

# THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Vol. 14, No. 1

BallardVale, Massachusetts

Summer/Fall 2017

## PRESERVING FAMILY HISTORY

### Renovating can be a labor of love

When Bonnie Haley and her husband, Mike, took on the transformation of the historic home at 211 Andover Street, they had a clear vision of what they wanted to accomplish — and no second thoughts.

After all, the home has been part of the story of Bonnie's family for four generations — and counting. "My maternal grandmother was part of the Lawrie family, a familiar name in Ballardvale," she explains. "My mother was born on Dale Street and went to the Bradlee School [For more on the Bradlee School, see Village Stories on page 2]."

In 1941, Bonnie's grandparents bought the house, which Bonnie says was built somewhere between 1835 and 1850, and she often visited. When her father, who served in the military, was deployed, the rest of the family would stay with the grandparents. After her grandfather died in 1969, Bonnie's family moved in to help her grandmother. "I went to South School in kindergarten, later junior high and high school, then off to college, from this house," says Bonnie.



**211 Andover Street before renovation**

Soon after college, Bonnie and Mike married and began raising twin sons, Kyle and

Matt, now in their 20s. "We moved around a lot," says Bonnie, "and built three houses along the way. We even lived here on Andover Street for a time when we were building one house in Westford, and the twins went to Ballardvale Preschool."

Bonnie's mother lived in the house until she died in 2013, leaving Bonnie the house and a project she welcomed. "I always wanted to restore the house and preserve my family's memories," she says. "Our goal is to be true to the history of the house and the town."

Their first step was to find the right contractor, one with experience in preserving history. In the spring of 2014 Cote and Foster got the job, working with architect Joel Silverwatch. "We decided to add up in back to extend the half story in front," says Bonnie. "You can't tell the difference from the street, but the house is bigger."

Before they started, the Haleys met with the BallardVale Historic District Commission, which was enthusiastic about the restoration, and by the fall of 2014 they had an approved plan. "Our goals were aligned with the BVHDC," says Mike. "We went into it knowing that we wanted to maintain the character of the house."



**211 Andover Street after renovation**

With their building experience, the couple had a good idea of what they were getting into. "We knew we had to do serious

work to save the barn and replace the porch (transformed into a kitchen in the 1940s), which became the new kitchen and an additional bedroom,” says Bonnie. “It probably ultimately would have been easier to build new, but there were no structural surprises.”

There may not have been unexpected structural issues, but there was a big surprise behind the house, where the yard became a steep hill. “We expected to do work on the old fieldstone retaining wall,” says Bonnie. “But we discovered it was failing in two places.”

The long-term fix, it turned out, would be to regrade the slope of the hill to make it less steep. And that entailed purchasing a sliver of land at the top of the hill on High Vale Lane from the owner, St. Joseph Church.

During work on the hill, construction on the house was on hold. “We needed the help of a civil engineer and an excavator. Then once the hill regrading was underway, an unusually hard fall rain sent water rushing down the hill, triggering a landslide behind the house. It became clear that we needed to construct a trench at the top of the hill to preserve the house restoration going forward,” says Bonnie. “Now that it’s all done, we are adding trees and other vegetation back to the hill.”

The hill project took additional time as well as more money. “Starting in fall 2014, it took about four months to come up with a regrading plan,” says Mike. “Then until July 2015 to acquire the land.” While the couple waited for construction on the house to begin, they refinished original doors, a fireplace mantel, and family antiques. Construction was finally underway in November, and they moved in the following August.

Bonnie now has an easy commute to her Orton-Gillingham Reading Center in downtown Andover, where she works with dyslexic children, while Mike heads to his office in Northboro.

After nearly a year in the house they are settling in, surrounded by memories and family antiques, many of which they salvaged from the barn. “We had to clear out four generations’ worth of stuff to do this project — bins of photos and archives,” she says, “including

Confederate money that belonged to my paternal great-great-grandfather Colonel Isaac Prescott, who went off to fight in the Civil War. His daughter Annie would later marry into the Brown family of Andover. It will take years to sort through it all.”

Meanwhile, they are enjoying the memories they are preserving throughout the house, from the lovingly refinished family furniture, to the horseshoe from the old barn hanging over a door, to Bonnie’s grandmother’s peonies blooming in the garden.

### **Your BVHDC**

BallardVale Historic District Commission (BVHDC) meeting dates and agendas are posted at [andover.ma.gov](http://andover.ma.gov). All are welcome. Members of the BVHDC include Joanna Reck, chair ([jlarcht@gmail.com](mailto:jlarcht@gmail.com)); Diane Derby, vice chair; Gary Rowe, secretary; Ron Abraham; Bob Branca; Remi Machet; and Matt Pimentel.

The BVHDC currently has two vacancies. To express interest in volunteering, please complete a talent bank form at [andoverma.gov/621/volunteer](http://andoverma.gov/621/volunteer). For more information, email Diane Derby at [derby01@comcast.net](mailto:derby01@comcast.net).

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### **Village Stories Old and New**

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Built in 1890, the Bradlee School at 149 Andover Street sits on a hilltop overlooking the village. The building is an example of the Queen Anne–Romanesque style popular in that period, with its tall hipped roof, asymmetrical styling, rounded first-floor windows, and decorative brickwork. It was designed with six classrooms, each accommodating 42 pupils. Originally called the Ballard Vale School, the structure was renamed the Bradlee School in 1894, honoring Josiah Bradlee, proprietor of the Ballardvale Mills. It was the fourth school in Ballardvale, and the first constructed of brick. It also has the distinction of being the first school building in Andover to be supplied with town water. Converted in 1983 to 11 condominium units, the project was recognized with the Andover Preservation Society Award for Adaptive Reuse in 1990.

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## Meet Your Neighbors

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On Dale Street, in a one story, brown shingled building, is the headquarters for Cronin's Ice Cream Inc., a five-generation family-owned business that distributes ice cream, frozen desserts, other food items, and ice from Maine to Connecticut.

A look at the company's informative website ([croninsicecream.com](http://croninsicecream.com)) unveils a long and proud history. "Cronin's Ice Cream began through the marriage of two ice cream families. In 1952 our grandfather Charles Cronin Jr. married Marilyn Welch, uniting Doughty Ice Cream Co. with Jersey Ice Cream Co. and Cronin's Ice Cream was born," is how the company website reports its origins.



**Cronin's fleet of trucks is ready to deliver frozen treats throughout New England**

The website goes on to explain that Doughty Ice Cream, which first sold ice cream on Martha's Vineyard in 1883, was the first company to market coffee-flavored ice cream.

Today, Cronin's carries over 3,500 items ranging from bulk ice cream and novelties to specialty items and is the proud distributors of HP Hood, Bart's Homemade Ice Cream, Richie's Slush,

Gifford's Famous Ice Cream, Royal Ice Cream, Philip R's Specialty Products, Tofutti, and Cold Fusion.

One service Cronin's offers is private tastings, which include samples of up to four ice cream flavors, a display set-up and break down, and flyers and promotional materials pertaining to the tasting flavors. The company also sets up ice cream socials and other functions for schools and businesses.

In addition to distributing ice cream and other dessert items, Cronin's sells chest and standing freezers and dipping cabinets for businesses. But the majority of Cronin's business is the distribution of ice cream, something the company has done very successfully for many years.

"We do not require any minimums (for deliveries) and we listen to our customers needs and custom fit programs and Ice cream for them," explained Carilyn Cronin Donovan, one of many family members who help run the ice cream business today.

"We've been in Ballardvale since the 1960s," said Carilyn. "We like the community, our neighbors and the location."

As Cronin's website proudly proclaims that Cronin's Ice Cream has long been a family-owned and operated company providing high quality frozen items combined with unsurpassed service. For over 5 generations, we have been committed to delivering first-rate products to our customers, and we understand the importance of receiving your ice cream on time and in perfect form."

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## FAQs

### Ask the BVHDC (BallardVale Historic District Commission) . . .

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#### ***What do I need to know about replacing a deteriorating fence?***

If your fence is appropriate to the period and style of your house, we encourage you to replace it with materials that duplicate the old fence. Otherwise, you might consider upgrading to a more architecturally appropriate fence. Remember that fences

along the front of a historic house were meant to be decorative, not to screen the house from the street (flat board privacy fences are fine for side and rear yards). Chain link, stockade, and wire-type fences are not appropriate in historic districts. And unless they were an original design feature, low brick walls and brick planters are not acceptable. Note that review and approval by the BVHDC are required for fences visible from a public way.

**BallardVale Historic District Commission**

*Andover Town Offices  
36 Bartlet Street  
Andover, MA 01810*

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**CALENDAR**

**October 4 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**

Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m.

**October TBD Halloween Festivities**

Ballardvale Playground: watch for notices with date and time posted at the playground

**November 1 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**

Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m.

**December 3 BallardVale Tree Lighting** BallardVale Green — 5:00 p.m.

**Go Paperless**

To receive the next issue of the BallardVale Gazette via email, send your name, address, and email to Karen English: [kfeenglish@gmail.com](mailto:kfeenglish@gmail.com)

**Questions? Suggestions? Feedback?**

If you have a question for the BVHDC or a suggestion for a future issue of the BallardVale Gazette, please contact the editors: Karen English: [kfeenglish@gmail.com](mailto:kfeenglish@gmail.com) or Joe Halpern: [joehelp@gmail.com](mailto:joehelp@gmail.com).