

Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

Winter 2011

Installation of StaLok® at Linwood Circle

by Karen L. Grossman

“What will be done to curb path erosion in Spy Pond Park (SPP)?” you might ask, as we have for several years. Todd Heimlich pointed out to me when he was working in the park on December 7, 2010 that it had been recommended when SPP was renovated that the original surface supplied by Read Custom Soils should be replenished regularly via Town path maintenance. However, this was not done since the product is expensive and the Town budget has been tight. Thus, since 2006 when the renovated park was re-opened, we have noticed steady path erosion, in many places down to its base. There were two potentially dangerous spots, one at Linwood Circle and the other at the handicapped ramp. Doris Birmingham, Gail McCormick, Carol Johnson of CRJ Associates, and I began to search for a solution to this problem last summer.

Terry Driscoll, the local supplier of the aggregate used on the renovated SPP path invited us to view a product called StaLok®, that his company had installed in the Blue Hills Reservation. StaLok® is an impervious material that will not wash away with heavy rains. They used it in the Reservation in a vulnerable, wet area at the bottom of a steep grade, similar to the walkways in Spy Pond Park.

During a “field trip” to Canton, we liked what we saw there. Carol negotiated with Mr. Driscoll who, along with Jim Hubbs of Stabilizer Solutions, the Arizona source of StaLok®, was interested in creating a demonstration site to show other potential customers. Much to our excitement, they agreed to repair the Linwood Circle path area where we found a dangerous step down from the sidewalk—free of charge!



PHOTO BY TERESA HODGE

Using a jackhammer to break up clumps in one of the one-ton bags of StaLok® before installation

The process for approval for the construction was not clear and easy, as we soon discovered. Throughout the fall we went to the Conservation Commission and the Park Commissioners armed with our arguments and our plastic bags filled with the StaLok® sample. Much to our amazement, Teresa Hodge, CRJ Associates’ senior landscape designer, also met with the Commissioners, drew up a wonderful plan for the whole park followed by a detailed one of the Linwood Circle area, and filed a lengthy Notice of Intent (NOI) for the necessary authorities, all pro bono! In November we finally got the go ahead from the State officials and arranged for the installation to be done on December 7th.

The three tons of material was shipped from Arizona the previous week and Jim Hubbs flew in from Arizona to make sure everything was done properly. The appointed day was sunny, but cold when the trucks from Canton rolled down Linwood Street with equipment and materials for the job. Todd Heimlich, owner of the construction company that renovated SPP, and his crew went to work early that morning laying down a gravel base, breaking up the StaLok® material in the huge plastic bags in which it had been transported, spreading it evenly on the path, and compacting it firmly in place. Terry, Greg Frederick, the sales representative, Jim Hubbs, Teresa Hodge, Doris Birmingham and I braved the cold and wind, took some photos and watched attentively as the workers transformed the path. By 12 p.m. they were done. We are very grateful to all of the people I have mentioned for making the installation of StaLok® happen, especially Teresa Hodge. Thank you so much for your time and effort.

Jim Hubbs will be back in January and we’ll observe how StaLok® weathers the winter and spring. Then we’ll determine how to enact changes on other areas of the path through Spy Pond Park. We realize that our work is cut out for us!



PHOTO BY TERESA HODGE

2010 Workdays Highly Successful

By Doris Birmingham and Gail McCormick
Co-Chairs, Beautification Committee

The Friends of Spy Pond Park completed its work season in October on an especially high note with a vigorous pruning of the overgrown plantings in bed one, near Linwood Circle—a job that had been long deferred due to more pressing tasks. Elsewhere in the park, the planting beds were kept in exceptionally good condition all season through trash pickup and a consistently vigorous assault on our most voracious *bête noire*, false indigo, and other invasive species.

The weather, which neither forced a single rain date nor cursed us with an intolerably hot workday, made life a bit easier and certainly contributed to the consistently good turn-outs, but the real credit goes to our volunteers whose energy, dedication, and good humor made every workday both fun and rewarding.

First, we want to acknowledge gratefully FSSP's enterprising publicity team, Jackie Katzman and Lally Stowell, who did a phenomenal job publicizing our workdays; Lally and Estelle Schwedock, who helped us with phone recruitment; and Karen Grossman and Greg Watt, who sent out e-mail reminders. Lally, too, should be thanked for posting the attractive signs on the bike path each workday inviting bicyclists and walkers to stop and help out for 20 minutes. This tactic in fact drew several folks who just couldn't put their pruners down and worked all afternoon!



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Eric Berger making an accounting for the DPW brown bag pickup to be removed from Spy Pond Park

We also wish to thank Betsy Leondar-Wright, Seth Botos, and all their helpers for enlivening two of our workdays with music, art and special activities. Their events were not only great fun but also effective ways to raise awareness of the work that goes into maintaining the park.

Above all, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all of the volunteers who did the backbreaking labor month after month without complaint. The Arlington/Belmont rowing team, under the leadership of their coaches Margaret Moore- de Chicojay and Bob Riley, jumpstarted our season by coming out in force during two successive workdays in April and May. A well-organized and knowledgeable group from People Making a Difference joined the rowers in May, and in July, about 15 energetic members of High Rock Church attacked the jungle of weeds that had invaded several planting beds. Last, but certainly not least, many, many FSPP members faithfully lent their support during the entire season.

Our records are somewhat incomplete, but we wish to recognize especially several members who we know participated in three or more workdays during the season. Our profound apologies go to anyone we have forgotten. Thanks to Eric Baatz, George Berberian, Eric Berger, Bill Eykamp, Karen Grossman, Elizabeth Karpati, Adrienne Landry, Betsy and Gail Leondar-Wright, Ilse Oliveira, D.P. Powell, Michael Rattner, Bill Stalcup, Lally Stowell, and Beverly and Wally Williams. We salute you, as well as everyone else who has helped keep Spy Pond Park beautiful, and we look forward to seeing all of you again, come spring!



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Jackie Katzman, Publicity Co-Chair, and Jane Whitmore, Treasurer for FSPP, first volunteered to work in the park's planting beds

The Ice-Harvesters Cometh

by Eric Berger

The nineteenth century brought many changes to Spy Pond. As Eva Balazs documents in her splendid book, *More Spy Pond Stories*, many of these changes arrived on the wings of industrialization, none more so than ice-harvesting.

“...ice-harvesting started around 1825 and by 1840 it had developed into the big business of the town.”

Perhaps the reader imagines a few thousand pounds of ice were harvested. That estimate would be a bit low.

“In a good year, 150,000 tons of ice were cut on Spy Pond, packed and shipped all over the world.”

Three hundred million pounds of ice were harvested on Spy Pond in one year!

“Three clusters of storehouses stood along the Pond. The oldest building was on Pond Lane (where the Elk’s house stands today)...A row of icehouses stood along the railroad tracks...and another one close to Route 2.”

To cut the ice, it first had to be cleaned of leaves, twigs and small stones. Plows pulled by horses scraped the ice clean of snow.

“Cutting was done by hand...Men worked 12 hours a day... At times 200-300 men and 150 horses were out on the pond.”

Great blocks of ice were cut first. These were “floated loose”, and next these huge pieces were cut into smaller blocks that each weighed about 250 pounds.

“These were then lifted from the water, chiseled and prepared for storage in the ice houses or for shipping.”

The 250 pound ice blocks that were stored had to be dragged to the ice houses and hoisted into them. The ice blocks were then packed between layers of sawdust and straw and were “preserved for as long as two years.”

This author will never look at a glass of water with ice the same way.

Thanks to Eva, many fascinating tidbits of Spy Pond history come alive in her illuminating book, *More Spy Pond Stories*.

Editor’s note: Part of the ice house remained close to Linwood Street in Spy Pond near the shore until recently. Since this posed a danger to people recreating there, when Spy Pond Park was renovated beginning in 2004, the plan included the removal of these last remnants of the ice house at the Friends of Spy Pond Park’s request.

President’s Letter

Dear Friends,

This has been quite a wonderful year of growth and financial stability for the Friends of Spy Pond Park (FSPP)! Our accomplishments have been numerous, and the goals for 2011 are worthy of our efforts. Although we start out the year in a good financial position, we will look for additional funding sources for our endeavors.

As always, I’m grateful for the strong support of so many of you: the FSPP Board whose names appear in the box on the last page of this newsletter, the backbone of this organization, and, of course, the many faithful volunteers. There are some changes for next year. Greg Watt has stepped down from the roles he assumed as Recording Secretary and Town Day Coordinator and I thank him for his service. Beverly Williams, a relatively new resident of Arlington who worked tirelessly in the park’s planting beds in 2010, I am happy to say, has consented to fill Greg’s shoes. Marshall McCloskey will continue to be our Membership Secretary, officially keeping the database updated and sending out acknowledgement letters. And Kathy Modigliani will again join us to help with children’s activities in the park as Activities Co-Chair. I appreciate people’s willingness to continue to be active and to get more involved.

There are many agencies and companies that have helped us: John Bean, Arlington Department of Public Works, who is retiring this month; Joe Connelly, Parks and Recreation Department and the Park Commissioners; Cori Beckwith and the Conservation Commission; Carol R. Johnson, CRJ Associates and Teresa Hodge; Jim Hubbs, Stabilizer Solutions; Terry Driscoll, Read Custom Soils; and Todd Heimlich, Heimlich Construction Company. They all had a role in facilitating the installation of the new path surface at Linwood Circle. Without their approval and assistance it would not have been possible. Thanks to all.

As you may remember, last winter frozen Spy Pond provided much opportunity for fun and adventure. I hope to see many people enjoying themselves again this year. I wish you all a Happy New Year and look forward to your continued interest in the success of our organization.

Sincerely,
Karen L. Grossman

Karen L. Grossman
President
Friends of Spy Pond Park

Standing Goals Accomplished in 2010

- Increased active membership, enlarged the core group of volunteers
- Maintained the park
- Town Day booth
- Sent bi-monthly meeting announcements including main topics to be discussed
- Sold more t-shirts
- Filed annual report and PC report to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Library display
- Increased awareness of FSPP and park events: held two successful park festivals
- Maintained and updated FSPP database
- Published quarterly Newsletter
- Created archive on news items on Spy Pond Park (Memory Scrapbooks)
- Created a scorecard on annual goals: all but 2 attained
- Recruited four new board members from a broad range of the membership: see list of Board members on our website

Additional 2010 Goals Accomplished

- Enhanced the FSPP website and implemented on-line dues payment
- Sought additional grants and funding
- Explored the question of gasoline-powered motors on Spy Pond
- Filed for exemption from Massachusetts sales tax
- Pursued solutions for path erosion: Teresa Hodge designed a plan involving re-grading and repair, and
- StaLok® was installed at Linwood Circle
- Recorded a Public Service Announcement at acmi TV

Goals for 2011

- Seek additional funding sources
- Submit warrant articles to Town Meeting for no-wake and safe boating signage
- Maintenance details:
 - plantings and soil enrichment in beds 2 & 3,
 - pursue poison ivy eradication,
 - have Town plant two trees for playground shade, and
 - remove dead tree
- Encourage Town to install a Port-a-Potty at Spy Pond Field
- Add web links to similar organizations and our PSA
- Involve more school groups in maintenance
- Schedule a different group for each Work Day
- Schedule more nature crafts in the park, when possible
- Obtain requested MA sales tax exemption
- Advocate for MyRWA to collect water quality data for Spy Pond
- Repair bulletin boards

2011 Officers

Officers Elected at the Meeting:

On the back of this newsletter in the upper right hand box is a listing of people who have assumed positions serving the FSPP in 2011. You can see on the FSPP website's News page the skills each officer, chairperson, or coordinator brings to his or her role.

Open Board Positions:**

- Grant Writer/Fundraiser
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Internet Social Networking Coordinator
- We also need someone with carpentry skills to assist Andrew Fischer in repairing the damaged bulletin board that had been near the intersection of Linwood St. and the bike path.

*** Please contact Karen Grossman to volunteer to help with any of these unfilled positions.*

In Memoriam: Peg Sheehan

by Betsy Leondar-Wright

Spy Pond Park lost one of its oldest and best friends in September, Peg Sheehan. Peg's view of Spy Pond out her kitchen window was her frequent companion. With her activist spirit, Peg played a key role in killing the Red Line extension that would have made a transit corridor of what is now the forested bike path.

In more recent decades, Peg's biggest cause was repair of a sewer access cover on Linwood Street that occasionally malfunctioned and spewed up sewage that ran down the street, jumping the curb and polluting the pond. Despite repeated communication with the DPW and numerous letters to the Selectmen, it wasn't until recently in 2010 that this source of sewer overflow was finally securely sealed, much to her satisfaction.

It was evident to all that Peg had a good heart. In the 1990s, she worked as a personal care attendant to very sick people, including a man with AIDS. Unlike some of the "old guard," she had no negative reactions to "new Arlington" people moving into her neighborhood, but was a friendly neighbor to all. Peg was also a great storyteller and listening to her was a laugh a minute. When she first told me that the doctors had said no more treatment was available for her illness, I asked her how she was coping, and she said, "Keeping it funny." She fought off cancer for eight years of good life, thanks to treatment at Dana Farber, so that sense of humor must have really worked well.

During the 2007 FSPP fall bulb planting, Peg and I planted dozens of crocuses and little purple bell-shaped flowers under the first bush as you enter the park from Linwood Street. A few have continued to come up each spring. So when you see the early flowers there this year, pause and think of Peg Sheehan, and all the good things that flowered from her long life.

Peg Sheehan passed away on September 19, 2010 on her 77th birthday. She leaves her daughters, Noreen and Peggy; her son, Ed; her grandson, Ricky; and her large, extended family. Her many church and neighborhood friends will miss Peg, too.

Winter TLC for the Park

by Doris Birmingham, Co-Chair Beautification

As winter approaches many of us look forward to a reprieve from the sweaty work of maintaining our planting beds. Yet Spy Pond Park continues to need attention, even in the off-season. Wind, water, and the occasional careless visitor inevitably leave behind a certain amount of debris. You can help preserve the winter beauty of the Park if you take a cue from FSPP member Liz Blumenthal and various anonymous "angels" who make a habit of doing a little pick up during their daily walks. When you set out for a winter stroll, grab a plastic bag on your way out the door and look for packaging, bottles and cans, all of which seem to be especially abundant—or at least appear more apparent—after a snowmelt.

Several locations in the Park are magnets for litter. These include the areas near the beaches and the boat ramp, particularly around the rose bed near the ramp, the embankment near the parking lot, the perimeter of the playground fence, and along Pond Lane near the overpass. Cigarette butts are an eyesore on paths and around benches. A particularly serious problem is the stuff that collects on the grates of the catch basins in the parking lot and Linwood Circle. This impedes drainage and leads to flooding and, ultimately, erosion in the park.

Visitors often comment on the cleanliness of the Park. With a minimum of effort, all of us can keep it that way, even in winter.



PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT

Richard Duffy and Ann LeRoyer: “Elizabeth Island, Past, Present, and Future”

by Eric Berger

Richard Duffy, local Arlington historian, and Ann LeRoyer, Editor of the *Arlington Land Trust News*, were the featured speakers at the FSPP annual meeting on Sunday, December 5, 2010. Richard gave a most interesting slide presentation about the diverse, colorful history of Elizabeth Island. In the 17th century, the island was originally owned in common by the proprietors of the Town of Arlington, called Menotomy at the time. In 1704, the island was sold to Moses Boardman. His daughter, Elizabeth, was born just prior to his purchase of the island, and the island, may have been named in her honor.

Boardman sold the island in 1713 to Spencer Phipps who later served as Lieutenant Governor and Acting Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Subsequently, Thomas Russell owned the island, and in 1868 his heirs sold it to the Fitchburg Rail Road Company. The deed marking this sale included the first reference to the name “Elizabeth Island”, supporting the theory that the island was named after Elizabeth Winship Russell, widow of Jason Russell, a local hero of the Revolutionary War. No railroad use by the Fitchburg Company was ever made of the island, although there was some thought that a railway could span the pond via the island.

There was much activity in the vicinity, however. When Arlington was the young, independent town of West Cambridge in the early 1800’s, militias from surrounding communities engaged in “war games” on the pond and the island, preparing for battles in the westward expansion of the United States. Then, in 1921 Freeman Young, an officer of the Middlesex Sportsmen’s Association, a hunting and fishing club, acquired the island and later willed it to the Association. Eventually, it was deeded to the Arlington Boys and Girls Club that occupied the former Arlington Boat Club on the shore of Spy Pond.

In 1940 Henry DeForest, a Lake Street resident and real estate sales manager for the Kelwyn Manor development, purchased the island to pursue a dream. Henry set about assembling 70-pound concrete blocks transported there for what was to be the foundation of his “honeymoon home”. However, his plan, described in the Boston Herald, never materialized and the island came to be held by other private owners, most recently the Sacco family for the past forty years. The residential real estate listing of the island in 2008 highlighted the importance of perpetually preserving it.

Our second speaker, Ann LeRoyer, spoke quite informatively about the wonderfully successful fundraising campaign launched by the Arlington Land Trust (ALT) to purchase and henceforth protect Elizabeth Island. The ALT applied for and

received a pivotal \$85,000 grant from the Massachusetts Conservation Partnership Program. Additionally, the Arlington Conservation Commission committed \$22,000. Furthermore, the ALT pledged \$40,000 and spearheaded a superb campaign that raised the remaining balance of \$118,00 by the November 30, 2010 deadline.

The land will be owned by the ALT, and both Mass Audubon and the Arlington Conservation Commission will hold a conservation restriction on the land. The very worthy and noble goal of the ALT is to protect Elizabeth Island “to ensure that the island remains a refuge for wildlife as well as a recreational resource accessible to the public”. Mass Audubon’s Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary staff will conduct occasional programs involving the island. As Bob Wilber, Audubon’s Director of Land Protection says, “Elizabeth Island is both a unique oasis of significant habitat and a defining element of the community’s identity”.

Editor’s Note: The FSPP salutes the ALT for the success of its efforts and wishes to express its gratitude to Richard Duffy and Ann LeRoyer for their generosity in spending time with us. Their presentations greatly enhanced our annual potluck and meeting at the Jefferson Cutter House.

In Memoriam: Frances Cameron

by Karen Grossman

Frances (Simopoulos) Cameron of Arlington passed away on November 8, at the age of 83. She was the devoted wife of the late F. Martin Cameron, loving mother of Melanie Cameron, and beloved sister of the late Josephine Pollack and Peter Simopoulos. She also leaves many nieces, nephews, cousins and other loving relatives and friends. Frances worked for the State Department as a secretary, here and all over the Globe.

Frances was very high spirited and enjoyed life to the fullest. She was active in politics and belonged to the League of Women Voters. Frances, as many may know, frequently attended meetings of the FSPP and served the organization coordinating mailings and sitting at our outreach booth. We know she loved looking out at Spy Pond since her home sits on the shore of this Great Pond of Massachusetts. I think of her when we watch the swans and geese waddling from the water to eat the grass in her backyard.

Frances has been absent from our meetings the past couple of years due to a long illness and we have missed her. The FSPP offers sincere condolences to her daughter, Melanie. A celebration of her life was held at the Rogers & Hutchins Funeral Home, 292 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, on Sunday November 14.

The Shores Resound with Music and Art at the FSPP Festival*

by Debbie Botos

Community, caring and a love of Spy Pond Park were on display at the Friends of Spy Pond Park Music and Arts Festival on Saturday, September 11, 2010. With help from Mother Nature, who provided a picture-perfect day, residents and friends from neighboring communities came together to share performances, art activities and beautification projects.

The sounds of bands and individual performers rang out from 12:00 to 4:00 pm, calling people to join the fun. Seth Botos, graduate of Arlington High School (AHS) and Berklee College of Music, created stages for both amplified and acoustic music. A mix of rock, country and neo-soul from: Opposite People, Sevi D and the Wilds, Music, The Furies, Webb and the Wisenheimers, and Uyanga Boldbaatar treated park visitors. Individual performers included Travis Lund, Webb Sandquist, Steve Gruber, Greg Perry, Angus Blake, and Liz Buchanan and Gordon MacFarland.

Brian Biciocchi, AHS graduate and staff member at the Arlington Center for the Arts, created 5 stations with arts activities that were located between the two stages. For a small donation, kids of all ages could make a pirate hat, design a crown, build a puppet, create a "flipper" or have their faces painted. Sylvain Malfroy-Camine, another Arlington native, invited children to join him in creating a painting. He encouraged them to pick up a brush and add their inspiration to the canvas on which he was working. This was a unique way for young people to work directly with an artist and understand the stages involved in creating a finished work.



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Emma Marlin-Curiel paints with Sylvain Malfroy-Camine, artist

The Friends of Spy Pond Park provided a strong presence, describing their mission to preserve and improve the park. They invited passers-by to assist members who were weeding and cleaning up the park, to join the organization, and to donate to their efforts. I talked to Karen Grossman, President of the group who sat at the outreach booth and signed in volunteers. She remarked that this terrific event has drawn attention and support for the park. She said, "We are so thankful to Seth, Brian, and all the musicians and artists who have produced and participated in this successful fundraiser. The volunteers working in the planting beds have faithfully devoted themselves all summer and we are forever grateful to them for their efforts. We hope that the visitors will come often to enjoy the park and get involved in our organization."

Although the music was free, attendees made generous donations. The funds collected went to the Friends of Spy Pond Park to help them continue their important work. All performers and art activity coordinators donated their time, talent and sound equipment. This program was supported in part by a grant from the Arlington Cultural Council, a local agency that is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

**This article originally appeared in the Arlington Advocate*



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

Members of Webb and the Wisenheimers (Chris McDermott, electric guitar, Webb Sandquist, vocals and guitar, Seth Botos, drums, Travis Lund, banjo and dobro, and Jordan Alegant, bass) entertain park visitors

**Friends of Spy Pond Park
next meetings
at
Karen Grossman's
Sunday, Feb. 6, 2011 &
Sunday, Apr. 3, 2011
both at 7:00 p.m.
32 Hamilton Road #402**

RSVP (optional) to 781-646-5990
email fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

Park on Linwood Street off Mass. Ave. or on Lakehill off
Lake St. at the far end of the complex.

To join Friends of Spy Pond Park...

Send your annual dues (\$15 individual, \$25 household, \$5 low-income) to:
FSPP, P.O. Box 1051

Arlington, MA 02474-0021

For more information, call a Friends officer.

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For newsletter contributions, contact berkshire2@juno.com

General comments can be sent to fspp@friendsofspypondpark.org

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PHOTO BY BETSY LEONDAR-WRIGHT