



Friends News

BOSTON COMMON / PUBLIC GARDEN / COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

Fall 2011 Number 53

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Lots of fun, and bubbles, on Duckling Day on the Common. See page 3.

Photo: Michael Dwyer

BREWER FOUNTAIN PLAZA FACELIFT



Photo: Robert Mulcahy

Exciting things are coming to the Brewer Fountain Plaza! Next spring the area surrounding the restored fountain will include tables and chairs, a reading room, and great food.

THE FIRST CONSTRUCTION phase of the Brewer Fountain Plaza project by Park Street station will be complete by the time you receive this newsletter. As hoped, it has dramatically changed this part of the Common for the better, with new trees, lawns, pathways, improved drainage, and best of all, a plaza that gives us all a close relationship to the restored fountain, one of Boston's oldest and most significant pieces of public art. We look forward to next spring's formal opening, when we will complete the space with tables, chairs, a reading room, a food truck as a pilot, and piano music at lunchtime.

The project has not been without its challenges, with construction delays in the spring and rising costs due to building

over the subway tunnel. We have moved well toward meeting our funding goal for this major \$3.9 million project, yet help is still needed and we are currently \$779,000 short of meeting the total cost for the first construction phase. Happily, this past summer a generous donor offered a challenge grant in the amount of \$300,000. If we can match this sum with new donations in the next six months, we will assure the necessary support for a significant and lasting improvement to this historic park. There are special giving opportunities which include gift trees, benches and sections of granite around the fountain plaza. For more information contact Mary Halpin at the Friends at (857)239-8937 or mary@friendsofthepublicgarden.org. ■

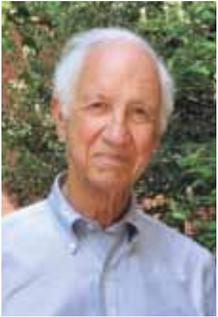
Be connected through our
Facebook page, Blog, and Twitter!

All available on our website.

Also note the Friends has a new e-mail:
info@friendsofthepublicgarden.org

Send us your email address
to join our e-news list.

Letter from President Emeritus Henry Lee



Henry Lee

In 2010 we observed our fortieth anniversary with projects, events, and a published history. This year we have not rested on our oars. Indeed, with your support, we have undertaken more in activities and care than hitherto seemed possible.

In tree care, we have done better each year. The fight against Dutch elm disease goes on, with setbacks such as losses this summer in the Garden, but in all three parks there is an ever-improving record of preservation. We have done much pruning, especially of trees damaged in the February storm, have treated compacted soil, until now beyond our means, and carried out a pilot air-spading project on the Hereford block of the Mall. Such progress is heartening, but we are ever mindful that more needs to be done, that urban trees are subject to many ills and care must be continuous, or all may be lost.

We have made great strides, too, in the care of sculpture. With funds so generously provided in my name, we can now maintain most of the statues and fountains in each park, a claim never possible before in Boston's history. An added accomplishment has been the lighting last year of the White, Washington, and Ether monuments in the Garden and this year of the Channing in the Garden and Eriksson on the Mall. In the future we hope to light more statues in both parks.

We work, as always, in concert with the Parks Department, which continues to do remarkably well with ever-diminishing resources. Staffing, however, is far below need for the Common and Garden, and inadequate too for the Park Rangers. In-

deed, it is only through the efforts of Julie Donohue and the Friends of the Boston Park Rangers Mounted Unit that the horses have a year of reprieve. A great loss to us, too, was the retirement in June of Mary Hines, Director of Public Relations and "Voice" of the Department. No one has been a more effective or valued friend to all concerned with our city parks.

In this pinching time, the wear and tear inflicted on the Common invariably outweighs the city's capacity for care. One solution is to allow fewer activities. A better one is assistance from groups such as universities, filmmakers, event sponsors, and others who utilize this public space. Setting an example this year was the Boston Athletic Association, which accompanied its 10K race with generous help in restoration. If others follow, we can save the fabric of our nation's oldest park.

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these parks and learned early
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As for the Friends, we have increased our contributions to all three parks, but with care as always to live within our means. For this we are beholden to our treasurer, Parker Llewellyn, to a prudent investment committee chaired by Rob Radloff, and most of all to your generous support.

For the Friends this year, as you know, is one of transition and growth. In administration, we are immeasurably fortunate to have Elizabeth Vizza as our Executive Director. She has brought to all facets of our work exceptional enthusiasm, skills,

and creativity. Nobly assisting her have been Ellen Kolemäinen, Administrative Assistant, and Nancy Reynolds, Staff Accountant, now succeeded by Patrick McAvooy, and since July Bob Mulcahy, formerly with the Parks Department and now our Project Manager. At summer's end, we were joined by Mary Halpin as Director of Development. This makes a strong team that is already moving us forward on many fronts.

New strength arises also from our reorganized committees for the Common, Garden, Mall, Sculpture, Finance, and Membership. Governance will remain in the hands of our Board and its Executive Committee led by the officers: Vice President Patricia Quinn, Secretary Bill Clendaniel, and Treasurer Parker Llewellyn.

The writer is slipping, rather gently you will notice, toward emeritus status. At such a point reflections are tempting and the number of people remembered with gratitude is infinite. Fortunately for you, recounting either is impossible in a newsletter. Some lessons of these forty-one years, however, seem important to hold. One is certainly that care of these parks can never depend on public or private efforts alone but only on a working partnership. This has been true throughout our history, and whatever the balance at any given time, will remain so for years ahead. At the same time we are advocates for these parks and learned early that their protection requires of us eternal vigilance and concerted actions. Park Plaza was a great threat, but others have followed and will continue to arise year by year. Meeting them must be a task not for a few people, however engaged, but for all members and friends. It is our corporate strength that will determine the future of these civic treasures. And that being so, I know they lie in good and caring hands. ■

HAPPENINGS!

Duckling Day

2011 was another year of events that have proven so popular they have become annual traditions. The Duckling Day parade on Mother's Day brought a thousand "ducklings" and their families to the Common for entertainment before marching through Beacon Hill behind the Harvard band. Once in the Garden, the participants were greeted by Henry Lee and the Mayor, after which Wheelock College students gave a dramatic reading of *Make Way for Ducklings* to the rapt young audience. Thanks to the *Boston Parents Paper*, our media sponsors for the day. ■



Photos: Michael Dwyer

Left: Wheelock College students read Robert McCloskey's classic, *Make Way for Ducklings*, to a Pack-ed audience. Right: A "duckling" was greeted with a Quack and a high five.

Making History on the Common



Photos: Michael Dwyer

Left: A "54th Massachusetts volunteer soldier," greeted students. Right: Students lined up to experience Colonial punishment.

This year we partnered with Historic New England to produce an even more successful Making History on the Common event, now in its second year, with 1,200 schoolchildren from 18 schools learning about the thousands of years of history on the Common. Thanks go to so many organizations who worked to make the day a success, including Historic New England, the Freedom Trail Foundation, the Ancient Fishweir Project, the Wampanoag Nation Singers and Dancers, Codman Community Farm, the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment, the Ancient and Hon-

orable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, Commonwealth Vintage Dancers, New England Contra Dancers, and the Boston Skating Club who gave students free carousel rides. Students learned about carding wool and weaving, played Colonial games, participated in a Native American dance honoring the harvesting of fish thousands of years ago, and saw sheep once again grazing on the Common. We give thanks to our corporate sponsor, the State Street Corporation, and to our media sponsor, *Boston Parents Paper* for their support. HAPPENINGS! continued on page 6 ►

BOSTON COMMON

THE COMMON HAS SEEN A great deal of construction this year, by the Friends, the City, and the MBTA. The largest project was the renovation of the Brewer Fountain Plaza described on page 1. Between Brewer Plaza and the Park Street subway entrance, the MBTA is installing an elevator for accessibility to the station, due to be complete in the fall of 2012. In October, the City completed renovations to the Visitor Information Center and is also embarking on renovations to Deer Park, the headquarters of Parks Department Common maintenance personnel at the corner of Tremont and Boylston Streets. After a long chapter, we can all move about more freely in our busy park.

Another major change will occur in 2012 when the former men's comfort station, located adjacent to the baseball fields, will become a sandwich take-out shop. The City awarded the contract to the Earl of Sandwich company to renovate and run their operation while retaining the exterior of this historic structure that has been out of use for the past forty years.

The Friends Common Committee, chaired by Beatrice Nesen, has been active this year, setting priorities for collaboration with the Parks Department. One initiative the committee has been exploring is the possibility of a dog recreation area program that creates seasonal rotation of off-leash dog areas to protect turf and trees and prevent overuse. We have surveyed dog owners in the neighborhoods adjacent to the park, thanks to board member Penny Cherubino, and will see if an acceptable arrangement that meets the park's needs and those of all of its two- and four-footed users can be found.

The Boston Skating Club (BSC) has taken on the management of the Frog Pond with great energy and enthusiasm, expanding the summer wading and winter skating programs with activities in spring and fall as well. Its summer and fall free weekly yoga classes by the pond's edge have been popular, and a Frog Appreciation Day in August brought huge numbers of adults and children to learn about frogs, play games, and listen to music. We look forward to continuing to partner with BSC on programs and events that enhance use of the Common, and will again be sponsoring three schools this winter with skating lessons.

In August, with the support of the Red Sox and Coca Cola's healthy drinks, we held a sports clinic for young baseball players. The event was a success for the children who participated, and it reaped significant funds from the company to support our work in the park.

Many of you no doubt saw the huge, 90-year-old elm near the Charles/Beacon corner of the Common that was felled by Irene. It had been failing in recent years, yet was responding well to



Photo: Elizabeth Vizza

Weakened by Dutch elm disease, this Common tree succumbed to the winds of Hurricane Irene.

Dutch elm disease treatments. The winds of Irene coupled with stress from soil compaction, however, proved too great for it. We have salvaged the wood in the hopes that we can create something useful as a fundraising opportunity. Any interested and inspired readers are welcome to help! ■

PUBLIC GARDEN

THE GARDEN SUFFERED VARIOUS BLOWS in 2011 – winter ice storm, summer hurricane, and losses from Dutch elm disease (DED), but on the whole it has come through surprisingly well. As always, we owe much to Sammy Sameski and staff who, short-handed as they are, do a remarkably good job in all seasons. The floral display has been sumptuous April to October, and owing to China Altman and her devoted volunteers in the Rose Brigade, the rose beds were more handsome than ever.

Two trees by Arlington Street succumbed to DED via infected street trees, and the Belgian elms at the Boylston side we thought immune were struck in July. Three were removed and others treated. On the brighter side, the diseases affecting the beech and apple trees appear under control, and the damage from



Photo: Michael Dwyer

Mother and child in a sea of Garden tulips.

Irene was eased, especially for the willows, by our winter pruning. Three trees were planted: a three-flower maple given by the Saunders Family in memory of Irving M. Saunders, a willow given by Tamara and Charles Davis, and on September 14 a Princeton elm from the Advent School in honor of its fiftieth anniversary.

The Horticulture Committee, co-chaired by Westy Lovejoy and Barbara Moore, will be addressing needs of entrances, especially that at Marlborough Street, erosion problems by Arlington Street, and care of the island and border plantings. To prevent crowding and retain vistas, there will be relatively few additions of trees or shrubs. Plans include the installation of benches on the Boylston Street Mall and lighting of its four statues.

Much needed, we know, are more Park Rangers, repair of paths and edging, and better signage, but these must await better times. Here and now we can take pleasure in the level of general care, the operation and lighting of the Ether Fountain (an historic first), prompt repair of benches and fencing, and the cleaning of all sculpture. A happy change also from years past is the control of litter, the result of city care in pick-up (no easy job) and public use of baskets often to the brim. The crowds this year have been greater, it seems, than ever and with good reason. On a summer afternoon with its trees and flowers, the Swan Boats circling the pond in their 134th year, and the sense of peace and tranquility it always imparts, the Garden remains for everyone, visitor and resident alike, a place of extraordinary appeal. ■

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

ANOTHER BUSY YEAR ON THE Mall included a pilot turf-restoration project on the Hereford to Massachusetts Avenue block, using a deep aeration process called air spading. The compacted soil was broken up, girdling tree roots were cut, and the area was reseeded. We have hired a soil scientist to conduct a long-term evaluation of the project's impact on the health of the turf and trees. Over \$18,000 was raised in support of this work, the largest such project to date in the state. Thanks go to the generous donations of eighty neighbors who responded to a fundraising campaign, as well as businesses and organizations including NSTAR, Timberland, Sabat Realty, and the Boston Athletic Association.

Five new trees were planted on the Mall in May, replacing trees lost to Dutch elm disease and damaged in the macroburst storm of last summer. The Parks Department seeded three blocks of the Mall again this summer in hopes of finally establishing a good stand of turf, and our tree work there has continued to focus on crown thinning and pruning to let in more light. Structural pruning was conducted on small trees on the Mall this spring to ensure their good form as they mature.



Photo: ©2011 Perry Cherdron, used with permission

Workers air spading on the Mall.

The Leif Eriksson statue was lit, and the lighting for the Fireman's Memorial and Women's Memorial was repaired. The next statues we hope to be able to light are the Sarmiento and Morison statues. Thanks go to the Garden Club of the Back Bay, which has taken on the maintenance of the plantings around the Collins Memorial and the Sarmiento statue.

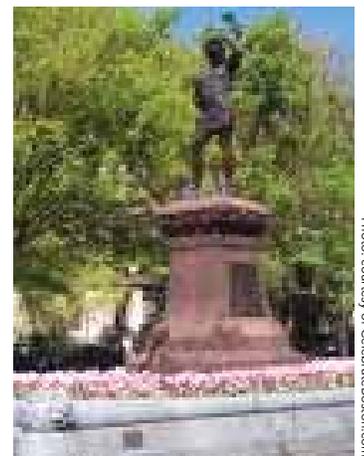


Photo: courtesy of CelebrateBoston.com

The Leif Eriksson statue.

The Civil War Bench was repaired and the three other stone benches on the Mall were cleaned in the spring. Money was raised from the Daughters of the Union Soldiers of the Civil War, the Merwin family, and the Dewart family to cover the expenses of this cleaning.

A newly recognized threat to trees on the Mall is methane from widespread gas leaks. Methane displaces soil's oxygen and moisture, killing tree roots. Sixty-six trees on the Mall are estimated to be compromised because of their proximity to gas lines and leaks. Thanks to the efforts of Margaret Pokorny, chair of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall Committee, National Grid has agreed to pay for replacement of two trees that have died as a result. A bill is being introduced by State Rep. Lori Ehrlich of Marblehead addressing the need for timely gas leak repairs. ■

HAPPENINGS!

All-Star Softball Game Fundraiser

Over three dozen spectators and players descended on the Common ballfields July 14 for the Second Annual Corporate All-Star Softball fundraiser. Players joined forces from the business, nonprofit, and government communities to support the Friends while playing serious amateur softball. Bob Lobel (former sportscaster for WBZ TV) called the play by play, Mike McGrath served as umpire, and once again President Emeritus Henry Lee with assistant Giles McNamee managed one team while Parks Commissioner Antonia Pollak with assistant Steve Healy managed the opposing team. *Boston Courant* editor and publisher Dave Jacobs coached first base. After a strong first inning from the Commissioner's team, Henry Lee's team caught up and came out the winner. Players and spectators repaired to the roof of the Motor Mart Garage to enjoy sunset over the city and a barbeque served by Fenway Park's famed concessionaire, The Sausage Guy. Thanks to John DeMatteo and Motor Mart Garage for hosting us on the roof of their facility. ■



Photo: Michael Dwyer

Druker Company President Ron Druker in fine form on the ballfield.

Duckling Day, Making History on the Common, and our Softball Game could not have succeeded without the superb organizational skills of Harron Ellenson and her team.



Photo: Michael Dwyer

Young Friends Kick-Off Party

We are happy to report that there is a new generation of young adult park supporters that has revived the Young Friends. They launched their efforts with a party on the roof of the Taj in July attended by over 200 people, and have plans for more events and activities in support of our parks, including a competitive Rake Off on the Mall in the spring. Thanks to Kate Pokorny, Charlotte Lewis, and the entire Young Friends committee for their outstanding work in bringing the next generation of park stewards into the fold. ■

Lovely supporters of the Young Friends of the Public Garden enjoyed our summer party.

Puppets on the Common

Thanks to the vision of Wendy Almquist and the generosity of the M. Holt Massey Charitable Trust, the Friends revived the tradition of puppet shows on the Common after a 16-year absence. Rosalita's Puppets with master puppeteer Charlotte Dore, presented two well-received performances at Parkman Bandstand in August. Over 200 children and parents attended the two performances, and plans are to expand the program in 2012. ■



Photo: Elizabeth Vizza

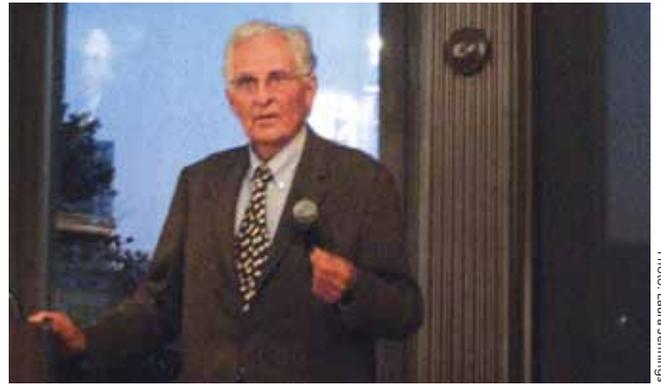
Charlotte Dore from Rosalita's Puppets entertained and introduced one of her "friends" up close.

HAPPENINGS!

Members Reception



On October 5, we honored Henry Davis, a distinguished arborist who has cared for the trees in our three parks for over four decades. Over 150 people came to hear him lecture on The Future of Trees in the Public Garden, Boston Common, and Commonwealth Avenue Mall, and the stresses that trees contend with to live in our urban parks. The Friends thanks Henry Davis, who has generously provided his expertise to us in tree care and in particular, with the battle against Dutch elm disease, for all these years for no remuneration. We are grateful to the Motor Mart Garage, corporate sponsor for the evening. ■



Arborist Henry Davis.

Photo: Laura Jennings

A Special Annual Meeting of the Friends



Photos: Michael Dwyer

Left: Henry Lee accepted the perfect gift from Parks Commissioner Antonia Pollak. Right: Author and historian David McCullough, his wife Rosalee, and Henry Lee shared a moment.

THE 2011 ANNUAL MEETING OF the Friends in May was a momentous occasion, the last at which Henry Lee presided as president. Members recognized the significance of the evening by a larger than usual turnout. Parks Commissioner Antonia Pollak spoke of Henry's skills of persuasion as an advocate for the parks over many years and our special guest, David McCullough, who recently moved to Commonwealth Avenue, praised Henry's diplomatic skills which he had observed on a trip to Europe they shared. Henry concluded with words of wisdom gained through four decades of public service on behalf of our parks.

All who live in, work in, or visit this city cannot begin to thank Henry enough for his incalculable contributions over 40 years to the Friends, to the parks, and indeed to the City of Boston. His impact on the civic realm and on countless advocates and public servants is captured in 21 tributes collected in *Reflections*, a booklet of testimonials from many who have been touched by Henry's service, including the Mayor, the Parks Commissioner, our State Representative, former public officials, arborists and monument conservators, and present and past board members. The good news is that Henry will continue to work with the Friends as elder statesman, guide, and advocate in his position as President Emeritus.

In the business portion of the meeting, the following were elected to the board for three year terms: Anne Brooke, Kate Enroth, Kate Gilbane, Giles McNamee, Barbara Moore, and Anne Swanson. ■



IN MEMORIAM

With great sadness, we must report the death on August 19 of Gail Weesner, our editor, secretary, and long-time board member. She was so self-effacing that many of you may not have known her, but in our forty-one years no one has rendered to the Friends greater and more devoted service. She was an outstanding editor and writer, to whom we owe much more than our publications.

With Barbara Moore, her frequent co-author, she was awarded in 2002 the prestigious Francis medal for horticultural writing from the Garden Club of America. Her minutes of board meetings turned our halting expressions into models of clarity and precision. And in our governance she was an unfailing source of wise and discerning judgment. Most of all she was a generous, caring, and loving person, who gave so much to so many without wish of requital. We will treasure her memory. ■

FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN

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BOSTON COMMON

PUBLIC GARDEN

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

Address Correction Requested.

Join or Renew Your Membership Today!

The Friends mission is to preserve, protect and enhance Boston's first public parks – the Boston Common, the Public Garden and the Commonwealth Mall – by performing vital tree care, restoring statues, replacing benches and advocating for appropriate use. The Friends also sponsors special educational programs and events for the community. We work in partnership with the Boston Parks and Recreation Department that does all that it can to maintain these properties, but will never have the resources to meet their full needs.

Your support will ensure that the Friends can continue to care for these treasured green spaces, and maintain a strong constituency that is ready to advocate for the protection of the parks for many years to come.

Please use the enclosed reply form or visit www.friendsofthepublicgarden.org/membership to safely join or renew online.

Thank you!

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

The Friends have a 41-year history of preserving, protecting and enhancing Boston's three historic parks in the heart of downtown. In order to ensure the organization's long-term financial strength, the Friends encourages supporters to consider a charitable bequest as part of your estate planning. Your gift will ensure that the parks are preserved for generations to come. For more information contact Mary Halpin, Director of Development at 857-239-8937 or mary@friendsofthepublicgarden.org.

