



Bootprints

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the
Pioneer Valley Hiking Club

President's Corner:

Adventure Awaits!

by President Erin Squires

A new year is upon us. Following the tradition of a new year we make our resolutions. For those reading this article I hope that your resolution is to lead or join more hikes. It will be my resolution to be on the trails every opportunity I can. It is not just the exercise or being healthy that is driving this resolution. I love being outside and surrounding myself in nature. It is where I decompress from the work week and I de-stress from all of life's little worries.

This new year, you will see me leading or joining hikes on the weekends. I hope to see all of you on the trails, as well. Make a resolution to get outdoors! Hiking is not just about the hike, it is about those we connect with on the trails. Get those boots on and fill up your water bottles. Adventure awaits!

--Erin

Volume 30, Issue 1

Jan, 2026

Inside this issue:

Important Renewal and Member-

10

Upcoming Events And The Usuals

11

Important Notices

11

Special points of interest:

- Erin Squires' President's Corner article on page 1
- Dick Forrest's article on page 2
- Ed Page's article on page 4
- Dick Forrest's book review on page 5
- Future Events on page 8

The “Drove My Chevy to the Levee” Hike

by Dick Forrest

*“Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry”
~ lyrics from Don McLean’s song American Pie*

On the last day of 2025 Debbie Bombard and Cheryl Stevens led a hike from Elwell State Park in Northampton, Massachusetts, starting on the Norwottuck Rail Trail footbridge, and ending up at the Alexandra Dawson Conservation Area along the Connecticut River. It turned out to be a 5-mile out-and-back hike and there were 14 brave, intrepid souls who hiked on slippery, icy trails on a cold and blustery day.

So why call it the “Drove My Chevy to the Levee” hike? Once we turned off of the Norwottuck Rail Trail heading north toward the Connecticut River we walked on a raised up levee between wide open fields of farmland. We didn’t actually drive our Chevys to the levee but it was exhilarating to be up on a levee overlooking the



vast, undoubtedly fertile, floodplain farmland on both sides of the levee. When we got to the end of the levee there was the majestic Connecticut River in all its glory. It never occurred to me that this was the same river that we crossed when we walked over the Norwottuck Rail Trail footbridge. The sight surprised me – I didn’t know that we would be seeing a wide, wild flowing river, where we could look far down the river. The expanse of the river made me feel small. It was

See Drove my Chevy to the Levee continued on page 3

*“So why call it the
“Drove My Chevy to the Levee” hike?”
~ Dick Forrest*



Drove my Chevy to the Levee continued from page 2

similar to being at the top of a mountain and looking over the surrounding landscape. The wind was blowing in one direction and the river was flowing in another. There were big patches of ice in the river close to the riverbank. We walked along the river and were up on the riverbank at least 50 feet above the river, above the danger of the frigid water.



“Why would anyone hike on a cold day with trail conditions like this?”

~ Dick Forrest

Why would anyone hike on a cold day with trail conditions like this? For lots of reasons: for adventure, for camaraderie, for exercise, for safety in numbers, for meeting new and interesting people, for wanting to hike with caring and competent hike leaders, for après hike, etc.

It was a joy to see hundreds of Canada geese hunkering down below on the ice in the Connecticut River, just south and not far from the Norwotuck Trail footbridge. And surprisingly, only one person went down after slipping on ice on the whole hike. We won't mention the person by name but in that person's defense, it could have been any one of us going down on the slick surfaces which we were walking on all day.



There was only one disappointment on this hike, however: I didn't see any "good ole boys drinking whiskey and rye and singin' this'll be the day that I die." A song about the end of an era, but in our case, the end of a year. I guess that it was just too cold for those good ole boys to be out.

--Dick Forrest

Ticks - What Did We Do to Deserve Them

by Ed Page

Probably all of us PVHC members know somebody who's been afflicted with one tick-borne disease or another. These maladies can be long-lasting, debilitating and hard to shake. Many of us wistfully remember earlier times when ticks were rarely, if ever, encountered. So, why has this bane on humans and other mammals intensified in recent decades?

Nature educator, forager and sagaciously well-spoken YouTube producer Adam Haritan recently released an 11-minute view on this subject of tick proliferation. Taking an ecological perspective, he explains how human interventions - along with natural factors - have worked to affect tick populations over the centuries. Usually the human actions were undertaken for some reason other than tick management, while ticks either reaped benefits or got set back for a time. Unfortunately for us, recent conditions have created a bonanza cycle for these little guys, and the trend shows few signs of retreat. One proposed solution would likely help but is unlikely to be socially acceptable anytime soon.

It would hardly be possible to improve on Adam's presentation, which includes plenty of what seems obvious, but some surprises as well. For that reason, and to his credit, here he can do all the talking:

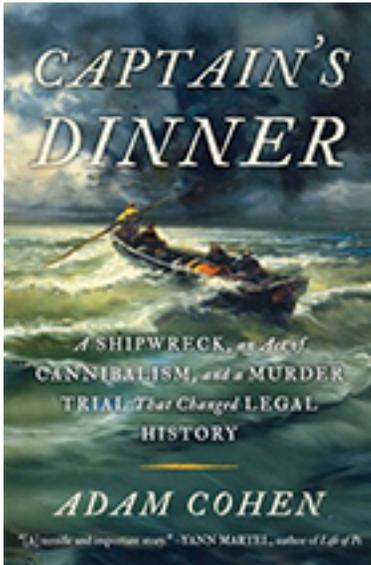
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Pfy6XBp0QY>

After watching his tick video, you may enjoy Adam's many other offerings. They are always very informational, flawlessly executed and interesting to all of us who love being out in nature.

--Ed Page

"Nature educator, forager and sagaciously well-spoken YouTube producer Adam Haritan recently released an 11-minute view on this subject of tick proliferation."

~ Ed Page



Book Review by Dick Forrest:

Captain's Dinner: A Shipwreck, an Act of Cannibalism, and a Murder Trial That Changed Legal History

by Adam Cohen

"I don't think there is any book that can't teach you something, even if it's how not to tell a story." ~ Mary Higgins Clark

What strikes me most about this book published in 2025 is that Adam Cohen tells a very good story which is well researched and well written. I could also tell that it was written by an author with a legal background (who I found out after reading the book happens to be a lawyer). The book, as you can guess from the subtitle, is a story involving cannibalism that became famous from a legal standpoint.

The story involves a yacht named the Mignonette, sailing in 1884, that became shipwrecked off the coast of west Africa, on its way from England to Australia to be delivered to a new owner. The yacht sank fast in stormy seas and all four men aboard, the captain, two crewmen and a cabin boy, make it into a lifeboat. The four men drift to the west, away from the African continent, and hope to be picked up by a passing ship. They are without food and water for two weeks and the British captain, Captain Thomas Dudley, with the help of crew member Edwin Stephens, makes the decision to sacrifice one of the others on the lifeboat so that the other three might survive. Another crewman Edmund Brooks, and a 17-year-old cabin boy, named Richard Parker, round out the crew. You can guess which of the four people was sacrificed – yes, the cabin boy.

Several days after killing the cabin boy, drinking his blood and eating his flesh, the three men in the lifeboat are rescued by a German steamer from South America that was traveling to England, where the men in the lifeboat come from. When they get back to England the rescued
See *Captain's Dinner* continued on page 6

Captain's Dinner continued from page 5

men told their story about killing the cabin boy to survive and expected to be fully exonerated for their action. Why? Because of precedent. By the term called the "the custom of the sea," seamen in the Age of Sail would draw lots to see who would be sacrificed in similar harrowing events on the high seas. In this case, there was no drawing of lots because the captain made the decision on his own with the help of crew member Stephens, to kill the cabin boy. Crew member Brooks was not involved in the killing, but partook in eating parts of the cabin boy.

Most of the book centers on the legal aspect of the killing. Captain Dudley and crewman Edwin Stephens were both charged and tried for murder. Edmund Brooks was not charged but was a witness for the prosecution. It's this part of the book where the reader realizes how much our judicial system has been drawn from England's.

There's a grand jury, a prosecutor, a defense lawyer, judges, and an attorney general. There's also a petit jury that will decide the case of the Queen vs. Dudley and Stephens. (Queen Victoria was on the British throne at the time.) English law had no precedent for killing Parker, and English society was changing rapidly in the 1880's, as well as the law (page 103). A "necessity" defense had been rejected by the judge from the beginning, but the defense lawyer tried to use it anyway. The presiding judge wanted to make this case a landmark one so he had a group of judges rule on a special verdict, rather than having the petit jury hand down a sentence. The group of judges found Dudley and Stephens guilty of murder, and the usual penalty for murder was by hanging. The lord chief justice and the home secretary had to rule on the punishment. Dudley and Stephens escaped the death penalty on the recommendation of the group of judges, and got a reduced 6-month prison sentence. Queen Victoria, as the final arbiter, ultimately had the duty as an absolute monarch to decide a judicial sentence. She did so on the recommendation of the lord chief justice and the home secretary. This is a short summary of the outcome of the case as I understand it after reading *Captain's Dinner*, but the book goes into incredible detail about legal matters and See *Captain's Dinner* continued on page 7

"Most of the book centers on the legal aspect of the killing."

~ Dick Forrest



Captain's Dinner continued from page 6
philosophical questions related to the case.

My special interest in reading this book is in the adventure genre. This book has an added interest for those who have knowledge of or interest in the law and/or legal history. Because it's so well researched and so well written, with a fascinating topic, I would recommend it to anyone, especially would-be or current lawyers or anyone who just wants to read a good book. As Mary Higgins Clark says: "I don't think that there is any book that can't teach you something...."

--Dick Forrest



Future Club Events

2026

October 19-23 - Cape Cod Trip organized by Debbie Bombard and Cheryl Stevens

PVHC 2025-2026 Executive Board



Left to Right: Brenda Doucette, Secretary; Judy Alfano, Treasurer;
Erin Squires, President; Ed Marrone, Vice President

Important Membership Renewal Notices

The following memberships are up for renewal:

January Renewals

Rebekah Anderson & Rich Baker
 Kristen Blythe
 Christine Bresnahan
 Paula Christian
 Jan Civian & family
 Gary Dolgoff
 John & Sara Donaruma
 Paul & Christine Duval
 Peter & Lisa Engel
 Susan Farber
 Joel & Kate Feldman
 Judy Fogg
 Carole Geoffrey
 Tina Giachello
 Marty Jo Henry
 Anne Houlihan
 Linda & Steve Jones
 Phyllis Keenan
 Donna Kendall
 Jessica LaCroix
 Lou & Catherine MacDonald
 Laura Manship
 Liz Massa
 Jack & Barbara McGowan
 Alan McLean
 Elizabeth Weiss Ozorak
 Chip Pray & Brenda Doucette
 Kris Rice
 Carole Richard
 Melanie Sarna
 Ann Wood
 Isaac Yglesias

February Renewals

Harriet Barnes
 Keith & Penny Brierley-Bowers
 Carol Constant
 Susan Crim
 Maria & Jack Davis
 Kay Flatten & Hilary Matheson
 Katherine Hall & Jonathan Jay
 Charlotte Hansen & Gary Fisher
 Scott Hughes
 Andrea Kalifa
 Hank Kozlowski
 Charlotte Lee
 Helen MacMellon
 Nancy Mangari
 Lori Martin
 Jennifer Murray
 Christine Pinney
 Jeffrey Pollock
 Nancy Rapisarda
 Lynn Rappaport
 Jane & Rick Ricci
 Suzanne Roberts
 Nancy Seguin
 Melinda Shaw
 Nina Talayco
 Carol Vanderheiden
 David Vivian
 Claire-Anne Williams
 Eileen & Robin Wood

Please renew early, and renew by mail. (Make checks payable to Pioneer Valley Hiking Club (PVHC)) Mail your renewal with your name and any address or phone number changes to:

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club
 PO Box 225
 West Springfield, MA 01089
 (Dues are: \$25 individual member, \$40 family, and \$15 for students)

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club Officers

Erin Squires, President
 Ed Marrone, Vice President
 Judy Alfano, Treasurer
 Brenda Doucette, Secretary
 Ray Tibbetts, Founder

Standing Committee Chairs

Hike Schedule: Jos Brannan & Lori Tisdell
 Backpacking Advisor: Rick Briggs
 Trail Maintenance: Chip Pray & Rob Schechtman
 Club Website Editor: Dick Forrest
 Non-Member E-mail Coordinator: Rob Schechtman
 Quartermaster: Mike Carrier
Bootprints Newsletter Editor: Dick Forrest

Bootprints is a publication of the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club. Please email your story/event contributions to Dick Forrest at: dforrest@charter.net

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

November

Alison Bent
 Preston Carr
 Sue Cassidy
 Meredith Clermont-Ferrand
 Gary Fentin
 Tina Jones
 Kathleen Laprade
 James Mattina
 Alison Plummer & Wendy Gannett
 Kati Richards

December

Elaine Huffman



UPCOMING EVENTS AND THE USUALS

- Mondays Morning hike
- Tuesdays Evening hike
- Wednesdays Morning hike
- Thursdays Morning hike
- Fridays Occasional hike
- Saturdays Morning hike
- Sundays Morning hike
- Jan 6 Club Meeting
- Feb 3 Club Meeting

- PVHC <https://teamup.com/ksz8qkbizhndt3qjt7>
- Schedule of Events

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Next Club Meetings

January 6, 2026 7 p.m. at **ROC**
 February 3, 2026, 7 p.m. at **ROC**

ROC - Red Oak Church, 337 Piper Road, West Springfield

Deadline for submissions to the next *Footprints* is February 20, 2026

**** Check out our club website at:**
www.pioneervalleyhikingclub.org

Members may join the PVHC Email List by sending a message to:
pvhc.hikingclub@gmail.com



----- fold here -----

A publication of the
Pioneer Valley Hiking Club
P.O. Box 225
West Springfield, MA 01090-0225

