

FALL 2010

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Vegetables from the Garden at Robbins Farm, August 18, 2010

courtesy www.RobbinsFarmGarden.org

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

Park News Roundup

Baseball Night is coming soon - Friday, October 1. Bring a jacket and get ready to watch your favorite team play under the stars! We'll have the usual "ballpark" treats: hot dogs, chips, soda, candy, water, and co-coa. Elaine Backman and Jim Thompson are heading up Baseball Night. Email the friends if you would like to lend a hand!

The Arlington **Astronomy Night** series will be holding their last scheduled session of the season at Robbins Farm Park this Saturday night, Sept. 25, at 8:00 pm. They will have at least one telescope out to view objects in the night sky. Some things to look out for: Jupiter returns to the evening sky, rising in the east. Moons Io, Europa, and Ganymede might be visible, as well as the different stripes of color/shades of gray across the planet. (Rain date Sept. 26.) Learn more at <http://www.landmanatee.com/astronomy.html>

Amended Canine Control Bylaw:

This May, Town Meeting passed Article 36 by voting 78 - 70 to amend the existing Canine Control Bylaw. This change allows dogs that are under control to be off-leash at certain parks from park opening until 9:00 a.m. Unleashed dogs are barred from within 15 feet of a playground and from parks directly abutting schools. Dog walkers are limited to two dogs off-leash at one time. As this is a town-wide issue, FORFP has not been involved in recommendations. The Parks and Recreation Commission will be able to create modifications to hours and locations on an as-needed basis.

Details will be posted on signs at the park after the bylaw amendment takes effect this fall.



Garden flourishes under care of experienced gardeners

As the growing season draws to a close, the pilot Robbins Farm Garden has shown its bounty. The idea for this project was developed by FORFP Board member Oakes Plimpton with help from Board member Mike Smith. FORFP approved the concept, but as FORFP was not the sponsor of the project, an initial garden group consisting of Dick Harmer, Elizabeth Carr-Jones, Alan Jones and Melanie Wisner worked with Parks and Recreation to develop guidelines and a funding plan.

Costs were covered by a \$75.00 fee each participant paid to the Town. The day-to-day activities of the garden are well documented on the website they produced, www.RobbinsFarmGarden.org.

Part demonstration project, part evocative landscape element reminding us of the original farmer Robbins, part essay in community cooperation, the garden has welcomed visitors on Wednesday and Saturday all summer.

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Music in the Park: Starting A New Tradition

by Tony Vogel, FORFP President



Photo by Tony Vogel

The band called "Public Interest," led by Arlington resident Stanley Pollack, performed on August 14.

"Well, we get together to practice once a month on a Thursday night – maybe we could just play at the Park on a Thursday evening, instead."

- Allen Feinstein, member of the Harvard Alumni Jazz Band, Spring 2009

And that's how a new summer tradition at Robbins Farm Park ultimately began. FORFP board members had been looking for opportunities to bring musical performances to the Park, and now it was going to happen.

But our journey to this moment can really be traced to back to a beautiful spring day in June 2007. On that extraordinary day, each class from the Brackett Elementary School serenaded Mrs. Julia Morrison at the park. Mrs. Morrison, the legendary crossing guard, was retiring after having safely guided Arlington children across Eastern Avenue for fifty years. But these weren't ordinary songs – each song was an original composition by the children. We learned that a Brackett parent, Allen Feinstein, had volunteered to be the "composer in residence" for the school and with the support of music teacher, Gina Esile-Sylva, had helped each class compose a song in honor of Mrs. Morrison. This musical tribute turned out to be very special, for Mrs. Morrison, for Arlington, and certainly for Robbins Farm Park.

As fellow Brackett parents and FORFP members, events chairman Christian Klein and I had known Allen for years. In addition to his musical volunteering at the school, he was also on the School Council. How Allen found the time to do all this we do not know. In his professional life, he had taught composition, conducting, music theory and history at Northeastern University for over twenty years. He was also the Music Supervisor at Harvard's Hasty Pudding Theatricals and Music Director of the Harvard Pops Orchestra, and a composer of classical music and musicals. And then, we learned about yet another of his passions, the Harvard Alumni Jazz Band, for which he played the trombone.

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Naturalists Corner:

Bats, Birds, and Bees

by Oakes Plimpton

At dusk sometimes you can see bats catching mosquitoes (one hopes) along the edges of the Park! Chimney Swifts do the same during the day. Do you know the Kingbird? Named for its aggressive defense of its territory, including attacking large hawks! We had a Kingbird perched on top of the sunflower in the Robbins Garden this August, flying out from its perch to snap up a flying bug and return. There was also a female hummingbird which came to sip the Nasturtium flower nectar for an instant in time! And one afternoon a beautiful Oriole flew into the Garden, also a young one followed begging its parent for food. The adult paid it no mind, and before long the young one started looking around itself for a bug to eat! I was not so happy with all the English Sparrows. What were they after? Insects?

Probably not the Horn Worm which found its way into our tomato patch, a huge green caterpillar 3 inches long and nearly as thick, which defended itself by rearing back, emitting a black substance and trying to bite!

Speaking of hawks, two Red-tails made a nest a top a pine on Coolidge Road! You could not see much, unlike the nest at 185 Fresh Pond Parkway, but looking through field glasses you could see the young hawks try out their wings, stretching them, and hopping from branch to branch getting ready to fly. And one heard their incessant cries for food! One neighbor saw one of the parents capture a squirrel in their back yard, and start tearing it to bits, apparently preparing it to feed it to its babies!

The accompanying photograph shows that honey bees are still around, not all dying from the "Colony Collapse Disorder." For a neighbor of the Park by the Puritan Road entrance discovered a swarm of bees, and called in professional bee keepers to handle the situation. As you may see they were protected from the bees by their uniform while they scooped up the swarm and put them into a prepared hive. They would then settle the hive somewhere else. You could tell that the bees accepted this, for they did not start up the angry whine they make when mad. The writer just happened to be walking into the Park to visit the Garden and was present, taking the photograph shown on the left.

Continued from page 2 . . . **Music in the Park: Starting a New Tradition**

In the spring of 2009 we wondered if we might entice them to play in the Park. After thinking about it he said "Well, we get together to practice once a month on a Thursday night – maybe we could just play at the Park on a Thursday evening, instead." Band leader, Jill Altshuler, was enthusiastic about the idea and the ball was rolling. As a band member later put it: "We want an audience and you want music – let's go!"

The concert was arranged with a minimal amount of time, practically on a whim. It would be Thursday, July 9, 2009. I remember my concern about whether people would show up on such short notice, on a week night. After the concert had begun, many neighbors heard the music from afar and started to gather at the natural amphitheater at the northwest end of Park. As if drawn by the Pied Piper, the crowd multiplied to over 300 – pretty good for a "whim" of an event. The performance of this little big band was a hit with all ages! It was evident that the band was getting as much enjoyment from all this as the audience, and they agreed to another concert the following summer.

This past summer, history repeated itself, as the Alumni Jazz band this time drew over 500 in its second "annual" concert on July 15th. These successes prompted us to add another "picnic concert" this past summer. This time, FoRFP board member Marlene Rockmore was our impresario. She invited two very local musicians, abutters to Robbins Farm Park, to perform. The Rockin' Robbins concert was held Saturday, Aug 14. The headline band, *Public Interest*, was led by Stanley Pollack. Stanley is the founder and director of Center for Teen Empowerment, an organization that develops leadership programs for inner-city teens. *Chris Nauman and Friends*, veterans of local coffeehouses and open mics, led off the show. In his day job, Dr. Nauman is a medical oncologist. The second concert of the summer, with a mix of popular rock and folk classics and original music, was another big hit, drawing an audience of over 350.

So a new summer tradition of music in the park has begun...

Next year? Hey, if we add a third concert - we could call it a series!



Photo by Oakes Plimpton

A professional bee keeper removes a swarm of bees for relocation.

FALL SCHEDULE of EVENTS:

Cut out and post on your refrigerator!



DATE:	EVENT:
Sept. 25 (Sat)	Arlington Town Day 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Visit the FORFP Booth for info, hats, books, and t-shirts
Sept. 25 (Sat)	8:00 p.m. Last Astronomy Night of the Season—Rain date Sept. 26.
Oct 1 (Fri)	Baseball Night!! 6:30 p.m. Picnic 7:05 p.m. Game Time BOSTON BASEBALL NIGHT An annual event featuring your favorite teams on the big screen
Oct 23 (Sat)	Field Day-an Annual Tradition! 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Activities for the whole family
Nov 7 (Sun)	Fall Clean Up Day and Bulb Planting 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm
	Inclement weather? Confirm times and dates at www.robbsfarmpark.org

Continued from page 1 . . . **Garden flourishes**

The Garden has aimed to "grow" young learners. An additional website, called Veggie School, is a great resource, with articles about the vegetable plant families and the history of each type of vegetable grown in the garden. Posters and labels at the garden added clarity for the visitor. You can go to veggie school too—at <http://veggieschool.robbsfarmgarden.org/>

Alan sums it up on the blog:

"We held our first open house on the evening of August 21, 2010, in the early evening before the Friends of Robbins Farm Park Movie Night. About 50 visitors had a cracking time exploring the garden and sampling our cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, edamame, and Steven's savory marinated Swiss chard. A grand night out!"



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website: www.robbinsfarmpark.org

A Lexington Farm-to-Park Transition to Watch...

When we think of the history of Robbins Farm Park, we know that there was a transfer from a private working farm to the public place we know today. A similar transition is occurring now with the purchase of the privately owned Busa Farm (adjacent to Arlington's reservoir on Lowell St.) for \$4.1 million by the Town of Lexington. What will the public use of this land become?

The Lexington Farm Trust is actively pursuing this land's use as a community Farm. They are hosting a benefit concert on October 9 at 8:00 p.m. at the Follen Church, 755 Mass. Ave., Lexington.

The evening consists of classical music and poetry with Ray Brown from 99.5 FM, Thomas Stumpf, Director of Music at Follen Church and members of the Lexington Symphony. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at Busa Farm, 52 Lowell St., Lexington, or at Nourish Restaurant, 1727 Mass. Ave., Lexington.

To learn more about the Lexington Farm Trust and their work: <http://lexfarm.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

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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.

www.robbinsfarmpark.org