



July 2023

Happy Independence Day!

Book Talk

Former longtime Washington resident Steve Nelson will be doing a book talk about *The Memoir of a Female Soldier*, by his late wife Jan Lewis Nelson. It is based on the true story of Deborah Sampson, a young woman from Massachusetts who disguised herself as a man and served for 17 months in the Revolutionary War. She was wounded in combat and promoted as an aide to General John Paterson of Lenox (in whose memory the obelisk in the circle at Lenox Center is dedicated). The event will be held at Berkshire Community College on Tuesday, July 11 at 7:00, and is sponsored by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) in partnership with the Lenox Historical Society. It can also be viewed online via Zoom. Register for free at berkshireolli.org. Copies of the book will be available for sale and signing. You can also borrow one from the Becket-Washington library, donated by Steve in Jan's memory.

July Community Walk: Saturday, July 29 at 9am

July's Community walk will take us to the Washington Mountain Marsh Trail inside October Mountain State Forest. At 16,000 acres, October Mt. State Forest is the Commonwealth's largest single state forest. The land was acquired from the private estate of Millionaire William C. Whitney, in 1922.

DCR West Region Interpretive Coordinator Alec Gillman invites us to explore this "wild" landscape of northern hardwood forest. Hear colorful stories of long ago: Herman Melville, a forgotten village, a cemetery, colliers and Whitney's grand estate, now lost to time.

This three-mile moderate walk traverses rolling terrain, with rocks and roots. It's anticipated to take 2.5 hours, as there will be stops at several locations to reveal more of the story.

Comfortable but sturdy walking boots/ shoes are recommended as some areas may be wet. Wear appropriate clothing for the weather, bring plenty of water and a snack. You may wish to bring a walking stick.

Meet at the Mountain Marsh trailhead at 9am. From Washington Mt. Road, take West Branch Road. Follow West Branch Road for 2.6 miles, continue straight through four-way intersection.

Upcoming Community Event: Picnic at the Town Common - Saturday, August 19, at 11 am (rain date August 26). Save the date! More details will be included in the August TRACKS.

Any questions please contact Linda Levernoch 413-623-8309.

Classes

Chair Yoga Mondays 11:00 AM

Yoga Tuesdays at 9:00 AM

Osteoporosis Thursdays at 9:00 AM

Ti-Chi/QiGong Fridays at 10:00 AM

Pot Luck Dinner

Friday July 21 5:30 Steve will be making BBQ chicken. All seniors are welcome, come visit and share a meal. Bring a dish to share if you can.

Questions, comments, or need assistance? Call 413-394-0003 or email washingtoncoa@gmail.com

Senator Paul Mark Coming to Washington for Town Hall Forum

The Select Board will be hosting Senator Paul Mark for a public forum on **Tuesday, July 25 from 10:30 a.m. to noon** at Town Hall. Join us to hear about legislative updates and to provide your perspective on our local priorities and issues for the State House. This is an opportunity to make our voices heard back in Boston.

Becket Roadwork Scheduled for July

The Town of Becket wants Washington residents to be aware that on July 10, they will be starting two road projects that could affect many of us as well.

1. Werden Rd (which many use as a convenient shortcut when traveling to Otis and beyond on Route 8) will be having a bridge replaced. This road will be completely shut down to thru-traffic during the project, for safety and to expedite the construction. This project should take approximately 30 days.

2. McNerney Rd (the southern extension of Washington Mountain Rd once it crosses into Becket) will be getting a full-depth reclamation. During the day this road will be shut down to everyone except residents who live on McNerney Rd and Pill Dr. The plan is to have the road open each evening. This project should take approximately 30 days.

There will be a few days when the intersection at Brooker Hill Rd will also be closed, preventing thru-traffic south of Schulze Rd. Keep an eye on our website for updates.

Get Town News in Your Inbox

Remember that you can subscribe to receive email notifications whenever News & Announcements or Urgent Alerts are posted to our Town website. This is a good way to stay informed about important opportunities, events, and cancellations in between issues of the Tracks.

To get these notices, go www.washington-ma.gov and click on the *Subscribe to Alerts* button in the Citizen Action Center sidebar. Then provide your email address and select "Urgent Town Alerts" and "Home Page News & Announcements".

(These emails are an automated feature of the web platform; addresses are not collected or used for any other purpose.)

Dear Washington Friends & Neighbors:

July 2023

After a nearly year-long saga, the Washington & Middlefield Select Boards have hired a full-time shared Town Administrator to work half-time in each of our towns. On June 23, the Boards finalized an employment agreement and voted to appoint Sean Curran of Springfield. Sean is a former State Representative and current Springfield City Council member, as well as a practicing attorney, licensed investment advisor, and real estate broker.

There will be a learning curve while Sean adapts his experience and skills to our small towns and gets to know us and our residents. We will want to hold an event to introduce him to the community and vice versa, but we haven't had time to set a date yet. We will look for a day in August. We will also be publishing a revised Town Hall schedule, once his regular office hours are settled. The Board looks forward to working with him in the weeks and months ahead.

However, we regret to announce that John Fish has tendered his resignation from the Select Board, effective June 30. We thank him for his service and wish him well. The Board will be coordinating with the Town Clerk to call a special election in the coming months.

Many residents may have noticed an unfamiliar face in our Police cruiser in the past month or so. The Board has appointed Officer Frank Murphy to join Chief Miller part-time specifically to increase hours spent on speed enforcement. This will be a year-long experiment utilizing grant money to cover his pay. If we all feel that the investment has been worth it in tamping down some of our chronic speeding issues, we can all decide at next year's Annual Town Meeting to continue funding this position in our operating budget.

The Highway crew will finally be able to tackle the potholes on Lower Valley Rd and Johnson Hill Rd, now that we have crossed into the new fiscal year and have a fresh materials budget. In terms of longer range planning, these roads are the next priorities for grant funding to undertake a more comprehensive repaving project (though this may take several years to plan and realize).

Work on the Frost Rd culvert should begin later this month. At some point, there will be approximately two or three weeks when the road will need to be closed completely. That timeframe is not yet known with any certainty, but the current best estimate is the last three weeks of August. We will provide updates to the website as the schedule takes shape.

Despite the drizzly weather, last month's Community Walk along the railroad tracks was well-attended. It was great to see so many old and new faces. This month's walk will be an interpretive hike in October Mountain State Forest. See elsewhere in this issue for details. Happy Summer!

Kent Lew
Select Board chair

David Ellis
Select Board

The Community Hike, hosted by the Washington Historic Commission, has been changed to a different date. It will now be held on October 7th, at 9 AM, instead of September 9th. The hike will visit quarries near Ashley Lake.

RESULTS

TOWN OF WASHINGTON ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2023

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Sherri Thomas	69
Blanks	7

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Write-ins:	
Linda Levernoch	2
Michael Burke	2
Kent Lew	2
Thomas Delaney	1
Jodi Hostetter	1
Pauline Clark	1
Marc Johns	1
Sean Connors	1
Other	2
Blanks	63

MUNICIPAL LIGHT BOARD

Richard Spencer*	75
Blanks	1

PLANNING BOARD

Peter Matson	73
Blanks	3

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

David A. Ellis	74
Write-ins:	
Craig Willis	1
Blanks	1

*Candidates for re-election

Total Registered Voters: 408

Total Votes Cast: 76

Voter Turn-Out: 18.6%

Town Park Playground Project Success!!

With great excitement, the Town of Washington Parks Commission, would like to extend our deepest thank you to all the volunteers at the Park Playground Project on Saturday May 27th. We had one of our largest volunteer groups in recent years and made quick work of laying the new playground mulch. A special thank you to Dave Drugmund, Dick Spencer and Mark Schnopp for bringing down their tractors for moving the mulch. Make sure you check out the beautiful work of our community volunteers! Also, we are looking forward to everyone joining us at the upcoming park events this summer including the Cops and Rodders Car Show and Music in the Park.



Come Together in Washington

By Susan Colgan

Linda Levernoch remembers when there were more houses clustered around her family home on Upper Valley Road. Neighbors would get together, kids would play and there were always things going on up the hill at the school. "I miss that," she will tell you, with a broad smile.

To recreate that sense of community, Linda has spearheaded a group in the town to try and bring more of us together. "What could be done," she asked at our first meeting, "to reach out to residents new to the town?" The group began to work on a Washington brochure to include a bit of our history, important contacts in the town, information about the town offices, the Transfer Station, and a list of annual community events. We also shared our thoughts about living here, what it meant to us, that elusive and gratifying sense of neighbors connecting. Kent Lew, a member of the group, spoke about getting to know our town from the ground up, so to speak, through his work helping folks connect to our broadband service. "I think I've been in every basement in town," he said.

"Our town is small and unique," Kent said, and we all agreed. Linda came up with a plan for a series of Community Hikes which you may have read about here in Tracks. The hikes, she felt, would provide opportunities for us to spend time together and experience our town, its history, its unique beauty, and the preserved lands in our State Forest.

The Bird Walk

This first expedition, in May, was led by our resident bird expert, Ed Neumuth. Ten intrepid residents, some with foresight, in rain gear, met at the Town Park at 7 am and were rewarded with the site of silver blue-winged tree swallows swooping and soaring over the gazebo, bluebirds perching near their houses, yellow warblers flitting about at the field edges, and even a Killdeer, a kind of plover, nesting along the gravel path. The Killdeer we learned will fake a broken wing and hop along to distract you from its nest. We got a good look and then made our way to the marsh along Upper Valley Road where we were able to get a close look at a rare, long-beaked Virginia Rail when it appeared through the tall grass. From there we headed up Frost Road where we made a stop and then to the State Forest via West Branch Road. Neumuth describes our town as the premier birding location in all the Berkshires. His annual Washington bird count in a recent year included some 156 species.

The Railway Hike

Despite the inclement weather, David Pierce, president of the Chester Railway Station Museum, conducted the next community hike in mid-June. More than twenty residents, along with participants from Lenox, Middlefield, and Savoy who read about the hike in the Berkshire Eagle, followed Pierce through the intermittent rain as he told about the 3,000 Irishmen who came to build the railroad from Boston to Albany—and directly through our town. It was a merry band following Pierce, folks happy to listen and walk and introduce themselves to one another as they went. We started by peering down from the Summit Hill bridge 65 feet to the tracks below, imagining what a huge job cutting through all that granite must have been like in 1840 with just picks and shovels! From here the group walked down the hill to the entrance along the tracks to Muddy Pond, past the location of the Railroad Station, to the highest point along the railroad track between Boston and Chicago. Pierce told the group about Engineer-Major George Washington Whistler, (father of the famous painter, James McNeal Whistler), who surveyed the land for the railroad on horseback and directed the construction of the 150-mile route. It took two-and-a-half years to complete the tracks from

Boston to Albany and included 21 bridges over the winding Westfield River, cutting through the massive heights of granite in Washington and coping with the sinking tracks along Muddy Pond. During the walk, two trains came whistling through, oblivious to these great accomplishments. David Pierce raised his hand and gave a dignified wave.



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Marsh Trail Hike

If you missed the Railway hike, another historic hike is set for July 29th at 9 am in our State Forest along the Washington Mountain Marsh Trail. Alec Gillman, DCR West Region Interpretive Coordinator will guide the tour.

Picnic, Music

On Saturday, August 19, a Picnic is planned on the Old Town Common, opposite the Town Hall on Washington Mountain Road. Granite markers designate the area and remind us where the old clapboard church on the green once stood. We hope for a sunny day with a breeze to send kites aloft and Frisbees sailing! Folks can pack a picnic and bring a blanket or folding chairs. Lemonade and iced tea will be served and anyone who wants to bring a desert to share would be more than welcome. Carol Lew has created and maintains a mown path surrounding the town land that folks can stroll along. If you cross the road and visit the Old Town Hall Cemetery, you can see the restoration work Carol and a work crew of residents are doing on the gravestones.

Bring your binoculars, your kites, a Frisbee. Bring your children. And their children!!

A rain date has been set for the following Saturday August 26th.

Washington's annual and popular Music in the Park will take place on successive Sunday afternoons in August.

Autumn Events

As the leaves begin to turn in September, the Sons and Daughters Reunion will take place once again at the Old Town Hall. The Town Historic Commission will have a display, folks will bring potluck to share, and residents will reminisce. This town tradition began after the Whitneys bought up all the farms to the West of Washington Mountain Road for their grand estate, land that is now October Mountain State Forest. Folks that used to live here would meet near the old train station and have a picnic so they could visit with their former neighbors. It's a tradition that moved up the hill to the Old Town Hall and has been going for over a hundred years.

October will bring another historic hike conducted by Tom Hoffman, of Washington's historical commission. He will lead curious residents to several of the old quarries around Ashley Lake.

More about the annual Pumpkin Walk at the town Park in October and the Tree Lighting Ceremony in December will appear in later issues of the tracks.

Come, join your neighbors for a hike, a picnic, or a concert. ... enjoy our town!

Washington Scholarship Recipients Announced

The Washington Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce that Mikaila Kruck and Tyler Vosburgh are this year's scholarship recipients. Mikaila plans to attend Emmanuel college this fall, majoring in Psychology. Tyler plans to attend Babson College in preparation for a career in finance. This year marks the 52nd anniversary of the Washington Scholarship. For over 50 years, fundraisers have sustained this scholarship. Thanks to the generosity of our community, the Washington Scholarship continues to support our young people.

Friends of the Washington Town Park are pleased to once again present ***Music in the Park*** each Sunday afternoon during the month of August (maybe a bonus on July 30th!).

In addition to the free concerts, there will be family-friendly outdoor fun, fairy garden activities for the kids, a 50/50 raffle and ice cream for sale. All to raise money to resurface the basketball court. Donations are always welcome.

Performances start at 4PM. Lineup will be posted on Washington-ma.gov.

Event made possible with grants from the Washington, Becket and Hinsdale Cultural Councils.

Becket Athenaeum

3367 Main St, Becket

BecketAthenaeum.org

- Saturday, July 1 & 22, 10am-4pm
Book Sale Fundraiser on the library lawn (weather permitting). By donation (cash or check). All proceeds support the services & programs at the Becket Athenaeum!
- Saturdays, July 1, 15, 29, 10:30-11:30am
Library Storytime
- Tuesday, July 4
Library Closed
- Saturday, July 8, 10:30-11:30am
Creative Movement & Storytime with Laurel Lenski
- Monday, July 10, 6pm
Cookbook Club: Milk Street: The World in a Skillet by Christopher Kimball
- Tuesday, July 11, 1:30pm
Book Club: Honor by Thrity Umrigar
- Tuesday, July 11, 6:30-9:30pm, movie starts at 7pm
Movie Night for Adults
- Thursday, July 13, 6pm
"The Most Active Man in the City": Early Black Abolitionist David Ruggles with Tom Goldscheider
- Tuesday, July 18, 6-7:30pm
Michael Miller Author Reading & Presentation
- Thursday, July 20, 6-7:30pm
Origami for Beginners with Pilar Bellido
Registration required: bit.ly/BA-origami
- Saturday, July 22, 10:30-11:00am
Storytime with Karen Karlberg
- Saturday, July 22, 11:30-12:30pm
New England Birds of Prey by Wingmasters. Held at the Becket Federated Church, Parish House.
- Tuesday, July 25, 7-8pm
American Shtetl Author Presentation & Conversation
- Thursday, July 27, 6-8pm
Game Night



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Email your TRACKS info by the **25th of the month** to get in to next month's
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Please put TRACKS in the subject line.