



Spring 2019 ROBBINS FARM ALMANAC

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Kids playing on "Duke," 1937



Kids playing on new statue, 2019
Andrew & Emma Levy, Maddie & Ollie Kalt

The Dog & the House: Completion of History Renovation Project by Tony Vogel

On October 20, 2018 the History Project at Robbins Farm Park was formally dedicated, culminating a five year effort by Friends of Robbins Farm Park (FORFP) volunteers. The project honors Farmer Nathan Robbins, the benefactor of the Park to the Town, inspired by the oral histories and images collected by Oakes Plimpton, Friends of Robbins Farm Park founder. Designed by FORFP, it consists of two parts: granite blocks that mark the location of Farmer Robbins house, and a replica of his dog statue that was beloved by the children of Arlington, for whom he donated his farm to become our park.

The granite blocks were installed in October of 2017, and truth be told, they inspired no big fuss. But that changed eight months later in July of 2018, when our dog finally arrived. Since then the dog has become a magnet, attracting children, their families, (and yes, even dogs) to visit the site. And, much as the Friends had hoped, many have also learned something of the history of the place.

Walk up the path from Eastern Avenue and just before you reach the concrete oval up top, you'll see a plateau to your left. This flat area held the last remaining traces of Farmer Robbins's great white house, torn down in 1942 to make way for the Park. Few remained of those who had told their marvelous stories of growing up around Robbins Farm to Oakes Plimpton for his book on the farm's past (*Robbins Farm Park: A Local History*, available from FORFP). Those stories paint a truly affectionate portrait of Robbins as someone who always welcomed the kids of the neighborhood to his farm.

The History Project is a gift to the Town of Arlington donated by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park. A major donation by the late Bill Armstrong in 2013 kickstarted the project by covering the cost of the new dog statue.

UPCOMING 2019 EVENTS

After a two-year hiatus during installation of new Park fields, we looked forward to hosting a full season of events this summer. Unfortunately, the Parks and Recreation Commission decided to re-fence the fields. Despite appearances, the grass and root systems remain fragile, thus further field use at this time could threaten their survival. The decision was a difficult but necessary one by the Commissioners to ensure that the fields serve their purpose for many years to come.

As a result, we cannot host our largest annual event, the 4th of July celebration, but are happy to announce the following events for this season:

- **Jul 18:** Harvard Alumni Jazz Band
- **Aug 24:** Arlington Philharmonic
 - **Sep 14:** Town Day
 - **Oct 26:** Field Day
 - **Nov 9:** Fall Cleanup

Please add these events to your calendar. We look forward to seeing many of our members and neighbors!

Origins of Robbins Farm Cooperative Community Garden by Oakes Plimpton



One night in December 2008, listening to Bill Moyers interview Michael Pollan, who described a cooperative educational gardening venture in Brooklyn, I thought what about Robbins Farm? I wrote up a proposal to take before Friends of Robbins Farm Park. After all, the new park had 66 Victory Gardens during World War II.

Many meetings and discussions later, the garden became a reality! Ground was broken in April 2010 at a little used site below the playground. There had been a cooperative community garden in Arlington before, in Patricia Watson's side yard by Spy Pond, tied to the Arlington Food Co-op. Nine people from the Watson garden and eight more gardener recruits gathered in 8/09 to start the RFP cooperative garden.

We are supported by the Friends, but independent. We are organic, educational, and cooperative—just one garden. We plant and cultivate in the spring and summer, and share the harvest summer and fall. The Town Parks Commission gave us permission to use a DPW water connection to irrigate our Garden.

For education, one of our members created Veggie School, telling the history of each vegetable. He crafted signs for each, too--the garden easily visible over our perimeter fence-- and created an educational and experiential blog. We open the Garden to the public some weekday afternoons, particularly our mid-week work evening, then Saturday mornings when we are all present. Come join us!

Interested in joining a cooperative and educational gardening experience? Please stop by the garden or download an application form at www.robbinsfarmgarden.org. Experienced and novice gardeners alike are welcome!

Neighbor Profile: Ginny Hutchinson by Jen Firreno



Sisters Ginny, Cathie & Rita at Robbins Farm



Ginny today

Known by some as “the glue of the neighborhood,” Ginny Hutchinson moved to Murray Street in September 1937. Over 80 years of residence by Robbins Farm—coupled with her extraordinary memory—have rendered her the unofficial neighborhood historian. “I have a friend who went to Junior High East (now Gibbs), while I went to Junior High West (now Ottoson Middle School). If we don’t know someone between us, they are a newcomer,” she declares. “My problem is I remember everything.”

A high school mathematics teacher for 33 years, Ginny was the first female math teacher at Arlington High, and later became Department Chair. These days, you might run into her on election days, where she’s worked the polls for over 20 years.

According to Ginny, Arlington has always been an international neighborhood. Back in the day, you’d hear Greek, Italian, Armenian, and Portuguese spoken in Arlington Center. This spurred her interest in languages at a young age. She learned to “survive” in five, teaching a year each in Japan and Germany along the way.

People who come to this neighborhood tend to stay, she says. It’s an old-fashioned neighborhood: neighbors get to know and take care of each other. Anecdotally, Ginny sees a good deal of longevity in the neighborhood, people living into their ‘90s or better. Maybe it’s from growing up on the products of the farm (Ginny drank raw milk from Mr. Robbins cow, Helen, until she attended school). Maybe it’s from walking up and down the hill every day. Maybe it’s the community. “Whenever I go out of here it’ll be feet first,” she says.

Interested in local history? Buy a copy of Robbins Farm Park: A Local History by Oakes Plimpton or combine with a membership and get a discount.

Your RFP Photos/Stories

Have pictures or stories about the park that you’d like to share? Email editor Jen Firreno at friends@robbinsfarmpark.org

Volunteer Opportunities: AHS Community Service Credit!

Did you know that your AHS kids can earn hours towards their community service requirement at Robbins Farm Park? Please contact volunteer@robbinsfarmpark.org for more info or see opportunities at www.givebacktime.org

New FORFP Web Site

Many thanks to Alan Jones and Elisabeth Carr-Jones for the revamped FORFP web site. We are grateful for their excellent work! Check it out at www.robbsfarmpark.org

RFP Off-Leash Dog Hours

6-9:00am Mon-Fri (7/1-8/31)
6-7:30am Mon-Fri (9/1-6/30)
8:30-9:00am Mon-Fri (9/1-6/30)
6-8:30am Sat & Sun (4/1-6/30 & 9/1-11/15)
6-9:00am Sat & Sun (11/16-3/31 & 7/1-8/31)

Notes: If field is in use for school dept. activity, off-leash activity is allowed behind backstop only. Fields are generally closed to all users in wet weather. For e-mail alerts re park and field closures, subscribe to the Field Conditions Notification e-mail list (www.arlingtonma.gov/subscriber).



Enjoying the crescent moonrise



Ryan checks out the new dog statue

Join Us!

Support RFP and honor the legacy of Nathan Robbins, Farmer-Philanthropist. RFP seeks to continue his tradition of bringing this community together and providing recreational space.

Funds go towards projects, events & upkeep of our wonderful park.

Join or renew your household membership:

1-year \$10, 3-year \$25 or special gift \$__

Please use the enclosed card to make your donation or go to robbsfarmpark.org/join-donate/

Friends of Robbins Farm Park Mission

- Promote the beautification, restoration, & improvement of Robbins Farm Park.
- Sponsor & promote cultural, educational, recreational and other community activities.
- Invite active membership in the organization & represent the Robbins Farm Park community.

FORFP is a 501 (c)(3) all-volunteer organization

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