

## William V. Fiske diary entries for 1911

William Fiske was an engineer working for the Boston & Maine Railroad from 1891-c.1931.

He kept a detailed daily diary for every year he worked, logging the trains he drove, repairs he performed (“tightened up bolt in frame”), and personal notes. These excerpts focus on William Fiske’s daily life in New Boston, NH.

The Fiske household in 1911 was William (age 48), his wife Bertha (39), and their five children Arvilla (17), Dorothy (14), George (11), Theodore (8), and Charlotte (2).

**Sun. Jan. 1** At home all day. Mrs. Foot brought Bertha and Charlotte home from Francestown & staid to dinner. [*probably “Foote”*]

**Mon. Jan. 2** Paid Dr. Weaver also house rent. [*Fiske noted rent payments each month, distinct from the doctor’s bill.*]

**Thurs. Jan. 5** Bertha went to Manchester this P.M.

**Fri. Jan. 6** (snow) Bertha the girls & I went to social this eve. Valley hall [*Valley Hall is the upper floor of the general store, now Dodge’s Store.*]

**Tues. Jan. 10** (Thermometer: 22°) The town people sliding on Meetinghouse hill a fine night

**Sat. Jan. 14** (30°) I went to Fireman meeting this eve. [*New Boston’s volunteer fire company*]

**Sun. Jan. 15** Picked over & inspect a bbl. of apples. Called on John Johnette this P.M. Fred Barr little boy died this a.m.

**Tues. Jan. 17** (4°) Lucian Barr buried this morn. [*Lucien Barr 1903-1911 was the son of Fred Barr and Carrie Davis Goodwin Barr.*]

**Thurs. Jan. 19** (10°) We all went skating this eve down to Whipples ice pond

**Fri. Jan. 20** Got hair cut.

**Sat. Jan 21** Played cards with Dick Melvin. Bertha & I called on Mr & Mrs Shedd this eve.

**Sun. Jan. 22** Called on John Johnette. Paid him for ham. [*Probably John H. Johonnett 1844-1918, a wheelwright married to Anna.*]

**Tues. Jan. 24** Bertha, Arvilla, Dorothy went to the Fire Co Ball tonight.

**Mon. Jan. 30** Bought a pickled pigs shoulder of John Johnette.

**Thurs. Jan. 31** (6°) Miles run this month 2340

**Fri. Feb. 3** (Ther. 5° Weather: Snow) Arvilla gone to Mt Vernon to a dance with John McLane [*The 1910 census shows one John McLane in New Boston. He is Arvilla’s age, and the son of James and Rebecca McLane. Jim McLane appears to have been Fiske’s landlord.*]

**Sat. Feb. 4** (Ther. 20° Wea. Rain & Snow) Snow plow come up to New Boston this noon.

**Tues. Feb. 7** (Ther. 10° Wea. snow) Snow plow up here this eve. Quite a Blizzard about 14” snow

**Sun. Feb. 12** Mr & Mrs Foot come this a.m. Mrs Foot stopped & Mr Foot went home. Teddy & I went up to the steam mill and McLane’s farm with John.

**Mon. Feb. 13** Bertha & Mrs Foot went to Manchester shopping

**Tues. Feb. 14** Got off track at Engine house switch. Switch rod pin come out. Got back on track in 10 m.

**Wed. Feb. 15** John McLane come over this eve. We played 63 & whist. [*Sixty-three, a card game popular in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, is played by four players*]

**Sun. Feb. 19** At home all day. Mr Foot come & got Mrs. Foot this noon.

**Tues. Feb. 21** Rec’d Annual Pass over B&M system for myself & wife.

**Thurs. Feb. 23** High School entertainment tonight.

**Fri. Feb. 24** I fired #901 & 902 for P.E. Melvin acct. of being sick. [*Proctor Melvin was Fiske's B&MRR fireman.*]

**Wed. Mar. 1** Bertha & I went to Valley Hall to a lecture by Frank Smith of Ohio.

**Tues. Mar. 7** Fire at Goffstown this a.m.

**Fri. Mar. 10** P.E. Melvin & I went to Boston in the air brake car. We went to the Auto show in eve & staid at the Y.M.C.A.

**Sat. Mar. 11** Left Boston at 10.45 on electric for Bonnebrook [*probably Bonny Brook farm in North Grafton MA*]

**Sun. Mar. 12** Staid at Bonnebrook all day a rainy day

**Mon. Mar. 13** Come to New Boston on 8 a.m. train from Worcester. Went to Town Circus this eve.

**Wed. Mar. 15** Bertha & I went to Town Hall to a Whist Party. I saw Blue Birds & a woodchuck today.

**Thurs. Mar. 16** Bridge washed out at Wilton NH.

**Mon. Mar. 20** 7 ½" snow fell last night.

**Thurs. Mar. 23** [*The name P.E. Melvin is struck out and J. F. Ryan is written in for 3/23 and 3/24. Ryan continued to substitute for Melvin until April 8.*]

**Fri. Mar. 24** Bertha & the boys went to Manchester this p.m. Got new suits.

**Sat. Mar. 25** P.E. Melvin mother died at Bradford N.H. last night.

**Sun. Mar. 26** Bub Trow [*probably Albert Trow, a B&MRR brakeman*] & I walked down to Page Wilson's power plant. [*Wilson owned New Boston's first electric power plant just downstream of the Depot Bridge.*]

**Wed. Mar. 29** Bertha the girls & I went to Town Hall to a play given by Goffstown talent.

**Fri. Mar. 31** Bertha the girls & I went to Town Hall to a Whist party.

**Sat. Apr. 1** Joe Rockingham sick abed this eve. [*Joe was the New Boston station manager for the B&MRR.*]

**Wed. Apr. 5** (32°) 5 in of snow fell last night.

**Sun. Apr. 9** (32°) Called on John Johnette. Snowed hard about 6" deep

**Sun. Apr. 16** (Wea. Snow) We all went to Easter services at the Presbyterian Church.

**Wed. Apr. 19** E.R. Melvin came up tonight. Bought a pail of maple sugar.

**Tues. Apr. 25** Eyes hearing & color tested at Manchester 10 am today

**Fri. Apr. 28** We had a car of stock Man. to Amherst on #901

**Sat. Apr. 29** Bertha took Geo & Ted to Man & got Geo teeth filled.

**Sun. Apr. 30** Bertha & I went after May flowers before breakfast. I called on Mr Johnette. Bertha & I went to Baptist Church this am & called on Trows.

**Tue. May 2** Mrs. Barr called this p.m.

**Wed. May 3** (Ther. 36° Wea. Snow) Work train was up with 6 cars of cinders put around depot. Joe Rockingham sick.

**Sat. May 6** Bertha & Arvilla went to Man. this p.m. We had up turntable for New Boston R.R. We had the hand tub out tonight for a trial. [*The Constitution No. 2 hand tub is the hand-pumped fire engine used by the New Boston Fire Department. Fiske appears to have been a volunteer member of this "fire company".*]

**Sun. May 7** Painted the boys room also the girls. Bertha & I walked up Morgans hill.

**Mon. May 8** Dorothy & George went to Boston with Sunday School class to the World in Boston. [*The World in Boston : the first great exposition in America of home and foreign missions, held in Mechanics Building, April 22-May 20, 1911*]

**Fri. May 12** (92°) Bertha & Charlotte went to Francestown via Manchester Milford & Elmwood to Antrim. A great thunderstorm tonight. One steady stream of lightning. *[Fiske noted temperatures in the nineties for most of the week.]*

**Sat. May 13** We had the hand tub out tonight. I finished splitting up wood. Called on Trows this eve.

**Sun. May 14** Filled up wood & tied up papers down cellar. I went down to the electric light works.

**Mon. May 15** Bertha & Charlotte come home today.

**Thurs. May 18** Bertha Arvilla Dorothy & I went to show at town hall.

**Fri. May 19** Bertha Arvilla & the boys & I went to show at town hall.

**Sat. May 20** Bertha, Dorothy & the boys & I went to town hall to a show.

**Sun. May 20** Bertha & I got a team from the farm & drove to Amherst to see Arthur Dreatin(?). Come home through Mount Vernon.

**Mon. May 22** (101° noon) Planted string beans Radish & sweet-peas.

**Fri. May 26** Arthur & Arvilla over tonight

**Sun. May 28** (100°) Mr Mrs Eames walked with us up to the farm & on top of Pin Ball. *[There was a nice view of New Boston village and the river from Pinball Hill before it became tree-covered later in the 1900s.]*

**Mon. May 29** Planted summer squash & cucumbers.

**Tues. May 30** Mr Mrs Farmer & Mr. Mrs Martin called on their way home to Newton with Autos.

**Fri. June 2** Bertha went to Dublin with Mr Mrs Reed in George Mardin's Auto. *[possibly George Marden]*

**Sun. June 4** Cleaned up the old hand tub for J. R. Whipple. Put screens onto house. *[Whipple died in 1912. It's not clear what Fiske meant by "the old hand tub". While the Constitution No. 2 was 60 years old in 1911, it would not be replaced by a motorized fire engine until 1924.]*

**Wed. June 7** Set out tomatoes

**Thurs. June 8** 2 Ex Pass up from Boston with Hotel men 5 cars each to J R Whipples farm *[Whipple owned three Boston hotels which he supplied via railroad from his Valley View Farm in New Boston. On June 9<sup>th</sup> he hosted a banquet for the dedication of his modern dairy barn. The cows were shooed out and long tables were set with white cloths for 500 guests. Hotel waiters served softshelled crabs, salmon, young pig, lobster salad and mince pie.]*

**Sun. June 11** At home all day. Arthur and Arvilla come over this eve.

**Tues. June 13** Arvilla gave birth to a baby girl 7:30 a.m.

**Thurs. June 15** N.H. Artillery came through town this eve.

**Fri. June 16** I went down to Goffstown this pm to 150 anniversary. *[The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1761 incorporation of Goffstown was celebrated on this date.]*

**Sun. June 18** Father & I called on Arvilla this eve.

**Thu. June 19** I went to Manchester this pm. I bought a pair of shoes and a wedding present for Arvilla.

**Sun. June 25** I went to Goffes Falls with Geo Marden, Joe Rockingham, Rush Atwood, Bill Trow to a German lunch given by the B of R T's. *[The Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen was a labor organization for railroad employees founded in 1883.]*

**Fri. June 30** John Clark died at 9 am.

**Sat. July 1** I went to an auction to Goffstown this p.m.

**Mon. July 3** (106°) We had John Clark body out on a.m. train. *[Temperature rose to 108° Tues-Thurs.]*

**Wed. July 5** Clarence Dodge got upset from a chair while hitching on to #338

**Thurs. July 6** (108°) Rained & hailed this P.M. Ther[mometer] dropped 36° in 15 m. Lights & telephone all out in New Boston. Bertha & I called on Arvilla this eve.

**Fri. July 7** A fine day.

**Sun. July 9** Bertha & I got up at 4.30 am & walked up to the McAlpine place. At home rest of day.

**Sun. July 16** Got a team at the Tavern. Bertha all the children & I went up to Mrs Foot & spent the day. Left New Boston at 6.25 am. Arr 8.20 pm. *[The Tavern was razed in 1944 but its stable, from which Fiske rented a team of horses, is now the bank building in the village center.]*

**Tues. July 18** Bill Sheehan came up to take my place off sick. Eng 234 in shop at Manchester to be renumbered to 750 & boiler test. *[In his book "Boston and Maine in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century" Bruce Heald wrote that B&M 234 was built by the Manchester Locomotive Works in 1874, renumbered "750" in 1911, and retired in 1912. David Woodbury explained that the B&M acquired many locomotives as it bought smaller railroad companies and it renumbered its engines by type and class.]*

**Wed. July 19** At home all day. *[Fiske worked 6 days per week. This appears to be the first day of his vacation.]*

**Thurs. July 20** I went to Northampton this a.m. Left my watch case with F W Roberts *[a jeweler]*.

**Sat. July 22** Left North Grafton this noon for New Boston N.H. Not feeling very well.

**Tues. July 25** Around town all day. Mrs Foot & Bertha went to Manchester all day. Arvilla came over. Got dinner for us.

**Fri. July 28** Mrs Foot, Bertha, Mrs Bliss & I played whist all the p.m. Rained like great guns. *[Fiske went back to work the next day.]*

**Mon. July 31** Received from F. W. Roberts of Northampton a watch case, to replace old one.

**Tue. Aug. 1** Work train up here with 4 cars of crushed stone for turn table.

**Thurs. Aug. 3** P.E. Melvin bought a Stanley Automobile. *[The Stanley Motor Carriage Company built steam-powered automobiles from 1902 to 1924. Note that Proctor Melvin was Fiske's fireman on their steam-powered locomotive.]*

**Sat. Aug. 5** Sent watch & new case to Manchester to be oiled and cleaned. *[A railroad engineer undoubtedly prized his pocket watch. Fiske's watch was returned on Aug. 10.]*

**Sun. Aug. 6** I went to Mt Vernon, Milford, Amherst & home in Auto with Geo. Dennison.

**Wed. Aug. 9** We all went [to a] lawn party at Presbyterian Church.

**Wed. Aug. 16** Bertha & the boys went to Pine Island Park this p.m. *[Pine Island Park on Brown Avenue in Manchester had a carousel, a wooden roller coaster and a roller-skating rink.]*

**Mon. Aug. 21** *[F.G. McGuire replaces P.E. Melvin as fireman until Sep. 1<sup>st</sup>; Melvin's vacation?]*

**Mon. Aug. 28** Construction crew commenced work on turntable foundation this PM.

**Mon. Sept. 11** Plumber come up from Boston. Put fire hose into Engine house.

**Thurs. Sept. 14** The children & I went to the show of moving picture at Town Hall.

**Fri. Sept. 15** Mrs. Foot, Bertha & I went to Town Hall to moving picture show.

**Tue. Sept. 19** Killed a yearling heifer on track 2 miles west of Amherst N.H. New Boston Pass. Cars stopped going through to Manchester in PM. [*Unclear if this was a temporary or permanent schedule change.*]

**Sun. Sept. 24** Bertha, Dorothy, Charlotte & I went to ride in Jim McLane's auto with Mr. & Mrs. McLane.

**Thurs. Sept. 28** Work train up. Put track into turntable.

**Sat. Sept. 30** Clarence Fox, A. Conders, Ed Rose & I went coon hunting up in Dane swamp.

**Sun. Oct. 1** Took off outside window screens. Bertha, the children & I went chestnutting this p.m.

**Thurs. Oct. 5** Got a hunters license this eve & a hair cut.

**Fri. Oct. 6** Oyster stew for supper

**Sun. Oct. 8** Mr Mrs Conder, Bertha & I went chestnutting in the Dickey pasture. Got a lot! Taped a pair of shoes for Ted. Repd a pair for George & one for Bertha. Bottled up the wine.

**Mon. Oct. 9** Head-on wreck on WN&P Div [*Worcester, Nashua & Portland division of the B&M Railroad*] east of Hubbards. Engr Bradley killed. [*Two freight trains collided a mile west of Hampstead NH. The eastbound train's engineer Allen Bradley perished; his fireman leapt to safety.*]

**Tue. Oct. 10** Helped John Parker milk

**Mon. Oct. 23** End 238 run into turntable pit at 1 am. We backed with New Boston cars Manchester to New Boston.

**Tues. Oct. 24** Arvilla come home to stay.

**Wed. Oct. 25** Cattle show at New Boston. Mrs Foot & Bertha went to play [at the] Town hall this eve.

**Sat. Oct. 28** I went coon hunting with Ed Rose & Chas Kidder up back of Joes Hill. No luck.

**Sat. Nov. 4** I went coon hunting this eve with Ed Rose.

**Tues. Nov. 7** Clarence Fox got 3 coon this eve.

**Wed. Nov. 8** Bertha & Dorothy went to Social & Supper in town hall.

**Thurs. Nov. 9** Mrs Trow, Marion & Bertha went to Boston all day. [*Marian Clark Trow Wilkins typed her memories of New Boston in 1986 when she was 91 and sent them to the Historical Society.*]

**Fri. Nov. 10** Struck a spring calf at Hoyts Farm broke a leg #901.

**Sat. Nov. 11** Mr Mrs A D Edwards sailed out of NB this am. I went coon hunting with Ed Rose. We got 1 coon. Started 2 more.

**Wed. Nov. 15** 3" snow fell last night. Bought 8 ¼ lb of roast pork of W. Quimby

**Wed. Nov. 22** Father, Bertha, the boys and Dorothy went to Boy Scout entertain[ment] Valley Hall this eve. A success. Netted \$57.

**Fri. Nov. 24** Landall, Blanchard & Shedd come home from Lincoln N.H. with 4 deer.

**Fri. Dec. 1** Bought ½ pig 110 lb of W Quimby. We cut it up this eve.

**Sat. Dec. 2** Paid Quimby for pig.

**Tues. Dec. 12** Oliver Newton died this a.m. at 3.45

**Wed. Dec. 13** Oliver Newton funeral this noon. Took body out on #336.

**Wed. Dec. 20** Mr Mrs Bliss & Fogg up this eve play whist.

**Fri. Dec. 22** Father, Bertha, Arvill, Charlotte, Teddy & I went to dog show.

**Sat. Dec. 23** Father, Bertha, Dorothy, George, Teddy & I went to Dog show [at] Town hall.

**Sun. Dec. 24** We had turkey for dinner.

**Mon. Dec. 25** We all went to the Christmas tree [at the] town Hall. [Note: Fiske ran his usual train schedule on this Christmas day!]

**Sat. Dec. 30** Bertha & I went up to Congers played whist this eve.

**Sun. Dec. 31** At home all day. Miles run this mo. 2340. [*Fiske logged 27,270 miles for all of 1911.*]

~ End of diary. See a Postscript below and sample pages from Bill Fiske's diary. ~



Undated photo of locomotive similar to Bill's #234 at New Boston depot

### Postscript

William Vaughn Fiske (1863-1955) retired from the Boston & Maine Railroad and continued to live in New Boston after his wife Bertha Mary Ball Fiske (1872-1939) died. The “Images of America” New Boston history book has a photograph of Bill Fiske in 1942:



This photograph shows Bill Fiske, a retired New Boston train engineer, standing in the doorway of the first World War II observation post in town. The post was an old Work Projects Administration shack on wheels, known as the Caboose. It was moved to an area off Molly Stark Lane during a gas shortage after residents complained of having to drive too far to do their watch. The photograph was taken by Clem Lyon Jr. on July 18, 1942.

Arvilla Fiske (1894-1982) divorced Arthur E. Hill and married Raymond Perham, who died in 1919 (age 22). In 1922 Arvilla married Robert P. Bryant (1896-1959). Robert and Arvilla are buried in Amherst NH.

Arvilla's oldest child Olive V. Hill (1911-2001) married Earl Bullard. Her descendants donated this diary to the New Boston Historical Society in 2016.

Bill and Bertha's youngest child Charlotte Fiske (1909-2007) married Lawson Smith and lived in New Boston all her life. She held the Boston Post Cane given to New Boston's oldest citizen.



**FOR IDENTIFICATION.**

My Name... *W. V. Fiske*

My Residence... *New Boston*

..... *N. H.*

My Business Address... *B. O. R. R.*

.....

My Home Telephone.....

My Office Telephone.....

In case of accident or serious illness please notify... *Mrs. W. V. Fiske*

..... *New Boston N. H.*

The make of my Automobile.....

.....

Its Number.....

Number on case of my Watch .....

Number of the works... *528787*

Number of my Bank Book .....

My Weight was... *175* On *Jan. 1*... *1911*

and my Height... *5* feet... *9 3/4* inches

Size of Hat... *7*..... Gloves.....

" Hosiery... *1.0*..... Collar... *16 1/2*

" Cuffs..... Shoe... *6 1/2*

" Shirt... *1.6*..... Drawers... *4.2*



Ther.  
34

MON. JAN. 2, 1911

Wca.  
Rain

Run Eng 90 + 234  
90 Pass Trains 330-901  
902-933  
336-339

P. E. Melvin 7  
Eng. 90 on 330-901-902  
" 234 " 333-336-339

Work done on Eng 234  
Cleaned headlight  
tightened up bolt  
in frame,  
repacked overhauls.

Paid Dr. Weaver also  
house rent.

New Boston

Ther.

TUES. JAN. 3, 1911

Wca.  
Rain

Run Eng 234  
90 Pass trains 330-901  
902-333  
336-339

P. E. Melvin 7

Blocked boiler head  
Fixed up signal flags  
Put up clock & station  
mndow.  
Tightened up bolt on  
grease lever

New Boston