

The BallardVale Gazette

Newsletter of the BallardVale Historic District Commission

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BallardVale, Massachusetts

June 2003

CHARLES SHEELER

In 1946, Bartlett Hayes, Director of Phillips Academy's Addison Gallery, invited American modernist Charles Sheeler (1883-1965) to take part in a novel experiment when he proposed that Sheeler come to Andover as the museum's first artist-in-residence. The choice of Charles Sheeler was an impressive one. As one of the most innovative members of the group known as the "Precisionists", he had combined drawing, painting and photography to achieve a distinctive vision of America, focusing on industry and technology, vernacular architecture, and craft.

During his artist-in-residency Sheeler was not expected to teach classes or lecture to the public, although he did meet informally with students. Instead, he and (his wife) Musya made forays into the nearby countryside to sketch and make photographs of the kinds of simple vernacular architecture that had attracted Sheeler throughout his career – barns, silos, modest farmhouses and plain white churches. On one of their drives the Sheelers came upon Ballardvale, a small working-class neighborhood of Andover that had once been a bustling industrial town. Its large woolen mills on the Shawsheen River had ceased production in 1930 and had gradually fallen into disrepair. Ballardvale Mill, with its towering chimney and massive brick buildings, quickly captured Sheeler's imagination and, although he also took several photographs of the Phillips Academy campus and the town of Andover, most of the images from his visit focus on the abandoned mills.

Sheeler was a painstaking and deliberate artist who rarely painted directly from nature. In an interview late in his life,

he explained that it had always taken him a long time to "digest" new places. He responded to the landscape of Ballardvale by taking many small-format photographs of the buildings along the river, which he described as "notes...in shorthand."

Sheeler's time at Andover proved to be important for him and over the course of the next year he created several works based on his experience here. The Addison's oil painting, *Ballardvale*, and the tempera study, *Ballardvale No.2*, (Colby College, Waterville, Maine), date from that fall of 1946. *Ballardvale* and *Ballardvale No.2* center on the "finishing mill", a wing of the main mill building built in 1836, that once housed spinning machines, a machine shop and boilers. Both paintings show the mill, with its impressive square chimney looming against the sky, as seen from an old wrought iron trestle bridge (since destroyed), which spanned the Shawsheen River just below the mill pond dam.

Several of Charles Sheeler's paintings from his experiences in BallardVale are on exhibit at the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy. Sheeler's work is included in the exhibit "Conversations: A Collection in Dialogue" which will be open for public viewing until July 31, 2003. Call the Addison at 978-749-4015 or visit their website at www.addisongallery.org for gallery hours. The BallardVale Gazette would like to graciously thank the Addison Gallery for permission to print the above excerpt from the Addison's exhibit catalog marking the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Charles Sheeler's artist-in-residency at the Addison Gallery.

PRESERVATION 2003

The month of May is traditionally designated as Historic Preservation Month in Massachusetts. In recognition, the Andover Preservation Commission in collaboration with the Andover Historical Society and the BallardVale Historic District Commission evaluated nominations submitted by the public as well as members of the group and selected ten outstanding examples of preservation effort within the town of Andover. Both residences and businesses were considered following a strict set of review criteria. The 2003 preservation awards were given in four categories: sympathetic additions to a historic residence, appreciation for ongoing exterior and/or interior preservation, historic streetscape preservation and recognition of lifelong community preservation by an individual. The 2003 award winners are:

9 Andover Street,
Benjamin Abbot House.
Certificate of Appreciation.
Mr. and Mrs. Dean Kemper

342 North Main Street
Certificate of Appreciation
Attorney Thomas Kiley

53 Poor Street
Sympathetic Addition
Bob Frishman and Jean Shinto
Jane Griswold and Mike Scott, Designers

For relocation of historic barn to:
60 Chestnut Street
Certificate of Appreciation
Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Markell

1 Judson Road
Certificate of Appreciation
Phillips Academy; Mr. and Mrs. George Dix

14 Orchard Street
Certificate of Appreciation
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Castle

6 Smithshire Estates
Certificate of Appreciation
Jeannie Stewart

66 Burnham Road
Certificate of Appreciation
Janice Meagher

BallardVale Green Historic Streetscape
Accepted by Richard Bowen on behalf of the
BallardVale Historic District

Ruth Davis Sharpe
Certificate of Appreciation
Given posthumously as special recognition for years
of dedicated community preservation service.

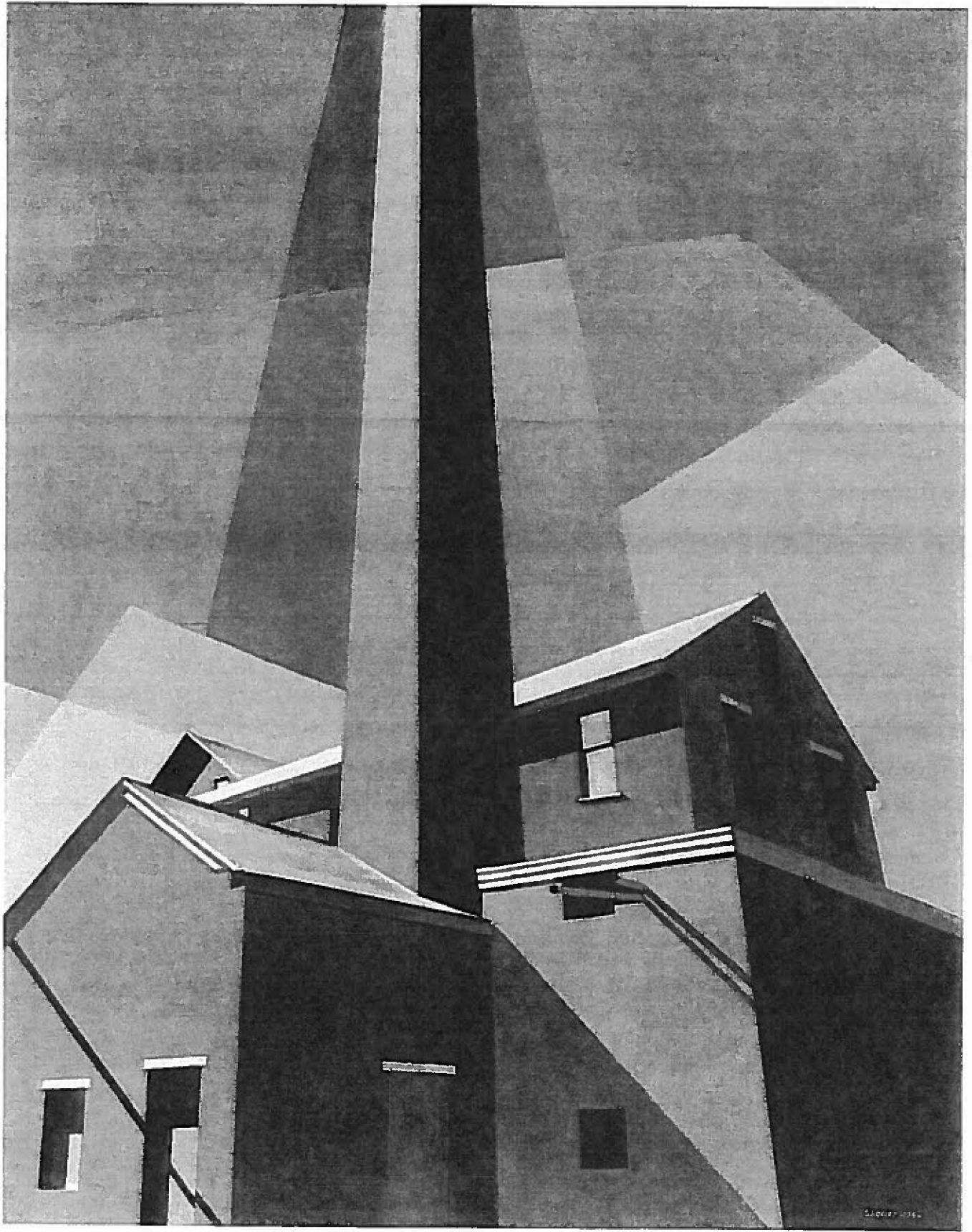
WINNING GREEN

"In the 1970's, the town of Andover razed the historic BallardVale Community Center, an act from which the residents of BallardVale have never quite recovered. Not content with the empty lot where the building once stood, residents, and in particular Richard Bowen, sought to do something positive by expanding the existing village green in hopes that it would serve as a central focus for the Vale, a place on which BallardVale residents could gather, hold events, meet their neighbors and build a sense of community.

Richard and Lucy Bowen have worked hard to make it happen by planting trees, shrubs and flowers and making sure it was watered...all this work with little financial support and no minor amount of frustration but always with the encouragement of those who live in BallardVale. Eventually town meeting approved a sprinkler system for the Green.

The Awards Committee believes that the BallardVale Green represents an important continuation and preservation of the sense of an historic streetscape in this district. While there is no longer a building that represents community, this green space serves the same purpose and perhaps even more so because it was by the hard work of the people who love and use it."

--- Karen Herman, on presenting the Historic Streetscape Award, May 15, 2003



Charles Sheeler (1883-1965)
Ballardvale, 1946

Charles Sheeler (1883-1965)

Ballardvale, 1946

Oil on canvas, 24 x 19 in.

1947.21

copyright Addison Gallery of American Art

Phillips Academy, Andover, MA

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The BallardVale Gazette wishes to express its gratitude and thanks to The Lane Collection, Karen Haas of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Addison Gallery of American Art for permission to reprint *Ballardvale* for the June 2003 issue of the BallardVale Gazette.

WE'VE BEEN ASKED...

What does the BallardVale Historic District Commission do?

The BallardVale Historic District Commission was established in 1995 to ensure that the unique historic character of BallardVale be preserved and protected. This is accomplished by following Commission guidelines and BVHD By-law, and requiring approval for most exterior work on homes, businesses, properties and any structure, visible from a public way, within the district.

The nine-member volunteer commission is made up of residents living both within and outside of the historic district. Regular monthly meetings, normally scheduled for the first Wednesday evening of each month, are held at Town Offices. At these meetings, applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness for projects are reviewed by commission members with input from neighbors, abutters and any interested parties. Commission members offer direction and answer questions for residents at any time before, during and after the application process. In addition, one member is appointed to act as a liaison to each applicant for the duration of a project. Answers to simple questions and small changes that occur during construction are often easily provided by the liaison.

The Commission also sponsors and organizes events held within the district, and works with residents interested in developing ideas. The neighborhood spring clean-up, the holiday tree lighting on the Green, and the annual block party held at the playground are all supported by the Commission and its members. Ongoing collaborative projects with local Eagle Scouts help troop members meet their community service requirements by providing improvements to BallardVale (repairing and painting playground equipment, making an inventory of broken or missing street signs in the district, etc.). The BallardVale Gazette is also a volunteer effort by the Commission to keep neighbors informed of fun or important events and developments in Ballardvale, as well as providing a forum for sharing information relevant to the Historic District, such as history of the Vale, We've Been Asked, Swap Shop and the calendar. Editor M.P.Bogan welcomes comments, suggestions and questions.

In addition to being involved in the many activities within the district and reviewing applications for renovation, construction, demolition and other projects in BallardVale, the Historic District Commission tries to remain attentive and responsive to the many proposals outside of the district. The Commission has advocated the importance of the historic character of BallardVale in regard to local development, and offered both suggestions and support for various projects that may have significant impact on the neighborhood, such as BallardVale Crossing, the intended bridge repair in BallardVale center and the current development under discussion with the Planning Board, known as the Marland Street Extension.

BLOCK PARTY III

Date: **Saturday, Sept. 6, 2003**

Rain date: Sept. 7

Time: **12:00 noon – 4:00 pm**

Place: **BallardVale Playground**

Once again, the Vale's annual neighborhood block party will be held on the Saturday following Labor Day. Mark your calendars and join your friends for an afternoon of food and fun! Each family should bring a potluck side dish and a 2-litre bottle of soda or juice to contribute. Grills will be available to those who prefer to bring grillable items not on the menu. Everyone is welcome to bring lawn chairs, blankets, bikes, balls and other playground toys and activities.

To contribute money or to be involved in the planning of this year's party ---three's a charm! --- please contact Chris and Diane Huntress at 978-475-7738 or email them at chuntress@attbi.com.

MEMBER WANTED

The BallardVale Historic District Commission is seeking a ninth member, preferably an architect, to fill one vacant seat. Commission members need not live in the district, though most do. If you are interested, or know someone who is, please call Chris Huntress (Chair) at 978-475-7738 or Diane Derby (V.Chair) at 978-475-0125.

ARE YOU PLANNING A PROJECT?

If you live in the BallardVale Historic District and are planning any work on your property that is visible from a public way, don't forget to submit your application to the BallardVale Historic District Commission (at the Town Hall Office of Community Development and Planning) at least 2-3 months before the date you wish to begin work. If you aren't sure if your project requires Commission approval, call Patti D'Agata (BVHDC Secretary) at Town Hall (978-623-8301); Chris Huntress, Ch. at 978-470-8882; or Diane Derby, V. Ch. at 978-475-0125.

CALENDAR

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Jun. 24 (Tuesday) | Planning Board meeting re: Marland Street Extension
Town Offices – 8:30 PM |
| Jul. 2 (Wednesday) | BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting
Town Offices – 2 nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00 PM |
| Jul. 8 (Tuesday) | Planning Board meeting re: Marland Street Extension
Town Offices – 8:30 PM |
| Aug. 6 (Wednesday) | BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting
Town Offices – 2 nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00 PM |
| Sept. 3 (Wednesday) | BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting
Town Offices – 2 nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM |
| Sept. 6 (Saturday) | Block Party at the BallardVale Playground 12:00 noon – 4:30 PM |
| Sept. 7 (Sunday) | Block Party rain date |
| Oct. 1 (Wednesday) | BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting
Town Offices – 2 nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM |

BallardVale Historic District Commission

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

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*See you at the Block Party on Sept. 6!
Rain date is Sept. 7...*