

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Vol. 7, No. 1

BallardVale, Massachusetts

August 2007

Green Gets Posts

Granite posts and new chain are being installed on the BallardVale Green, replacing the wooden posts and chain that had encircled the spot for so many years. The posts are being placed 8 feet on center with approximately 3-1/2 feet of post showing above the ground. The previous holes are not being reused since they were sporadic in spacing and alignment. Chain will be added later, leaving several openings for pedestrian access.

Richard Bowen, former Town Manager, former Chair of the BV Historic District Commission, and long-time BallardVale resident, proposed a warrant article to Town meeting in 2006 for the granite post upgrade. "I'm very pleased," he said, on seeing the work underway. "What the town is doing now makes some amends for the demolition of the community center many years ago." The wooden posts had deteriorated and the chain rusted despite Bowen's personal effort to tend them over the years. "I'm just relieved that I won't have to paint the posts and chain anymore," he added laughingly. This improvement "is really very nice for the community, and for the town as a whole."



Block Party 2007

Saturday, Sept. 8, 2007

12:00 noon- 4:00pm

BallardVale Playground

Mark your calendars for BallardVale's best party --- the annual Block Party ---held every year on the weekend *after* Labor Day. Activities include the egg toss, hula hoop contest, tug o' war, sack race, face-painting, and Moonwalk, or simply sitting and chatting with neighbors and friends!

Last year, food, drinks and grills were provided by Wyeth & Sodehxo, Spinner's Pizza, Ballardvale Café, Cronin's Ice Cream, Piantadosi Bread and Sunday's General Store. (The Gazette editor regrets her failure to thank Sunday's General Store in the November 2006 Gazette...Sunday's has been a regular and generous supporter of BallardVale events for many years. My sincere apologies...) Other sponsors included F.P.Reilly & Sons, Elm Street Auto and the BallardVale Historic District Commission.

Hamburgers, hotdogs, drinks and snacks will be provided. Andover's Department of Health food guidelines for public gatherings discourage potluck food offerings. A suggested donation of \$5.00 per person (\$20.00 per family cap) is appreciated to defray the cost of food. Please make checks payable to "BallardVale Block Party" and send your check by September 1 to: Chris and Diane Huntress, 17 Tewksbury Street, Andover, MA 01810. To contribute additional money or to be involved in the planning of this year's party, please contact Chris and Diane Huntress at 978-475-7738 or diane-huntress@comcast.net. Dogs (on leashes, of course) are welcome.

BVHD Commission Members

The BallardVale Historic District Commission welcomes two new members to the working group. In July, David DiAntonio and David Hart joined James

Sheldon, Chair; Diane Derby, Vice-Chair; Ron Abraham; Sherry Kirby; Mike Ristuccia Jr.; Lynn Smiledge; and Bruce Taylor. Also as of July, Mary (M.P.) Bogan, is no longer a voting member of the Commission, but will continue to volunteer as the BallardVale Gazette editor.

If you have questions about the historic district or the Commission, please contact James Sheldon at ilsheldon@verizon.net; Diane Derby at derby01@comcast.net; or any other Commission member. Please direct comments or articles for inclusion in the Gazette to Mary Bogan at mpbogan@comcast.net. The next Gazette will be published in November. In addition, you or your group can sponsor the Gazette and submit an ad of up to one half page in size. The cost is \$140.00 to cover the cost of printing and postage.

Local Award Winners

Andover's Preservation Commission held its 17th annual awards ceremony in May. As it does every year, residences, businesses and individuals were considered. Awards to properties were given for sympathetic additions to historic residences, appreciation for ongoing exterior preservation and contextual appropriateness in new construction, and to individuals for their contributions to historic preservation.

The strong preservation efforts in BallardVale were generously recognized this year, with three of the ten outstanding examples of the preservation effort in Andover being bestowed on properties in the historic district.

An award for *Exterior Preservation* was given to Chris and Diane Huntress of 17 Tewksbury Street. "This charming federal style home reflects an early 19th century style of rural house with two stories, five bays, gable end and centered entrance. Detailing on the house is minimal and reflects a classical style of architecture. It sits near the center of BallardVale. The first owner was William D. Stark, a local provisioner and butcher. In the early 1920's the home was rented to two families. The owners have taken great care to preserve their comfortable family home. The Awards Committee appreciates their effort."

An award for *Contextual Appropriateness in New Construction* was given to Stephen and Diane Derby of 63 Center Street in recognition of their newly constructed barn. "BallardVale has its own distinctive small mill village appearance. Buildings date primarily from the 1850's and 63 Center Street is no exception. This mid-19th century two and one half story residence was built in the vernacular farmhouse style of architecture with the entrance located on the side of the front facing gable end. The Italianate bracketed overhang decorates the double door entryway. As preservationists, Stephen and Diane Derby have celebrated their historic house by building a two-story barn/garage with cupola that mirrors that 19th century style. The barn, which sits at the rear of the lot, has the appearance of always having been in place. In fact, some awards committee members were surprised to learn of its more contemporary construction. The Awards Committee appreciates the care and consideration given by the Derby's to their barn project and to the preservation of their home."

An award for both *Exterior Preservation* and *Contextual Appropriateness in New Construction* was given to Michael Ristuccia for his work at 9 and 11 Clark Road. "9 and 11 Clark Road are being considered in tandem because the project was possible due to the Town's zoning bylaw, the Dimensional Special Permit for Historic Preservation and Michael Ristuccia's talent in identifying these projects and successfully developing them. The bylaw allows for the subdivision of a lot that ordinarily would not meet dimensional requirements in order to preserve an historic house, ideally on the site or if necessary as a moved structure. The process is overseen by the Zoning Board of Appeals and must meet certain stringent criteria, including historic significance, to be allowed.

The Thornton House, built in 1856 at 11 Clark Road has a prominent position overlooking Andover Street in BallardVale. The house is a Federal style, five bay with a center entrance and Italianate front porch. Much of the interior of the house remains intact with decorative wood moldings, doors and wood paneling under its large first floor windows. The formal curved stairway railing, newel post and balustrades reflect the mid-19th century style. At the time the building was purchased by Mr. Ristuccia, it had asbestos siding and the exterior detailing was in a deteriorated state.

9 Clark Road is a newly constructed residence in a style that is reminiscent of the small mid-19th century vernacular farmhouse typical of BallardVale. It is optimally sited on the landscape, facing south. The home looks comfortable in its surroundings, as if it had been built one hundred fifty years ago.

The Awards Committee applauds Mr. Ristuccia's effort and his energy in preserving the Thornton House and creating its new neighbor on Clark Road."

Other 2007 award winners for properties include 54 Lupine Road (1910); the Punchard-Barnard House at 8 High Street, (1846); 115 Lovejoy Road, (1840); the Aiken-Ripley-Barnard House at 48 Central Street, (1850); the Balmoral Condominiums at 16 Balmoral Street, (1922). The award for Individual Achievement for Photo-documentation of Elm Square and the Town of Andover from the 1960's through 1996 was given posthumously to Richard D. Graber to celebrate his life, his extensive photographic work and talent.

Thanks to Karen Herman and Jim Batchelder of the Andover Preservation Commission for permission to quote from their notes.

White Squirrels

In one area of BallardVale, joggers can't believe their eyes. Bikers pull over to the side of the road to take a look. And neighbors keep their cameras at the ready. What's causing all the commotion? The white squirrels, of course!

Several white squirrels live and frolic in the backyards of BallardVale residents. Known as *albinistic* gray squirrels, these are genetic variants of the gray squirrel, and can be true albinos with pink eyes as well as simply white-furred squirrels with black eyes. Black squirrels are referred to as *melanistic*.

BallardVale's white squirrels are not albinos, as they have black eyes. White squirrels are not particularly common, and according to *Massachusetts Wildlife, Vol. LV, No.4, 2005*, this may be because some have impaired vision and, except for when they are protected by a snow-covered landscape, are obvious to

predators. But they play, frolic, and hide acorns with and just like any other squirrel.

Several towns, including Marionville, MO, Brevard, NC, Olney, IL, and Exeter, Ontario Canada, bill themselves as the "Home of the White Squirrel". With only four white squirrels spotted together at any one time, BallardVale may not be ready to make such a claim. But the squirrels are well-loved, and even affectionately named --- Whitey, Al, Eddy and Blanche.

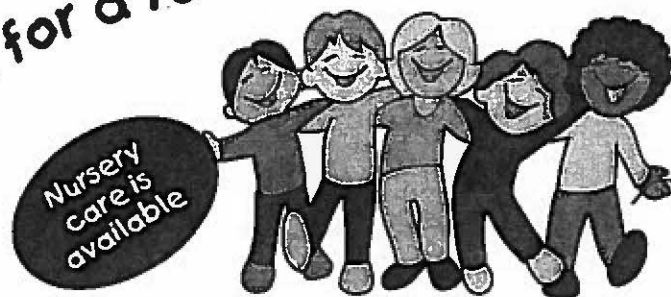
To read more about the claims of the towns listed above, visit www.RoadsideAmerica.com. To hear Exeter, Ontario's song "White Wonder", visit www.whitesquirrels.ca or look for the video on YouTube. And keep your eyes peeled for BallardVale's uncommon residents!



Gazette Sponsor

This Gazette was sponsored by the BallardVale United Church located at the corner of Clark Road and Hall Avenue in BallardVale. See the following page for more information.

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BallardVale
Historic District Commission

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See you at the Block Party on Saturday, September 8!