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Lake Street Park - Elliott Park

In May of 1929 the Board of Park Commissioners issued a Bid Order to remove buildings along Main Street at the head of Wedge Pond with the intent of building a Park at that location.

In June of 1929 the Star talked of a “pleasing renovation to North Main Street with the removal of several buildings. The site has been seeded down with grass to make a pleasant open space.”

At the same time Horn Pond Brook which flowed from Horn Pond to Wedge Pond has been cleaned of debris leading to a clean water supply for Wedge Pond.

In September of 1929 George Davidson, the Park Commissioner and Past President of Rotary was the speaker at a luncheon with his topic being “The Improvement of the Waterways of Winchester”. The Horn Pond Brook was part of the cleanup along Wedge Pond and now a beautiful vista of Wedge Pond can be seen.

The Park Department was working on the new Lake Street Park at the head of Wedge Pond including the building of a rock garden and the addition of shrubs. E.F. Randall’s Nurseries of Reading rearranged and planted the rockery at the new park.

In October 1965 the Rotary Club petitioned the Town to rename the Lake Street Park after Alfred Dykes Elliott and to include monies to provide an irrigation system. In December the name change was voted in the affirmative but the request for funding the irrigation did not pass.

In March 1967 the Rotary Club asked the town to spend \$4,500 to install underground irrigation. The club had already committed funds for landscaping the area.

In April 1967 Lou Snow, Rotary President, made an impassioned plea to the Town to appropriate \$4,500 for the irrigation system at Alfred Dykes Elliott Park when it is extensively improved with plantings by the Rotary Club. Lou rhetorically asked the Town Meeting Members how proud they were of the Winchester Common. “It used to be an eyesore site, he reminded them and it was mainly through the efforts of Al Elliott it is as beautiful as it is today. The Rotary with the cooperation of Home and Garden Club, the Park Department and the Conservation Commission is undertaking the beautification of Elliott Park. The Selectmen and the Park Commissioner supported the request. The Finance Committee was not in support of the sprinkler system. The Town Meeting in a near unanimous vote passed the appropriation.

Frost and Higgins Company of Arlington did all the planting of trees and shrubs and D.J. Olivadoti Co. of Winchester did the walkways and a platform for the memorial stone. The total cost was in the vicinity of \$7,000.

The Winchester Star praised the Rotary Club for its efforts in an editorial in May of 1967.

The Park was officially dedicated in May of 1967. Rev. Newt Clay, a Rotarian, called Al “a homespun boy” in his remarks at the dedication. Newt spoke of Al’s strengths of character, integrity and service to the Town.

In July of 1968 there was another editorial in tribute of Al Elliott, a native son who devoted his life to making Winchester a more beautiful place to live. He epitomized “Service Above Self”

WEDGE POND PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANK H. HIGGINS

Showing before- during- after-construction views of the park later named for Alfred Elliott

(Winchester Archival Center 2019.08)

Notes assembled by historian Ellen Knight 6/24/19

Site History

As recommended by landscape architect Herbert Kellaway and the Winchester Waterways Committee (est. 1927), the Town of Winchester acquired the properties abutting Wedge Pond which fronted on Main Street, removed the buildings, and created a park called Lake Street Park and later named Elliott Park.

A special Town Meeting in June 1928 approved acquiring ownership of Horn Pond Brook from the Woburn line to Lake Street.

The Town also acquired a substantial strip on the shore of Wedge Pond at Main and Lake Streets, as approved at the Annual Town Meeting in March 1929. During 1929, the buildings were removed and the cellar holes filled. Using Town ashes for fill, the site was graded in 1930 and was laid out and planted by the Park Department in 1931. A rock garden was created, and shrubbery and rose gardens were planted.

Photographs

#1 shows the properties on Main Street which would be demolished to make a park on the eastern shore of Wedge Pond. The buildings pictured stood between Lake Street and the river bridge and were photographed on March 12, 1929. According to a map in Kellaway's report, the Taylor family owned all the property except the Garbino and Blunt homes. Right to left with last known occupants:

718 Main (or 716-718), two-family, home of Biaggio Garbino family as of April 1929. (In 1928, the Trygve Anderson family was at 716.)

702-706 Main, Taylor wagon house with attached house including (#702) ground-floor commercial space (a grocer in 1916, a plumber in 1925). Behind the Taylor wagon house were a carriage house and shed (shown in #2). The Verner Carson family lived here in April 1929.

698-700 Main, home of Annie Davey in 1929

694 Main, home of Christopher Morris family in 1928

692 Main, with a Mansard roof, home of John D. Blunt family in 1929

688 Main, home of Charles Chamberlain family in 1928

Bridge – wooden railing is visible (here the water ran under Main Street eventually to empty into the Aberjona River)

678 Main, was the Robert Spong auto paint shop in 1925, numbered 669 in 1928, not listed 1929

#2 shows the rear sides of the above-listed properties on March 12, 1929

The outlet is at the far right, and the first house on the right is #688 Main. #702-706 is in the center and the shed and carriage house belonging to Taylor are at the shore to the left. At the far left is the rear of the Garbino house.

#3 shows the park under construction, looking north from Main Street and Wedge Pond Road. In the background are buildings on Lake Street. The building to the right of the trees is the Town's Water Department building. To its right is a wooden railing where Horn Pond Brook passed under the street.

#4 shows the park under construction, looking south from the intersection of Lake Street and Main Street. In the left background is the steeple of the Congregational Church. The trolley tracks belong to the street railway which went through Winchester center from Woburn to Arlington.

#5 shows the finished park.

#6 is a view across Wedge Pond to the park and buildings on the east side of Main Street belonging to George W. Blanchard & Co., coal and lumber.

#7 shows the finished park with buildings on Lake Street. At the right is 724 Main, another building owned by George W. Blanchard. To its left, behind the rock garden, is the Water Dept. building.

#1



#2



#3



#4



#5



#6



#7





Lake Street Park 1929



Lake Street Park 1929

Elliott Park Plaque 1967



1968

May 24, 1929 - Star



TOWN OF WINCHESTER

**BOARD OF
PARK COMMISSIONERS**

Bids will be received by the Board of Park Commissioners for the removal of the buildings situated on Main Street, adjacent to Wedge Pond, and being numbered 688, 692, 694, 698, 700, 702, 704, 708, 710, 712, 716, and 718 Main Street.

All of the buildings are of wood frame construction.

The right is reserved to sell as a whole, in groups or separately, as may appear to the best advantage of the Town.

Bids will be opened at the Park Commissioners' Room, Winchester Place on Monday evening, May 27th, at 8 P. M.

Bids must state the date when buildings shall be removed.

The right is also reserved to reject any and all bids.

By Order of the

**BOARD OF PARK
COMMISSIONERS**

June 21, 1929 - Star

A pleasing renovation to North Main street is the removal of several of the buildings which have been located on the street line at the big lumber and coal yard of the George W. Blanchard Company. These buildings, directly opposite the new taking by the town of the Wedge Pond shore, have been removed and their site seeded down to grass, making a pleasing open space. The work of removing the houses and old Taylor stables on the town property is progressing rapidly.

June 28, 1929 - Star

Horn Pond Brook, long a bone of contention, has been practically cleared from its source to Wedge Pond. The word practically is used advisedly, for while this brook has been cleaned of debris and its banks restored, its location is such that constant removal of rubbish is still necessary to keep it in a clean condition. Fortunately this is becoming less daily, and as the feed of this brook is directly out of Horn Pond, a clean water supply, this phase of the situation is now under control.

September 27, 1929 - Star

The speaker at this meeting was our own Past President, George. His topic was "The Improvement of the Waterways of Winchester." George, who is chairman of our local Park Commission is particularly well qualified to deal with this subject. He gave particular attention to the development along Horn Pond Brook and to the Mill Pond.

To those who think that the Park Commission has been idle, George offers the explanation that much preliminary work must be completed before actual construction begins. For instance the Town must acquire rights along the Waterways before alterations are undertaken. This has been done for the entire length of Horn Pond Brook and along the shores of Wedge Pond as far as is practical. Those who seek evidence of progress should take a walk along upper Main street and observe the beautiful vista of Wedge Pond which has been created by the removal of the unsightly buildings which fronted on Main street. The work in this section will be pushed rapidly. Work at the Mill Pond is still under consideration, but it is probable that an appropriation will be made for dredging the pond at an early date.

April 10, 1931 - Star

Men of the Park Department have been busy this week at the new park on Main street at Lake street. The rock beacon which aroused so much discussion, pro and con, has been made over into a rock garden, shrubs have been set out and considerable grading done.

April 17, 1931 - Star

E. E. Randall of Randall's Nurseries at 28 South street, Reading, has personally rearranged and planted the rockery at the new park on upper Main street at Lake street with evergreen, shrubs and a variety of hardy plants. He has also set out a hedge and corner plantings of flowering shrubs. When this park is completed it will be a great improvement to the section in which it stands, providing as it does a pleasing view of Wedge Pond.

October 1965 - Star

OTHER ARTICLES

Other articles named by the Town Counsel as possible considerations for the upcoming special Town Meeting included a Rotary Club petition to fix up the park land opposite the First National Store and by Wedge Pond, and the memorializing of it to the memory of one of the town's most beloved citizens of recent years, the late Mr. Alfred D. Elliott.

October 1965 – Warrant Article 12 - Star

12. Requests town permission to name park on Main and Lake Streets by Wedge Pond the Alfred Dykes Elliott Park, and appropriate funds for installing an irrigation system there.

December 1965 - Star

The final Monday night session on the special Town Meeting voted: to extend the Myopia Hill area sewerage system into Myopia, Fernway and McCall Roads—making the town 98% covered by its sewer system; to name park area between Wedge Pond and Main Street the “Alfred Dykes Elliott Park,” but not to construct an irrigation system there;

December 1965 - Star

ELLIOTT PARK

Article Twelve asked the town to authorize the naming of the park area west of Main Street by Wedge Pond the “Alfred Dykes Elliott Park” and to appropriate \$4,127 for constructing an irrigation system there.

The article was split into two parts by a motion.

Edmund A. Williams, member of the Board of Park Commissioners, Edward E. Hicks, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, and Charles Doucette, chairman of the Finance Committee, all recommended favorable action on the naming of the park after the very respected late Alfred Elliott, and the Town Meeting voted to do so.

In speaking in favor of building an underground irrigation system into the park area, Mr. Williams said the site was a choice one and had the potential of “turning out to be another small Common” in its beauty if irrigated and properly watered.

“As far as the Park Department is concerned all our future plans will call for irrigation systems,” Mr. Williams said. He added that the Park Department did not have the manpower to cope with the care and maintenance of all its town properties and have to water them too. And if they aren’t watered on a scheduled basis, he noted, plantings like the Garden Club’s recent beautification project along the Aberjona’s banks by the laundry—where there was a loss of between 10 and 15 per cent of the trees—would be lost.

Mr. Doucette jested: “Finally the Finance Committee is opposed to something,” and added that the committee believed the Park Department could schedule its men and water pump equipment to do the job adequately without having to go to the article’s expense.

Mr. Hicks said the Selectmen were divided on the issue, but tended to favor the Finance Committee’s view.

The Town Meeting voted not to appropriate funds for an irrigation system at the newly named park.

ARTICLE 29: Asks the Town to spend \$4,500 in installing an underground irrigation system at the Alfred D. Elliott Park by Wedge Pond and Main Street, requested by the Rotary Club, which has already committed funds for landscaping that park area.

April 6, 1967 - Star

ELLIOTT PARK

Under Article Twenty-Nine the Rotary Club of Winchester sought to have the Town appropriate \$4,500 for the purpose of installing an underground irrigation system in the Alfred Dykes Elliott Park by Lake and Main Street so as to properly water that Town park land when it is extensively improved with plantings by the Rotary organization.

Lewis B. Snow, president of the 82-member local Rotary Club, spoke to the issue by rhetorically asking the Town Meeting Members how proud they were of the Winchester Common. "It used to be an eyesore site," he reminded, "and it was mainly through the efforts of the late Alfred Elliott it is as beautiful as it is today," he pointed out.

4TH SESSION, cont. page 6B

(continued from page 1)

The Rotary Club contributed substantially to beautifying the common through the leadership efforts of the late Alfred Elliott, he noted, and the Rotary Club is now trying to further beautify the Center area by making this park attractive too, with the cooperation of the Home and Garden Club, the Park Department and the Conservation Commission, he said.

"The Rotary Club started its Annual Auction 15 years ago, led by the late Alfred Elliott," Mr. Snow reported, "and since then the club has worked hard to make Winchester a better place to live, including giving over \$110,000 from the Auction to such local organizations as the Scholarship Fund, Hospital, Girl Scout Cabin, Girl and Boy Scouts, Little League, Auxiliary Fire Department, and WHSR-FM...which is one of only five public school radio stations in the nation."

"In continuing to make Win- to help beautify it, the club wishes to make the Elliott Park an chester a better place to live, and attractive asset to the Town by putting in new walks, benches along the pond-side, planting trees and shrubs, and other improvements," Mr. Snow concluded, "and the club would like to have the Town's support in making this park land as beautiful as the Common now is."

Selectman Armstrong noted that the Board of Selectmen were in unanimous accord in strongly supporting the article. "This park is in a conspicuous place in the Center of Town," he said, "and it could be a real good asset to the Town instead of the present liability." It should be a credit to the Town, he continued, "and water will be the key factor if it is to survive and stay beautiful—so it needs the irrigation system."

Mrs. Gilpatric told the meeting that "tender loving care is not the only prerequisite of good park lands, they also need water." "Take off your glasses of apathy," she charged, "and take a good look at that spot by the First National Store," for it needs improving and it must have an irrigation system to preserve any improvements.

Park Commissioner Albert A. MacDonnell said the Park Department supported the article because "these underground systems are necessary, as we have learned from our experience at the Common."

Mr. Amico said the Finance Committee recommended unfavorable action because it did not feel the Town was ready to take care of this property, and there was no reason why the Park Department, with its garage across the street, couldn't hand water and care for the property.

Malcolm Masters, chairman of the Conservation Commission, said that organization strongly supported the article.

The Town Meeting voted to appropriate the \$4,500 requested in a near unanimous vote.

Article Thirty sought the Town's authorization for the Public Library to accept a gift of \$3,000 from an anonymous donor for an irrigation system there, and the Town Meeting voted its approval, with thanks, to the donor.

Rotary Club Starts On New Elliott Park

Work began Tuesday on what is planned to be a stunning new park area at the junction of Main and Lake Streets.

Initiated by the same cooperative group effort in Town that raised the Common from just another park to one of the most attractive Center sites in the state, the redesigned new park area by Wedge Pond is named to honor the man who started the move to improve the Common less than a decade ago, and will be called the Alfred Dykes Elliott Memorial Park.

The push to beautify the site between Wedge Pond and Main Street is spearheaded in planning and financing by the Winchester Rotary Club, with strong assists from The Garden Club in planning of plantings and the Town Park Department, which approved the plans on its land and got Town Meeting support for installing a \$4,500 underground watering system.

Frost & Higgins Company of Arlington is doing all the planting of trees and shrubbery.

The contracting firm of D. J. Olivadoti of 6 Wendell Street in Winchester is constructing concrete sidewalk pathways and a platform for a rock bearing a plaque dedicating the park to the late Mr. Elliott.

And the Park Department is doing excavation work for the memorial platform, placing gravel under the concrete walks, and overseeing the implacement of the watering system.

The total cost of re-creating a new park on the long untouched and potentially attractive site is expected to run just under \$7,000, according to Lewis B. Snow, president of the local Rotary Club.

The park land will be improved and beautified in the following way:

The present dirt footpath running diagonally across the park from Lake Street opposite the Town Stables to Main Street opposite the First National Store will be paved with a rough aggregate concrete path with redwood or cedar edges and dividing strips (5' wide). Another short path will be similarly constructed leading toward the center of the park but remaining close to Main Street, where a memorial platform, rock and plaque will show an attractive setting.

Surrounding the platform will be a ring of white alyssums and ageratums, red geraniums, junipers, pieris and white petunias, in beds at the back of the stone, and red ivy along the foundation.

Now existing on the park land are eight spruce trees, six maples and one linden; to these will be added one maple and one linden, and two weeping willows, along with some additional shrubbery.

The new Elliott Memorial Park is expected to be completed by summertime, and at some time in the near future, additional plantings are contemplated, as well as adding some benches at random under some of the trees facing toward Wedge Pond and built on concrete block foundations to avoid muddied soil where people might sit.

Commenting on the plans and work begun on the new park honoring a former Rotarian and well-known civic leader, Mr. Snow said he saw the new park as "a healthy and fine addition toward beautifying the Town—and one that the Town will really be proud of for many years to come."

May 18, 1967 - Star Editorial

Beautiful New Park

The Rotary Club's plan to improve and beautify the park land at the junction of Main and Lake Streets by Wedge Pond, and to name it as a memorial to the late Alfred D. Elliott who started the movement to upgrade the Town Common several years ago, is both a good and worthwhile venture, and the Town will be the better for it.

This particular piece of land at one time was a beauty spot in Town, among many, and had attractive shrubs lining its Main Street border, and grass and plantings were kept up neatly. In recent years, however, it fell into neglect, and until now it showed only a glimpse of what its potential beauties were for those with good imaginations.

The Rotary Club, seeking to honor one of its most

beloved members, wisely conceived of this plan to beautify this park area as the Town Common had been improved several years earlier mainly through Mr. Elliott's and the club's efforts. The club sought and received generous planning help from The Garden Club, and the support of the Park Department, which also wished to see its own former beauty spot restored. The Town Meeting gave it a vote of confidence and appropriated some funds to assist with the installation of an underground watering system to insure its proper watering.

Community-wide spirit like this behind a good project insures its success, and the Rotary Club is to be commended for its motivating, planning and financing of the restoration of this park to make it into a new and more beautiful site.

Elliott Park Is Dedicated by A Rotary Ceremony

"He was a builder—and this new park that is being dedicated is a fitting and proper remembrance to him and the good works he achieved in this community," the Reverend Newton Clay affirmed in dedication ceremonies at the Alfred D. Elliott Memorial Park last Thursday afternoon.

Members of the late Alfred Elliott's family and nearly 100 Winchester Rotarians gathered at the new park site at Main and Lake Streets by Wedge Pond amid tempestuous rains and wind gusts to participate in the dedication event to one of this community's most beloved and notable former residents.

Lewis Snow, president of the Rotary Club, which was the initiator, planner and major financial contributor toward building the park site as a beauty spot—similar to what was achieved at the Common through the leadership of the late Mr. Elliott, officiated at the dedication ceremony.

Mr. Snow commented on the Mr. Elliott's many contributions in civic life through his work in Rotary, such as upgrading the Common, starting the annual Rotary Auction—which this year raised over \$12,000, and most of which is turned over to youth and service groups such as Boy and Girl Scouts and the Hospital, the Girl Scout Cabin and Winning Farm, among many others.

Reverend Clay spoke further on the late Mr. Elliott's strengths of character, integrity and service to the Town—and his inspiration of these qualities in others around him. "He was a 'homespun boy' in the best meaning of the phrase," the Rotary Chaplain asserted.

The Reverend John Bishop of the Episcopal Church led a prayer in memory of the late Mr. Elliott, and the Reverend John O' Donnell of St. Mary's Church gave the invocation after Rev. Clay placed a memorial wreath on the rock and plaque dedication site.

The area now known as the Alfred Elliott Park was originally acquired for park purposes by vote of the Town Meeting of March 21, 1929, at a cost of \$40,500.

All houses on the land at the corner of Main and Lake Streets were taken down, the cellar holes filled, and a new and shorter channel for Horn Pond Brook from the Lake Street bridge to the point of entrance into Wedge Pond dug.

The Waterways Committee at that time in 1929 told the Town Meeting:

ELLIOTT PARK, cont. page 5

June 1, 1967 continued

Elliott Park

(continued from page 1)

"We feel compelled to ask for it now because it is clear to us that unless we make the taking this year and at this time, our last chance to get this area at anywhere near the figure is gone once and for all. The trend of business development of Main Street has resulted in general increase in land values and the replacement of obsolete buildings. The indications are that this move will go on and include this tract of land at no distant date unless, by the foresight of the town, it is immediately taken for public purposes."

The Waterways Committee report of 1929 went on to say:

"It is one of the worst eyesores in Town. It serves (with dilapidated homes there) to conceal the pond from passers by on Main Street. It offers a disagreeable back yard condition visible from all parts of the pond and shores. It represents a noxious barrier between the Horn Pond Brook and the outlet of the pond. . . We need to have the shores here under the jurisdiction of the Town to get rid of the present mess (also water pollution), and we need the buildings and land to tear down the former and so care for the latter that all chance of future pollution at this point will be done away with. . . around a most beautiful sheet of water in our very midst, not to mention the establishment of a most attractive park."

Richard Parkhurst of Oak Knoll in Winchester, a former member

of the old Waterways Committee in 1929 and who supplied the above information, noted in a recent letter to Lewis Snow, president of the Winchester Rotary Club:

"As a citizen long interested in the preservation and beautification of open areas in Winchester, and the improvement of our waterways, I want to express my thanks to you and to Winchester Rotary for what you are proposing at Elliott Park. Your undertaking there . . . will be of the greatest value to the Town."

And that was how conservation was achieved in Winchester before the establishment a few short years ago of a highly skilled and organized Conservation Commission, which now seeks to preserve the remaining waterway areas in Town for the same public purpose and values.

July 18, 1968 – Star Editorial

A Growing Tribute

Some remember him for his pungent and always humorous leadership at Town Meeting, coming straight from the heart and mind of his native spirit. Some remember him for his warm response to their own personal needs. Some knew his business sense at work — be it in ground work efforts to get the Rotary auction — which he fathered — going, or in the broader concepts of planning.

The Winchester Rotarians have seen to it that Alfred Dykes Elliott will also be remembered for his steadfast efforts to make Winchester a more beautiful place in which to live and in so doing have given to the Town a place of increasing beauty to enjoy and cherish. The Elliott Memorial Park, set aside on that piece of Town land which borders Wedge Pond to the east, was dedicated in late spring and is having its first full summer of use. "In memory of Alfred Dykes Elliott a native son, who devoted his life to making Winchester a more beautiful place in which to live. Service above self," reads the Rotary plaque handsomely affixed to a

large boulder moved down to the center of the park from the Country Club backlands.

Mr. Elliott, a past president of Rotary and a former chairman of the Board of Assessors has been given credit for initiating and pushing through the major beautification measures of the Winchester Common; for leading Rotary's part in the helping to build the Girl Scout cabin; and for major contributions to Winning Farm. Among other things he built — in his own back yard — the chuck wagon which now supports the WHS orchestra by its Saturday* football sales.

His was a continuing and positive contribution to the Town until his death four years ago and for this he was widely respected and beloved. Rotary in turn is continuing, with the aid of the Garden Club and the Park Department, to add to its beautification of the Park. Most recently eight Austrian pine, three sycamore and four juniper have been set in. This is a most appropriate memorial. Mr Elliott would have liked it.