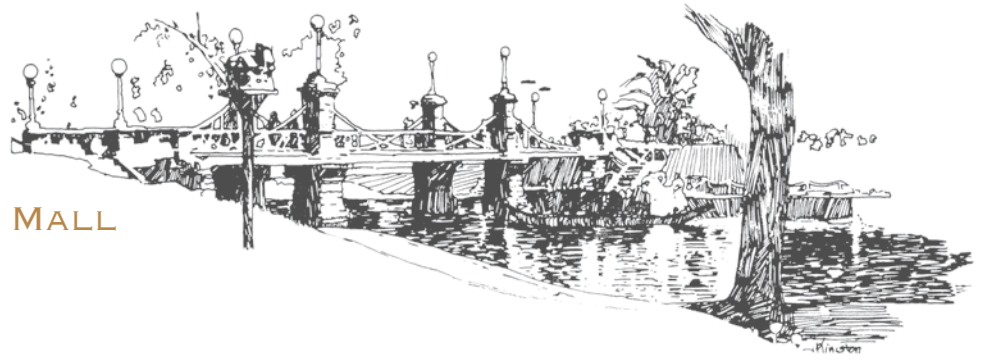


BOSTON COMMON

PUBLIC GARDEN

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL



FRIENDS *of the* PUBLIC GARDEN

FALL 2008

NO. 50

The writer's valedictory was a little premature. The intention holds, but the process moves, like many park projects, in the fullness of time. This Newsletter reflects, nonetheless, a transition begun last spring to more frequent and briefer reports, a brighter format, and more corporate involvement. Unchanging is a familiar theme of problems and progress in equal measure.

As ever, our greatest challenge has been tree care. While concerns are still numerous, conditions are better this year than last. We carried out much pruning in the winter, injected all elms in spring and summer, continued to treat ailing beeches in the Garden, and fertilized for the first time many trees in each park. The Parks Department did much as well including removal of threatened elms and several more apple trees infected with fireblight. At writing, we have lost only five elms to disease, four of which had old root graft infections. The beeches are improving, albeit still imperiled, and the apples, including five planted last year, are faring well.

The tree inventory mentioned last year is nearing completion. We look forward to having for the Friends and Parks Department an electronic record of trees in all three parks as well as identifying tags and labels. This boon comes to us with the guiding hands of Karin Dumbaugh and



Photo: Jo-Domenica

A touch of the Rose Brigade, Public Garden

Corwin Fleming, the fine and careful work of Melissa LeVangie, and vital support of the Highland Foundation.

We are far, of course, from doing all that is needed and must note again that all trees, especially those on the Common, suffer greatly from foot and vehicular traffic. But each year we do more, this time with enabling support of Beacon Hill Elms, Millennium Partners, Heritage Condominium Trust, Garden Club of the Back Bay, Saquish Foundation, generous gifts of members, and a wonderful bequest, noted later. Trees need, as we often say, consistent, not occasional care. Your help has been their saving grace.

THE COMMON

The Common remains a scene of more talk than action, but prospects of improvement are a little brighter. The Parks Department is doing all that its resources allow, the Friends are giving substantial support for tree care, and the City Council Common Committee, chaired by Michael Ross, is active and concerned. In June, Council members joined Park Commissioner Pollak, representatives of the Friends, and others in visiting three parks in New York City to observe their operation and food service. Like the Common, these parks are host to many activities and events but take steps, with public approval, to protect their turf and trees. In a report prepared for the Friends, the firm Brown, Richardson & Rowe has documented similar policies in parks across the country and abroad. Balancing activity and care requires, however, a level of funding not available to the Common. Lip service abounds, but City (including the BRA), State (including the MBTA and Convention Authority), developers, and neighbors have yet to step forward. Until they do, the Common will lag behind its counterparts in other cities.

Interest is strong in bringing to the Common an excellent short-order concession or in time a restaurant. The former seems possible, the latter, for reasons of space and licensing, more remote. The Parks Department is still



A Winter's Day at the Frog Pond

on course to restore the Brewer Fountain, while the Friends and Solomon Fund are working on landscape changes for the area around it. To this end, we have engaged Pressley Associates to prepare proposals for the redesign and use of the space. Here again, all will depend on raising the necessary funds.



Installing the irrigation system, Public Garden

The Parks Department has also repaired fencing, corners, and paving, aerated soil, and managed along with Mother Nature to maintain the restored Parade Ground. Owing to the care of Daedalus, Inc. the Shaw/54th remains in good condition. A minor concern is the frequent theft of Col. Shaw's sword; a major one is the life of the flanking trees now in old age and last year cut back severely for public safety.

The Frog Pond programs were again extremely popular winter and summer. The Shakespeare presentation this year, *As You Like It*, was as always a great attraction, and along Tremont and Boylston streets, Emerson College and now Suffolk are bringing new life to an area once all but abandoned. And not least our thanks go as always to the Common staff and Park Rangers who do much with small numbers to give our ancient ground care and security.

PUBLIC GARDEN

For a while this spring the Garden resembled a battlefield or perhaps home to giant moles. But the new irrigation system is now installed, and the park almost back to its verdant self. Tom Williams and staff of the Greenhouses have given us floral displays more stunning than ever, while the Garden staff under Sammy Sameski has coped extremely well under difficult conditions. And on its twentieth anniversary the volunteer Rose Brigade, commanded by China Altman, has brought the beds to new brilliance. On the planting side, Westy Lovejoy reports that her horticultural committee set out four trees: a Hawthorne (*Crataegus lavellei*); a red oak given by family and friends in memory of Michael Waite; an apple given by Jean and Jess Cain; and an Allee elm given by Capizzi & Co. in memory of Norman Rowe, to whom we as well are indebted for his expert care of the Garden's trees and shrubs. On the Boylston Street walk outside the Garden we have also planted two elms given by Theodore and Cynthia Berenson to replace those lost several years ago to acts of nature. Finally we have done an extensive pruning of shrubs on the four borders and will be planting next month a number of new specimens.

Through an extraordinary grant from the Ruth & Frank Stanton Fund, we have restored or cleaned five pieces of sculpture, completing for the moment the treatment of all art work in the Garden. In addition, Friends and Parks Department are still intent on lighting at the White and Washington statues and, with the laying of new conduits, several statues along the Boylston Street side.

We are conscious always of blemishes and problems of the Garden. It is too popular and



Photo: Courtesy of Rita Smith McNally

Restoring the Channing Monument, Public Garden

unprotected ever to be perfect. It needs several critical improvements, work on path edges, and more horticultural oversight. But it gives us every day of the year great pleasure, for which we are indebted to many people over all its history. Among these certainly are the Paget Family, operators of the Swan Boats since 1877; successions of city gardeners and arborists; creators of its sculpture, like Nancy Schön; and in recent years a host of generous donors. We are fortunate to have such an attraction in the heart of our city, and the Garden is fortunate to have had such devoted stewards.

COMMONWEALTH AVENUE MALL

The Mall continues to look better each year. In addition to regular care, the Mall Committee thinned a number of trees to admit more light. This step, with Parks Department aeration, seeding, and liming (and a summer of rain), has brought much improvement to several grass areas.

On the sculpture front, its artist, Penelope Jencks, has recast and mapped replacement of missing barnacles on the monument to Samuel Eliot Morison, and with support of the Browne



Photo: Jerry Katz

Mayor Menino greets lots of Earles



Photo: Jerry Katz

Harvard Band Leading the Duckling Parade

Fund, we expect in fall to clean the statue of Domingo Sarmiento. On the Arlington-Berkeley block, the Committee removed overgrown and damaged shrubs around Alexander Hamilton, re-aligned the Civil War bench, carried out important pruning, and planted a replacement for the tree honoring Katherine Howard, all owing to the thoughtful and designated gift of John W. Sears.

New trees came as well from William Hodgins, in memory of Thomas Walker; Jack and Betty Slocum; friends of Jennifer North; colleagues of Arnold Zetcher, Chairman and CEO of Talbot's, in honor of his recent retirement; staff and supporters of the Women's Lunch Place in honor of their new Board President, Sarah Monaco and her husband Peter. With these gifts, we have for the first time in the Mall's history a waiting list for gift and memorial trees.

We are especially grateful to friends and family who donated so generously to the Mall Tree Fund in memory of Alexa Charles, daughter of Cynthia Schaumberg and her husband Grant. These funds will be used for extraordinary maintenance and the planting of a tree in Alexa's memory.

The Mall Committee was again awarded a Small Change Grant through the Parks Department to be used this year to remove yew stumps and to regrade and seed the areas at the underpass at Massachusetts Avenue.

In her annual report, carried in full in the NABB News, Committee Chair Margaret Pokorny also thanks the Parks Department for power washing the benches and Patti Quinn for her graffiti watch and removal of tags, another of Patti's countless gifts to our parks. What her report does not include, of course, is appreciation of herself. In Margaret, and Stella Trafford before her, the Mall has been twice blessed. You need only walk along it and recall its former state to sense the extraordinary contribution of these two civic heroines.

CONSTRUCTION

We are always alert to construction that affects the parks. Indeed, we began, as all know, in the struggle against a plan for buildings of 500 feet at the Garden's edge. Legislation passed in 1990 and 1992 gives the Common and Garden some protection from new shadow, albeit for the Common by a convoluted formula. Current proposals for nearby structures, including those for 350 Boylston, 4-6 Newbury, and Province Street, have critics of design but appear from current information to comply with the shadow restrictions. The 1000-foot tower proposed for Winthrop Square is for a time on

hold. Threats of a different nature are posed by the planned enlargement of the Under Common Garage and extensive tunneling for Phase Three of the Silver Line. Much discussion must ensue on the value of either project, then on their impact on the Common and adjacent communities.

EVENTS



Photo: Roger Farrington

Green & White Dinner

It is thirty years since Nina Meyer organized the first parade for children emulating the Mallard Family of Robert McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings*. Now a Mother's Day tradition, the occasion seemed this year more popular than ever. A joyful throng of "ducklings" followed the Harvard Band through Beacon Hill to the Public Garden where they enjoyed activities and a warm greeting from Mayor and Mrs.

Menino. We are grateful to the band, always a joy; entertainers in Common and Garden; Committee members; event helpers; and our leaders Tiverton McClintock and Allison Fiscoeder. Together they gave us, old and young, a happy holiday.



Photo: Roger Farrington

L-R Frank Gilligan, Nina and Gene Doggett, Mario Russo

The Green & White Ball was, too, a grand affair, for which we are indebted to innumerable benefactors. Among these were our hosts, David Gibbons and staff of the Taj Hotel, a wonderful and self-effacing committee, sustaining sponsors, and guests of great generosity. Although limited by space to 225 people, the ball raised over \$400,000 toward our Capital Campaign and projects critical to the care of each park.



Photo: Roger Farrington

Druker Family gathering, Green & White Ball

As noted in the spring letter, we joined once more in sponsoring the Ancient Fishweir Project on the Common. Under the direction of Ross Miller, school children erect each May a fishweir replicating those of Native Americans living here 5000 years ago. In June, we joined with the National Park Service as co-presenters at the MFA of Paul Samuelson's film on Augustus Saint-Gaudens, sculptor of the

Shaw/54th Memorial. And in August we began, with the aid of Lyn Paget and Swan Boats, Inc., to offer audio tours of the Garden. For those more distant, the tours may be downloaded at www.friendsofthepublicgarden.org

All of these projects and events owe much to the efforts of our Executive Director, Nichole Cirillo. Without her hand, several would not have occurred. She has raised our civic sights and made possible our participation in activities of value to public and Friends alike.

ANNUAL MEETING

Our Annual Meeting took place in custom at the First Church in Boston. Elected as directors for terms of three years were Julie Boes, William Clendaniel, Linda Cox, Karin



Peter Meade addressing the Annual Meeting

Dumbaugh, Hannelore Grantham, Tim Ian Mitchell, Donna Petro, Margaret

Pokorny, Susan Prindle, and Colin Zick.

Members also approved a by-law amendment allowing for more than one vice-president. Honors and gratitude were bestowed on China Altman for her twenty years of loving care of the Garden's rose beds. Our speaker was Peter Meade, a former Park Commissioner and presently chairman of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy. In an absorbing and wide-ranging talk he described the challenges facing Boston's parks especially its newest and most varietal green space.

Photo: Palmina Manson



The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company has paraded on the Common since 1638

FRED MAUET

Our Vice-President, Fred Mauet, died in June after a valiant struggle with leukemia. The loss to us and to his community is immeasurable. He was a guiding star on whose judgment and counsel we deeply depended. A wise and patient negotiator, he had a matchless ability to analyze problems and to fashion with great clarity and precision acceptable solutions. He set for us all a standard of commitment, knowledge, and vision we may never emulate but will try our best to follow. And beyond skills, we shall remember always Fred's infectious spirit, caring of others, and over these past two years extraordinary grace and courage.

We cannot replace Fred's presence, but he insured that one effort of importance to him would continue by leaving a generous bequest to the Commonwealth Avenue Mall Tree Fund. Of certainty, he knew how valuable such help would be to us and how grateful we would be in receiving it. This fall the Friends and NABB will join in placing a bench in Fred's honor on the Berkeley-Clarendon block of the Mall. Although his true memorial will be in our hearts,

his bench will remind those who pass in years to come of a great benefactor and champion of all they see around them.

FRIENDS

At their June meeting the Directors elected as vice presidents for 2008-09 Patricia Quinn and William Clendaniel. Other officers remain in place. In peripheral spheres, much acclaim goes to Anne Swanson, recently honored by the Boston Police Department for her work in fighting graffiti, and to Peter Thomson and Karin Dumbaugh for keeping the island at Charles and Beacon streets a flourishing attraction.

Our Capital Campaign is edging toward conclusion, still \$500,000 short of our \$6.5 million goal but a success already in strengthening our tree and sculpture funds, bolstering our administration, and assisting a number of important projects.

As always we are beholden to myriad friends, including Frank Gilligan, guide of our campaign; Jeanne Amabile, keeper of our purse; Henry Davis, keeper of our trees; and committee members, especially chairs Nina Doggett, Anne Brooke, Rob Radloff, Westy Lovejoy, and Patti Quinn. Eugenie Beal is, of course, a civic treasure as well as advisor, guide, and conscience of the Friends, And with Nichole Cirillo as Executive Director, we have moved forward with new energy in activities, development, and administration, indeed the whole process of our transition to a firmer organization.



Photo: Jerry Katz

The Swan Boats in their 131st year are still the Garden's Heartbeat

Most of all we thank you, our members. Your support over these many years has enabled us to accomplish much in our three parks and to raise a civic voice on their behalf. Threats are ceaseless, and a season of neglect, as all gardeners know, can undo gains long in achievement. And yet our confidence grows year by year that, whatever the ebb and flow of city funding, these loved and historic spaces will always have friends to assure their care and keeping.

Henry Lee



Margaret Pokorny and Stella Trafford receiving just desserts a few years ago

*F*RIENDS *of the* PUBLIC GARDEN

87 Mt. Vernon Street
Boston, MASSACHUSETTS 02108
www.friendsofthepublicgarden.org

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