Calendar of Events
A complete listing of department, committee, commission, and board meetings is posted: www.royalston-ma.gov

Winter Parking Ban through April 30th
Burn permits available now.

February 2  Friday  Groundhog Day
Village School – No Classes for language arts in-service

7 p.m.  Open mic at Town Hall, sponsored by the Royalston Cultural Council. Free. Arrive early to sign up to play music. The Williams Brothers will be the house band for the evening. Light supper, baked goods and tea and coffee for sale. First Friday open mics continue throughout the winter.

February 9  Friday  New Snow Moon
5:59 p.m.

February 10  Saturday  Lunar New Year 4722  Year of the Dragon
10 a.m. – noon  Village School Open House

February 13  Tuesday  Mardi Gras – Fat Tuesday – Shrove Tuesday

February 14  Wednesday  Ash Wednesday
Valentine’s Day
ARRSD Early Dismissal half-day for professional development

February 15  Thursday  Library Book Group discusses This Other Eden by Paul Lynch. Refreshments.

February 16  Friday  ARRSD, Monty Tech, and Village School Winter Breaks begin at close of school today.

February 19  Monday  Presidents’ Birthdays Holiday:  Schools, Post Office, Library closed; no meetings

February 21  Wednesday  2:00 p.m.  ZooMobile from Southwick Zoo Introduction to Animal Ecology. Town Hall. Funded by the Royalston Academy and sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

February 22  Thursday  1:30  Lunar New Year program for kids at the Library. Learn about the significance of special symbols and foods with Alice Daugherty.

February 25  Sunday  2:00 p.m.  Author Visit: Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson will discuss their book, Many Hands Make a Farm: 47 years of Questioning Authority, Feeding a Community, and Building an Organic Movement. Town Hall

February 26  Monday  6:30-8:00  –  Handwork Evening with Nicole Rother at the Library. Light refreshments. Sponsored by the Friends

February 29  Thursday  Leap Day!
6:30 p.m.  Public Meeting:  Presentation of the Whitney Hall Feasibility Study- Final Report by Keen Independent Research at Town Hall.

Save the Date
March 5  Tuesday  7 a.m. – 8 p.m.  Presidential Primary Town Hall

March 10  Sunday  10:00 a.m. and Noon.  Make a Willow Basket with Mary Lauren Fraser. Sponsored by the Friends. Town Hall. Registered by calling the Library.

March 15  Friday  7:00 p.m.  George Bennett will discuss his book, Into the Distance at the Town Hall. Refreshments. Sponsored by the Friends. Town Hall.

April 8  Monday  2:00 – 5:00 p.m. If it’s sunny, come view the solar eclipse at the Library. While not a total eclipse, it will be an exciting experience to share. We will have eclipse glasses, pinhole viewer, and maybe a special treat.

April 18  Thursday  1:30 p.m.  Kite Flying, kite cake, kite poetry, and Earth Day crafts

April 28  Sunday  2:00 p.m.  Michael Coffey, sculptor and woodworker, will discuss his life and craft and his book, Michael Coffey: Sculptor and Furniture Maker in Wood. Town Hall.
Select Board Notes

Whitney Hall: The Whitney Hall Feasibility Study, conducted by Keen Independent Research, has been underway for several months now. They will be wrapping things up by the end of February. The town should be receiving their conclusion report soon after that. They have taken the input of our residents and made final suggestions as to what they feel would be the best plan going forward for Whitney Hall. The results of this work will be presented in a public meeting on Thursday, February 29 at 6:30 PM upstairs at the Royalston Town Hall.

Flag Policy: In recent weeks, neighboring towns have been contacted by political organizations requesting that they be allowed to fly their flags on town flagpoles. In response, several towns have moved quickly to adopt a flag policy that specifies the types of flags that can be flown from town poles. At this time, Royalston has not been contacted by any organization with such a request. However, without a written policy in place, we would be hard-pressed to respond fairly to such requests. The board is working with our attorneys to adopt a clear policy that will specify the flags that can be flown from our poles. This will protect the town from difficulties should we need to deny a request.

Upcoming Town Election: Just a reminder there is a Town Election coming up April 1, 2024. Anyone looking to run for an open position should have their nomination papers in before February 12. We are always looking for more people to get involved with town government. If you have any questions about open positions, you can look on the Town website www.royalston-ma.gov, or call our Town Clerk at 978-249-0493.

Budget Information Meetings

Rick Martin, selectboard

Believe it or not the town is starting to gather information for the Budget for FY25, which runs from 7/1/2024 to 6/30/25. The results of this process will be presented for your vote at the Annual Town Meeting in June.

The process for this is for all Department heads to formulate a budget and send these to the Select Board and the Finance Committee. After this, Department heads, along with members of the Finance Committee, will be meeting in open session with the Select Board in February through April to discuss their budgets and the details that go into their decisions for their budget proposals. Separately, the Capital Planning Committee will also meet with the Board to discuss its recommendations for capital expenditure in FY25.

As you can imagine, it takes many hours and meetings to go over all this detail to come up with a final number for each article and line item presented at the town meeting.

So, if you are interested in knowing this detail so that you can make an informed decision on each item on the town meeting warrant, we encourage you to go to the My Town Government for the Select Board meeting schedules over the next three months and plan on attending the meetings that interest you. This way you can listen to all that goes into determining the final number for each line item. It may not be possible to express all these details at the town meeting, and this gives each person the chance to hear all the details before a decision must be made. Thanks for planning to participate in the process!!

Town Clerk News

Town Clerk Barbara Richardson 978-249-0493
Hours: Wednesdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; by appt.

Now Entering Election Season for Town Positions

Nomination Papers are ready to take out for registered voters wishing to run for a Town office. See your Town Clerk on Wednesdays from 10-2 at Whitney Hall, 5 School Street in Royalston or contact at 978-249-0493 - email townclerk@royalston-ma.gov to make other arrangements. All nomination papers must be returned NO LATER than February 12, 2024 by 5 P.M.

POSITION - TERMS - Who is CURRENTLY IN POSITION
Select Board Member (1) 3 years Deborah J. D’Amico
Moderator (1) 3 years Vacant
Assessor (1) 3 years Stephen Chase
Cemetery Commissioner (1) 3 years Roy Smith
Cemetery Commissioner (1) 2 years filled by appt. until election
Tree Warden (1) 3 years Larry Siegel
Board of Health (1) 3 years Randy Divoll
Constable (1) 3 years Roland Hamel
Library Trustee (1) 3 years Jennifer Basso
Planning Board (1) 5 years Joshua Doub
Trustees of the J.N. Bartlett fund (4) 1 year Nancy Melbourn 1 year
Gary Winitzer 2 vacant seats
Athol-Royalston Regional School Committee (1) 3 years Carla Rabinowitz

Voter Registration Hours for the March 5 Presidential Primary
Saturday, February 24th 9-11 and 3-5 at Whitney Hall, clerks’ office. This is last day to register. All mail in registrations must be post marked no later than this day.

Early in-person Voting for Primary
Saturday, February 24th 9-11 and 3-5 and Wednesday, Feb 28th 10-2 at Whitney Hall, clerk’s office.

Royalston Police Department News

Officer Christopher Deveneau – 978-249-5838 (leave msg.)

Police Chief Curtis A. Deveneau reports that 75 calls were responded to in December. Highest numbers were 9-1-1 calls during patrol shifts (14); general calls at the stations (14); and motor vehicle stops (12).

The Chief adds, “We continue to see an increase in calls relating to family matters and mental health issues. We are currently investigating an incident of Child Sexual Exploitation in coordination with the District Attorney’s Office. Calls of this nature are handled with care and discretion, providing parties with information on contacting available resources.”

Hunting season is still open for coyote and other small game. This typically continues into March, so you may hear the occasional discharge of a firearm. Discharge of a firearm within 500 feet of an occupied dwelling is unlawful unless permission is gained from the owner. [MGL Ch. 269 Sec. 12E further states, “Discharging a firearm (including a bow and arrow) is prohibited in or within 150 yards of a developed recreation site, a residence, or any place where people are likely to be. Shooting across bodies of water or a Forest Service road is prohibited. Shooting into or within any cave, mine or open shaft is prohibited.”] If you observe someone claiming to be a hunter on your property and speak with them, they are required to identify themselves and show you their hunting license. If you experience a negative encounter with a hunter, please contact the Royalston Police Department, or the Massachusetts Environmental Police for a response.
Greetings from the Royalston Fire Department.

It is that time of year again and burning season is here. This is the third year for the new online system and it seems like it is going well. For those not familiar with the system, the process to get a burning permit is as follows: go to https://www.royalston-ma.gov/ and click on the find it fast tab and you will see burn permits, click on that link and read the instructions on that page. (It is a two-step process you have to pay on one page and go to another page to create the permit.) If you have any problems with the process or are unable to go online, please call the Fire station at 978-249-8138 and leave a message with name, address and phone number and arrangements can be made to get a burn permit.

Updates: The new grant funded breathing air compressor is installed and working well. We will also be holding a 24 hour class funded by the same grant to provide Hazardous Materials 1st Responder training to our members starting in February. The new vehicle lifts funded at Town Meeting and housed at the DPW have been used to service several of the Fire Department vehicles to date and it has been a very successful partnership with the DPW. Thank you to the taxpayers of Royalston for their support.

We want to make everyone aware that the fire station in the Village is an active station and please do not park vehicles on Park St between the gazabo and the Fire Station, the Fire Engine is housed in the bay that faces the park and it needs the entire road and part of the lawn to get in and out of that garage space. No parking signs and a painted fire lane will be installed by DPW in the spring as well.

2023 was another busy year for the Royalston Fire Department; we continue to train regularly holding meetings the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Mondays at 7pm. If anyone is interested in joining the department please feel free to come to one of the training nights or email the chief at chiefrfd@royalston-ma.gov for more information.

The Royalston Fire Department responded to 246 calls for service for 2023 the breakdown is as follows: 149 EMS Calls, 68 Fire Calls, and 22 Service Calls. Structure Fires responded to, 1 in Royalston, 12 Mutual Aid 60 inspections, 37 Mutual Aid given and 18 Mutual Aid received.

Board of Health News

Phil Leger, chair

A well-attended meeting was held in January discussing the future of the transfer station. Options include: raising fees to close deficit, RDPW take over operations, or regionalize. Other considerations are switching out compactor motors from 3-phase to single phase saving $100k + for National Grid power upgrade. No decisions have been made at this time. Stay tuned.

Flu, Covid, and RSV are circulating in our area. Be safe, get vaxed. Most pharmacies have vaccines and offer same day immunizations. Get vaccinated and stay out of the hospital.

Winter weather is here. Please be careful when you are at the transfer station. Watch out for slippery areas, backing up cars, and children. Reminder that items being left at the reusable should not be junk, broken, or just plain no good.

Royalston Department of Public Works

DPW Superintendent Jaret R. Thiem 978-249-4223 or dpwadmin@royalston-ma.gov

Winter Parking Ban in effect through April 30th. A gentle reminder: Any vehicle impeding sanding/salting or snow removal may have to be towed, and at the owner’s expense.

There have been some concerns expressed regarding road salt usage to treat our roads. Last year we changed from a sand/salt mix to straight salt. This year we are still using straight salt, as well as treated salt, which has a liquid deicer added such as biodegradable, nature-neutral sugar-based anti-icing agents like beet juice or molasses, or liquid magnesium [which the EPA considers safer than salt and more economical than calcium chloride.] While it may appear that the roads have a lot of salt, we have actually cut salt usage since changing over to straight salt. In addition, we no longer have the expense of purchasing as much sand, or the cost and labor picking up the sand in the springtime. We still are using a sand/stone mix for treating gravel roads, and are looking into using crushed stone for treating the gravel roads, which along with gaining traction, will help add material to the gravel roads.

We have also changed cutting edges on the snowplows. The old edges were single-piece steel. The new edges are sectional blades. Each section is 12 inches long and is carbide encased in rubber, so each piece moves independently to better follow the contours of the road. This allows us to better scrape roads, removing more hardpack snow, which also cuts the amount of salt needed to treat the roads.

Every sander has been calibrated to spread the industry standard 240 lbs. per lane mile. Two out of the three trucks have computers in them which will control the sander speed and the RPM of the truck to make sure the amount being spread is consistent, no matter the speed of the truck. The chart below compares sand and salt usage.

* The first winter using straight salt vs. sand/salt mix. To date, the winter of 2023/2024, we have used just 163.02 tons of salt, and 65 yards of sand.

New SCHOOL ZONE signs have been installed on Winchendon Road, on either side of the Royalston Community School. These Mass. Highway Grant-funded signs are solar powered, with a speed readout designed to catch the attention of drivers so they can reduce their speed as they approach the school zone. These signs replace the older versions, which are no longer working properly.

Energy Committee News

Tom Musco

On January 22, 2024 the Town was notified by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources that it has received a Green Communities Grant for $168,689. The committee applied for the grant in the fall of 2023 with the help of Karen Chapman, the Planning & Development Director of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission. The funds will be used for weatherization measures on five town buildings. The work will save the town $1,532 in fuel costs per year. Work on the buildings will start in the spring of 2024.
Hand Work Evenings

The first hand work evening brought seven people to the library to knit, visit, and cross-stitch with the assistance of Nicole Romer, craftsperson extraordinaire. The enjoyable evening was enhanced by the sense of accomplishment, the sharing of ideas, warm tea, and some refreshments, including great cookies baked by Stephanie McClure. The Monday evening get together will continue until summer with the next two on February 26 and March 25 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. All welcome to bring your handwork projects, color meditatively with our books and pencils, or just visit.

Celebrate Lunar New Year at the Library: Kids’ Program

Learn about the significance of special symbols and foods with Royalston’s (and Taiwan’s) Alice Daugherty on Thurs. February 21 at 2:00 p.m. in the upstairs of the Town Hall on Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m. Community yoga is adaptable to all levels of ability. The class takes place every Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. at the Library. Yoga with Jess Schanz

As the days get longer, it’s a great time to join in for an hour of stretching, strengthening your core, and enhancing your balance. This community yoga is adaptable to all levels of ability. The class takes place in the upstairs of the Town Hall on Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m.

Top Circulating Books in 2023

The most circulated book in our library in 2023 was Lessons in Chemistry by Dennis Lehane. There is a slight glitch in these numbers as Lessons in Chemistry was here the whole year but went out on loan to another library and took five months before it made its way back to our Library, so that reduced the number of times it could have gone out here. Overall it has gone out a lot more than either of the other two books and was at the top of the list in many libraries. And the top circulating item, not just books? It was the six hotspots which were checked out 148 times during the year. That’s only 8 less than the maximum number possible which seems unlikely but many times, people would try one, find it didn’t work, and return it right away. And most of the time (at least until Spectrum was wide-spread) there were several people waiting to take it right out.

Donations to the Friends

Tony Ferragamo and Jean McCurdy
Tom and Leslie Freudenheim
Theresa Quinn and George Krasowski
Ken and Marty Bouhard
Kathleen Pirro
Cedric Nash
Dana Perkins
Fair Alice McCormick
Jim MacPhee
Deb Nunes
In Memory of Werner Bundschuh:
Christopher and Emily Santillo

Thank you

To all those who helped clean up after the holiday garland workshop. Stephanie Bennett Rahmat for help with weeding and other tasks.

Phinehas S. Newton Library News

Kathy Morris, Library Director
Trustees: Jeffrey Mangum, Jennifer Basso, Theresa Quinn
Mondays 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Thursdays 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 - 8 p.m.;
Saturdays: 9:00 am-12 noon
978-249-3572 www.royalstonlibrary.org

Art Exhibit

During February, John Burk’s photographs of North Central Massachusetts will be on display along with a selection of his books, which are available to borrow. John is well-known for his photos which capture the natural beauty of our surrounding area of Massachusetts.

Kids’ Art Month and Art Exhibit

March is National Kids Art Month and all people aged 1-18 are invited to create a drawing or painting up to 8 ½ “ x 11” in size to be exhibited at the Library during March and April. You may leave your artwork at the Library or Royalston Community School. Please make sure your name, age, and phone number or email are on the back of the artwork. We’re looking forward to seeing all the creative talent!

Here Comes the Southwick Zoo!

On Wednesday, February 21 at 2:00 p.m. in the upstairs of the Royalston Town Hall, Earth Limited from the Southwick Zoo brings its Zoomobile. Two members of the team will show us animals and explore topics such as traits used to classify animals into groups, types of interactions between animal groups, how animals interact with their environment, and much more. Attendees will be able to get close to and touch many of the animals. This fun and educational program is great for all ages and is funded by the generosity of the Royalston Academy. Registration is not required but if there are a lot of people, only those who have registered will be granted admission.

Library Book Group - All welcome

February’s Library book club will take place on Thursday, February 15 at 3:30 p.m. at the Library with a discussion of This Other Eden by Paul Lynch. The book is based on the true story of the consequences of eugenics on Malaga Island, Maine. Lynch creates a fictionalized version which begins in 1792 when a formerly enslaved man and his Irish wife, come to an island off the coast of Maine and continues into the 20th century. It has been called a spellbinding story of resistance and survival. It was long-listed for both the Booker Prize and the National Book Award for fiction in 2023. Copies of the book are available at the Library.

To all those who helped clean up after the holiday garland workshop. Thank you

Stephanie Bennett Rahmat for help with weeding and other tasks.

Top Circulating Books in 2023

The most circulated book in our library in 2023 was Hello Beautiful by Ann Napolitano followed by Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus and Small Mercies by Dennis Lehane. There is a slight glitch in these numbers as Lessons in Chemistry was here the whole year but went out on loan to another library and took five months before it made its way back to our Library, so that reduced the number of times it could have gone out here. Overall it has gone out a lot more than either of the other two books and was at the top of the list in many libraries. And the top circulating item, not just books? It was the six hotspots which were checked out 148 times during the year. That’s only 8 less than the maximum number possible which seems unlikely but many times, people would try one, find it didn’t work, and return it right away. And most of the time (at least until Spectrum was wide-spread) there were several people waiting to take it right out.

Celebrate Lunar New Year at the Library: Kids’ Program

Learn about the significance of special symbols and foods with Royalston’s (and Taiwan’s) Alice Daugherty on Thurs. February 22 at 1:30 at the Library.

Hand Work Evenings

The first hand work evening brought seven people to the library to knit, visit, and cross-stitch with the assistance of Nicole Romer, craftsperson extraordinaire. The enjoyable evening was enhanced by the sense of accomplishment, the sharing of ideas, warm tea, and some refreshments, including great cookies baked by Stephanie McClure. The Monday evening get together will continue until summer with the next two on February 26 and March 25 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. All welcome to bring your handwork projects, color meditatively with our books and pencils, or just visit.
Some of the new materials at your library

**Adult Fiction**
- Ascher, Aurora: *Sanctuary of the Shadow*
- Blake, Matthew: *Anna O*
- Burke, James Lee: *Harbor Lights*
- Elston, Ashley: *First Lie Wins*
- Hawkins, Rachel: *The Heiress*
- Krentz, Jayne: *The Night Island*
- McCorkle, Jill: *Old Crimes*
- Michaelides, Alex: *The Fury*
- Miller, Derek: *The Curse of Pietro Houdini*
- Steel, Danielle: *Upside Down*

**Adult Non-fiction**
- Bennett, George: *Into the Distance*
- Main, Veronica: *Straw Plaiting*
- Sherman, Casey: *12*

**Preschool Story Time**
Brooke Coleman’s warm invitation to investigate the children’s room at the Library is a great place for young children to meet other children (caregivers too), enjoy a craft, a healthy snack, a story, and time for play and visiting on non-holiday Mondays at 2:00 p.m.

**Library Herbarium**
On Friday, January 19 Matt and Nancy Hickler and I traveled to the Herbarium lab at the University of Massachusetts where Dr. Tristam Seidler, Collections Manager, taught us how to use the digitizing equipment and in short order we were able to digitize all 450 James A. Bates specimens from the Library in 3 ½ hours. They are now being organized and set for inclusion in the Consortium of New England Herbaria and then onto Digital Commonwealth. Individuals will be able to access the specimens to see what was growing in Royalston around 1914.

**Farmers and Community Organizers to Discuss Their Book**
Jack Kittredge and Julie Rawson will discuss their new book, *Many Hands Make a Farm: 47 Years of Questioning Authority, Feeding a Community, and Building an Organic Movement* on Sunday, February 25 at 2:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. They will relate their journey from community organizers, to starting a farm, joining the organic farming movement, raising a family, earning a living from home, and working for social justice. Join us for a lively discussion and some delicious refreshments. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

**Library Herbarium**
On Friday, January 19 Matt and Nancy Hickler and I traveled to the Herbarium lab at the University of Massachusetts where Dr. Tristam Seidler, Collections Manager, taught us how to use the digitizing equipment and in short order we were able to digitize all 450 James A. Bates specimens from the Library in 3 ½ hours. They are now being organized and set for inclusion in the Consortium of New England Herbaria and then onto Digital Commonwealth. Individuals will be able to access the specimens to see what was growing in Royalston around 1914.

**Spice of the Month – Garam marsala**
This traditional Indian spice is a blend of at least five ingredients with a warm sweet flavor that can be used alone in soups, dal, stews, or curries. The basic ingredients are combinations of several of these warming spices: cinnamon, coriander, cumin, cloves, ginger, cardamom, and nutmeg. Stop by the Library to pick up a spice kit containing enough garam marsala to make any of the recipes included in the kit. Created by Gina Verrelli and funded by the Friends of the Library.

**Children’s Fiction**
- Boynton, Sandra: *Hippos Remain Calm*
- Bruel, Nick: *Bad Kitty Does Not Like Easter*
- Gopal, Jyoti: *One Sweet Song*
- Ho, Joanna: *Coyote’s Wild Home*
- Keller, Shana: *Do You Know Them?*
- Park, Junghwa: *Wish Soup*
- Patterson, James: *Million Dollar Mess*
- Richardson, Melissa: *The Last Slice*
- Wilson, Karma: *Bear Finds Egg*
- Zaman, Farida: *Aliya’s Secret*

**Children’s Non-Fiction**
- Cline-Ransome, Lesa: *Fighting With Love*
- Duncan, Alice: *Coretta’s Journey*
- Hwang, Aaron: *A Kid’s Guide to the Chinese Zodiac*
- Nelson, Vaunda: *Small Shoes, Great Strides*
- Nopra, Arley: *Claudia and the Bad Joke*
- Thomas, Mindy: *Wow in Space*

**Audiobooks**
- Connelly, Michael: *Resurrection Walk*

**DVDs:**
- *Dumb Money*
- *Little Bird*
- *Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie*
- *Sound of Freedom*
- *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*

**Willow Basket Making Workshop**
Create a willow basket with Mary Lauren Fraser on Sunday, March 10. There will be two sessions of two hours each. Pre-registration is required and there is a $20 materials fee.

**Young Adult**
- Sutherland, Tui: *Wings of Fire*

**George Bennett to Talk about Long Haul Trucking**
On Friday, March 15 at 7:00 p.m. in the Royalston Town hall, Village School teacher George Bennett will discuss his memoir, *Into the Distance: The Lost World of Long-haul Trucking.* You’ll never look at trucks in the same way again. Refreshments.

**Spice of the Month – Garam marsala**
This traditional Indian spice is a blend of at least five ingredients with a warm sweet flavor that can be used alone in soups, dal, stews, or curries. The basic ingredients are combinations of several of these warming spices: cinnamon, coriander, cumin, cloves, ginger, cardamom, and nutmeg. Stop by the Library to pick up a spice kit containing enough garam marsala to make any of the recipes included in the kit. Created by Gina Verrelli and funded by the Friends of the Library.
Save the Date:
Easter is Early This Year!
Sara Dilg is hard at work with Peter Rabbit, organizing this year’s, 26th Annual Easter Egg Hunt and Candy Melt! Since Easter is March 31st, this event will be here in two shakes of a bunny’s tail! Volunteers are needed before (a bazillion plastic eggs need to be filled with candy), during (among other tasks, Mr. & Ms. Peter Rabbit need some assistance with posing for pics), and after (volunteers to assist with the chocolate melting candy making, and of course clean-up), are welcomed. Details regarding donations of plastic eggs and candy for them, and donations towards the chocolate melting and candy making will be in the March newsletter. If you can hop out... uhh, HELP out, please contact Sara at 978-248-9828.

Historical Society News
Peter Kramiak, president

May 2024 be good to you. I am hopeful that it will be beneficial for me with my balance and equilibrium keeping me at a level keel with no more problems. I have help and a guardian. I never expected to reach the age of 83 since I have been battling Parkinson’s since I was 72. I appreciate the support to me personally from our community.

I want to thank the residents of Royalston for their support of the Royalston Historical Society. Through your support, we have made accomplishments of which the founders of the Society would be very proud. We continue to plan improvements to our physical building, including a walkway, the grounds, the fence, and climate control in the archives.

We are also improving the displays. Throughout the summer we will organize the first floor artifacts to more clearly tell the story of the work and professions of our Town, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, the wooden taps for maple sugaring in the collection are pictured here.

The Ladies Benevolent Society is 200 years old in 2024, and to celebrate, the Society is staging an exhibit to highlight women’s lives in Royalston’s history. Watch for a grand reopening in May of the upstairs museum, featuring this exhibit. Also remember, YOU, the citizens of Royalston should consider adding your history to the collection. Reach out with your artifacts and stories.

North Quabbin Garden Club
On Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 7 pm at the Millers River Environmental Center, the North Quabbin Garden Club is hosting the Greening Greenfield team to discuss their plan for creating a friendly environment, including individual gardens, for pollinators. Admission is free. All are welcome.

Pauline Aldred, co-president

Royalston Emergency Management Agency
Director Jim Barclay ema@royalston-ma.gov or phone 978-249-2904
Deputy Director Tom Musco tgmusco@gmail.com or 978-249-9633
A number of “unpreparedness situations” have made national news recently; so many, my original newsletter plans have been scrapped in order to discuss a few of the incidents:

Lost hikers on January 19th had to be rescued, in the dark, near the summit of Mount Monadnock. The daytime temps were in the teens, and by the time the NH Fish & Game conservation officers and the Upper Valley Wilderness Response Team were called, the wind chill temperature was in the -10 degree F range. “Due to exposure to extreme cold, and the hikers’ lack of warm clothing” one of three victims was in such poor condition, it necessitated hand-carrying her 1.3 miles out of the woods, and stopping partway to administer warming IV fluids. If you’re going to be doing any off-road hiking, #1 – Check the weather forecast! #2 – Dress for the worst possible weather conditions. #3 – Have a fully-charged phone and at the very least, basic survival needs with you. #4 – Inform an emergency contact of your plans and expected route, and expected return time. Your emergency contact should be instructed to contact emergency services if you are not in contact at the expected return time.

Electrocution, also on January 19th, was the result when three people made a fatal attempt to leave their SUV after a power line (secondary to a tree branch taking it down) landed on the vehicle. Two adults (including a pregnant woman), her 15-year-old brother, all died, when attempting to remove an infant from the vehicle that was electrically charged from the wires. Should you ever be in a vehicle with wires down – even if they’re not touching your vehicle – the safest place for you is generally going to be IN the vehicle with doors closed and windows up (or barely cracked open for ventilation). Unless there is an urgent need to exit the vehicle (for example it’s on fire, or it’s sinking) stay put. Call for help, stay in the vehicle, and wait. In the winter, your vehicle should have a blanket or sleeping bag in the passenger compartment to help you stay warm.

Heart attacks while shoveling represent about 7% of the ER visits related to shoveling, and as many as 1,500 adults die each year while engaged in snow removal. With the critical overcrowding of hospital ERs, medical experts are trying to get ahead of the potential problem, and encouraging those faced with snow removal.

Strategies strongly recommended by medical personnel to prevent injuries and heart attacks while shoveling include: #1 – Warming up before tackling snow removal. #2 – Shovel small sections at a time, and take frequent breaks. #3 – Stay well-hydrated while shoveling. #4 – Dress in layers, wear a hat and gloves, and cover your nose and mouth to avoid breathing in cold air. #5 – When possible, push rather than lift and throw snow. If an any time while removing snow you experience any lightheadedness, dizziness, shortness of breath, or chest pain, stop immediately and go inside. If the symptoms do not go away quickly, call 9-1-1.

Work is continuing on the CodeRED™ data base, in anticipation of another test call in the next couple of months. Exact dates and times will be posted on the Town’s website and social media sites.

Be informed ~ Make a Plan!
CONGRATULATIONS AND GOOD NEWS

Got something to crow about? Let us know at the RCN. Drop at the Library or email chasesgos2@gmail.com.

The Royalston Community Newsletter is marking an anniversary. The first newsletter went out at the turn of the millenium with a November 1999 issue. The Friends of the Library have kept it up, 10 issues per year, ever since. Thus, this is the 25th February all residents have had the news direct mailed to their homes.

Welcome Paxton Chase Medina, born in the early hours of January 14. (8 lbs 21 oz and 21 inches) Happy parents are Araceli Medina and Asher Chase of Frye Hill. Thrilled grandparents are Maria Esperanza Gonzalez and Ignacio Medina of Mexico City and Beth Gospodarek and Stephen Chase of Royalston.

Owen J. Willhite was named to the Dean’s List for the 2023 Spring Semester. He is a sophomore in the Criminal Justice degree program, minoring in Environmental Science.

Fire Chief Eric Jack recently completed Chief Fire Officer Management Training, “...an intensive, 14-week course presented by the MA Firefighting Academy and the Collins Center for Public Management at U-MA Boston”. Congratulations to the Chief, with thanks for investing his time to improve his performance as a fire service leader.

Puzzle Up

Carl Schmidt, puzzlemaster

ACROSS
1. NaCl
2. Detroit dance music
3. Gargamel foes
4. Warmer than gloves
5. Tree with papery bark
6. Ingredient in yellow curry
7. Movie theater
8. Give stream water a black hue and dry wine its taste
9. Pulley system you might find in a barn
10. 365 days
11. Millers River bridge now under bid to rebuild
12. Largest body of water in Massachusetts
13. Sunflower, thistle, millet, cracked corn, safflower, etc.
14. Supports and bracings
15. Blimp filler
16. Wood chopper
17. Location of the next nearest public library
18. Spiky barn inhabitant
19. Tree with smooth gray bark under threat of a new leaf disease

DOWN
2. Sunflower, thistle, millet, cracked corn, safflower, etc.
3. Warmer than gloves
4. Dustin Dance music
5. Movie theater
6. Give stream water a black hue and dry wine its taste
7. Pulley system you might find in a barn
8. Largest body of water in Massachusetts
9. Supports and bracings
10. Spiky barn inhabitant
11. Tree with smooth gray bark under threat of a new leaf disease

answers to last month’s puzzle available at the Library

James Bennett Obituary

On the evening of December 3, 2023, Jim Bennett, a resident of Royalston for 23 years, died peacefully surrounded by his family.

Jim was born to Donald Bennett and Virginia (Klink Bennett) Paulson in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1948. Their family was rich in the arts and sciences. Jim was a jack-of-all-trades from an early age. He experimented with his chemistry kit in the basement, played saxophone in marching band and the school orchestra, worked as editor and photographer for the Pulaski high school newspaper, played soccer, played in a local band, and ran a garden crew consisting of his four beloved siblings.

Jim came to Massachusetts to attend Harvard College, graduating in 1970 with a degree in biochemistry. The following year he worked at the university researching the effects of organo-phosphate pesticides on the human immune system. His work influenced his lifelong dedication to organic gardening. Needing a change from research Jim then took a job at a community drop-in center in Cohasset, MA where he met his beautiful blue eyed, red haired, be-freckled, wife of 47 years, Denise.

Moving to North Andover in 1977, he worked in scientific research and was a member of the band Tabasco Fiasco for many years. Meanwhile, Jim never stopped looking to nature to feed his soul and his family. He studied herbalism, became an avid forager, locating, among other things, a blueberry swamp, a cranberry bog, and an almost perfect blackberry bush.

When Jim moved to Royalston he found a life with everything he wanted, land to grow an extensive vegetable garden, music, nature, and good friends. Especially important to him was the Royalston Cultural Council and the Open Mic series, which opened for him the musical career he so cherished. It gave him a connection with many other musicians, which led to his playing extensively throughout the region in numerous bands, and he loved passing on all he knew about playing and performing to a new generation.

Jim is survived by his beloved wife Denise Bennett, his three children, Carolyn Bennett and her partner, Jason Kurian, Stephanie Bennett Rahmat and her husband, Saad Rahmat, and Mackenzie Bennett, his chosen family Mary Hoag and Lisa Hoag, his four siblings, Donna Bennett, Robert Bennett, Lorena Bennett-Newton, and Mary Bennett also his mother-in-law, Theresa Glynn, his four siblings in-law, Tom Glynn, Andrea Glynn, Lisa Glynn, and Frank Glynn. He is also survived by nieces, nephews, many friends, and bandmates.

A celebration of life will take place in Royalston in early summer. The date to be announced.

Fire Chief Eric Jack recently completed Chief Fire Officer Management Training, “...an intensive, 14-week course presented by the MA Firefighting Academy and the Collins Center for Public Management at U-MA Boston”. Congratulations to the Chief, with thanks for investing his time to improve his performance as a fire service leader.
Royalston South Village Revitalization Committee (RSVR)
A New Owner for the Royalston Country Store:
The Steering Committee of the RSVR is pleased to report that the Royalston Country Store has changed hands. Peter Gagliardi, chair of the Save Our Store Subcommittee, said that the closing occurred on January 24. According to Gagliardi, the new owners, Winter and Heldi Vieria, contacted the SOS Subcommittee to learn more about the work done by the community. Information from the public meeting in April, 2023 and from subsequent meetings of the Subcommittee, was shared with the Vieiras. It was clear that they had done a good deal of research as they made their decision to buy the property. Gagliardi said that the Vieiras plan to reach out to the residents of Royalston to learn as much as possible about the community’s needs as they make plans to bring the store back to life as an essential part of the community. Re-opening the store will be a major step toward the continued revitalization of the South Village, complementing projects such as the gazebo and energizing efforts or new projects underway or anticipated. The new owners will be undertaking needed repairs on the building as well as some improvements and will need several months to complete that work before the store actually opens.

King Street Bridge Project
Whitney Hall was the setting for a meeting on January 18 regarding the King Street Bridge. It was held to discuss the future of the bridge, which has been permanently closed by the state. We are hoping to replace the bridge with a multi-use footbridge. This footbridge is vital for the transport of the waste water pipe that crosses the river from the users on King Street to the Waste Water Treatment Plant on Blossom Street. This footbridge would also allow residents and visitors to gain access to the 100+ hiking trails maintained by the North Quabbin Trail Association volunteers, including Don Shambroom and others. In addition, the RSVR group has long envisioned a Bloomin’ Bridge over the river. Bob Curley, President of the NQTA, has spent countless hours working with the local and state officials, engineers and consultants. Thanks to the coming together of NQTA, RSVR and the Town of Royalston spearheaded by SelectBoard member Rick Martin, the town has allocated $25,000 for the design cost estimate for refurbishing the bridge.

Master Planning
RSVR would like to thank the SelectBoard and Planning Board for moving forward on a master planning process for the whole town, which we have been advocating for over the last two years. The effort is meant to involve every single Royalston resident in deciding what the future direction of our community will be. We look forward to seeing the process begin in the near future and we hope you will be involved.

Many thanks
We are grateful to Jessica Spring Barrett for developing and maintaining the RSVR Facebook page since 2019. There are more than 600 people who follow it. Kelly Dolan has volunteered to take over from Jessica, so please look for us at “Welcome to the Village of South Royalston” FB page.

What’s Happening at the Village School?
5th-6th grade students are learning about Ancient Greece and doing science experiments in preparation for Science Night in March. 3rd-4th grade students are studying Ancient Egypt and made a giant diorama of the Nile River. 1st-2nd grade students are learning about Massachusetts Then and Now, through geology, geography and crafts. Kindergarteners are learning about their bodies, including what’s inside, and naming feelings. Preschool is outside all morning, in the outdoor classroom, enjoying play in the woods.

Recess has been a blast, with lots of sledding, snow fort building and snow exploration. On Friday afternoons when there is snow, 1st-6th graders are cross country skiing around Camp Caravan and at Jolly Farm.

Come to Open House Saturday February 10 from 10 to noon. Bring the family, there are arts projects and science exploration in the classrooms. Meet teachers, current parents and find out about the enrollment process.

We are scheduling parent visits now. If you are interested in preschool or kindergarten for next fall, email rise@villageschoolma.org or call 978 249 3505.

Retiring: Rise Richardson, School Director, is retiring after 34 years with the school. Find out more on our school website; click on the Donate/Support page.

Royalston Community School PTG
PTGroyalstoncommunityschool@gmail.com
The Royalston Parent-Teacher Group is heading up a Little Caesars fundraiser through February 7th. There is a variety of ready-to-make and bake frozen pizzas, cheesy breads, and cookies. The kits and cookies will be delivered directly to your home. Each unit sold brings in $6 to the PTG, which will be used for goods and events that directly enhance the education of RCS students. Don’t forget, PTG meetings are the first Tuesday of each month, 6 p.m., and held via Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent out in the principal’s letter, as well as an e-mail from the PTG to those who request it.

First Friday Open Mics continue February 2
arrive early to sign up for a performance slot homemade light supper as well as desserts, tea and coffee for sale sponsored by the Royalston Cultural Council
Monty Tech students continue to be recognized for both vocational and academic talents. In the local SkillsUSA competition, students earned 190 awards in more than 45 categories. Winners will be advancing to the District Competitions March 13th. Additionally, 40 juniors and seniors were inducted into the National Honors Society in a November ceremony.

In December, a grant application was submitted for $133,600 to fund an employment program for young adults with disabilities. In coordination with partners: Hannaford, Red Apple Farm, Colonial Hotel, Growing Places, and Dunkin’, Monty Tech would provide skills training designed to support paid internships designed to serve as pathways to jobs, with support from The ARC of North-Central MA, and CAPS Collaborative.

Monty Tech’s After Dark MVP program facility continues to undergo preparation for plumbing and electrical instruction. In December, F.W. Webb in Bedford, MA, donated a Bradley hand wash sink and water heater to benefit the MVP plumbing program.

Other recent grants and donations include:

- A $358,316 consolidated ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) federal grant for Title I, Title II, and Title IV.
- Two state grants from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) focused on students with disabilities, including a $417,678 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and a $14,348 Special Education Program Improvement grant.
- Grants for high school vocational programs included a $25,000 benchmark grant for Auto Body & Collision Repair program through the I-CAR Collision Repair Education Foundation (CREF); and for the HVAC/Property Maintenance program: F.W. Webb donated Milwaukee tools valued at $6,628 to outfit the job trailer used by the program; and Dominic Baggio donated a York air conditioner valued at $450. Monty Tech also received an Aldi Community Cares Grant of $300.

The annual Campus Safety Summit was held last November with representatives from Fitchburg and Westminster Police and Fire Departments, to discuss potential safety concerns throughout the MT Campus and student body. Blueline Security Consulting, who recently completed a school safety and security audit funded by a STOP (Students Teachers Officers Preventing) School Violence grant, also participated. As part of the process, a memo of understanding was signed with Game On Sports & Performance Center, designating that facility as a reunification center in the event of an incident requiring evacuation of Monty Tech.

Also in November and December, 25 Monty Tech staff members assisted families in need by delivering holiday meal baskets for Thanksgiving and Christmas. This effort was coordinated by the school’s social worker, a guidance counselor, Marine JROTC Cadets, 1st Sgt. Shane Dillon, and 1st Sgt. Jeremy Mickelson.

The 248th Birthday of the Marine Corps was celebrated at a Birthday Ball with 200 cadets and their guests participating in the ceremony, dinner, music, and dancing.

Monty Tech has created their first ever on-line school store (named the “Dog House” for the Bulldogs) now open for online shopping! Support Monty Tech, find the perfect gift for graduation, all while helping train future businesspeople with your purchases. Visit https://monty-tech-school-store.square.site/ to browse clothing, jewelry, accessories, and more.
That pretty much exhausts garden notes. At times like this, I rely on my go-to subject: the weather. This is New England after all. It has been a profoundly unusual couple of months. The best I figure, we’ve experienced but one week of winter. Except for that one week, it has risen above freezing for all but a handful of days. Until the snow on the sixteenth, the steer was still out on pasture. Lawns remained green (or, at least, greenish). With the protection of the snow before the cold spell, it wouldn’t surprise me to find it green, still, after melt.

Then there is the matter of rain. Winter rain. Large volumes of winter rain. Upwards of twelve inches of rain. In December. In January. Our basement, having remained dry during the past summer’s deluge, final flooded in the one area where it would do the most damage, the corner that housed our root crops. Remedial action was necessary. The ratio of snow to rain is 10:1. If one inch of rain had fallen as snow, there would be ten inches of snow. The twelve inches of rain, converts to, hold your hats, ten feet of snow.

Another handy subject of conversations is backyard birds. There is even a connection to the garden (remote though it be). Insects damage the garden. Birds eat insects. Therefore, we should be encouraging the presence of birds. They were slow to present themselves. Heretofore, when I’ve filled the feeders for the first time, the birds have been on them before I’ve returned to the house. This year, it was days and the first ones to return were the ground feeders (primarily juncos, mourning doves, and blue jays). I used to re-fill the hanging feeders every day or two; now it’s every five or six days. There have been a couple of surprises. A flock of white-throated sparrows appears from time to time. Bluebirds have been spotted on the suet. I’ve been told that both are winter residents; notwithstanding, it is their first appearance in the yard.

Grinding down. Our wood furnace, after forty some years of yeoman service was seriously misbehaving late last winter. It has been replaced by a propane burner. The cook stove continues apace but it means I will be spending half as much time, and effort, cutting, stacking, hauling, re-stacking, and feeding the fire. Then there is the matter of ‘livestock’. We’ve always tended to two (or more) steer. But we haven’t purchased a calf in two years. One steer remains. (It will be our last.) Another significant reduction is my every-declining workload.

I best ‘fess up’: enthusiasm for gardening is flagging. I haven’t even worked up next year’s garden plan. The seed catalog, having arrived months ago, remains unopened. I’ve hauled no manure to the beds. There will, of course, be a day of reckoning.

I find it difficult enough to write this column in mid-summer; you can imagine the challenge of completing the task in the third week of January. We picked, and ate, our last Brussels sprouts in late December. The season ended, not due to the weather, but because the deer found them to their liking.

This is midwinter, season of owls and cold silver light. Yet on this morning I lingered at the window, puzzled by what I saw. How could I have missed the transition from late fall to midwinter? Perhaps the lights and festivities of the holiday season had pulled me away from its turning. In the cold predawn light there was no denying it: while I wasn’t looking, midwinter had arrived.

Something happens to time in winter. When I was a child, the passage of time was irrelevant. The cold and snow of New Hampshire’s White Mountains arrived and simply became a new environment in which to play. There were snowbanks to climb, fields of deep powder to cross, and ponds of ice to skate on. We were bundles of energy in constant motion, barely aware of the lengthening days, the more crystalline snow, the puddled ice.

Now I savor winter’s unhurried time, with its days beginning and ending in darkness. Despite these shorter days, winter passes slowly, unfolding in long stretches of grey light. Even the sun, often a faint circle of white in a cloudy sky, makes no pretense of warmth. Summer’s long days of heat and light are a persistent call to action. But winter demands nothing of me. Instead, it invites me to slow down and notice. So, I do.

I notice tiny tracks in fresh snow. I venture outside in the crisp cold to follow the tracks across our field. I wonder where the squirrels have gone, or why the Eastern Towhee in our yard is so far north ending in darkness. Despite these shorter days, winter passes slowly, unfolding in long stretches of grey light. Even the sun, often a faint circle of white in a cloudy sky, makes no pretense of warmth. Summer’s long days of heat and light are a persistent call to action. But winter demands nothing of me. Instead, it invites me to slow down and notice. So, I do.

As the sky slowly lightened that predawn morning, I heard the owl call again. Midwinter is the owl’s mating season and the reason for its call. From a perch somewhere in the trees nearby, this owl was in its last quarter but still bright enough to bathe the sky in silver. Black tree branches laced the sky, and Venus, low in the east, was a spark of bright light.

This is midwinter, season of owls and cold silver light. Yet on this morning I lingered at the window, puzzled by what I saw. How could I have missed the transition from late fall to midwinter? Perhaps the lights and festivities of the holiday season had pulled me away from its turning. In the cold predawn light there was no denying it: while I wasn’t looking, midwinter had arrived.

I notice tiny tracks in fresh snow. I venture outside in the crisp cold to follow the tracks across our field. I wonder where the squirrels have gone, or why the Eastern Towhee in our yard is so far north ending in darkness. Despite these shorter days, winter passes slowly, unfolding in long stretches of grey light. Even the sun, often a faint circle of white in a cloudy sky, makes no pretense of warmth. Summer’s long days of heat and light are a persistent call to action. But winter demands nothing of me. Instead, it invites me to slow down and notice. So, I do.

I notice tiny tracks in fresh snow. I venture outside in the crisp cold to follow the tracks across our field. I wonder where the squirrels have gone, or why the Eastern Towhee in our yard is so far north ending in darkness. Despite these shorter days, winter passes slowly, unfolding in long stretches of grey light. Even the sun, often a faint circle of white in a cloudy sky, makes no pretense of warmth. Summer’s long days of heat and light are a persistent call to action. But winter demands nothing of me. Instead, it invites me to slow down and notice. So, I do.
Rambling: Winter Bones
Linda LeBlanc

A few winters ago, walking in the NEECA horse park, a melody kept running in my head – “Food, Beautiful Food” from Oliver! However, the lyrics became “Bone, Beautiful Bones”, and they referred to the winter skeletons of the trees. Something about how dense and quiet the forests were, how the dark hemlocks stood, graceful and sad, and how the pines seemed to hold the afternoon sun in their branches when I headed west back to the barn appealed to me.

I also liked looking at the young pioneer trees in the field that had once been wooded. Some in fact did resemble stark skeletons: their smooth bark was the color of bone and they displayed swellings like swollen joints. Their spare crowns had fewer branches compared to the others in the thicket, like thin arms raised up into the air. These skeletons were aspens: Quaking and Big-toothed, trees that I associate with the North Quabbin along with the hemlocks and birches. At the aspens’ feet were the bent remains of Bracken Fern, and always Teaberry.

The aspens are unassuming and undemanding. Quick to pioneer where the soil is bare, they are intolerant of shade, but otherwise grow in diverse environments and plant communities. Aspens are in fact the most widely distributed native tree. They reproduce by cottony wind-dispersed seed, and most likely the field’s aspens arrived that way. But one of their most interesting features is their ability to regenerate vegetatively through shoots and suckers arising along the tree’s shallow long root system. When growing in a mass in which all trees have identical characteristics and share a root structure, they are considered a clone – basically a single living organism which can cover over 100 acres.

Another reason to admire this tree is its role in the natural community, for it benefits all sorts of wildlife. It is host to over 300 species of caterpillars which in turn are food for migratory birds such as Prairie Warblers, a species that breeds in the field. Ruffed Grouse are inextricably linked to aspen. The flower buds of older aspen are an important food source for this North Quabbin game bird, and younger trees provide cover for grouse broods in the summer and the adult birds in spring and fall. I have not yet flushed grouse in my walks at NEECA, but I would not be surprised to. Not far from Ernie’s childhood home is “Hundred Acre Wood” (now Town of Athol conservation land) where we used to walk after Sunday dinners. Often, we would flush grouse or hear the male’s drumming. The male beats his wings faster and faster in the air while standing upon a log or rock – I can best describe the experience as hearing an outboard boat motor putt, putt, putting to life deep in the forest.

The barn property has a few mature Big-toothed Aspen trees with furrowed bark like oak, but looking all the way up to the crown, one sees the typical aspen bark, smooth and light colored. The leaves of both this and the Quaking Aspen are, I think, among the most pleasing of all species: their shapes are rounded like faces, and in color they are a restful blue green above and pale below. The leaf surfaces are so smoothly textured that they feel velvety. Young leaves often have a rose-colored blush. In the fall aspen leaves are part of the yellow haze over the North Quabbin, along with birch and beech. And a distinctive feature of the aspen leaf is the flattened leaf stem or petiole. It is attached perpendicularly to the leaf blade, allowing the leaf to pivot, thus exposing both leaf surfaces to the sun, and maximizing photosynthesis. This attribute has led to its names: quaking, trembling. In the north country it may be called “popple”, for the tree is also known as poplar. Whatever name it is known by the tree is familiar to many for its chatter in the breeze.

The property has a few mature Big-toothed Aspen trees with furrowed bark like oak, but looking all the way up to the crown, one sees the typical aspen bark, smooth and light colored. The leaves of both this and the Quaking Aspen are, I think, among the most pleasing of all species: their shapes are rounded like faces, and in color they are a restful blue green above and pale below. The leaf surfaces are so smoothly textured that they feel velvety. Young leaves often have a rose-colored blush. In the fall aspen leaves are part of the yellow haze over the North Quabbin, along with birch and beech. And a distinctive feature of the aspen leaf is the flattened leaf stem or petiole. It is attached perpendicularly to the leaf blade, allowing the leaf to pivot, thus exposing both leaf surfaces to the sun, and maximizing photosynthesis. This attribute has led to its names: quaking, trembling. In the north country it may be called “popple”, for the tree is also known as poplar. Whatever name it is known by the tree is familiar to many for its chatter in the breeze.

One perennial LBS fundraiser over the years has been selling cookbooks, and one is in the works for the 200th anniversary. Here is a recipe originally from Betty Woodbury (who is a direct descendent of Mrs. Almira Woodbury) from the 1997 cookbook:

LBS Banana Bread
1/2 cup shortening
2 eggs
3 mashed bananas
2 cups flour
1/4 tsp salt
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup nuts
1 tsp baking soda

Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs one at a time and beat after each addition. Add flour, sifted with salt and soda, alternately with mashed bananas. Pour into greased loaf pan and bake for 1 hour at 350.

The Ladies Benevolent Society 200th Anniversary
Watch for a series of programs and festivities throughout this year celebrating the LBS’s 200th year of comradery and service. Using the power of the community event and fundraising, the this group has had has had a persistant influence on our Town. Here is a bit of history from the first decades:

According to The History of the First Congregational Church of Royalston, the Society began as a Women’s Group connected to the Church. It’s first records are from December 21, 1824. In the early years, the president was always the pastor’s wife. By the mid 1840’s, through dues and fundraising, the LBS was contributing significantly to the Church’s budget and in 1848 raised enough money to cover the pastor’s salary ($450) and the yearly expenses ($750). After a fire destroyed the Church (and the Town Hall) in 1851, the Society paid for the new church furnishings. Some of the other charitable works from the early years were sewing clothes for families in need and providing quilts for the Orphan’s Asylum in Worcester. In the mid 1850s, men were encouraged to become honorary members, although they could not hold office. During the Civil War, the Ladies made caps, flannel shirts, socks and bandages and many “sewed with mute expressions of sorrow and sadness.” After the war, the women worked to fill barrels of clothes to aid the Freedmen, a liberated slave organization. Mrs. Almira Woodbury was “impasioned with the project” and kept an open barrel in her home for all to stop by with items of clothing. Mrs. Woodbury was also instrumental in founding the Town’s library. From the beginning, the LBS gave assistance to people in time of sickness, bereavement, accident or special difficulties. “They brought flowers and wrote notes to cheer heavy hearts.” This still happens.

One perennial LBS fundraiser over the years has been selling cookbooks, and one is in the works for the 200th anniversary. Here is a recipe originally from Betty Woodbury (who is a direct descendent of Mrs. Almira Woodbury) from the 1997 cookbook:

LBS Banana Bread
1/2 cup shortening
2 eggs
3 mashed bananas
2 cups flour
1/4 tsp salt
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup nuts
1 tsp baking soda

Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs one at a time and beat after each addition. Add flour, sifted with salt and soda, alternately with mashed bananas. Pour into greased loaf pan and bake for 1 hour at 350.

The History of the First Congregational Church of Royalston, The Society began as a Women’s Group connected to the Church. It’s first records are from December 21, 1824. In the early years, the president was always the pastor’s wife. By the mid 1840’s, through dues and fundraising, the LBS was contributing significantly to the Church’s budget and in 1848 raised enough money to cover the pastor’s salary ($450) and the yearly expenses ($750). After a fire destroyed the Church (and the Town Hall) in 1851, the Society paid for the new church furnishings. Some of the other charitable works from the early years were sewing clothes for families in need and providing quilts for the Orphan’s Asylum in Worcester. In the mid 1850s, men were encouraged to become honorary members, although they could not hold office. During the Civil War, the Ladies made caps, flannel shirts, socks and bandages and many “sewed with mute expressions of sorrow and sadness.” After the war, the women worked to fill barrels of clothes to aid the Freedmen, a liberated slave organization. Mrs. Almira Woodbury was “impasioned with the project” and kept an open barrel in her home for all to stop by with items of clothing. Mrs. Woodbury was also instrumental in founding the Town’s library. From the beginning, the LBS gave assistance to people in time of sickness, bereavement, accident or special difficulties. “They brought flowers and wrote notes to cheer heavy hearts.” This still happens.

One perennial LBS fundraiser over the years has been selling cookbooks, and one is in the works for the 200th anniversary. Here is a recipe originally from Betty Woodbury (who is a direct descendent of Mrs. Almira Woodbury) from the 1997 cookbook:

LBS Banana Bread
1/2 cup shortening
2 eggs
3 mashed bananas
2 cups flour
1/4 tsp salt
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup nuts
1 tsp baking soda

Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs one at a time and beat after each addition. Add flour, sifted with salt and soda, alternately with mashed bananas. Pour into greased loaf pan and bake for 1 hour at 350.

The History of the First Congregational Church of Royalston, The Society began as a Women’s Group connected to the Church. It’s first records are from December 21, 1824. In the early years, the president was always the pastor’s wife. By the mid 1840’s, through dues and fundraising, the LBS was contributing significantly to the Church’s budget and in 1848 raised enough money to cover the pastor’s salary ($450) and the yearly expenses ($750). After a fire destroyed the Church (and the Town Hall) in 1851, the Society paid for the new church furnishings. Some of the other charitable works from the early years were sewing clothes for families in need and providing quilts for the Orphan’s Asylum in Worcester. In the mid 1850s, men were encouraged to become honorary members, although they could not hold office. During the Civil War, the Ladies made caps, flannel shirts, socks and bandages and many “sewed with mute expressions of sorrow and sadness.” After the war, the women worked to fill barrels of clothes to aid the Freedmen, a liberated slave organization. Mrs. Almira Woodbury was “impasioned with the project” and kept an open barrel in her home for all to stop by with items of clothing. Mrs. Woodbury was also instrumental in founding the Town’s library. From the beginning, the LBS gave assistance to people in time of sickness, bereavement, accident or special difficulties. “They brought flowers and wrote notes to cheer heavy hearts.” This still happens.

One perennial LBS fundraiser over the years has been selling cookbooks, and one is in the works for the 200th anniversary. Here is a recipe originally from Betty Woodbury (who is a direct descendent of Mrs. Almira Woodbury) from the 1997 cookbook:

LBS Banana Bread
1/2 cup shortening
2 eggs
3 mashed bananas
2 cups flour
1/4 tsp salt
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup nuts
1 tsp baking soda

Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs one at a time and beat after each addition. Add flour, sifted with salt and soda, alternately with mashed bananas. Pour into greased loaf pan and bake for 1 hour at 350.
Lady Winter

Lady winter reclines beneath a white comfort.
Long and lithe, her curves reflect
The contours of the country.

Lady winter slumbers.
It is not yet time to rise.
Yet soon enough she will.

Lady winter welcomes flurries.
They fluff up her covers
With their frigid feathers.

Lady winter stirs
Beneath the soft, cold shimmering.
Her sparkling cover renewed.

Lady winter stays still.
All of Nature shares her rest,
Dreaming of gestating seasons.

Lady winter's seamstress lays out
A fragrant floral gown.
Soon she'll wake and put on spring.

Michael Young, Royalston Poet Laureate

Public Meeting Presentation of
THE WHITNEY HALL
FEASIBILITY STUDY FINAL REPORT
Thursday, February 29, 2024 6:30 PM at Town Hall
As the Newsletter goes to press, Keen Independent Research is putting the final touches on its months-long marketing study of Whitney Hall. Please plan to come hear their final report at a public meeting on Thursday, February 29, 2024 at 6:30 in the Upstairs Hall, Town Hall, 13 On the Common.

Interested in town social activities?
I’m seeking other town residents help in setting up a game night once or twice a month at Town Hall. I’m hoping to obtain a ping-pong table to go along with card games like whist, hearts, cribbage, and chess. This is a chance for folks to come together and interact, especially during the non-summer evenings. If you are interested in trying to make this happen please give me, a call or text at 617-460-3531.

Robert Fairchild