

Please Join Us at the Town Forest Celebration on May 1

The Walpole Town Forest will be celebrating the 100th Anniversary of its dedication on May 1, 2016. This article is the sixth and final one of this series describing subjects pertaining to the Town Forest, from the first recorded deed in 1659 to modern times.

The celebration will be this Sunday May 1 at Turco Field, Walpole High School, from 11AM to 4PM. There is no rain date because it's not going to rain.

There will be a variety of demonstrations and exhibitors that you don't get to see in your normal travels. This includes:

- Two chain saw sculptors.
- Two saw mills that will take raw logs and cut them into lumber. It's an opportunity for adults and children to see how the lumber that built your home is produced
- A display of forest-themed artwork produced by Walpole schoolchildren
- Antique forestry tools
- An archery demonstration
- Horse-drawn wagon rides
- Military memorabilia
- Food, drinks, snacks
- Tabletop displays
- Unveiling of a new Town Forest monument
- The dedication of a new Anniversary Garden
- Planting of a large Centennial Tree

For children's activities we'll have:

- Face painting
- Decorating of tree cookies
- Decorating of flower pots

In keeping with two themes of the Town Forest dedication in 1916, the Lt. Gov. (Karyn Polito) will be on hand while children and families plant 1,000 white pine seedlings in a prepared area of the forest.

Distinguished speakers from Walpole's State Congressional delegation and state forestry organization are invited.

Parking and Access:

A goal of the event planning committee is to make this event accessible to anyone wishing to attend. One reason is that some attendees may have planted trees at the 50th or 75th Anniversary events and may wish to do so again.

We will have an expanded handicap parking area. If you have a handicap placard, be sure to display it that day.

We are asking people without placards, but with mobility challenges, to take advantage of our Drop Off area behind Plimpton School. Volunteers will be on-hand to escort people to the Turco Field entrance, where golf carts will be available to shuttle people to the celebration, which will be based in the open area near the Turco Field scoreboard.

Anniversary Garden and Tree Planting:

After the speaking portion and the unveiling of a wonderful new plaque in the Town Forest Monument area, activities will move to a beautiful new destination near White Bridge called the Anniversary Garden. The Centennial Tree will be planted in a brief ceremony.

Again, golf carts and the horse-drawn wagon will be available to shuttle people between Turco Field and the Anniversary Garden.

Planting of Seedlings:

Charles S. Bird, Jr., in whose vision the Town forest was created, believed that if children planted trees in the new Town Forest in 1916, a connection would be formed that would carry on as the children became adults. They would benefit from the lumber harvested there and enjoy the open space. They would become stewards of the Forest.

In that theme, we are encouraging children and families to come and plant as many white pine seedlings as they wish after the Centennial Tree Ceremony. We have 1,000 white pine seedlings to be planted in a small area that was forested this winter.

We will be asking families to record their names on Seedling Planting forms that will be stored at the Walpole Historic Society until the 125th Anniversary and beyond. Your children will be touched to come back as young adults in 25 years to see their childish handwriting that documented the day that they, as youngsters, planted a tree in the Town Forest in May 2016.

Hope to see you there.

For Walpole History Enthusiasts:

Two interesting historic facts have recently come to my attention, and if you're interested in Walpole History you can look into these things.

In a previous article of this series, I mentioned that industrialist George A. Plimpton donated land for both the current High School in 1907 and the first 51 acres of Town Forest in 1916.

So the question is: where was the high school prior to 1907? For the answer, contact me through the Town Forest website: <http://www.walpole-ma.gov/town-forest-committee>. Hint: the building is still in use.

Also, you can research a fatal locomotive explosion in the Boston Globe archives that took place on August 20, 1923 near Walpole Heights Station (long gone), which was near Common and South St.

I owe a huge thank you to the Walpole Historic Society, whose help was critical to me being able to write the articles in this series. President John Anderson, researchers Roger Turner & Barbara Bartholomew were very knowledgeable and more than eager to help.

If you're looking for an interesting gift for the Walpole Townie in your life, please visit the Historic Society some Saturday.