

## HISTORY

### Beverly Cove Improvement Association, Inc.

#### Celebrating 100 Years of Neighborhood Fellowship 1921-2021

##### The Cove Neighborhood

The Cove section of Beverly Massachusetts is considered one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city. In the early 1700's settlers, mostly farmers and tradespeople, arrived and began raising families on the moist fertile soil along the coast of Salem Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. The curved spine of the district is Hale Street, Route 127, running North from Dane Street and turning East toward the abutting Beverly Farms section of Beverly. Prominent early family names living along this corridor were Woodbury, Foster, Prince, Thorndike, Lovett, Ober and Patch.

##### Formation of the Association and Original Benefactor

The Cove Association originated when 96 residents of the Cove (known as Covers) joined together on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1921 and formed a neighborhood association. They called themselves the Beverly Cove Improvement Association. Article II of the first By-Laws stated that the organization was formed for the purpose of promoting "good will in the community" .....and for "the general interests and welfare of the Cove section of Beverly...."

One of the original members was Gideon Francis Foster. Gideon's only child, Anna P. Foster had died early in 1905 at the age of 23 and Gideon's final 1924 bequest played an important part in the early creation and enduring fiscal success of the Association. Gideon Francis Foster was so impressed with the "do good" purpose and dedication of his peers and neighbors in the Association that, unbeknownst to anyone, his final will contained an extraordinary provision. Upon the death of his second wife Elizabeth, Gideon's entire estate, although modest in 1924, was left to the Association to establish a Trust in the name of the Anna P. Foster Fund. The Fund was to be held "in trust and safely invested" for the use of the Association. The Auditorium in the Cove Community Center is officially named in honor of his daughter Anna's memory. In addition to supporting the operation of the Association, the Fund regularly supports two "youth happenings" inspired by Gideon. One is the regular Gideon P. Foster Picnic on Community Center grounds. The other is the Gideon P. Foster Memorial Scholarship Fund given to a deserving High School graduate residing in the Cove.

When Gideon died in 1924 the Association realized the need to apply for status as a legal entity. A Board of eleven members then petitioned the Commonwealth to form a non-profit corporation. On March 5<sup>th</sup> 1925 the Beverly Cove Improvement Association, Inc. was granted a Certificate of Incorporation.

## Commitment to the Community

Throughout the history of the Association the members have continued the commitment of the original members by proposing and accomplishing numerous civic improvements and beautification projects in the neighborhood and inspiring and encouraging residents to partake in Beverly and Cove civic affairs. A 1926 campaign eliminated "all unsightly dumps in the Cove." In 1928 in memory of John H. Woodbury, a Beverly Cove veteran of the Civil War, a plot in front of the Old Woodbury Tavern on Hale Street was dedicated as Woodbury Square. The Association erected a bronze plaque which sadly was vandalized and removed. In 1938 the Association installed a drinking fountain in the 31 acre Sally Milligan Park in the district. In 1941 the Association paid for the installation of tennis courts in the Cove Playground (properly called Pickman Park). On July 4, 1944 the Cove honor roll of men who served their county in World War II was dedicated. Traditionally on Memorial Day and Veterans Day the Association renew flowers at the base of the monument.

## Cove Community Center

In the 1920's the early association member meetings were held in the homes of the members. Once the membership grew meetings and social affairs were held in a hall built by the members adjoining the Old Cove School on Hale street. In the early 1950's the City tore down the old school and built a new elementary school to accommodate Cove Children. Meanwhile the Association purchased a 2 1/8 acres site at 19 East Corning Street and, in December 1951, the membership voted to retain an architect to draw up preliminary building plans for the site. The plans were approved and the ground-breaking ceremony was held on Sunday August 3, 1952. The first shovelful was turned by Robert S. Foster, oldest of the fifty members present. On April 5<sup>th</sup> 1953, 30 years and one month after its incorporation, the Association began a one week-long celebration, dedication and the grand opening of the Cove Community Center. Nearly 200 people attended the first day's celebration which included a cornerstone-sealing ceremony.

## Events

Throughout the next thirty years the 1 ½ story building has been the site of many colorful theatricals, holiday parties, dances, picnics and numerous social events. The Association also sponsored historical presentations, book talks, films, forums and civic debates. There were also plenty of "fun kid's activities." However, as members and visitors aged, the men's and the woman's lavatories located on the second floor became an obstacle to full enjoyment and successful events in the building.

The drive to provide handicap access to the building was led by Charles Woodbury Wallis, a former President and longtime Trustee. Charlie was a veteran of World War II and was generally considered Honorary Mayor of the Cove. In 2013 David Jaquith a local architect was retained to draft a plan to provide ADA compliant access to the building and lavatories. Jaquith presented a plan to construct an addition with ground level entrances on the rear of the building, a handicap ramp to the Auditorium and an additional unisex lavatory. The membership promptly voted to accept the plan in 2014 and the Trustees obtained financing from the Boston Private Bank. Todd Main of Main Construction was selected to build the addition and the construction and excavation began in the Spring of 2015.

During construction a second floor plumbing leak and broken water pipes caused extensive damage in the kitchen. The Board then decided to repair and completely upgrade the kitchen and hired J & J Frerk Carpenters, a local contractor in the Cove. Once the new addition was completed and kitchen restored, a new energy efficient heating and air conditioner system was installed in the Auditorium. The Cove Community Center held a Grand Reopening on October 2016.

During the years of construction delays and setbacks the membership and hall rentals declined. However, the Fund managed by Boston Private Bank remained strong, continued to appreciate in value and provide a sufficient income stream. At a special meeting in January 2020 the Trustees proposed and obtained membership approval to pay off the entire balance of the Bank loan.

When the COVID Pandemic took hold during 2020 -2021 the building rentals and social events ceased until early 2022. The Board took advantage of the vacancy period to spruce up the hall with a new wall and window paint. In early 2023, the Board selected a North Andover team, CompeteNow to redesign an entirely new Website. In March of 2023, the Board unveiled the new website and invited the membership to a special meeting to approve laying a new floating laminate floor over the 50 year old tiles in the auditorium. With the installation planned for May 2023, the hall will have been completely renovated for use by member and non-members alike.

