

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- July 4, p. 1
- Ball Field Reno, p. 1
- A letter from FORFP's President Christian Klein, p. 2
- SUMMER SCHEDULE of EVENTS p. 3
- Coasting, p. 3
- Spring Clean up and Kite Day, p. 3
- Book Signing, p. 4



Winter sledding –also known as coasting—at the park. See page 3 for story

photo by Roly Chaput

Robbins Farm Almanac . . . the newsletter of the Friends of Robbins Farm Park

July 4 at the Park—Tradition in Jeopardy

By Barry Russell

One of our favorite Robbins Farm events is in jeopardy. After seven successful years of hosting the town-wide 4th of July celebration in collaboration with the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department, this year the Friends of Robbins Farm Park will be running the event on our own.

This year, the town of Arlington will not be providing funding or assistance. There are significant costs for providing services such as the police patrol and the portable toilets. There are also costs for setting up the big screen for the television broadcast and providing power and wiring to the band for amplification.

Unless we can find new sources of funding, we will not be able to host the event at all this year. That's why we are reaching out to our community to help save this event.

We are asking for everyone's help in order to get this truly special event off the ground. FORFP Board members are currently approaching Arling-

ton businesses, asking them to sponsor the event with a donation of \$250 to \$1,000. This is a unique opportunity for any organization that wishes to expand its presence in the Arlington community and to establish an ongoing relationship with the Friends of Robbins Farm Park. Our one-of-a-kind view of the Boston skyline attracts families from far and wide, and a crowd of nearly 1,000 typically attends the celebration each year.

Please call or e-mail Jen Rothenberg (781-648-1998 or jenjenroth@rcn.com) or Barry Russell (781-316-8495, dgbyruss@rcn.com) if you know of a local business (e.g. bank, real estate firm or cable company) that may be receptive to becoming a major sponsor or donor. Contributions at every level count.

Also, if you would like to volunteer your time selling refreshments, making signs or even cleaning up, or anything else that would put your special talents to use, please give us a call. We would really appreciate your help!

Ball Field Renovations both a Reality and a Long Range Plan

By Christian Klein

Have you been wondering what happened to the ball field renovations? After the playground and overlook were completed in 2003, attention was supposed to turn further up the hill. However, the ball fields remain as they were. What happened?

First, rest assured that the ball field renovation **will** occur, just not as soon as everyone had hoped. Shifting budget priorities in town required its delay but not its cancellation. It was recently budgeted for 2011, but the earliest it will happen is now 2014. To see why, we need

to look at how the town funds park renovation projects.

The budget process for Arlington parks mainly involves two groups. The Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) is the town committee that oversees the parks and their development. The Capital Planning Committee (CPC) develops the town budget and presents it to the Town Meeting for approval. Each has a specific role and different priorities.

Each fall, the PRC meets to determine

Continued on page 2 . . .



Look for the flowering of small spring bulbs like this *Chionodoxa* (also called *Glory of the Snow*) planted last fall around the park.

FORFP has contributed \$250.00 worth of wonderful books about nature and parks to the Brackett School Library—check them out (in every sense!) They have an identifying bookplate inside.



A Message from our President, Christian Klein

Spring, 2007

I don't know about you, but I've given up on predicting the weather. After believing that winter would never come (my having purchased snow tires being the likely cause), the bitter cold more than made up for its early absence. I thought I'd never get the glacial off my driveway. Then it was all gone... then back... and now gone again. Ah, winter in New England!

While the weather was trying to make up its mind, the Friends' board was busy with deliberations of its own. Last November, Friend Rob Scheschareg presented a detailed proposal for erecting and maintaining a skating rink at the park. We assisted in getting the Town actively involved in establishing appropriate policies, and we all have high hopes for next winter. Mike Smith and Corinna Vanderspek have been researching possible plantings for specific areas of the park. Marlene Rockmore continues to lead our discussion of how we could incorporate a sundial into the park. Our own Oakes Plimpton, with generous help from Tony Vogel, has been busy revising his *History of Robbins Farm Park*. The definitive Third Edition is now headed to print. Please look for articles on many of these topics in this newsletter.

The community outreach committee is off and running planning events for the summer. Our first event, the Spring Cleanup, is scheduled for April 28th. We will have movies, baseball games, Independence Day, Field Day, and so much more. Look for the complete itinerary for the entire summer in this newsletter. I wish to thank the committee for all their work in getting this season off to a strong start.

In order for the summer events to be successful, we need two things from all of our Friends. First, please do what you can to keep the rain away from our events! Second, and much more importantly, please give of your time and volunteer to help plan and staff the events. We simply cannot do it without you. I encourage all of you to show how important these events are to you and become a more active participant in our neighborhood by sending an email to volunteer@robbinsfarmpark.org and letting us know you are ready to help. With your generous support, this will be another great summer at Robbins Farm Park!

Christian Klein

FORFP President

Ball Field Renovation continued from page 1

what projects it will ask the town to undertake over the next five years. Their criteria for determining which projects make the cut include safety concerns, current conditions, use load on the park, the availability of outside funds, and the level of community involvement .

Based on those criteria, the PRC selects the projects that are in greatest need for inclusion in the budget. They also set aside seed money for developing proposals for future projects.

The proposed park budget is submitted to the Capital Planning Committee, which uses its own criteria to determine how the resources of the town should be fairly allocated. They must consider budget requests from all sectors of the town. The CPC then presents a comprehensive funding plan to the town for ratification at Town Meeting.

Over the last several years, the PRC's two main budget issues have been cost escalations and funding decreases. Twenty years ago, the town spent 75,000 to replace a playground. Now that number has increased to \$475,000. This

increase in price forced the original postponement in the ball field renovations back in 2003, as those funds were needed to supplement other park projects. At that time, the town was spending \$450,000 - \$560,000 per year on park renovations. Now, the CPC is looking to hold the park renovation budget to between \$300,000 and \$500,000 per year. This means that current projects get extended and future projects get pushed further off.



Artist's Sketch Of Joe Di Maggio In Action
San Francisco Call-Bulletin October 31, 1955

The town is committed to the ball field renovation, but there are other priorities that must be addressed first. Pheasant Avenue, Summer Street, Wellington, and Florence Avenue parks are all higher priority. The town also needs to make serious improvements to the Reservoir Beach and its equipment. These projects are all slated to be completed before the Robbins Farm Park ball fields.

The Friends will keep close contact with the Parks and Recreation Commission to make sure we remain in their sights until the entire master plan for Robbins Farm Park is complete.

Coasting at the Park—thrills and risk

By Oakes Plimpton

December and January had record warm temperatures, and it really looked like Global Warming was upon us! I arrange with farms to glean produce left in the fields, and on January 12th, harvested Collard greens from Verrill Farm in Concord for Food For Free in Cambridge. Then everything changed, down to the single numbers a number of days and below freezing for weeks! Not so good for coasting, though, no snow. But it was the best ice skating winter, weeks of black ice at Hills Pond, Menotomy, and crowds like old times skating at Spy Pond!

Finally a late February ice storm, and sledding was to be had. Coasting is the old-fashioned term for it; in the Robbins Farm history it is described where, aside from The Farm, kids coasted down Eastern Avenue all the way to Spy Pond and out onto the ice! Anyway the snow was icy, so Boston Hill (aka Suicide) was dangerous. My wife Pat saw a child injured down at the bottom fence, ambulance there at the gap. People were still sledding despite — denial or bravery??

I had put up a warning sign in years past, Danger if Snow Icy, try other park hill (Baseball Hill). One time I walked out on the hill to find my sign gone. Parents there told me some kids had used it, the cardboard, to sled down the hill! To show the danger, one parent last year told me he set his daughter on a course down the hill towards the view of Great Blue Hill, in other words as far from the fence as possible. But as the sled proceeded, it started curving, and despite his best efforts running to catch up, her conveyance kept curving and sped right towards the gap, went right through the gap, and deposited her on the street below unhurt!

When the March snow with its icy crust came, I endeavored to put the sign up again. Now with the thaw, plan to go up to retrieve it. How about a permanent sign?

I hope to propose this to the Parks and Rec Commission. We would need to research technology to have the sign well anchored, but removable during the spring, summer and fall.

SUMMER SCHEDULE of EVENTS:



Cut out and post on your refrigerator!

- | DATE: | EVENT: |
|------------------|--|
| April 27 (Fri.) | Science and Math evening at Brackett School 6:30 to 8:30 pm |
| April 28 (Sat.) | Spring Clean-Up & Kite Day
9:00 am to 12 noon
Kite flying in the afternoon
Bring rakes, shovels, gloves! |
| April 29 (Sun.) | <i>rain date for the above</i> |
| May 22 (Tues.) | 7:30 to 9:00 pm
At the Robbins Library
Book Signing with
Oakes Plimpton |
| July 4 (Wed) | Independence Day Celebration
with the spectacular Boston
fireworks on the big screen
 |
| Aug 12 (Sun) | 5:00 pm New England
Shakespeare Festival's
"A Comedie of Errors"
co-sponsored with A.C.A. and
Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park
 |
| Aug 24 (Fri) | Friday Night Flicks — 8:00 p.m.
title to be announced
 |
| Aug 25 (Sat) | <i>rain date for the above</i> |
| Sept. 8 (Sat) | Arlington Town Day 10:00 to
3:00 visit the FORFP Booth—for
info, hats, books, and t-shirts |
| To Be Announced: | Baseball Night
featuring
your favorite team
on the big screen
BOSTON
BASEBALL
NIGHT |
| Oct 13 (Sat) | Field Day-an Annual Tradition!
2:00-4:30 pm Activities for
the whole family |
| Oct 14 (Sun) | <i>(Rain date for Field Day)</i> |

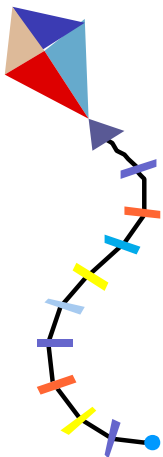
Clean up and Kite Day, Saturday April 28

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

followed by afternoon

Kite Flying

Bring a rake or just yourself and your willingness to pitch in! This year, we have a special incentive: Come out to the clean up in the morning and receive a free kite to fly at Kite Day in the afternoon! Easy to make and fly, the 24" sled kite has a large sail for decorating and comes complete with rods and string. We have a limited number, so we'll give them out on a first-come, first-serve basis.





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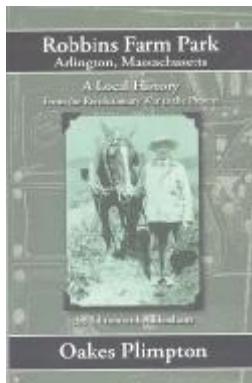
email: friends@robbinsfarmpark.org

website: www.robbinsfarmpark.org

Books Signing Party On Tuesday May 22

Books are here! Come to a BOOK SIGNING PARTY with Oakes Plimpton on **TUESDAY, MAY 22nd** from **7:30 to 9:00 pm** at the **ROBBINS LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM**

An all-new edition of the book, Robbins Farm Park, A Local History from the Revolutionary War to the Present will be available for purchase. This book is a treasure, with over 65 pictures and illustrations of the life of Nathaniel Robbins and the Park, an article about his unusual marriage, and his love for the farm and the children. The addendum includes new pictures and stories to bring us up to date.



Robbins Farm Almanac is a biannual newsletter published by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park. It is also posted on our website in color. We welcome and encourage your suggestions for articles. Please write or email to the attention of the editor. If you would like to become a member, write or email the membership secretary at friends@robbinsfarmpark.org

Officers 2006-2007

*Christian Klein, President
Anthony Vogel, Vice-President
Roly Chaput, Treasurer
Oakes Plimpton & Sandy Carmichael,
Co-Clerks/Recording Secretaries
Jim Thompson, Membership Sec'y.
Oakes Plimpton, Founder/Historian*

The Friends of Robbins Farm Park, Inc. is a community organization formed to promote the beautification, restoration, improvement and maintenance of Robbins Farm Park in Arlington Heights, Massachusetts.

FORFP is a charitable, not-for-

profit 501-C-3 corporation. Donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

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.

Monthly meetings of the Friends of Robbins Farm Park are typically held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm at the Jefferson-Cutter House in Arlington Center. Anyone may attend. Check the web site as occasionally the meeting place changes.

Don't forget to renew your membership to keep receiving the Almanac. Our spring issue contains the Summer Events Calendar.