else to grow. What did it for me was a trip to the Dollar Store where I found the seed packs priced at four for \$1.25. What a deal!

While I wouldn’t spend \$3.99 for a package of eggplant seeds, I could shell out approximately 32 cents, and if I end up with a half dozen fruit it would be worth the investment.

We grow eggplant at Old Sturbridge Village, but it is the ornamental type, the kind that looks seriously like pure white eggs hanging from a fuzzy gray-green plant! I plan to grow “Black Beauty,”

variety that holds promise of parmesan grinders and saucy pasta dishes.
It’s been a few years since I have grown eggplant. I stopped growing it because I never seemed to pick it at the right time – either it was too early or too late.
So, why don’t we learn together how to grow eggplant successfully and harvest it correctly?
Eggplant is a member of

the Solanaceae family, making it cousins with tomatoes and peppers. Like its relatives, eggplant seeds need to be started indoors, eight to 10 weeks prior to the last frost.
By sowing the seed yesterday, I just sneak in to the eight week mark. If the thought of growing eggplant excites you, don’t let the calendar dissuade you. Any head start is still a head start!

The seeds like a warmer germination temperature, with some experts calling for 80 degrees! When the seedlings show their first set of true leaves, transplant them

GARDEN, page 5



A Brimfield resident makes regular trips to ponds to look for waterfowl often in Warren.
On March 19 he saw five Canada geese, six mallards (three pairs), three American black ducks, six green-winged teal (three pairs) and one male, hooded merganser at a pond on New Reed Street.

The green-winged teal is the smallest dabbling duck in North America. The male has a cinnamon colored head and grayish body with a green crescent from the eye to the back of the head. The male has a vertical white strip that extends from the water line to its shoulder. The female is brown. Both sexes have green wing patches, which are visible in flight. They also have a yellowish stripe along the tail.

They have a blocky body, large head and short bill. They are between 12 and 15 inches in length. There tail is high out of the water.

Spring time is a great

time to look for green winged teal. They often land in shallow wetlands and are sometimes seen foraging in puddles of water on agricultural fields. They feed on shallow bodies of water on vegetation. They breed in dense vegetation along river deltas.

The oldest know green-winged teal was at least 20 years and three months. A female, she was banded in Oklahoma in 1941 and recovered by a hunter in Missouri in 1960.

Great blue heron
The Brimfield resident said in an email dated March 19, “I visited two ponds in Warren yesterday and saw great blue herons for the second time this spring. However this time, they were at the pond where great blue herons have had nest for a couple of years and an osprey was back. Both sightings were at the pond on South Street.” Other birds seen at the pond included one ring-billed gull, three rock

Green-winged teal
pigeon, one blue jay and six red-winged blackbirds.

Last year, there were four heron nests, however one nest fell down during the winter. There were two birds standing in one of the nests for a time before one of the birds flew to a nearby tree.

Osprey
The Brimfield resident said an osprey nest has been at this location in Warren since 2020 and nine young have successfully fledged. here. An adult just arrived in the last day or so. The bird flew to the nest carrying a branch and then moved to the bottom of the nest, tilted forward and then began scratching at the bottom of the nest. He took a picture of this osprey scratching. He said, “In a picture I took, debris can be seen flying over the edge of the nest. A behavior I have never seen before – interesting.”

BACKYARD, page 5

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@ Country Journal

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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

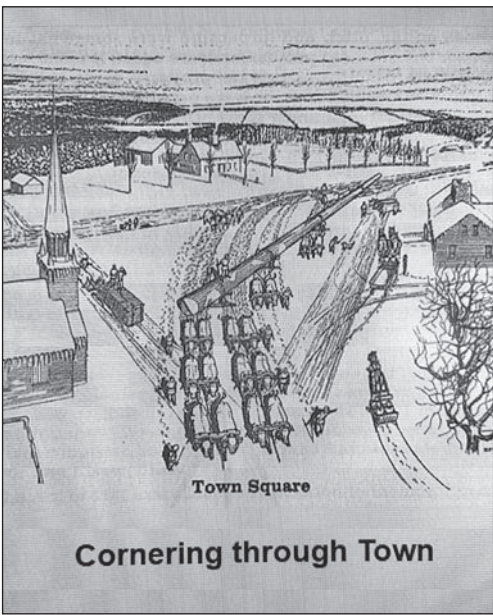
HILLTOWN HISTORY

Barking mad for a Revolution on pine trees

By Deborah Daniels
Correspondent

Patriots Day celebrates the start of the American Revolution with the Battles at Lexington and Concord, April 19, 1775. But it wasn’t just the tax on tea that lit the fuse on the Revolution. It was also the King’s broad arrow mark on the eastern white pine trees that really sparked a bonfire. These trees were called mast trees because they were the preferred tree for making ship masts. The three slashes made by a hatchet on the tree designated it as belonging to the King of England then King George III. They could not be used by any colonial American. England and most of the European countries had wiped out all their tall trees. Competition for tall timber from Norway and the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was fierce. So England, who ruled the seas with the fastest ships, was mightily pleased to have access to plenty of

tall white pine trees growing in Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Perhaps eastern white pine trees represented the most valuable commodity in America. We like our tea, but take our pine trees and that means war. King George required an inspector to assess all trees before they could be cut down. All pine trees with a diameter of 24 inches, which was later reduced to 12 inches were reserved for the King in 1691. They would be marked with the King’s broad arrow - hatchet slashes and reserved for exclusive use for the King’s Royal Navy. Remember this was a wooden age for the colonists, trees were needed to build homes, barns, wagons, furniture, fences, ships and more. Pine trees were abundant. They were used. If you were found to have used a white pine tree you were fined 100 pounds. This law was not strictly enforced at first, but as time went on and the European pines disappeared



Colonial drawing of an eastern white pine tree being pulled by 16 oxen to a mast building site, courtesy of the Chesterfield Historical Society in New Hampshire.



The soft pine needles and cone of an eastern white pine tree taken from Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association website.



The King of England's hatchet mark on Eastern white pine.



Some tall white pine trees today in the Hilltowns.

things changed. April 14, 1772 in Weare N.H. rebel colonists smeared their faces with ash and captured two British enforcement officers. They beat them with pine branches, tied them onto their horses facing backwards and drove them out of town. Nice touch that horseback riding facing backwards. This became known as the Pine Tree Riot. The colonists resented sending their best pine trees to England. It would be one year later that the Boston tea party took place, protesting the taxes on tea among other goods. Here colonists disguised themselves as native Americans to hide their identity. Colonists got around the pine tree decree by cutting down trees and obliterating the hatchet marks. Mast trees

were critical for American ship building, which was going on in almost every port city. The sea trade for molasses to rum to England and to Africa for slaves and the Caribbean Islands was on. There was much profit to be made at sea. The Eastern White Pine trees made into masts were supple. They bent in storm winds, but did not snap easily at sea. Were they worth fighting for? You betcha. The process for felling a mast tree involved selecting a tree, which typically grew to 150 to 240 feet tall, reflecting 100 years of growth. These trees shed lower branches as they grow so it was common for them to be 80 feet tall with no lower branches. Then a bed was prepared for the tree to safely land on. This entailed remov-

ing boulders and covering tree stumps over with pine branches so the tall tree landed intact when cut down. It was chopped down by two men wielding axes on opposite sides of the trunk. Then “peelers” removed the bark and tree limbs. It was then loaded onto a mast-wheel trolley that had wheels that ranged from 9 - 15 feet in diameter. It was pulled by a team of oxen on a path that was made by “swampers” whose job it was to prepare a straight smooth road to transport the mast to its destination. Cornering such a long tree was very difficult to do, to put it mildly. The preferred time to transport the pine tree was in the winter when the snow made such travel easier. It has been speculated that some 4,500 pine trees destined to become masts were shipped from New England. The war for American independence was brewing. The pine tree became a symbol of resistance to British rule. It was placed on a flag, a green pine tree on a white field with the words “An Appeal to Heaven” printed under it.

It was chosen by George Washington to be flown on six schooners in 1775, commissioned by Congress to intercept British ships and prevent them from entering Boston. It is believed the Heaven statement was a reference from John Locke’s (1632-1704, British philosopher) second treatise on government, published in 1690, referring to a right to rebel if grievances in government were significant. So the flag came to represent colonial resistance against British rule. It is the state flag of Maine today. It was the maritime flag for Massachusetts until 1971 when the Heaven statement was removed (as if we didn’t need divine intervention). The pine tree was celebrated on a U.S. stamp in 1968. A picture of a pine tree was also imprinted on colonial coins. Next time you are hiking, raise a salute to those eastern white pine trees that were critical to our ability to build ships and to help rally the colonists to fight a war for independence. Patriots Day is the third Monday in April. Thankfully the British are not coming.

GARDEN

out of the seed pack and into six packs. A grow on temperature of 72 degrees coupled with supplemental light will produce nice, stocky seedlings. Another trick to stocky seedlings is the brush method. A couple of times a day run the top of your hand gently over the seedlings. Depending on how quickly they grow, another transplanting maybe necessary, this time into a four-inch pot. Be careful not to disturb the roots too much; while tomatoes and peppers don’t seem to mind transplanting, eggplant can be stunted a bit, so tackle this task tenderly. About mid-May preheat your garden space in preparation for planting out the seedling. I lay down black

plastic for peppers and will also use it for my eggplant transplants. After the plants have been hardened off for a week or so by gradual exposure to the elements, it’s time to get them in the ground. I cut “Xs” in the plastic about 18” apart, and mix some compost into the soil under each X. The seedlings are then installed just slightly lower into the soil than where they were growing in the pot. If you can cover them with a floating row cover to help modulate the heat and keep flea beetles and Colorado potato beetles at bay, all the better. I read that northern gardeners can expect to get four to six fruit per plant. Folks with a longer growing sea-

son can sometimes gain 12 to 15! Once the fruit appear glossy, they can be picked, even before they reach their full size. If you wait until the skin is dull, the fruits are seedy and not at their prime any longer. I am excited to see if my 32 cent investment will be fruitful. Fingers crossed! 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.

BACKYARD

Worm stealing blue jay
An Oakham resident through his kitchen window an American Robin extract a worm from the ground. He said, “At that moment, a blue jay landed scaring off the robin and stealing the worm.” He watched the blue jay flit closer and closer in the shrubbery and swoop in when the next worm was extracted by

a robin. He said, “I did a quick check of the literature - nothing like this observed before. Jays, crows, ravens and magpies (Corvidae family) are renowned for their instinctual ‘intelligence’ and thievery.”
Sandhill cranes
I have not seen the sandhill cranes in my field lately. I did here then early in the morning last week

when I put my trash bin out. My neighbor said she heard them in the morning as well. 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.

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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.



A photo showing the 6 cent Appeal to Heaven postal stamp featuring an eastern white pine tree, issued in 1968 taken from the author's stamp collection.

Submitted photos

Sat. & Sun.
April 26-27
10am - 4pm

"Thisle,"
Watercolor by Pauline Thomas
Southwick, MA

Southwick Cultural Council
**24th Annual
Fine Art Exhibition
Show & Sale**

Featuring more than 40 artists from Western MA and Northern CT. Oils, acrylics, watercolors, wood carvings, sculpture, photography, mixed media, and more. Live art demonstrations. Book authors, Joe Adamavicia and Gail Olmsted, from Book Club on the Go, will showcase and sign their books. Southwick Historical Society exhibit and photo essay. Musical performances each day.

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BLANDFORD

Golden Picklers team enjoy pickle ball

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – Pat Daviau may not have actually recruited all the players, but she and Robin Stevens began playing in the gym at town hall.

Pat became the “instructor” for the ladies, who have subsequently joined in the game since. The most recent contenders to participate are Terri Mitas-Stetz and Jodie Genovese of Russell.

Other ladies of a certain age, who play regularly are Kris Smith, Mary Mangini. They enjoy the company and the game. “We just have a lot of fun,” said Kris, who has been competing since last August.

The game takes a certain amount of concentration to remember the score, who serves and from which side on the doubles court. “We get very confused sometimes with the score,” said Kris.

Terri confessed that she practices at home with her dog fetching the ball as she paddles against the side of the horse barn.

Sometimes during the course of play, colorful language may be heard. “It really helps with the game,” said Mary. Only missing from last Thursday’s regular game was Pat, who was in Florida.

The ladies decided to be called the Golden Picklers and plan to have T-shirts commissioned with their logo, yet to be designed.

There is a national Pickle Ball organization for this sport that originated in Washington State in 1965 as a children’s backyard game. It’s taken 60 years to achieve its current popularity. Will it ever become an Olympic sport? Who knows?



The Golden Picklers with paddle-ready are from left, Kris Smith, Robin Stevens, Terri Mitas-Stetz, Mary Mangini and Jodie Genovese.

Turley photos by Mary Kronholm

The court resembles a badminton court, 44 feet by 20 feet and the service areas are ten feet, two on a side, and 15 feet deep.

Kris explained there is an area on both sides of the net called the Kitchen, which is seven feet deep adjacent the net in which there is no volleying allowed.

The court is the same whether singles or doubles play – that is two players in opposition or two teams of two in opposition. The rules can be exhausting.

The same court is used for both singles and doubles play. The net height is 36 inches at the sidelines and 34 inches in the middle.

The ball is a perforated plastic ball, similar to a nerf ball, but, “it is not a nerf ball,” said Robin.

There is a special sequence for serving that almost requires a diagram to follow. The server has to swing at the ball in an upward arc and cannot be hit from a level above the waistline; the ball has to go diagonally across the court.

The first serve is made

from the right-hand side, if a point is scored, the server moves to the left-hand side to serve again. The regulations for serving continue until points are no longer scored by the server or a fault is committed. Then the serve goes to the other team and the routine continues. But, at the start of a new game, one player serves until there’s a fault, then service goes to the opponent.

When the ball is served, the receiving side must let the ball bounce once and on return, the serving side has to let the ball bounce once as well.

Then there’s scoring – only the team serving scores points. Games usually play to 11 points, winning by two. The point, according to Kris, “goes to the serving side if the opponent fails to get it (the ball) over the net.”

Confusing, certainly, but the perseverance and dedication make it all fun and a worthwhile effort.

The Recreation Committee has provided some of the equipment for the Pickle-ballers.

FIN COM FINALIZING BY 26 BUDGET



Thursday, April 3, the Finance Committee met to attempt to finalize the budget for fiscal year 2026. Shown are Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera, from left, Finance Committee Chair Jackie Coury, members Janet Lombardo and Deb Brodie. Kevin Green was not at the meeting.

Turley photo by Mary Kronholm

Library announces events

BLANDFORD – Porter Memorial Library Director Nicole Daviau announces events for April.

All month long everyone can pop in to the library to see the progress of moths and butterflies as they work through their metamorphoses. Every Tuesday from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Book Squirms meets for stories, songs and sensory play for preschoolers and their siblings. Every Wednesday: from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Book Squirms also meets for stories, songs and sensory play for preschoolers and their siblings.

CommuniTea Reads will take place on Saturday, April 19 at 11 a.m. The adult book club meets for a lively discussion about “The Safekeep,” a novel by Yael van der Wouden. They start at 11 a.m. and usually have yummy refreshments.

School vacation week

include: Monday, April 21 all day Lego play with the library Legos; Thursday, April 24 Mars Rover STEM tween program from 3-4 p.m. to build a mini Mars Rover; Friday, April 25 from 4-5 p.m. Pokemon Club will trade cards, play trivia and games on Saturday, April 26 there will be an all day Venus fly trap craft and story.

The Library Building Committee meeting is Thursday, April 24 at 6:30 p.m. This is a public meeting to discuss and vote on items for the planned library expansion. All town residents are welcome to listen in and hear about the latest progress. The library is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2-6 p.m.; Wednesday from 10 a.m. -6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. -2 p.m. For more information, people may call the library at 413-848-2853.

COA lists menu

BLANDFORD – Council on Aging board member and food preparation expert Joann Martin announced the menus for the Friday, April 11 luncheon at 12:30 p.m. and the Friday, April 25 breakfast at 10 a.m.

Lunch will be baked ham with sweet gravy, scalloped potatoes and tossed salad accompanied with caramelized onion rolls. Beverages will be available. After lunch, Highland Valley’s Registered Dietitian Brandon Walton will discuss food safety followed by a game of Nutrition Bingo.

Breakfast delights planned are eggs Florentine, crispy bacon, breakfast potatoes and blueberry parfait. Breakfast drinks will be available. There is no charge for either meal, but a \$5 donation is welcome to help sustain the program. People may call the COA telephone at Town Hall at 413-848-4279, extension 400 and leave name and number of people attending.

from page 1

CLASSES

Adoption of the Specialized Stretch Energy Code is only one of six requirements needed in order for the town to become a Climate Change Leader. The requirements include: be a Green

Community in good standing; have a local body (sustainability committee, energy committee, etc.) that advises the municipality on clean energy/climate initiatives; commit to eliminate on-site fossil

fuel use by 2050 (municipal buildings/operations); create a municipal decarbonization roadmap; adopt a Zero-Emission Vehicle first policy and adopt the Specialized Opt-In building code.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Legends of Gateway Sports: Steve Magargal – Class of 75

By David Pollard

Welcome to our first Legends of Gateway Sports column, featuring some of the greatest athletes that ever wore the Blue and Gold.

Many thanks to the fine folks here at the Country Journal for seeing the value in such a series. We hope you like this feature and welcome suggestions for other Great Gator athletes for future releases.

In our first release, we are here to honor one of our greatest athletes, Steve Magargal, who played four different sports while at Gateway Regional High School. Steve excelled at baseball, basketball and soccer, but it was his mastery of golf that made him a legend of Gateway sports.

Born and raised in Worthington into a golfing family and community, Steve became introduced to golf at the age of 7 at the Worthington Golf Club. In a time before golf carts were widespread, Steve earned 30 cents per round caddying for the local adult players. After school each day, he would run over to the club from Conwell Elementary just in time for the ladies afternoon outing, as the women in those days were only allowed to go out after 3 p.m., as crazy as that sounds. Steve cut his teeth and learned the etiquette so essential to golf, while carrying up to three bags at a time for his women players.

In 1969, then 12 years



Steve Magargal

old, Steve reported for caddy duty one day and was assigned to a golfer he did not know, but with whom

he would form a lifelong friendship and golfing bond. Steve knew this player was an important person, but being a friendly unassuming youngster, was immediately liked by this historic figure, who as it turned out was

George Shultz, Secretary of the Treasury under Nixon and then Secretary of State under Reagan and the diplomat on duty as the Berlin wall came down.

Shultz and Steve became fast friends and every time George was in town he checked in on Steve and, over the years, played with Steve on numerous occasions, road trips and in tournaments. Shultz’s love of Worthington Golf Club is legendary, refusing to play any other courses in the area, as he stated to Steve, “Why would we play anywhere else, when we can play Worthington.”

On one such memorable occasion, one of the players on a team in which Shultz was playing in a highly competitive tournament, was unable to play. So, young Steve was drafted and went off and shot a smooth 65, helping the Shultz team win the tournament. That outing helped cement the bond between Shultz and Steve that would last the next 40 plus years, until Shultz’s passing in 2021.

Steve entered seventh grade at Gateway Regional Middle School and immediately began playing every



Gateway sports legend Steve Magargal is shown in this photo, far right in second row.

Submitted photos

sport possible. Having never played soccer before, Steve made the JV team in seventh grade and after two seasons got called up to varsity as a freshman to fill in for an injured player and never looked back. Steve made Varsity basketball and baseball as a sophomore. This young man was not going to be contained and Steve excelled at every sport he tried.

Steve faced a major question after his sophomore year. Baseball and golf were both spring sports and Steve had chosen baseball up to that point. His golf game was getting so good that, as he thought ahead to his junior year, he requested to be allowed play golf and baseball concurrently, as he could pitch on his off days from golf. After some consideration, the Athletics department decided that Steve would need to make a choice, so Steve stepped down from Gateway Baseball to focus on his exploding golf game.

As a result, Steve led the Gateway golf team to back-to-back undefeated seasons over his junior and

senior seasons and in the process, won the Individual All Western Mass Tournament in 1975.

In that same period of time, Steve was recruited by the great Toski golf teaching family, who took Steve under their wing and prepared him for the next level of play, which Steve embraced and charged into undeterred and ready to prove he was ready.

Under the Toski’s tutelage, Steve qualified for the U.S. Junior National Championship. In that event, Steve lost a tough match to Joey Sindelar, who went on to a great PGA career, including seven wins on tour. Steve’s performance in the National U.S. Junior event got him on the radar of college recruiters.

After graduating from Gateway in 1975, Steve attended and played golf for Post College in Waterbury, Connecticut. His success there continued and resulted in a New England Junior College Golf Championship.

From there, Steve was recruited under scholarship, to attend and play for Rollins College in Florida. This



Steve Margargal is shown on the basketball court.

was the big-time and Steve was a long way from home. With 36 other kids vying for a spot, Steve had to move his game to a higher level. And he did. Not only did he make the Rollins team, Steve excelled, winning the Coastal Carolina Tournament in his senior year.

After graduating from Rollins, Steve brought his game back to western Massachusetts and took the region by storm. Lighting up the area courses, winning countless championships and setting the course record at Berkshire Hills with a 62.

Over the years, Steve made the most of his golf game including the opportunity to play with and meet great PGA players like the aforementioned Sindelar, as well as Bob Tway and the legendary three-time major tournament champion Payne Stewart, who Steve described as one of the great gentlemen in the game.

After a twenty-year career owning and running the legendary Liston’s Bar and Grill, Steve and his wife Diane still live in Worthington and are active in the western Mass Golf



For Steve Magargal, it was golf, which made him a sports legend. He also played basketball, baseball and soccer for Gateway.

Community, playing his childhood course, as well as travelling to so many other courses in the region where he is considered a legend of western Mass Golf.

Not bad for a kid from Gateway Regional High School, our first featured Legend of Gateway Sports.

Well done, Steve.

Recommendations for other great Gateway Athletes that deserve recognition may be emailed to dpollard1102@gmail.com.

BECKET

Art Center hosts granite sculptor Allen Williams

BECKET – As part of its speaker series, the Becket Arts Center, 7 Brooker Hill Road, will present a talk and slide presentation by granite sculptor, Allen Williams, owner of the Chester Granite Quarry, on Thursday, April 10 from 5-6:30 p.m.

A second-generation stone carver, Williams learned his craft from his father and the Finnish carvers of the Old Chester Granite Works. After studying sculpture and design, Williams began doing stone restoration

work on his own and took commissions for stone carving for many public projects. His work can be seen at Harvard, Princeton, and the Rochester School of Music among other locales. The slides will cover a selection of art pieces he has carved for other artists as well as his own granite sculptures.

The event is free for Becket Art Center members and there is a \$5 fee for non-members. For more information, people may visit becketartscenter.org.

School art exhibition to be held at BAC

BECKET – Students in the Becket Washington school will present their art at the the Becket Arts Center, 7 Brooker Hill Road, on Friday, April 11 from 3-5 p.m.

This is free and open to the public. The artwork will be on display April 11 to April 18.

EASTHAMPTON

bankESB two host free shred days

EASTHAMPTON – bankESB invites customers and members of the community to two free shred days at local offices. Events will be held from 9-11 a.m. or until the truck is full on Saturday, May 17 at the Agawam office, 770 Main St., Agawam and on Saturday, May 31 at the Easthampton office, 241

Northampton St.

The first shred day is in partnership with the Parish Cupboard, who will be collecting food donations. There will be two trucks at the May 31 shred day. No appointment is necessary.

Local residents can reduce their risk of identity theft by bringing old mail, receipts, statements or bills,

cancelled checks, pay stubs, medical records or any other unwanted paper documents containing personal or confidential information and shredding them safely and securely for free. A professional document destruction company will be on site in the bank’s parking lot and can accept up to two boxes of documents per person.

CUMMINGTON

Friday Night Cafe returns April 11

CUMMINGTON – The next cafe is Friday, April 11 from 7-9 p.m. at the Village Church, located in downtown Cummington in the heart of the Cummington Cultural District.

Dave Christopolis will be leading. He says, ‘This year’s show is The Resistance. A five piece syndicate playing improvisational original songs for the weary.’ Instrumentation includes; words, guitar, upright and electric bass,

violin, drum kit, saxophone, clarinet and flute. “It will be intense.”

Christopolis is always creative, never boring. The event is free, donations are appreciated. Snacks are provided, bring your own drinks.

The show will take place in the intimate Vestry space. Masks are welcome, and encouraged. Once again brought to you by the friendly folks at the Village Church who believe music

can be a powerful force for building community.

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.

CHESTER

CHILDREN LOVE STORY AND FUN TIME



Children enjoy story and fun time on Thursday, April 3 at Hamilton Memorial Library in Chester. They listened to a story, made a carrot craft then participated in some gross motor strengthening fun.

Submitted photo

Chester has new recycling shed

Chester – The Chester Board of Health in cooperation with the Chester Fire Department installed a used clothing recycling shed, located at 300 Route 20, courtesy of St. Pauly Textile and it’s open to all.

Chester receives rebate cash for every pound of clothing brought there and it goes to those in need.

Only clothing goes in the shed and it must be bagged.

The Chester Board of Health proudly offers this service for the community and the neighbors at the Chester Fire Department.

Littleville Fair announces events

CHESTER – Every year the Littleville Fair utilize funding from Massachusetts Cultural Council for fair entertainment like music, magic shows, face painting, reptile displays and petting zoos. The 2024 program was funded in part by grants from the Montgomery, Russell, Middlefield, Chester and Worthington Cultural Councils, local agencies, which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. Littleville Fair would like to

thank these towns for providing their MCC funding to help make the Fairs a wonderful summer time activity for all to enjoy and in creating lasting memories.

Littleville Fair volunteers have been meeting monthly since the 2024 fair ended, arranging music venues and acts to keep children and adults happy for the 2025 Fair scheduled for Aug. 1, 2 and 3.

On Sunday, April 13 at 1 p.m. the Littleville Fair, the Chester Hill Association, and the Chester Recreation Committee Easter egg hunt at the Littleville Fairgrounds, 15 Kinnebrook Road. The egg hunt has four age categories: 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-8 years and 9 years and over.

On Sunday, April 27 from 7 a.m.-1 p.m the Annual Pancake Breakfast and the Chester Hill Association Springfest will take place. They will have craft vendors and raffles helping to support the fair.

CHESTERFIELD

CCC to hold breakfast

CHESTERFIELD – The word is out, the best breakfast in the Hilltowns can be found at the Chesterfield Congregational Church, 404 Main St., which will be having its monthly breakfast on Sunday, April 13 from 8-10 a.m. The cost is a voluntary donation.

The menu features pancakes with or without blue-

berries, French toast with pure Chesterfield maple syrup, free range, organic, farm-fresh eggs any style including eggs Benedict, breakfast sandwiches, sausage, home fries, and excellent homemade corned beef hash, juice, tea, and coffee. In addition, the special item for this breakfast will be gingered melon balls.

Library to hold Arbor Day event on April 26

CHESTERFIELD – The Chesterfield Library, 408 Main Road., will hold an Arbor Day celebration on Saturday, April 26 from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Local arborist from Hilltown Tree and Garden will be replanting a pin oak

to replace a maple that was removed by the town. All are welcome to be part of this environmental responsibility and stewardship event. The location was incorrectly listed as the Hamilton Memorial Library in last week’s paper.

Chesterfield Library hosts pansy planting

CHESTERFIELD – The Chesterfield Library, 408 Main Road, will hold an annual pansy planting on Saturday, May 3 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

People may choose a flower, pot it, decorate the pot and take it with them for a gift for May Day or Mothers’s Day. All supplies are provided.

MATCH

of this interview, Gagne had started receiving dialysis the previous week and had completed five treatments. Adam has noticed that he’s not having as much leg cramping and has been able to sleep through the night for the past two nights, which is a welcome change. Claudette, who serves as Adam’s care partner, has already seen a difference in him. “He’s so much more alert,” she said. “Before, he would speak in a whisper. I can hear his voice again, so that’s nice.”

Nonetheless, the journey is not without its ups and downs. In preparation for dialysis, they tried a fistula in the right arm, meant to expand his own veins to bring the dialysis solution to an artery. This was unsuccessful and the veins collapsed. They will go to a vascular center next week to try again-this time with the left arm. The next option was a graft-putting a stent into the vein to hold it open and stretch it over 4-6 weeks, but by then Adam’s numbers required him to begin dialysis right away.

He had a port put into his neck and started going in for dialysis four days a week.

As they work to find a kidney donor, they continue to look ahead to changes that will come while they wait. Once the center confirms the correct baseline numbers for his dialysis treatment, Adam and Claudette will be trained to use a dialysis machine that will be brought to their own home. Data will be shared with the dialysis center, which will remotely monitor Adam’s readings and contact them if something needs to be adjusted. This will greatly reduce the travel back and forth to the center.

Gagne’s best hope for recovery lies in a kidney donation and his outcomes improve with a live kidney donor. Humans only require one of their two kidneys. According to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, there were about 6,900 living kidney donors in 2023, although that number fluctuates year to year and was nearly 7,400 in 2019.

‘March for a Match’ on May 18

Up until 2024, Adam worked two jobs-full time in the shipping warehouse for Webs Yarn Store and a side hustle at Stop & Shop. Today, Adam is home and Claudette works two jobs, although they are part-time to free her up to be Adam’s care partner. She is the assistant tax collector and treasurer for the towns of Worthington and Windsor and says the towns have been very understanding and given her some flexibility in her hours to help Adam. If things aren’t going well and Claudette needs to be at work, his mother is called in as backup.

With part-time hours comes a part-time income, just as expenses, such as an urgent need to maintain health insurance, are rising. Adam reached out to one of his former Eagle Scouts, David Jeffway, for help making a video and setting up a GoFundMe site. In true Eagle Scout fashion, Jeffway went one better and, with Gagne’s close friends, Sue

and Eric DiBrindisi, organized “Adam’s March for a Match” at Look Park on Sunday, May 18. The goal of the march is not only to raise \$15,000 in funds, but also to find Adam a living kidney donor.

Registration will begin at 10 a.m. at the Dow Pavillion. The registration fee is \$20 per person and food and music will be provided. Free t-shirts will be given to the first 75 to register. Speakers will talk at 10:45 a.m. and share information about becoming a living donor and how to donate a kidney or part of a liver. The walk begins at 11 a.m. and food will be available at noon. Closing remarks are scheduled for 2 p.m.

Those who are unable to attend are encouraged to visit Adam’s GoFundMe page and share this information with others. “The more eyes we reach, the closer we get to a match,” a flyer promoting the March states.

In addition to raising funds, the ultimate goal is to secure a new kidney

for Adam. According to Claudette, potential donors don’t need to worry about things like blood type or tissue compatibility. The Gagne’s are working with a Paired Kidney Donation model. If a kidney donor steps forward for Adam, but they are not medically compatible for him, as a pair they will be matched with other compatible donors and recipients. “Either way, Adam moves up the list,” Claudette said.

Information will be a big part of the March. For example, potential donors primarily need to be healthy and are checked very thoroughly to ensure that it is safe for them. Adam says that another big organ need is for liver donation: a portion of a living donor’s liver is used and ultimately grows back in the donor. The National Kidney Registry provides vouchers to reimburse donors for their expenses related to travel, lodging, lost wages and dependent care. They are also given legal support and reimbursed if any unforeseen medical complications arise.

For now, the Gagnes are looking ahead to things like the convenience of managing dialysis at home. Even to the possibility of even taking a short trip and staying in a hotel that is near another dialysis center.

Adam prefers not to think too much about what life will be like after receiving a new kidney, other than to say he’d like to be able to do the simple things he used to. Their son Joseph will turn 13 at the end of April and his parents say he is a big help. “We try very hard to not let it affect his childhood,” Claudette said before talking about his upcoming bowling birthday party with friends or having friends over at the house. But it is not the same as earlier years when the family enjoyed traveling with their camper.

Claudette dares to look ahead to life after Stage 5 kidney disease. “The biggest thing I look forward to is seeing him being active and happy doing the things we used to do as a family,” she said. “Camping was a big one.”

from page 1

PUBLIC NOTICES

**Town of Huntington
Request for Proposals
Assessment Services for
Town of Huntington**

The Town of Huntington seeks sealed proposals from qualified firms for providing assessment services for FY2026-FY2028. The complete request for proposals package is available by emailing bids@huntingtonma.us or at the Town Administrator Office located at Huntington Town Hall, 24 Russell Road in Huntington by appointment during regular business hours. Sealed proposals must be received by **April 28, 2025 by 2:00 p.m.** by mail to Town Administrator, Town of Huntington, PO Box 430, Huntington, MA 01050; or delivered to the Town Administrator office. The Town reserves the right to reject any or all bids if it is deemed in the best interest of the Town. The Town of Huntington Selectboard will be the contracting authority.

Jennifer Pelouquin
Town Administrator

04/10/2025

**Town of Blandford
Massachusetts
Public Hearing**

The Blandford Select Board will hold a public hearing on **Monday, April 28, 2025, at Town Hall located at 1 Russell Stage Road at 6:00 p.m.** on the pole petition from NSTAR ELECTRIC COMPANY DBA EVERSOURCE ENERGY, upon the plans marked 19744961. The petitioners seek permission to relocate and/or install poles, wires, cales and fixtures, including the necessary anchors, and other such sustaining and protecting fixtures to bring electrical service to North Street.

Members of the public who wish to participate in the meeting may do so in person or remotely by visiting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82168083073>; Meeting ID: 821 6808 3073 or phone dial in: 1-929-205-6099, dial in meeting ID when prompted.

04/10/2025

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.

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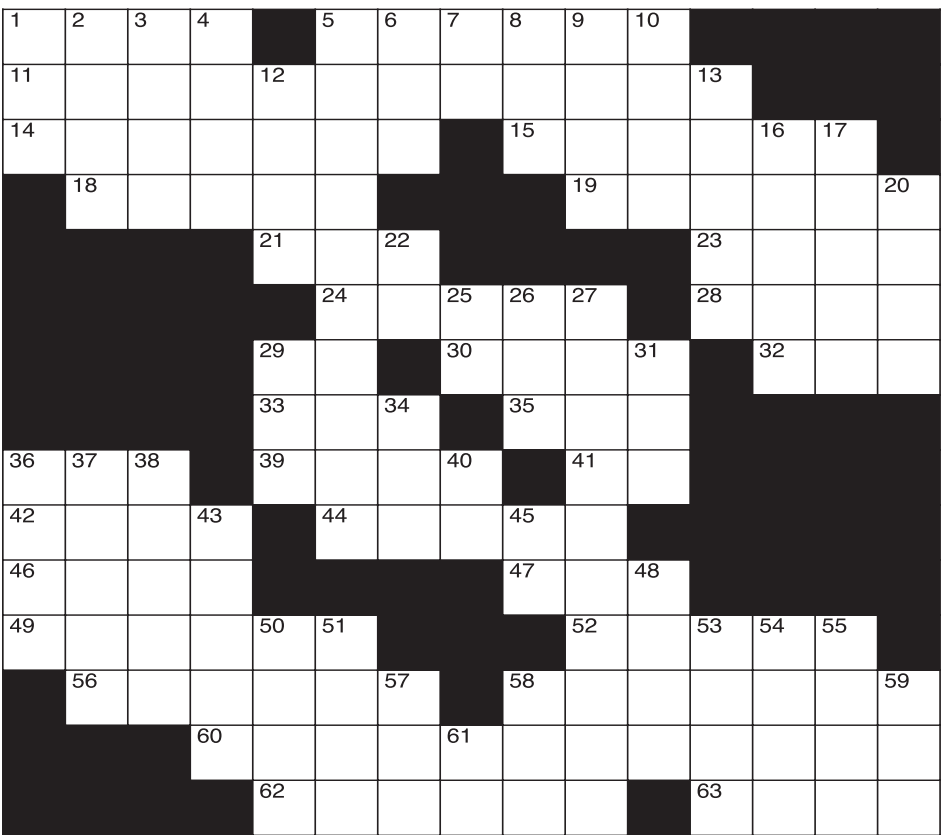
WORTHINGTON COA to hold grab and go lunch

WORTHINGTON – On Thursday, April 17 from noon-1 p.m. the Worthington Council on Aging will hold a grab and go lunch at Town Hall.

The menu will be a choice of chive and cheese quiche or pasta primavera with garlic bread, broccoli and chilled peaches. To reserve a meal, people may call or text 413-238-1999 by Sunday, April 13 and give their name, number of meals and the name of the person also receiving the meal and their meal choice.

New enrollee forms can be downloaded here and are also available at the Town Hall bulletin board and the COA bulletin board at Corners Grocery. People can also fill one out when they come to pick up. They should bring a bag with them to carry their meals to their car.

The meals are sponsored by the Worthington Council on Aging and Highland Valley Elder Services. It people have any questions they may call Phyllis Dassatti at 413-238-5962 at the Worthington COA.



CLUES ACROSS

- Garden tool
- A way to preserve
- Gratitude
- Domestic sheep
- Simpler
- Cavities containing liquid
- Large fish-eating bird
- Ocular protection index
- Phil __, former CIA
- Icelandic poems
- Pop
- Device
- Actor Rudd
- A pituitary hormone
- Focus on an object
- Corpuscle count (abbr.)
- Young women's association

- Not shallow
- Doctor
- Furniture
- Hindu male religious teacher
- Highly spiced stew
- A way to communicate
- Almost last
- Astronomer Carl
- Small horses
- A slender tower with balconies
- A disrespectful quality
- Fully shaded inner regions
- Short convulsive intake of breath

CLUES DOWN

- Popular Sunday dinner option
- Oil cartel
- Agile

- Greek goddess of discord
- Genetically distinct variety
- Indicates badly
- Popular Mr. T character
- Consumed
- Chinese dynasty
- NFL great Randy
- Within
- Palm trees
- Fungal disease
- Tall, slender-leaved plants
- Affirmative! (slang)
- A passport is one
- Two outs in baseball (abbr.)
- Swiss river
- Deferential
- Where a bachelor lives
- Portable computer screen material

- A crying noise of a bird
- Sticky, amorphous substance
- Starchy dish of dried tubers
- Type of acid
- Partner to "Ma"
- 16 ounces
- The Bay State
- A well-defined track or path
- Substitution
- Defined period
- Group of toughs
- Region
- Famed Scottish Loch
- Blood relation
- Not around
- Recipe measurement
- Father to Junior

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

This week you are going to take action on a project that has been on your mind for awhile, Aries. Trust your instincts, but make sure you are not moving too fast.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

You need to take care of your body and mind. Now is as good a time as any to begin this pursuit. Even small adjustments can lead to long-term health benefits.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, you are able to express your thoughts with clarity and charm, which is why personal relationships often come easy to you. This week you may use this superpower to make friends.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, focus on rest and relaxation in the days ahead. You have been putting in a lot of work lately and now is a time to focus on your inner self and recharge.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

This week brings an opportunity for intellectual pursuits, Taurus. You might think to enroll in a higher education class or a take a course on a specific hobby that has been on your mind.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, this is your week to look into matters of self-expression and creativity. Pour your energy into anything that gets you excited. Your enthusiasm may draw others in as well.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

You may soon find yourself reevaluating how you spend your money or what you value most in life. This is a good time to check financial goals and adjust them.

AQUARIUS

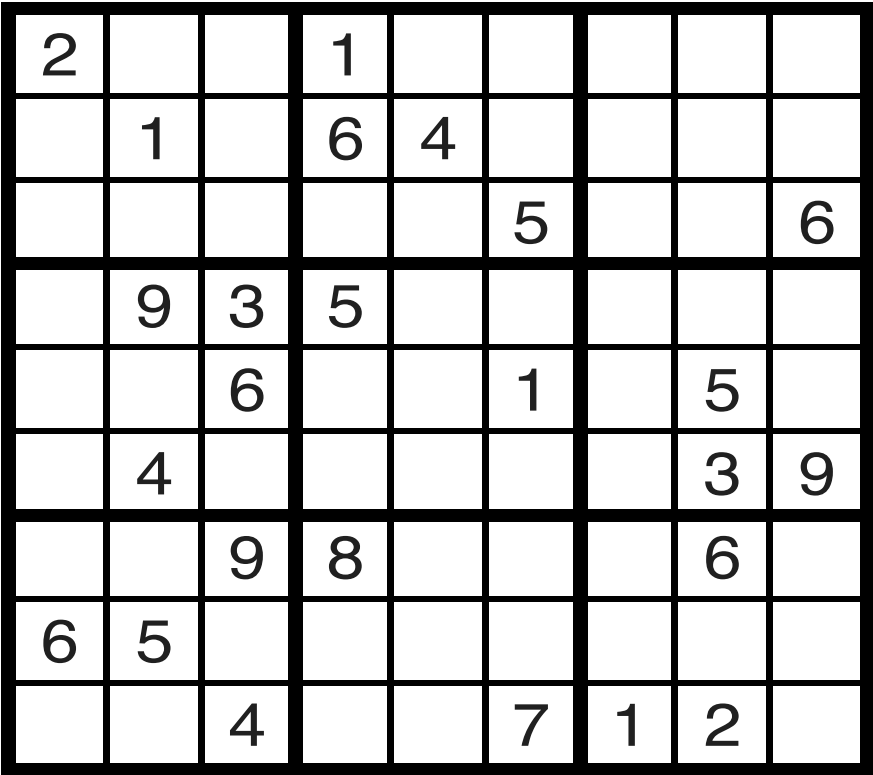
Jan 21/Feb 18

Collaborations with others could prove fruitful this week, Aquarius. Don't hesitate to lean on your social network when you need to get something done.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

You might be presented with a way to take your professional life to the next level, Pisces. Strategize about how to move forward in this regard, and think through all decisions.



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!

Fun By The Numbers

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



Greg stands in front of the stone walls still standing of the Pontoosic Mills.



A Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers stands by a large well used by the mill plant.



The Pontoosic Mill remains sit very close to Route 20, but are hidden being below the present day road grade.

Hikers explore Pontoosic Mills site

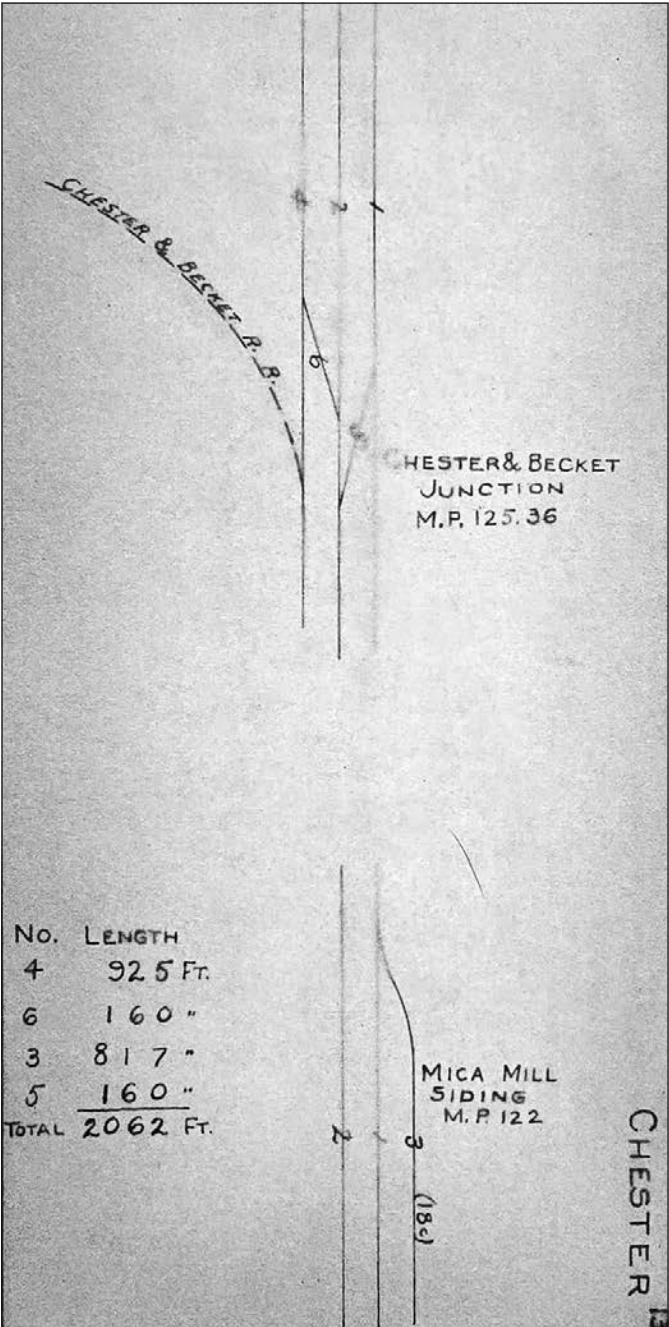
One of the least known Industrial factories in Chester is The Pontoosic Mills.

Mica was finished here, brought down from the steep mountainside just above it, now Chester Blandford State Forest near Goldmine Brook. Very little information exists

on this one even though it had its own siding on the Boston and Albany Railroad. It was a very large operation with walls still partially standing and a very large well. The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers researched this mill for the property owner.



This is a map of the Pontoosic Mills site. Submitted photos



This is a 1903 survey map of the sidings for Boston and Albany and the Chester and Becket Railroad and the mica plant.

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