



## Newton Lower Falls IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

### LOWDOWN SPRING 2023

#### LETTER FROM THE LFIA PRESIDENT

by Shelah Feiss

It's a new season, and LFIA has a new president and several new board members. So I thought this would be a good time to introduce you to the board of the LFIA and give you an idea of what we've been doing. **Please come to the Spring meeting on April 23rd at 3:30pm, to support this wonderful organization, and find out all we have planned going forward.** We want to see neighbors, old and new, and hear what you want us to be doing. Not sure what we do with your dues, or if you should join? – come hear the annual financial report, and learn about all we are doing.

A word about the LFIA Board Members, new and old are:

- Ted Chapman, Treasurer
- Becky Connors, Member at large
- Nancy Finn, Membership Committee chair
- Cyrisse Jaffe and Randall Block, Civics Committee chairs
- Erin Kandamar, Immediate past president
- Kathy Kasabula, Secretary
- Michael Lorant, Communications Committee chair
- Suzanne Pond, Beautification chair
- Becky Shelton, Member at large
- Drew Williams, Nominating Committee

The board meets monthly to discuss issues affecting our neighborhood, and plan neighborhood events. Here are just a few things board members and others have done to continue making this a caring and connected community.

Cyrisse Jaffe has been going to meetings regarding the City's village center rezoning efforts, and keeping us in the loop. You can get a full update at our Spring meeting on April 23rd.

Suzanne Pond and Ted Chapman together have planted, or helped plant, trees and thousands of bulbs in and around the neighborhood. They have installed memorial benches, and worked with Francisco Shelton to create the community garden. Suzanne coordinates cleanup and mulching days, with Ted's help. If you see either of them in the neighborhood, please thank them for making this such a beautiful neighborhood.

Nancy Finn and Ted Chapman keep the membership rolls, notify you when it's time to renew, and work hard to keep our records current.

Drew Williams came up with and organized the First LFIA March Madness pool.

Becky Connors got busy brainstorming about possible neighborhood events, including a neighborhood family potluck dinner. So many people responded positively that we hope to do this as part of the Falls Ball (save the date – June 10th.)

Michael Lorant keeps the Lower Falls website up and running ([newtonlowerfalls.org](http://newtonlowerfalls.org)), and sets up and monitors the listserv.

Kathy Kasabula takes minutes for every meeting, and she makes sure the neighborhood knows when we meet and has the agenda for each meeting. She has already sent out the agenda for the April 23rd meeting.

This past year has been a busy one. The wonderful Ashley Green Gluskin stepped up to coordinate the efforts for the skating rink. With help from many neighbors, the rink went up in December and was taken down in March. Thank you, Ashley!

Besides sponsoring the skating rink, the LFIA sponsored a Boo Halloween movie night last October. That same day, Tori Zissman and Cyrisse Jaffe led a Lower Falls neighborhood history walking tour. Check out the history set out at our website by Tori Zissman. It's amazing.

In December the Board donated to two local food banks, the Newton Food Pantry and the Newton Centre Food Pantry. Erin Kandamar and I were thrilled to present the checks to them and both organizations were so appreciative. If there are other local organizations you would like us to consider donating to, we are all ears.

Another LFIA sponsored item is this Lowdown Newsletter. Summer Zeh works hard to coordinate articles and put the Lowdown out twice each year. Thank you, Summer! The Lowdown is available to all on-line, but if you know anyone that needs a hard copy, let me know and we'll make sure they get one.

Some of the things we are planning, besides the Falls Ball, are the new, improved progressive dinner in September, a garden tour this summer, and we are hoping to have a "Lower Falls Inspires" – modeled on Newton Inspires program with people sharing their talents/wares in an open house format. If you have a talent you'd like to share we would love to hear from you. Of course, we'll do a movie night in October. And look for info on Porchfest, coming the first weekend of June.

If there is something you'd like to be done in the neighborhood, we are all ears. The LFIA exists for the neighborhood, and we want and need your input.

**See you on April 23 rd at the LFIA Spring Meeting.**

### **FALLS BALL LEADERS NEEDED**

The Falls Ball 2023 is tentatively scheduled for June 10th, but it can't happen unless one or two of you out there agree to lead this. It's a great way to meet new neighbors and connect with those you already know. Please volunteer to do this. You'll have plenty of help, and the past leaders will be happy to talk about what's needed. Interested? Email Shelah at [feisslaw@gmail.com](mailto:feisslaw@gmail.com).



### **NEIGHBORHOOD SHOUTOUTS!**

By Summer Zeh

- Share in the joy of building community by listening to music with your friends and neighbors at Newton PorchFest 2023. Newton PorchFest is an afternoon of free music performed outside on people's front lawns, driveways and front porches. Join this beloved community event on **June 3rd from 12pm - 6pm** in Auburndale, Newton Lower Falls, and Waban Center!



- The Bialek family welcomed a new addition to their family. They brought home their puppy, Willow, on New Year's Day. She is a black lab mix rescue brought to New England from Tennessee. She is now 5 months old,

loving, playful and food-motivated. She's looking forward to getting to know other neighborhood dogs and friends.



→ A special thanks to **Steve Feldman** of St. Mary's Street, who let the neighborhood know about the Longwood Symphony's performance on March 18th. Cello player **Read Pukkila-Worley** (who also lives on St. Mary's Street) is a regular member of the symphony, an orchestra "made up of volunteer musicians, mostly from Boston's medical community." **Ben Wright** of Ithaca Circle, a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, was the night's special guest, performing Haydn's trumpet concerto. Twenty-five current and former Lower Falls residents attended the concert. Wright added a wonderful Puccini aria as an encore. It was a beautiful night of music at Jordan Hall, supporting the healing art of music program.

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### SPRING HAIKU

Too many golfers  
Using the local dog park.  
It must be Spring.



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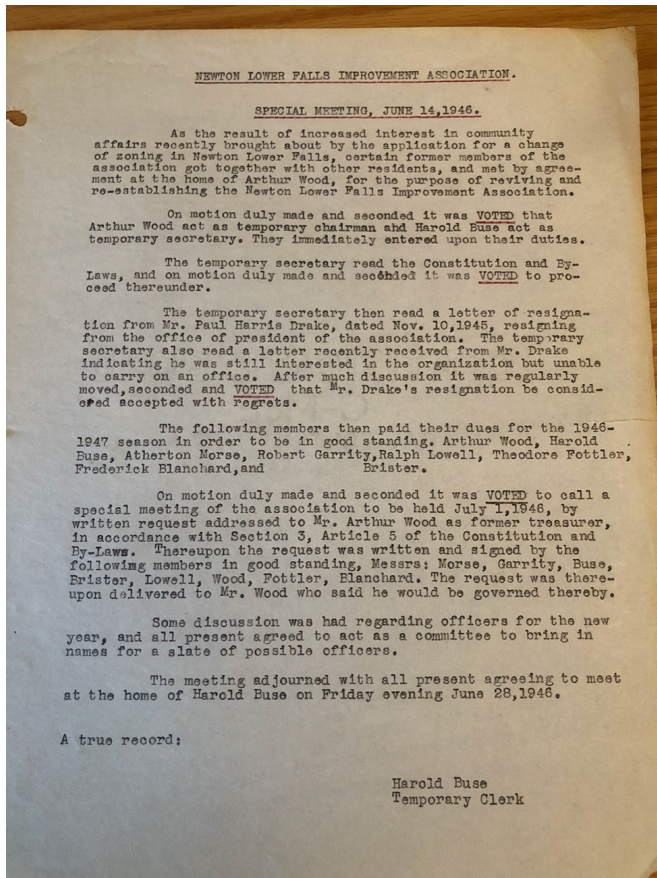
### THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

By Cyrisse Jaffee- and Tori Sizzman

Many of you know our former Alderman John Stewart. Not only has he lived in Newton Lower Falls for over 50 years, John has been an active participant in local politics throughout that time, including as president of the LFIA.

Recently, John offered us a box of historical papers about Lower Falls that he has accumulated over the years. Not surprisingly, it contained many remarkable treasures—especially for neighborhood history buffs like us. Here is just one of them: the notes from a "special meeting" of the Lower Falls Improvement Association from June 14, 1946.

The first paragraph sounded eerily familiar: "As a result of **increased interested in community affairs recently brought about by the application for a change in zoning in Newton Lower Falls**, certain former members of the association got together with other residents, and met by agreement...for the purpose of revising and re-establishing the Newton Lower Falls Improvement Association." (emphasis ours)



This yellowed piece of paper, written on what some of us recognize as a manual typewriter, is not only an artifact of the past. It's a reminder that the Newton Lower Falls community has come together time and time again to debate, discuss, and advocate for the needs of the neighborhood.

So even though some of the same issues tend to crop up over the years—over-development, historic preservation, and yes, zoning—it's heartening to know that a sense of shared purpose and activism is part of our Lower Falls heritage. (And, as you notice, some things do change—in 1946, the leadership was men only!)

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## VOLUNTEER LOCALLY WITH ST. MARY'S

By Ann Bonner-Stewart

St. Mary's organizes and hosts volunteer opportunities throughout the year, to all of which our Lower Falls neighbors and friends are most welcome.

- ★ **April 22nd Earth Day Charles River Cleanup!** Come honor Earth Day by participating in St. Mary's Cleanup Team from **10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** on **Saturday, April 22**, in conjunction with the [Charles River Watershed Association](#)! We will be picking up trash along the river on Concord Street between Washington St. and Hagar; the more folks who come, the more area we can cover! Trash bags and gloves provided (bring your own gloves if you can). Neighbors, parishioners, and friends are all welcome, as are children and youth, who need to be accompanied by a parent/adult. If you plan to attend, or if you have questions, e-mail Cecile Tucker ([cutucker@gmail.com](mailto:cutucker@gmail.com)).
- ★ **May 6th Spring Drive-Through Clothing Drop-Off, 9 a.m. to noon.** Drop off unwanted clothing, help sort donations, or drive donations to locations on your own time. Details coming later! Contact Amy Molloy ([amolloy@qoutlook.com](mailto:amolloy@qoutlook.com)) for more info.
- ★ **June 24th and 25th Make and/or deliver lunches for common cathedral**, a long-standing non-profit that offers a variety of programs meant to nurture, empower, and celebrate people experiencing homelessness in Boston and also seeks to build a bridge between people who are housed and people who are unhoused. Contact Ann Bonner-Stewart

([ann@st-marys-episcopal.org](mailto:ann@st-marys-episcopal.org)) for more info.



## HAMILTON PARK'S MEMORIAL TREES AND BENCHES

By Ted Chapman

The Lower Falls community has a gem at its heart – the Hamilton Park. This 15-acre parcel was purchased by the City from the Crehore estate in 1924 following a 10-year process initiated by the Newton Lower Falls Village Association that contributed \$1,200 of the \$12,200 purchase price. Donations by “Public spirited citizens” have been a core to keeping the park in good condition – whether through donations to the LFIA Beautification Committee or memorials to Lower Falls residents.

The city's Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department, uses fees from sports teams that utilize the playing fields to maintain the grass turf, irrigate the field and cleans up the park each fall.

The trees surrounding the park and benches are largely the work of the LFIA's Beautification Committee, which was started in mid-1980s and is supported by the volunteer labor and donations of Lower Falls residents. (See the article later in this issue on this history by Bev Chapman.) Maintenance, including mulching of the trees and flower beds is done on 'cleanup days' in the Spring and Fall.

Many trees and all the benches in the park were installed to memorialize friends and family members of residents. The LFIA has a memorial policy to define the process. The LFIA has held fundraisers for specific projects like the Flower Garden installation last Spring. The attached map and chart show the memorial sites in Hamilton Park.

Reach out to the Beautification Chair Suzanne Pond to get involved. Tax-deductible donations to the LFIA Beautification Fund can be made online, with payment by credit card or by check.



## REMEMBERING THREE YEARS AGO WITH A THANK YOU

By Summer Zeh

Three years ago, the pandemic suddenly trapped many parents of young children inside their homes. I was one of those parents. My kid, like all the others, no longer had a routine, time with friends, or access to a playground (remember when we were instructed to stay off playgrounds and even the basketball hoops were boarded up?). Even getting him to walk around the neighborhood, for a bit of fresh air and to ease the cabin fever, was a struggle. What is there even to do on a walk, Mom? It's BORING.

Well, all of you came to my rescue, and the rescue of many other local parents. You created a scavenger hunt the size of Lower Falls! In yards all across the neighborhood, you hid dinosaurs, painted rocks, a Spongebob, balloons, ghosts, teddybears, turkeys, turtles, and umbrellas. Anyone driving through must have thought Lower Falls was the quirkiest neighborhood around. Rubber chickens sat on front steps and monkeys swung from palm fronds. Trees dripped with Mardi Gras beads and action figures scaled bird feeders. One enterprising family created a person from an old appliance, a pole, shirt, gardening gloves and other odds and ends. Families started coming from nearby areas to enjoy the hunt with their stir crazy kids. Soon, other villages were replicating our idea. But don't forget that it started here, in Lower Falls, with all of you.

So in case I didn't say it then, and let's face it, I probably didn't because I was half insane, **thank you**. It was a good memory among all

the scary, sad, and stressful ones. It might have taken so little to place a witch on your railing, but it meant so much. And I can report it worked: suddenly my kid was begging to take walks every day.

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## A LOOK BACK AT HAMILTON PARK

By Bev Chapman

When we moved into the neighborhood in 1983, Hamilton Park looked pretty bleak and wind-swept. Most of the trees you see now in and around the park weren't there. So in the mid-80's a few of us started organizing the Spring and Fall Planting Days, and for the first decade we focused mostly on planting trees and more trees.

Recently, I was given a few photos of the park, taken around 1989. I was struck by how hard it is to imagine what the park looked like back before all those plantings. Even for those of us who were here then, it's weirdly hard to remember what it looked like. Trees have a way of filling in, becoming just a part of the environment in a way that's easy to take for granted. But the difference they make is huge.

Of course, time has its own role to play. I remember that one spring we planted the whole row of red maples along lower Cornell Street. And, honestly, the trees were so little that they looked like nothing. Even two or three years later, if you looked from a distance across the field, you could hardly see anything was there. But time is amazing. Let some more years go by, and you've got a beautiful, shady, tree-lined street.

In the 1980's, before we started the neighborhood "Planting Days", the few old trees that were still standing had been planted about a hundred years earlier. Around 1880 someone had the idea to encircle the park and line the streets with maples and white pines. And you can still see a few remnants of that

19th century planting. A photo taken around 1915 shows the park looking lush and verdant, in stark contrast to the bleak landscape of the 1980's. So there are cycles; trees have lifespans. Sometimes there's a severe drought – like last summer – and a few trees don't make it and have to be replaced. (Unless we want to head down the long, slow decline from lush and verdant to bleak.)

All in all, though, when I think of the almost 40 years of Planting Days, it's the spirit of our community that stands out as something unique. I guess Lower Falls could have just complained that the city wasn't meeting its responsibility to plant trees and maintain green spaces. And I supposed we would have been justified, right? Isn't it the city's responsibility?

Instead, neighbors just started planting. And we've had fun doing it. It makes me really happy to live here.



Hamilton Park in the 1980s.

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## CHEF CAMDEN

Camden Bialek has started making video shorts of his cooking. Fulfilling his dream of being a YouTuber, he now has several videos and will be adding more to his YouTube channel, as inspiration hits. Check out 'Camden Cooks' on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@camboscrazyadventures8304>.

He does his own planning, set up, videography and editing. On occasion, he has had some video assistance from his older brother, but otherwise he has done it all independently! He attributes much of his expertise in cooking and making videos to all the hours of watching other YouTubers! He plans to offer some neighborhood treats again this Spring.

## PECAN TARTS

By Joann Calcagno Tahn

- Mix 3 oz of cream cheese with 1 stick of butter and 1 cup of flour.
- Divide into 24 equal portions and press into mini muffin tins.
- Mix together: 3/4 cup of firmly packed brown sugar, a dash of salt, 1 egg, 1 tsp of vanilla, 1 tablespoon of melted butter and 1 cup of nuts.
- Put the mixture into shells and bake at 325 degrees for 25 minutes.

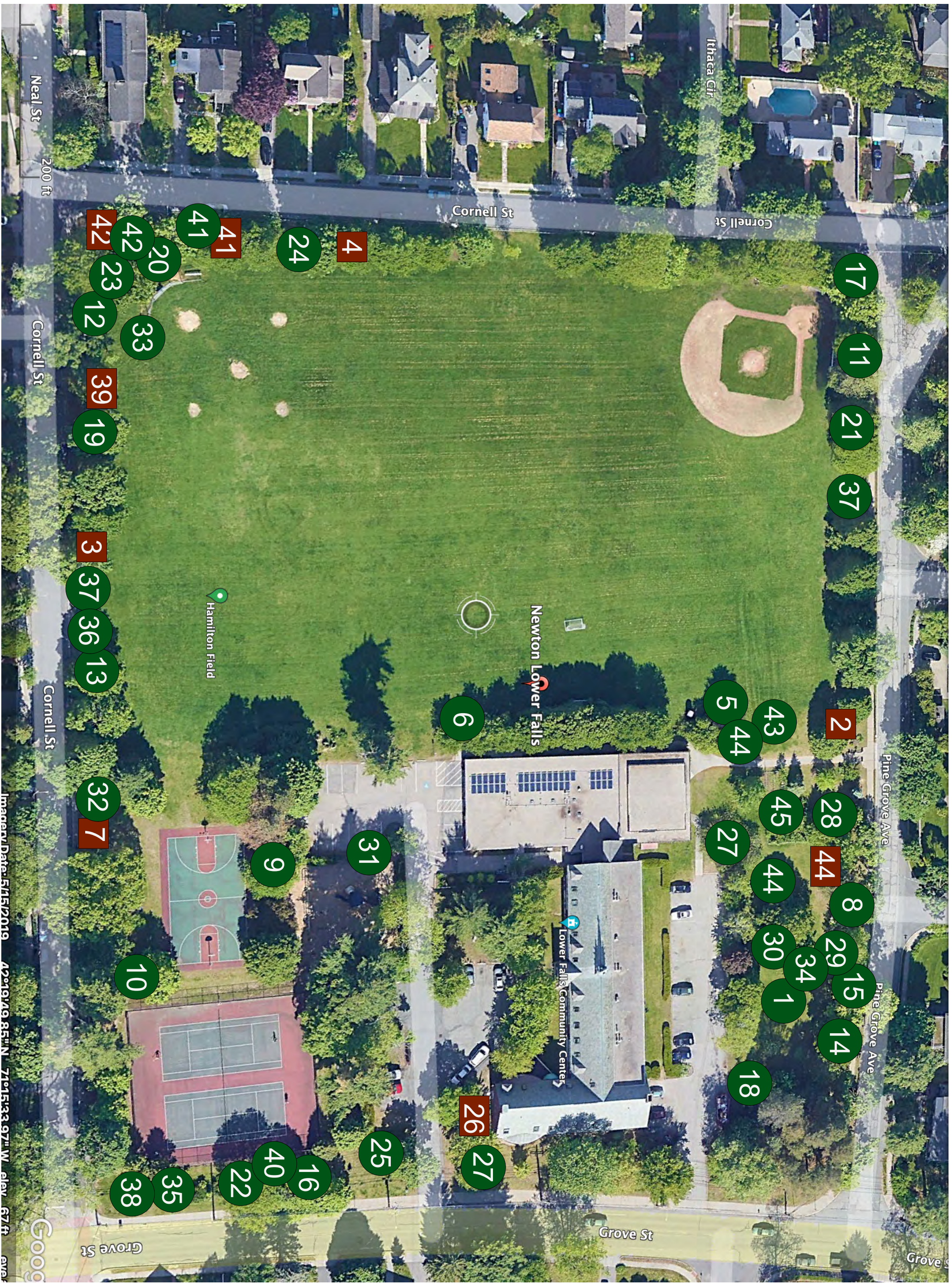
These tarts can be made with walnuts and almonds as well as pecans. Joann's family is divided over which version is the best.



A local squirrel working hard on a spring nest,  
by Thayer Bialek.

| Item | Item (CN)               | Item (SN)                         | Location                             | Name in Memorium                     | Notes   | Date |
|------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|------|
| 1    | Eastern redbud          | Cercis canadensis                 | CC - Pine Grove side                 | Rothschild, Walter                   | planted by the Mondell family in honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Karen Mondell's father, Walter Rothschild. He was born on May 24, 1909. A wonderful and beloved man who gave generously of himself to his family, his community and his country. He set an example for all of us. |      |
| 2    | Bench                   |                                   | Cornell South                        | Grant, Betty                         | Friend & Neighbor, 1926-2000; Lived at 77 Cornell St.   |      |
| 3    | Bench                   |                                   | Bus stop Pine Grove                  | Andrews, Lillian                     | From all of the RecPlace families whose lives she touched along with her friends from Parks and Recreation and Hamilton Grove, 2002; Lived at Hamilton Grove apartments.  |      |
| 4    | Bench                   |                                   | Cornell South                        | Schindler, Joseph                    | Coach, Friend & Neighbor, 1952-1999. Lived at 41 Cornell St.  |      |
| 5    | Copper Beech            | Fagus sylvatica 'purpure'         | CC, NW                               | Barnes, Steven                       |   |      |
| 6    | Red maple               | Acer rubrum                       | CC, W                                | Colliton, Hugh                       |   |      |
| 7    | Bench , Sugar Maple     | Acer sacchrum                     | Basketball Ct, S                     | Stewart, John                        | Bench and sugar maple in honor of former alderman John Stewart  |      |
| 8    | Bradford pears (2)      | Pyrus calleryana                  | CC, N                                | Scarsella, Mr. & Mrs                 | CC, N   |      |
| 9    | Red maple               |                                   | Playground, S                        | Lawn, Dorothy                        | Former Lower Falls Librarian  |      |
| 10   | Sugar maple             | Acer sacchrum                     | Basketball Ct, S                     | Armstrong, Peter                     | Bev Chapman's brother   |      |
| 11   | London Plane            | Platanus x acerifolia             | Park NW Pine Grove                   | Farnsworth                           | Donated by Marguerite Farnsworth in memory of her son and daughter-in-law   |      |
| 12   | Red maple               | Acer rubrum                       | Cornell south                        |                                      | Bartzak Children  |      |
| 13   | Red maple               | Acer rubrum                       | Cornell South                        | Jessup                               |   |      |
| 14   | Red oak                 | Quercus rubra                     | CC, north, Pine Gorve                | Rucinski                             | Donated by Gary Rucinski in memory of his father.   |      |
| 15   | London Plane            | Platanus x acerifolia             | CC, north, Pine Gorve                | Leda, the Charney-Golden family dog. | Charney-Golden Family   |      |
| 16   | Sugar maple             | Acer sacchrum                     | Grove, West Tennis Court             | Dore, Lawrence                       | Husband of Judy Dore.   |      |
| 17   | Sugar maple             | Acer sacchrum (3)                 | Park NW Pine Grove                   | Lerz, Alfred                         | Lucia Stewart's father  |      |
| 18   | Spruce                  | Picea sp.                         |                                      | Wollmer, Chuck                       |   |      |
| 19   | Red maple               | Acer rubrum                       | Cornell South                        | Thompson, Jon David                  | Brother of Susan Thompson   |      |
| 20   | Dogwood, florida        | Cornus florida                    | Park, SW, Cornell                    | Baumstein                            | Donated by Andrew Hodgdon & Carol Baumstein in memory of Carol's mother.  |      |
| 21   | Linden, little leaf     | Tilia cordata                     | Park NW Pine Grove                   | Sweeny                               | Sweeny famaily  |      |
| 22   | Sugar maple             | Acer sacchrum                     | Grove, West Tennis Court             | Schwoppe, Martha                     |   |      |
| 23   | American Beech          | Fagus grandifolia                 | Park, SW, Cornell                    | King, Michael                        |   |      |
| 24   | Sugar maple             | Acer sacchrum                     | Park, SW, Cornell                    | Ramsey/Cutright                      | donated by Julie Ramsey and David Cutright in honor of their three children.  |      |
| 25   | Plum, flowering (3)     | Prunus sp.                        |                                      | Feeley, Charles E.                   | Celebration of life tribute, 1989.  |      |
| 26   | Bench                   |                                   | CC, SE                               | Rawlings, Ray & Nancy                | in honor of Nancy & Raw Rawlings, Good Neighbors, Dedicated Citizens. Formally of 581 Grove St.   | 2016 |
| 27   | Tulip poplar            | Lirodendron tulipifera            | CC, near gym                         | Wagner, Karl Edward                  | Planted in June 2006 by Jim Wagner in memory of his brother Karl Edward Wagner, (1945-1994)   |      |
| 28   | Pin oak                 | Quercus palustris                 | Near Pine Grove bus stop             | Murphy, Jane McDaid                  | Planted by Jerry Murphy, family and friends.  |      |
| 29   | Dogwood, stellar pink   | Cornus x florida x Kousa , Rutgan | CC - Pine Grove side                 | Larrabee, Elizabeth                  | selected by Michele Martin  |      |
| 30   | Dogwood, stellar pink   | Cornus x florida x Kousa , Rutgan | CC - Pine Grove side                 | Martin, Scott Douglas                | selected by Michele Martin  |      |
| 31   | White pine, upright     | Pinus strobus, fastigata          | Playground                           | Ray Rawlings                         |   | 2018 |
| 32   | Gingko                  | Ginkgo biloba                     | Playground, S; near Stewart bench    |                                      | Donated by Ted Chapman  |      |
| 33   | Swamp White Oak         | Quercus bicolor                   | Park, SW, Cornell                    | Steven Melly                         | in honor of Steven Melly for his work as chairman of LFIA Beautification Committee. Steve, his wife Karen Puopolo and their 4 children lived at 63 Cornell and 5 Pine Grove.  | 2018 |
| 34   | Eastern redbud          | Cercis canadensis                 | CC - Pine Grove side                 | Rothschild                           | planted by the Mondell family in honor of the Karen Mondell's mother Walter Rothschild.   |      |
| 35   | Korean lilac            | Syringa meyeri                    | Park SE - Cornell / Grove            | Peggy Conroy                         | Sister of Mae Finn  |      |
| 36   | Dawn redwood            | Metasequoia glyptostroboides      | Park S - Cornell                     |                                      |   | 2019 |
| 37   | Yellowwoods (2)         | Cladatstrus kentuckii             | Pine Grove/Cornell                   | Barabra Gruethal, Liz Mirablale      | Riverside Committee   | 2021 |
| 38   | Gingko biloba, Saratoga | Saratoga Gingko                   | Grove St Bed soth                    | Mark Paris                           | Coordinated by Elaine Hatow   | 2016 |
| 39   | Bench                   |                                   | Grove St South near baseball diamond | Keyes, Dick                          | By family   | 2017 |
| 40   | Sourwood                | Oxydendron arboreum               | Grove St                             | Jim Slattery                         | By family   | 2017 |
| 41   | Bench                   |                                   | Cornell West                         | Ed Rousch                            | In loving memory of Rev. Ed Roush "Mr. Lower Falls", 933-2018. A gift from friends and family   | 2018 |
| 41   | Eastern Redbud          | Cercis canadensis                 | Cornell West                         | Ed Rousch                            |   | 2018 |
| 42   | Bench                   |                                   | Cornell/Cornell                      | Martha Collins                       |   | 2020 |
| 42   | Dogwoods (2)            | Cornus x florida                  | Cornell/Cornell                      | Martha Collins                       | Community fundraiser  | 2020 |
| 43   | Magnolia, Yellow bird   |                                   | Near community garden                | anonymous                            | Friends   | 2021 |
| 44a  | Cucumber magnolia       | Magnolia accuminata               | Near community garden                | Tony Scarasella                      | Terry Williams  | 2022 |
| 44b  | Willow Oak (3)          | Quercus phellos                   | Near community garden                | Tony Scarasella                      | Terry Williams  | 2022 |
| 44c  | Bench                   |                                   | Near community garden                | Tony Scarasella                      | Terry Williams  | 2023 |
| 45   | Flower Garden           | perennials                        | Community garden                     | Marlene Archer & Wayne Clarke        |   | 2022 |





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