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### What to Expect

CRJA defined Phase I of the project as rebuilding the playground area including:

- Modifying the big slide and its rebuilding the steps
- Installing new structures, including swings, sand pit and better surfacing
- Regrading and implementing erosion control plantings such as trees, shrubs, and loam/seed
- Adding fencing, benches and picnic tables
- Making paved pathways leading to the playground area and all the equipment handicap-accessible

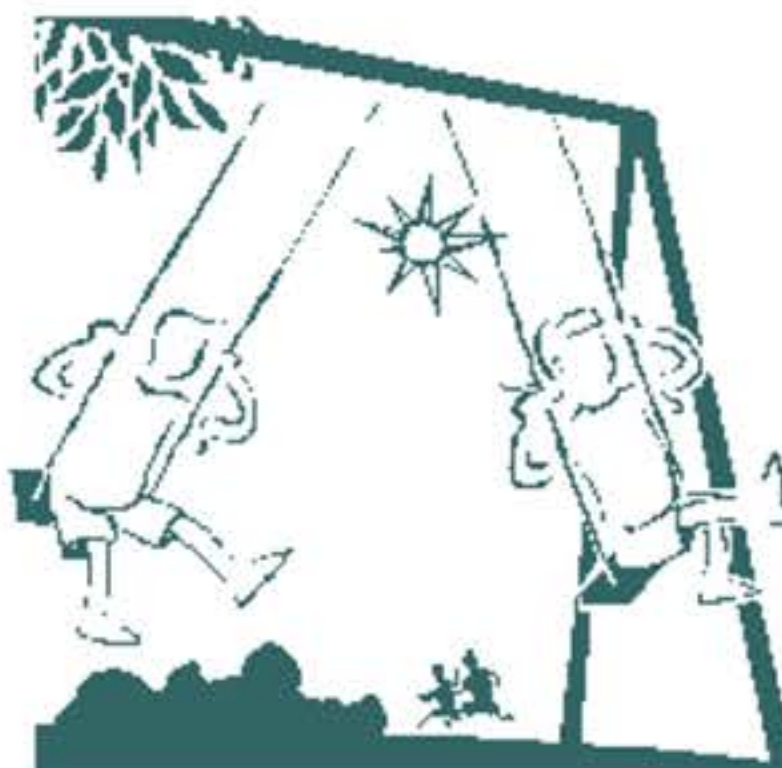
For future phases, once more money is available, the plan currently shows renovated baseball fields and a new backstop. They've also designed a skating area, viewing wall, a relocated basketball court, and a new entry walkway.

## FORFP President Outlines Park Plans

Dear Friends,

The last few months have been very busy. We have been actively planning upcoming events and working with the Parks and Recreation Commissioners to help plan the future of Robbins Farm Park.

The planning and design stages are moving right along. Representatives from FORFP met with Carol R. Johnson & Associates (CRJA) the designated landscape architects and the Commissioners on January 29<sup>th</sup> and again on February 4<sup>th</sup>. The first meeting was an opportunity for CRJA to become more familiar with our priorities for Robbins Farm Park and to ask specific questions about our layout and design ideas.



At the second meeting, CRJA presented their preliminary master plan. Those of us who attended agreed that it looks great. The overall design is simple and clean, and works well with the park's natural topography. They have done a very nice job of incorporating our priorities while maintaining a historical feel.

Because the scope of the project is so large, the construction will proceed in phases. The first is the redesign and rebuilding of the playground area, with work potentially beginning as early as the end of this summer. The playground portion of the project will

include new play structures, swings, modifying the big slide/steps, adding more benches and picnic tables, along with the necessary regrading, resurfacing, landscaping, and fencing.

The first pass at the budget for this work has come in higher than anticipated, but CRJA and Parks and Rec are working to get those numbers down. However, there is still quite a bit we can do. One idea that's been discussed recently is to enlist the community to actually help build the playground. The other obvious way we can help is to raise money – and not just for the playground, but for the critical needs of the ball fields, which also must be renovated as soon as possible.

Now that we have a master plan in hand, we're ready to step up our efforts on the fundraising side. So over the next few months, I'll be asking for your help. Please consider ways you can participate as this next, exciting phase in the restoration of Robbins Farm Park gets underway.

If you have any questions, comments or would like to get involved, please call or e-mail me.

*Jen*

Jen Rothenberg  
President  
781-648-1998  
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## Preparing the Farm for Spring



### Founder's Corner

by Oakes Plimpton

Spring cleaning at Robbins Farm Park will be May 18. We will pick up trash, rake leaves and branches, spread loam over eroded places, plant grass, and rake the sand in the playground-- whatever needs to be done and whatever we can do to prepare for the summer rebuilding. Our first clean-up day was May 1, 1999. The next year we tackled the abandoned tennis courts clearing out the weeds and glass, and that led to the idea of painting the fence -- hence the green fence. But as described elsewhere, the park's rehabilitation is under way, and the abandoned courts will be removed. Seventy years ago, spring was a time for planting the carrots and beans and corn that Nathan Robbins cultivated at his Farm. In May he would have started harvesting asparagus spears and then rhubarb, 35 cents a bunch for freshly cut asparagus, rhubarb at 5 cents a pound. As for corn, "He had the most delicious corn you ever ate! I think it was 35 cents a dozen. At the end of the season he would give you what he called the nubbins, little pieces that weren't quite right -- he would fill a bag and give it to you. He was a very sensitive man you know. He wanted that farm as an open space for the children. He liked the children." The above quotes are from my book, "Robbins Farm, a Local History." When I first put together the book, I thought the farm was started in the 1880s when Nathan Robbins Sr., whose fortune graced the Town with its Library and Town Hall, built his mansion

on the top of the hill, where the abandoned tennis courts are now. But reading "West Cambridge, 1775", which is a remarkable oral history of the Revolutionary War in Arlington -- April 19, 1775, which we now celebrate as Patriot's Day -- came across the following passage: "The strong British flanking guards on either side of the road back to Cambridge and Boston gave them opportunity for violence and plunder. Hardly a dwelling on their way escaped. On the summit of what we call 'Peirce's Hill' was a house occupied by Mr. Robbins. The family had fled on the approach of the enemy. The flank guard ransacked the premises, destroyed the clock, and set fire to the kitchen floor, which was extinguished by the wet clothes falling upon it, after it had burned off the lines." Reverend Samuel Abbott Smith gathered the stories and wrote the book in 1864, available at the Arlington Historical Society's Smith Museum; most of the memories were from children remembering their parent's stories, but one elderly woman was a young child on that day and still remembered the day's events!

Arlington was originally incorporated as West Cambridge, and earlier had been known as Menotomy Village. Further research revealed that in 1739 a Joseph Robbins purchased 12 acres from Phillip Shattuck in Cambridge Rocks, as Arlington Heights was known at the time. And a 1750 map of Menotomy shows a farm near Peirce Hill labeled

### What to Bring to Clean-up Day

#### Recycling

We are planning to raise money by collecting reimbursable recycling for redemption. Please bring your simple recycling-- bottles and cans-- to Clean-up Day. If you can't bring your recycling on May 18 but still want to donate, please call Jen Rothenberg at 781-648-1998 and we will arrange to have it picked up. Also, we are looking for volunteers to help sort donated recycling!

#### Supplies

- Gloves
- Shovels
- Rakes
- Wheelbarrows
- Know-how
- Enthusiasm

Come join your friends and neighbors on **May 18** for Clean-up Day At Robbins Farm Park from 9am to 1pm. Assignments will be handed out at the park. See you there!

"Robbins Family, 1739". Robbins Farm became a park in 1942, so it existed as a farm for at least 200 years! So remember when you put down loam and plant some grass at Robbins Farm Park on Clean Up Day, that not so long ago you would have been planting corn and beans!

Oakes' book, *Robbins Farm, a History*, is available at Robbins Library, the Historical Society, Jefferson Cutter House and the Town Barbershop or by email, . [robbins\\_farm@hotmail.com](mailto:robbins_farm@hotmail.com).



## Shakespeare in Robbins Farm Park this Summer

Save these dates! On Tuesday evening, June 25th, Trinity Rep's Summer Shakespeare Project will return to Menotomy Rocks Park to perform *The Tempest*. The performance will be co-sponsored by the Arlington Center for the Arts (ACA) and the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park and should be as lively and entertaining as last year's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

On Tuesday, July 23rd, Trinity Rep will perform *A Comedy of Errors* at Robbins Farm. This will be co-sponsored by the ACA and the Friends of Robbins Farm Park.

Both slightly abbreviated 90-minute free performances will start at 6 p.m. and are appropriate for all ages. The public is invited to come early and bring



lawn chairs and blankets along with a picnic supper. Beverages, desserts, and T-shirts will be sold at both performances.

Donations to help offset the cost of the performances are welcome. Those making a tax deductible contribution of \$25 or more prior to the performances will be invited to a cast party following one of the performances. Checks made

payable to the Arlington Center for the Arts can be mailed before June 15 to:

Arlington Center for the Arts/Shakespeare Project  
Gibbs Center  
41 Foster Street  
Arlington, MA 02476

Anyone wishing to help distribute flyers, set up, clean up, or donate desserts should contact Betsy Baldwin at 781-643-3848 or [betsybaldwin@hotmail.com](mailto:betsybaldwin@hotmail.com).

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### FORFP Proposed 2002 Event Calendar

Winter Fest *Canceled due to lack of snow*  
Spring Kite Day *Saturday, May 4*  
Annual Spring Clean Up Day *Saturday, May 18*  
Field Day and FORFP Annual Meeting *Saturday, June 15*  
Independence Day celebration sponsored by the Town of Arlington *Thursday, July 4*  
Shakespeare in the Park *Tuesday, July 23*  
Movie Nights *Friday, August 9 & 23*  
Town Day *September (TBD)*  
Kite Day *October (TBD)*

*Robbins Farm Almanac* is a quarterly newsletter published by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park. We welcome and encourage any articles or suggestions. Please send them to: [robbins\\_farm@hotmail.com](mailto:robbins_farm@hotmail.com). If you would like to become a member, email us or call 781-648-1998.

#### Friends of Robbins Farm Park Officers 2001-2002

Oakes Plimpton, *Founder/Historian*  
Jennifer Rothenberg, *President*  
Roly Chaput, *Vice-President*  
Chris Hall, *Treasurer*  
Sandy Carmichael, *Clerk*  
Corinna Vanderspek, *Membership Secretary*

Monthly meetings of Friends of Robbins Farm Park are held on the second Wednesday at 7:30pm at the Jefferson-Cutter House in Arlington Center. Spring meetings will be held April 10, May 8, and June 12.



## Friends of Robbins Farm Park

*Friends of Robbins Farm Park*  
34 Eustis Street  
Arlington, MA 02476

Phone: 781 648-1998

*The Friends of Robbins Farm Park is a community organization formed to promote the beautification, restoration, improvement and maintenance of the Robbins Farm Park in Arlington Heights, Massachusetts. We sponsor and promote cultural, educational, recreational and other community activities throughout the year. We invite active membership in the organization and seek to represent the Robbins Farm Park community.*



### ***CPA Update***

Two items came out of the recent Community Preservation Act conference that may be of interest to FORFP members. The first is that a percentage of funding allocated to open space preservation or acquisition will be available for supporting construction projects in the park. For example, the town of Hopkinton, which passed the CPA last year, has earmarked some funding to renovate an old park and build new soccer and ball fields on the site. That's the good news. The bad news is that funding will be very slow in coming. According to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, which sets the rules governing how the funds are distributed, there must be an approval by Town Meeting, passage of the bill at a local election and certification that the funds are actually in place. The town tax collector must also set up the accounts for correct billing to qualifying applicants. All of this will take at least two years, which means the earliest we could expect CPA funds for Robbins Farm Park would be 2004. We'll keep you informed.

### ***Volunteer Opportunities Abound***

We realize we've said it before... but we're still looking for new volunteers to help out with our 2002 events.

We are looking for people willing to donate an hour or two to help out at one or more of the events listed in the calendar on page 3. We are always looking for help planning and organizing events. In addition, our board of director elections are coming up so if you're interested in getting your name on the ballot, that's another way you can become involved in FORFP.

Currently, we are looking for two people to fill larger roles within the organization:

- Fundraising Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator

If you have fundraising experience, we definitely could use your expertise in getting us geared up for what we think will be a fairly considerable

fundraising effort to complete construction projects at the Farm. We also need someone with time and connections to keep a log of all our volunteers and coordinate their efforts for our planned events. This mostly means contacting people to let them know when and where they are needed. If you are interested in any of these roles or in volunteering your time to a fun and worthwhile organization, please send an email to [robbins\\_farm@hotmail.com](mailto:robbins_farm@hotmail.com) or call Jen Rothenberg at 781-648-1998.

***Our new web address is:  
[www.robbinsfarmpark.org](http://www.robbinsfarmpark.org)***

We will post issues of the Robbins Farm Almanac there as well as park updates, event schedules, and volunteer opportunities. Make it a "favorite" today!