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# The End of Things

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The word “Quabbin” is an Algonquin term meaning great waters. Here can be glimpsed the end of things: the end of towns, “disincorporated” by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1938 to make way for inland great waters; the end of outdated agricultural modalities and structures, blasted relentlessly by New England’s atmospheric patterns and Earth’s gravity.

## The End of Things

by Michael J. Bennett

Barn, Nichaewaug Road



Abandoned Cabin, Warren

NOTE: Wikipedia describes Nichewaug as, "a village in Massachusetts... close to the Quabbin Reservoir, and close to the former town of Dana, Massachusetts. The village was likely depopulated due to the construction of the nearby reservoir, and has a few houses today."



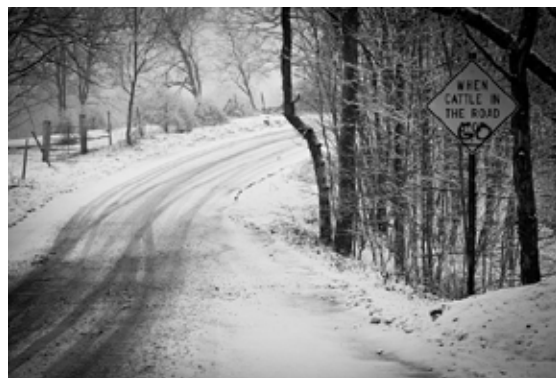
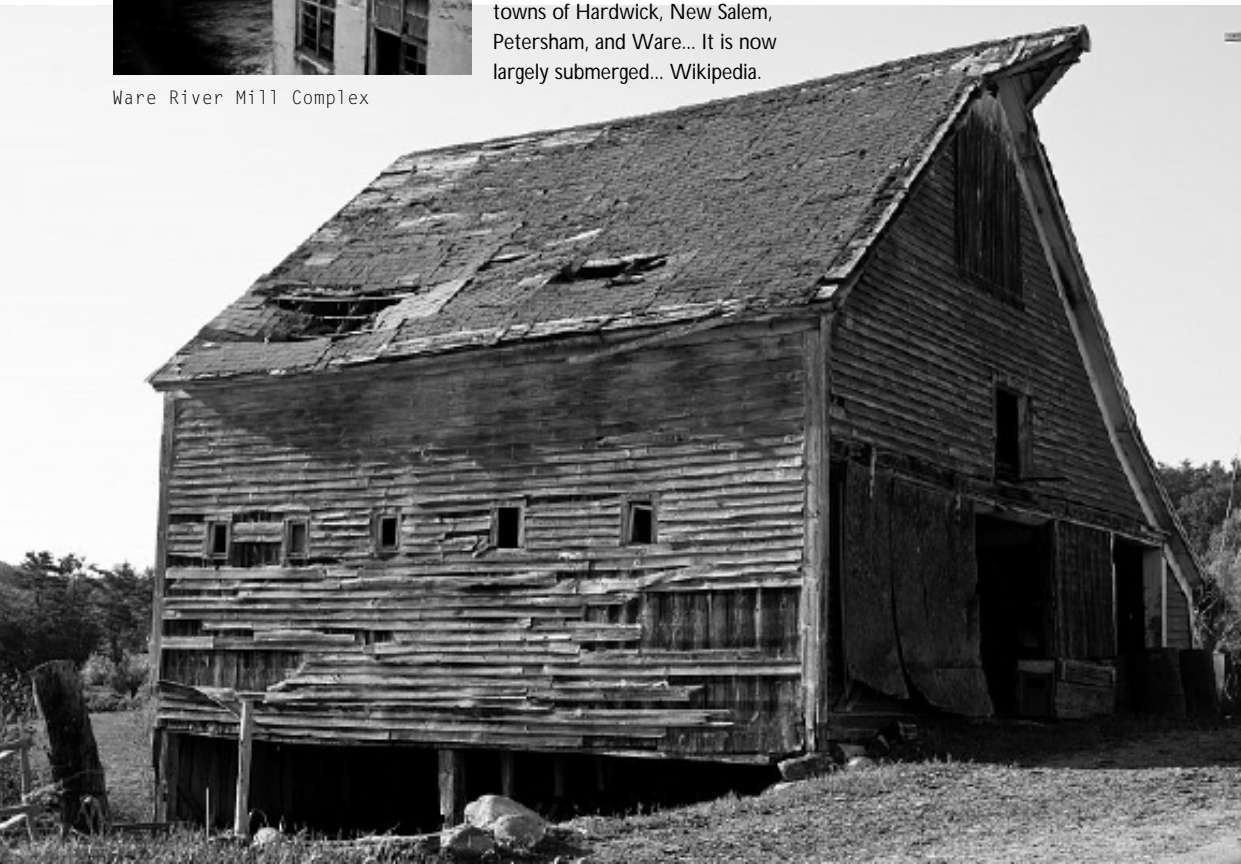
Cattle and Fog, Hardwick

## ~ The End of Things



Ware River Mill Complex

Note: Greenwich was disincorporated on April 28, 1938 as part of the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir. Upon disincorporation, portions of the town were annexed to the adjacent towns of Hardwick, New Salem, Petersham, and Ware... It is now largely submerged... Wikipedia.



Sign, Prouty Road



Tundra, New Braintree

Or perhaps it's just the echo of things left alone, left to fend for themselves.

Some geographical history. The Quabbin Region is a hazily outlined area in west/central Massachusetts. At its heart can be found the largest inland body of water in the state. The protected watershed that surrounds the Quabbin Reservoir is a vast, deeply forested corridor that runs north/south along the glacier-scoured boundaries of the old Swift River valley. Deep beneath the cadenced waves lie the cellar holes and abandoned memories of four submerged towns: Dana, Enfield, Greenwich, and Prescott, each replaced on maps printed after the late '30s by Quabbin's pristine azure. If you hike in far enough through the boundary land, you can find old roads that lead straight to the waters' edge only to then disappear and never resurface. There is no easy car route to the region that has become isolated by the watershed's large posted footprint. For black bear, moose, and bobcat, however, it has become a haven. Among other far off communities, the Quabbin supplies the city of Boston, 65 miles to the east, with its drinking water. Yet, folks from the city rarely venture this way. The quietude, and perhaps the history (or the Red Sox) keep the place off of their radar.

A friend of mine owns a small country store and diner within walking distance of my place here along state Route 67. It's a road lightly travelled, just east of the Quabbin. He has a saying about 67. Says it's a route that begins nowhere and ends nowhere. And he is right. With Palmer at its southern terminus and Barre to the north, there is really no

reason for the numbered assignment, as the towns in between do not share any distinctive purposeful link. We think about this sometimes, my friend and I, as we stand in the middle of nowhere looking at nothing in particular.

I had a dog once. His name was Tundra. He was a beautiful black and white Siberian husky with whom I would walk the fields and woods of this area. He had a knack of knowing how to suddenly stop and gaze towards the middle distance in such a piercing, unflinching way that he could seemingly take nowhere and definably make it somewhere. What silent, internal calculus he employed, I never fully fathomed. A couple of years ago while supervising my splitting of yet another year's worth of cordwood, he passed away from old age. We have him buried on our property on a hill that overlooks our home. Often I try to summon his muse when I am out along the old paths and rutted roads that we used to follow together side by side. x

**There is no easy car route to the region that has become isolated by the watershed's large posted footprint**