

Department of Conservation and Recreation
Quabbin Interpretive Services
Educational Information Packet



Points of Interest for Dana Common

The town of Dana was formed in 1801. Of the 4 towns taken for the building of the reservoir, Dana was one of the wealthiest, and certainly the most “high tech”. It was a regular stop on the railroad in North Dana, and had an abundance of waterpower, so it naturally became a successful manufacturing center. Boxes and cloth were made and soapstone was mined here, and Dana was the premier manufacturer of palm leaf straw hats, which could be partially made at home and provided local women with a decent income. Dana was the first town in the valley to have electricity, and was the only town in the valley to have a motorized fire truck – a 1929 Ford that still runs today and can be seen at the Swift River Valley Historical Society in New Salem. Dana was divided into 3 main villages: North Dana, Doubleday Village, and Dana. While much of the area for these 3 villages remains above water and is accessible by foot, the center of Dana is the only one that is maintained and where the old foundations are relatively easy to spot.

Dana Common is located 1 7/10 miles down the road from Gate 40 off Route. 32A in Petersham. The Gate and the first few foundations on the road are technically in Petersham, and are an example of how only parts of some towns were taken for the Quabbin project. For groups that are being led by a DCR Educational Interpreter, he or she will have a guidebook to this road and down into the main area. This book contains pictures of the buildings that were on the foundations along the way, as well as information about the Common and the people who owned homes and businesses there. For groups that go to Dana Common on their own, what follows will serve as a brief introduction to some of the more significant stops along the way.

Entrance/Gate 40:

The first foundation on the right hand side of the road, just before entering the gate, is the location of a home that was last owned by Sheridan Hall, but the original owner is the one worth mentioning. Asa Snow was born in 1797 and died in 1872. His nickname was “Popcorn” Snow. Supposedly, he loved popcorn so much, that not only was it the main food he ate while he was alive, but rumors were that he had his casket filled with it when he died! Another story, which, unfortunately, there is no way to verify, is that he was so afraid of being buried alive that he had a metal coffin made with a glass lid. He was to be put in this coffin and placed in a tomb in the cemetery directly behind the house, and was to be visited by the undertaker for 7 days after his death, to make sure there was no mistake. However, the undertaker was only able to visit him for 3 days, because a terrible snowstorm came up and blocked off the tomb. Rather than have the undertaker struggle to keep his promise, Snow’s widow told him he didn’t have to come by, and so Asa Snow’s body was left unchecked!

The foundation across the street from the Snow house is another home that was originally owned by Asa Snow. The last person to live there when the Quabbin was built was Nellie Dorow.

Fields on Either side of the Road:

When the Quabbin Reservoir was built, a significant amount of the land in the Swift River Valley was farmland. Due to concerns with possible erosion, a massive reforestation project was undertaken to establish tree cover on State watershed lands around Quabbin. Over 8 million trees (mostly conifers but some deciduous) were planted on fields throughout the watershed during the late 1930’s and early 1940’s. These trees grew up quickly,

and the State was able to begin sustainable forestry management practices. In the beginning, because of the formal and intentional nature of the tree plantings, the landscape of the Quabbin was all very similar. In order to encourage a more diversified community of plants and animals, the decision was made to “reclaim” some of this forest, so selected areas were cleared of trees, stumps were pulled and the land was allowed to convert back to fields.

Vernal Pools:

A vernal pool is a natural habitat that is a pond only in the spring and early summer, after the winter thaw and spring rains. Frogs, salamanders and turtles make their home in these pools, which are devoid of fish, who are predators of young amphibians. By mid to late summer, these ponds have begun to dry up, and the creatures move on to other areas. These pools are along the road on either side, and can be more fully explored on trips led by an Educational Interpreter in the spring.

George Carter/Poor Farm:

Approximately 1 mile from the gate is a foundation on the right that was the barn attached to the house of George Carter (the house foundation has filled in). This was a large farm house and barn complex that was originally the town’s “poor farm”. Decades ago in some agricultural towns, a large homestead was designated or donated as a “poor farm”. This was an active, working farm where poor or “down-on-their-luck” people could go and work the farm, which provided food or goods for the community, in exchange for room and board at the farm.

Brown Cemetery:

On the right side after the road turns is a wide reclaimed field that was one of the Dana Cemeteries. It was called Brown’s Evergreen Cemetery because it was originally planted with 2000 evergreen trees and was well known for its beauty. All 124 graves were removed (mostly to Quabbin Park Cemetery) and all of the original trees are now gone as well.

Entering the Common Area, Beginning Clockwise on the Left:

Marcille House – Past the swampy area across from Brown’s Cemetery is a thicket in which is the foundation for the second home owned by Moses Marcille. His first house was a few yards back from this location. That house burned down in 1899 and he and his wife, Josephine, moved to Fall River temporarily. When they returned in 1904 they bought the house that stood here. In 1907, according to contemporary accounts, the Marcilles had an argument after which Moses shot his wife twice, and then shot himself in the head. Moses died, but Josephine survived the ordeal and lived in the house until she sold it to the state in 1927.

Congregational Church – Immediately past the Marcille place is the front entryway to the “Orthodox Congregational Church of Dana Center”. Services were held here from November 1853 all the way until July 31, 1938. Since the town hall building was formerly a church, visitors to Dana would get confused as to which building to go to for Sunday services!

Vaughn House – On the right of the Church was the home of Edgar Vaughn and his family. A remarkable feature of this home was the pebble retaining wall, which still stands. The Vaughns built this wall with stones they found in local streams. The fact that it remains after all these years is a testament to the skill and pride that people put into their work and their homes so long ago.

Pottapaug Pond – At the corner of the Vaughn house is a road that goes straight up through a field and into a stand of pines. Just through the tree line is an overview of Pottapaug Pond. Now used by the DCR for canoe

& kayak fishing, this pond existed before Quabbin was created, and was a popular local spot for fishing, swimming and having fun. It was smaller then; its size increased substantially with the flooding of the valley.

Grace Dunn House – Back on the main street and past three other foundations, is a foundation of a large home and barn owned by Grace Dunn. A sharp eye will be able to pick out from the shrub and overgrowth a manmade item left behind: A large safe. It is likely that, because it was so heavy, Mrs. Dunn decided it was not worth the effort to move the safe when she left town, so she emptied it of its contents and it remains, unmoved, there today.

Eagle Hotel – At the intersection of roads just behind the green is the foundation of the Eagle Hotel. The 15 room building was moved to this spot from another location in town in 1843, but it was not run as a hotel until 1893. It remained a hotel until it was sold to the State and demolished in 1936.

Flagg House – After the hotel, continuing east there are two roads. At the east corner of the second road and the main road was the home of Herbert Flagg, whose family had been active members of the community since the mid 1800's. When people were leaving the valley, they often found that they could not take all their possessions with them. Many of these things were sold at auctions. After Herbert moved out in 1930, he filled his new home with antiques and mementos that he had bought at these auctions, as a personal reminder to him of the life he had left behind.

School – Past the stone posts that were the boundary markers of the town cemetery, is the well-preserved foundation of the schoolhouse. Students in the Swift River Valley went to school in local one-room schoolhouses until the eighth grade. There were no high schools in the valley, so if a student were to continue their education (instead of going to work full time), they would have to travel to another town like Orange, Athol, Belchertown or Ware – but there were no busses either, so they had to find their own way to get there!

Town Hall – Just beyond the school to the right is the very distinct walkway to the town hall. It had been built initially as a Baptist church in Petersham, but was moved to this location in the early 1800's. It ceased to be a church in 1830 and remained idle until 1842 when it was purchased by the town for use as the town hall.

Cannon and Monuments on the Common – The grassy area in the center was the town common. On it were a Civil War cannon, a monument to all the town's veterans through World War I and a monument to the Unitarian Universalist minister Hosea Ballou. These were all relocated to Quabbin Park Cemetery off route 9 in Ware, however, the cement base on which the cannon stood remains.

Suggestions to Tie-in to Frameworks Standards by Grade

(This is not an all-inclusive list, merely a starting point to encourage teachers to think of the many facets of Quabbin Reservoir and the educational opportunities available here.)

Pre-K – 2:

Science

ESS1 – Recognize that water, rocks, soil and living organisms are found on the earth's surface. *All these things can be observed at Quabbin.*

LS3 – Recognize that plants and animals have life cycles, and that life cycles vary for different living things. *Students can see different stages of tree growth.*

LS8 – Identify the ways in which an organism's habitat provided for its basic needs. *Many different habitats at Quabbin provide for different life forms.*

Grades 3 – 5:

Science

ESS12 – Give examples of how the surface of the earth changes due to slow processes such as erosion and weathering, and rapid processes such as landslides, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. *Discuss reforestation of watershed to reduce erosion and filter water.*

LS6 – Give examples of how inherited characteristics may change over time as adaptations to changes in the environment that enable organisms to survive eg. shape of beak or feet, placement of eyes etc... [Compare and contrast the physical characteristics of plants or animals from widely different environments]. *Different environments at Quabbin provide for good observation of this.*

LS7 – Give examples of how changes in the environment have caused some plants and animals to die or move to new locations. *Discuss invasive species of plants here, change from farmland to lake & forest, changes brought by forestry/reclaimed fields, deer population, bald eagle, loons and etc.*

LS10 – Give examples of how organisms can cause change in their environment to ensure survival. Explain how some of these changes may affect the ecosystem. [Research local projects where humans are changing the environment to ensure a species survival.]. *Discuss the change humans made at Quabbin and the reasons for it; discuss forestry, reclaimed fields, conservation, wildlife management, bald eagles, reasons for restrictions on use.*

Technology and Engineering – Study the technology that was available during the 18 and early 1900's and how it contributed to everyday life in the Swift River Valley. How did they get various types of stone and how were they able to make things from it? How was electricity generated at that time? How were the automobiles different from today's?

History

H3.12 – Explain how objects or artifacts of everyday life in the past tell us how ordinary people lived and how everyday life has changed. Draw on the services of the local historical society and local museums as needed. *Study the foundations and other signs left behind by the former residents of Dana to discover how they lived; compare the size of the town and homes, the types of businesses and the lifestyle of Dana Common with that of other towns in the past and to places of today.*

Grades 6 – 8

Science

LS13 – Give examples of ways in which organisms interact and have different functions within an ecosystem that enable the ecosystem to thrive. *Study the ecosystems of the Quabbin and understand reason for wildlife and habitat management, in particular the reclaimed fields and the vernal ponds.*

LS17 – Identify ways in which ecosystems have changed throughout geologic time in response to physical conditions, interactions among organisms and the actions of humans. Describe how changes may be catastrophic such as volcanic eruptions or ice storms. *Study the geologic factors of the Swift River Valley and how they contributed to the creation of the reservoir; study the impact of human intervention on the ecosystems that have developed since that time.*

Technology and Engineering – Study the technology that was available during the 18 and early 1900’s and how it contributed to everyday life in the Swift River Valley. How did they get various types of stone and how were they able to make things from it? How was electricity generated at that time? How were the automobiles different from today’s?

High School

Science

ESS3.4 – Explain how water flows into and through a watershed. Explain the roles of aquifers, wells, porosity, permeability, water table and runoff. *Study the Quabbin Watershed, reason for size, trees, purity control/regulations of, spillway for overflow and etc. Discover why places like Dana Common had to be cleared out even though they were not going to be underwater.*

ESS3.5 – Describe the process of the hydrologic cycle, including evaporation, condensation, precipitation, surface runoff and groundwater percolation, infiltration and transpiration. *Study the Quabbin Watershed and the affect the hydrologic cycle has on it.*

BS2.3 – Use cellular evidence and modes of nutrition to describe the six kingdoms. *The varying habitats of the Quabbin support species from all kingdoms.*

BS5 Evolution and Biodiversity & BS6 Ecology – The full range of these standards can be taught & observed at Quabbin. Teachers are encouraged to explore all the possibilities of bringing students to Quabbin for these lessons.

PS3.2 – Explain how heat energy will move from a higher temperature to a lower temperature until equilibrium is reached. *Study how heat from surface of water at certain times of the year affects the other zones in the water which in turn affects plant and animal life, movement & growth. Compare the effects on a large body of water like the Quabbin to the effects on a relatively small body like Pottapaug Pond.*

Technology and Engineering – Study the technology that was available during the 18 and early 1900’s and how it contributed to everyday life in the Swift River Valley. How did they get various types of stone and how were they able to make things from it? How was electricity generated at that time? How were the automobiles different from today’s?

History

USI.18 – Explain the major components of local government in Massachusetts, including the roles and functions of school committees, town meetings, board of selectmen, mayors and city councilors. *Discover what happened to the local governments of the 4 towns that were taken for the Quabbin.*

USI.19 – Explain the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and describe how a democracy provides opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process through elections, political parties and interest groups. *Discuss what voice or level of participation that the citizens of the 4 towns in the Swift River Valley had during the entire process, from conception of the idea to put a reservoir there through the taking of the lands and eviction of the people.*

USII.2 – Explain the important consequences of the Industrial Revolution. *Study how the results of the Industrial Revolution in Boston contributed to the need to build the Quabbin Reservoir.*

USII.13 – Explain how the Great Depression and the New Deal affected American society. *This was the time at which residents of the valley have to start moving out and starting new life; explore their challenges and what the government did or did not do to help the people it was evicting; discuss how such a massive construction and relocation project would have been funded at this time.*

Explore the **economic** factors surrounding the Quabbin project including cost of water supply to metropolitan area, relocation, construction, lawsuits, surveys and etc.

Explore the various issues of **government**, civil rights, and eminent domain as related to the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir.