

THE GAZETTE

"a news-sheet, a periodical publication giving an account of current events"

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

MAY 2022



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“There must be always remaining in every man's life some place for the singing of angels, some place for that which in itself is breathlessly beautiful, and by an inherent prerogative, throws all the rest of life into a new and creative relatedness, something that gathers up in itself all the freshets of experience from drab and commonplace areas of living and glows in one bright white light of penetrating beauty and meaning ---then passes.”

Thurman, H. *Deep is the Hunger: Meditations for Apostles of Sensitiveness*. New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1951, Chapter 1: A Sense of History, Meditation No. 20.

Officers

Fran Lightsom, clerk

(508-548-9186;

fran.lightsom@gmail.com)

Molly Cornell, recording clerk

Clyde Tyndale, treasurer

Regular Events

Adult Discussion Group

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Peace and Social Order

2nd Sunday at 12:00 p.m.

Erica Adams, convener

Empathy Practice (NVC)

Usually 1st Saturday 9:30–11:45

Brenda Nolan, convener

Restorative Circle Practice

Usually 1st Saturday 1:00-3:00

Brenda Nolan, convener

Ministry & Counsel

Cynthia Rankin, clerk

(508-360-7536)

Sunny Davidson, co-clerk

West Falmouth Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Usually 4th Sunday

But May 29, June 26

Note: Due to COVID, many of these events are on hold. Check with committee conveners to sure.

May Birthdays

Maggie Saab, 3

Dorothy Wheeler, 23

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

Junior Yearly Meeting (Grades 1 – 6) Retreat at Woolman Hill -- Saturday **May 21** 10:00 a.m. through Sunday **May 22** at 3:30 p.m. Come and sing, play, and celebrate spring and JYM at Woolman Hill. The theme is *Plant Love*. Anyone who has ever taken care of a plant knows that they require at least some water, light, and attention! As we tend to the beloved garden that is JYM, let's pay attention to all that has grown, and all that may in the coming season. This will be our first overnight in person since January 2020! **Space will be limited and we will not be able to accept registrations after May 13th.** To learn more about fees, COVID safety, etc. and to register see <https://neym.org/events-calendar/2022/05/jym-retreat>.



Spring Midweek Meditations – This spring Brian Drayton (Souhegan, NH, Friends Meeting) is offering monthly opportunities for Zoom-based worship-sharing and conversation, based on various selections from the writings of Isaac Pennington. The final sessions in the Spring series will be on Wednesdays **May 18** and **June 15**. Sessions start and end promptly! About one week before the event, Friends will receive the Zoom link, the month's text and a few short questions for quiet reflection. Each gathering will open with quick greetings, followed by 15 minutes of conversation about the text. The rest of the time will be spent in worship-sharing. The final 5 minutes will be silent before we depart from our miniature retreat. To RSVP, please send an email with "Midweek Meditation" in the subject line, to Brian Drayton: drayton.be@gmail.com.

Save the Date!! Annual Sessions 2022 – August 6 - 11

After a long two years, we expect Friends will be able to joyfully gather together, in person, at **Castleton University**, Castleton, VT for the Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, **August 6–11**. Some portions of the program are being planned as hybrid event so that those who so choose may participate again by Zoom.

The theme for Sessions 2022 is "This is the hour: How does the Spirit find you?" This grew out of our sense that Friends' condition, as we gather, will reflect two years of living with the pandemic. We all are carrying myriad conditions, among them: joy, grief, longing, outrage, happiness. "How does the Spirit find you" invites you to acknowledge the many and sometimes seemingly contradictory feelings. But "This is the hour" is a query in the form of a statement. What is this the hour for? Concerns have been brought to Sessions in recent years about the state of our earth, systemic racism, the history of our relationship with Native Americans, and more. "This is the hour" invites us to consider what this is the hour for. Phil Veatch of Fresh Pond Meeting is serving as clerk of the Sessions planning process: <mailto:sessions@neym.org>.

The Bible Half Hours will be given by Regina Renee Ward. She has given Bible Half Hours at Friends General Conference and Pacific Yearly Meeting, and was a presenter at the Walking with the Bible series offered by Woolman Hill Quaker Center and the Beacon Hill Friends House.



International Meeting for Worship -- noon to 1:00 p.m. EST

Join Friends around the world for a one-hour international Meeting for Worship every day at noon. Let us join together in holding in the Light the situation in Ukraine, the decision makers, the soldiers, the citizens, all the people whose lives are in danger and already disrupted by fear. See <https://neym.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Meeting%20Details.pdf>.

From Lewis Randa -- To the greatest extent possible, we pacifist idealists must envision, then help create, alternatives to violence and war or we are complicit in the continuation of this never-ending crime against humanity which the vast majority of our tax dollars fund. For me, being a Quaker means being a pacifist. I use these terms interchangeably in my discussions with peace groups.

During Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, this old adage applies, “being a pacifist when there is no war is like being a vegetarian between meals.” So let us hold in the light our pacifist commitment as it is challenged when war raises its murderous face and the world becomes transfixed on countering it with more bloodshed. Let us remind ourselves of the line in the Sikh Prayer for Peace that says, “only that victory endures in consequence of which no one is defeated.”

“Sikh Prayer for Peace” in *Peace Seeds: The Multifaith Prayers of the Peace Abbey*. See <https://www.peaceabbey.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Binder1.pdf>.



From The Ukrainian Pacifist Movement Against Perpetuation of War – “War is a crime against humanity. Therefore, we are determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war.”

Read the full statement at <https://www.pressenza.com/2022/04/statement-of-the-ukrainian-pacifist-movement-against-perpetuation-of-war/>.

Events in the Quarter

Sunday, **May 1** -- **Interfaith Solidarity Walk for Ukraine in Fall River**, starting at 4:00 p.m. See flier attached to this mailing for further details.

Saturday, **May 7** -- **Memorial service** for Steven Correia at Westport Friends Meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Work Party -- Sunday, **May 15** -- after worship at the **New Bedford** meeting. Lunch included! Work Parties are normally the 2nd Sunday of the month but May's will be on the 3rd Sunday to avoid conflict with Mother's Day. Please, vaccinated Friends only.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting

West Falmouth

Weekly Sunday Worship continues to be held via Zoom at 10:00 a.m. Watch for a hybrid gathering between the meetinghouse and Zoom sometime in May.

Peace and Social Order

Sunday, **May 8: Committee Meeting**, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.



Sunday, **June 12: Native Land Conservancy** -- Gail Melix, a Manomet Wampanoag and Quaker, serves on the Board of the Native Land Conservancy and will speak on indigenous land rescue and preservation.

Sunday, **July 10:** Andrew Gottlieb, executive director of the **Association to Preserve Cape Cod**, will speak on *Water Quality: Challenges Facing Cape Cod*. Gottlieb serves on the Mashpee



Select Board and was Chief of the Office of Commonwealth Development under Governor Romney.

Sunday, **August 14: Committee Meeting**, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Also of Interest

Friends Association
for Higher Education

43rd Annual Meeting ~ Virtual Conference

June 14 - 15, 2022

Quakers and Racial Justice

Hosted by Earlham College and
Earlham School of Religion

Learn more and register at
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fahe-virtual-conference-2022-quakers-and-racial-justice-tickets-293872730247>



Saturday, June 18 – Mass Poor People’s and Low-Wage Workers’ Assembly and Moral March on Washington and to the polls

Why Do We March? We Assemble and March on June 18 because any nation that ignores nearly half of its citizens *is in a moral, economic and political crisis*. There were 140 million people who were poor or

one emergency away from economic ruin *before* the pandemic. Since March 2020, while hundreds of thousands of people have died, millions are on the edge of hunger and eviction, and still without health care or living wages, billionaire wealth has grown by over \$2 trillion. Learn more about the Poor People’s Campaign and the June march and register at <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/>.

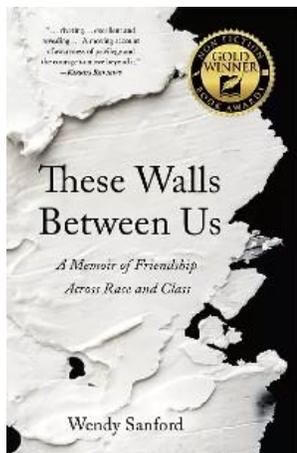
Above Us Only Sky, an exhibit curated by Erica H. Adams featuring Erica and five Boston-based artists. At the **Atrium Gallery** in **Moakley Federal Courthouse**, Boston Seaport, **April 7 - June 29**, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. In her curator’s statement Adams notes that “the six artists in *Above Us Only Sky* speak of the infinite and euphoria in dark times. Romantic and hopeful, dream-like paintings elevate while embracing the light and lightness through imagery of stellar cascades; avian night flight and starlike bouquets; a luminous energy field; the legacy of passion; meditation and a flow state; community and seeking new worlds.” To view the exhibit see <https://www.artsy.net/show/array-contemporary-above-us-only-sky>.



Blues Progression © 2022, Erica H. Adams, Watercolor and Ink Brush on Paper, 11 x 30 inches.

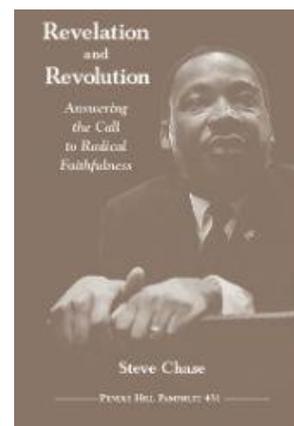
Pendle Hill Events

Daily Worship via Zoom from 8:30 – 9:10 a.m. See <https://pendlehill.org/explore/worship/join-us-online-for-worship-in-the-barn/>.



A First Monday Lecture with Mary Norman and Wendy Sanford – *These Walls Between Us: A Memoir of Friendship Across Race and Class*. How might our Quaker values lead us to break down the institutional and cultural walls that continue to separate racial groups in the U.S.? Via Zoom, Monday, **May 2** from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Free to the public, registration required. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/reflecting-with-quakers-about-these-walls-between-us-a-memoir-of-friendship-across-race-and-class/>.

May Online Reading Group – On May 25 from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. we will be considering Steve Chase’s June 2015 pamphlet, [*Revelation and Revolution: Answering the Call to Radical Faithfulness*](#) (PHP #431). Free and open to the public, but registration required. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-may-2022/>.



Friends Committee on National Legislation

Witness Wednesdays -- Silent reflection, in community every Wednesday from 5:15 – 6:15 p.m. Register at <https://www.fcnl.org/events/witnesswednesday>.

Tell Congress: Pass Climate Legislation to Address Renewable Energy. The latest report from the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* serves as a timely reminder of the immediate and drastic consequences of the climate crisis. Congress is currently considering a \$550 billion proposal that will speed up the construction of solar and wind facilities, offer tax breaks for U.S.-based manufacturing, and begin to address longstanding environmental injustices. See <https://fcnl.quorum.us/campaign/39042/>.

Learn more about how you can promote **environmental justice** in your community. Join Quaker advocates and community leaders on **May 7** at 7:00 p.m. for this virtual event cosponsored by the AFSC and FCNL. See <https://www.fcnl.org/events/quaker-call-environmental-justice-all>.

Seeking Truth, Healing, and Right Relationship: Quakers and the Legacy of Indian Boarding Schools **May 25** from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Quakers played a role in colonization and the cultural genocide of Native people through the operation of more than 30 Indian boarding schools. In conversation with Paula Palmer and Jerilyn DeCoteau, FCNL’s Congressional Advocate for Native American Advocacy Portia Kay Anthos Skenandore-Wheelock will discuss FCNL’s work to build support for the bipartisan Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act (S. 2907/H.R. 5444). Join us to learn how FCNL and Friends are reckoning with this history and advocating in solidarity with Native communities. <https://www.fcnl.org/events/seeking-truth-healing-and-right-relationship-quakers-and-legacy-indian-boarding-schools>.

Photos of Friends



WF Friends enjoy outdoor hospitality, Sunday April 17. Photo credits: P. Blumenthal.





Raising of the partitions at East Sandwich Meeting House, Sunday April 3. Photo credit: M. Fawcett.



Some ES Friends protest the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Sandwich Center, Sunday, March 13. Photo credit: a sympathetic passer-by.



Easter Morning light on water, Santuit Herring Run,
April 2022. Photo credit: G. Melix.

Readers Write

On the Trail

Paul Denoncourt

In 1923, while touring the U.S. to raise money for an expedition to the yet unclimbed Mt. Everest, British mountaineer George Mallory was asked why he wished to climb it. His iconic reply was, “Because it’s there.”

I am Paul Denoncourt, a retired orthopedic surgeon and Registered Maine Guide. I attend the East Sandwich Friends Meeting.

I have guided, canoed, hiked and/or backpacked in several U.S. National Parks, Maine’s Allagash Wilderness Waterway, Minnesota’s Boundary Waters, Quebec, Nunavut (formerly the Eastern half of Canada’s Northwest Territories), Mexico and above the Arctic Circle in Alaska and Greenland.

My surgery practice limited how much time I could spend in the wilderness, but once I retired my wanderlust only increased. Last year I backpacked Maine’s 100-Mile Wilderness, a rugged section of the Appalachian Trail. Afterwards, I wondered whether, at the age of 66, I could do the entire Trail.

The Appalachian Trail is 2,194 miles long, traversing 14 states from Georgia to Maine. It’s the most difficult and most famous hiking trail in the nation. There is 500,000 feet of elevation change. The overall completion rate for those who attempt a thru-hike, is 25%; for hikers over 60, it is only 3%. Most hikers

require six months to do it; I’ll need seven. You endure solitude, cold, rain, heat, humidity, mosquitos, ticks, and bears. You risk injury, Lyme disease, and loneliness. You climb innumerable mountains carrying a heavy pack (25-35 pounds). You sleep on the ground in a tent or on the floor of lean-to shelters.

So, why do it?

Because it is the apex American wilderness adventure. It is something I have considered doing since I



Starting on the northern half of the trail, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, April 24, 2022. Photo credit: S. Tardif.

was an Eagle Scout. Every thru-hiker agrees it is a life-changing experience. It'll allow me to test myself. "Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go," said T.S. Eliot.¹ Like Thoreau at Walden, it will force me "to live deliberately", "[to] suck out all the marrow of life", and "... not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."² Because "... a man's reach should exceed his grasp ..." wrote Robert Browning.³ Because the long stretches of silence will permit me to be one with Nature and to listen for Divinity. Because there are many sights to see and fellow hikers to meet. Because it is there.

If I am unable to complete the trek, I'll not consider myself a failure. I'll have tested myself and learned where my boundaries lie. Graceful ageing requires accepting limitations. Mallory never did summit Everest.

My wife is fully supportive of me tackling this challenge; in fact, she was the first to bring it up. Every three weeks or so, she plans to meet me at a town or road crossing to resupply and encourage me.

I start the hike on April 24. I'll do the Northern half first, followed by the Southern half. I'll periodically send a photo and progress report to *The Gazette*. I hope to have Thanksgiving dinner at home. Wish me luck!

Note: A number of ES Friends will be spiritually accompanying Paul on his several-months-long journey on the Appalachian Trail. They have set their phone alarms for 3 p.m. daily at which point they will stop what they are doing and hold Paul in their thoughts and in the light. They invite you to join them. 🕒

¹ Crosby, H. *Transit of Venus: Poems*. With a preface by T.S. Eliot. Paris, France: Black Sun Press, 1931.

² Thoreau, H.D. *Walden*. New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1910, p.118.

³ Browning, R. "Andrea del Sarto" in *Men and Women*. Boston, MA: Ticknor and Fields, 1856, p.187.

The Journey of the Stone

Alan Burt

Last year on Good Friday the two-thousand-pound Global Pandemic Bereavement Stone situated on its specially designed carriage left the State House in Boston where it had been resting and was pulled through the streets of Boston. Throughout the day the stone was blessed by various clergy and visited by others wishing to acknowledge our communal grief during this pandemic. The stone then traveled through Plymouth and Duxbury, eventually coming to rest for the winter in the East Sandwich Meeting House stable. Here a number of us continued to meet around the stone joining in prayers for each other and for the world.

More recently, on April 14, 2022 the stone journeyed to Cape Cod Hospital where it was welcomed by hospital employees, some in tears as they touched the stone and remembered the patients and loved ones lost to COVID in the last two years. Sadly, the pandemic death toll in this country alone is now approaching one million which means millions more Americans have experienced great sadness and loss.

From Cape Cod Hospital the stone was pulled by hospital staff, police, firemen, town leaders, and others across Main Street to Hyannis Town Hall where it rested for the afternoon. The stone was then brought to Falmouth Hospital where another memorial service was held.

Each of these services was very beautiful, but what I found most touching were the words of the many visitors before and after the services. Marci, a social worker related how early in the pandemic she lost forty of her patients at the nursing home where she worked. She then shared that she got Covid herself, brought it home, and gave it to her husband who then died from it. Her words were deeply affecting, speaking as they did to the fear, pain, and suffering that we and billions of others around the world have had to endure.

The stone is now back in Duxbury where it will rest until its next journey, to New York City this summer. Those wishing to learn more about the Pandemic Stone journey should contact the Peace Abbey in Millis, MA., where the stone was created. See <https://www.peaceabbey.org/stonewalk-intl-requiem-memorial-walk/>.



Hospital staff, Quakers, and others at the Pandemic Stone. Falmouth Hospital, April 14, 2022.

Meditation on a 1972 MIT Model

I. The Model

Which predicts societal collapse
in the twenty-first century
continues to “prove prescient”
according to sources vetted
by Harper’s Magazine
moreover the Cryosphere
a moving target to be sure
shrank by 3.2 million square
kilometers between 1979 and 2016
(that’s a lot of water no longer frozen folks)

II. Not Today

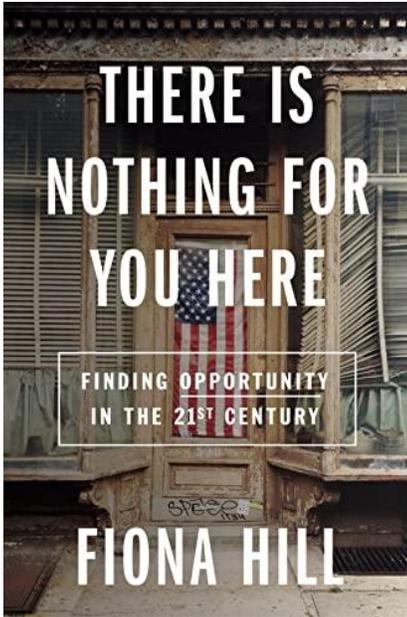
And, not today not today
NO
I will not meditate or even consider
these not so cheery little ditties
today as the sky defines cerulean
the air feels clear clean cool almost cold
and walking to the mail box
remember Thich Nhat Han saying
to enjoy this day this breath this moment
will perpetuate the Living Buddha
and the Living Christ together.

Bill Holcombe

What We're Reading

John Davidson: *There is Nothing for You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21st Century*
by Fiona Hill

It has become clear to all of us since the Russian invasion of Ukraine last February that history in the form of international conflict has returned with a vengeance, and that the end point of fascism is aggressive war, as indicated in so many history and politics textbooks. Fiona Hill's autobiography and reflections on the decline of opportunity in Russia, America, and the UK is a very timely discussion of where we are in



the world in a broader sense, in that she ties the lack of economic opportunity she encountered growing up in North West England in the sixties and seventies with the broader worldwide trend of rising support for know-nothing chauvinist populism, as evidenced by the triumph of politicians such as Trump and Putin. As she makes clear in her well-written review of her life and experience, it matters that we elected a narcissistic ignoramus of a man-child who sat in the White House for four years endangering our safety, and it matters that Putin became increasingly enraged at the West in general as well as Ukraine in particular.

Ms. Hill rightly complains of the fact that she was underpaid for her research work on Russia over the course of her career, which she sees as due to her gender as well as her unwillingness to make demands on employers (see pp. 143-44), but on this I would point out that almost anyone who wanted to make a living writing academic articles about Russian affairs after the end of the Cold War was going to face a lack of

compensation. Russian foreign policy has been an extremely overcrowded field, and her connections protected her to some extent. She admits that she happened to be fortunate enough to marry a man who earned a lot of money, and thus was able to combine work and family. She shifted through a series of undercompensated yet important positions in order to continue writing and researching in her field, but the underlying issue to me is that any academic work (even if related to vital national security issues) is never compensated in our society like the “things that make money.”

Known as a wise observer on Russia, Ms. Hill describes her sit-down dinner with Mr. Putin about ten years ago, in which he had no idea who she was when they were seated at the same table, and this helped her develop an acute psychological understanding of the Russian dictator (pp. 133-34). She makes only passing reference to her 2015 book *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, written with Clifford Gaddy, but this was probably her most important publication in that she accurately predicted that Putin's efforts to make Russia's economy more resilient, and to eliminate domestic opposition, were a long-haul preparation for a confrontation with the West. His bid to undermine Western democracies through fifth columnists, bribery and *kompromat* was part of the same strategy. The greyness, they wrote, had always been tactical. Mr. Putin was “the ultimate political performance artist,” his mercurial public persona a way to keep his adversaries off balance. Ms. Hill avoids any tone of “I told you so” or any critique of more optimistic opinions about Mr. Putin, but it is clear in retrospect that Western Europe in general and

Germany in particular placed a heavy bet on continued access to Russian oil and gas, and thus optimism about continued pragmatic relations was an understandable mistake.

Her description of her work on the Trump Administration National Security Council (NSC) as a Russia expert is highly relevant to the present, in that we can see the gradual decline of East-West relations behind the façade of Trump's self-glorifying proclamations. She describes Trump's refusal to read briefing papers, and her difficulties trying to prepare the President for his Helsinki meeting with Putin (pp. 226-7). This ended in Trump's public support for Putin at the press conference after the summit over his own intelligence agencies on the claim that there was no Russian interference in the 2016 election. No wonder Putin increasingly lost respect for America and our national interests over the past decade. After Ms. Hill sat in the room with both men at Helsinki, she fended off constant plots by vicious hard-liners to eject her from the government, but she continued on, not being prominent enough for Trump to notice her, let alone publicly attack her until her participation in the first impeachment investigation (p. 206).

I agree entirely with Ms. Hill's analysis that Trump was fascinated by authoritarians in general, and did not really care about Putin or anyone else, since all along his thoughts and actions have been completely self-centered (p. 233). His obsession was to get revenge on anyone who crossed him, or appeared to cross him, which made him an easy target for foreign manipulation. The only good news is that the national security bureaucracy is still functioning after his extensive effort to purge, damage, or destroy it.

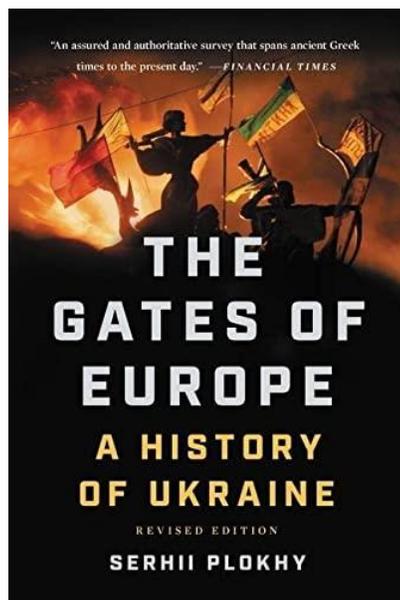
Trump's continued attacks on Ukraine and its government have been useful to Russia. Although many of us hoped Trump would disappear forever following his defeat at the polls in 2020, he has had a lasting effect on the Republican "base" in that he directed his followers to focus on the threat at the southern U.S. border, rather than the threat presented by events in Ukraine. Elected GOP officials are all over the map on foreign policy toward Russia, with a growing faction becoming more hostile by the day to support for Ukraine. On Tuesday, 5 April, the House of Representatives held a vote for a simple, nonbinding resolution expressing support for NATO and calling on President Biden to strengthen the organization's commitment to defending democracy. Although all of the Democrats and two-thirds of the Republicans voted for the resolution, 63 Republicans voted against it (see <https://theweek.com/nato/1012212/63>).

Since Putin's invasion of Ukraine, suddenly we have awakened to discover that we are back to the dilemmas of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, but facing a determined, completely cynical adversary who is ready, willing, and able to use small nuclear weapons to intimidate his opponents. In this situation, a number of commonly-held American and European beliefs which have been current for thirty years have come into question. The first is that wars of aggression are a thing of the past; the second is that democracy will gradually extend across the earth, preventing the spread of fascism; third, that disinformation will be successfully countered by accurate information; and finally, that psychopathic megalomaniacs will no longer command major countries. As someone who was educated in the seventies and eighties, I privately had my doubts about these twenty-first century popular cliches, but in general most people have preferred optimism to pessimism. It is hoped that the failure of Putin's Ukraine invasion will demonstrate the defeat of a war of aggression by a democracy, and the weaknesses of disinformation. A tough compromise which divides Ukraine from Crimea and the Donbas will probably be the best that can be achieved, but at least Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky will survive with most of his country intact.

Hill, F. *There is Nothing for You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21st Century*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2021.

John Davidson: *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* by Serhii Plokhy

Situated between Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East, Ukraine has been shaped by empires that exploited the nation as a strategic borderland between East and West -- from the Romans to the Ottomans to the Third Reich to the Soviet Union. I became much more interested in the history of that country when Vladimir Putin justified his invasion on the theory that Ukraine is not really a nation, and can therefore be attacked and carved up by its larger neighbor. A review of that history by Harvard scholar Serhii Plokhy allows the reader to understand its various phases of development and the related arguments which have arisen, while debunking the notion that this is not a separate nation but a part of Russia.



Mr. Plokhy examines Ukraine's search for its identity through the lives of major Ukrainian historical figures, from its heroes to its conquerors. His major distinction from his predecessors is that he has interpreted the history of Ukraine applying the modern concept of national identity, which is a rather new approach in Eastern Europe. He has emphasized belief in Ukraine's history of tolerance and legality, rooted in European Christian civilization, which goes a long way to explain the emergence of a much-strengthened democratic national identity over the last thirty years. The remarkable resilience and unity of Ukraine's people under assault from Russian aggression is no doubt related to the centuries of attacks on their nation from those who sought to exploit them.

The author starts with Herodotus, and then moves forward to discuss the founding of Kyiv by Rurik the Viking and his dynasty in the 9th-10th centuries. (pgs.26-30) He discusses the dispute between Russophiles and Ukrainian national historians over whether Rurik's successors (such as

Volodymyr, the descendent of Rurik who introduced Christianity) developed the Russian or the Ukrainian state over the next two centuries. This argument as to whether Volodymyr (who took the throne in Kyiv in 980 AD and is called by the Russians Vladimir) was Russian or Ukrainian would be comic if its outcome were not so tragic. Last month an elderly Ukrainian man in his mid-80s in the suburbs of Kyiv who found a Russian paratrooper had broken into his garden asked, "why are you here?" The paratrooper replied that because Rurik founded the Russian state and Vladimir was Russian, Kyiv belongs to Russia.

The Cossacks, as Mr. Plokhy explains, were folk heroes who freed slaves from the Tartars and the Ottomans, and the word itself is of Turkic origin meaning a guard, a freeman or a freebooter (p.75). By the mid-sixteenth century, the lands south of Kyiv were full of Cossack settlements (p.76). These were Ukrainians who came to escape serfdom, and thus the great national myth was born of the heroes who ran away from serfdom and fought for freedom. The book explains in detail the great Cossack revolt of 1648, which gave rise to the Cossack state that many regard as the foundation of modern Ukraine (pp. 97-107).

Although I visited the Monastery of the Caves in Kyiv, I was not aware of its key role in the Orthodox Reformation, in which the Orthodox Church adapted to the challenges of the Reformation and the

Counter-Reformation by updating and westernizing the Byzantine heritage (pp.85-96). The first Orthodox College was established in Kyiv in 1632, which altered the Jesuit (Counter-Reformation) curriculum to fit Orthodox needs by creating a statement of faith, providing written answers to the standard questions of that era (p.93). Since the late sixteenth century, the region south of Kyiv had become a Cossack freehold in all but name, a fact that assisted the rise of Kyiv as the focus of religious, educational, and cultural activities opposed to Polish Catholic authority (p.91). The Cossacks contributed to the Kyivan renaissance in that their presence minimized the Tartar threat, making the city more secure as a place for religious dissidents to live and work, as well as for the monks and peasants who tilled the Cave Monastery's lands to produce the revenue needed to fund education (p. 93).

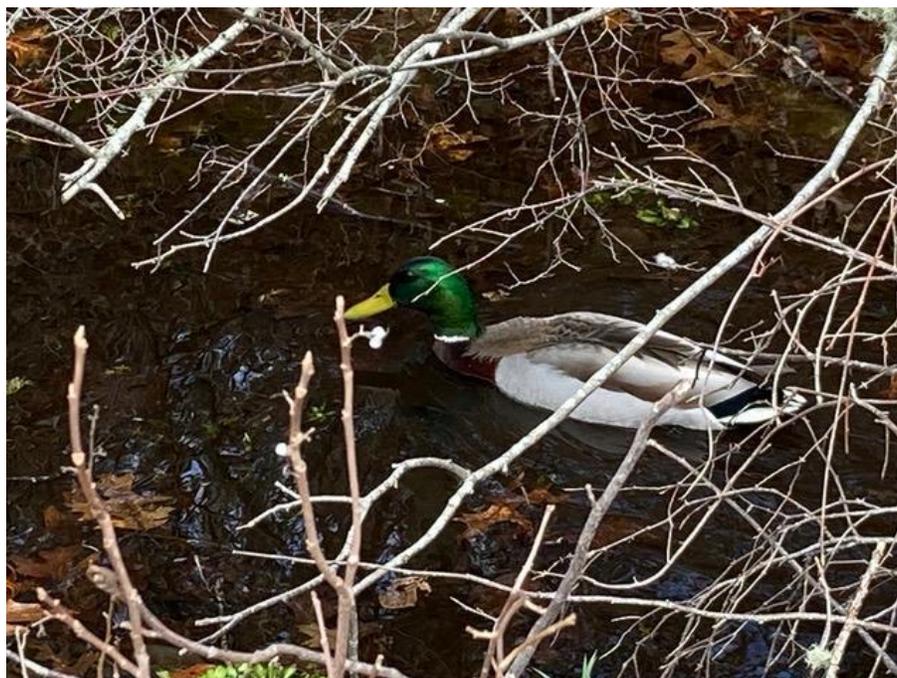
The incorporation of Ukraine into the Russian Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a gradual process, and the author carefully reviews the sequence of events that led to the Cossack Hetmanate signing agreements with the Tsars in Moscow in the 1650s (pp. 109-118). Although the Russian theory argues that the result was the formation of one nationality, in fact, Ukrainian national identity gradually developed over the next three centuries, despite the gradual absorption of the territory into the Russian state following Peter the Great's victory at the battle of Poltava in 1709 (pp.119-132). The author explains the process by which Ukraine had not only more religious tolerance than Russia, but also was partially occupied in the late 18th and 19th centuries by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Galicia (the area around Lviv), which led to greater political diversity and freedom (pp. 161-173). The key figure in the transfer of the Galician experience of greater political debate and ethnic nationalism to Dniepr Ukraine at the start of the 20th century was Peter Hruschewsky (p.195). When I last visited Ukraine in 2014, I encountered the street through the center of Kiev called Hrushevsky, and did not realize then that it was named after the professor of Ukrainian history at Lviv University who, a hundred and twenty years ago, clarified Ukrainian political and cultural goals, arguing that there should be no separate deals with regard to nationalities within the Russian empire in the face of Tsarist repression following the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 and the creation of the first Duma or Parliament (p. 195).

Although Mr. Plokyh discusses the Great Ukrainian Famine (in Ukrainian the Holodomor) as a possibly premeditated act of genocide against the Ukraine and its people, (pp. 254-256), my own view is that Stalin was willing to kill huge numbers of any nationality, including the Russian, based on his self-interest and ideological preconceptions, and (unlike the Nazis) he did not engage in openly promoting genocidal plans. Nonetheless, the fact that over three and a half million Ukrainians starved to death in one of the richest grain-growing regions on earth during the forced collectivization of the early thirties indicates a strong disregard for human life on the part of Stalin and his henchmen.

History has been used and abused more than once in the Ukraine crisis, informing and inspiring its participants but also justifying violations of international law, human rights, and the right to life itself. Plokyh's book, having been revised last year, takes the discussion of reforms and events in Ukraine up to recent times. The national identity has been revived and strengthened since the start of the Donbas war in 2014, just as the army has been greatly strengthened. Ukraine has always been known, and lately it has been much praised, for the cultural hybridity of its society, but how much hybridity a nation can bear and still remain united in the face of "hybrid war" is one of the important questions now being decided in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (p.365). We have seen once again in recent weeks that the shock of

an invasion, the self-confidence born of victories over Russian tanks, and the open wound of lost territories have served as potent instruments for building solidarity and forging a strong national identity.

Plokyh, S. *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015.



Mallard in Santuit River,
April 2022. Photo: G. Melix.



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The Gazette is a publication of
West Falmouth Preparative
Meeting
Rita O'Donnell, Editor
Alta Mae Stevens, Founding Editor
Stephen Gates, Photographer
Brenda Nolan, Transmitter

Next Gazette Deadline
Saturday, May 21