

the funding. The Friends and the Boston Parks Department hosted more than half a dozen well-attended public planning meetings, which helped to shape the plan for the renovation.

It was agreed that the main purpose of the renovation was to improve the park's infrastructure. The children's play equipment was not up to current code requirements. The basketball and tennis courts were in disrepair. Benches were warped or broken. The meadow was a mud hole due to heavy usage and poor drainage over many years.

The Halvorson Company, a well-known Boston-based landscape architectural firm, was responsible for planning and design of the renovation. The contracting company was DND Enterprises. Ken Crasco, Chief Landscape Architect for the Boston Parks Department, approved both design and contract.

Park guidelines

Please enjoy the newly renovated park, and help keep it clean and safe for everyone. The Friends of Titus Sparrow Park asks you to follow these recommendations.

PLEASE:

- 1) Put trash in the waste barrels.
- 2) Have your dog relieve him/herself before entering the park.
- 3) Keep your dog on leash, pick up after your dog, and restrain barking.
- 4) Enjoy the dog water fountain at the cross paths.
- 5) Follow the recommended ages for the playground equipment.
- 6) Follow the guidelines posted at the tennis and basketball courts.



02/04 — 1000

Who are the Friends of Titus Sparrow Park?

“The Friends” is an ever-renewing group of residents and park users who promote and sponsor activities in Sparrow Park for the enjoyment of its users. The Friends originated from the task force that helped design the park in the early 1970's. The Friends care deeply about the usage of the park and, along with the Boston Parks Department, work hard to help maintain its beauty and cleanliness for everyone's benefit. In addition to obtaining renovation funds, it has overseen the park's rehabilitation. The Friends have created programming in the park that provides entertainment, music, physical education and art programs free of charge to all its neighbors — young and old. Contributions from local residents and the NSTAR Foundation have paid for programming, horticultural and infrastructure improvements.

Helpful information

- “The Friends” website is www.thefriendsoftitussparrowpark.org
- The Friends have open meetings several times a year, and invite neighbors to ask questions and learn more about becoming a member or volunteering to help with a park event. Membership in the Friends of Titus Sparrow Park is free.
- Please see the bulletin board in the park for updates about board meetings, park events, as well as information about tennis clinics and basketball leagues.
- Questions? Please contact Yong Kim (617-262-8179) or Ted Pietras (617-641-8789).
- If you'd like to telephone the Boston Parks and Recreation Department directly about a maintenance issue that needs attention, the BPRD Parkline is 617.635.PARK, or 617.635.7275.



welcome to

Titus Sparrow Park





Welcome to Titus Sparrow Park

THIS PAMPHLET, WRITTEN BY THE FRIENDS OF TITUS SPARROW PARK, PROVIDES CURRENT AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARK.



down. However, no new building occurred and for the next eight years the lot remained vacant. Occasionally, it was used for illegal dumping of construction debris. Interim uses of the lot included parking for the Prudential building,

How did Titus Sparrow Park get its name?



A long-time resident of Durham Street, **Titus Sparrow** cared deeply for his neighborhood in the South End. He was a devoted tennis player, and began tennis programs for children at nearby Carter Field. Titus Sparrow helped to form the Sportsmen's Tennis Club, which for decades has provided city children with the opportunity to learn the game at no cost. In 1956, he became the first African-American umpire of the United States Tennis Association. He officiated at the Davis Cup, the U.S. Open, and the Longwood Tennis Club in Brookline. He planned to give free tennis lessons on the court in the new park. At a time when city officials paid little attention to poor minority areas, he encouraged his neighbors to be politically active and take responsibility for their community. He died before the park was completed in 1976. Because of his commitment to his community, the park, which includes a tennis court, was named in his honor.

"Has it ever occurred to you that just as your home is a reflection of you, so too is your neighborhood, your community, your city."

—TITUS SPARROW

What is the history of the location of Titus Sparrow Park?

The Park is located on 1.5 acres of land in the South End which in 1960 contained one half-row of houses on West Newton Street and another on West Rutland Square; they were brick bow fronts similar to those still standing. The other half of the lot, behind the brick wall, was empty. It formerly had contained the

Booth Memorial Hospital for Women and, later, a Salvation Army home for pregnant and unmarried women. The lot was bordered by the Union United Methodist Church on one side, and by five railroad tracks carrying intercity rail service between Washington, New York and Boston on the other. The heavy traffic during the heyday of rail travel often left black soot on the clothes hung out to dry behind the houses in the neighborhood.

In the 1960's, and for some decades before, houses in the two-block strips between Columbus Avenue and St. Botolph Street, from Dartmouth Street to Massachusetts Avenue, had been primarily owned by African-Americans, many of whom were members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. They possessed job security rare for African-Americans in those days. This history is described on plaques in Back Bay Station.

During the 1960's, the homeowners of West Rutland Square were repeatedly threatened by urban renewal projects that were to "improve" the major entrances to the South End, one of which was West Newton Street. "Improve" meant using federal money to tear down buildings and waiting for allocation of local development funds to rebuild.

The Urban Renewal Plan included, among other items, the construction of a four-lane highway. This four-lane road, called the South End Bypass, was to be the off-ramp from the large I-95 South interchange in Roxbury. It was expected to bring 40,000 cars a day onto West Newton and Dartmouth Streets.

In the winter of 1967 – 68, residents of West Rutland Square watched as houses across the street were torn

a basketball court, and gardens. For three summers it contained a portable pool where local children swam. In 1974, it became clear no money would be allocated to the site for housing.

The three-year battle against the South End Bypass ended in 1972 when Governor Francis Sargent canceled construction plans for highways into and through Boston. Subsequently, federal highway funding paid for the relocation of the Orange Line MBTA from Washington Street to the railroad tracks; rebuilding and covering the Amtrak lines, and building the Southwest Corridor Park to unify the South End and St. Botolph neighborhoods.

All four surrounding neighborhoods (Claremont, Cosmopolitan, St. Botolph, and Pilot Block) and the Union United Methodist Church were involved in the original design of Titus Sparrow Park. Their goal was to create mixed uses for all ages and levels of energy, but not to overbuild. The park would be restful while also including spaces for activity, such as the sledding hill in winter and the basketball and tennis courts in warmer weather. Cross paths were designed to bring everyone into the park, and to create a vibrant mix of ages and backgrounds.

Why was the park renovated in 2003?

Titus Sparrow Park is one of the most heavily used parks in the city, and in the 1990's was among those most in need of renovation. While the South End has 6% of the city's population, it has only 1% of its open space. The bulk of the park had not been renovated for 25 years. The Friends and their supporters in Boston City government secured