

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Vol. 21, No. 2 BallardVale, Massachusetts Fall–Winter 2024

Pole Hill One Year Later

It has been over a year since the devastating windstorm tore through Pole Hill and destroyed hundreds of trees, changing the landscape. Here are a few observations I have made in the past year.

The trails are mostly open. Two trails are still littered with downed trees and will not be opened, according to the town's Conservation Division. These two trails, parts of the Red and Yellow, are partially closed, but you can still access the top of Pole Hill from a new side trail by Marland Street. There are still many downed trees leaning on other trees and branches that could come down at any time especially on windy days, so use caution.

Wildlife in the area is also adjusting to the debris-littered forest. I continue to see deer, fisher cats, coyotes, raccoons, and turkeys in the forest and ducks, geese, herons, and an occasional beaver in the Shawsheen River! The deer have found their way around the downed trees and continue to amaze me with their gymnastics as they navigate away from me, jumping over and around the debris field of downed pine and oak trees. I also have noticed an increase of birds in the area, especially in the middle of the hill where it is wide open from the fallen trees. This area probably gives many hiding/nesting spots to the birds. I have seen all the backyard birds (cardinals, bluejays, titmice, chickadees, robins, mourning doves). I also saw a scarlet tanager (with pictures to prove it!) in the middle of the hill. An increase in woodpeckers is noticeable, including the skittish pileated woodpeckers, as they work on trees that are now decaying. Barred owls remain in the area and can be seen on the White trail by Pole Hill Drive, and heard throughout the neighborhood at night.

The changing landscape and vegetation are also very noticeable. There is now a proliferation of small oak saplings. Is this because they are getting more sunshine? It seems the oak saplings are beating out the pine saplings. Also, more sun seems to mean more weeds, poison ivy, and long grasses. If you walk down the center of the hill you will notice

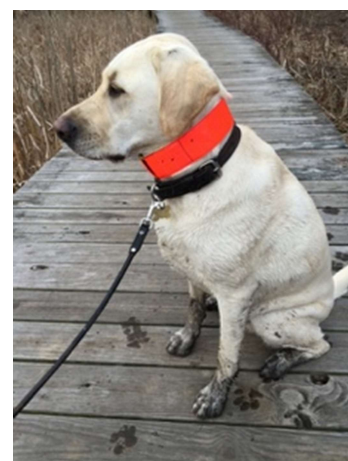


A scarlet tanager sojourns in Pole Hill.

four- to five-foot-tall weeds releasing their seeds and poison ivy crisscrossing the path. Due to the very dry, hot summer, and now constant sunlight hitting the middle of the hill, mushrooms that used to thrive under the pines and low light conditions are not as numerous.

An important reminder especially for the winter and potential snow cover is to stay on the trails as uprooted trees and adjacent gaping holes are just feet away on both sides. Deer hunting season begins October 7 through December 31. Please remember to wear bright colors like hunter orange — even on your dog — and stay on marked trails so hunters can see you.

Teresa Padvaiskas



Abbot plays it safe in hunter orange.

The Lost Building of Ballardvale Green

Ballardvale Green might be easily mistaken for a historic New England common, one laid out in colonial days as a shared space for grazing livestock and public meetings. But the Green's history as a community resource is much newer, dating to the

1848 opening of the Ballard Vale District Schoolhouse at 173 Andover Street.

Situated at the south end of what is now the Green, the school closed in 1889 when the new Bradlee School opened at 149 Andover Street (now condominiums). The original school building had a main entrance on Center Street and two store fronts on the lower level facing Andover Street, which generated revenue for the district. With the departure of the school, the building became the



“Community House,” as it was known. It had a large room with a stage on the top floor, while the main floor was home to the Ballardvale Branch Library and a “precinct room” for voting.

Longtime Center Street resident Diane Derby recalls hosting her daughter’s fifth birthday party on the top floor. “I recall the library branch being on the middle floor and the Beverage Barn [a store] on the basement level facing Andover Street,” she said.

The main floor housed the library branch from 1913 to 1981, when the town condemned and razed the building. The site was filled in and graded, expanding the space available for a park. (The library branch moved to the corner building at



195 Andover Street where

Spinner’s Pizza is now, and the Beverage Barn moved to Dale Street.) The north side of the green, a vacant lot with a steep grade, was acquired by the town in 1957.

Ballardvale Green has been a work in progress since it was created. Former town manager and Ballardvale resident Richard Bowen, who died in

2022, was a leader in improving the Green and making it a center of village life with ceremonies on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, July 4, and the holiday tree lighting, where he led the carol sing. In 2021 the Green was officially renamed the Richard J. Bowen Ballardvale Green, and a memorial bench was dedicated in his honor.

Photos of the Ballard Vale District School/Community House are courtesy of the Andover Center for History and Culture.

A Tree Grows in Ballardvale

The eastern redbud tree now growing nicely at the corner of Clark Road and Andover Street was a gift of the Andover Garden Club. The tree was planted last April on Arbor Day. Garden Club president Judy Wright explained that an Arbor Day gift is a longstanding tradition for the group. Paul Sanborn, parks and grounds superintendent, introduced Forestry Division staff members who distributed lilac and Washington hawthorn seedlings to residents who came to welcome the new Ballardvale tree.

Also this spring, town foresters planted six new trees on the Green to replace the green ash trees that were declining or dying due to an infestation of the emerald ash borer. This insect pest has killed most of the white and green ash trees in this region and beyond. To prevent a monoculture vulnerable to insects and disease, the ash trees were replaced with more diverse species, including one American hornbeam, three red maples, one kousa dogwood, and one Japanese maple.



Paul Sanborn with the redbud tree.

Meet Your Neighbors: Sara of Lulu's Lunchbox

A passion for historic towns with a lot of community spirit inspired Sara, the owner of Lulu's Lunchbox, to set up shop in the Vale. She said she drew her motivation after watching the previous café owners at her location, between Spinners Pizza Parlor and Sunday's General Store, struggle during the pandemic. "I wanted to revive the cafe and create a welcoming space," Sara said.



Lulu's Lunchbox has been open over a year now and has established itself as a spot where

locals and commuters can grab treats like homemade pastries and Richardson's ice cream, as well as traditional Middle Eastern wraps including falafel and marinated and grilled beef or chicken shawarma. All wraps are available as platters with gluten-free options. Or choose a traditional Mediterranean pie — spinach, cheese, or zatar. For early morning commuters heading to the nearby Ballardvale train station, the shop offers freshly brewed coffee along with breakfast wraps and croissants.

Sara said the best-selling items at her small but cozy bakery-kitchen are the baklava and chicken and falafel sandwiches. Recently, Lulu's introduced some seasonal foods such as homemade lentil soup. "We focus on quality ingredients and comfort foods that people love," said Sara, who plans to add crepes to her menu this fall.

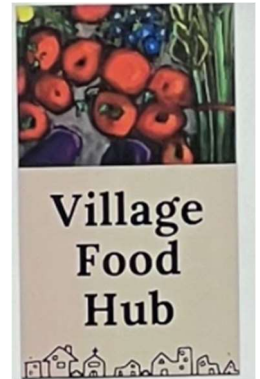
Lulu's Lunchbox at 195 Andover Street is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 8:30 a.m. till 3:00 p.m. to accommodate the breakfast and lunch crowd.

"I chose the Vale because of its strong sense of community. It's a place where people know each other, and I wanted to contribute to that warmth," Sara said. Asked about the best part of doing business in the Vale, the owner of Lulu's said, "It's the connections I've made with the local people.

Their support and stories inspire me every day, and it feels great to be part of such a vibrant community."

Village Food Hub Builds on Success

We had an incredible year since moving into our warehouse space on the first floor of 23 Clark Road at Ballard Vale Church. We distributed well over 100,000 pounds of food since November through our food pantry (available 24/7 in the lower parking lot of the church), and through supplementing food needs to our community partners including Neighbors in Need, Lazarus House, the Psychological Center, Bread and Roses, Peoples Pantry, the Lawrence Community Fridge, and the Lawrence YMCA.



We have an amazing team of volunteers getting this work done, and are always welcoming new volunteers including individuals, families, groups, churches, employer groups, scout troops, and teams. We are always grateful to the community for their support, both through financially donating or dropping off food. We love when neighborhoods, teams, churches, and scouts have food drives to support our fridge as well. We always need milk, eggs, proteins, fresh and canned fruits and vegetables, cereal, rice, and pasta/sauce.

We are planning to make Thanksgiving meals again this year and will have them ready for pickups and deliveries on Wednesday November 27. Signups for both meals and volunteer opportunities will be accessible on our website villagefoodhub.org.

— Shari McLeod, program coordinator

BallardVale Tree Lighting

Barbara Burke will once again be organizing the Tree Lighting event, which will take place on the BallardVale Green on Sunday, December 8 at 5:00 p.m. Watch for her email, or let her know you would like to help or contribute: (barbaraburkerealtor@gmail.com).

FAQs - Ask the BVHDC (BallardVale Historic District Commission)

Where are the monthly meetings of the BVHD? Can anyone attend?

Meetings are usually held on the first Wednesday of the month in the third-floor Blue room (while the second floor is being renovated) at the Town Offices, and all are welcome. Check the town website for dates and locations. Meeting dates and agendas are posted in advance at andoverma.gov.

Ballardvale Day 2024 — A Spectacular Day!

The fourth annual Ballardvale Day celebration was filled with sunshine and friendly faces once again. Returning and first-time organizations lined the walkway, greeting visitors of all ages.

- The Ballardvale Historic District Commission continued their outreach to inform District residents and property owners about the Commission's role in guiding those who want to make exterior changes to a property in accordance with the town bylaw. BVHDC members are volunteers who are passionate about preserving the character of Ballardvale.



Chris Shepley and Diane Derby setup the BVHDC table.

- The Andover Village Improvement Society (AVIS) led hikes on the Burns and Vale Reservations again this year and provided information about the stewardship of their green spaces in Andover.



Hiking the AVIS Burns Reservation.

- Shawsheen River Watershed Association (SRWA) members shared their mission and activities on and along the Shawsheen River, which flows through six towns before joining the Merrimack in Lawrence. This year they had some beautiful postcards featuring photos taken from the Shawsheen River.

- Andover DPW brought some trucks to the train station parking lot so that fans of the big machines could get close, climb into the driver's seat, and honk the horn. This is always a favorite part of Ballardvale Day, and we greatly appreciate DPW's involvement and all that they do for us!



- Scout Troop 76 set up their photo storyboards depicting the adventures in scouting they enjoy as Ballardvale's long-standing troop. Let me tell you, it's not just about tying knots!

- Volunteer advocates from Rare Road Foundation joined us to spread the good work in progress to make Ballardvale Playground more inclusive. We look forward to the improvements that will enrich the lives of more visitors to the playground!



-Master Shin's World Class Martial Arts students impressed spectators again this year with their board-breaking and skills demonstration. WOW! Can they jump high!



- Lulu's Lunchbox provided samples of their delicious coffee and food — a very welcome treat!



- Closing out the celebration, we had a visitor from the surrounding woods, One World Puppets' Green

Man. As tall as some trees and taller than the tire swing, Green Man visited with us and took a stroll around the playground, chatting with and high-fiving. Green Man checked out the pumpkin craft table, the tire swing, and of course, the beautiful foliage.



If you missed Ballardvale Day 2024, you'll have a chance to see a segment on "Positively Andover" produced by Andover TV. They do an amazing job of highlighting great things in Andover, like Ballardvale Day!

Mark your calendars for Ballardvale Day 2025, October 18, 2025, 10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. To participate, email barbaraburkerealtor@gmail.com — Barbara Burke

Questions? Suggestions? Feedback?

If you have a question for the BallardVale Historic District Commission or a suggestion for a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue of the BallardVale Gazette, please contact the editors:
Karen English / kfeenglish@gmail.com
Joe Halpern / joehalp@gmail.com

BallardVale Historic District Commission

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CALENDAR

November 6 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting

Town offices, third floor Blue room — 7:00 p.m.

December 4 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting

Town offices, third floor Blue room — 7:00 p.m.

December 8 Holiday Tree Lighting

BallardVale Green — 5:00 p.m.

January 8 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting

Town offices, third floor Blue room — 7:00 p.m.