

Insightful and Informative

THE HAMPTON Gazette



VOLUME XLVI No. 10 / NOVEMBER 2024

November Skies



Pete Vertefeuille

This osprey took off from a very tall tree not far from where I was standing. All of a sudden the bird appeared to be heading directly at me. Oh, yes, it certainly was. Closer and closer it got while rapidly descending to just around twenty-five feet overhead. The bird came to a stand-still as it hovered over me, and for around fifteen to twenty seconds. I was so surprised because I didn't realize they could hover in place. I was thinking, bird, I'm not a fish. Did I look like a fish? Yikes! And then it flew off and circled a few times and took off. A little while later, this osprey came back and alighted in the same tree and watched to see what was visible in the river below and above the dam. Once again, the bird darted directly at me, but in the last moment, it seemed to stop in mid-air again, but then rocketed just past me. I quickly turned to follow the osprey with my camera but couldn't keep up with it. And then, splash! The bird crashed into the water and captured a fish and then flew off, only to return once again, but further off into another tree.



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THUMBS UP to this month's community events, Organic Roots Farm's Heritage Day, East and West of the River's Samhain Festival, Walktober at Goodwin Forest, Trail Wood, and the Airline Trail, the Fletcher's 5K race, and Main Street's celebration of Halloween. Thanks for giving us an excuse to appreciate the splendor of October's foliage and weather!

THUMBS DOWN to the recent spate of burglaries on the south and west ends of town, one of which resulted in many stolen items. Hampton is a relatively safe place to live; we're fortunate. Yet we're not immune from crime, and we shouldn't let our guard down. Please lock your doors, your vehicles, and remember to be vigilant.

Dear Readers,

The Gazette regretfully accepts the resignation of Wayne Erskine from our editorial board. Wayne has served in this capacity for several years, offering suggestions and encouragement at our meetings, distributing beverages at our Memorial Day Barbecue, and most importantly, contributing poetry to our town newspaper, which he promises to continue, gracing our pages with his artistry.

Thank you, Wayne.
The Gazette

FROM THE REGISTRARS OF VOTERS

The polls will be open for the Election on November 5 from 6AM to 8PM in the Community Room at Town Hall. Early Voting and Same Day Registration is available in the Office of the Registrars of Voters on November 1, 2 and 3 from 10AM to 6PM. The Registrars will hold a limited registration session from 9AM to 5PM on November 4 for those whose rights as to age, citizenship, or residence was attained since October 27. Same Day Registration is available during the Election in the Registrars' Office only to those who apply prior to the close of the polls. Absentee ballots are available from the Town Clerk during regular Town Hall hours, and curb-side voting will be available during Early Voting and Election Day.

Dayna McDermott-Arriola and Sulema Perez-Pagan

RECIPE OF THE MONTH: BANANA CUPCAKES

Election Day was once synonymous with culinary delights, as officials delivered their specialties, as well as their expertise, in dealing with a very long day at the polls. Many are still associated with their gastronomic contributions -- "Stephanie's Salads", "Sandra's Deviled Eggs", "Linda's Cookies", "Juan's Guac" and "Randy's Cupcakes". Though he didn't make them, my grandmother's banana cupcakes were Randy Thompson's favorite -- the first time he ate a baker's dozen all by himself. I baked them whenever he was our ballot clerk, and only recently since. Here's to a smooth election, our loyal poll workers, and delicious food, on Election Day, Thanksgiving, and always.

Ingredients:

½ cup butter, softened
½ cup sugar
½ cup brown sugar
1 egg
1 tsp. vanilla
5 very ripe bananas
1 tbs. water
1½ cups flour
½ tsp. cloves
½ tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda

Cream the butter and the sugars till smooth. Blend in the egg and the vanilla. Mash the bananas and lightly stir in the water. Lightly fold the bananas into the butter mixture. Stir all the dry ingredients together and blend into the banana mixture. Pour the batter into buttered muffin tins and bake at 375 for 15 – 20 minutes, or until the cupcakes pass the inserted knife test. Remove from pans and frost when cool.

Frosting:

4 oz. cream cheese
1 tsp. vanilla
1 tbs. and 1 tsp. milk
Cream till smooth. Gradually add 3 – 3 ½ cups confectioner's sugar and blend to spreading consistency. Makes 24 cupcakes.

Anna McDermott

BOARD DECISIONS, PRINCIPAL'S DEPARTURE, AFFECT SCHOOL CULTURE AT HAMPTON ELEMENTARY

The Hampton Elementary School Board of Education voted 5-3 at its 10/23 meeting to conduct an investigation into allegations raised against a board member. There were many residents in attendance, drawn to the last few meetings presumably, based on their remarks, due to agenda items "pertaining to the conduct of a board member". However their questions went unanswered when the board entered a closed executive session, as the public discussion was limited to only the motion, made by Dennis Timberman and seconded by Mark Becker, "to authorize the Board Chair person in consultation with the Board's legal counsel to retain the services of a third party to investigate the complaint made against a Board Member."

Although the minutes fail to reflect his request, Juan Arriola, the member whose conduct is in question, was denied an open executive session by Chairman Rose Bisson because of "attorney-client privilege". Arriola has filed a complaint with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Commission regarding this decision, asserting his right to a public session for the portion of the executive session that discussed "the conduct of a board member". The statute governing executive sessions provides that the individual "may require that discussion be held at an open meeting".

This will be the fourth complaint regarding executive sessions filed this year. The first, alleging that the session was improperly noticed, was resolved in the complainant's favor through the commission's ombudsman program. The second was decided in favor of Board members Arriola, Diane Gagnon, and John Russell who objected to the former Superintendent's presence during an executive session. The third complaint filed was the result of an executive session last month called "to discuss an attorney-client privileged communication related to an employee", however, the "client", Arriola alleged in his complaint, was former school Principal Patrice Merendina, not the Board of Education. That complaint has yet to be resolved.

The conduct to be investigated stems from Arriola's "involvement" in a discrimination grievance filed by former custodian Armin Harris alleging that school administrators failed to follow policies related to an incident that occurred at the school in September of 2023. Harris, who has since resigned, has also filed a complaint with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO). In a letter dated 9/19/24 addressed to Bisson and Becker, Merendina's attorney claimed that "Arriola used his position as a Board of Education member" to "publicly disclose information he obtained". The six-page correspondence was distributed on 9/20 to all of the school board members, except Arriola, who obtained it on 9/28 via a FOI request.

The complaint alleges that Arriola's attempt to attend a meeting between Harris, Merendina, and Superintendent Skarzinski on 6/21 was improper, and was ultimately cancelled. However, a CHRO representative has independently confirmed that Arriola did so at their suggestion. It also alleges that Arriola inappropriately distributed Harris' letter of resignation to members at the 7/26 meeting of the school board, where letters of resignation are normally received. Though the complaint accuses Arriola of "passing out a copy to the press", Harris himself sent his letter to the CHRO, the NAACP, the First Selectman, an attorney, and the newspaper.

The complaint also alleges that Arriola breached state and federal law when he "disclosed information that he obtained based on his position as a Board of Education member to the public and to the media". Most of the complaint centers around the "substantial damage and injury to Ms. Merendina's professional and personal reputation" due to an article published in the *Willimantic Chronicle* on 9/10. The article reported a communication from former Superintendent Sarli stating that the investigation into Harris' discrimination grievance concluded that Merendina engaged in certain "inappropriate conduct". Merendina accused Arriola of providing the

Willimantic Chronicle with all of the information, however the reporter has confirmed in writing that she had no contact with Arriola regarding the matter.

Most of the parents attending the meeting were focused on why Merendina resigned, blaming multiple culprits, including the Superintendent, the school board at large, one member in particular, and the *Willimantic Chronicle*. Merendina's letter to parents stated "In order to reach my professional goals, it is necessary for me to accept the position of Coordinator of State Initiatives" with Norwich Public Schools. Superintendent Skarzynski confirmed the same at the meeting of 9/26 when the board voted to accept her resignation. One parent lamented that her child no longer wants to come to school for fear another staff member might leave. Another parent announced that Merendina would be willing to return to the school if "some things happen", but didn't identify what those things were.

Concerns about the reasons for Merendina's departure were not the only complaints. One parent criticized the school for failing to deal with instances of bullying, another claimed the school has become "unwelcoming" to the extent that she's considering the removal of her children from the school. She listed as examples the new procedures for dropping off and picking up students curbside rather than in the school, the necessity of making an appointment in order to enter the building, and new procedures which require parents to get fingerprinted in order to volunteer in their child's classroom, or chaperone field trips. All of these practices were implemented by Merendina, not current Interim Principal Vikki Smith, who also serves as the school's Special Education Director.

Despite citizens' descriptions of the board as "dysfunctional" and worse, the administration reported positive steps on some important matters. The school will be employing an additional teacher to assist with the students in the first and second grade class which has 25 students, a measure supported by parents and staff. The Superintendent will be amending the volunteer procedures so that fingerprinting will not be required when parents are supervised by a teacher. It was also decided that parents will be alerted in the event that the police are called to the school to address any incident. And the school is negotiating a contract with a former, retired custodian who will assist the custodian who replaced Harris with procedures to deal with the day-to-day operations of the school.

Kathi Newcombe

I'm From Here

Life-long resident June Pawlikowski Miller is starting a column called "I'm From Here", in recognition of the uniqueness of our town. Here are her first entries, celebrations of life and of autumn.

BITTERSWEET

Even though I'm from here, today was only the second time I've enjoyed the pavilion's hospitality. I really should get out more. The sky was that beautiful fall blue, mixed with white, white clouds that didn't block the sun but instead uplifted one's spirits. The October air was warm, more reminiscent of September, clear and fresh but not yet crisp. The locust leaflets rained down with the occasional breeze, filling the nearby air with yellow confetti, fitting indeed for a homecoming celebration.

I received a very fine welcome from the honored guest, a very delightful and grown-up six-year-old who solemnly welcomed each attendee, asking tentatively "is that present for me?"

Addiction hurts. But even when it does, it can be the catalyst for determination, steadfastness, and incredible acts of love and kindness and goodness. Though addiction was the unfortunate backdrop, today's celebration was orchestrated well indeed by this small boy's proud, grateful grandparents. They were thankful and happy, and we were thankful and happy right back.

Many joined the festivities, and I recognized many that, like me, could rightly say they were 'from here'. Some sat singly, in quiet reflection. Others, in groups, chatting and enjoying a traditional and excellent repast. And the children played, and played.

Thankfulness. It all stemmed from thankfulness. The thankfulness spread and spread, until it caused a celebration. At the center of it all, a small boy, playing and piling his grandpa with all the gifts he'd received. A small boy who can call all of Hampton "family".

I've seen an irony that both hardship and blessing can produce fine things. Today I got to join in a celebration that was breathed by both. It was a beautiful thing, one that makes this Hamptonite once again proud to say, "I'm from here".

SMALL TREASURES

The brisk walk along the Goodwin northbound section of the Airline Trail with good friends left me sweating, jubilant, energized. The fiercely, perfectly blue sky framed the trees' autumn-color-laden leaves, which on occasion floated down for us to examine as we chose. While my mom used to refer to this kind of cloudless sky as a 'weather breeder,' I'm aware of no weatherman who has even hinted at anything but sun for the next few days. Time will tell which is right!

Next stop? The General Store, for meat loaf! Upon entry, Brutus immediately greeted me at the door with soft whines. It did little to enhance his already gentlemanly charm. I had no treats, so took directions to the back of the store (Brutus coming along) to find some to buy. Brutus quickly devoured the treats, then whined softly in recognition as another regular entered the store. Ah, no meatloaf today, but for this single gal, the eggplant parm that I chose may last at least the next three substantial meals. Huzzah! A brilliant, beautiful fall day, with mozzarella-laden eggplant and tomato sauce. Who could ask for more!

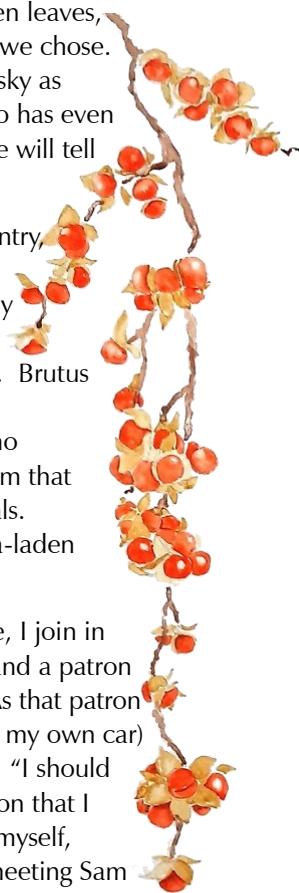
From there, a quick drive to Organic Roots. Of course, I join in the conversation already underway between Rosetta and a patron who had a handful of zinnias and other fall flowers. As that patron leaves (yes! She left her car running. No! I didn't lock my own car) Rosetta immediately begins her conversation with me: "I should know you; I'm sure we've met?..." This is my indication that I spend far too little time at Organic Roots. I introduce myself, and it's a fond reintroduction. I had the pleasure of meeting Sam while he was scouting out Popover Hill for a farm, and for his family, and we had and have a lot in common. Sam and Rosetta and their family are kindred spirits to both me, and Hampton.

I am impressed with the neatness and orderliness of Organic Roots. The fall flowers, zinnias and shoulder-high salvia and others form nearly a wall as one enters. It is these that compose the lovely bouquets for sale in the welcoming store. Today I've come for cinnamon rolls. And they are on sale! Well, it's just for me so I still only purchase two, and then Rosetta and I chat long about the pork sausage and meats offered. Why I don't yet shop local! I have to work on that. We stop beneath the bower, and I inquire about the beans covering it. They are an ornamental type that Rosetta planted for their show. She generously gave me a ripe pod, from which I can plant my own bean plants next year, and enjoy with delight a piece of Organic Roots.

A hug from behind, infused with a love-filled grin. And now a pair of Hamptonites has entered the store, who long ago discovered the value of shopping local that has just sprouted in my own consciousness. And the conversation picks up anew, now four joining in. I take this as my opportunity to leave, also leaving behind the conversation akin to that enjoyed by immediate family. I say I'm from here? And yet I leave this so quickly? Yes, I'm still working on my town integration. As my mom would say, I too am a 'swamp Yankee' and these things can come hard.

The cinnamon roll must be thawed by now, and the eggplant parm baking in my Breville oven will be ready within the hour. The sky is still cloudlessly blue, and the October warmth is slipping in through my opened windows and doors.

Thank God for small treasures!



Fletcher Memorial Library

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS: 1924-2024

NEW BOOKS

Variety this month with an abundance of adult fiction and nonfiction, plus books for early readers. Favorite authors like Lee Child, Louise Erdrich, Richard Powers, Rachel Kushner and Rich Riordin are on the shelves, plus new memoirs, biographies, and histories, even a book that gives a new look at plants.

ADULT FICTION

Louis Bayard	The Wildes
Lee Child	Safe Enough (short stories)
Julia Dahl	I Dreamed of Falling
Louise Erdrich	The Mighty Red
Lee Goldberg	Ashes Never Lie
Ava Glass	The Trap
Matt Haig	The Life Impossible
Tami Hoag	Bad Liar
David Lagercrantz	Fatal Gambit
Attica Locke	Guide Me Home
Mike Maden	Clive Cussler Ghost Soldier
Sarah Morgenthaler	The Christmas You Found Me
Liane Moriarty	Here One Moment
Richard Powers	Playground
J.D. Robb	Passions in Death
Sally Rooney	Intermezzo
Nicholas Sparks	Counting Miracles

ADULT NON-FICTION

Hillary Clinton	Something Lost, Something Gained, Reflections...
Ina Garten	Be Ready when Luck Happens (Memoir)
Rebecca Nagle	By The Fire We Carry: Generations-Long Fight for Justice on Native Land
Camille Peri	A Wilder Shore: The Romantic Odyssey of Fanny & Robert Louis Stevenson
Zoe Schlanger	The Light Eaters, How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth

JUVENILES AND YOUNG ADULT

Melinda Beatty	Things That Go Bump in the Day
Stephane Frattini	Heavyweights of the Vehicle Universe
Janet Lord	Crick, Crack, Crow!
Rick Riordin	Wrath of the Triple Goddess
Anne Schreiber	Monkeys
Max Walther	On the Farm (board book)



WEEKLY EVENTS

Wednesday Afternoon Knitting Group
NOON

This informal fiber arts group meets most Wednesdays; please call the library first to make sure the group is meeting.

Thursday Mornings Mah Jongg
10AM -- NOON. Mah Jongg is a popular tile game. A terrific brain teaser, it's addictive, it's fun, and it's social. All skill levels are welcome.

Friday Mornings Mexican Train
9AM -- NOON Join us in the Community Room of Town Hall for free classes on a modern version of Dominoes. All skill levels are welcome

Friday Mornings Tai Chi at the Hampton Town Hall 8:30AM Tai Chi takes place in the Pavilion at the Town Hall Campus.

SENIOR DELIVERY SERVICE

The library is happy to provide a delivery service for library items (books, audio CDs, and DVDs). Please call or email the library with your requests, or questions on all listed programs: call 860.455.1086 or email: fletchermemoriallibrary@gmail.com

LONG SERVING VOLUNTEER KEEPS THE DESK RUNNING AND THE BOOKS GOING OUT!

While the library conducts a search for a new permanent librarian, we are extremely fortunate that Beth Desjardin, one of our long serving and invaluable volunteers, has offered to run the day to day operations of the library. Beth has been a volunteer for the last six years, working nine hours a week to help keep Fletcher running smoothly.

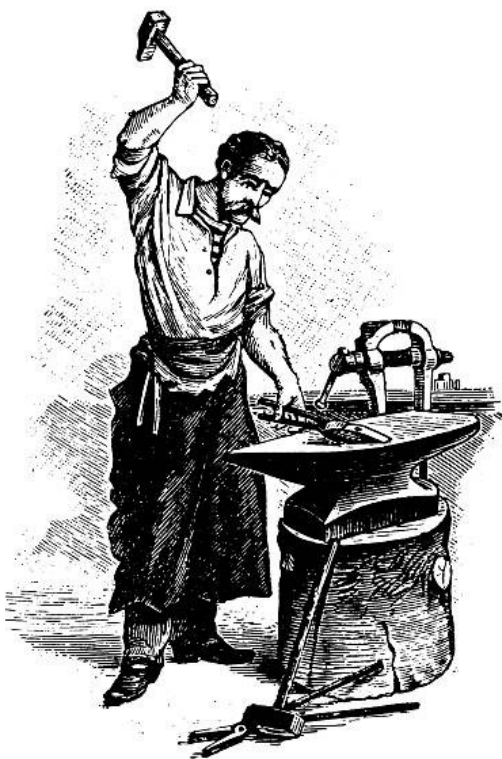
Although her professional work was in accounting, Beth can honestly say that she started out in library science: she was a teenaged page in her local library and she has never lost her love for books. Friendly and efficient, Beth is an enthusiastic reader, always willing to share information about a new author or a good book. The library will be in good hands with her on the desk.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH

The village blacksmith was an important person in rural America. An essential craftsman and merchant, the blacksmith was responsible for making repairs and indispensable items such as horseshoes, farm and kitchen tools, his merchandise and expertise an integral part of the currency. Every village, including ours, required certain institutions to function well and independently – a church, a school, a store, a tavern, and a blacksmith.

In early times, no farm was without its own forge, Susan Jewett Griggs wrote in "Folklore and Firesides", but the blacksmith was vital to the farmer and the housewife alike, shoeing the horses and the oxen, and supplying the pots and pans, hammers and nails, handles and hinges, axes and shovels, sickles and plows. The blacksmith was also a link in the system of currency. In "Discovering Hampton", Janice Trecker writes, "an early nineteenth century farmer like William Alworth might get a blacksmith like Ebenezer Jewett or John Hovey to mend plows and other farm equipment in exchange for barrels of cider which would be sent to them after the apple harvest in the fall."

According to Griggs, the first blacksmith to set up shop, or "coal house", in the area was shortly after the Reverend Samuel Mosley's 1735 arrival to our newly formed parish. Located on "the King's Highway" in Westminster, Griggs notes "it would seem to have been an out of the way place for a village smithy to establish himself, but it was...convenient for shoeing the horses of the many travelers."



The eldest sons of Benjamin Jewett II, a blacksmith who settled in Canterbury in 1732, Benjamin III and Ebenezer, were both blacksmiths who came to Hampton. Griggs reports that they "settled on the road that once connected Howard's Valley and Clark's Corners", but it's unclear as to where their "coal houses" were.

As Hampton's population expanded, so did the need for blacksmiths, and eventually there were several in town, apparently busy enough to require appointments. "There must have been at least five smithies in Hampton seventy years ago," Arthur Kimball recalled of the turn of the 20th century in Alison Davis' "Hampton Remembers". One is thought to have been in Bigelow in connection with the Litchfield mills, the blacksmith Fuller's shop, located at 631 Pomfret Road, was associated with the mills at Hemlock Glen, the blacksmith Hovey's shop is presumed to have been near the reservoir, and in all probability there must have been at least one in the southern section of town where there were several mills. And there was one, of course, in the town's center, possibly two.

Earlier deeds of the lot where Jonathan Clark built the house at 289 Main Street, recently featured in "Country Living" magazine and still referred to as "The Misses Pearl's", show this parcel "with a blacksmith shop standing in the highway", according to town historian Bob Burgoyne's articles on the development of the village in "This Old Hill". It wasn't all that unusual for surveys to require structures, even houses, to be moved from the middle of the road and relocated. In this case, the blacksmith shop disappeared from this property's deeds and its repositioning south east of the property suggests that it could have become part of the property at 276 Main Street where Clark's 1858 survey identifies CC. Button's grain pantry, a wagon shop, and one more small shop which might have been the original blacksmith's. The village blacksmith shop was apparently equipped to shoe oxen as well as horses. Arthur Kimball recalled, "The blacksmith shop in the center of town run by Booth and then Henry Fuller and later Russell was equipped to shoe oxen. Oxen refused to stand on three feet, as a horse does, while the farrier works on the other foot. They have to be hung in a sling to keep them from tumbling onto the floor." The stone structure on the corner of Cemetery and South Bigelow roads was presumably built for this purpose as well.

There is architectural evidence to suggest that a second blacksmith shop was located across from the Burnham-Hibbard House in a building which pre-dated the Little River Grange, constructed in 1906, because of the way the structure is built into the bank. This speculation is based on the fact that the building, the Community Center since the completion of renovations in 2008, has a berm barn foundation of dry laid stone, typical of blacksmiths' shops, to prevent the forge fire from spreading.

The occupation was lucrative here in Hampton for over two hundred years, and blacksmiths were always busy. In "Hampton Remembers", Arthur Kimball recalled: "Besides shoeing horses and mending tools, the blacksmith kept on hand a supply of small iron rods from which he manufactured nails in his spare time."

But repairing tools, shoeing horses, and even making nails couldn't keep the trade alive once the invention, and availability, of automobiles, became a reality in our small, rural town, and in 1907, Griggs reports, the



THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH

*Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The Smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.*

*His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can
And looks the whole world in the face
For he owes not any man.*

*Week in, week out, from morn till night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.*

*And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming furge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing floor.*

*He goes on Sunday to the church
and sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach.
He hears his daughter's voice
singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.*

*It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.*

*Toiling,--rejoicing,--sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.*

*Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought!*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

village blacksmith shop, which “stood from earliest times at the north end of the long street”, closed. “Henry Fuller, who began his trade when ten years old,” she wrote, “was the last of the old time blacksmiths.”

“As the population of draft animals dropped,” Trecker noted, “blacksmiths switched to mechanical work and body repairs on cars.”

My husband Bob McDermott came to Hampton from Providence and worked for Walter Hoffman who owned the garage, and then in 1926 he bought the garage and ran it as the Hampton Hill Garage...there were still lots of horses around town but as they became scarce the need for blacksmiths lessened and those who knew that trade became garage mechanics. George Huling, the son of the blacksmith Greene Huling, worked in the garage for my husband.

Anna McDermott from “Hampton Remembers”

Over the course of more than a year, “Our Rural Heritage” has featured the section of our town known as the village, the center, the hill. Starting in June of 2023 with the 300th anniversary of the Congregational Church, we detailed the development of the homes, their later use in the “summer colony”, some of the “characters” who lived in them, the schools, the library, the firehouse, the Town Hall, businesses -- taverns inns, and stores, the Burnham-Hibbard Museum, the Little River Grange, the Catholic Church, hidden behind the pines, the post office, the town pound, and the parades that have streamed along Main Street. Most of these institutions remain a vital part of village life, some of the buildings have been repurposed, and there is at least evidence of places which once were. So perhaps it's fitting that we finish our exploration of the village with the blacksmith, and his shop, the only one that has entirely disappeared.

GARDEN

In the with Dayna McDermott

THE PAVILION

Garden structures always enhance the landscape. Even the smallest of lawns benefits from an informal pergola, trellises or arbors bridging one area to another. Ramadas and gazebos serve as garden rooms for larger yards, architectural colonnades or arcades entwined with greenery as corridors for estates. Only an expansive property can host a pavilion. Hampton's campus is one of them.

Though the Town hasn't yet held the dedication, Hampton's pavilion is meant to honor the memory of Michael Chapel, a lifelong resident with long familial roots, town businessman, and a selectman of several years. The pavilion was built shortly after his untimely death in 2018. The town purchased the materials, members of our Mennonite community, who attribute Michael in large part for their decision to settle here, supplied the labor -- construction, electricity, paving -- with Mahlon Stoltzfus serving as Clerk of the Works, and Michael's landscaping partner, Dave Johnson, was responsible for the plantings, a collection of lilies and grasses, tassled now, on a scree of river rocks. Michael would approve.

Along with his fellow Selectmen, Michael thought a pavilion on the lawn between Town Hall and the Community Center would be a welcoming opportunity for community gatherings and staged events. They weren't wrong. The pavilion houses the Fall Festival, the Memorial Day Concert, and the Halloween Fortune Telling Witch, shelters the carolers for the Christmas Tree Lighting and provides seating for Flock Theater's summer performances. During the pandemic, meetings, even the Annual Town Meeting, were held there, when several boards, commissions, committees, agencies and organizations, such as the Scouts and the Seniors, met there, and realizing how lovely the space, and often the weather, continue to use it. It's also available for private parties, most recently ours.

The pavilion is situated on the Town Hall campus, between two of our most venerable institutions. The Community Center, which was once the Little River Grange, where my grandmother went weekly for "whist", and where we still use the stage for community performances, the kitchen to cook community meals. And the Town Hall, which once was the Consolidated School. My office is in a portion of what was Mrs. Lundin's English class. We vote in the

room that was sixth grade. It's wonderful to have children learning there once again, especially wonderful to watch them play the way we used to -- wholesome play, hide-and-go-seek and tag, baseball in the spring and fall, and in the winter, making the most of those magnificent hills. Its distinction as a "campus" is due to the pavilion. Prior to that, we just called it a field.

In every season, we admire the panoramic view. On this afternoon, the pavilion rests within a crescent of maple trees, still mostly saturated with summer's greens, only starting to ignite, a gold flame here, an orange one there, a couple of oaks bronzing at their edges. Soon the entirety will burst in a fiery explosion of color, and then the branches will become brooms sweeping the sky, too thick to reveal the valley beyond. I've witnessed the sun seep through those trees on election mornings, dawning on a new and determinative day, and our family frequently walks there evenings to sit beneath the ceiling, warmly lit, and watch the moon rise over the horizon. The rest of the circle, where there were once majestic elms, is reserved for special trees dedicated to people who have made a difference in our town, a dogwood, a crab apple, resplendent in spring, a sugar maple in fall, the evergreen we decorate at Christmastime with multi-colored lights, my Uncle Bob's cooper beach -- the plaque reads: Citizen Teacher, Friend. Indeed.

On this October afternoon, the view within the pavilion is one of neighbors, friends and relatives. They've gathered here to celebrate our grandson's adoption. Over one hundred of them, and almost as many children. A diverse group, several guests observe. And it is. They range in age from five weeks to 96 years old and represent various cultures, members of our Mennonite community, families and staff from the elementary school, the "good" DCF professionals, life-long friends and others we only just met along this journey. There are others here in spirit. My cousin Michael, my parents -- it's the bittersweet anniversary of our marriage and the death of my father, our grandson's namesake, a perfect tribute to both. And, of course, Felix's mother, our daughter Jill -- she's here with us, too.

What everyone has in common is their tremendous support for our family through these last two years. These friends and neighbors, relatives and professionals, were always there for us, giving of themselves in every conceivable way -- with their compassion, their time, their expertise, their validation, yes, even their outrage, most importantly their love of this little boy, and most especially, their prayers. The Lord works in mysterious ways, and never has this been more true than with little Felix who, frighteningly powerless through two years of reckless and imposed trauma, was, with a little help from his friends, finally able to take control of his future and become the hero of his own story.

The party was supposed to show our appreciation for everyone, but they brought their generosity right along with them, gifts of games and toys, books with memorable messages, cards with memorable words. Sarah Beaudoin serenaded us on her guitar with songs she wrote, Charity Stoltzfus came with one of her exquisite bouquets, Rosetta Fisher baked the celebratory cake, Elaine and Vernon King brought fresh apple cider, Peter Witkowski and Diane Gagnon -- wasn't it so good to see her around again! -- supplied invaluable cooking-for-a-crowd advice, and Kathy and Steve Donahue arrived early to set everything up and stayed late to put everything away -- friends who have been there from, literally, the start. And in return, acknowledging that we can never thank them all enough, we made food for everyone -- all of Jill's favorites -- enchiladas, pico, guacamole, pernil, arroz -- apparently everyone else's favorites, too.

In the end, I don't think the host ate anything. He was too busy playing with his friends. People would arrive a little late and say -- where's Felix? And we would say -- we don't know. He's running around with the kids. And they would all say -- that's as it should be.

All's as it should be.

JOSHUA'S TRUST

November 2 **Contemplative Walk at Whetten Woods**
10 – 11:30AM. Join us for a guided walk, stopping for contemplative reflections along the way. We will meet at the Nash-Zimmer Transportation Center in Storrs.

November 6 **Wednesday Walk at Hubbard Sanctuary and Agnes' Pasture** 9 – 10AM
Join us for a leisurely 1.3 mile walk through multiple habitats. Parking is available at Garrison Park.

November 20 **Wednesday Walk at Wolf Rock Nature Preserve** 9 – 10AM. Join us for a breathtaking walk and view one of Mansfield's most spectacular landmarks, a great glacial boulder. Parking is available along Crane Hill Road.

November 29 **Walk at Utley Hill Preserve**
10AM -- NOON. Join us for a post-Thanksgiving, 2.5 mile wilderness walk. We will meet at the Columbia Recreation Park at 60 Hennequin Road. Visit <https://joshustrust.org/events/> for details, updates and cancellations.



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PROGRAMS AT POMFRET

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November 1 -- December 31 Photography Exhibitions: Amy Porter: Bird Walks and More & Steven Rosendahl: Wetland Birds

November 1 (7 PM) & November 9 (6PM) Saw-whet Owl Banding Demonstrations

AT TRAIL WOOD

93 Kenyon Road, Hampton

November 2 Nature Journaling **10AM**

After a look at Teales' observational and scientific approach to nature writing, participants will take a short hike, make notes, sketch or photograph sights encountered, and share observations with others. Contact 860-928-4948, or trailwood@ctaudubon.org to register.

November 2 A Book of Days: Nature Lovers, Their Journals, and Phenology **2PM**

Katherine Hauswirth, author of *The Morning Light* and *The Lily White: Daily Dips into Nature and Spirit*, discusses nature journaling, some history of the practice, and recording observations across the seasons.

November 2 Last Light of Fall Walk **3:30PM**

Enjoy the last day of daylight savings time with a late afternoon autumn walk, weather permitting.

November 6 Trail Wood Troubadours **9PM**

Play and sing songs written during the years the Teales lived at Trail Wood. A PDF of chords and lyrics will be provided, and simple chords will be projected on screen so all levels can follow along. Registration required at trailwood@ctaudubon.org.

To register for programs or for more information, call 860.928.4948, visit ctaudubon.org, or email arzenkiewicz@ctaudubon.org.

SCOUTING NEWS

On an unusually warm and sunny weekend in September, Troops 93 and 1093 had another awesome adventure. November 13 through the 15th was spent canoeing on the Connecticut River from the Middle Haddam boat launch to the Baldwin Bridge boat launch in Old Saybrook. The first leg of the journey brought them to Hurd State Park. Arriving just before dark, they had just enough time to set up camp. The next day led them to Selden Island, with a stop at Gillette Castle for ice cream on the way. Once arriving, the Scouts made camp and prepared a meal of mac and cheese and hot dogs, a Scout favorite. The final day was spent paddling to Baldwin Bridge boat launch in Old Saybrook where the adventure ended. Many lifelong memories were made along the 23 mile journey. Many thanks to those planning and volunteering to make this trip happen.

Scouts meet at 7PM on Tuesdays at the Hampton Congregational Church.

CONTRIBUTORS: Mary Albro, Bob Burgoyne, Marie Cantino, Beth DesJardin, Kathi Newcombe, Rob Rondeau, Janice Trecker, Pete Vertefeulle.
PHOTOS: page 1, Pete Vertefeulle; page 7, courtesy of Hampton Remembers the Second Half of the 20th Century; page 9, Rob Rondeau.

Dear Auntie Mac

You must be tired of fielding political questions, my apologies, but the last two readers made me feel less alone. The fact is I am alone, a widow with no children, and I'm dreading the holiday season with my relatives because I'm alone in my political opinion too. In 2020, Covid prevented the traditional get-togethers, but in 2016, our Thanksgiving was a disaster – no food fights, but that might have been better than the verbal aggression! No matter the outcome of the election, this Thanksgiving will be worse. Do you have advice on fortifying myself to field the gloating of their victory or the hostility of their defeat? Or should I find another "tribe" who I might not be related to, but maybe have more in common with. At least this year.

Lonely

My Dear Neighbor:

Auntie Mac offers her sincere condolences on the passing of your husband. No matter how much time passes after the loss of a loved one, a certain twinge is felt during the holidays, and no matter how much supportive family or caring friends one has around one, there remains a small vacancy off to the side of any festivity that is difficult to fill. Nevertheless, your issue is one that would persist regardless: the prospect of attending a Thanksgiving family gathering in the company of people whose wildly differing political and social views from yours are giving you, to quote Sherwood Anderson, the pre-event fantods.

The holidays provide us with three alternate states of being: Joy. Obligation. Misery. Often these combine into a hopeless web from which we fear there is no extrication. What a delight it is to see the nieces, nephews and grandchildren. And this may be Aunt Bertha's last get-together with the whole family. Still, the talk around the table, especially if accompanied by before-dinner aperitifs, can send the most conscientious peacemaker to the fainting couch.

Auntie Mac must confess, dear, that she is extending her answer for the sake of this column, for she is adamant, as she hopes that in your heart of hearts you are too, that one should never put oneself in the path of the oncoming train of guaranteed misery. Depending on one's constitution, one may elect to verbally slug it

out with the least palatable relatives even before the creamed onions make it around the table. In that case, one accepts the family invitation and steels oneself for a tasty battle. I sense, however, that you wish to avoid such shenanigans at all costs. If there is an obligation to be considered, Aunt Bertha or otherwise, by all means go and spend all your time with her; if she's one of the relatives who is oblivious to your feelings, however, and likes to join in the sentiment you find appalling, decline the invitation, send her a nice card, and visit her some other time (in the very near future). If you have your heart set on seeing the younger family members, sit at the children's table and devote your attention to them.

Your letter, however, provides the answer you would really rather receive, and that is to host a holiday celebration yourself for people with whom you have much in common and around whom you feel comfortable, and loved. Auntie Mac finds that many people are eager to find a like-minded group with whom to spend the holidays, either because relatives are far away, or relatives are, frankly, unenjoyable companions. Even if some friends have obligations elsewhere, you will be surprised at how eager they are to enjoy a second dinner (or dessert) with you--someone they truly care about. And if friends invite you to be part of their own family celebration, do not, I repeat do not, think they are doing so out of pity. I assure you that the most enjoyable thing about Thanksgiving is sharing it with others; you will do both yourself, and them, a great favor.

Your Auntie Mac

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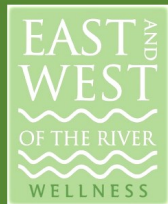
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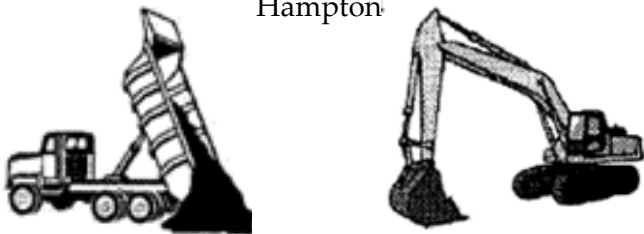
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