

# Friends of Spy Pond Park Newsletter

## Fall 2008

### A Sense of Place: An Interview with painter Adrienne Landry

by Betsy Leondar-Wright



PHOTO BY FRED MOSES

**"Bench at Spy Pond Park" by Adrienne Landry**

Several paintings by FSPP member Adrienne Landry, including a lovely small one of Spy Pond Park and Elizabeth Island, have been on display at 13Forest Gallery at 167 Mass Ave, which specializes in local artists. I spoke with her at the October 16 Artist Reception.

Most of Adrienne's paintings are either of East Arlington scenes, some of them of Spy Pond, or of Monhegan Island, Maine, where she goes every summer. She described herself as an artist with a "sense of place." She had been painting Arlington houses for years before she realized that they looked exactly like the neighborhood in Wakefield where she grew up. She is often surprised by her subjects in that way. She said they come from an unconscious "dialogue between your outer world and your inner world."

Adrienne talked about how her painting evolved towards her current representational style, and what role living in the Spy Pond condos played. In college she was pushed to be an abstract expressionist, because that's what was cool then. "It wasn't me; I was so bored." Finally she asked herself, "Who are you doing this for? All you have as an artist is yourself. If it's not you, don't do it." So she stopped painting for 11 years.

But then one day the beauty of Spy Pond drew her to paint it. Of that first painting, she said, "It was horrible-looking, but it got me going again. I started doing lots of Spy Pond paintings, mostly not worth showing to anyone, but I was learning to paint again."

When Adrienne paints in the park, she doesn't mind people looking over her shoulder. This summer in Maine, two boys an-

nayed her by snapping photos in her face and hanging over her. She suggests asking an artist, "Do you mind if I look?"

I asked her about the painting, "Bench at Spy Pond Park." She enthused, "I love that painting!" Pointing to it, she showed me how asymmetrical it is, with the bench to one side, and with the juxtaposition of the rough rock steps and the even cobblestones on the path. She called the rock formations in the park "stunning" and called the improvement in the park "phenomenal."

After the 13Forest Gallery no longer displays her paintings, there are no other exhibits currently planned. But several of her Arlington paintings appear on the website of the Concord Art Association (<http://www.concordart.org/> - click "Past Exhibits," then "Coleman Gallery," then look under 2006 for Adrienne's name). To learn of future opportunities to see Adrienne Landry's paintings, you're welcome to e-mail her at [alandry@belmont.K12.ma.us](mailto:alandry@belmont.K12.ma.us).

### When Mastodons Roamed Spy Pond Park

by Eric Berger

I recently gazed awestruck at the six and one-half foot long mastodon tusk clearly displayed by The Arlington Historical Society at the George A. Smith Museum located at 7 Jason Street in Arlington.\* The discovery of this huge tusk in Spy Pond in 1959 by Arvid Carlson while fishing is clearly described in the wonderful book by Eva Balazs entitled *More Spy Pond Stories*. Eva's book is a must read for Spy Pond lovers and can be found at The Book Rack located at 13 Medford Street in Arlington.

After gazing at the mastodon tusk, I had the good fortune of meeting the delightful Eva Balazs, purely by accident, at the Smith Museum the very day of my visit. I became fascinated as Eva told the story of Arvid's discovery in Spy Pond. The Mastodon, which roamed Spy Pond about 14,000 years ago, was a mammoth creature about ten feet high, covered with reddish brown hair, resembling an elephant, but with much longer tusks and a more barrel-shaped body. Mastodons were confirmed vegetarians, with a preference for conifer leaves and cones, twigs, and grass.

Wouldn't it be fun to zoom back 14,000 years in a time machine to check out the mastodons cavorting in Spy Pond-all from the safety of that time machine, but of course?

\*The Smith Museum closed Oct. 31st, reopening next April 1st. Call 781-648-4300 to schedule a visit from November-March.

## Call for Nominations

The FSPP has open positions for 2009. One of these can provide an opportunity for you to get involved with the FSPP in a new way. Contact Karen Grossman, FSPP President, to indicate or verify your interest: [karen@klgwoman.com](mailto:karen@klgwoman.com) a.s.a.p.

### 1. Corresponding Secretary

Role: Keep the database current.

### 2. General Vice President

Role: Help the President and learn the President's job in order to assume the Presidency or, perhaps, the Co-Presidency in 2010.

### 3. Co-Chairpersons of the Beautification Committee

Role: Recruit FSPP members, and others in our database who have indicated interest in aspects of clean-up and park maintenance, to help on work days in SPP. Oversee the work being done on those days.

### 4. Mailing Coordinator

Role: Recruit people from our database to help do mailings of the FSPP Newsletter and our annual meeting notification.

### 5. Park Activities Co-Chair

Role: Plan activities for children and recruit people to enact them.

## Electronic-only Newsletters

by Eric Berger

If you have been receiving the FSPP electronic newsletters, we hope you've noticed the wonderful appearance of the color pictures and photos in the online versions. If you haven't been receiving emails from FSPP, we don't have your email address. *Future FSPP newsletters and meeting notices will automatically be sent by email only.* Therefore, it is necessary for you to send us your email address now. For those of you who don't have access to email, please call Karen Grossman at 781-646-5990 a.s.a.p. Let us know so we can make alternative arrangements for you. You can also go to our website: [www.friendsofspypondpark.org](http://www.friendsofspypondpark.org) where all the FSPP meeting minutes and newsletters are posted on the NEWS page. These actions save money and help the environment by leaving less of a paper trail. We hope by making the FSPP more visible online we will increase peoples' awareness, interest, and involvement in what we do.

## FSPP and Town of Arlington Work Together

There are many issues that the FSPP and the Town of Arlington have been working on together.

John Bean, Director of Public Works, arranged for Karen Grossman, President of FSPP, to meet in Spy Pond Park with Mike Rademacher, Town Engineer, to look at erosion along the paths. Mike has recommended a long-term remedy to impact water runoff during heavy rains. A contractor would install "honeycomb" concrete pavers filled with stone dust material at particular locations along the walkways through the Park. This would cost approximately \$7500. Since the Town and the FSPP do not have sufficient funds at this time to make this improvement, the FSPP will be discussing the possibility of soliciting money from other sources.

The Conservation Commission has indicated that they do not feel the need for any work to be done to change the muddy edge of the Linwood Beach area. The FSPP will be talking about this and welcome your comments regarding the condition of this area of the Park.

We couldn't figure out the source of a mysterious pool of water in the grass in the middle of the Park. However, the DPW detected an irrigation system leak there and contacted the contractor responsible to repair it.

Joe Connelly, Parks and Recreation Director, is concerned that the playground was off limits for so much of the summer due to an infestation of sand wasps. Therefore, in his next budget, he has requested funds for an alternative surface in the playground.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is investigating the feasibility of having portable restrooms available at parks and fields throughout Arlington. The Friends of Parks will be meeting to hear about this soon.

The FSPP is happy to work in a cooperative manner with all the Town's Commissioners and Department employees.

## Note from the Editor

by Eric Berger

I had indicated to our president, Karen Grossman, that I would resign as Editor of the FSPP Newsletter, effective January 2009, to become co-chair of a task force to champion the importance of public school library staffing by full-time certified professionals. I disagreed, however, with the Board of the MA School Library Assn. about the strategic direction to be taken by the Task Force and thus we parted company. Consequently, I'll be on the ballot again in January as a VP for Communications.

# An Eagle Scout Helps FSPP

by Eric Berger



**Eagle Scout Matthew Scenna**

Matthew Scenna recently became an Eagle Scout, the highest honor a scout can earn. To achieve this rank of excellence, Matthew needed to demonstrate proficiency in all scouting skills and complete at least 21 merit badges in various fields like citizenship, environmental sciences and outdoor activities. Matthew chose to spend many hours helping to spread mulch and weed the planting beds in Spy Pond Park to fulfill some of his merit badge requirements.

Another Eagle Service Project Matthew focused on was to lead his troop in painting the kitchen and a second room at the Pleasant Street Congregational Church in Arlington. Matthew coordinated the extensive work of 18 volunteers who contributed 152 volunteer hours making the spaces brighter, cleaner and safer.

We greatly appreciate Matthew's assistance to the FSPP and the Arlington community. He should be quite proud of his many accomplishments and exemplary community service. Matthew Scenna is an outstanding role model for other teens demonstrating that working hard towards a goal brings many rewards.

## President's Letter

Dear Friends,

This has been a very busy and productive year helping with the maintenance of Spy Pond Park. Uta Low has done a superb job helping to get volunteers to participate on Park Work Days this year. On behalf of the FSPP I thank Eric Baatz, Bill Eykamp, Anne Ellinger, Betsy Leondar-Wright, Gail McCormick, Ilse Oliviera, Doris Powell, and Dolores Schueler who worked tirelessly to clean up the planting beds in Spy Pond Park this past October 18th. I also want to thank again the many others who have helped with tedious tasks in the Park all year. Special tribute goes to Eric Berger and Jamie Ciocco for the excellent job they have done editing and laying out the newsletters. Our numbers continue to grow because FSPP outreach in the Park each month has brought us new members and volunteers to support our maintenance efforts.

Unfortunately, the students we trained to do weeding in the park planting beds have not done much work. However, perhaps next summer when they aren't as busy with school, some of them will take advantage of the financial incentive we offer for the work. We realize at the time of year we presented the job to them, it was a daunting task. As always, it is our hope that we can keep up more with the growth of invasive plants earlier in the spring and summer.

The FSPP encourages you to read the minutes from our regular meetings posted on our website. Most of all, I hope to see you at our annual meeting on January 4. We will enjoy a potluck meal, discuss our 2008 accomplishments and formulate goals for 2009. Please save the date.

Sincerely,  
Karen L. Grossman  
President  
Friends of Spy Pond Park



# A Water View of the Sand Bar

by Betsy Leondar-Wright

State Representative Will Brownsberger (D-Belmont) stopped by the FSPP booth on Town Day. He had signed on to the Selectmen's letter to the MA Highway Department about removing the sandbar from Spy Pond, but he was unsure exactly what or where the sandbar was. I offered to show him. So one crisp October evening, the two of us kayaked out from the Park to the far corner of the Pond near the intersection of Pleasant Street and Route 2, where the runoff from Route 2 pours unfiltered from a massive drain into the Pond.

Unfortunately, the recent rains meant that the sand bar was entirely under water, so Rep. Brownsberger did not get to see the full effect of how it looks when a long peninsula of sand rises above the surface in drier seasons. But he could see that that entire corner of the Pond is extremely shallow. The stones that channel the water away from the middle of the Pond cause the sand to settle right in front of the last two abutters' homes. I picked up some sand with my paddle, and while the top layer was light colored, immediately below was black sand. I said I thought the black came from motor oil, and he was skeptical, wondering if perhaps it was just dirt. In any case, it's something not found elsewhere in less polluted parts of the Pond. The water trapped in the far corner by the sandbar was, as usual, disgustingly full of trash, weeds and algae, and he was appropriately appalled.

I told him how close we had come earlier in this decade to getting the Highway Department to take responsibility for the impact of their faulty Rt. 2 design, and how disappointed we had been when they had dropped the ball and failed to dig out the sand or re-fashion the drain.

Spy Pond showed off for its visitor. Twice we were able to paddle very close to a great blue heron standing in the water, one slender young one across from the Spy Pond Condos and one big one near Kelwyn Manor. Both herons flew away right over our boat, and later we saw one of them up in a tree on the island. Rep. Brownsberger had never before seen Elizabeth Island up close. By the time we got back to shore, a lovely pink and gold sunset had begun.

We all look for our politicians to roll up their sleeves and be willing to get their feet wet. Well, this was one state rep. willing to roll up his pants and wade into some very cool and dirty water!

## Spy Pond Mural Update

by Anne Ellinger

Next May, just before you enter the Walgreens store in East Arlington, you may see off to your left an artist creating a beautiful mural depicting Spy Pond Park. Hundreds of shoppers a day will see it. Because we view it as a wonderful way to inform residents of the park and do outreach for members, FSPP has donated \$500 towards the project and is serving as fiscal agent. We are currently busy collecting signatures from abutters and applying to the Town Zoning Board. We hope you, too, will contribute towards creating this valuable public art in Arlington. So far we have raised \$2500 towards the total budget of \$5000.

Make your check to Friends of Spy Pond Park and send it to Anne Ellinger at 21 Linwood Street, Arlington, MA 02474. For more information or to help solicit funding for this project, please contact [anne.ellinger@gmail.com](mailto:anne.ellinger@gmail.com). You can find out more about the proposed mural in the FSPP Summer '08 newsletter posted on our website: [friendsofspypondpark.org](http://friendsofspypondpark.org).



# Winter Visions

by Peggy Fenner

It's widely known that all hearty souls do not easily enjoy harsh, unpredictable New England winters. This causes me to wonder whether people living on or nearby Spy Pond share the same feeling. I hope not.

Years ago, when I had to give up participating in winter sports, I was challenged to find a new way of embracing winter while living on Spy Pond. At first it wasn't easy, but over time by using the power of my imagination, things changed for me.

In December as soon as the lake freezes and the first blizzard covers the expansive space with a pristine, white blanket of snow, it's easy for me to imagine I live on the edge of the Alaskan tundra. Everything becomes still and serene as I wait by my window for the silence to be interrupted by the first run of huskies harnessed and running across the lake. I don't always see them, but more often than not clusters of hooded Eskimo figures walk slowly across the frozen surface wearing their trusty mukluks and snowshoes. They hold hands and steady one another as their shadows drift across the tundra and are eclipsed by a late afternoon whiteout.

I immerse myself in all the real and imagined elements of this vision as it will fade and dramatically change in a day or two. The temperature will rise, the snow will melt and magically the view will transform itself into a crystal skating arena. The surface that was once covered with snow now gleams and has come to life with swirls, twirls and the sounds of clashing hockey sticks. A few ice sailing rigs shoot across the ice, adding splashes of color to the scene while a daring young cyclist tests his balancing skills on a wobbly bicycle along the edge of the skating arena. This touch of humor added to a beautiful portrait of an old fashioned New England scene is unforgettable.

In March, months later after winter has laid out its arrays of captivating dramas across Spy Pond, the lake begins to show signs of wanting to become fluid again. At night one can hear prehistoric like rumblings and grumbings underneath the ice. I hear the sound of ice cracking as I imagine giant pressurized bubbles forcing their way to the surface and beginning to create faults and fissures in the four month old ice mass. It feels like marine geology at its best.

As this scene dissolves, the sun and air currents unite, giving us warmer temperatures that begin melting the ice on the pond. It happens gradually, but when the sun hits the ice shelves that are created near rivulets of flowing water, magically, beds of shimmering crystals and diamonds appear. The waves wash over these treasures. They rock and scrub them. Almost as soon as the crystals and diamonds appear hours later, they helplessly succumb to the illusive robbers who steal them and submerge them in the cold, murky waters below.

Days later in April, our feathered friends arrive and the pecking order begins out on the lake for all to see. The geese, the swans and the ducks have rehearsed their honks, hisses and quacks for opening day at our lakeside bird sanctuary. The feather fluffing and fanfare can only be compared to opening day at Fenway Park. Now that is a stretch of the imagination, isn't it?

This is a small sample of how I get myself through the long months of winter. My curiosity is aroused.... How do you do it? E-mail me if you are inspired to share your strategy. Peggy Fenner [mlpfenner@gmail.com](mailto:mlpfenner@gmail.com)

## Spy Pond is my "Lost Garden"

By Ilse Oliveira

When I moved to the Spy Pond Condominiums last June I was bemoaning the fact that I had to leave behind a small garden in the back yard where I previously lived. I always had or worked in a garden, starting in my mother's kitchen garden in Austria, and then I found a FSPP Newsletter that was sent to the former owner of my condo. I signed up as a volunteer on Arlington Town Day and I went to the meeting at Karen Grossman's condo on September 7, 2008. It was inspiring and I wanted to help to weed and plant.

Karen entrusted me with some lily bulbs to be planted on the Fall Cleanup Day. The bulbs came from Mike Huben who propagated and grew them and gave them to Dearborn Academy. Ted Wilson, Head of the Academy, gave them to us on Town Day. Thank you!

On October 18th, the Fall Cleanup Day, I joined other volunteers to work in Spy Pond Park. We weeded, trimmed and cut up branches to fit into yard waste bags, and picked up litter throughout the Park. It was hard work, but satisfying. We found some spots near the small paths leading down to the Pond where we could plant the day lily bulbs. We found that the dirt was full of gravel and roots, but as Mike mentioned in his article in the *Boston Globe* (see below), day lilies don't need a lot of rich soil. We planted about 24 bulbs and hopefully they will sprout in the Spring.

Hope the winter frosts are kind to our lily bulbs.

Read the *Globe* article [here](http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/house/articles/2008/08/31/a_budding_obsession_with_daylilies):

[http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/house/articles/2008/08/31/a\\_budding\\_obsession\\_with\\_daylilies](http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/house/articles/2008/08/31/a_budding_obsession_with_daylilies)

# **Friends of Spy Pond Park Annual Meeting**

at the

## **Jefferson Cutter House Sunday, Jan. 4, 2009**

**5 p.m. - potluck supper**

**6 p.m. - annual meeting**

## **Corner of Mystic Street and Mass. Ave.**

**1 Whittemore Park, Arlington, MA**

Featured Speaker:

Leslie Mayer, Chair of the Park Commission

## **To join Friends of Spy Pond Park...**

Send your annual dues of (\$15 individual, \$25 household, \$5 low-income) to

FSPP, P.O. Box 1051

Arlington, MA 02474-0021

For more information, call a Friends officer.

President: Karen Grossman (781) 646-5900

General Vice-President: Open

Treasurer: Eric Baatz (781) 641-7479

Recording Secretary:

Elizabeth Karpati (781) 643-4172

Corresponding Secretary: Open

Chair for Publicity and Outreach:

Eric Berger (781) 859-5096

Co-Chairs for Beautification: Open

VPs for Communications(Newsletter):

Eric Berger (781) 859-5096

Jamie Ciocco (781) 316-1662

Website Chair: Fred Moses (617) 304-4451

Outreach/Park Events Coordinator:

Anne Ellinger (781) 646-1705

For newsletter contributions, contact [berkshire2@juno.com](mailto:berkshire2@juno.com)

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