

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Vol. 16, No. 1 BallardVale, Massachusetts Spring/Summer 2019

Celebrating Our Public Lands

Among the pluses of living in Ballardvale is ready access to our beautiful natural surroundings. In this 125th anniversary year of AVIS (the Andover Village Improvement Society), both issues of the Gazette will be taking an appreciative look at the AVIS and Conservation Commission land that surrounds us. Included in this issue is a personal story of the importance of local trails to a Ballardvale neighbor, Teresa Padvaikas.

We invite you to share your own story of what our open land means to you and your family. So lace up your hikers, but don't stop exploring at the borders of Ballardvale. Check avisandover.org for special anniversary activities and a directory of all the AVIS reservations (if you visit each one this year, you can score a free t-shirt!).

Discovering a Sense of Place in Ballardvale's Great Outdoors

By Teresa Padvaikas



Are you still considered a newcomer to a town after four years? Andover is rich in history and part of the Merrimack Valley where I lived all my life. But being born and raised in Methuen, I surely never expected that I would live in "Ahndover"!

Do you know about the rivalry between the towns separated by the Merrimack River? The us vs. them, poor vs. rich, blue collar vs. white collar, Democrats vs. Republicans? Maybe that was high school thinking, or maybe it still exists after (cough, cough) 30+ years' distance from high school.

Still, the "wow" factor at the fact that I call Andover my home now is slowly fading like the sunsets over Pole Hill, but my growing fascination with the slice of Andover that I now call home grows with each daily walk I take in the Pole Hill Reservation.

Finding a home on a dead-end street, with a backyard that connects with the trails of the Pole Hill Reservation, was a lucky find after quite a long time

searching. I call Pole Hill my "back 40" and, yes, I have claimed it as my backyard as I enjoy daily walks in the woods! Although the trail system is not extensive, I notice changing scenes of wildlife, plants, and the forest every day. With each change of season, after every snowstorm or rainstorm, there is always something different in the trails.

I never know what I will see on these daily walks, whether it be deer, fisher cat, turkeys, baby owls, a great horned owl, familiar songbirds, or beavers slapping their tails in the Shawsheen River by the train bridge.



I look forward to spring so that I can find the elusive lady slippers and jack-in-the-pulpit flowers and other plants that come to life. Walking through the woods after a rain shower and looking for all the



different mushrooms springing to life is amazing as you breathe in the smell of the pines as the mushrooms push up through the discarded needles on the ground.

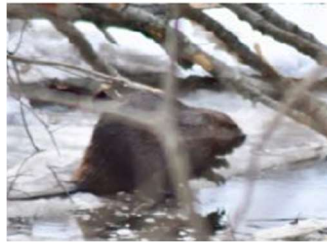
I have been lucky to find many signs of wildlife along the trails: animal tracks in the snow, scat from different animals, feathers, and the remains of animals that were a food source for others.

I enjoy sitting on the picnic tables by the river listening for the trains and trying to identify them before they cross the beautiful stone bridge —



is it the MBTA, Downeaster, or a freight train? It's very interesting to see all the beautiful graffiti artwork on the freight cars as they pass by.

As an amateur photographer, I enjoy documenting these sights to share with family and friends. The pictures here show some favorite encounters in my “back 40.”



So if you take a walk in Pole Hill, make sure you stop and listen. Look for the deer that will remain still until you pass by, look up high for owls in the pines, then come back another day and see something different. As always, leave only footprints, and enjoy your walk!

Meet Your Neighbors: Longtime residents John and Lorna McIntyre

How many Ballardvale residents can stand in their front yard and see the two homes they’ve lived in their entire lives? John McIntyre, who’s 76 and lives in the white colonial home with distinctive red shutters at 231 Andover Street, may be the only one.



Lifelong Andover Street resident John McIntyre and his wife, Lorna, with the two houses he’s called home.

A third-generation Ballardvale resident, John was raised next door in the large, tan Victorian home at 229 Andover Street that sits on the corner of High Vale Lane. John lived there from 1942 to 1965 before moving into his present home with his wife, Lorna. “The house we’re in now was actually a barn that sat behind my father’s house, called Sunnybank. He moved the barn over to this property in 1935 and

converted it into a home, named Apple Orchard House, for his sister Alice,” said John, who along with Lorna raised two boys, John Jr. and Andrew, at 231 Andover Street.

John, who is likely one of Ballardvale’s longest reigning residents, certainly has a lot of history here. He met Lorna when they were students in Ms. Patricia Keyes combined fifth and sixth grade class at the old Bradlee School at 149 Andover Street, which has since been converted into condominiums. Back then, said John, students who lived within a mile of the handsome brick grammar school were required to walk home for lunch, then back to school and home again and again.

John, who worked in sales for the Thomas J. Lipton Company for 32 years, and Lorna remain a well-known and friendly presence in the community, thanks in large part to their active affiliation with Ballard Vale United Church along with their annual plant stand sale in front of their home. For the last dozen or so years, the majority of the proceeds from their plant stand sale, which takes place for about seven weeks starting around Mother’s Day, have been donated to their church. The donations have helped support a number of causes including scholarships, Neighbors in Need, and youth mission trips.

Lorna, who runs the plant sales business while John keeps the stand full of new inventory, said that they have sold more than 100 different varieties of plants over the years, with the vast majority of them perennials. They said the most popular plant they sell is variegated hosta.



The plant stand at 231 Andover Street was well stocked in 2018.

“Ballardvale was really the perfect place for me to grow up and remain,” John said. “Our roots are here as well as our family and friends, and we love being part of our church.” Lorna seconds that. “John is certainly well rooted in Ballardvale,” she emphasized.

Fire Station Update

Last November more than two-thirds of voters at a Special Town Meeting approved funding a new fire station in Ballardvale. The facility will replace the current building, which at nearly 130-years-old, is inadequate and outdated. The planning phase is now in progress, and the BallardVale Historic District Commission and town boards are working with the architect to finalize a design. Remove and unfold the insert for more information.

Burns Reservation Beckons



View of Clark Pond in the Burns Reservation from Andover Street.

Pass through the busy intersection where Clark Road meets Andover Street and you'll notice a contrasting pocket of serenity at the picturesque pond across from the fire station. You may even have enjoyed a few quiet moments on the bench there.

The pond — Clark Pond — is part of the AVIS Burns Reservation. According to former Burns warden Allan Smeltzer, who took care of the reservation for a couple of decades, the land was donated by a Mrs. Forsyth and named in honor of her parents, who once owned a tract that stretched from Chester Street to the section by the fire station.

We can thank Smeltzer for the walking paths along the brook and the bridges. "I made the bridge on the Chester Street side so the kids could play on the island in the middle, and I did the same on the Clark Road side where you can walk along the water," he said.

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 Machet; Matt Pimentel; Gary Rowe; and Sara Sobieski.

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



Stroll the paths and Smeltzer says you might spot

A bench and bridge in the Burns Reservation off Chester Street.

wild turkeys, deer, and the occasional fox. "I enjoyed taking care of the land and making it enjoyable to walk around for kids and their parents," said Smeltzer. "It's a nice, peaceful area to just sit and enjoy the quiet."

He adds that he "highly recommends" the role of AVIS warden to anyone who is interested in taking care of the land so others can enjoy it, now and for future generations. Visit avisandover.org to find out more.

FAQs: Ask the BVHDC

Solar panels are appearing on roofs all over town. Do solar panel installations need to be reviewed by the Historic District Commission?

Solar panels are encouraged in the Historic District, but each situation is different so, yes, solar panels do need to go through a review and approval process.

Go Paperless!

To receive the next issue of the *BallardVale Gazette* via email, send your name, mailing address, and email to Karen English: kfeenglish@gmail.com.

BallardVale Historic District Commission

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

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CALENDAR

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| May 1 | BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| June 5 | BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| July 4 | Townwide Fourth of July Celebration at the Park |
| July 10 | BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| August 7 | BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |