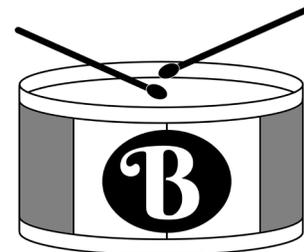


# Becket Beat



Keeping neighbors connected

Vol. 2, No. 10 - November 2023

## A Becket-Born Revolutionary Veteran

by Marilyn Fish

Joseph Plumb Martin (1760-1850), born in Becket to Reverend Ebenezer Martin and Susanna Plumb Martin, served from 1775 until the end of the American Revolutionary War in 1783. Almost 50 years later, he published *A Narrative... of a Revolutionary Soldier...* (hereafter *Narrative*), a book that stands as the most vivid first-person account of the life of a Continental soldier during the Revolution. Some see it as a ground-breaking plea for the improved treatment of soldiers and veterans.

Martin's father had graduated from Yale in 1756, having already married the daughter of a prosperous farmer from nearby Milford, Connecticut. Two years later he accepted a position with the newly organized First Church of Christ in Becket. (The Church was across from the First Congregational Church on YMCA Road and is today marked by a monument.) When son Joseph was born in 1760, the family's future path may have seemed clear. However, in 1764 Ebenezer was dismissed from his position in Becket. Three years later he accepted the ministry of the Westford Parish in Ashford, Connecticut, and sent young Joseph to live in Milford with Susanna's parents.

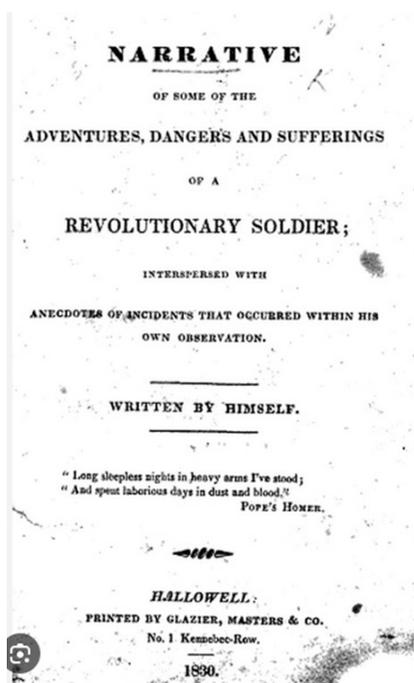
In Milford Joseph worked on his grandfather's farm, acquired an education, and enjoyed boyhood freedoms. In 1774 he became aware of impending war and in 1775 he enlisted for a six-month tour with the Connecticut State Militia. The following year he made a life-altering commitment, enlisting in the 8th Connecticut division of the Continental Army. Until he was mustered out in 1783 he marched, took and returned

fire, starved, froze, suffered smallpox, and risked his life in notable battles [see map].

In his *Narrative*, Martin takes pains to describe not only young soldiers' antics and bravery but also their hardships. "When we engaged in the service we were promised the following... One pound of good and wholesome fresh or salt beef, or three fourths of a pound of good salt pork, a pound of flour, soft or hard bread, a quart of salt.... But we never received what was allowed us." The troops were thus left to fend for themselves, often resorting to stealing from citizens and officers, alike. They were also deprived of promised clothing, shoes, blankets, and shelter.

Martin was likewise appalled by the treatment of veterans. "When those who were engaged to serve during the war enlisted, they were promised 100 acres of land, each.... [But] when the country had drained the last drop of service it could screw out of the poor soldiers, they were turned adrift like old worn-out horses...."

When Martin left the army, he was destitute. The promissory note he received from the government in payment for his service was unredeemable when issued and now worthless. He worked as a teacher, farmer, and laborer before he settled in Prospect, Maine, in 1794 and married 18-year-old Lucy Clewley. They were to have 11 children, of whom only three lived to



The title page of Joseph Plumb Martin's book. It was published anonymously.

Continued on page 2

# From the Editors

by Kathy Baugh and Marcia Parnell

This month's issue is largely devoted to service – both to country and community.

Veterans' Day is November 11th and our lead story on Becket-born Revolutionary War veteran Joseph Plumb Martin is both a reminder of the long history of military service by Becket citizens and an appreciation of his advocacy for pension benefits and improved conditions for all soldiers. Today there are just over 100 veterans living in Becket, all whom served in Vietnam or the Gulf Wars. Our family, friends and neighbors, we hope you'll take the opportunity this month to thank them or offer some other acknowledgment of their service to our country.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The Becket Select Board is seeking a resident to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Residents serving on the ZBA balance the public good with private rights. Some duties of the ZBA include hearing and deciding on applications for Special Permits, Site Plan Reviews, and variances. The ZBA meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m., as needed, hearing input from applicants, organizations, and residents directly affected by land use decisions.

Your involvement can help shape your community's future. If you have questions about the ZBA, please contact [zba@townofbecket.org](mailto:zba@townofbecket.org). To apply, please submit a letter of interest and an Appointment Application to the Select Board. The application may be obtained from the Town's Administrative Assistant (email [adminasst@townofbecket.org](mailto:adminasst@townofbecket.org))

## PICKLEBALL / TENNIS COURT OPEN!

The court on Prentice Street in the North Becket Village has been resurfaced and is ready for action!

*A Becket-Born Revolutionary Veteran , continued from page 1*

adulthood.\* Martin farmed the land and also served the town as selectman, justice of the peace and town clerk. In 1818, when he appeared in the Massachusetts General Court with other Revolutionary War veterans to claim the war pension newly permitted by President Monroe, he was in debt. Martin was granted an annual lifetime pension of \$96 "by reason of age and infirmity." Even that small sum incited public disapproval. Toward the end of his *Narrative* Martin observes, "Many murmur now at the apparent good fortune of the poor soldiers... The only wish I would bestow upon such hard-hearted wretches is, that they might be compelled to go through just such sufferings and privations as that army did...."

Joseph Plumb Martin died in Prospect, Maine, at age 90. His greatest legacy is his 1830 *Narrative*, which may have contributed to the passage of the 1832 Pension Act. The act provided every surviving officer and soldier who served at least 2 years in the Continental Army and other units with a pension of full pay for life.

*\*accounts differ as to the number of children.*

# Becket Hosts Legislative Breakfast

by Marcia Parnell

Regionalization of schools and emergency services emerged as a consensus issue in a question-and-answer session following the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) breakfast hosted by Becket on October 13th at the Town Hall community room. About 40 municipal officials from across Berkshire County and Western Massachusetts attended the meeting, including Becket Select Board Chair Bill Elovirta and Town Administrator Kathe Warden.

The MMA works with municipalities throughout the state to develop support among state and federal agencies and the general public about issues and concerns common to municipalities that would be difficult for them to address on their own. MMA legislative representatives present at municipal networking events around the state throughout the year. At Friday's session they shared details about the state's FY 2024 budget, with good news including \$100 million from supplemental revenue for local road and bridge maintenance and an additional \$25 million for rural road allocation. (MMA reps credited State Senator Paul Mark for his diligence in getting the rural road funds approved.)

During the Q&A, several attendees expressed resistance within their communities to greater regionalization even though they believe continuing increased costs and service levels are unsustainable for their tax base and population. New schools have been built and maintenance requirements continue in the face of reduced enrollments. Paid full-time emergency services are costly and as attrition reduces existing staff and volunteers, replacements are difficult to secure. Their message to MMA: help us articulate how greater regionalization can be effective by sharing best practices and talking to our legislators about how state government can help.

For more specifics on the budget go to: [www.mma.org/gov-healey-signs-fy24-state-budget/](http://www.mma.org/gov-healey-signs-fy24-state-budget/)

# Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Study Confirms County-Wide Staffing Shortages

by Al Blake

The BRPC surveyed all 30 towns in Berkshire County in December of 2022, asking about successes in hiring and retaining paid staff as well as attracting resident volunteers for town committees, commissions, and boards. Twenty-three towns responded; the 7 non-responders were all towns with fewer than 2,000 residents. BRPC believes that given the deficits in staff and volunteers, it's possible the towns not responding simply had no one available to fill out the forms.

According to the survey results, in the previous three years 13 towns had five or more paid staff positions turn over. Four communities expected over 50% of their staff to retire within five years.

Washington and the Hampshire County town of Middlefield have paired up to hire a full-time shared town administrator. To fill the initial \$60,000 position, the two towns had to raise the salary to \$80,000.

At the time of the survey, 18 of the responding Berkshire towns had volunteer vacancies, with 16 towns reporting openings unfilled for over 60 days. Low voter turnout in town elections may relate to disinterest in taking on town roles and/or a lack of contested races.

Kent Lew, Selectboard Chair in Washington, points out that with fewer than 500 residents, the town has to fulfill all of the same functions that larger communities do and this can be a real challenge. Becket has nearly 1,700 residents and as of this writing one opening on the Zoning Board of Appeals. The hope is that the position will be quickly filled. On other boards there are members that have been sitting in their positions for numerous terms in office, likely because they've been unable to recruit new members.

Waning interest among small town residents in serving has accelerated in recent years, possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and uncivil social media and public discourse. Since the pandemic, many have lost in-person connections locally and beyond, instead depending on electronic ties over personal ones. With hybrid meeting options now commonplace, residents can choose how to receive town news and observe decision-making posted online. Given the convenience of remote participation, it unfortunately may be that fewer people are interested in the often face-to-face interaction that so many community positions require.

# Volunteering in Becket

by Tommie Hutto-Blake and Al Blake

In an increasingly complex environment, some small Berkshire towns are struggling to find locals to serve in important roles. These roles can be full- or part-time town employees, sitting on committees (both elected and appointed), as well as volunteer positions that keep our small towns functioning. Having loyal and effective town staff is critical to Becket. So is filling all boards, committees and commissions. We suggest more citizens get to know town employees, select board, committee and commission members, and consider serving in an area of interest.

We didn't start off as volunteers. For decades after purchasing our beloved cabin in the Becket woods in the late 1970s, we were part-timers who traveled to the Berkshires most weekends during all four seasons. We loved the beautiful landscapes, performing arts, hiking and exploring the history of Berkshire County.

Following our retirements in the late summer of 2011, we moved to Becket full-time. On reflection, once we became full-timers we saw our town differently and decided it was time to explore how we could get more involved. We attended our first Becket Annual Town Meeting in May 2012 and were quite impressed by how town government is voter-driven in all town decision making, with guidance from elected, appointed and volunteer citizens.

After participating in our first town meeting, we visited Town Hall, met hard working employees and began inquiring about how to get more involved. We attended select board meetings and observed public meetings of both elected and appointed committees. One of us joined the Becket Cultural Council (appointed) and the other got involved with the Becket Energy Committee. Over the years we have taken on elected, appointed and volunteer roles, learning so much about the system of town government here in our Commonwealth.

To learn more about Becket, ensure your email is on the town e-alerts list. Call Town Hall if you do not get notices. Attend public meetings in-person or online and look for posted openings for elected or volunteer positions. Mark your calendar when the May 2024 Annual Town Meeting date is set. We encourage all Becket residents to consider serving in some capacity to make Becket the best small town in Berkshire County. Look for the most current openings and how to apply at: <https://www.townofbecket.org/home/pages/procurement-opportunities>

## CHP COVID & FLU CLINIC

DATE: Monday, November 6, 2023

TIME: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Becket Town Hall

To Schedule an appointment call (413) 528-0457

Walk-in welcome

# BECKET DAY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4TH! ALL DAY

FOOD • DRINKS  
PERFORMANCES  
& LIVE MUSIC

NEON  
NEWT  
30 WASHINGTON STREET



ROUTE 8 PUB  
3235 MAIN STREET

BECKET ARTS  
CENTER  
7 BROOKER HILL ROAD



DREAM  
AWAY  
LODGE  
1342 COUNTY ROAD



**Food  
Live Music  
Performances  
And more food!**

@thedreamawaylodge  
@neonnewt  
@becketarts  
@route\_8\_pub

Join us on Nov. 4 for a day of eating, arts, live music and a whole lot of fun! Celebrate our hilltown by starting your day at the Neon Newt for the Becket Breakfast Special. Grab lunch at the Route 8 Pub and then head to the Becket Arts Center for the *Thanksgiving Play* staged reading from 2-4pm. End your day with cocktails, games, conversation, live music and dinner at the Dream Away Lodge.

**Need more info? Follow these organizations on Instagram and go to [TheDreamAwayLodge.com](http://TheDreamAwayLodge.com).**

## BECKET WASHINGTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (BWCP) NEWS

### Becket Arts Center - Much To Be Thankful For This Nov.

We have a really exciting November planned. First up is *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse on Nov. 4 at 2pm, followed by "The Art of Giving" exhibit opening reception at 4pm. Friday, Nov. 10 we have Creative Movement and Body Language for children K-5 at 10am, led by Laurel Lenski. "Music is My Story" with Bernine Lewis is on Saturday, Nov. 11 (with a workshop the following weekend, Saturday, Nov. 18). Then *Bakersfield Mist* by Stephen Sachs featuring two well-known local actors graces our upstairs stage Friday-Sunday, Nov. 17-19 (see website for times and tickets). The Becket Arts Center Sip & Shop (hot beverages will be served) will be Thursdays and Fridays 10am-4pm; Saturdays 11am-7pm; and Sundays 12-4pm. Free gift wrapping will be available. Members enjoy 10% off on in-store purchases.



### Becket Athenaeum - Telling Our Familia's Stories: A Reading and Poetry Workshop with José B. González, PhD

Join us on November 19 at 12pm to hear professor of English José B. González read from his book, *Toys Made of Rock*, which tells the story of his journey from El Salvador to Connecticut at the age of 8. He will also share advice on writing poetry and sharing stories. Attendees will have the opportunity to craft their own journals. Light refreshments will be served. More information: [BecketAthenaeum.org/events](http://BecketAthenaeum.org/events)



## Becket Beat

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*The Becket Beat is published monthly (with a combined Jan/Feb issue).*

*Articles may not be reprinted without obtaining author permission from the Becket Beat.*

# Community Calendar November 2023

Full listing & details: [www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar](http://www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar)

see reverse  
for more >>



## BECKET ARTS CENTER

**Thursdays, November 2, 9, 16, 30:** Yoga w/ Rima Sala / 9:30-10:30am / \$10 (\$5 for BAC members)  
**Fridays, November 3, 10, 17:** Nia with Diane Firtell / 12-1pm / \$15 per class  
**Saturday, November 4:** *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse staged reading / 2pm / \$20 (\$10 for BAC members)  
**Mondays, November 6, 13, 20:** Sean McCusker Art Demonstrations / 1-3pm / Free  
**Friday, November 10:** Creative Movement and Body Language for children K-5 / 10am / Free  
**Saturday, November 11:** Music is My Story Performance - Bernice Lewis with Amy Attias / 7-9pm / \$10 suggested donation  
**Friday, November 17 - Sunday, November 19:** *Bakersfield Mist* by Stephen Sachs theater performance (Nov. 17: 7pm; Nov. 18: 2pm & 7pm; Nov. 19: 2pm) / \$25 (\$10 for BAC members)  
**Saturday, November 18:** Music is My Story Songwriters' Workshop with Bernice Lewis / 4-6pm / \$25

## BECKET ATHENAEUM

**Saturdays, November 4, 11, 25:** Library Storytime / 10:30-11:30am / Free  
**Saturday, November 4:** Movie Night for Adults / 6:30-9:30pm / Free  
**Saturday, November 4:** Stargazing Party with Destin Heilman / 7pm / Location: Robert Alaire's home at 74 Andrews Rd / Free  
**Tuesday, November 7:** Book Club: *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett / 1:30pm / Free  
**Monday, November 13:** Cookbook Club: *Barefoot Contessa Foolproof* by Ina Garten / 6-7:30pm / Free  
**Wednesday, November 15:** Game Night / 5-7pm / Free  
**Saturday, November 18:** Creative Movement and Storytime with Laurel Lenski / 10:30-11:30am / Free  
**Sunday, November 19:** Reading and Poetry Workshop with José B. González / 12-1:30pm / Free  
**Saturday, December 2:** Movie Night for Adults / 6:30-9:30pm / Free

## MORE MUSIC & PERFORMANCE

**Dream Away Lodge:** [thedreamawaylodge.com](http://thedreamawaylodge.com)  
**Papa Bob's:** [facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall/](https://facebook.com/PapaBobsentertainmenthall/)  
**Saturday, November 4:** Becket Day - Neon Newt, Route 8 Pub, Becket Arts Center, Dream Away Lodge - [TheDreamAwayLodge.com](http://TheDreamAwayLodge.com) for more info



# HIMALAYAN HIGH

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413-447-5846

Ginger Conner, The Becket Connection

## RED HORSE REAL ESTATE

[www.RedHorseRealEstate.com](http://www.RedHorseRealEstate.com)

PO Box 111 Becket MA 01223

[Ginger@RedHorseRealEstate.com](mailto:Ginger@RedHorseRealEstate.com)

**JEFF WILKINSON**

(413) 269-4500

[Jeff@StoneHouseProperties.com](mailto:Jeff@StoneHouseProperties.com)



# STONE HOUSE PROPERTIES LLC

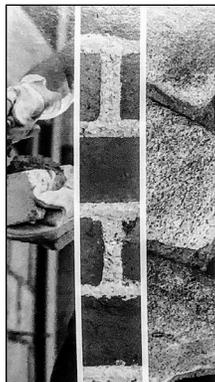
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**STONE HOUSE PROPERTIES LLC**

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Great Barrington, MA 01230

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# Community Calendar November 2023

see reverse  
for more >>



Full listing & details: [www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar](http://www.BecketBeat.org/Community-Calendar)

## TOWN GOVERNMENT

**Wednesday, November 1:** Board of Health / 5pm  
**Wednesdays, November 1, 15:** Select Board / 7pm  
**Monday, November 6:** Cultural Council / 6pm  
**Wednesday, November 8:** Bylaw Review Comm / 10am  
**Wednesday, November 8:** Planning Board / 6pm  
**Tuesday, November 14:** Finance Committee / 5pm  
**Tuesday, November 14:** Historical Commission / 5pm  
**Tuesday, November 21:** Energy Committee / 4pm  
**Tuesday, November 28:** Conservation Comm / 5pm

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

**Wednesdays, November 1, 8, 15, 22, 29:** Yoga / Becket Town Hall / 9am / \$3

*community events continued on next column*



**Sherwood Shoppe**  
 413-623-2338  
 "From Scratch"  
 Baking & Cooking  
 NOW OPEN  
 Tues. - Sun.  
 8am -7pm

**Thursdays, November 2, 9, 16:** Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market / Becket Town Hall / 11:30am-2pm  
**Friday, November 3:** Free Pasta Dinner / Becket Federated Church / 5-7pm  
**Saturdays, November 4, 18:** Food Pantry / Becket Federated Church / 9-11am  
**Monday, November 6:** CHP Flu & COVID Vaccine Clinic / Becket Town Hall / Free  
**Mondays, November 6, 13, 20, 27:** Chair Yoga for Seniors / Washington Town Hall / 11am / Free  
**Tuesdays, November 7, 14, 21, 28:** Yoga for Seniors / Washington Town Hall / 9am / Free  
**Saturday, November 18:** Annual Pie and Craft Sale / First Congregational Church / 9am-3pm / \$14 per pie  
**Saturday, November 25:** All You Can Eat Breakfast / Becket Federated Church / 8-10:30am / \$8

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Open at 3pm

**SAT & SUN:**  
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*closing times vary*

Private rentals available  
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**CHP's Mobile Health Unit** offers wellness visits, chronic disease management, sick visits, and vaccines throughout Berkshire County.

*For an appointment or the Mobile Health Unit schedule, call 413.528.0457 or visit [chpberkshires.org/mobile](http://chpberkshires.org/mobile).*

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 444 Stockbridge Rd. | Great Barrington, MA 01230

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## OPENING SOON!

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