

150 YEAR COMMEMORATION OF THE MILL RIVER FLOOD DISASTER

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WILLIAMSBURG

SATURDAY, MAY 18, 2024

2:00 P.M.

First Congregational Church of Williamsburg
Forbes Library - Historic Photographs - Dickens Library

Williamsburg Fire Department - Williamsburg Police Department

And to the donors of 1824-1825 a generously donated
their knowledge and talent.

Local Commemorative Event List at www.scharthampton.org

PART ONE

PIANO PRELUDE: CONTEMPLATION AND REMEMBRANCE
Original Music by Nicholas Reid-Lastowski

WELCOME
Eric Weber, Master of Ceremonies

INVOCATION
Roy Beals, Senior Deacon, First Congregational Church of Williamsburg

“THE OLD MAN OF VILLAGE HILL”
Louise Mosrie Coombe

“IN THEIR OWN WORDS: THE STORY OF THE MILL RIVER FLOOD”
by Elizabeth Sharpe with readers Ken Borden, Glenda Cresto,
Daria D’Arienzo, Emma John, Sean Riddle, and Bill Stewart
Musical interludes composed and performed by Nicholas Reid-Lastowski
I. Morning II. Flood III. Aftermath IV. Building Back

REMARKS
Rev. Mark Seifried, Haydenville Congregational Church
Father John Gawienowski, Our Lady of the Hills Parish

“MAY 16, 1874 [A BALLAD OF THE MILL RIVER FLOOD]”
by Lynne Bertrand and Penny Schultz
Penny Schultz, Choral Director
Stephen Katz, Cellist

The Mill River Flood Chorus 2024
Cathy Adams, Jane Allen, Denise Banister, Roy Beals, Lynne Bertrand
Jen Black, Freda Brackley, Judson Brown, Emily Cavin, Bill Cutler
Daria D’Arienzo, Emily Dines, Nick Dines, Susan Farrell, Anne Fine
Anne Gelbard, Maya Gelbard, Jon Gould, Karen Guiel, Larry Hanson
Tina Howard, Pat James, Paul Jahnige, Karen Kennedy, Amy Landau
Melinda McCall, Christian McEwen, Lee MacKinnon, Tim McMurrich
Lucy McVey, Marti Pomputius, Rochelle Wildfong

CLOSING REMARKS
Eric Weber

AUDIENCE SING
“Shall We Gather at the River?”
by Robert Lowry

POSTLUDE
Nicholas Reid-Lastowski

PART TWO

PRECIOUS MINUTES LOST
Re-enactment of dam keeper George Cheney’s horseback ride from the
breaking dam into Williamsburg and his encounter with mill owner
Onslow Spelman outside 11 North Main St.

George Cheney’s horse: “Blaze”
George Cheney: Robin Merritt Brown
Onslow Spelman: Fred Goodhue
Directed by Dean Acheson

(Please stay on the sidewalk during the re-enactment.)

MEMORIAL TREE PLANTING
in memory of Sarah Collyer Bartlett and her daughter Viola Collyer,
the first victims of the flood, with messages from Nicole Derby’s third graders
at Anne T. Dunphy School, and Principal Stacey Jenkins
Mill River Flood Memorial Tree Project
Gaby Immerman, Mill River Greenway

THIS AFTERNOON EXHIBITIONS IN MEEKINS LIBRARY
ON THE LAWN: ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

MILL RIVER FLOOD 150 WORKING GROUP
Dean Acheson, Reid Bertone-Johnson, Christopher Clark, John Connolly,
Daria D’Arienzo, Gaby Immerman, Emma John, Nancy Meagher,
Josh Shanley, Elizabeth Sharpe, Heidi Stevens

COMMUNITY SPONSORS
ARTHUR KING FUND • BERKSHIRE DESIGN GROUP • BILL LASHWAY FOREST PRODUCTS
BOTANIC GARDEN OF SMITH COLLEGE • BREAD EUPHORIA • CHARTPAK • CICHY’S GARAGE
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VILLAGE GREEN WHALEN INSURANCE • WILLIAMSBURG CULTURAL COUNCIL
WILLIAMSBURG GENERAL STORE • WILLIAMSBURG MARKET • ZONONI LAWN CARE

SPECIAL THANKS
First Congregational Church of Williamsburg
Forbes Library • Historic Northampton • Meekins Library
Williamsburg Fire Department • Williamsburg Police Department
And to the dozens of individuals who generously donated
their time to planning this event.

MAY 16, 1874

MILL RIVER FLOOD



MEMORIAL TREE PROJECT

150TH ANNIVERSARY - MILL RIVER FLOOD

The sudden collapse of the Williamsburg dam let loose a flood that swept away parts of Williamsburg, Skinnerville, Haydenville, and Leeds, and killed 139 people, all within an hour.



HN
Historic Northampton

A Memorial Urban Forest to Honor Victims and Heroes

The Mill River Greenway is heading up efforts to install 144 trees in memory of the 139 victims of the May 16, 1874 flood and 5 heroes of the day. Trees will be sited in the flood's footprint, from the remnants of the old dam up Ashfield Road, through the villages of Williamsburg, Skinnerville, Haydenville, Leeds, Florence, and through downtown Northampton where the receding floodwaters made their way to the Connecticut River.

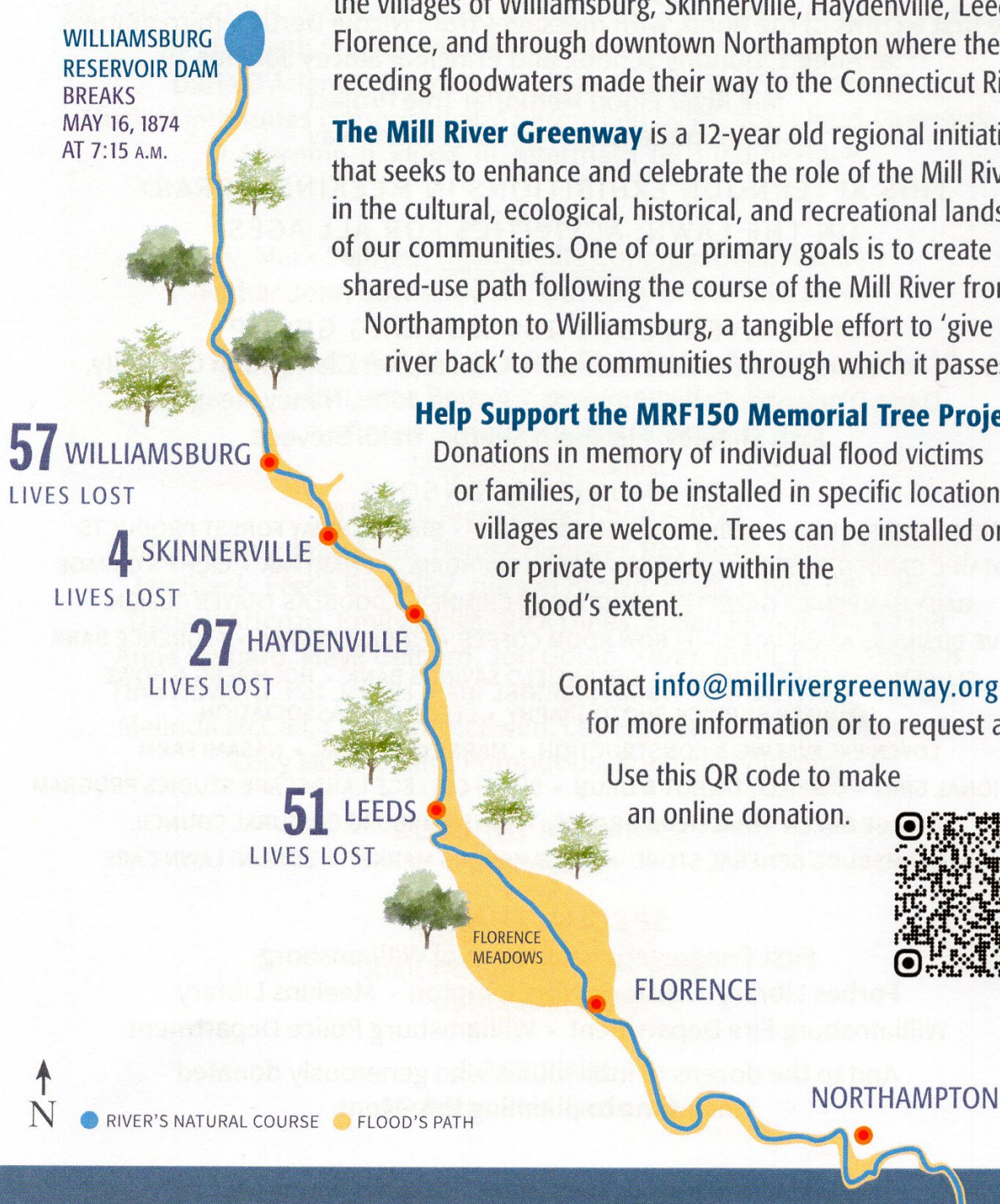
The Mill River Greenway is a 12-year old regional initiative that seeks to enhance and celebrate the role of the Mill River in the cultural, ecological, historical, and recreational landscape of our communities. One of our primary goals is to create a shared-use path following the course of the Mill River from Northampton to Williamsburg, a tangible effort to 'give the river back' to the communities through which it passes.

Help Support the MRF150 Memorial Tree Project

Donations in memory of individual flood victims or families, or to be installed in specific locations or villages are welcome. Trees can be installed on public or private property within the flood's extent.

Contact info@millrivergreenway.org for more information or to request a tree.

Use this QR code to make an online donation.




Shall We Gather at the River

Robert Lowry

1864

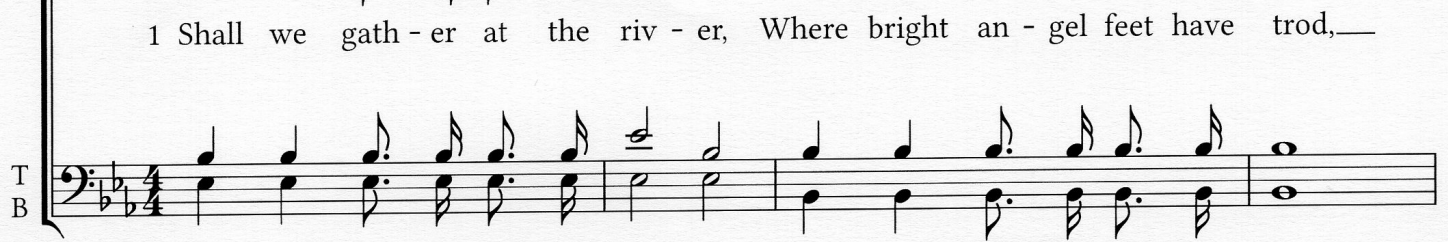
Cheerfully

S
A




1 Shall we gath - er at the riv - er, Where bright an - gel feet have trod,___


T
B



5



With its crys - tal tide for - ev - er Flowing by the throne of___ God?



9

CHORUS



Yes, we'll gath - er at the riv - er, the beau - ti - ful, the beau - ti - ful___ riv - er;



13



Gath - er with the saints at the riv - er That flows by the throne of___ God.



2 Ere we reach the shining river,
Lay we every burden down;
Grace our spirits will deliver,
And provide a robe and crown.
Yes, we'll gather ...

3 Soon we'll reach the shining river,
Soon our pilgrimage will cease;
Soon our happy hearts will quiver
With the melody of peace.
Yes, we'll gather ...