

THE GAZETTE

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

West Falmouth Religious Society of Friends

MARCH 2023



In Praise of Craziiness, of a Certain Kind by Mary Oliver

On cold evenings
my grandmother,
with ownership of half her mind-
the other half having flown back to Bohemia-
spread newspapers over the porch floor
so, she said, the garden ants could crawl beneath,
as under a blanket, and keep warm,

and what shall I wish for, for myself,
but, being so struck by the lightning of years,
to be like her with what is left, that loving.

From *New and Selected Poems, Volume Two*. Boston, MA:
Beacon Press, 2005.

Contents

<i>Upcoming Events</i>	2-9
<i>Photos of Friends</i>	10-12
<i>Readers Write with a Special Section on Poetry</i>	12-22
<i>What We're Reading</i>	23-25



Officers

Molly Cornell, clerk

Sally Fritz, recording clerk

Clyde Tyndale, treasurer

Regular Events

Peace and Social Order

2nd Sunday at 12:30 p.m.

Erica Adams, clerk

Ministry & Counsel

Cynthia Rankin, clerk

(508-360-7536)

West Falmouth Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Usually 4th Sunday

March 26; April 23

Upcoming Events

New England Yearly Meeting

International meeting for worship – daily from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. Join together with Friends 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.

<https://neym.org/events-calendar/international-meeting-worship>.

Sandwich Quarterly Meeting

New Bedford -- Work party after worship followed by lunch, Sunday, **March 12** (every second Sunday).

Quarterly Meeting for Business – Saturdays, April 22 in Yarmouth; **July 22** in Allen's Neck; and **October 28** in East Sandwich.

Quarterly Ministry and Counsel – Saturdays, March 25 in East Sandwich and **September 23** in Mattapoisett. Note: Business and M&C meetings start at 10:00. Format to be determined.

The **Dartmouth Historical and Arts Society**, in collaboration with the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, recently completed *The Minutes of the Dartmouth, Massachusetts Monthly Meeting of*

Friends 1699 - 1785, Volumes I and II. Verbatim transcriptions of the original records kept by the Quakers, each volume numbers over 800 pages. The texts have been made available online on the Colonial Society's website, <https://www.colonialsociety.org/publications/4942/volume-97-minutes-dartmouth-massachusetts-monthly-meeting-friends-1699-1785>.

West Falmouth

Quaker Women - The Zoom schedule for the upcoming month is as follows (meetings begin at 7 p.m.).

March: Wednesday **3/15** and Tuesday **3/28**. Also, opportunities for in-person gatherings occur on alternate Fridays at 9:30 a.m., when we meet with Gina Lyman at Atria. Notifications for the in-person gatherings come from Molly Cornell.

Peace and Social Order

Sunday, **March 12**, 12:30 p.m. Social worker and homeless advocate Alan Burt will speak. See page 4 for details. The second Sunday in April is Easter so there will be no 2nd Sunday form.

Note that videos of previous 2nd Sunday presentations can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/@westfalmouthquakers>.

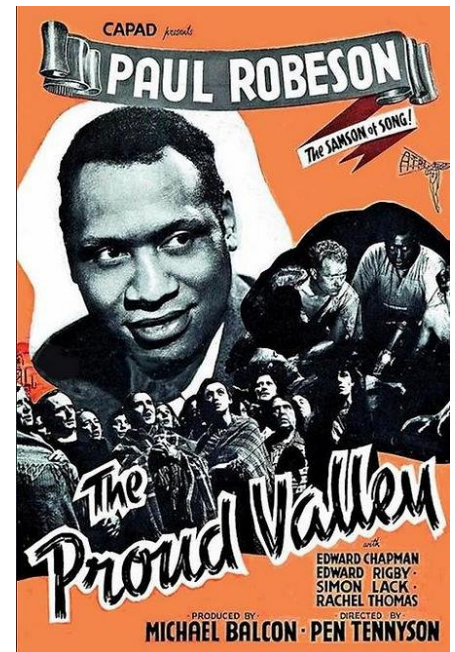
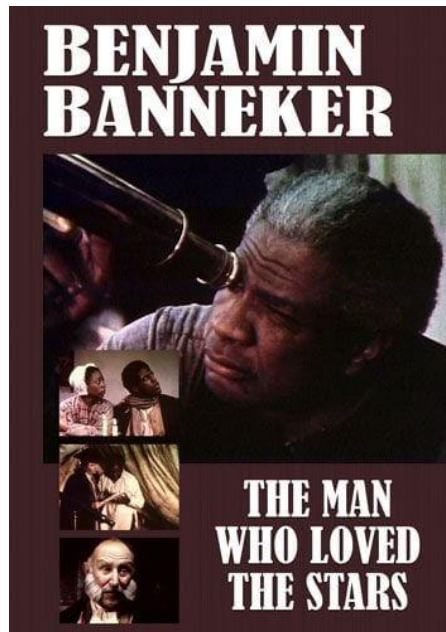
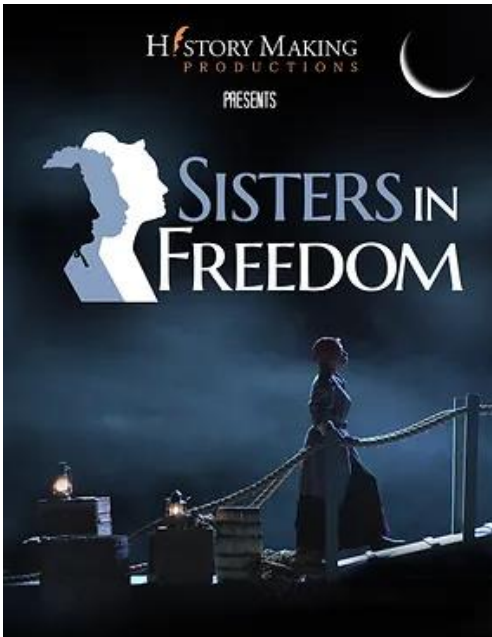
2023 Black Quaker Lives Matter Film Festival & Forum

Sisters in Freedom (2018) – Sarah Mapps Douglass & Women in the Abolition Struggle Against Slavery. Saturday, **March 4** at 1:00 p.m.

Benjamin Banneker: The Man Who Loved The Stars (1981) - Early African American Scholar-Activist. Saturday, **March 18** at 1:00 p.m.

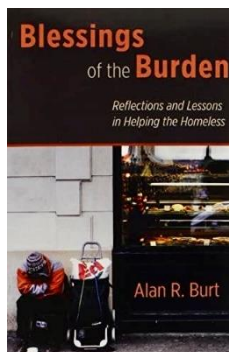
Paul Robeson: Tribute to an Artist (1978) and *The Proud Valley* (1940) – Celebrating Paul Robeson’s 125th Birthday. Saturday, **April 8** at 1:00 p.m.

Each screening will be followed by conversations between guest experts hosted by festival-forum director and curator Dr. Harold D. Weaver. Experts are eminent scholar-activists, writers, and historians, some of whom are descendants of our film honorees. The program will conclude by opening to audience questions. There is no charge for any of these Zoom screenings and subsequent discussions, but registration is required. See <https://www.theblackquakerproject.org/2023-film-festival-forum>.



Blessings of the Burden

Widening the Circle of Compassion: Helping Oneself while Helping Others



Alan Burt

Member: Sandwich Meeting, MA. Lives in Centerville, MA.
Social Worker and Homeless Advocate; Author of [Blessings of the Burden](#)

Alan will share some excerpts from his book, [Blessings of the Burden](#), an overview of his experiences working with the homeless and the mentally ill since 2002. In particular, he'll talk about how in the process of helping the lost and the hopeless he was blessed by them and transformed into a better human being and child of God.

ZOOM Talk: Sunday, March 12, 2023 at 12:30 – 1: 30 pm EDT

Question + Answer period follows.

Link to register: <https://bit.ly/BlessingsoftheBurden>

Alan Burt has a Master's degree in Social Work from Boston University and is a licensed independent clinical social worker (LICSW). He serves on the Citizens Advisory Boards of the Department of Mental Health DMH; Cape & Island and the Southeast Area Boards and has served as chair for both boards for many years. He is a cofounder of Homeless Not Hopeless, a 50-bed shelter program and of the Belonging to Each Other shelter program in Falmouth. He recently celebrated his 46th wedding anniversary with his wife and two adult children. He is a member of Sandwich Meeting.



2nd Sunday Forum on ZOOM

HOST: Peace + Social Order Committee
Quakers: West Falmouth Preparative Meeting MA

Also of Interest

Spirit in the Dark, a solo exhibit of 23 abstract watercolors (2020-2022) by Erica H. Adams, continues at the Lobby and Harbor Park Galleries in Moakley Federal Courthouse in Boston through **March 30**, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Reception on Thursday, **March 23** from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Adams has also curated *Above Us Only Sky II* (March 2 - April 1) with thirteen artists including herself at Brickbottom Gallery in Somerville. Opening reception is Sunday **March 5**, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. Learn more at <https://brickbottom.org/exhibition/above-us-only-sky-ii/>.



Blues Progression (detail), 2022. Erica H. Adams, Watercolor, Ink Brush, on Paper, 10 × 30 inches.

Faith Communities Environmental Network's Healing Walks



Tuesday, **March 21**, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Sandwich Quaker Meetinghouse and in Joe's Woods, Sandwich. Theme TBD.

Thursday, **April 27**, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Barnstable Land Trust and the Pogorelc Sanctuary, W. Barnstable. *Earth Day & Poetry/Words in the Wild*.

Thursday, **May 25**, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Sylvan Gardens & St Christopher's Episcopal Church, Chatham. *World Water Day*. See <https://www.unwater.org/news/world-water-day-2023>. Please register by emailing Susan Starkey at STARKEY.SUSAN@gmail.com.



In case you missed Paul Denoncourt's fascinating December 2022 presentation about his experiences hiking the Appalachian Trail, he gave a similar presentation to the Herring Ponds Watershed Association also in December. A video recording of that presentation can be found at <https://www.theherringponds.org/news-events/>.

Left: Paul at the summit of Springer Mountain, the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. Photo credit: fellow hiker, Brian Gallagher, October 28, 2022.

Still Thinking about Solar? Falmouth Climate Action Network (FaCAN) invites you to attend **"A Workshop on Residential Solar Power"** on Saturday, **March 4** from 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon. This meeting will be both in-person at the Falmouth Public Library in the Hermann Foundation Room and on Zoom.

Renewable energy expert Megan Amsler, Executive Director of Self Reliance Corporation, will explain essential aspects of the process of planning for and installing a solar array at your residence, and other options for accessing solar power. Several Falmouth residents will also share their experiences with solar power. Register for this event by email to FALMOUTHCAN@GMAIL.COM.

The Comfort Quilt started last summer is coming together beautifully under the skilled hands of Deborah Winograd. Twenty unique green-decorated squares fill the front, separated by strips of darker green. The underside, also of the darker green, has the twenty-first square, one that is perfect as a pocket – for instructions on how to wash the quilt, and for any note a user might like to tuck in.

Now it's time for finishing touches: the hand quilting that will fasten the squares through the batting to the back. Is there somebody who would like to learn how to do this? Maybe meet for several hours for several afternoons to help with this next tricky step?

Just let us know and we'll pick some convenient times. Contact Deborah Winograd or Sally Fritz.



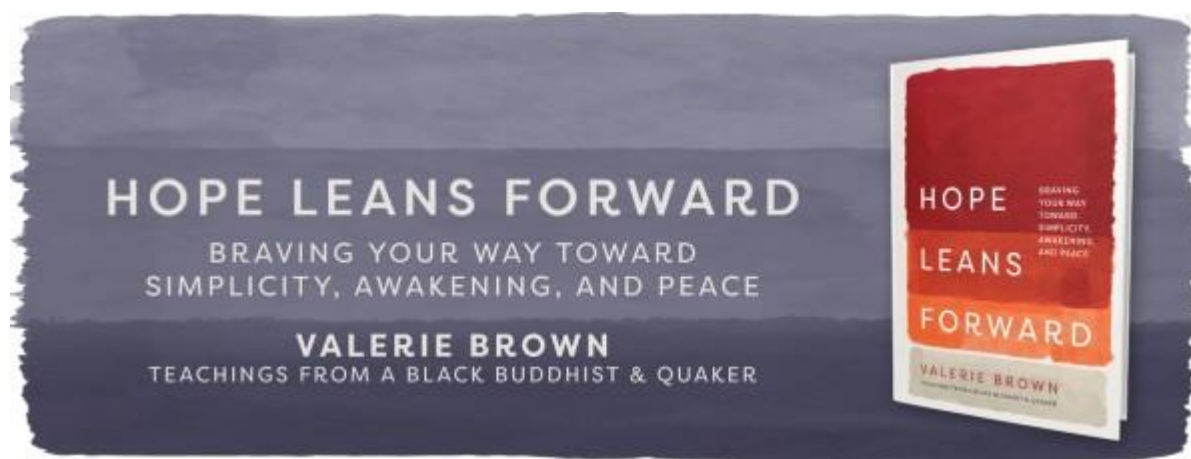
John Davidson will offer a four-part series ***Crisis in Ukraine*** as part of the Falmouth Public Library's popular Joy of Learning Series. John will speak on Wednesdays, **April 12, 19, and 26 and May 3** from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. The program schedule is: April 12: *The History of Russia and Ukraine, an Introduction to the Current Crisis*; April 19: *The Roots of the Current Crisis in the History of East-West Relations*; April 26: *The Events Since the Russian Invasion of February of Last Year Up to the Present*; May 3: *Possible Outcomes to the Current Crisis, Peace as a Possibility as well as Ukrainian Victory*. John's academic specialization in Russian Studies and Security Studies combined with over three decades of work experience in many of the Russian-speaking countries promises an interesting series. The program will be held in the Hermann Foundation Meeting Room. Registration is required. Go to <https://www.falmouthpubliclibrary.org> and see Upcoming Events.

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

A First Monday Lecture with Blanca Pacheco – *Building Sanctuary within to Build Sanctuary for Others*. Via Zoom, Monday, **March 6** from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Free to the public, registration required. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/building-sanctuary-within-to-build-sanctuary-for-others/>.

March Online Reading Group – On Wednesday, **January 18** from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. the group will discuss Wilmer Cooper’s classic pamphlet *The Testimony of Integrity in the Religious Society of Friends* (PHP #296). Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hills-reading-group-january-3/>.

Hope Leans Forward -- An online series with Valerie Brown offering tools and practices to navigate these challenging times. Saturdays, **March 18** and **25** from 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. in collaboration with Woodbrooke. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/hope-leans-forward/>.



Pendle Hill Quaker Institute: Beloved Community as Prophetic Witness – An on-campus gathering of Friends to learn about and practice the art of building beloved community as an act of prophetic witness. **April 28 – May 1**. Schedule forthcoming. This long weekend is a collaboration with a broad range of Friends and Friends’ organizations, including the American Friends Service Committee, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends General Conference, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative, and others. Learn more and register at <https://pendlehill.org/events/pendle-hill-quaker-institute-beloved-community-as-prophetic-witness/>.

News about some other Quaker organizations can be found at the following links:

Quaker United Nations Organization: <https://quno.org/>

Friends Committee on National Legislation: <https://fcnl.org/>

Friends World Committee on Consultation: <https://www.fwccamericas.org>

Friends General Conference: <https://www.fgcquaker.org>

NEYM Archives to Be Available Online

David Young

Friends may be aware that the Archives of the Yearly Meeting, in which Preparative, Monthly, and Quarterly Meetings deposit their minutes and membership information (including births, marriages, and deaths), were moved from the Rhode Island Historical Society to the UMass Amherst Libraries in 2016.

The late Rob Cox, until 2020 head of the Special Collections at the Libraries (and for whom the Special Collections are now named), was very knowledgeable about Quaker history and helped arrange this transfer. He noticed that as soon as the records arrived there was considerable demand for access to them by historians and genealogists.

The Special Collections maintain an online repository of images of many of their documents called CREDO.¹ The Libraries have announced that they are now adding the NEYM Archives to CREDO.²

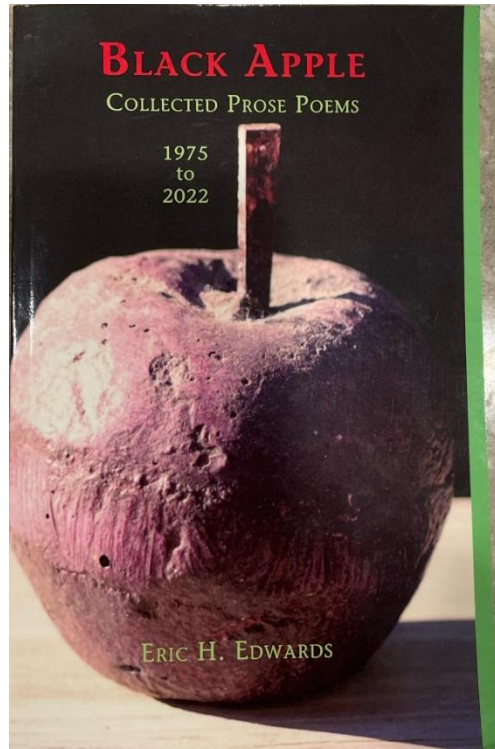
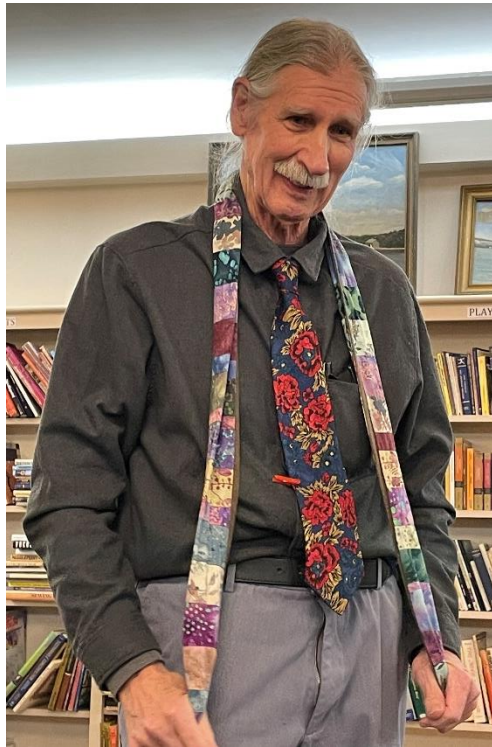
Because the Boston Public Library maintains a digitization center for Massachusetts' digital portal, Digital Commonwealth, of which the Special Collections are a member, the entire scanning can be completed during 2023, with a target date of late summer.

These records will, of course, be images, rather than transcriptions, so indexing within documents will not be possible. Nevertheless, dedicated researchers will find a wealth of information about the history of our Meeting and all in the Yearly Meeting. Perhaps for our 350th anniversary in twelve years, we will be able to produce a larger volume than the short but very valuable *Quakers in West Falmouth 1685-1985* (of which copies are still available at the Meetinghouse).

¹ The online repository is named after W.E.B. Du Bois' 1904 prose poem "Credo" in which he laid out his philosophy of racial equality. Read the full Du Bois text and view the original document online at <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b227-i010>.

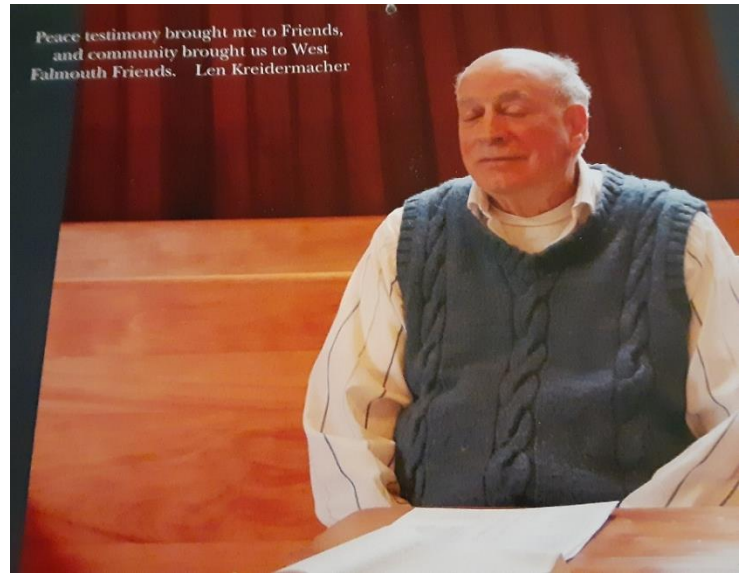
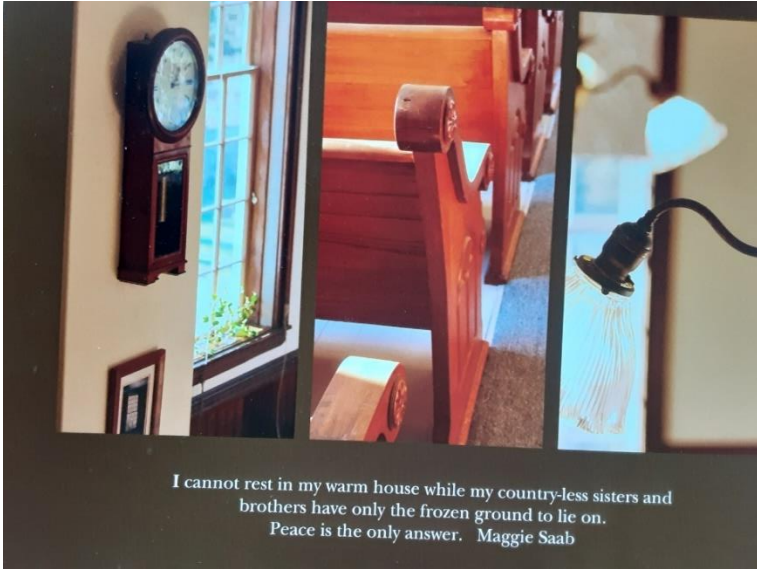
² See the announcement at <https://www.umass.edu/news/article/new-england-quaker-records-be-digitized> and learn about the various special collections at <https://credo.library.umass.edu/>.

Photos of Friends



Eric Edwards read excerpts from his recently published book of prose poems, *Black Apple*, at Woods Hole library, Monday evening, February 27. Many F/friends attended, purchased books and had Eric sign them. Two of the prose poems he read are reprinted on pages 13 and 14 of this issue.





Maggie Saab has shared pages of earlier WF Meeting calendars that featured photos by Karen Hunter and thoughts from members.

From the 2016 calendar:

Above left, Maggie on peace: "I cannot rest in my warm house while my country-less sisters and brothers have only the frozen ground to lie on. Peace is the only answer."

Above right, Len Kreidermacher on peace: "Peace testimony brought me to Friends, and community brought us to West Falmouth Friends."

From the 2015 calendar:

Left, Alta Mae Stevens and Gina Lyman with a quote by Louise Luckenbill: "After I attend Meeting for Worship I feel calm and whole."



Steve and John Gates visiting with Gina Lyman on Saturday, February 25.

Readers Write
with a Special Section on Poetry



WILD ASTER

In November, all that is left of the wild asters is this kind. The others are dead and make up the brown withering fog that lines the roadsides. But this aster is a little shorter and less visible, and still green. Its leaves are more like needles and its flowers are tiny. Maybe because the weather is cold the flowers seem barely to open at all. They are minute buttons, open at the top with some white petals sticking out like short threads. In the very center of these brief white petals is the feminine heart, sun, a golden inwardness and warmth that succeeds, where I can see my breath, to make my imagination fertile. What, I have to ask, is attracted by this? What tenuous scent pours out of it that I cannot feel? Perhaps nothing but the wind because most of the insects are dead, except for some strange flies that sit on the tops of mailboxes even now if the sun is right. Lots of plants use the wind, few such a cold one. The end of a season, where we are looking to go indoors. Even so, the wild aster keeps up its life and extreme dedication. So do the monks to my othering lifestyle. And for all artists suffering to create only the most wonderful of experiences, here is the wild aster, an aster like a patron saint, not even worth picking to bring inside for a few days of joyous if humble contemplation. Worth only leaving alone. There are incredible flowers at the extreme edges of our capabilities, and we could know them, regardless of how plain they have to be. Regardless.

Eric H. Edwards

Black Apple. Hatchville, MA: One Bird Books, 2022, p.91.



J. (From ELEVEN MORE GOD PROBLEMATICS)

Peter was driving, God in the back as usual. Peter loved this car, or whatever it was. GPS, beautiful big screen mounted next to a lovely, deep-set dashboard display. Several of the options seemed obscure, and indeed, most of them were not highlighted and so inaccessible, God not having subscribed to any of them. Especially if they cost additional money. Which, of course, they did, neither police nor deity receiving freebies any more, at least that anyone might trace. Ah, the untraceable, thought God. How like prayer. Or some particles God preferred to keep out of measure, at least for the time being. Just then Peter drove off a dock that the GPS had assured him, in her most calm and reassuring tone, was the arrival at their destination. As the car sank into a green marble-like and liquid light, God rolled down the window. Of course, no water came in, giving God a sentimental or perhaps vaguely pleasant if guilty nostalgic memory, if God experienced such things, which of course God did. Does. Peter damned the GPS, slid the car into all-wheel drive, and continued to drive. "Not impossible at all. Give me maps any day," Peter muttered, "instead of this effing fake and not wholly reliable navigator. Not even real!" "So!" God's voice interrupted the stillness of no wind passing by the windows, "Can we not do the unreal just as much as the real? I get tired of facts 24/7. Let's get some fiction on this bus and give ourselves a break, or a holiday, or whatever we want to call it. Let's live it up a little!" So they did that in some dimension or another, accountable to no one and nothing for at least one version of all time.

Eric H. Edwards

Black Apple. Hatchville, MA: One Bird Books, 2022, p.111.



Spring Riff on a Psalm

O Lord our Lord
How beautiful is the greening
Of your Spring over all the earth!
Babies and children outdoors
Make sounds that sing your praise!
To look up at the night sky,
The work of your fingers,
The moon and the stars all arranged,
What is mankind that you keep us in mind?
You gave us the Son of Man
For you so care for us,
You made us just lower than the angels;
Allowed us to have glory and honor
With our power over the wakening earth,
Its farm animals: sheep, cattle, and goats;
Its watery seas, fish, and birds!
O Lord our Lord
How beautiful is your name
Over all the earth.

Sunny Davidson (February 2023)





waiting worship woodside

Sometimes the approach
is best
in bare feet
hands opened
from a place of prayer
with ears that long
to hear
the voice, the whisper
the roar

You can get lost
in the deafening silence
on the path
to the Divine

or to this
When will I hear?
What do I know?
What can I trust?
or by
distractions

Pay these no mind
only
your longing
longing
for the beckoning call
of the Light
and you will
find
your way
here to there

Most times
answers won't come
paired
with your questions
Listen
listen
to that which is given
for God is the unfathomable
wellspring of love
and you love's shadow
ever joined



Gail Melix (January 2023)



Feathers found on recent woodland walks: Turkey (wing, tail, secondary), blue jay, crow, guinea hen, mourning dove, hawk. Photo credit: Gail Melix, February 2023.

Thoughts from the East Sandwich Meeting House “Fire Starter”

Alan Burt

For the past several years, I have held the position of “fire starter” at the East Sandwich Meeting House as our wood stove is the only means of heating the building. During the past couple of years it has been more challenging to keep our members and attenders warm, as we have windows open to make our meetings safer during this pandemic. I must admit there were a number of times when I thought, jokingly to myself, about buying some electric heaters instead.

Along with the challenges of my fire duties, I’ve come to appreciate the unique and deeper spiritual aspects of being the fire starter. This starts the night before, when I remind myself to set my alarm, as it is important for me to get to the meetinghouse a couple of hours early to make sure there’s time to turn the cold into the warm. When I awaken, I think of my Quaker Friends and how blessed I am to be the one who will welcome them warmly in this way. I often experience a stirring sense of meaning and purpose as I drive towards the meetinghouse, my sanctuary and sacred place of worship.

One of my favorite spiritual experiences is when I open the door to the meetinghouse area, where my words flow out spontaneously, “good morning, Friends.” In terms of just who or what I’m greeting, well it varies. Sometimes it is the spirits of Quakers of long ago. At other times, I am looking around the room and greeting members who will arrive later on. And there are times in which I’m deeply connecting with the room and the wood stove as living beings, as Friends. And of course, there is the silence itself, the inner light of all truth and love which beckons me here each time, helping me to see what I am often unable to see and to know things which I tend to forget when I’m away from this holy place. And while all of this is happening to me, I haven’t even begun to light the fire.

Suddenly, I’m back to the here and now, the reality that it’s cold, and I remind myself of the task at hand. I walk over to the stacked wood and get a sense of what I’ll need to start and maintain the fire for the next three hours. I have developed a very special relationship with the kindling as it comes from the fallen branches of the ancient trees overlooking and protecting the cemetery out back. I cannot help but make the connection between the kindling and the early Quakers, as they started and kindled this faith into an everlasting fire of faith for me and all who sit in this room. And then come the sounds emitting from the fire and burning wood, sounds which penetrate my senses in mysterious, simple and profound ways, “the sounds of silence.”

After getting the fire going, I go out to the woodshed to bring in more wood. I look at the pile, and then I pick up the axe to make more kindling for the day or for next week. I can’t really put it into words, but there’s something so special about splitting wood. Perhaps it is



The fire starter on Sunday, February 26.

yet another unique way of connecting with early Quakers who had actually stood where I am standing, likewise making kindling for the fire, for the Meeting.

Then I walk into the cemetery to pick up twigs and fallen branches to bring into the carriage house where I'll prepare them for the woodshed at a later time. As I walk through the cemetery, I can feel the presence of our founding Quakers, and sense that they can feel my presence as well. Perhaps it is because it is early morning, or because I'm gathering wood for the fire, or because I have taken on the sacred role as fire starter. I really don't know. What I do know is that I have been so very blessed to have discovered the Quaker Faith and become a member so that I can have such powerful experiences like this, before, during and after worship.

In about an hour, the heat has found its way into every corner of the room, beginning to turn it into a warm and welcoming place for others. By around 9:30 a.m., a few Quakers have come by for a fireside chat about how each of us is experiencing and taking our faith and practice out into the community. A few of us refer to ourselves as "Quakers on the move." Here, we talk about our various initiatives such as providing support and resources to our Wampanoag friends, to our homeless neighbors and others suffering in our community. We talk about our involvement with the Faith Community Environmental Network and share in the joy of our healing walks in nature. We talk about the journeys of our Global Pandemic Stone, now resting on the shores of New York. We talk about the ways in which we are finding our faith to be a source of inner peace and joy for ourselves, loved ones and each other. And we leave it open for talks about anything that anyone wishes to bring up at our fireside chats.

As the time nears for silent worship and people begin to enter the room, I feel a sense of joy that they have come in from the cold to this warm and cozy room. I sit up by the woodstove so that when I need to add a log or two, it is less of a distraction. However, shortly after my efforts to be silent, sounds from the fire increase as warmth permeates the room. It is as though the fire is saying, "I'm here with you, loving you and bringing you more warmth and well-being."

After rise of meeting, it is common for people to share their appreciation for the warm fire. Like me, they have found something so special and precious about what it feels like sitting here. It's about more than the fire and the temperature of the room. It's mysteriously entwined in the silence itself as simply one in a number of ways to feel the sacredness in the room with each other.

Still wanting even a little bit more, I've made it my responsibility to be the one to close the meetinghouse down. Here, I get the chance to exchange a parting smile and say goodbye to the wood stove and the room. And finally, when I'm just about ready to close the outside main entrance door, I whisper my appreciation and joy, "I'll be back soon, my love."

It has been my joy in sharing all of this with you. Please know that all of you are welcome to our early morning fire side chats with the fire and one another.

Blessings from the Fire Starter.

Can We Save the World by Stopping Shopping?

Steve Gates

I recently read an interesting book called *The Day the World Stops Shopping*, by J.B. MacKinnon (Ecco, 2021), this month's selection by the Falmouth Climate Action Network's book club. The premise of this book is that if we all reduced our shopping by 25%, we'd solve the climate crisis. But is that true, or even possible?

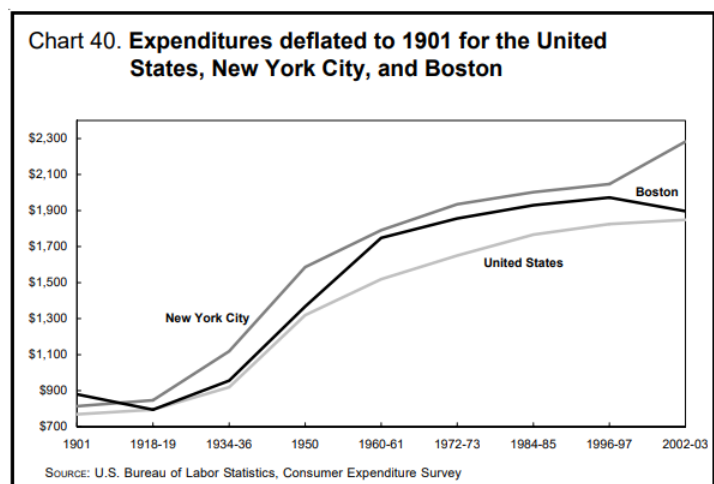
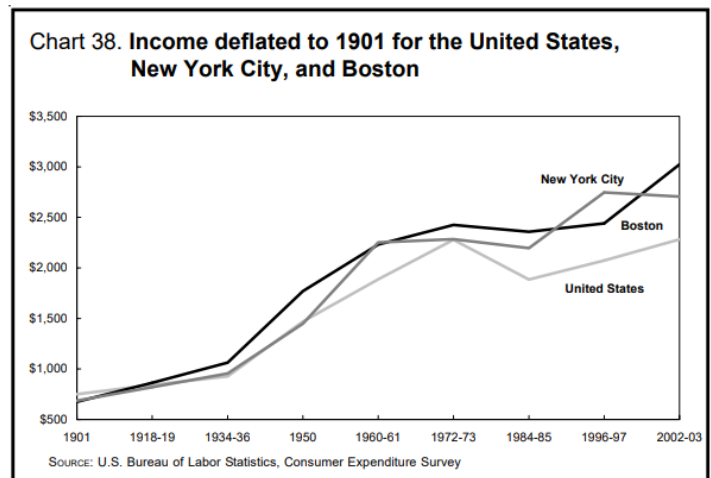
The idea that we should reduce our consumption of goods and services has long been promoted by a range of environmentalists (do you remember the Club of Rome's 1972 book, *The Limits to Growth*, which was a report of modeling done by some MIT scientists that predicted by 2100 or sooner, we'd run out of some resources? More recently, the idea that we should give up much of our "stuff" to help solve the climate crisis has become an article of faith for many.

Before we dive into the idea of limiting shopping, however, let's look at what has happened in the U.S. using a series of graphs from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for the 100-year period of 1901-2003.¹ During that time, the U.S. has moved from a largely agrarian society to a manufacturing powerhouse to a global provider of services.

As shown in Chart 38 from that paper, household income (expressed in 1901 dollars) has risen by a factor of roughly 3-fold in that 100 years in constant dollars, in part because of the sharply increased participation in the labor market by women. (In 1901, 28% of the labor force in Boston, for example, was female; by 2002, 50% was female.)

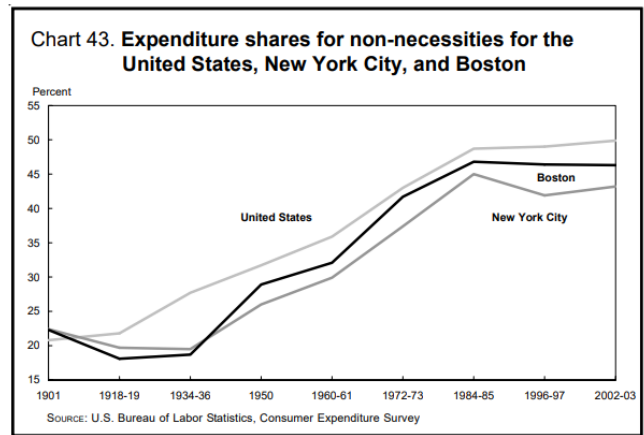
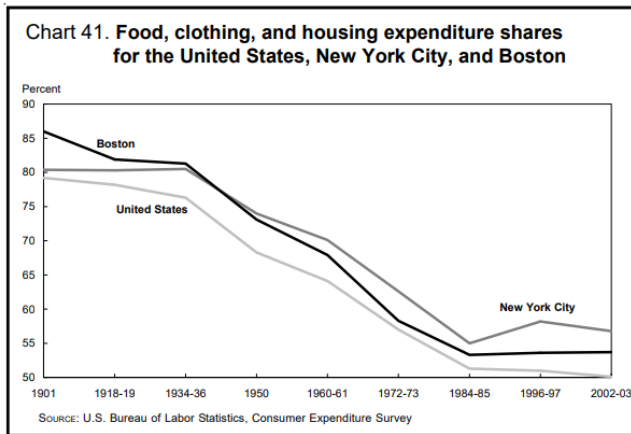
Not surprisingly, household expenditures also increased sharply in that same 100 year period, by a factor of 2.4 in 1901 dollars, as shown in Chart 40.

Interestingly, however, not all expenditures increased. As shown in Charts 41 and 43 (next page), the *percentage* of household spending on necessities (food, clothing, housing) *decreased*, while the percentage of spending on non-necessities *increased*. One example of the non-necessities is that in 1934-36, only 44% of U.S. households owned a family car (and in big cities with public transportation, only 14% owned such a vehicle). By the 21st century, 88% of the population owned



¹ <https://www.bls.gov/opub/100-years-of-u-s-consumer-spending.pdf>

at least one car, with the average family owning 2.0 cars. In other words, cars had become *de facto* necessities.



Thus, becoming a consumer nation has meant that we have largely satisfied our basic needs and moved on to accumulating a variety of discretionary goods such as computers, TVs, vacation homes, recreational vehicles, and services such as education, summer camps, retirement and pension funds, theater, movies, sports events, and travel.

So could we cut back by 25%, and if so, where? Let's look at the numbers (Figure 1). It's hard to see where to cut. However, the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides another level of detail below the data in this graph, which does give us some possible areas. Here are some ideas for cutting costs:

- Transportation – stop flying. Saves about 1%.
- Food – give up eating out. Saves 5%.
- Food – give up alcohol. Saves 1%.
- Food – give up meats. Saves about 1%.
- Entertainment – go without. Saves about 6%.
- Total: 14% (for an average household).

OK, maybe not 25%, but you could save a lot (and help the planet). And if you were willing to move into a much smaller house and trim other optional expenses, you probably could make the 25%. Would you be willing to do all of these things? Any of them??

Therein lies the rub. Few people, especially in the U.S., are willing to reduce their lifestyles and return, say, to the lifestyles of the 1950s, unless we are forced to do so. It is only during catastrophic events, like the Great Depression and the Covid pandemic, that household spending in the U.S. has

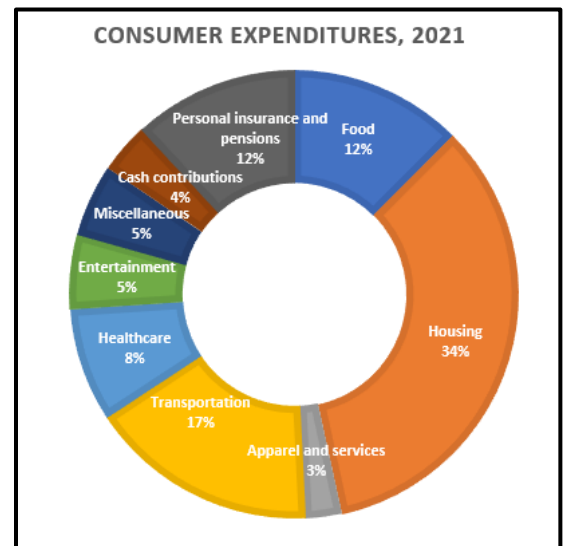


Figure 1. Data source, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/consumer-expenditures/2021/home.htm>

dipped significantly (and greenhouse gas production dropped significantly as well). Even the ever-more-dire warnings about the trends in climate warming from climate scientists have not, in large part, convinced people to take action on the climate, and certainly not to reduce their levels of consumption.

As the author of *The Day the World Stops Shopping* points out, any sudden move to reduce spending would almost inevitably cause a sharp contraction of our economy (another very deep recession). So in the last paragraph of the last chapter of his book, MacKinnon says, “Suppose we start with a more humble goal: to reduce consumption by 5 percent across the rich world. That would take us back to the lifestyle of a couple years ago, a shift we might hardly feel.” He then goes on to assert, “Yet everything would begin to change, from our desires, to the role of economics, to the future of the planetary climate. It might be the end of the world as we know it. It will not be the end of the world.”

Maybe. I’m less convinced than MacKinnon that even this modest 5% goal could be met, at least voluntarily. People just almost never downsize, unless forced to do so by illness, retirement, or changes in the overall economy. But the climate crisis is real, and we do need to act *now* to reduce the impact it will have on our grandchildren and their children. So what can we do?

It seems to me that the solution is to focus on carrots (incentives) instead of sticks (forced reduction of our lifestyles). For example, what if you looked into buying an electric car or electric heat pump and liked it better than its fossil-fueled predecessor? Why wouldn’t you buy this better vehicle or heating/cooling system, instead of yet another smelly, less functional fossil fuel version when you’re otherwise ready to buy your next car or furnace? Especially if you saw many of your neighbors doing so as well? In other words, instead of going back to live like we did in the past, you’d be going forward to a *better future*.

Most of the devices that are fossil-fuel-powered – refrigerators, water heaters, air conditioners, ovens and stove tops, automobiles, furnaces – have been around since at least the early 1900s. They are dinosaurs relative to most modern technology. These dinosaurs have had incredible lasting power largely because fossil fuels were so cheap and plentiful, not because the technologies are still so potent. It’s time for them to go.

And the good news is that the prices of many green technologies have fallen sharply in the last decade. Solar panels, wind turbines, and electric batteries for cars have all become cost-competitive with older, fossil-fueled technologies. We still need to reduce the climate impact of manufacturing the new technologies, but especially if you are buying or generating “green” electricity, you can enjoy all of the new, better green technology – and perhaps that will motivate you to do even more!



Figure 2. Electric pickup trucks now come with large batteries that can be used to power tools at a work site, and a lot of fun options as well. Image from <https://www.ford.com/trucks/f150/f150-lightning/>.

What We're Reading

John Davidson: *The Prophets* by Abraham J. Heschel

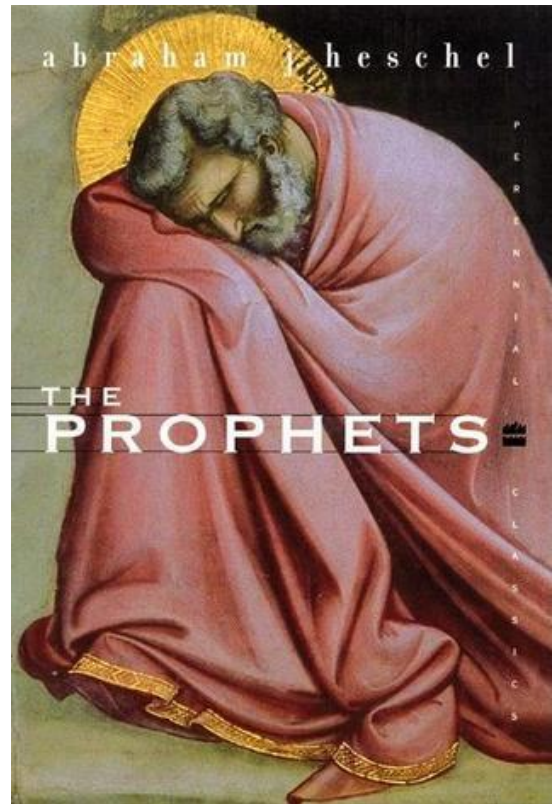
I decided to read a 1962 classic was written by Abraham J. Heschel, the well-known professor of Jewish Ethics and Mysticism at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, who participated in and influenced the Civil Rights Movement, because I am interested in the parallel between the prophets and the thinking of the early Quakers. It seems to me that the original Quakers of the seventeenth century were very much in the prophetic tradition, because they were not against religion, just the existing official organized religions of the Calvinists and the Church of England. They sought to revive the spirit of Amos and Isaiah by condemning the services and authorities of not only the Papists and the Anglicans as false and hypocritical, but those of the Protestants who had translated into English only a generation earlier the bible they worked from. Although their stated intent was to revive primitive Christianity, their view of 17th Century England was a moral condemnation very much in the tradition of the prophets. Given the degree of hostility that the early Friends provoked, it is remarkable that they managed to establish a religious society that survived down to the present, but it was the prophetic nature of their outlook that has been a major reason for their survival.

The light of the prophetic insight shines through the ages in blazing brilliance. Heschel treats the prophetic understanding mainly in terms of pathos, a beauty of language, a profundity of analysis, and a subtlety of insight which at once confirms biblical theologizing on God's active involvement in history, and moves beyond it.

The first objective of Heschel's inquiry is not to see the prophet as an example of a species, but rather to ascertain the characteristics that set him apart as well as those he shares with others. He emphasizes that the prophet is an iconoclast, challenging the apparently holy, revered, and awesome (p.10). Beliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity, he exposes as scandalous pretensions.

*To what purpose does frankincense come to me from Sheba,
Or sweet cane from a distant land?
Your burnt offerings to me are not acceptable,
Nor your sacrificing pleasing to me.
-Jeremiah 6:20*

The prophet knew that religion could distort what the Lord demanded of man, that priests themselves had condoned violence and called for ceremonies rather than bursting forth with indignation at cruelty, deceit, idolatry and violence (p.11).



The striking surprise is that prophets of Israel were tolerated at all by their people. To the patriots, they seemed pernicious; to the pious multitudes, blasphemous; to the men in authority, seditious (p. 19). The contradictions in the prophetic message seem perplexing (p.22). The book of Amos, out of which come the words, "The end has come upon My people Israel" (8:2) and "Fallen no more to rise is the virgin Israel" (5:2) concludes with the prediction:

*I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
And they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
-Amos 9:14*

From this it should be remembered that the prophets offer a word of compassion in addition to the divine wrath.

In contrast to Amos, whose main theme is condemnation of the rich for the oppression of the poor, Hosea does not single out a particular section of the community.

*There is no truth, no love, and no knowledge of God in the land;
Swearing and lying, killing and stealing, and committing adultery,
They break all bonds, and blood touches blood.
-Hosea 4:1-2*

Under the long reign of King Jeroboam II (786-746 BCE) the Kingdom of Israel was wealthy, but in the view of the first prophet, Amos, corrupt. When Amos appeared in the North there was pride (6:13-14), plenty, and splendor in the land, elegance in the cities, and might in the palaces. At the same time, there was no justice in the land (3:10), the poor were afflicted, exploited, and even sold into slavery. (2:6-8, 5:11), and the judges were corrupt (5:12). (pg.27)

Amos was working as a shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees when he was suddenly overwhelmed by God and called to be a prophet. (pg.28) What was the nature of Him whose word overwhelmed the herdsman Amos?

*For lo, He who forms the mountains, and creates the wind,
And declares to man what is his thought,
Who makes the morning darkness,
And treads on the heights of the earth-
The Lord, the God of hosts, is His name...
He who made the Pleiades and Orion,
And turns deep darkness into the morning,
And darkens the day into night,
Who calls the waters of the sea,
And pours them out upon the surface of the earth,
The Lord is His name,
Who makes destruction flash forth against the strong,
So that destruction comes upon the fortress.
-Amos 4:13; 5:8-9*

What had provoked the anger of the Lord? The answer is given in the account of events that happened in the world of Amos. Two things stand out in his account: The absence of loyalty and the absence of pity. These things stand out as well in the world of today.

I would recommend Abraham Heschel's book to any Quaker, because it helps us to get beyond familiar or out of date thinking to understand the meaning of the prophets. The author discusses with perception such problems as the prophetic meaning of history, the significance of chastisement and justice, the theology of pathos, the meaning of God's wrath, and the nature of prophetic inspiration.

Abraham J. Heschel, A.J. *The Prophets*. New York, NY and Evanston, Ill: Harper & Row, 1962.

A Reminder from the Editor

The Gazette is now on an every-other-month publication schedule. The next *Gazette* will be the May 2023 issue, the deadline for which is Friday, April 21. I hope you will consider contributing.

Also, a large print edition of *The Gazette* is now available. It contains all of the articles, poetry, photographs, and other reader contributions, but is limited in terms of the announcements. If you'd like to receive the large print version or if you'd like to look at an issue to see if it might be better for you, please let me or Brenda know.

Thank you! Rita





Front and back page photos:
Views from Shining Sea Bikeway
near Surf Drive. Photo credits:
S. Gates, January 7, 2023.

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

The next *Gazette* will be
the May 2023 issue. The
deadline is Friday, April 21