



Fundraising Effort Underway--Send Money!

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Park Renovation Schedule

- Playground design is complete and final decisions are being made about independent structures!
- Our fundraising effort has been launched!
- Construction documents will be completed by the end of the year and bid requests will go out to construction companies after the first of the year.
- Playground equipment will be ordered after the first of the year.
- A construction company will be chosen and heavy work, demolition, regrading, and paving will be started in April.
- The Robbins Farm community will come together in April and May to build the playground.

The fundraising committee, under the guidance of Carole Kasper, met during the late summer to lay the groundwork for a fall and winter campaign to raise money to purchase furnishings and additional playground equipment. Carole resigned her position in September and the committee is now being co-chaired by Leslie Ouellette and Jen Rothenberg. The other committee members are Jack Rogers, Banks Poor, Sharon Days, Roly Chaput, and Susan Bernhard.

The fundraising effort is essentially a two-pronged approach: corporate donors and private donors. To address the private donors, a letter was recently mailed to all homes in the 10th, 12th and 14th precincts. Corporate donors will be approached by members of the fundraising committee and FORFP board members. We need to raise \$54,000 by February 2003 in an effort to purchase the additional equipment and have it installed in the spring along with the rest of the equipment purchased by the town.

The items we are raising funds for:

- 8 picnic tables
- 10 benches
- 1 see-saw
- 1 multi-pondo (a standing see-saw)
- 1 tire swing
- 2 vehicles
- 1 playhouse

As we've reported before, the total available funds appropriated by the Town for Robbins Park renovations is \$473,000--

\$300,000 approved by Town Meeting in 2001, \$23,000 for handicap access and \$150,000 from the 2003 budget. The current plan calls for roughly \$300,000 to be spent on the playground area, \$100,000 on the tennis court area and the remainder on associated design and construction fees. In order to have benches, tables and free-standing "creative play" equipment in the playground area, we must raise this money.

Your *membership dues* provide us with the operating budget to sponsor park events such as Field Day, Shakespeare, and Movie Nights. It allows us to produce and mail this newsletter and to operate our website. We also use that money to send notices about upcoming events and to fund the fundraising printing and mailing costs. But membership dollars will not purchase this equipment. We need additional support from you.

Inside this newsletter you will find multiple donation forms. Please talk to your friends, neighbors and others who might be interested in making a donation. Tell them how wonderful Robbins Farm is, why you're a member and why they should support this renovation effort with a donation. For every donation over \$100 that bears the name of a FORFP member, that member will receive a one-year FORFP membership at no charge. This is your opportunity as a friend of Robbins Farm Park to play a substantial role in our fundraising effort. Please make sure you send in your donation, renew your membership if you haven't already and ask your friends and family for their support as well.

Your effort and support is critical to the success of this campaign. Please send your donation today!



Founder's Corner

by Oakes Plimpton

Mr. Nathan Robbins and the Children

The Arlington Advocate reported Nathan Robbins' presence at the second Field Day at Robbins Farm Park held September 20, 1943: "One of the most popular of the entire gathering was none other than Nathan Robbins, former owner of the Farm, and a favorite of the children, several generations of them, in fact." So it can be said that the Friends' present effort to renovate and rebuild the playground fits right in with the Park history. What follows is further evidence of Nathan Robbins' attachment to the neighborhood children taken from the oral histories and letters from "Robbins Farm, a Local History" available at the Library and from the Friends. (Ironically, the fact that we inherited this remarkable park came about in part because Nathan Robbins had no children of his own to inherit the land!)

Here's what Ed Reardon had to say, "We (the kids) more-or-less had free run of the place. We were always welcome, come and go as we pleased. We played ball at the Brackett School. We'd take a break and go over to get a couple of apples and pull us some carrots, eat those, washing them at the pump, and go over and finish our ball game. He used to let us ride his horse — he'd take the horse out of the pasture up to the stone wall so one could get on; he'd lead the horse, we'd be sitting up there, but there'd be these branches of the apple trees — you'd be knocked for a loop if you didn't watch where you were going. We didn't look at him as a great guy, because he just did these things. We didn't know any-

one else with a horse to compare with him."

Margaret Hutchinson: "We used to go over every night (late after-noon) for a walk. We'd walk over through the farm, and Mr. Robbins would go down and he'd say, "Well, Ginny," (that was our daughter), "guess we need a carrot." And he'd go down to the carrot patch, and he'd dig around till he found the right carrot. Then he'd take it and walk over to the pump, was it off, and give to her — every night he'd give her a raw carrot. He was very good with the kids."

Memories of Katherine Cooper Donelan, "Going up to the farm just before supper to buy corn (35 cents a dozen), tomatoes or string beans (5 cents per lb). Mr. Robbins very seldom had vegetables in the barn. We always walked out to the field and helped him pick fresh. Showing us how to put the heavy weights on the scale. Where would that scale be now? What an antique! He was so patient explaining the heft of the different weights, a lesson in arithmetic!"

Ralph Edwards: "Mr. Robbins' first truck I can remember was a green Ford Model "A". Then later he looked pretty fancy in a spanking new green model. He was very good about picking us up if he saw us walking up Highland. The picture of Mr. Robbins on page 43 (of the local history) was the man I knew; a great old guy, our friend, but it was always Mister because we respected him".

Elizabeth Armstrong Wyman: "I can't tell you how many times I went for milk and had

a running conversation with Mr. Robbins while he milked the cow. I loved sitting in the sun of the [barn] doorway talking to that lovable, ruddy complected gentleman. He would let me hunt for eggs. Many is the time I was sent to buy corn and rhubarb and would tag along as Mr. Robbins picked. How that kind gentlemen loved children."

Lastly an interview of Joan Gillespie by reporter P. L. Bustamente of the Advocate: "No plaque marks the spot where Farmer Robbins sat every evening in his legless chair on an apple box, but his spirit lives on as neighborhood children play just where they did when he was alive. The swing set and slides sit on land that was once Farmer Robbins' cornfield. 'In the winter Farmer Robbins would flood the cornfield so that people in the neighborhood could skate on it. And, just like now, they would ski and sled on the hill. He never kicked the kids off his farm. He would go out into the field and pick corn with the kids, and in the summer he let us jump in the hay. Everyone would come in early evening to talk with Farmer Robbins. The kids would run around and play. He was nice to everyone. It was the event of the day to go up there and play in the barn with the kittens while the men talked and smoked. The barn was lined with lanterns, and there was always a barrel of apples that the kids could take from. Farmer Robbins also had four majestic, old coaches in his barn that he would let the kids play in'".

May his kind spirit live on!

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.

Friends of Robbins Farm Park

34 Eustis Street, Arlington, MA 02476

Yes, I'd like to help rebuild Robbins Farm Park!

My check in the amount of _____ is enclosed.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Referred by FORFP member: _____

Thank you!

- Neighbor (\$60)
- Friend (\$150)
- Supporter (\$300)
- Patron (\$500)

The Nathan Robbins Circle

- Sponsor (\$1000)
- Benefactor (\$2500)
- Skyline (\$5000) *Circle members may choose to have their name included on a plaque. We will contact you.*

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

781-648-1998
robbins_farm@hotmail.com

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.



Leaders Needed for Community Build in Spring 2003

The Town of Arlington expects to break ground on park renovations in the Spring of 2003. It is likely that the playground and tennis court areas will be closed to the public through the bulk of the spring, beginning in March until work is completed.



Part of that work is, of course, the installation of new playground equipment. By conducting a community build, we estimate a savings of roughly \$60,000 that would otherwise have been needed for professional installation.

However, a community

build will require that we do have a fairly skilled pool of volunteers to do the heavy lifting and building required for this extensive project.

We are looking for skilled volunteers, perhaps contractors and builders, who are willing to donate several weekends in April or May to this effort. In addition, if anyone is interested in coordinating the community build—contacting volunteers, scheduling, and acting as on-site supervisor, that help would be greatly appreciated. We will have a

coordinator from the equipment manufacturer as well to ensure that all the equipment is installed to specification.

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering for the community build, please contact Jen Rothenberg at 781-648-1998 or jenjenroth@rcn.com.

Robbins Farm Almanac is a quarterly newsletter published by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park. We welcome and encourage any articles or suggestions. Please email them to Susan Bernhard, Editor, at 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 2002-2003

Jennifer Rothenberg, President

Jack Rogers, Vice-President

Frank Days, Treasurer

Sandy Carmichael, Clerk

Corinna Vanderspek, Membership Secretary

Oakes Plimpton, Founder/Historian

Monthly meetings of Friends of Robbins Farm Park are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm at the Jefferson-Cutter House in Arlington Center. The remaining 2002 meetings will be held November 13 and December 11 .