

THE GAZETTE

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

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

SEPTEMBER 2022



Excerpt from Marge Piercy's "To Be of Use"

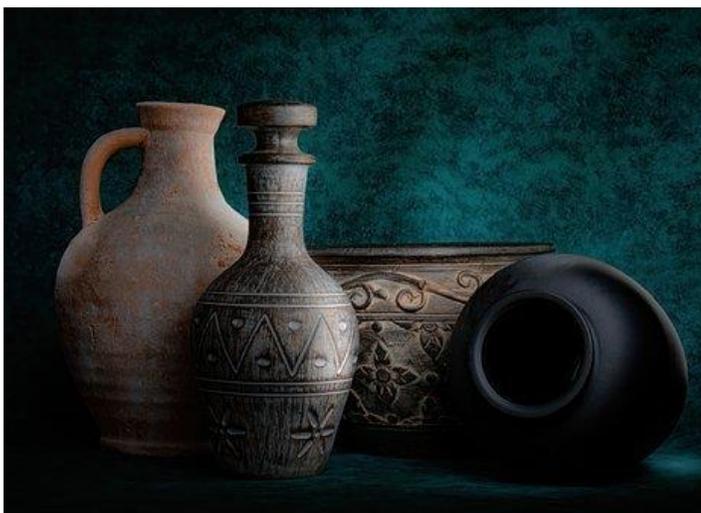
...

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

Piercy, M. "To Be of Use" in *Circles on the Water: The Selected Poems of Marge Piercy*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982.

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A seed jar made by Hopi-Tewa potter Nampeyo around 1905

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 12:30 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

September 25

September Birthdays

Nan Garrett-Logan, 5

Len Kreidermacher, 25

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

From Annual Sessions 2022, August 6 – 11: Some recordings of Sessions Events are now available at the NEYM YouTube channel, among them, Bible Half Hours with Regina Renee Ward and the Plenary with Emily Provance. See <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjh62LXMAAjw5w0FP-uDLAQ>.

Events in the Quarter

Saturday, **September 24** -- **Ministry & Counsel** at Mattapoisett.

Sandwich Monthly Meeting

Sunday, **September 11** -- Annual picnic at East Sandwich at noon following worship.

West Falmouth

Peace and Social Order

Sunday, **September 11**, 12:30 p.m.: Sarah Clarke, Director of the **Quaker United Nations Office in New York**, will speak on the life and wisdom of Bayard Rustin, an African American leader in the areas of civil rights, socialism, nonviolence, and gay rights. See the next page for further information on this presentation.

Sunday, **October 9**, 12:30 p.m.: Steve Gates of WFPM will speak on *Joyfully Saving the Planet for Our Grandchildren*. Steve has served on the board of the Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative and as clerk and co-clerk of NEYM's Earthcare Ministry Committee. He is currently completing a book on the climate crisis from which this talk is adapted.

Note that videos of previous 2nd Sunday presentations can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLcvmlRkcwwsDtLVT06TwQQ/videos>.





Sarah Clarke

Director: the Quaker United Nations Office/ QUNO (2019 -) in New York
Quaker UN Representative: QUNO (2002-2014)

Originally from Ottawa Monthly Meeting, Canada, now lives in Philadelphia with her family

2nd Sunday: Sunday, September 11, 2022 from 12:30–1:30 pm ET

Reflecting on Quaker Work at the UN:

Applying Lessons from the Life and Wisdom of Bayard Rustin

As we approach the 75th anniversary of Quaker work at the UN, we have an opportunity to reflect on valuable lessons about the Quaker traditions of non-violence and direct engagement. The life and wisdom of Quaker civil rights activist Bayard Rustin offers insights and lessons that continue to guide us today and as we look into the future.

BIO: Sarah Clarke serves as Director of the Quaker UN Office in New York. She leads QUNO’s engagement with the UN, diplomats, and civil society representatives, bringing Quaker practice and insights to the work of the UN system. Sarah holds a master’s degree in international political economy from the London School of Economics and has worked in the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation for over 20 years. She served as Quaker Representative at QUNO from 2002 – 2014, before undertaking work with a variety of peacebuilding actors in Myanmar, including the UN. Sarah brings a passion for building inclusive dialogue between stakeholders, and strengthening engagement between non-state actors and international policy makers. Originally from Canada Sarah is a member of Ottawa Monthly Meeting. While working in New York, she resides with her family in Philadelphia.

REGISTER: <https://bit.ly/SarahClarkeDirectorQUNO>

LIVE STREAM: <https://bit.ly/SarahClarkeDirectorQuakerUnitedNationsOffice>



2nd Sundays Quaker ZOOM Talk Series
HOST: Peace + Social Order Committee
West Falmouth Preparative Meeting MA (USA)

Also of Interest

Pendle Hill– See <https://pendlehill.org/>.

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) -- Annual Meeting and Quaker Public Policy Institute 2022: *Brave & Constant: Building the World We Seek. November 16 – 20*, Washington, DC. Learn more and register for in-person or online attendance at <https://www.fcnl.org/events/annual-meeting-and-quaker-public-policy-institute-2022>.

Read *January 6 Was Serious. So is the Disenfranchisement of Millions of People*, an interesting FCNL update by José Santos Woss, FCNL's director for justice reform.

<https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2022-08/january-6-was-serious-so-disenfranchisement-millions-people>.

Please join Nan Garrett-Logan on **October 12** at 10:30 a.m., when a representative from the **Louis Brown Peace Institute** will be speaking at the Grandmothers Against Gun Violence meeting. The Peace Institute is not only an important part of the Dorchester community but an inspiration to other communities throughout the country. The meeting is at the Cape Cod Synagogue, 145 Winter St., Hyannis.

Their mission: 'To serve as a center of healing, teaching, and learning for families and communities impacted by murder, trauma, grief, and loss.'

Their vision: 'To create and sustain an environment where all families can live in peace and all people are valued.'

WFPM contributes financially to the Peace Institute and this is a great opportunity to learn more about their work. See <https://ldbpeaceinstitute.org>.

For rides, contact Nan at loganwoho@comcast.net.



Memorial Minute

Alta Mae Stevens

Alta Mae Stevens loved to share with others. She combined her strong intelligence with a unique ironic wit until the day of her death at age 91. She became a Friend from her attraction to pacifism and well-considered opposition to injustice. Then she came to love our community, calling each of us monthly in order to write a personal newsletter, then giving us her laughter and her frankness. As long as she could, she also took it as a duty to inform us with the wider news and tell us of the needs of others. She also took care of us, inviting us to her table and to her large Christmas parties.



She was born in 1929 in Lima, Peru, where her father, one of the first test pilots and a war hero, the retired General Harold R. Harris, was arranging the first commercial overseas flights from South America. His devotion and accomplishments inspired hers. In 2015 she wrote and published a biography describing his outsized bravery and acumen.

Meanwhile, Alta Mae graduated magna cum laude from Bryn Mawr and earned three more degrees. For ten years, while married, divorced, and raising four children, she taught literature to Canadian high school students. When her mother died she moved with her children to Falmouth to be with her father and her brother, Harold, who needed care.

She was always wide awake and fascinated with life here and abroad. When she earned her Ph.D. at Brown University at age 70, she chose a thesis in anthropology on family life in Haiti. By then her own family life focused on her brother, her grown children and their five children.

Alta Mae thought like a scientist about some open questions by not insisting on one's right to a conclusion. The question that troubled her the most and led to barbed discussions with her father was Friends' abstract pacifism and our determined conviction of the wrongness of war. When he died she grieved by comparing her former reasoning with his intimate experience of the necessities of battle. This led to a sense of loyalty both to his views and to those of Friends. Perhaps she felt him watching as she spoke of resigning. She never did. Love matters most.



Readers Write

A Simple Garden

Sunny Davidson

Somehow this happened. We sat by Oyster Pond in our backyard while the front yard became mostly meadow. Yet, even on a street leading to the ocean where people spend thousands on their yards and trees, made perfect by able men with huge and loud machines (brought here on even bigger trailers) these neighbors exclaim that the simple meadow is beautiful.

Many walkers stop to talk and encourage me, this lady in her mid-nineties sitting on a cart. I am pulling the little weeds that appear among the logs and sticks I have carefully placed to separate the wildflowers from the ordinary lawn on the one side, and the grass of the two-foot-wide path on the other. Some sticks get replaced after rain moves them.



A garden needs bones and surprises. The bonelike path curves between the meadow and the neighboring conservation land. Some flowering plants pop up from the days when this was a normal garden. Old roses and hydrangeas bloom by the driveway. A big orange azalea briefly looks like Moses' burning bush leading the Israelites from Egypt. But the

best surprise is a true friend who pushes his mower down the bone and over the lawn. He also digs and whips and moves ferns, saws trees, and keeps me company with his joy.

The truth, of course, is that I laze in my low cart seat, for I can't do more than small transplants and maintaining the meadow's edges. I do walk along daily pulling off and clipping whatever I can reach of the vines that want to cover everything. Morning glories and porcelain berries are also beautiful, but they are a bane to everything else if they squelch and cover what one wants to see.

For example, in June this quarter of our quarter acre is an astonishing sea of yellow flags, or iris. Before that and before the weed meadow appears, it is all daffodils. They have multiplied each season, massing from a few bulbs I put around the house some forty years ago. In the backyard, more of them nearly match their flourishing mates on the opposite side of Oyster Pond in Spohr Garden.

Some of the yellow iris have migrated far and even grow in the water! They are so aggressive as to have been banned for sale in this state five or six years ago, long after ours escaped control. In the pond they push back phragmites, another invasive species. Those tall fronds are recommended to be cut and the stalks poisoned three times in a season, to be rid of them. But I only cut, not poison.



Writing about age and simplicity makes me think of my Quaker ancestors. My great grandfather, Jesse Thatcher, M.D., and his son my Uncle Blakey, also a homeopathic physician, died caring for patients in Philadelphia during the great flu epidemic of 1918. As a child I knew and loved Jesse's ancient wife (incapacitated on an upper floor from age eighty), as well as my grandmother "gaga," and her elderly siblings. Homeopathy taught, "the smaller the dose, the stronger," and presumably caused much less harm than blood-letting allopaths, whom my great aunt, using the plain language, still vigorously disparaged. Very likely the species of tall, wild foxgloves emerging

conspicuously above the current patch of weeds provided homeopathy's most effective medication, digitalis, as foxgloves do to this day.

I sit musing on my cart, amazed and grateful for all the medications and healthcare we have now. I hope my heart never needs digitalis, especially when the morning glory vines take over the meadow.





Money Plant



Iris



Daisies



Iris

Photos pp. 6-8 by
S. Gates, August 2022.

A Second Postcard from the Appalachian Trail

Paul Denoncourt

I did it! Well, I did half of it. After starting the A.T. at the midpoint at Harper's Ferry, WV on April 24th and heading north, I reached the northern terminus at the summit of Mt. Katahdin in northern Maine on July 30th. 1168 miles in 99 days. The northern half traverses many mountains in Northern New England including Killington, Moosilauke, and the seven Presidentials in New Hampshire. It runs above treeline (where you are not allowed to camp) in several places including twenty-four continuous miles in the White Mountain National Forest. The weather on the summit of Mt. Washington was wintery and miserable with sustained winds of 30 mph and gusts of 70 mph, a wind chill temperature of 22°, sleet and poor visibility. Katahdin was not much better.



I am fortunate that I did not sustain a significant injury or overuse condition. I did have a series of blisters early on but changing to a different brand of hiking shoe solved that problem. My biggest problem was a lack of stamina, especially climbing mountains. I just was not “getting my trail legs,” even as late as Vermont. Finally, another hiker suggested I drink a protein/oatmeal/coffee granule shake with breakfast each morning and that made a difference just in time for the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Apparently, my problem was protein malnutrition. I lost about sixteen pounds over these ninety-nine days, much of it muscle mass.

Phase one is now complete! July 30, 2022.
Photo credit: J. Dickens, fellow hiker.

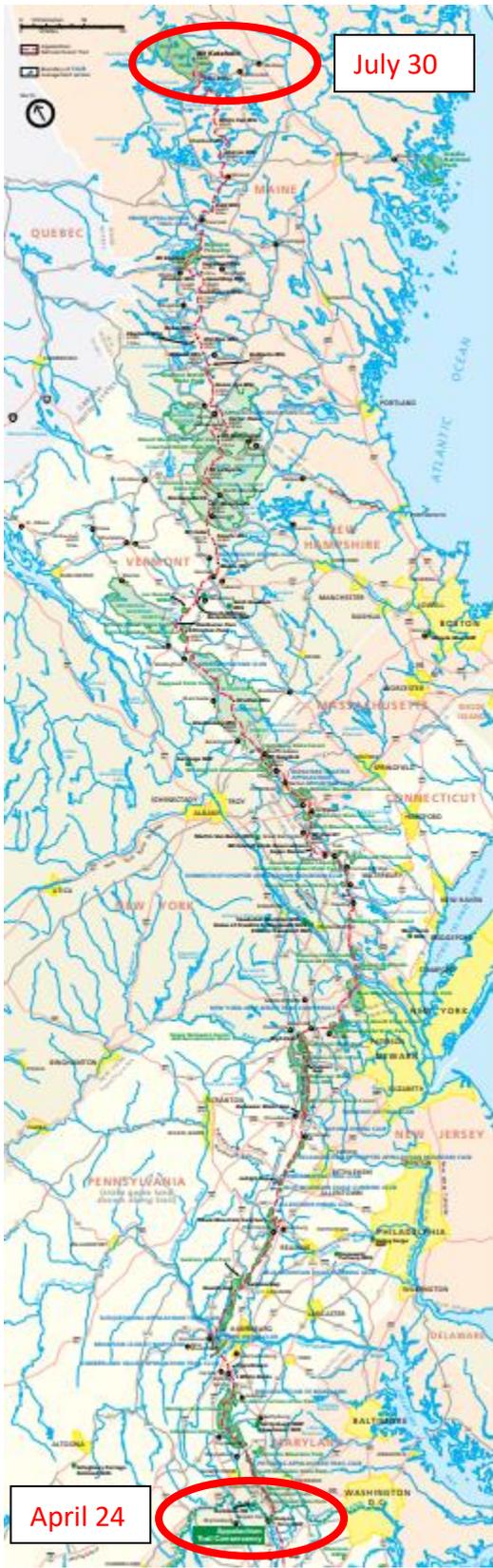
Most of the time I hiked alone. As I am three times the age of most of the through hikers, I am relatively slow and hold others back. Because I am slow, I do fewer miles per day – I average about twelve compared to many who do twenty or more most days. It does get lonely, but I can stop to rest or snack or camp whenever I need to and not slow down a hiking partner. I tried listening to music and audible books but doing so wore down my phone battery quickly. I need my phone for its navigation app and recharging opportunities were rare. I therefore resorted to mind games. I recited poems, song lyrics, the alphabet backwards, the Greek alphabet, the U.S. presidents in order, the capitals of all U.S. states and Canadian Provinces, the names of the twelve apostles, the first twenty elements of the Periodic Table, etc. I was never really alone, however, because, as I described in my last installment, Spirit was always with me, and I am being held in the Light by the Friends of East Sandwich.

A great joy is seeing wildlife. In my previous post I described the sleeping fawn I encountered. Since then, I have seen three Black Bears including a mother and her cub. Initially I didn't see the cub. The mother just sat there watching me, showing no aggression. I talked to it (I didn't know whether it was female and a mom) and it seemed to listen. I took her picture. Then I saw the cub and realized the potential danger I was in, so I retraced my steps away from them. Only then did the mother snort at me. Why, I don't know; it was clear I was retreating. I guess she wanted to have the last word. I had to bushwhack up a steep hill in the rain to get back on-trail.

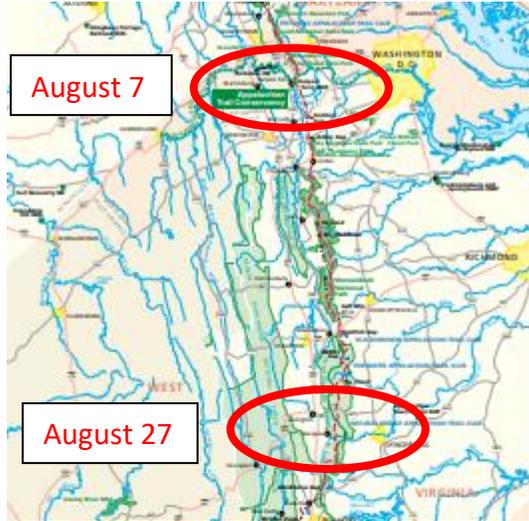
I am taking a week off to resupply, repair or trade out gear, and try to put some weight back on. I am eating as much high calorie food as I can, and that is very enjoyable! Pie, cookies, ice cream, but also salads, fruit, and high protein foods. Tomorrow, August 6, my wife will drive me back to Harper's Ferry and the following morning I will return to the trail heading south to Springer Mountain in Georgia. That segment is only 1026 miles. I hope to accomplish it in about 90 days. There will be fewer mountains to climb but heat and humidity will be a factor, and water sources may be scarce. I trust Spirit to guide me through these obstacles, just as it did in the north.



Photo by author.



Left: Northern segment, April 24 to July 30, 1168 miles in 99 days.
 Below: Southern segment, 1026 miles total. Began August 7, 2022 at Harper's Ferry, W VA. In Buchanan, VA on August 27.



The journey continues. Heading south. August 7, 2022. Photo credit: S. Tardif.

<https://www.nps.gov/appa/playourvisit/upload/APPA%20Map.pdf>

Some Memories

Maggie Saab

Some memories, going down the memory lane, from when we arrived in Boston in 1976 from Lebanon. My dear husband Ali left Beirut in the middle of the Civil War, barely making it to the airport. He arrived in Boston in February 1976 where snow and freezing weather welcomed him. He came to look for a position in anesthesiology at a good medical center. But February is not an ideal month for that. He called me in Beirut where I was staying with my in-laws and with our two children, Amin, five years old, and Amer, three years old. Ali asked me to stay in Lebanon because he was not feeling welcomed in this country, and thought we could do our best to survive in Lebanon. My answer was stay where you are, we are coming to the USA.

We both received our degrees from the American University of Beirut (“Harvard of the Middle East”). Ali got his medical degree in anesthesiology and I got mine in nursing.

The boys and I arrived in Boston a month later and stayed in a motel in the city. We had no home, no job, no car. Ali was going for interviews daily here and there, but there was nothing substantial. He was very worried about how we were going to manage. But I was not worried at all. I knew and felt something good was apt to come about. I have the innate wisdom and strong faith in God, and knew we were going to be fine. We had our degrees, boards, and licenses and just needed to be patient. I was happy in that motel. They had a Syrian chef who prepared shish kebab daily for us, why to complain?

I used to wake up in the middle of the night -- so quiet, super quiet -- and hold my breath. “It’s going to explode, explode, now, now!” Then a voice would say, “Maggie, you are in USA, not Lebanon, you are not in danger.” This went on for many months. PTSD.

Evenings and nights during the Civil War -- 1974 and on-- there were fierce battles among the hundreds of militias. Explosions right and left, snipers everywhere, fires. So many innocent civilians were killed. We had to sleep on mattresses in the hallway away from doors and windows. There was no water, no power, flush bathroom once daily, and depended on candles to see our way around the apartment in a huge building. We did light a candle every night and sing happy birthday to our kids. They asked us, “Are we growing a year every day?” Just some humor is needed!!

For twenty-four hours daily I had to worry about our basic needs, go to the market and get all the canned goods I could. You could not store anything in the fridge or freezer due to lack of power. We could not go out and walk freely. Every corner had a militia, checking your ID cards. Ali used to drive to the hospital and call me to tell me that he’d made it safely. The same at the other end -- calling the hospital to tell them that he’d made it home safely.

But the problems got worse. When physicians were needed to attend to hundreds of injuries, ambulances would come to our building and call Ali to come down immediately. He could not say no, so they would travel through wildfires with bombs exploding left and right. I could not sleep. Is my husband coming home? I started having chest pains and lost my appetite. Stress was taking a toll on me and us.

This could not go on. Dear Lord, we are good and decent people, we deserve a better life, we are in danger, we need to take strong steps for a better life. Could not see the light at the end of the tunnel.

There were countless cease-fires. On one of these occasions, we ventured downtown to buy some fresh figs and spring fruits. Ali said he would drop me at the vendor's market where I would get what we needed and he'd drive around and come and get me. The kids were with him, too. I got out and started putting some figs into a paper bag when all of a sudden, the sky opened up with explosions, machine gun fire. All I knew was that people were pushing each other here and there and I ended up in a store where they shut down the iron door and there was no room to move or breathe. Hundreds of people were shoulder to shoulder and I thought I was going to die! So I started to scream like a lunatic, "Let me out! My family is out there. If they died I cannot live." Some were saying, "If it's not your time to die you won't." I said, "I don't care. Just let me out, let me out." Someone said, "Let her go. We have enough problems." So I went out. So eerily quiet! I could not see Ali's car. I panicked and started crying. I saw one of the militia guys and told him I wanted him to shoot me if my family died.

He put his hand on my shoulder and told me to wait, that maybe they'd come. After a while I saw something moving on the sidewalk on the far side. It was our green Datsun moving at a snail's pace. When Ali arrived we both cried like babies.

We decided the next day to go to the American Embassy and request a visa. We were given the green card in two months. So that was a good start. We were one of the first families to leave the University. It did take courage indeed!!

We stayed a whole month at the Boston motel, and Ali did find a good job at a community hospital. So then he wanted to buy a car, a Chrysler Cordoba. At the dealership, where he decided on the car, the car dealer asked for our home address. We told him we didn't have a home. He said, "What, you don't have a home? Wait a minute. Let me call my condo association and see if there is a vacancy." Sure enough they did have a three-bedroom townhouse which I loved. We stayed there for a year and then moved to a house. So the car dealer found us a home.

It was a tough beginning. The kids had difficulty adjusting to school. They did not know any English (had not watched Sesame Street in Beirut -- no power), so they felt awkward at the start. But I gave them lots of alphabet soup!!! (Made a difference!)

Man is a war-loving animal. War -- the perfect field for the practice of power, fame and money. It is not something new. It is a man-made disaster since the beginning of humanity. A few big shots decide on it, and let others do the killing and dying.

The common man has no power. He cannot ask why and how? He has to survive, protect his family, and get out of harm's way if he can. Many in Lebanon could not escape. Some lacked money, some were too old. Many committed suicide. Helplessness, pure agony, and no hope.

We ourselves were lucky and got out safely. We had hope that the USA was the perfect place for us. We loved the people we met and had many friends.

Most of all it was the Divine Intervention that facilitated our safety. A car dealer finding us a home, a job that needed a board-certified doctor to fill an urgent vacancy!! We thank God the Almighty for our blessings! But anxiety and claustrophobia are my long-time friends. Knitting scarves is the solution.

The republic of Lebanon is a country of Western Asia located between Syria to the north and Israel to the south. From the 16th century Lebanon was ruled for four centuries by the Ottoman Empire. It was divided into counties and municipalities. People of different sects and religions were scattered among many divisions.

It was colonized by the French for 25 years when the French government had a big hold on the business and economy. The British government helped them in many ways to get rid of the French.

Geographically, Lebanon is a very beautiful country and Beirut is the capitol. Being on the Mediterranean Sea made Beirut a hot spot for many foreigners to visit and many to live there. The American University of Beirut was founded by a Christian missionary from Vermont, Dr. Daniel Bliss.

The foreign presence had a huge influence on the people in Lebanon. Exposed to different people they became broadminded, learned many languages, and became a melting pot of many nationalities. Lebanon is the most religiously diverse country in the Middle East. However, the divisions among the various sects and religions are many and lasting and are felt and fought about with vigor during any conflict, major or minor. The civil war from 1975 to 1990 caused enormous destruction.

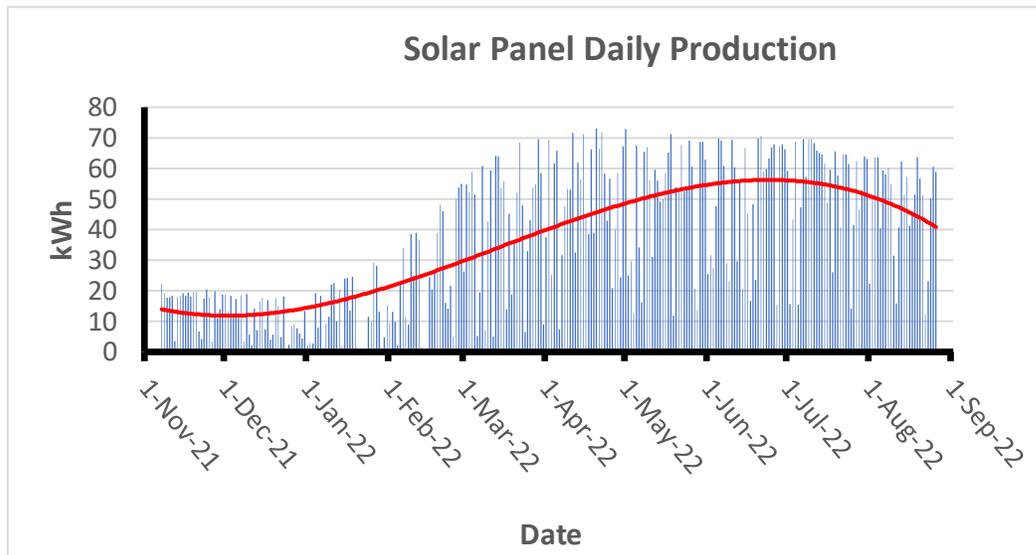


Solar Update

Steve Gates

This is the time of year when most people cringe about their electric bills. Air conditioners are running almost continuously because of the August heat wave on the Cape, and Eversource rates go up a bit starting July 1 (by about 2.1 cents per kWh). Two of our neighbors mentioned to Rita that their bills were \$700 to \$800 for July, and August may be even worse. But our July bill was -\$175.61; i.e., we have a credit for that amount from Eversource toward future electric costs. Actually, it's even better than that. Let me explain.

The amount of electricity solar panels produce varies with the season. Here's our data for the period since November 6, 2021 when our solar panels were installed:



What you can see from the red (third-order fitted) curve is that electricity production is mostly determined by the season, with a minimum in mid-December, and a maximum in mid-June (i.e., near the seasonal solstices). Most of the daily fluctuation is determined, on the other hand, by how cloudy the days are (May and June, for instance, had lots of cloudy days). Our consumption of electricity averages about 22 kWh per day in winter, and up to twice that during hot summer days. You can see from the graph that November through February we had to buy some electricity from Eversource, but beginning in March, we were producing more electricity than we used.

So what happens when we have “excess” electricity from our panels? Our system automatically sends it to Eversource, which gives us a credit for that excess electricity, because they can then sell the electricity to our neighbors. The amount of the credit is the same as the cost our neighbors would pay (for example, in July, it was \$0.29323 per kWh). In July, we had 634 “excess” kWh, so the credit was $634 \times \$0.29323 = \185.91 . They also charge us a “delivery fee” of \$10.30, which means

No Payment Due	
Electric Account Summary	
Amount Due On 07/24/22	-\$748.79
Last Payment Received	\$0.00
Balance Forward	-\$748.79
Current Charges/Credits	
Electric Supply Services	\$0.00
Delivery Services	\$10.30
Other Charges or Credits	-\$185.91
Total Current Charges	-\$175.61
Total Amount Due	-\$924.40

that our *net* credit was \$175.61. This is then added to the credits we had received earlier in the year (\$748.79) so we have a total credit of \$924.40 so far in 2022. That total credit is applied by Eversource to the months (probably mid-September 2022 to mid-March 2023) when we will produce less electricity than we need. At the end of one year, our net production will approximately equal our net consumption. But of course, we will have avoided paying the more than \$3,000 our electricity would have cost if we had not had solar panels.

In addition, Massachusetts has an incentive program (“SMART”) for encouraging production of renewable energy. This month, we received a check for \$173.71 from Eversource reflecting our total energy production (about 1500 kWh) in May. The SMART incentive is monthly but declines each year over a 10-year period.

If we look at this from a bit of a distance, what is happening is that Eversource is acting like it’s a big battery for us. It takes our excess electricity production and “stores” it in the form of credits for up to several months until we need it. Our panels are designed to give us just enough electricity to meet our needs for the entire year. So each year, we avoid paying any electric bills at all, and we receive the SMART incentives. If you count the electricity costs we avoid, plus the incentive, we’ll recoup our solar panel investments in about 6 years; beyond year six, we are making a substantial net profit on our investment.

Global Pandemics Touchstone: From Cape Cod to the Bronx *Lewis Randa*

The one-ton granite Global Pandemics Bereavement Touchstone, hosted this past winter at East Sandwich Quaker Meeting before being pushed and pulled from Cape Cod Hospital to Barnstable Town Hall, is awaiting acceptance at a place few people have ever heard of in New York City — and for good reason. The place is Hart Island, located in the Bronx on Long Island Sound, but it might as well be in another country, as those in New York City have been kept from knowing about it, that is until the coronavirus hit and massive numbers of unclaimed bodies needed to be disposed of.

This desolate, uninhabited island has served as a repository for unwanted bodies in New York City for over one hundred fifty years and it continues to this day. Over one million mass graves are kept out of sight and out of reach for most New Yorkers, save a few who must apply in advance, then wait months to visit the grave of a friend or loved one. If the Peace Abbey’s Global Pandemics stone has anything to say about it, the country’s largest Potter’s Field will have a marker for lives lost, many of them to contagious disease.

As plans were underway to have the stone placed at the meditation garden at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan, news about Hart Island surfaced. While the initial goal was to have the stone in the most visible, pristine location near the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, that consideration yielded to where indigent, unwanted, unclaimed bodies of those with contagious disease were buried, stacked three deep in trenches a mile long. It was Hart Island (where few people are allowed to visit, is

accessible only by ferry, and for well over a century was managed by inmates from notorious Rikers Island Prison), that was determined to be where the stone rightfully belongs.

Hart Island deserves the bereavement stone because the island cemetery lacks a monument of any kind that identifies it as where those who succumbed to contagious diseases are interred. In a profound and far-reaching way, this bereavement stone uniquely embraces not only victims of contagious diseases such as AIDS and COVID-19 but, as homeless advocate and Quaker Alan Burt and Cambridge Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui point out, “also those whose deaths can be attributed to the pandemic of racism, discrimination, poverty, gun violence, heart disease and cancer.” This memorial stone, standing seven feet tall offers solace and comfort in placing one’s loss in a global context, for the human family suffers as one, and heals as one.

While the Peace Abbey Foundation awaits NYC Mayor Eric Adams’ decision whether to endorse the offering of the bereavement stone for Hart Island, it rests on its carriage at the Barron Marina next to the ferry dock at City Island from which access to Hart Island is provided. The wheels of big city government turn slowly — as those buried on Hart Island who deserve a memorial stone turn slowly in their graves.



Pandemic Stone at Barron Marina, City Island.
Photo credit: L. Randa, August, 2022.

Learn more about Hart Island at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SF3eddIly3U> and <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hartisland/hart-island/hart-island.page>.

Gun News in Falmouth

Nan Garrett-Logan

Destroy police assault rifles or enter them into circulation? Last Spring the Falmouth Select Board took a remarkable if inadequate step when it created a new policy that would allow the Board to ask that retired Falmouth assault weapons be destroyed.

State law allows a town to modify rules regarding disposition of their town property. We had hoped the Select Board's rule would state clearly that retired assault weapons would be destroyed as this class of weapons is banned for ownership by civilians in Massachusetts. Instead, the Board left an option for guns to be entered into circulation in the hope that they would be purchased by Falmouth police officers. However, once in possession of the dealer they can be sold not only to Massachusetts police officers, but also to individuals in any of the forty-three states that have no assault weapons ban.

The community came together with over three hundred people signing a petition to ask the Select Board to opt for the allowed destruction. Alas, complications in the purchase agreement led the Select Board to allow the sale to go through. The twenty-three retired assault rifles that we owned are now in circulation.

Not to be daunted, Deborah Warner, recently retired minister of Church of the Messiah in Woods Hole, found that the creation of a by-law to the Falmouth code could require destruction in the future. In conversation with the members of the Town Council she crafted an Article which will appear on the Warrant for the November Town Meeting.

Deborah, Nan and others will be educating Town Meeting members as to the importance and legal implications of this proposal in the hope that we in Falmouth will arrive at a better protocol for the disposal of assault weapons in the future.

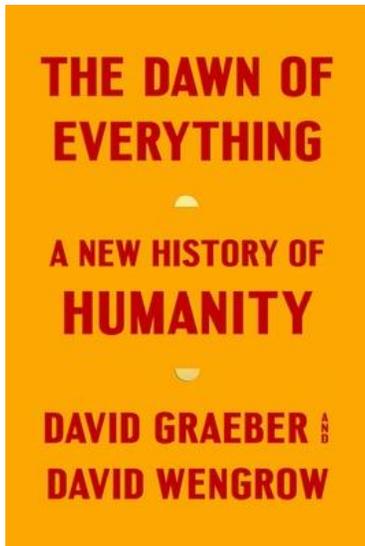


Friends Alan Burt, Bill Holcombe, Gail Melix, and Lewis Randa at East Sandwich Meetinghouse after Meeting for Worship. Gail, Alan, and Lewis then continued on to the annual Mashpee Wampanoag Powwow on the Mashpee Wampanoag tribal reservation. Photo credit: L. Burns, July 3, 2022.

What We're Reading

John Davidson: *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* by David Graeber and David Wengrow

A review of the pre-history and early history of humanity by British academics David Graeber (an anthropologist and Occupy Wall Street activist who died recently) and David Wengrow (an archaeologist) argues that it is time to rethink everything we have been taught about the origins of “civilization” and the current inequality of power. Their all-encompassing explanatory history presents the case that nation-states which monopolize the use of violence through police, courts and armies are a path which was chosen relatively recently, and are in no sense inevitable. In their view, we need to reexamine these civilizational origins to explain why so many people obey the orders of so few over most of the planet, as well as why the contemporary state generally holds a monopoly on the use of violence to the detriment of the rights of citizens.



The authors start by criticizing the general preference for a model of history that is at once teleological (driven by specific forces to arrive at the foreordained present) and discontinuous (such magical things as farming and the current state order of bureaucrats, armies and priests emerged from the woodwork, unlocking successive stages of developmental maturity.) The two scholars came to see that to inquire after the “origins” of inequality was to defer to one of the two myths--roughly, Thomas Hobbes’s notion that early human existence was a brutal

war of all against all, or Jean-Jacque Rousseau’s thought experiment that we were born free but rushed headlong into our chains (pp. 2-10). Their profuse and antic account of how we came to take these old narratives for granted and why we might be better off if we let them go is fun to read, although their notion that pre-history offers new ideas for the future is controversial among mainstream academics and sceptics.

The Dawn of Everything makes a persuasive case that what was passed off as Indigenous criticism of European political thinking for being undemocratic and hypocritical in the early 18th century was, in fact, Indigenous criticism of European political thinking which came to play an important role during the Enlightenment. These Indigenous objections could be safely deflected only if they were seen as European ventriloquism, not ideas from another adult community with alternative values, so were misinterpreted in this manner. The authors cite Sagard’s account of his stay among the (Native American) Wendat which became an influential bestseller in France and across Europe: both Locke and Voltaire cited *le grand voyage du pays des Hurons* as a principal source for their descriptions of native American societies (p. 40). The authors argue that Europeans learned from native Americans about the connection between reasoned debate, personal freedoms and the refusal of arbitrary power (p. 44). They emphasize the importance of the Native American (Huron-Wendat) statesman Kandiaronok as a key figure in presenting an argument to the French colonizers in favor of individual freedom (p.51).

Graeber and Wengrow conclude that the simplistic models of social evolution that draw a straight line from forager bands to tribes and chiefdoms to ever-larger states are too crude to be of much value. Instead, they argue that we should accord significance to the 5,000 years in which cereal domestication did not lead to the emergence of pampered aristocracies, standing armies, or debt peonage, rather than just to the 5,000 years in which it did. The rise of cities did not necessarily lead to the rise of rigid hierarchies and institutions of social control. For example, in around 7,000 BC, thousands of people lived in densely packed housing in one of the earliest known large communities Catalhuyuk in present day Turkey (pp. 212-14). Scholars have not found any evidence of ruling elites at the site or the practice of agriculture.

Later urban centers that relied on cultivated crops did not automatically come with the conventional package of kings, priests and bureaucrats. Some did just fine without monarchs, apparently including the mysterious Indus valley civilization, which stretched over much of South Asia in the second millennium B.C. and Teotihuacan, a large metropolis with over 100,000 residents in Central Mexico that flourished in the first five centuries A.D. In both cases, archaeologists have found little evidence of kingship or social stratification (pp. 313-321 and 328-345, respectively).

The vast erudition of the authors makes the book very much worth reading. But Graeber and Wengrow have an ideological ax to grind in that they are unhappy about the course of history, arguing that there is no doubt that something has gone terribly wrong with the world. Although they know that historical outcomes converged over time toward growing state power and social inequality, they prefer to dwell on cases that went against the trend. They do not resolve the tension between their individual examples and the overall direction of human development, preferring the exceptions to the rule. Although they disparage the conventional evidence, they do not offer any new explanation for the long-term historical transition toward centralized states. Making light of the connection between early adoption of farming and the subsequent emergence of large-scale societies and states, they fail to note that the latter invariably appeared in areas blessed with the most useful food crops, including the Middle East, northern China, Mexico, and Peru. The spread of nutritious crops that grow on a predictable schedule and could be taxed by landlords and rulers facilitated state formation and strengthened hierarchies. Graeber and Wengrow clearly dislike this explanatory nexus, but provide no alternative theory.

Although they dismiss the views of popularizers of big picture history such as Jared Diamond, Steven Pinker, and Yuval Noah Harari, it is not at all clear that the argumentation of Graeber and Wengrow has convinced their professional colleagues. In his review of the book, for example, Stanford professor Walter Scheidel argues that “the few cases of early cities without documented autocracies that Graeber and Wengrow find are so poorly known that they can hardly be said to add up to a “surprisingly common pattern” of communities scaling up without elite control” (pp. 190-191).* He accuses them of sweeping entire schools of historical thought under the rug in order to make their case. For reasons they never quite explain, he says, Graeber and Wengrow spend a large chunk of their book inveighing against the concept of the state, which they are determined to unfairly banish from ancient history by imposing a modern definition of statehood which is anachronistic and maximalist.

I would recommend the book of Graeber and Wengrow to any Quaker, because it is a creative effort to get us beyond stereotyped and outdated thinking about the nature of authority in society and the origins of state power. Although the authors make a very enjoyable presentation of the influence of native American democratic thought upon the European enlightenment, they cannot be said to have

transformed their field by overthrowing the existing paradigm which explains how states came into existence and how inequalities of power came to dominate society.

*Scheidel, W. "Deep Takes: Does a Better Future Lie in the Prehistoric Past?" *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2022, pp. 187-193.

Graeber, D. and Wengrow, D. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. New York, NY: Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2021.



End page: WF Meetinghouse,
August 9, 2022. Photo credit:
Larisa Davidson.

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
Thursday, September 22

