



FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER APRIL 25, 2024

Above: Ismail Asaad has moved his Mohawk Falafel and Shawarma food truck across the river to Turners Falls, in this Second Street lot behind Pioneer Valley Brewery and across from Unity Park, Unity Skatepark, and Nova Motorcycles. Asaad tells the Reporter he is still weighing whether to take Sundays or Mondays off, but is open most days from 11 a.m. or so to 8 p.m. A group of supporters is also helping raise funds at [www.givebutter.com/4rNErs](http://www.givebutter.com/4rNErs) for Asaad, a native of the West Bank, to establish a brick-and-mortar location. At the truck, Asaad offers an option for community members to pay in advance for meals for people who are hungry but might not have money. He makes it clear he wants to feed people.

RECIPES

Spain’s Tapas: Not Just Snack-Sized!

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

**LEVERETT** – When are tapas not tapas? It’s a bit of a trick question, but here’s the answer: When they are *raciones*, which are bigger servings.

Most tapas menus in Spain give two prices: one for *tapas*, and one for *raciones*. That’s useful because while an order for a tapa will get you an appetizer-sized portion, a *racion* order will be produce a lunch or even a supper-sized portion. This is good

news if you like tapas but don’t find them handy for American occasions except parties. Make a larger amount and serve it as a meal rather than as a mere drinks-time tidbit.

The exception is such tapas as a dish of olives or peanuts or yummy potato chips, often served in Spain *para picar* – to nibble on. Order a drink in most bars and just such a munchie is likely to be included.

This is the origin of Spain’s tapa tradition, which comes from the southern province of Andalucia. Dust and flies can be a nuisance, so people kept them out of their drinks by covering the glass with a slice of bread as a lid – a *tapa*. Another tradition is that a Spanish king ordered bars to serve something to eat with alcohol to curb drunkenness.

Whatever the case, the bread slice lent itself to a lid of its own in the form of a veil-thin slice of ham, a slice or two of sausage, or some other tasty little thing. Naturally,

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Serving free tapas – *papas aliñas*, specifically – at the Cádiz Carnaval.



Exploring California’s empty Central Coast.

**SOUTH DEERFIELD** – A few weeks ago, when the mornings were still chilly here in the Valley, I hopped on a plane to San Luis Obispo, California for some time on the uncrowded coast.

When I stepped off the plane in the sun outside of San Luis Obispo’s airport terminal, it set the scene, with a comfortable sunny outdoor seating area complete with a small stand selling local wines and microbrew beers. Welcome to California’s Central Coast!

California has always been my favorite place to visit in the cold winter months, and this area of the coast, between Gorda and Morro Bay, is stunning because it is so undeveloped. Miles and miles – about 68 miles of coastline – is simply open grasslands, mountains, and the Pacific Ocean.

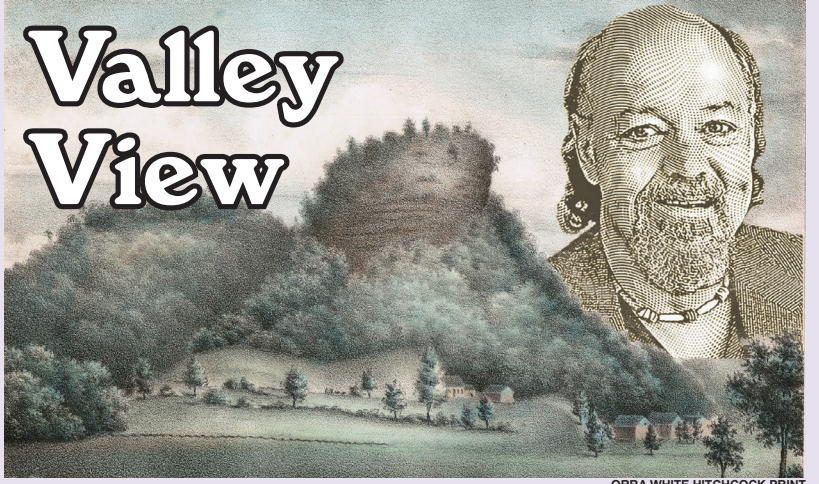
To be able to drive this far and avoid what we usually find along the ocean anywhere is a refreshing experience. We have the Hearst Corporation to thank for preserving the 83,000 acres they own here, 17 miles in either direction from the Hearst Castle’s entrance.

As we traveled north about a half hour from SLO, we headed to the Vina Robles winery in Paso Robles, a building with a sweeping, modern design. My hosts, Mike and Noreen, were excited to show me the rolling

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Ragged Point, north of San Simeon on Highway 1.



The Rivers’ Ancient Bounty

By GARY SANDERSON

**GREENFIELD** – As daffodils, forsythias, and magnolias brighten neighborhoods, and anadromous fish rev their Long Island Sound engines for annual Connecticut River spawning runs, my imagination often swells with invigorating freshets of spring-time thought.

I’m there. Early morning. Nestled into my winter writing nook. Soapstone stove burning. Ideal for reflection.

I’m still stuck on our fish migrations, past and present, and the three local, surviving Terminal Archaic and Eastern Woodland Indian fish weirs recently discussed in this space – one on the Ashuelot River in West Swanzey, New Hampshire, another on the upper Chicopee River, and yet another on the lower Westfield River.

These permanent, ancient, dam-like stone structures built across manageable riverbeds would have been accompanied by repairable, replaceable wooden structures, maintained annually to maximize harvests of spring shad, salmon, lamprey eels, sturgeon, striped bass and small herrings, not to mention outgoing fall harvests of American eels. One can only imagine the immense scope of runs before Europeans first laid eyes upon our New World.

For nearly 50 years I have studied these fish runs – evaluating restoration and conservation efforts, successful and not; comparing and contrasting annual numbers and trends; and bracing for an uncertain future, our planet heating at an alarming rate. Global warming has already negatively impacted our spawning runs and will absolutely continue to do so.

Recently, quite out of the blue, a lady from the not-so-distant past came to mind as I poked around in new fisheries data. Her name was Janice Weeks. She was from Greenfield: born 1924, died 2011. I got to know her as fellow Greenfield Historical Commissioner (GHC) appointees during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Then elderly and spirited, she was fully engaged and more than capable of performing

her historical-steward duties.

Our first meeting occurred on the streets of Greenfield, slightly less than 10 years before I moved from South Deerfield to Greenfield in 1997 and long before my GHC days. Then cranking out daily sports sections and a weekly *On the Trail* outdoor column for the *Greenfield Recorder*, I can’t recall why I happened to be out of the office that day. All I know is that we met in front of World Eye Bookshop.

The encounter was memorable. Recognizing me in passing from my column sig’s mugshot, Ms. Weeks approached to introduce herself. She had been following with interest my pessimistic stance toward our federal and state Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Restoration Project, and knew I’d be interested in her scholarly UMass Amherst friend’s cutting-edge research.

Anthropology doctoral candidate Catherine Carlson had created quite a stir, Weeks said, with her “Where’s the Salmon? A Reevaluation of the Role of Anadromous Fisheries in Aboriginal New England,” a chapter in husband George P. Nicholas’ 1988 hard-cover compendium titled *Human Holocene Ecology in Northeastern North America*.

I furnished my home mailing address, and promptly received a copy.

Carlson had reviewed the archaeological record from dozens of known pre-contact fishing sites along New England rivers, including our Connecticut, and found a stunning scarcity of Atlantic salmon remains. The finding supported vague information I had pieced together from many published town histories up and down the Connecticut Valley.

With the 1990s looming, I had been a lonely – if not *the only* – public voice challenging the viability of the Connecticut River salmon restoration effort. That is not to say I hoped the program would fail. Quite the contrary, nobody wanted a local salmon sport-fishery more than me. I just didn’t believe it was going to happen, based on a troubling string of

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