

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

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BallardVale, Massachusetts

Fall/Winter 2018

Meet Your Neighbors Celebrating 20 Years of Scary Fun with Jan Holden and Donna MacLean

Jan Holden, who came up with the idea for the Ballardvale Halloween Party and Parade 20 years ago, has no trouble remembering the first event she put on. Or even the motive behind it. "I came up with the idea because we had just moved to Chester Street, and we wanted to meet our Ballardvale neighbors. I thought it would be fun to have a dress rehearsal for Halloween for our children," said Jan, who recalls about 10 kids showing up for the inaugural event.

But thanks to Jan's persistence, and the work of her Chester

Street neighbor Donna MacLean, who took over planning the annual event seven years ago, the Ballardvale Halloween Party has grown into a full fledged festival and become a time-honored Vale tradition. Along the way Donna and Jan have had the assistance of countless neighbors, including Ellen and Rick Brennan, who give out treats to the kids from their home on Center Street.

With the exception of last year, when rain limited the size of the crowd to about 40, the annual party, which takes place the Sunday before Halloween, has consistently drawn between 75 and 100 to the BallardVale Playground on Andover Street.

"It's a lot of fun, with a lot of people from the neighborhood really looking forward to getting together every year," said Jan, who still participates in the annual event despite the fact that her three children are now adults and have moved away from the Vale.

"It's just great to bring people together and celebrate the kids who dress up and come down for the event," added Donna, the mother of two, Dylan, an eighth grader, and Colin, a fifth grader.



Jan Holden (left) and Donna MacLean

This year's 20th annual Ballardvale Halloween Party and Parade is scheduled to start at 5 p.m. sharp on Sunday, Oct. 28, at the Ballardvale Playground.

Donna said that once again hot cocoa and treats will be served, as each family is asked to bring something to share. Cider donuts and

Halloween gummies (more than 100 each of donuts and gummies) will again be strung from the playground equipment and games, including a relay race and scavenger hunt for buried plastic witches and spiders in the playground sandbox, will be set up for the toddlers.

"We'll gather at the playground and, like we do every year, we'll march the kids across Andover Street and up to Center Street

Halloween treats," said Donna. "After that we'll march the kids back to the playground where we will gather for more goodies.

“From start to finish the whole thing takes about 45 minutes,” added Donna, “which works out for the parents who want to get their kids home at a reasonable time for school the next day.”

Jan said that a big reason for the ongoing success of the Ballardvale Halloween Party and Parade is the volunteers who rally around the annual get-together. She said that many parents along with their sons and daughters in high school have chipped in to help run the event over the years.

Jan credits Donna, who emails “Save the Date” reminders to the parents of South School students a month prior to the actual event, for helping to keep the tradition alive.

Donna, meanwhile, credits Jan for making the annual event a reality and starting what has turned into a cherished tradition in the Vale. “Jan started the whole thing including the tradition of putting up signs in the playground a week before the event,” said Donna. “Without Jan none of this would have been possible.”



From left: Dylan MacLean, Cole LaChapelle, and Will Dorsey at the festivities in 2015.

Gather for the 20th annual Halloween Parade and Party on Sunday, 10/28, at 5:00 p.m. sharp at the Ballardvale Playground, For more information about this year's Ballardvale Halloween Party and Parade, email Donna MacLean at donna.p.maclean@gmail.com.

BallardVale Fire Station Update

Plans are underway to replace the existing, outmoded structure in the same location, where it has served the village since 1890. The next step is to invite input from the community, the BVHDC, and the Preservation Commission.

Public information sessions have been scheduled for October 17, 7:00 p.m., Ballardvale Fire Station, and October 25, 7:00 p.m., Public Safety Center (see the calendar on page 4 for additional dates). Also, the BVHDC has scheduled a special meeting on October 24 to view plan options with the architect. And because new construction would mean purchasing an adjacent property, there will be a Special Town Meeting on November 27 to vote on that funding.

Constable Ballard's Witches

Every October images of witches on broomsticks are part of the seasonal fun. But to residents of Andover in 1692, witches were a very real threat to life and property.

The outbreak of witchcraft hysteria that made Salem famous started about 15 miles away in Salem Village (now Danvers), but Andover's most dubious claim to fame may be that more witches were accused, arrested — and confessed — here than in Salem Village and Salem Town combined. (Witches who confessed were imprisoned; those who did not were executed.)

This chapter in town history has a Ballardvale connection through Constable Joseph Ballard. A miller by trade, Ballard's mill was on the Shawsheen, likely near the falls where — five generations and a hundred years later — Timothy Ballard was granted the use of land that would eventually become the site of the Ballardvale Manufacturing Company.

The Shawsheen itself had a role in the hysteria. Witnesses described the devil baptizing converts in the river and witches gathering on its banks at midnight after sneaking out of their houses and riding through the air on sticks.



Several accused witches described riding “sticks” to midnight meetings with the devil on the banks of the Shawsheen.

Ballard traveled to the county seat in Salem and knew about the “afflicted girls” who set off the first wave of hysteria. So when his wife, Elizabeth, didn’t recover from a mysterious illness after several months, he suspected witchcraft and recruited two of the afflicted girls as witch-finders.

They named her tormentors as the elderly Ann Foster (Foster’s Pond is said to be named for her husband), her daughter Mary Lacey, and her granddaughter, also Mary Lacey. All three generations admitted to signing the devil’s book, adding lurid details and implicating several neighbors.

By the time Elizabeth Ballard died at the end of July, the witch hysteria in Salem had abated. But Joseph then triggered a second, more dramatic round of witch hunts in Andover that lasted eight weeks. Among the arrested were relatives of town leaders, including the daughter and young granddaughters of the town’s minister, Francis Dane.

The hysteria ended in October after Andover residents led a campaign through petitions and letters to the General Court in Boston.

Reverend Dane’s daughter wrote one of the most convincing letters from her prison cell.

In November Joseph Ballard ended three months of bereavement by remarrying. He died in 1722 and is believed to be buried in the town’s first cemetery, at South Church.

In all 48 witches, including the most children of any town, were arrested in Andover: three adults were hanged and Ann Foster died in prison.

Ultimately the families of the accused were compensated, but it’s unlikely that life was ever the same for the 80 percent of townspeople touched by Joseph Ballard’s witch-hunting.

FAQs: Ask the BVHDC

Does the Historic District Commission have guidelines on skylights when the roof faces the public way and the installation would be apparent?

Skylights that would be visible do need to go through a review and approval process. In general, skylights are not encouraged in the Historic District, but each situation is different and considered individually — there is no one-size-fits-all rule when it comes to skylights.

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

Your BVHDC

BallardVale Historic District Commission (BVHDC) meeting dates and agendas are posted at andover.ma.gov. All are welcome.

Members of the BVHDC include Joanna Reck, chair (jlarcht@gmail.com); Diane Derby, vice chair; Ron Abraham; Bob Branca; Remi Mchet; Matt Pimentel; Gary Rowe; and Sara Sobieski.

For more information, email Diane Derby at derby01@comcast.net.

BallardVale Historic District Commission

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CALENDAR

- October 28 Annual Halloween Party and Parade**
BallardVale Playground — 5:00 p.m.
- November 7 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m.
- November 8 Ballardvale Fire Station Public Information Session**
Andover Senior Center — 8:00 a.m.
- November 10 Ballardvale Fire Station Public Information Session**
Ballardvale Fire Station — 11:00 a.m.
- November 15 Ballardvale Fire Station Public Information Session**
Andover Town Offices — 7:00 p.m.
- November 20 Ballardvale Fire Station Public Information Session**
Memorial Hall Library — 7:00 p.m.
- November 27 Special Town Meeting**
Vote on funding purchase of property required to expand Ballardvale Fire Station
- December 2 BallardVale Tree Lighting and Carol Sing**
BallardVale Green — 5:00 p.m.
- December 5 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m.