

THE LINCOLN BALL FIELD

Our objective is to preserve the best of what we have—our open spaces.... By definition, our concept is one in which the essential integrity and serenity of our open spaces will be preserved.

—Lincoln Conservation Commission, 1968

In 1932—during the Depression and long before Lincoln embarked upon its leadership role in land conservation—an anonymous Lincoln resident generously donated to the Town about 7.25 acres to be used as a Town Ball field. Costs to prepare the field and an access road were estimated at \$4,950, but all but \$1,000 of those expenses were also donated by residents.

Lincoln was a baseball town. That same year, the Lincoln Mohawks Baseball Team won their first league championship. Later, they became a semi-professional team, competing against teams from Waltham, Cambridge, and other larger communities. Smith School was being constructed next door when the Mohawks repeated as league champions from 1947 to 1951. As they played on the Town Ball field, the community came together, sharing in sport and fun. Watching the Mohawks was an indisputable Fourth of July tradition.

For Lincoln's residents, few landscapes could better convey the "essential integrity and serenity of our open spaces" than their Town Ball field—few could convey the character or the inspirational sharing of traditions that define community. It is not surprising, then, that in 1946 the Town acquired 20 acres adjoining their treasured ball field for a "school and Town auditorium site."

As the Town planned for a school, "it was decided to place the building almost entirely on the western part of the site so that the present ball field would in no way be disturbed." The architects suggested a southern alignment for the building, but that was rejected to preserve a valued Town green space: the open Town Ball field. Instead, the Town specifically voted to build "on land recently acquired by the Town for that purpose," not on the ball field lot. While the ball field lot would be used by the schools, it was not part of the school property. It continued its tradition as a Town Ball field, soon administrated by a new Town Recreation department. Additional adjoining lots would be acquired for Hartwell and then for Brooks, and the Superintendent declared that "the concept of a campus school system with a Primary School, a Middle School and an Upper School became a reality." Through it all, the Town Ball field remained. A cherished open space that essentially served that traditional, spiritual role of a central campus "Quad," it continued to be held and maintained by the Town, listed under Town "Park" funding.

Consciously preserved by Lincoln throughout the past 80 years, that green space, that community park, that Town Ball field has been an enduring symbol of the Town and its approach to the land. Lincoln built a ball field—"build it, and they will come." But as Lincoln's constant stewardship of the land has demonstrated, should an inheritance of defining landscapes also inspire and encourage future generations, there is a demanding corollary: Preserve it, and they will come.

— Jack MacLean