



Beech tree, Longwood Mall by Bruce Wolff

## Brookline: A Short History of Leadership in Open Space Preservation

Our definition of leadership is broad-gauged. Gifts of land, conservation restrictions and advocacy qualify, but so does community commitment to serving the common good, such as purchases of land for passive and active recreation using tax-payer funds. As you read this list we urge you to think what Brookline would be like today absent the many examples of leadership and conservation exhibited in this history.

1640 – Captain Joseph Weld received a 2,000-acre land grant, a portion of which is still owned by Captain Weld’s descendants and operated as Allandale Farm (70.11 acres). (Look for a short history of Allandale Farm in our fall 2006 edition of PLACE.)

1818 -1903 – In 1818 David Sears (and somewhat later, Amos Lawrence) began acquiring land in the area known as Longwood, stretching from the Charles River to the Muddy River. By the late 1840’s he had laid out Longwood Mall, Winthrop Square, Knyvet Square and Mason Square. By 1849 he had planted 14,000 trees in the area, including the grove of beech trees at Longwood Mall, considered the oldest such grove in the nation. In 1902-1903 David Sears’ heirs gave the four squares to the Town to be used for public parks.

1843 – Linden Park and Linden Square were laid out by Thomas Aspinwall Davis with the assistance of Alexander Wadsworth. These parks were the centerpiece for one of the earliest known planned suburban developments following the principles of garden designer Andrew Jackson Downing. Between 1895 and 1899 Linden Park and Linden Square were given to the Town to be used for public parks.

1850 – The Old Burying Ground on Walnut Street, consecrated in 1717, was acquired by the Town. The wall was built and a new picturesque design formalized in the early 1840’s. A Friends group, formed in 2003 by Dorothy Baldini, is working to restore the space.

1864 – Monmouth Park, adjacent to the current site of the Brookline Arts Center, was acquired by the Town.

1871 – Cypress and Brookline Avenue Playgrounds were the first parcels of land in the country to be acquired by a municipality for use as public playgrounds.

1874 – The park-like Walnut Hills Cemetery on Newton Street was created by the Town; the 45.26 acres of open space is not, however, a park and is, therefore, unprotected land.

1880 – The Town's first Park Commissioners were elected. Among them, Francis W. Lawrence, Chair, Charles Sprague Sargent, Secretary, and Theodore Lyman.

1881 – Frederick Law Olmsted began work on the Sanitary Improvement of the Muddy River, incorporating the creation of Riverway and Olmsted Parks. The land for this landmark project was purchased between 1881 and 1894. Leverett Pond, in Brookline's portion of Olmsted Park, was created from a malarial swamp near Brookline Village. Advocates Arlene and Hugh Mattison, Isabella Callanan, Betsy Shure Gross, Irene Gillis and Frances Shedd Fisher have worked for more than 25 years on restoration efforts. Michael Dukakis, three term governor of Massachusetts and committed Emerald Necklace supporter, has served as a model for environmental advocacy and leadership in Brookline and beyond throughout his civic career.

1882 – The nation's first country club – The Country Club – was founded for the purpose of maintaining open land for riding and recreation. The land, initially leased in 1882, was acquired in 1887 and now comprises 230.76 acres. TCC has a unique and illustrious history.

1886 – Brookline Town Meeting, in response to advocacy by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and Charles Sprague Sargent, founding director of the Arnold Arboretum, created the nation's first Tree Planting Committee.

1887 – Beacon Street was widened and trees were planted following a plan designed by Frederick Law and John Charles Olmsted.

1891 – The Town acquired 4.54 acres of marsh land for Longwood Playground. In 1895 Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot were hired to improve the land. An active friends group, now Friends of Lawrence Park, has maintained a planting circle in the park since 1988.

1896 – The first state Audubon Society was founded by Harriet Lawrence Hemenway of Boston and Brookline, and Minna Hall of Brookline, whose house in Cottage Farm overlooks Hall's Pond.

1897 – St. Mark's Square was accepted by the Town as a gift of the heirs of Marshall Stearns.

1899 -1902 – The initial purchases of 124.6 acres of land for Putterham Meadows and Putterham Woods were accomplished. Before construction of the municipal golf course was begun in 1930 an exchange of land was arranged with The Country Club to straighten the irregular line between the two properties. The Brookline Bird Club urged protection of the hemlock grove, and the Board of Selectmen insisted the plan selected for the course should preserve the groves and wooded areas. The golf course was designed by Stiles & Van Kleeck, Inc. Wayne Stiles was a Brookline resident. Lotta Bradburn Schick, a leading Brookline activist, is credited as being the advocate most responsible for the creation of the course. The Brookline Chronicle stated in 1934 that the course "will be one of the foremost in the country from the standpoint of playing qualities and as regards scenic beauty..." In the 1990's efforts to take a portion of Putterham Woods for a driving range were resisted by advocates led by Brookline GreenSpace Alliance.



Corey Hill Park. Photo by Jean Stringham

1900 - 1916 -- Over almost 50 years, the Town continued to acquire land to expand Corey Hill Park, and to preserve the beautiful outlook.

1901 – The Town acquired 4.2 acres from the Griggs estate to create a playground in 1903.

-- Land for Waldstein (Dean) Playground off Beacon Street was bought in 1901.

-- Clinton Path was laid out in 1901-1903.

-- The Upland Road Triangle, also known as Philbrick Square, was developed by Edward Philbrick in the 1880's and sold to the Town in 1901. The Upland Green (the neighborhood's name for the space), is located in the Pill Hill Local Historic District, and is an example of many small, much beloved pocket parks in Brookline.

1902 -- The Town, aided by neighbors Amy Lowell, John Charles Olmsted, Walter Channing, Edward Atkinson and George Lee, bought what is now Brookline Reservoir Park, including the reservoir and surrounding land, from the City of Boston.

-- The heirs of David Sears donated four open squares to the Town with the stipulation that they be maintained as public parks. The squares, Knyvet, Winthrop, Longwood and Mason, were originally laid out as part of Sears' Longwood residential development.

1903 -- The Town acquired 8.2 acres from the Amory Land Trust to create a public playground.

1908 – Two acres of land acquired by the Town at an attractive price from the estate of Elijah Emerson was designated as Emerson Garden. The park is located in the Cypress Emerson National Register District.

1913 – About an acre of land was acquired by the Town for Clark Playground on Cypress Street.

-- The Brookline Bird Club, founded in Brookline in 1913, is the oldest and largest of the many bird clubs in Massachusetts. BBC actively supports open space preservation in Massachusetts.

1914 – Land on Pond Avenue, 8.6 acres now known as Harry Downes Field, was acquired by the Town from MIT for a playing field.

1914 -1922 -- Brookline created a Planning Board with F. L. Olmsted, Jr., its first chairman. The Board established a setback policy to preserve open space, and a zoning code was created in 1922.

1922 --The addition to Brookline High School was planned so as to retain a sunny, interior quadrangle, 150 by 200 feet. The addition was built on land donated by the Blake family.

1932 – The Town and the MDC shared the cost for the traffic circle, now Horace James Circle, that was part of the Hammond Pond Parkway project. An anonymous donor provided plantings and design by S. N. Shurcliff. The planting was performed by the Tree Planting Committee.

1939 – The Mary E. Robinson Playground was created on 2.38 acres acquired by the Town.

1944 – The 10.98 acres Warren Field was acquired by the Town in 1944.

1948 – Isabel Anderson's bequest of her 64-acre estate to the Town of Brookline led to the creation of Larz Anderson Park. In a failure of advocacy and leadership, the Anderson mansion was demolished and the Italian Garden removed in 1955. Since that time, some restoration of the landscape has been undertaken, but there have also been several attempts to introduce intrusive uses, which advocates have resisted. In 1987 Linda Dean funded an effort to protect Larz Anderson from an intrusive and potentially damaging private use. In 1992 a video detailing the history of the estate was produced: Isabel's Gift: the Story of Larz Anderson Park was produced by Mary Dewart for Brookline GreenSpace Alliance.

1953 – The Town acquired 16.8 acres of the Dane estate, a woodland area with volcanic formations, for recreational and educational purposes, and an additional 6.8 acres of the estate was donated to the Town by Edward Dane. An active Friends group formed in 2000 by Abby Coffin, Cissy Hutton and Margie Greville has led a restoration effort.

1961 – D. Blakely Hoar bequeathed 25 acres to Brookline as a bird sanctuary which, in 1969, became the Town's first sanctuary under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission.

1970 – Holy Transfiguration Monastery, under the jurisdiction of the Holy Orthodox Church of North America, acquired the 19 acre estate on Warren Street, which includes the remnants of an Olmsted landscape. The self-sufficient monastic order has retained the wooded landscape and welcomes visitors under rules which may be found on their website.

1971 -- The Minot Rose Garden, located in historic Winthrop Square, was initiated by Henry W. Minot, a member of the Tree Planting Committee. The garden was dedicated to him in 1971, the year after his death. The distinctive climbing rose trellis located in the garden is from the Larz Anderson estate.

1973 – The five acre Sargent's Pond conservation restriction was established. The pond was part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Charles Sprague Sargent estate and is a National Register property.

1975 – Brookline acquired Hall's Pond, located adjacent to the Cottage Farm Local Historic District, as its second parcel of conservation land. In the same year Josephine Albrecht founded the Friends of Hall's Pond, followed soon thereafter by the Friends of Leverett Pond, founded by Arlene Mattison and Betsy Shure Gross. Today there are more than three dozen parks Friends groups in Brookline.

1977 -- The Town purchased an additional 1.6 acre wooded parcel adjoining the Amory Playground, known as Amory Woods.

1979 – Fairsted, Frederick Law Olmsted's home and offices at 99 Warren Street, became a National Historic Site, allowing the Federal Government to conserve plans and drawings documenting the approximately 5,000 parks, suburban developments, campuses, public buildings grounds, estates and residences the Olmsted firm designed, and providing access to those documents to researchers. The 1.76 acre landscape at Fairsted has been restored by the Park Service and represents a microcosm of Olmsted's best ideas. After an extensive process, 5.35 acres of adjacent land from the Gardner estate (Green Hill), then held by the Brookline Land Trust, was transferred to the National Park Service in December 2001. The site is a National Landmark.

1980 – A conservation restriction was created on 11.69 acres, the site of the Park School, by Mary DuPont Faulkner.

1981 – The Brookline Conservation Land Trust, founded by Lee Albright, currently protects approximately 6 acres in four properties in various locations.

1982 – Lost Pond Sanctuary was created when land near the Town landfill was transferred from the control of the Department of Public Works to the Conservation Commission. Intense advocacy was required to accomplish this. Advocates included Lewis Edgers, Terry Ann Vigil, Marian Lazar and Jewel Mason. Lost Pond, a video history of the effort, was produced and directed by Carol Kowalski.

1983 – Friends of Longwood Mall created a maintenance fund for the grove of beech trees and received a Massachusetts Historical Commission award in 1984 for their preservation efforts.

1987--1988 – Brookline GreenSpace Alliance was formed. Initiated by Michael Berger and Mary Dewart in 1987, the organization was founded in 1988. The Alliance, a non-profit 501(c)(3), is a Town-wide open space advocacy and education organization with 43 organizational members and approximately 1,000 individual members.

1994 – New Lincoln School was built on the old Park School site during Kitty Ames' tenure as Chair of the School Committee. The 3.86 acre site, which also houses the Brookline Music School in the antique Hill-Kennard-Ogden house, retained, through careful design, substantial open space for a play area. An active committee led by parents uses the site's open space as a teaching tool.

-- The Friends of Brookline Reservoir Park, led by Caroline Grayboys and Bisi Starkey, undertook to raise sufficient funds to replant the Kwanzan cherry trees surrounding the park. The Friends of Brookline Reservoir Park, formed in 1988, has continued to actively support the park.

-- The Tree Planting Committee and the Conservation Commission, working with academics from University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and with over 100 volunteers assembled by Brookline GreenSpace Alliance and trained with the assistance of Arnold Arboretum staff, completed the nation's first inventory of municipal street trees accomplished by volunteers. The project was a successful trial meant to establish a model for using volunteers for the time consuming work. The data collected on over 11,000 street trees, including location, size, condition and species, has been maintained since then on the Town's GIS and serves as an important tool in the management of our urban forest. For example, the information gathered serves to guide future planting in order to broaden the variety of species, an important horticultural management consideration for one of the Town's most valuable assets.

1995 -- Brookline GreenSpace Alliance initiated a review of the maintenance and management of the Town's open spaces. As a result, the Task Force on Open Space, co-

chaired by Frances Shedd Fisher (President, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance) and Donna Kalikow (Chair, Board of Selectmen), was created; the Task Force drew in elected officials, Town management and staff, representatives of boards and commissions and open space advocates in a collaborative process. Over a period of three years the Task Force accomplished a review of parks and open space management in the Town resulting in a reorganization of parks management to enhance service and assure proper maintenance to protect assets and investments, including reestablishing middle management layers lost as a result of cuts related to 2 \_ (tax) legislation in the early 1980's. Numerous other specific accomplishments came out of the study process: increased maintenance dollars to protect open space assets, including allocations for conservation lands, and structural changes in maintenance, particularly with respect to historic landscapes. Other goals included greater transparency in process, more constructive communications among boards and commissions, a recommendation that master plans be created for all major open space assets, and Town personnel support for citizen initiatives. Open space advocacy volunteers who served on the Task Force included Mary Dewart, Fred Perry, Corliss Engle, Joanna Wexler, Betsy Shure Gross and Michael Berger. Subsequently, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance participated in the interview process for the director of the new and broadened position of Director of Parks and Open Space.

1999 and 2003 -- Two Massachusetts Environmental Trust matching grants available to Community Foundations were applied for and received by the Brookline Community Fund. The grants, an aggregate amount of \$125,000, were matched 1:1 by Brookline citizens. The second grant of \$100,000, now \$200,000 with matching contributions, created an endowment fund for future community environmental grants. BGSA assisted with the initial grant application by offering examples of environmental needs and opportunities and recent examples of successful environmental activism in the community, and later by supporting the fundraising efforts.

1999 – ongoing -- Friends of Carlton Street Footbridge, led by Cathleen Cavell and Hugh Mattison, have advocated for the restoration of Olmsted's historic entrance to Riverway Park, permitted to decline during a period of "shabbification" of Town assets. Restoration of the bridged entrance is a recommendation of the Master Plan for Riverway Park. The Town is currently seeking a Federal grant under the Transportation Enhancement Program to fund the restoration. Active members of the Friends Steering Committee include, in addition to Cavell and Mattison, Ed Cutler, Dick Garver and Frances Shedd Fisher. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance actively supports the restoration project.

2000 - ongoing -- The Campaign to Preserve St. Aidan's, led by Diana Lees Spiegel and many other Brookline citizens, worked to save the historic church and the forecourt and heritage trees as the church property was developed for housing; advocates for the trees and open space in particular included Carolyn Sax, Jean Stringham, and Marty Rosenthal. The magnificent, 150 year old copper beech tree on the site is believed to have been planted by David Sears. As a result of the advocacy, a conservation easement on a portion of the open space has been granted by the owner of the property. Responding to the concerns of neighbors and BGSA Tom Brady, Brookline Tree Warden, prepared stringent conditions for the building contractor to follow in protecting the trees during site preparation and construction. The Campaign's efforts with respect to preservation of the landscape have been continuously supported by Brookline GreenSpace Alliance. (St. Aidan's Reuse Team (StART), a related, though unsuccessful, effort, worked to preserve a portion of the church for public purpose, including a visitor center for the National Park Service.)

– Under the leadership of Barbara Mackey, Friends of Hall's Pond launched the Hall's Pond Learning Project, now the Town-wide Environmental Learning Project managed by Brookline GreenSpace Alliance.

-- Brookline GreenSpace Alliance sponsored a forum on global warming and climate change in May 2000 with expert speakers from Harvard, Tufts and the Conservation Law Foundation. Climate Change Action Brookline (CCAB) was formed the same year led by Deirdre Buckley, Erin Chute, Frances Shedd Fisher, Werner Lohe, Fred Perry and Don Weitzman. The group sponsored three warrant articles at fall 2001 Town Meeting: a warrant, proposed by Werner

Lohe, to require the Town to begin implementation of use of hybrid vehicles for its non-safety related fleet was approved and has since been acted on; in addition, two articles requesting the creation of two Moderator's Study Committees (on tree protection and green energy) were approved. In the same year the Selectmen approved a Climate Change Action Plan for Brookline.

2001 – Exploring the Paths of Brookline was researched, written and published by Linda Olson Pehlke of Brookline.

-- Chestnut Trails, a publication of Chestnut Hill Garden Club, provided historical and geographical information on major public open spaces in the Chestnut Hill areas of Boston, Brookline and Newton. The book was researched and written by members of the Chestnut Hill Garden Club led by Marjorie Greville of Brookline.

2002 – The completion of work at Hall's Pond marked the first restoration of an urban wetland in Massachusetts.

2003 —The Richardson family created a conservation restriction on approximately 2 acres of family land adjacent to Route 9, across from Brookline Reservoir Park. The restriction is held by the Brookline Conservation Land Trust.

2005 – Town Meeting approved initiating discussions with the Commonwealth of purchase of the 9.92 acre Fisher Hill Reservoir site from the Department of Recreation and Conservation for use for recreational purposes.

-- The Town began rehabilitation of the Stephen Glover Trane Memorial Health Building following green building principles. The leadership and advocacy of Alan Balsam, Brookline's Director of Public Health and Human Services, convinced Town management to undertake Brookline's first environmentally sensitive rehab of a public building.

-- Friends of Minot Rose Garden, led by Linda Olson Pehlke, collaborated with the Town on planting 300 rose bushes in the reinigorated garden in North Brookline.

-- Town Meeting approved the Town's first tree protection bylaw. Building on work done by a 2001 Moderator's Study Committee led by Fred Perry of CCAB (other members of the study committee included Corliss Engle, Joe Geller, Tom Brady and Erin Chute), the fall 2005 warrant article was offered as an amendment to the Town's zoning bylaw. The bylaw requires property owners seeking a special permit in connection with a construction project to refrain from removing any trees on the site prior to review through the permitting process. Advocacy for the bylaw change was led by Hugh Mattison, Chair of the Tree Planting Committee, and was encouraged and supported by Brookline GreenSpace Alliance.

This list was created by Werner Lohe, Chair of the Brookline Conservation Commission and a Brookline GreenSpace Alliance Board member, and Frances Shedd Fisher, editor of PLACE and a founding Board member of Brookline GreenSpace Alliance. Additional contemporary entries were added by Shedd Fisher. Much of the historic information in this list is derived from research done by historian and Brookline Preservation Planner, Greer Hardwicke. The editor wishes to extend particular thanks to Ms. Hardwicke for her assistance and, additionally, to Linda Olson Pehlke, author of *Exploring the Paths of Brookline*. In addition, we wish to acknowledge the wealth of information about Brookline open spaces to be found in the Brookline Conservation Commission's Open Space Plan 2000.

We acknowledge that this list is far from complete -- a work in progress, in fact -- and invite readers to contact us with interesting historical facts about your neighborhood park. See below the list of historic open spaces in Brookline designated National and State Register properties; the list was compiled by Greer Hardwicke.

## **Public Open Spaces in National and State Historic Register Districts in Brookline**

Amory Playground  
Amory Woods  
Beacon Street  
Emerson Garden  
Fisher Hill open reservoir  
Fisher Hill covered reservoir  
Hall's Pond  
Horace James Circle  
Larz Anderson Park - Buildings and land  
Linden Park  
Linden Square  
Longwood Mall  
Mason Square  
New Lincoln School –Buildings and land  
Old Burying Ground (Walnut Street Cemetery)  
Old Town Green (Walnut and Warren Streets)  
Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted) -- Also a National Historic Landmark  
Olmsted Park  
Philbrick Square  
Reservoir Park  
Riverway Park  
The Riverway  
Soule Recreation Center – Building and land (Chestnut Hill NR district)  
Upland Green (Philbrick Square)  
Walnut Hills Cemetery  
West Roxbury Parkway  
White Place  
Winthrop Square

Eligible:  
Griggs Park  
Lawrence School

Compiled by Greer Hardwicke, Preservation Planner (2005)