

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
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From Horses to Horsepower Transforming the Fire Station



Horses and “fire wagons” drove the design of the old Ballardvale District Firehouse. That large white building at the corner of Andover St, and Clark Road was constructed in 1871, but on the other side of Andover St. on a lot that backed up to the railroad tracks. The “engine house” was moved to its present location in 1896, when a 67-foot bell and hose tower was added on the west side, along with an addition at the rear. The tower, used to dry hoses, was removed in the 1950s. But in 1896 when the firehouse improvements were unveiled, it was reported that “the firemen are quite jubilant over their new quarters.”



Ballardvale Firehouse c.1900 (Andover Center for History & Culture)

Over time the firefighters became less jubilant as their equipment morphed from horses and wagons to heavy trucks that dwarfed the space. Once it became clear the station could not accommodate a modern standard fire engine — not to mention an ambulance,

rescue boat, and collateral equipment — the town started planning. In 2011 there was a proposal to construct a brand-new station elsewhere, and

several sites around South School were considered and rejected. Then in 2014 there was a proposal to renovate and expand the existing historic building.

When it was determined that replacing the building with a fully modern facility that meets all building, safety, and accessibility codes would be the best option for the town, a space needs study was conducted in 2017. In 2018 a Special Town Meeting approved funds to design, construct, and equip the new station, and public information sessions were held. The chosen architects worked with the town and the BallardVale Historic District Commission to design the replacement building.

The new ADA compliant Ballardvale Fire Station will be up and running this summer.

Improvements include seven gender separate dorm rooms to be shared by the four shifts, an exercise room, a large meeting room that can also be used by the community, a wonderful kitchen and sitting area, and most important, enough equipment bays to accommodate the needs of the neighborhood for years to come, starting with a fire engine, ambulance, and rescue boat.



Once the new station is fully operational, the old facility will be demolished. Plans for the site are in progress but include space for a memorial park and landscaped parking. Also in the works is a redesign of the intersection at Clark Rd., and still to come is the acquisition and demolition of the brown house on the north side, most likely to create an area for additional parking.

For now, watch for the opening ceremony for the new station — the date will be announced soon.

Mushrooms: Fungi Among-i

*Under the pines
where the needles fall
the mushrooms grow
to half of a half foot tall*

In my “back 40” — Pole Hill — I walk the trails almost every day. I don’t always look for things, in so much as I just happen upon them (animals, birds, plants, trees, trains, hunters). One thing I see often is mushrooms. I have a connection to mushrooms, fungi among-i, as I call them. Many people believe a found penny or a cardinal in the yard is a shout-out from a loved one in heaven, but for me mushrooms are my heavenly sign. Sadly, I did not pay attention when my dad used to forage for mushrooms. I did not learn the art of picking the right mushrooms to eat. I don’t know which ones are poisonous or which ones can be gathered for a feast. So now I just enjoy the beauty of finding them, watching them push up through the pine needles reaching for a sliver of sun, growing along tree trunks and decaying stumps. Those #MushroomsFromHeaven (yes, I hashtag them along with #PoleHill #BallardVale on Instagram!) are signs.

I have photographed dozens of the Pole Hill mushrooms. Their colors vary along with their size, shapes, stems, and crowns. Trying to photograph them from underneath to show their gills or the sponginess of their bottoms is a favorite trick. Sometimes I am lucky enough to snap a great photo with the mushrooms, pine trees, and sky. The *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms* is a reference I use to try to identify names of mushrooms, edible or not.

Three mushrooms I often see are birch polypore, chicken mushrooms, and the emetic russula (although I have seen so many more in Pole Hill, I find it difficult even with the reference guide to correctly identify many of them). These three I have identified and am including a fun fact about each.

The birch polypore is abundant on both living and dead birch trees. A fun fact is this mushroom has been used in the absence of matches to keep fires blazing; I wonder if this can be the new kindling — save a tree, use a mushroom!



The chicken mushroom is one of my favorites. It can get quite large and has a beautiful orange, yellow, and white overlapping fan-shape. The chicken mushroom is quite edible and is said to “taste like chicken.” I will take other peoples’ word for that!



The emetic russula is a red-capped mushroom. I often find it pushing up through the pines. It is poisonous. It’s beauty is in the eye, not the taste buds — do not eat!



I hope in 2021 many of you will take a walk through the trails of Pole Hill and happen upon animals, birds or mushrooms...your own sign from heaven!

— Teresa Padvaiskas

Questions? Suggestions? Feedback?

If you have a question for the BallardVale Historic District Commission, a suggestion for a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue, or a story you'd like to write for the BallardVale Gazette, please contact the editors:

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Hope Tree Thanks

Across the country, "Hope Trees" glowed with red, white, and blue lights throughout the pandemic. Many thanks to Bill Ferris, of WH Ferris Landscaping and Christmas Décor, for creating "Hope Trees" in Andover at Memorial Hall Library and, especially, the BallardVale Green, and for raising money for first responders. In April, in honor of Autism Awareness, Bill set the lights to blue with a random low-key white sparkle. It was gorgeous! If you have a chance for a nighttime drive by in the next month, you'll see our tree divided into red, white and blue thirds. Each section chases the next color around the tree. Enjoy! Because Bill plans to retire the lights after the Fourth of July.



BallardVale Green Tree Lighting Needs New Organizers

After almost 20 years, Diane and Steve Derby are retiring from the December Tree Lighting and Sing on the BallardVale Green. While Diane is no longer going to organize the Tree Lighting, Diane and Steve are happy to help the new organizer(s) with set up and loan the needed tables, electrical cords, etc. Commission members, past and present, when asked will provide the hot chocolate, cookies, and cider, helped by friends and neighbors.

The Tree Lighting was started in 2000 by then BVHDC Chair Richard Bowen. Up until the past few years, he served as master of ceremonies, and ended his welcome with the countdown to turn on the tree lights.

If you're interested in organizing or helping the new organizer(s), or have any questions, email Diane Derby (derby01@comcast.net).

Editors' Note: Many thanks to the Derbys for two decades of organizing this community event — a special Ballardvale tradition!

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BallardVale Historic District Commission

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CALENDAR

- July 7** **BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m.
- TBD** **Ballardvale Fire Station Opening Ceremony**
The public is invited.
- August 4** **BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m.
- September 1** **BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting**
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m.