

HIGHLIGHT

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The Newsletter of the High Street Hill Association

October 2006

The Old Burying Ground



In early September, Friends of the Old Burying Ground hosted a tour of the historic site on Walnut Street as a fundraiser to support preservation efforts. The picturesque graveyard is now in need of repair to preserve its historic tombstones and monuments. According to Friends Board member, Frances Shedd Fisher, the well-planned event would have fallen as flat as some of the gravestones if HSHA's own Tom Elwertowski of Highland Road had not been one of the attendees. When the invited guest speaker was a "no show," Tom, with no notice at all, stepped into the breach. It had come to the attention of Friends President Dorothy Baldini through Pill Hill residents that Tom had been studying the historic graveyard so, thinking quickly, she asked him if he would fill in for the missing speaker. Without hesitation, Tom agreed to lead the tour, astonishing all with his knowledge and poise, and received not only the gratitude of the Friends but genuine accolades from the attendees. At the lovely reception at the Brookline Music School following the tour, Tom was much in demand.

The Old Burying Ground was established as the Town's first graveyard in 1717, just 12 years after Brookline was formally incorporated. Many of the Town's founding families are represented among the family plots: Aspinwall, Boylston, Clark, Corey, Devotion, Gardner, Goddard, Griggs, Heath, White, Winchester and others. The Friends have hired preservation specialists Minzie and Jim Fannin to direct the restoration. They will be working in the graveyard on October 8 from 9-4 and welcome questions.

For additional information about the Old Burying Ground see www.highstreethill.org, where Tom Elwertowski has begun to document the historic site. To join the Friends or to contribute to the Friends' restoration fund, call 617 566-5876, (or call Frances at 617 566-1237).

Pinebank Update

On Sept 26 the Boston Parks Department (BPD) presented plans to the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) for demolition of the forsaken Pinebank mansion overlooking Jamaica Pond. The BPD proposes construction of a "memorial" at the site, a "footprint" in the grass that traces the outline of this once-magnificent structure.

Over the years, despite having funds to stabilize the building, the City has allowed Pinebank to deteriorate to the point of needing a complete rebuilding. And now the BPD is determined to tear it down, fill in the hole and be done with it.

The Friends of Pinebank, however, are still working hard to prevent Pinebank's loss. A fundraiser will be held at the Sargent Estates on Thursday, October 12. For more info please contact Hugh Mattison at 232-6083.

DPW's Historic Legacy



Many in our neighborhood have considered our distinctive, black and silver cast aluminum street markers an integral part of our historic district. But over the years we have been upset to see them, one by one, replaced with flimsy substitutes. Recently, the HSHA Board wrote a letter to Selectwoman Nancy Daly's

Street Sign Committee, which was set up last year by Town Meeting to study the issue. We urged the committee to adopt measures that will protect, restore and replace the signs that are missing.

A countrywide survey, conducted by Committee member Dennis DeWitt, has shown that our cast aluminum signs are unique and they, as well as the associated poles and mounting fittings, deserve unique treatment. Starting in 1937, they were produced by the DPW in the Town's own foundry from handmade wooden casting patterns. The workmanship is of a very high order and, aside from broken signs that have been repaired by welding, they have survived virtually maintenance-free. Approximately 500 of Brookline's signs, 10-20% of the original number, remain in situ, with about 280 stored in the town barn. In Pill Hill, there are currently 19 signs with 11 more found in storage. It has also come to light that signs in Local Historic Districts should have been subject to Preservation Commission review since the inception of those districts.

We understand that developing standards for street signs town-wide requires detailed study of the issues and we commend the Committee for their work. But we urge the Committee to find the means for preserving our signs and not accept the reasoning that, just because general regulations don't anticipate the existence of Brookline's unique markers in its historic district, they cannot be preserved. For more info see www.highstreethill.org.

Upcoming Events

"The Community Preservation Act: Will it help or hurt Brookline?"
The Coolidge Corner SouthSide Neighborhood Association will host a forum to explore this question on Wednesday, Oct. 11, 7 p.m., at 90 Longwood Ave., community room. Speakers will include Jay Gonzalez, chairman of the "Yes for Brookline's Future!" and Dr. Robert I. Sperber, co-chairman of "Partnership to Preserve the Future of Brookline."

Neighborhood Hearing: The Transportation Board will be conducting a special hearing to discuss a proposal that would allow residents to park on their own streets for longer than 2 hours during the daytime, while increasing the fine for violating the 2 hour limit from \$15 to \$40. Thursday, October 12, 7 PM Lincoln School Cafeteria.

Friends of Hall's Pond, 30th Anniversary Celebration, Sunday, October 15, 3-6pm. For more info contact Betsy Shure Gross, 731-1448.

Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 7am to 8pm. Lincoln School.

Join Us for

Our Fall Cultural Arts Tour

Sunday, October 22, 2:30 - 5:30PM

This year's HSHA Tour features two artistic icons located in our own neighborhood: the von Huene Early Music Workshop and the GASP Gallery. The von Huene Workshop, owned and operated by neighbors Friedrich and Ingeborg von Huene since 1960, is internationally renowned for its fine craftsmanship of historical woodwind instruments. GASP, a sophisticated contemporary art gallery and with open studio spaces, is owned by neighbors, artist Magdalena Campos-Pons and musician Neil Leonard.



We will have a private tour by the owners of the von Huene Workshop followed by a studio tour and final reception at GASP gallery. For more details about each location, see www.vonhuene.com and www397.pair.com/gasp1.

Cost: \$10 per person for HSHA members* and their guests.

*Note: HSHA membership is open to all residents of the the HSHA area (the Pill Hill Historic District- see map on our website at www.highstreethill.org) and requires a per household yearly dues of \$15. Not sure if you dues is paid up? Please call our Treasurer, Jean Peteet, at 738-8555 or ask Marie when you register. Not yet a member? Please join when you register for the tour.



Reservation

This is an invite-only event for local residents and their guests. Space is limited and reservations are required.

Complete and return this form with your payment to Marie Schick, 10 Upland Road, Brookline 02445.

Or you may contact Marie Schick by email (mschick@nni.com) or phone (617-388-4501) to reserve your tickets.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Number Attending - \$10/person _____
HSHA Dues - \$15/household/year _____
Total Enclosed _____

Neighbor News

Recognized: Josiah McElheny, son of Ken and Fran McElheny on Walnut Street, has been chosen as one of this year's 25 MacArthur Fellows. The \$500,000, no-strings-attached award, commonly known as the "Genius Grant," is given to individuals who show exceptional creativity in their work and the prospect for still more in the future. This year's recipients range from stem cell biologist to country doctor to deep-sea explorer to jazz violinist. Josiah is a New York sculptor who works primarily with glass. For more info about Josiah see www.macfound.org and to see photos of his work go to www.donaldyoung.com.

Passing: Longtime Pill Hill resident and doctor known for his personal attention to patients, Arthur Pier, Jr. died this past August at the age of 93. Even after the onset of managed care in the 1980's, he was said to have made two dozen or more house calls per week. He was also a dedicated conservationist.

What is the answer to Question 4?

On Nov 7, the voters of Brookline will be asked Question 4: Should Brookline adopt the **Community Preservation Act**? The CPA is a state law that provides towns with the option of establishing a dedicated fund for acquisition and preservation of open space, creation and support of affordable housing and acquisition or preservation of historic buildings and landscapes. Money for the fund will come from a 3% surcharge on property tax that will be matched with funds from the state. There will be exemptions for the first \$260,000 of residential value and exemptions for low and moderate income households. Over the first 6 years, it is projected that the Town will generate over \$33 million in local surcharge revenues and state matching funds. To date, 111 communities have adopted the CPA. For more info (in favor) see www.yesforbrookline.org or (not in favor) contact Robert Sperber at 277-6572 or email: espe277578@aol.com.

Curl up with a good book and the HSHA! If you're interested in participating in this winter's *Author's Series*, as an author or host, please contact Marie Schick, 617-388-4501 or mschick@nni.com.