

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- A message from FORFP's President Tony Vogel p. 3
- SUMMER SCHEDULE of EVENTS p. 3
- Historian's Corner p. 1 by Oakes Plimpton: Hens at Robbins Farm

# ROBBINS FARM ALMANAC



On the first Friday of each month, the Brackett Visual Arts Enrichment Committee (better known as the "Art Squad") leads hands-on creative art making after school. Last October, the kids painted images of Robbins Farm Park. These are just some of their park-inspired paintings.

## Robbins Farm Almanac . . . the newsletter of the Friends of Robbins Farm Park What's New . . . rubber swing mats, porta-potty program

**Swing wear mats:** New large, heavy rubber wear mats that sit directly on the soil surface below the swings were installed at Spring Clean Up Day on May 2. The purpose of these mats is to prevent the deep holes that form under the swings due to the jumping up and continuous kicking of the ground when swinging - the holes get so deep that the littler kids can't get themselves onto the swings after a while. This picture (bottom right) shows a mat prior to the installation of a thick layer of wood chips on top. They cost \$748 for all three. Similar mats are in place at the Stratton School playground.

**Porta-Potty Program:** At their April 14, 2009 meeting, the Arlington Park and Recreation Commission voted to recommend approval of a pilot program for portable restrooms. This will be a two-month trial period at seven of our parks paid for by the various user groups. FORFP contributed \$1000 to this endeavor. At the end of the two-month trial there will be

an evaluation process by the Arlington Park and Recreation Commission and a public hearing will be held for public comment. The date of this public hearing will be posted on each of the units along with emergency phone numbers to report any maintenance issues or vandalism. The date will also be posted in the Town Meeting section of the Town's website, [www.arlingtonma.gov](http://www.arlingtonma.gov).



Will chicken culture ever return to 21st century Arlington?

## HISTORIAN'S CORNER: Laying Hens at Robbins Farm

By Oakes Plimpton

### The Story of Back Yard Chickens in the 1920's and 30's and Today!

Yes, farmer Nathan Robbins raised chickens besides a milking cow and all the vegetables he cultivated. You will notice from the photograph on the next page that his chickens were free-range, scratching around in his orchard behind him.

Interview with Stephen Stiles: "He had

chickens, fresh eggs. In later years one of the Shepard children, my age, David Shepard, took over the chickens. He ran the chicken coop, which was partway up the hill towards Grandview Road. It was a two-and-a-half story chicken house with a yard on the downhill side of it." *Note:* you can see today where the chicken house was on Baseball Hill perhaps 15 feet from the bottom not far from the baseball benches, a flat place where the grass grows a little more luxuriously from the long ago chicken manure.

**Continued on page 2 . . .**

## Historian's Corner—Laying Hens at Robbins Farm



*Farmer Robbins with Apple trees and Chickens*

**. . . Continued from page 1**

*Interview with Edward Reardon:*

“Have you heard how he went into the market in Boston? “No.” Well, it had to be 1937, 1938 at the latest, he used to come out at nine thirty or ten o'clock in the morning, and he had morning striped pants, a cut-away coat, a tie and a dress shirt on. And he's taking seven dozen eggs, and he'd leave the farm and go down Eastern Avenue — I remember Mrs. Hunter lived there — she'd get a dozen eggs — and he had another customer in East Arlington, another in Somerville, and then to the market, as he called it. He'd get back to the farm around two, two-thirty in the afternoon. You'd see him in his cut-away. He drove a blue Chevy, which he used just to go to the market, not at the farm, strictly a vehicle for transportation. Only later did I learn “the market” was Faneuil Market.”

*Did you get involved in his chickens?*

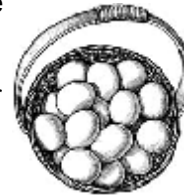
“Yes. Keeting and this friend of mine and I started out our own chicken ranch up on top of the hill. He's dead today. David Shepard his name was. He lived over at the corner of Murray and Coolidge. We were raising chickens there, los-

ing our shirts! Eggs didn't go more than 35 cents a dozen. He gave it over to us. We had maybe 50 chickens in there, and the feed was going up every week. He gave it right over to us. Eventually that business went down the drain, because there was no money to be made — you had to have another job to support the chickens!”

These quotes all come from *Robbins Farm Park, a Local History* 3rd Edition, 2007, available through the Friends of Robbins Farm or the Library. The relevance to today is the proposal, which has just been passed by Town Meeting, which will allow people to have up to six chickens in their back yards for fresh eggs, no roosters! This law will go into effect in October, after it is approved by the Attorney General.

People also had back yard chicken coops back then, as Stephen Surette observed : “There were other people on the hill who were not real farmers, but who did raise chickens in coops on ordinary house lots. Mr. Lundquist showed me the location of one such coop on Kenilworth Road near the farm. Again this would have been the 1920s.”

Now you can contact your Town Meeting representative and thank them for permitting us to have a few chickens in our back yards for very fresh and local eggs for breakfast!



*Below: The new screened in porta-potty*



**A message from Tony Vogel, FORFP President**

Spring is finally here and the Park is looking beautiful. On Spring Clean-up Day, Saturday, May 2nd, several of our members joined in to pick up trash, sweep up the paths, and remove weeds to spiff things up. Notice the arrival of new mats under our swings and our new screened porta-potty. In keeping with the new color bursting all over our park, I've shared with you some colorful images inspired by the park, created by some talented young artists from Brackett Elementary School. You can see them on the front page of this newsletter where they serve as the banner heading.

**A Message from Christian Klein,  
FORFP Community Events Chair**

The summer season really kicks off with the Annual July Fourth Celebration from Robbins Farm! This Robbins Farm event serves as the town's independence day celebration. We will have the John Penny Band, the concert from Boston, and, of course, the fireworks from the Esplanade. Grab your friends and come join the fun!

Shakespeare returns to Robbins Farm this summer, with a new troupe and production. This favorite event is co-sponsored with the Arlington Center for the Arts and the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park. We hope to hold a fundraising garden party for this event in the weeks before. Please keep an eye out for the invitation. Our Movie Night is in the middle of August, and we welcome all film suggestions.

Boston Baseball Night will be in September. Due to a conflict with Town Day (where we hope to see you at our booth) we may not be able to feature our rival from the Bronx – please keep posted. Field Day comes in October, when we host a carnival for all ages by the playground. There will be games, puzzles, food, and all manner of festivities. We wrap up the season with our Fall Cleanup, when we plant the bulbs for next year's beautiful spring flowers.

I am again confident it will be a great summer, but it will only work if we continue to come together as a community and make it happen. Every one of us in the Friends is a volunteer, and we need all of you to be a volunteer as well. Whether you would like to help with fundraising, planning, advertising, set-up, staffing, clean-up, or any of the other jobs that go into a successful event, we would love to have whatever time you can offer. Please write to [volunteers@robbinsfarmpark.org](mailto:volunteers@robbinsfarmpark.org) and let us know that you want to be a part of a summer of successful events at Robbins Farm Park!

*Right: Sanjay Vakil and Christian Klein muscle the porta-potty into place.*



*Photo credits:  
Tony Vogel*

**SUMMER SCHEDULE of EVENTS:**



*Cut out and post on your refrigerator!*

- | <b>DATE:</b>   | <b>EVENT:</b>  |
|--|--|
| May 2 (Sat)<br>    | Spring Clean-Up & Kite Day<br>9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon<br>Kite flying in the afternoon<br>Bring rakes, shovels, gloves!   |
| July 4 (Sat)<br>   | Independence Day Celebration with the spectacular Boston fireworks on the big screen and live performance by the John Penny Band   |
| July 19 (Sun)<br>  | 5:00 p.m. Shakespeare at Robbins Farm with the Rebel Shakespeare Co. presenting "Hamlet"<br><br>Co-sponsored with Arlington Center for the Arts and Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park   |
| Aug 14 (Fri)<br> | Friday Night Flicks — 8:00 p.m.<br>A family movie night out, title to be announced   |
| Sept. 26 (Sat)   | Arlington Town Day 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.<br>Visit the FORFP Booth for info, hats, books, and t-shirts  |
| Sep 12 (Sat)   | Baseball Night!!<br>6:30 p.m. Great Food<br>7:10 p.m. Game Time<br><b>BOSTON BASEBALL NIGHT</b><br>An annual event featuring your favorite teams on the big screen   |
| Oct 17 (Sat)   | Field Day-an Annual Tradition!<br>1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.<br>Activities for the whole family<br><br><br>Fall Clean Up Day and Bulb Planting 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm |

Confirm times and dates at [www.robbinsfarmpark.org](http://www.robbinsfarmpark.org)



P.O. Box 750013  
Arlington, MA 02475

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**  
BOSTON MA  
PERMIT NO. 540

*Robbins Farm Almanac . . . the newsletter of the  
Friends of Robbins Farm Park, Inc.*

email: [friends@robbinsfarmpark.org](mailto:friends@robbinsfarmpark.org)

website: [www.robbinsfarmpark.org](http://www.robbinsfarmpark.org)

## Friends of Robbins Farm Park Supports Cricket Yard at Brackett School

Our biggest park neighbor, the Brackett School, has developed plans to refurbish their school grounds. The project is named "Field of Dreams/Cricket Yard." A benefit auction for the grounds beautification program will be held on Friday May 15, 2009 at Arlington Town Hall from 7:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m.

FORFP has bought a paving brick in support of the project. Find out more about Cricket Yard and bricks at [www.brackettelementary.org](http://www.brackettelementary.org)



*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](mailto:friends@robbinsfarmpark.org)*

### Officers 2008-2009

*Anthony Vogel, President  
Judy Leich, 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 first Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. 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.*