



# Friends of Hall's Pond

Volume 1, Issue 2

Spring 2004

## HALL'S POND: LOOKING BACK . . .

by Ferris Hall



This is the first of a series of historic vignettes relating to Hall's Pond Sanctuary and the neighborhood surrounding it, Cottage Farm. Both the Sanctuary and the Neighborhood are part of the National (1978), State (1988) registries of historic places as well as being the first local (Brookline) historic district (1979).

Hall's Pond was acquired by the town of Brookline in 1975, the Town's first purchase for conservation purposes. It is administered by the Conservation Commission and maintained and stewarded by the *Friends of Hall's Pond*, a volunteer group begun in 1976. It has been a model for 20 subsequent 'friends' organizations in the Town which support a variety of neighborhood sanctuaries, parks, gardens, woods, and playgrounds. An extensive restoration of the Sanctuary was completed in 2002, at which time Hall's Pond (3.5 acres) was combined with the adjacent Amory Woods parcel (1.6 acres).

A map dated 1641 shows Hall's Pond, then called Cedar Swamp, occupying approximately 10 acres in the bowl that now forms Amory Park. Not far east was a vast tidal marsh that separated Boston from Brookline. The Mill Dam was constructed across this marsh in 1821. Largely made of granite stones, it now corresponds to Beacon Street. Subsequently, from 1840 to 1850 the Back Bay landfill created new land, 100 acres of which were annexed by Boston.

Meanwhile, the Cedar Swamp was also gradually filling-in, initially by eutrication but later by landfill (notably in 1953). In 1903 the Town purchased 8.2 acres of what is now Amory Park from the Anna Powell Sears

Amory estate for \$62,000. Until her death in 1895, Mrs. Sears had lived on her 25 acre estate given to her by her father, David Sears II, in an 1846 home burned or torn down in the early 20th century which was situated on what is now 20 Amory Street. About this same time, Minna Hall, living at 156 Ivy Street, offered the Town her 3.5 acres of backyard wetland, including Hall's Pond. This offer was refused!

The Pond is the lowest point in the neighborhood serving as the catch-basin for 115 acres extending to Coolidge Corner and the Town installed the current system of storm drains in this area in 1948. The Pond has always drained into the Charles River via a stream that runs west along what is now the Friedman Street extension to Amory (then Dymore) Street, and hence north to the Charles River at what was the Indian Palisades Fort near Essex Street RR station (current Cottage Farm/BU Bridge). The stream was running routed underground as streets were constructed. Amory Street (the northern part of which replaced Dymore Street) was constructed in 1911 and its homes overlooking Amory Park, date from about this time.

*(continued next page)*



SANCTUARY NEWS



*Come forth into the light of things. Let nature be your teacher.*

*- William Wordsworth*

Spring 2004

Page 2

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends of Hall's Pond is dedicated to the preservation and protection of the nature sanctuary comprising Hall's Pond and Amory Woods in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Through the encouragement and coordination of volunteer involvement in educational, conservation and maintenance activities, the Friends seek to ensure a healthy future for this valuable urban resource.



### BIRD WATCHING WITH FRED BOUCHARD

A short trip around Hall's Pond one November morning -- still in radiant raiment with the long, low autumn's gold and russet splendors -- produced a few pleasant surprises: a jaunty pair of Hooded Mergansers along with the usual handful of Mallards; not one but two Great Blue Herons, one pond-side, one perched high in the tall maple; three Hermit Thrushes among the forty or more Robins eating the berries and crabapples and leaf tossing on the upland 'forest' floor.

Among the littler critters, a Ruby-Crowned Kinglet was knee-high along the upland trail, and an Orange-Crowned Warbler was overhead near the Garage corner. Making a twitter were a dozen or more Goldfinches and a few Chickadees. Among the sparrows were two Song, one Chipping, two White-throats, and six or more Juncos were in the red house's grass under the pines.

Permanent local residents at the pond are Double-crested Cormorant, Mallard, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Screech-Owl, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, House Finch, and American Goldfinch.

### HALL'S POND: LOOKING BACK . . . (continued)

Cedar Swamp subsequently became know as Swallow Pond, and in the late 1800's became known for its owner, Minna Hall. Interestingly, this legacy to Brookline is dwarfed by Minna being a cofounder, with Harriet Hemenway Lawrence, of what became the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the first such society in the America. But that is another story.

### TOWN OF BROOKLINE Improvements and Activities Fall 2003 - Spring 2004

- Accessibility improvements to boardwalks near water areas in the sanctuary (completed fall 2003).
- Replacement and widening of existing boardwalks in Amory Woods (spring 2004).
- Removal of lead paint from the gazebo and re-painting (possible spring 2004, depending on cost).
- Response to vandalism incidents at boardwalk railings and at new ornamental gates, and follow-up repairs (fall 2003). Full repairs to be completed spring 2004.
- Ongoing invasives removal and control. Two Sanctuary and Historic Park Interns will be working in summer of 2004.
- Infill of some open upland areas with native shrubs and trees (spring 2004).
- Installation of new permanent sign panels and bulleting board at sanctuary entrances (winter 2003 - spring 2004).
- Collaboration with Friends on fall and spring work days.
- Publication and distribution of new sanctuary brochure with map and nature guide (winter 2003).

### 2004 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Leadership Team:

Dan Doherty  
Betsy Shure-Gross  
Barbara Mackey  
Ronny Sydney

#### Secretary:

Patricia Roberts

#### Treasurer:

Joe Collins

#### Board Members:

Fred Bouchard  
Harry Bregar  
Dana Brigham  
Joseph Collins  
Dan Doherty  
Eris Doorneweerd  
Gail Fenton  
Ellen Forrester  
Betsy Shure-Gross  
Ferris Hall  
Kate Harnsworth Morrissey  
Barbara Mackey  
Randolph Meiklejohn  
Janice Provencher  
Deborah Raptopoulos  
Lauren Rauh  
Patricia Roberts  
Nan St. Goar  
Ronny Sydney  
Bruce Wolff

*For information about  
membership,  
please write or call:*

**Friends of Hall's Pond**  
P.O. Box 1844  
Brookline, MA 02446  
(617)738-4334





*There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man  
than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before.*  
- Robert Lynd

Spring 2004

Page 3

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING PUBLIC EVENTS

### Minna Hall Tea

Date to be  
Announced

### Spring Clean Up

Sunday  
April 25, 2004

### Annual Meeting

Monday  
June 28, 2004

## LOSING GROUND: AT WHAT COST?

*This Massachusetts Audubon Society report shows the recent trend toward large houses and large lot development has resulted in a drastic loss of wildlife territory. Much of the state's wildlife habitat suffer from lack of permanent protection.*

*To read more about this alarming report and find out what you can do to address these issues, visit their site at [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org) - News & Action and follow the links to "Losing Ground".*



## HALL'S POND LEARNING PROJECT: LIFE LESSONS EXPLORED

by Gail Fenton

This fall, a group of fifth graders were sketching plants and animals at Hall's Pond when a class of preschoolers approached. In fascination, one of the older girls showed the little children her study subject. Then both young and old stared in awe at the delicate body of a white-footed mouse. "Maybe it's really alive," suggested the fifth grade girl euphemistically. When the preschoolers moved on, she asked, "How did it die? Will something eat it?" and a classmate announced, "It's the circle of life."

The Devotion School fifth graders, taught by Lauren Ockene, have been making regular visits to the pond to explore habitat, biodiversity, and over-wintering behaviors of animals and to carry out a computerized study

of temperature variations in and around the pond. Nine classes from four of the Brookline schools have explored Hall's Pond this past fall with a naturalist or leader provided by the Hall's Pond Learning Project.

Supported by the Friends of Hall's Pond and grants from the Brookline Community Fund and the Blossom Fund, the Learning Project provides a naturalist or leader for a variety of community programs. The fall programs included an autumn walk for the Brookline Senior Center and a 2nd grade song-writing project, which resulted in a CD that is now available for viewing. In 2002, the project served 500 people, ranging from preschoolers to seniors and including extended day programs and summer day camps.



## IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

The fall cleanup was quite an event. There were people everywhere doing an amazing amount of raking, cutting back and mulching. All of this is a necessity in preparing the garden for winter. Thanks to all who had a hand in getting the garden put to bed.

Next up is preparing for spring. The catalogues have been steadily arriving on doorsteps everywhere. The allure of those plants is overwhelming. How will we design the newly edged spaces? What kind of garden will it be? The plant choices are beyond belief! The planning has begun so be on the lookout for new things happening in the garden this spring.

Remember, the garden is always in need of volunteers. If you would like to help in the effort or learn

more about gardening join us this spring. For more information call Nan St. Goar at (617)232-5775 or Ellen Forrester at (617)232-1627. Hope to see you in the garden!



The Brookline High School B-Green Group, promoting greener spaces in their community, attend the Hall's Pond Clean Up Day on November 25, 2003.

Photo by Bruce Wolff

# BIRDS OF HALL'S POND

*Photos by Bruce Wolff*



*Great Blue Heron*



*Eastern Screech Owl*



*Male Hooded Merganser*

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

Friends of Hall's Pond  
P.O. Box 1844  
Brookline, MA 02446  
Phone: (617) 738-4334  
Fax: (617) 223-5138  
Email: [info@hallspond.org](mailto:info@hallspond.org)

