

FRIENDS OF ROBBINS FARM

To promote preservation, restoration, recreational opportunities and safety, and to sponsor clean-up and other community activities at the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm

FALL NEWSLETTER 2000



CLEAN-UP DAY, MAY 6, 2000

CONTENTS: Friends' Description, Year 2000 Activities, Future Plans / Radcliffe Plans Evaluation, Friends' Response / Park Photos / Re-up Form

Friends of Robbins Farm

FRIENDS was organized as a membership association in October, 1998. Now (October, 2000) it has 147 members. We have organized two spring clean-up days for the Park, picking up leaves and trash, repairing erosion, shoveling loam, planting grass, cleaning the playground sand, etc. The summer of 1999 we painted the rusty tennis court fence green. Last spring we organized a kite flying day. We have held a number of meetings to discuss people's concerns and visions for the Park. The Core Committee has met with the Parks & Rec Commission, the DPW Director, the Police Director, the Chair of the Capital Planning Committee, and Representative Jim Marzilli. Over the past academic year, we asked a class of Design students at the Radcliffe Institute to draw up some plans — visions — for the future of the Park. They produced four plans, which were posted at Robbins Library for public view and comment. We held a public meeting at the Brackett School in January for their presentation. The Parks & Recreation Commission hired a local planner to evaluate the plans. The Comm'n Chair has indicated the Commission has the funds to start a master planning process which would include the Friends as the interested citizen group. We have held several meetings to consider Friend's reponse to the Radcliffe plans. See "Review of Design Proposals" following.

We are considering presently incorporation and application for charitable status with the Internal Revenue Service. We're planning to hold our Annual Meeting to so incorporate or formally organize November 14th. The plan is to fund raise for the renovation of the playground and also for plantings and other improvements for the Park. See last page for membership blank, and for ordering our newly designed tee shirts. Follows fall schedule and contact information:

October 17th: Meeting at 7 pm, Community Room @ Robbins Library (basement) principally to review Radcliffe plans and incorporation & charitable status application.

October 21: Meet at crest of Boston Hill @ 10 am to walk the Park with Andrew Leonard, planner; if possible attend 10/17 meeting for preparation.

November 14th: Annual Meeting at 7 pm @ Robbins Library Community Room to review 10/21 Walk and to formally organize Friends as a charity and/or charitable corporation plus other details of organization and future planning.

PLAYGROUND RENOVATION COMMITTEE — contact Jen Rothenberg @ 648-1998 or <jenjenroth@rcn.com>. **1st Meeting October 11 @ 7:30 pm**, 4th Floor Library Conference Room.

CORE COMMITTEE: Oakes Plimpton, Roly Chaput, Sandy & Bud Carmichael, Elaine Backman, Greg Porfido, Jim Miller, Corinna Vanderspek, Judy Leich, Ken Reilly, Chris Culhane, Brian Murray, Dorothy Lally, Jen Rothenberg.

FRIENDS CONTACT: Write or phone or e-mail Oakes Plimpton, Coordinator @ 67 Coolidge Road, Arlington, MA 02476; phone # 648-5117; e-mail: plimag@mediaone.net. *Robbins Farm Park, a Local History* also available @ \$5 to benefit Friends at above address.

Review of Radcliffe Seminars Design Proposals for Robbins Farm
by Andrew Leonard, Leonard Design Associates, Arlington, April 27, 2000

Introduction: *Robbins Farm* represents a unique and valuable resource for the Town of Arlington. At the township level, it is one of the few open, park-like spaces in Arlington that is not wholly given over to playgrounds or recreation fields. There is potential to develop other types of park uses that are unavailable elsewhere due to space considerations. While there are other hilltop public areas in Arlington, only Robbins Farm has an open character allowing views to the surrounding area. In addition, **the potential for development of historical interpretation adds a dimension that is not present in other areas.**

. . . On a regional level, *Robbins Farm* represents one of a series of public spaces that celebrate the 'Blue Hills' surrounding Boston. These vary greatly as one traverses around Boston, from the wilder Lynn Woods, Breakheart and Middlesex Fells reservations, to more developed spaces in Somerville, Brookline, and at the Peter's Hill section of to Arnold Arboretum. *Robbins Farm* would fall into the same category as the latter facilities, with its fully developed suburban setting.

Proposals and Program: The four proposals prepared by the Radcliffe Seminars (students) span a fairly wide range of program and theme. Each embraces to differing levels the elements that make *Robbins Farm* special and unique in Arlington. Rather than criticize each individual proposal, I feel that it would be more beneficial to analyze the individual program elements presented, as well as some others that have not been utilized in these proposals.

In evaluating the program for *Robbins Farm*, I have not prepared rigorous objective criteria by which to judge feasibility. After all, feasibility is somewhat in the eye of the beholder; if enough people want a particular type of element in the park, we should study how to achieve and maintain it regardless of cost, effort, and ease of maintenance. However the town has some experience in how certain types of park facilities survive. We know that initial construction funding will be limited. We have limited resources for maintenance personnel and facilities. Safety considerations will dictate the configuration of certain facilities in what is a largely unsupervised park. . . .

Follows Friends' review of Andrew Leonard's evaluation. We didn't have space to print all of his original materials — call or e-mail us if you'd like to read his full report. Some of the Radcliffe plans are available also as is a review and summary of all of them.

REVIEW OF RADCLIFFE PLANS REVIEW BY ANDREW LEONARD

Only nine people came out for the Friends' meeting 06/20/00 to review Andrew Leonard's evaluation of the Radcliffe plans for the Park. We were hoping for more (several sent their regrets, having conflicts). Those who came will be steering committee along with some regulars, and others can express their opinions at community meetings called as the process of figuring out a master plan for the Park unfolds.

First we heard the bad news of the destruction of the Koenig memorial bench at the crest of Boston Hill by young vandals a few nights before. Then we discussed how to approach the future plans for the Park — what's our vision? We decide to respond to Mr. Leonard's recommendations, which were arranged alphabetically:

ART — skepticism expressed; would have to be indestructible — [no doubt we were influenced by the vandalism; note we did favor a foundation garden with historical interpretation, a sun dial and/or a Boston skyline or constellation diorama, a viewing terrace, and a ceremonial entrance; Mr. Leonard's report mentioned additional benefit of separate funding for any art].

BASEBALL — retain as is — no relocating the backstop or fencing in — two Radcliffe plans had recommended reorientation with home plate over by Eastern Avenue.

BLACKTOP — favor surface for tricycling and young rollerbladers probably near playground.

BASKETBALL COURT — unnecessary; general consensus Brackett School court will suffice.

CEREMONIAL ENTRANCE — one of the plans had wrought iron entrance opposite Brackett School which most approved despite danger of vandalism; possibility of fence extending from entrance to keep kids from running into street (approved by A.L.).

COMMUNITY GARDENS — doubt expressed because of vandalism, ugliness (fences), private use of limited public park, taking space away from recreation (soccer).

FARMHOUSE site excavation and design formed by foundations favored.

FROG/SKATING POND: agreed with planner Leonard that such impractical respecting maintenance and safety; also Menotomy's Hill Pond nearby.

HABITAT AREA — approved, if meant meadow with wildflowers down the steep hills where it's difficult to mow.

LEDGES — (by baseball backstop); don't expose too much; plant low, creeping plantings by the rocks, and perhaps improve on the wild grapes.

ORCHARD — no — hard to maintain (prune, etc.), and apples make ready ammunition!

OVERLOOK — favor curving, low, stone wall to sit on, lean against as at Corey Hill in Brookline; also sun dial or panorama of stars or buildings. Everyone against having picnic tables up there because of mess and trash created.

PATHS (strolling) — OK, depending on design and budget (not too wide or interfering with sledding, etc.).

PLANTINGS: good, if on limited basis (not to block the view or the feeling of open space), and native plants.

PLAYGROUND: probably needs to be replaced! Needs to be more diverse, appealing to wider age group. Interest expressed in raising funds to accomplish redoing!

SKATEBOARD PARK: should be skateboard park in Town, but not at Robbins.

SLEDDING: something needs to be done to make "Suicide Hill" safer, such as by berms to divert sledders from going straight down into the fence.

SLIDES: good as they are (!), save make longer run-offs for safety.

SPRING AND STREAM: too impractical an idea!

TENNIS: group favors building new court (or courts) by playground, with adjacent area for tricycling.

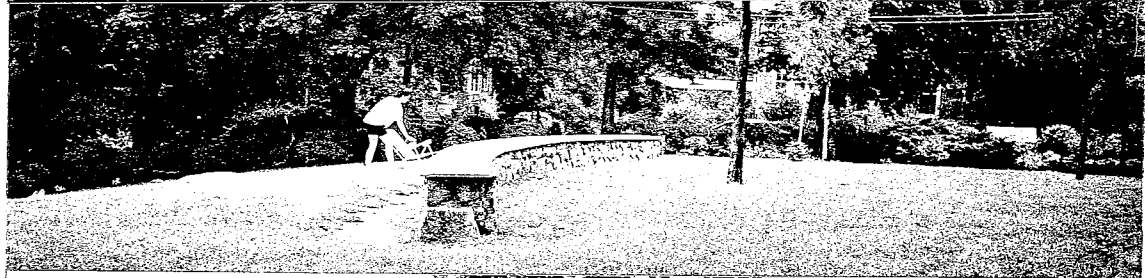
WATER FOUNTAINS: two are needed, one by the playground, the other by the baseball/soccer field.

Budget

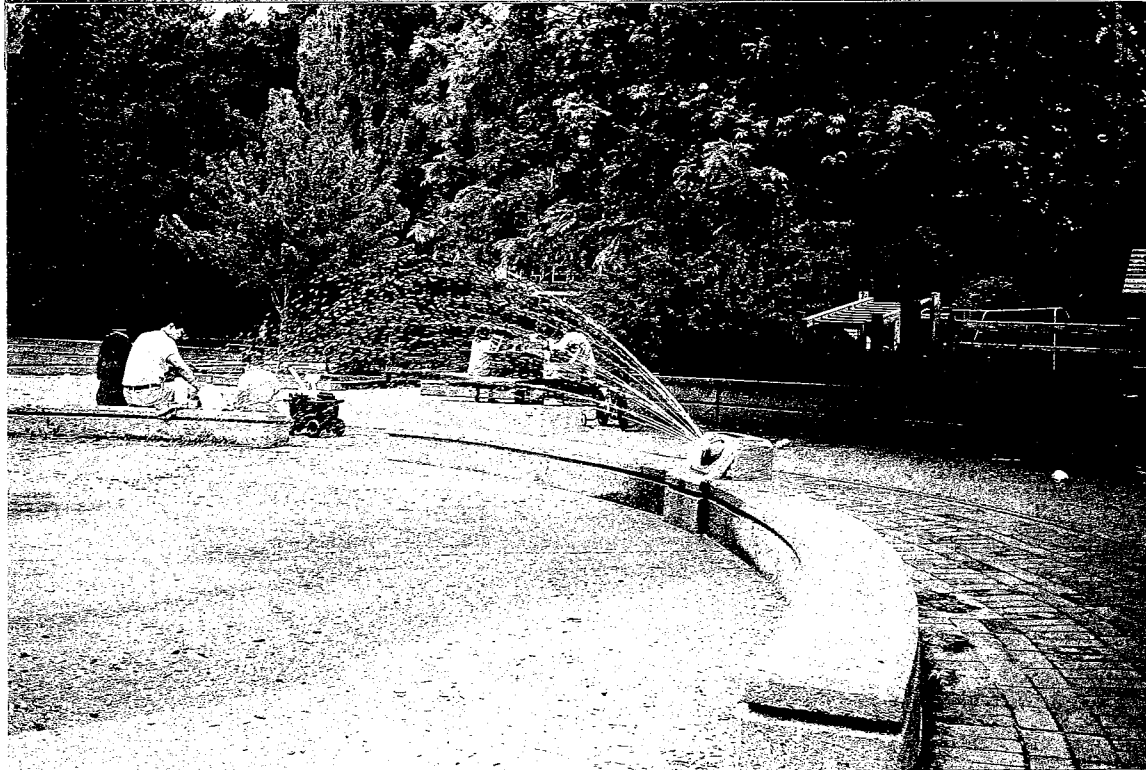
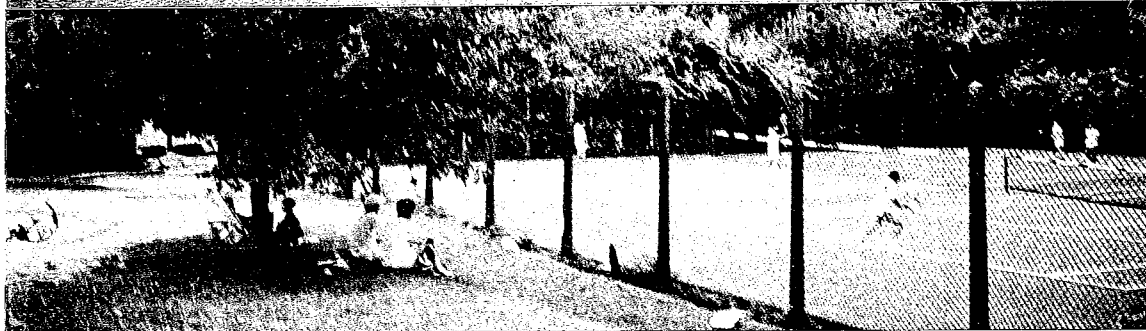
(Andrew Leonard again): The Parks and Recreation Commission has identified a target budget of \$300,000 for Robbins Farm, yet to be approved by Town Meeting (potentially for 2002). While this is a generous amount compared to other park funding, the scope that is desirable to accomplish at Robbins Farm is much greater than most parks. Based on similar renovations at other parks in Arlington, assuming most of the above were put into operation, we would find a construction cost of \$600,000 to \$750,000. A great deal of work will have to be done to refine the proposals for Robbins Farm, to prioritize and phase the work, and identify funding sources.

Up-To-Date

The Parks & Recreation Commission decided to hire Leonard Associates to continue the process of creating a master plan for the Park and its renovation. Andrew Leonard will be walking *Robbins Farm* with the Friends @ 10 am, Saturday, October 21st (meeting at crest of Boston Hill). To further discuss the Friends' roll and wishes, there'll be a Friends' meeting Tuesday night October 17th @ 7 PM at the Community Room in the Library, and post-walk November 14th. Our group now has a sub-committee to promote renovation of the playground; see page two for contact information for that and the Friends of Robbins Farm itself.



DESIGN IDEAS — SUN DIAL & CURVING STONE WALL @ COREY HILL PARK, BROOKLINE



DESIGN IDEAS — FLOWERS & PLAYGROUND SPRINKLER, LONGFELLOW PARK, BROOKLINE
ALSO TENNIS

Friends of Robbins Farm

To promote preservation, restoration, recreational opportunities and safety, and to sponsor clean-up and other community activities at the beautiful park in Arlington Heights known as Robbins Farm

Robbins Farm Tee Shirts

Sandy Carmichael designed some beautiful Robbins Farm Tee Shirts, the adults ones with a graphic map of the Farm as it looked in 1936, drawing by Geoffrey Stiles from the memories of his father Stephen Stiles, the youth ones with a composite graphic of Brackett School students' drawings of the Park, and all of them with a Friends' logo on the front; see over for the logo and the students' drawing composite. We sold them over Town Day; the following sizes, etc., are left.

ORDER

ADULT:	4 med. gray long sleeved @ 14.00 each:	_____
	3 med. green tee shirts @ 12.00 each:	_____
	5 med. gray tee shirts " " "	_____
	6 large gray tee shirts " " "	_____
YOUTH:	2 large (14/16) blue tee shirts @ 9.00 each:	_____
	1 med. (10/12) blue tee shirt " " "	_____
	2 small (6/8) gray tee shirt " " "	_____
	3 med. gray tee shirts " " "	_____
	4 large red tee shirts " " "	_____
	6 med. red tee shirts " " "	_____

Annual Membership Dues \$5 ___; Donation for beautification _____.

Robbins Farm Park, a Local History \$5 ___; T-Shirts (order above):_____.

Name: _____

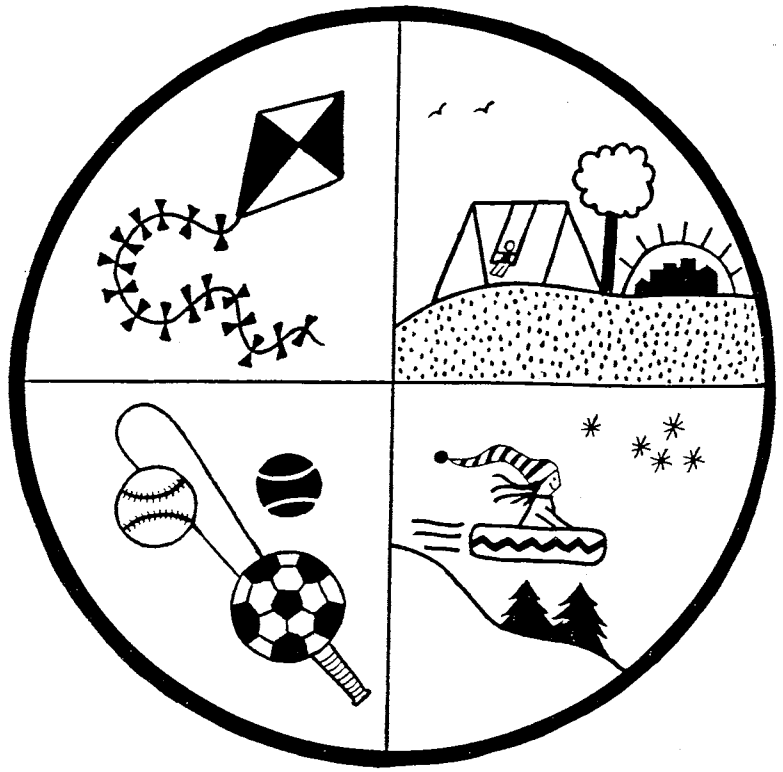
Address: _____

Tel # & E-mail: _____

Interests: Core Committee ___; Newsletter ___; Publicity ___; Landscape ___; Playground ___;
Future plans ___; Fund raising ___; Friends' events: ___; Volunteer labor ___; Just a Member ___.

Other & Opinions: _____ (over).

Please make out your check to *Friends of Robbins Farm* and mail or deliver to
Oakes Plimpton, Coordinator, 67 Coolidge Road, Arlington, MA 02476



Friends of Robbins Farm
c/o 67 Coolidge Road
Arlington, MA 02476