



Kathryn Toomey
Register of Deeds

Hello and welcome to our Newsletter.

We spotlight one community per month and hope to share with the other communities in our district some historical or social significance of the region.

This month we chose Petersham, MA. During Covid, in or about fall 2020, my husband and I visited Petersham to walk the Harvard Forest French Road Trail. When I was a kid my family would take road trips around central Massachusetts, Petersham and the abutting Quabbin Reservoir was a frequent haunt.

Recently my assistant register and I took a ride out to Petersham to meet some local business owners and res-

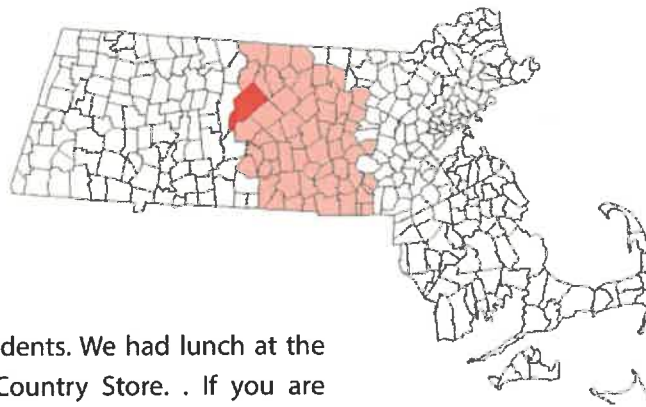
Worcester Registry of Deeds

Newsletter

July 2021 ~ Issue #10 ~ Town of Petersham

What's Inside?

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- ★ **Places to visit in Petersham** (p.2-3)
- ★ **Puzzle** (p.4)



idents. We had lunch at the Country Store. . If you are into exploration and good food, I cannot say enough about the Cuban Panini made by Ari and his great staff at the store. (<http://petershamstore.com/index.html>) I posted on social media a picture of the view adjacent to the Petersham His-

torical Society in the center of town, the comment that struck me as most fitting: Majestic. When you come into Petersham center you are greeted with a picturesque town common including a stone library, the Nichewaug Inn, churches, the Historical Society and the Country Store.

This month I am sharing all the tidbits I have learned since I revisited Petersham and subsequently searched on the internet and reached out to people.

Community Statistics

49

Number of Recordings in June 2021

\$278K

Median Home Value

84%

Homes Owned vs. Rented

551

Total Housing Units

10

Density (Houses per Square Mile)





By Kathryn Toomey

Town Spotlight

Petersham

A quick guide to what I learned about Petersham, Massachusetts, first by visiting the town, personally and speaking with the locals at the country store and then searching on google and wikipedia:

Petersham was first settled by Europeans in 1733 and was officially incorporated on April 20, 1754. On February 4, 1787, it was the site of the second battle of Shays' Rebellion. The town is noted for its common, part of the Petersham Common Historic District. About 45 buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Country Store, an 1842 Greek Revival structure that has housed a general store on its main floor since its opening, sits just to the East of the common.

The town's lands were expanded greatly by the building of the **Quabbin**

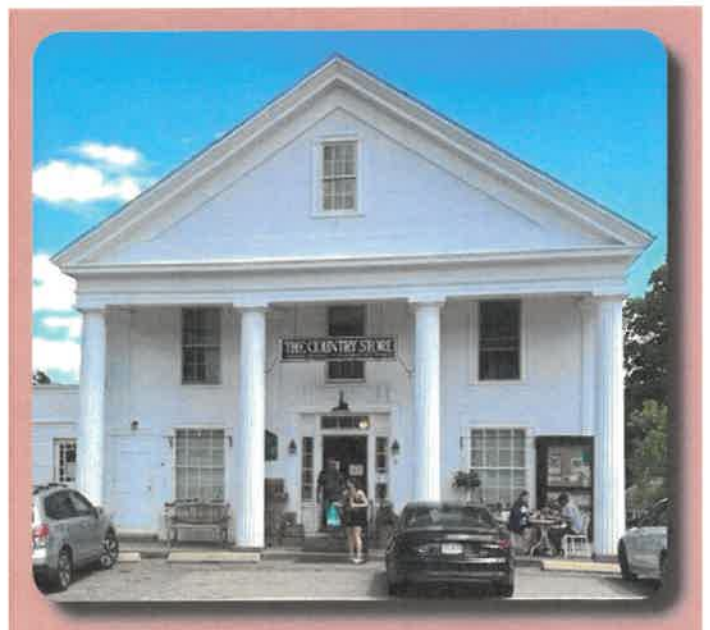
Reservoir in 1938. When the towns of the Swift River Valley were disincorporated, Petersham and neighboring New Salem benefited the most, with Petersham receiving all of the former town of Dana, much of the town of Greenwich, and a small portion of the former town of Prescott east of the Middle Branch of the Swift River.

By virtue of the lands it gained in the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir, Petersham is the largest town by land area in Worcester County, and the fifth-largest town of the 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. It is the largest town by area in Central and Western Massachusetts, with the four largest towns being in southeastern Massachusetts (Plymouth, Middleborough, Dartmouth and Barnstable).

Much of the town's land

is protected as part of the Quabbin Reservation, a protected area surrounding the Quabbin Reservoir. The town's borders extend well into the eastern branch of the reservoir, and includes the lands around what were once Mount Pomeroy, Mount Zion (the largest such "island" in the reservoir), and several other former hills. The lands of the Reservation are only accessible on foot, and include the only disin-

corporated areas which are accessible to the public, at the former Dana Common, a 1.5 miles (2.4 km) walk from Gate 40. Most of the town still drains into the Quabbin, along brooks that once met the Swift River. The town has several other hills that are part of the larger Worcester Hills region, including Whitney Hill and Camels Hump Hill, at 1,044 feet (318 m) the highest point in town. Several other parts of the town

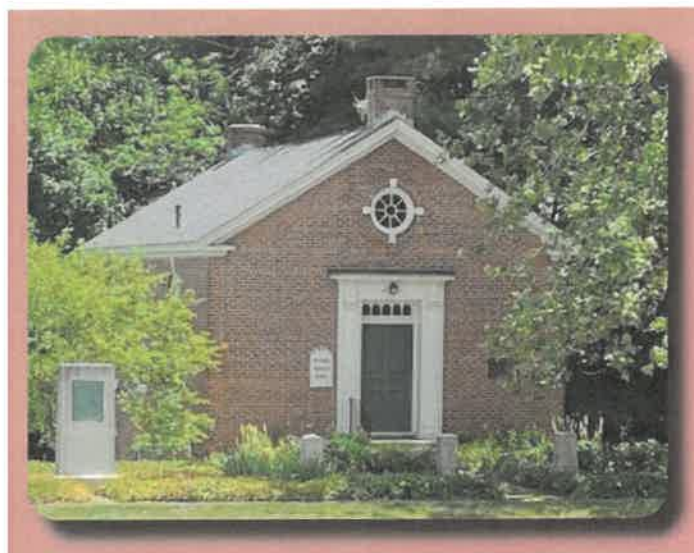


are also protected, including the Federated Women's Club State Forest, the Petersham State Forest, Harvard state Forest, the Popple Camp Wildlife Management Area, and the Phillipston Wildlife Management Area, the latter three extending into neighboring towns. Most of the town is rural in nature, with the largest population located near the town common, in the village of Petersham.

Petersham, by virtue of its territory in the Quabbin, is the westernmost town in Worcester County, bordering Franklin County to the west and a small portion of Hampshire County to the south. Petersham is bordered by Athol to the northwest, Phillipston to the northeast, Barre and Hardwick to the south-

east, Ware to the south, and New Salem to the west. From the town common, Petersham is 29 miles (47 km) northwest of Worcester, 41 miles (66 km) north-northeast of Springfield, and 66 miles (106 km) west-northwest of Boston.

There are no interstates or other limited-access highways within town, with the nearest being Route 2, the major east-west route across northern Massachusetts, which lies just north of the town. Near the center of town lies the junction of Route 32 and Route 122, with Route 32 entering from Athol and Route 122 entering from New Salem. The routes pass concurrently into the town of Barre before splitting again in the southern part of that town. The town center is also the



northern terminus of Route 32A, which heads southward through Hardwick, providing a more direct route from where Route 32 turns eastward in the Hardwick village of Gilbertville to the Petersham town center. Just north of the town center, the southern terminus of Route 101 lies along Route 32, heading into Phillipston along its route towards the

New Hampshire border.

Solomon Willard (June 26, 1783 – February 27, 1861), was a carver and builder in Massachusetts who is remembered primarily for designing and overseeing the Bunker Hill Monument, the first monumental obelisk erected in the United States. Willard was born in Petersham, Massachusetts, and trained as a carpenter with his father, a farmer who did carpentry in the winters. He went to Boston in 1804, working during the day and reading books of architecture and drawing in the evenings.

Nichewaugh Inn is a historic hotel in Petersham, Massachusetts. There was an inn on the site as far back as 1850. The current structure was built by James Brooks in 1899 after two earlier inns on the site were destroyed by fire. It was designed by Stone, Carpenter & Will-

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PETERSHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY.

son, who also designed the Petersham Memorial Library and Petersham Center School (1906). The Inn's golf course is now North Common Meadow.

Cellist Helen Isabel Moorhouse wrote letters to her lover Alice E. Brown during her stay at the inn in the summer of 1915 and they are now part of the University of Michigan collection.

In 1952 it was purchased by the Sisters of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin who expanded it and used it as a parochial high school for two decades, Maria Assumpta Academy.

In 2007 the Inn was purchased by the Town of Petersham. ([Book 41699, Page 256](#))

Harvard Forest, since 1907 research and education have been the mission of the Harvard Forest, one of the oldest and most intensively studied forests in North America. From a center comprised of 3000 acres of land, research facilities, and the Fisher Museum the scientists, students, and collaborators at the Forest explore topics ranging from conservation and environmental change to land-use history and the ways in which physical, biological and human systems interact to change our earth.

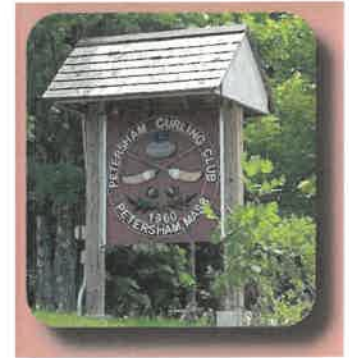
The Fisher Museum at Harvard Forest main exhibit displays twenty-three internationally acclaimed models ([dioramas](#)) portraying the history, conservation and management of central New England forests. Other exhibits at the museum represent the range of Harvard Forest's research.

Visiting the Forest, Harvard Forests 3000 acres are open to the public. There are many miles of road and trails. A map of the prospect hill tract is available.

Two self-guided nature trails, starting from the museum,

provide an excellent way to enjoy a hike in the woods while learning more about the history, environment and beauty of the Harvard Forest. Note trail maps and guides are available at the kiosk in front of the museum.

Petersham Curling Club was founded in 1960 and is one out of 4 dedicated curling clubs in operation in Massachusetts. The club was founded by employees of the UTD or Union Twist Drill Company, located in Athol Massachusetts. More specifically, Stanley L. Holland, relocated from Rock Island Que-



bec, Canada to work at Union Twist Drill in Athol. Holland was curler and determined to organize a curling club. The land was purchased and the facility was born in 1960, 250 Main Street, Petersham, Massachusetts. ([Book 4122, Page 565, 566, 567](#)).

Fourth of July

WORD SEARCH

C	A	G	F	D	P	S	J	F	R	E	E	D	O	M
R	E	V	O	L	U	T	I	O	N	L	W	L	S	X
O	V	B	I	S	T	A	T	E	S	I	V	T	J	Y
E	F	U	D	N	X	Z	Z	B	W	B	C	G	U	W
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E	H	D	Q	G	A	X	U	N	B	V	C	G	S	I

United States	Independence	Revolution	Fireworks
Liberty	America	Freedom	Picnic
States	Stars	Flag	Patriotic
Parade	Flag	Summer	July