

Postcards from Falmouth Oral History Transcript

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Interviewer: Barbara Kanellopoulos

Topic: Falmouth Heights Baseball

Note: The right column references postcards by identifiers searchable in the Digital Commonwealth online collection.

00:00	[Music]	
00:45	welcome to the program	
00:46	and um thank you very much about	
00:50	Falmouth Heights well if we're talking I	#falmouthheights
00:53	think I'm talking a little bit about the	
00:54	ballpark	#falmouthheightsballpark Gunning_Heights_Ball_1251 through 1265 Hunt_Heights_Bldg_267 through 269 Hunt_Heights_Bldg_194 Hunt_Heights_Bch_274
00:56	at the great park that was set up in	
00:58	1870	#1870
01:00	Falmouth the Heights as a summer resort	
01:03	was really starting to be put together	
01:05	and over the next three years	
01:07	the six gentleman from Worcester	
01:09	Massachusetts acquired all of the	
01:11	properties	
01:12	and uh zoned it on their own zoning map	

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01:16	very tight restrictions decided where	
01:19	the parks would all grow	
01:21	uh go so they had a really uh	
01:24	it was the first planned unit	
01:26	development in the history of	
01:27	Massachusetts	
01:28	so it ran in those years and it evolved	
01:31	as it as the years went by but that	
01:34	particular year set up everything	
01:36	every single park throughout the	
01:39	the system the whole Falmouth Heights were all	
01:41	part of the grand design	
01:42	and when you walk through Falmouth Heights	
01:43	you can take a look at that	
01:45	and and uh admire it and the largest	
01:48	parcel of all was what we call the ball	
01:51	field	
01:52	and that has been used for all sorts of	
01:54	things everything from	
01:56	uh a children uh boys and girls	
01:58	campground with tents and religious	
02:00	training uh had	
02:02	had political events uh Herbert Hoover	#herberthoover
02:05	had a	
02:05	fundraiser in there on that that with two	

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02:07	thousand people	
02:09	uh there's all kind of uses but even in	
02:11	the 1870s baseball was an attraction	
02:15	so in my contact don't go back to 1870	
02:18	although I'm	
02:19	wondering how I look like I might go	
02:21	back to 1870	
02:23	but it was taken over the the developers	
02:26	of Falmouth Heights	
02:28	did so in such a way that you would	
02:30	always have an area	
02:31	that could be used for spectacular	
02:33	events	
02:34	and baseball was one of those for them	
02:36	and it was for myself as I grew up as a	
02:39	youngster 10 11 years old there were	
02:42	teams from Falmouth Heights teams from	
02:45	Falmouth and we would either ride our	
02:47	bikes from Falmouth to Falmouth Heights	
02:50	or we would if we were lucky we would	
02:53	had a nickel we could go on Palmer's	
02:55	bus station which was on Walker Street	#walkerstreet
02:57	and for a nickel you could ride to the	
02:59	ball field	
03:00	and that's how we went back and forth	
03:01	but Belvidere Plains had a team Falmouth	#belvidereplain

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		Hunt_Village_Har_114
03:03	Heights had a team	
03:04	and we all played on the Heights ball	
03:06	field and I remember	
03:07	most of my youth traveling to that ball	
03:10	field and I went back	
03:12	as years went by to play on it as in	
03:14	Cape Cod League which was	#capecodbaseballleague
03:16	already it had been going on since I	
03:18	guess there were baseball in the Heights	
03:20	since the	
03:21	1870s but the Falmouth All-Stars a lot	#falmouthallstars
03:24	of the local people that you would know	
03:26	Willard Boyden who was principal of the	#willardboyden
03:28	East Falmouth Elementary School was the	#eastfalmouthelementaryschool
03:30	coach for the Falmouth All-Stars	
03:32	and the old original Cape Cod League	
03:35	with great players like	
03:37	Butts Jonas if you remember about Jonas	
03:40	so Roche Pires is just	#rochepires
03:41	outstanding athletes who competed in the	
03:43	league	
03:44	there was a team from the military	
03:46	reservation	
03:47	uh had great stars the young uh	
03:50	professionals who had been drafted who	

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03:52	played in the cape league	
03:53	Mass Maritime had a team Mashpee had a	
03:56	team Barnstable	
03:57	went all the way down to Eastham and	
03:58	baseball league	
04:00	say we were the Falmouth Falcons so we	#falmouthfalcons
04:02	were the second team from Falmouth	
04:03	playing on the	
04:04	Falmouth Heights ball field so many of	
04:06	the names that	
04:08	we that I'm familiar with I just happen	
04:10	to be talking to Billy Swift who's doing	#williamswift
04:12	another tape for you folks	
04:14	who played left field for our team in	
04:16	that league and could tell you the same	
04:18	stories of	
04:19	Cape League baseball three days a week	
04:21	and we just lived for it	
04:23	as soon as somebody was old enough to	
04:25	have a driver's license we were on the	
04:27	road	
04:28	but Norman Allenby uh Billy Swift	
04:31	[Charlie Board] and Jack Cavanagh a list	Sp. unknown
04:34	of 100 people that probably played in	
04:36	the leagues during that decade	
04:38	but the ball field was always there for	

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04:41	the folks who need it by deed it had to	
04:44	be available and accessible for every	
04:46	property owner and that was the mandate	
04:50	that was	
04:50	by the original planners who founded	
04:53	they were the Land and Wharf	#falmouthheightslandandwharfcompany
04:54	Company and they just they dictated	
04:56	everything rezoned it much like our	
04:58	zoning maps of today	
04:59	only with very carefully placed parks	
05:03	all of those parks in Falmouth Heights	
05:05	were turned over to the Town of Falmouth	
05:06	for one dollar	
05:08	so the ball field and all of the parks	
05:10	throughout Falmouth Heights were deeded over	
05:12	to the Falmouth	
05:13	Town of Falmouth for posterity and I	
05:16	think that was a great	
05:17	uh a great thing to have been done but	
05:20	the ball fields themselves	
05:23	everybody has a story about games on the	
05:25	on	
05:26	the Falmouth Heights ball field and	
05:28	practices on the ball field	
05:30	and I go down periodically and I'll see	

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05:32	youngsters playing	
05:33	up front not from the pitching rubber	
05:34	but playing from 20 feet earlier in	
05:37	underhand maybe a little bit but playing	
05:39	on the big field	
05:40	or watching uh seniors play softball on	
05:44	the field it's always a ball field	
05:46	it hasn't changed in a hundred years the	
05:48	the desire to have	
05:50	events out there are just I guess it's	
05:53	instinctive you have a big field and you	
05:55	got to play a game	
05:56	so that was my part of the uh the	
05:59	baseball year the Cape Cod League for	
06:01	several years	
06:02	my brother Bob and I would be there	#robertkendall
06:04	Charles Robb	
06:06	Billy Swift who as I mentioned just has	
06:08	another taping for you	
06:11	but many were very memories a great deal	
06:13	of memories	
06:14	all together but	
06:18	were the games organized today we have	
06:21	um	
06:22	organized baseball for young people and	
06:25	yours seemed to be rather pickup games	

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06:29	whenever you could get the groups to get	
06:31	together	
06:32	that that's the big difference there was	
06:33	no Little League or Babe Ruth League and	
06:35	what we would do is organize	
06:36	teams in our region as Belvidere Plains	
06:39	or Falmouth Heights or East Falmouth	
06:42	or North Falmouth and we would use the	
06:44	Heights as our ball field so we've made	
06:46	up our own teams	
06:47	with our own bats and our own balls and	
06:49	we coached them within ourselves	
06:51	it was just youth youth youth baseball	
06:55	a lot of fun but no organization and	
06:58	there was no	
06:59	you never really won or a loss you just	
07:01	played the game	
07:02	so it wasn't too competitive it was very	
07:05	competitive the team from the base had	
07:07	uh	
07:07	probably four minor league double a ball	
07:10	players our star pitcher for the Falcons	
07:13	was	
07:13	had played double a for the Red Sox so	#bostonredsox
07:16	no the competition was good	
07:18	the leagues now were outstanding	

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07:20	collegiates waiting to be drafted	
07:22	our league had professionals former	
07:24	professionals	
07:25	college stars high school stars	
07:29	it was a very competitive league I'm	
07:31	sure that some of you looked up to the	
07:34	stars oh absolutely absolutely when you	
07:37	got up when you came up to bat as a	
07:40	late teenager and you had a former	
07:43	double	
07:44	a major minor league pitcher going	
07:46	against you you were	
07:47	in awe you were definitely you know	
07:50	a lot of ball players the older Jack	
07:52	Cavanaugh had played Navy baseball	
07:55	so they were the league was fast	
07:58	Roche Pires as I mentioned probably one of	
08:00	the fine	
08:01	when the Negro leagues were the only	
08:04	place that uh that a non-white could	
08:06	play	
08:07	and Roche Pires was a triple sport	
08:09	athlete magnificent	
08:11	by any stretch of the imagination would	
08:13	have been a high high minor league or	

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08:15	probably a major leaguer	
08:16	given the opportunity and when you faced	
08:18	Roche Pires in a game you knew you were	
08:20	going to whiff three times	
08:23	so that was before blacks were	
08:26	bigger I'm talking about the 40s 40s	
08:31	40s and 50s and do you remember some of	
08:34	our own Falmouth	
08:36	boys who went on to become professionals	
08:39	well Rusty Robbins was in my high school	#rustyrobbins
08:41	class he became a lieutenant in the fire	
08:43	department here	
08:44	Rusty was the three sport athlete in	
08:46	Falmouth High School	#falmouthhighschool
08:48	the Boston Braves before they moved to	#bostonbraves
08:50	Milwaukee gave him a	
08:51	minor league contract and Russ went down	
08:53	to Florida to play for a minor league	
08:55	team	
08:56	he broke his leg as I recall early on in	
08:59	his career and came back to Falmouth and	
09:02	did not continue but Rusty was a real	
09:05	real prospect	
09:06	probably the finest prospect that I saw	
09:08	in my years	
09:10	you had to mention the fact that the	

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09:13	land	
09:13	has what's given uh does it	
09:16	it seems that there were a lot of	
09:18	wealthy	
09:19	summer residents who bought property and	
09:22	were quite generous	
09:24	the corporation that bought from	
09:27	Worcester the six gentlemen business	
09:29	people were civic minded and they	
09:31	understood the responsibility they had	
09:33	they zoned it	
09:34	we would be pleased with the zoning it's	
09:36	it's equivalent to what we have today	
09:39	uh it was all residential but the parks	
09:41	had to be in	
09:42	these spots here but the big changeover	
09:44	was	
09:45	when they had sold out all of their real	
09:47	estate	
09:49	they wanted to make sure that the parks	
09:50	remained under care	
09:52	and so everything was deeded as I	
09:53	mentioned earlier to the town	
09:56	were they retiring these gentlemen	
10:00	the six people they would know they were	
10:01	in the business to make money	

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10:04	they made a fortune they bought up all	
10:06	of the Heights you think of Falmouth	
10:07	Heights	
10:08	as a land mass with no property owner	
10:11	except one	
10:12	and so it was re-zoned and they sold	
10:14	every single piece of property	
10:16	that was to be there and allowed it to	
10:18	be there's a building on the water that	
10:20	we now know as the casino a an	#casino #casinobythesea Gunning_Heights_Bldg_1144 and 1146, Gunning_Heights_Bldg_1151 through 1157 Hunt_Heights_Bldg_195 Hunt_Heights_Bldg_208 through 218
10:22	equivalent building to the casino has	
10:24	been there for 100 years	
10:27	so the Heights then was	
10:31	the ball field but how about uh the rest	
10:33	of the Heights did you have the kinds of	
10:35	restaurants and	
10:37	no they came later they came later what	
10:40	you had was a really elegant	
10:42	summer resort and people from everywhere	
10:44	that could travel that distance	
10:46	would go to Falmouth Heights and that	

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10:47	was their desire	
10:49	to establish the most elegant summer	
10:51	resort uh	
10:53	and as I think I mentioned in my early	
10:55	mentionings it had been	
10:57	around since the 1600s when the queen of	
10:59	the Narragansetts	
11:01	summered in Falmouth Heights so	
11:04	Falmouth then was the watering hole for	
11:07	the rich and famous	
11:08	I would say the the Rose Kennedy	#kennedy
11:12	actually lived on the Heights looking	
11:15	overlooking the ball park	
11:16	as a summer person John Kennedy's mother	
11:21	they were what was it about Falmouth I	
11:24	suppose it wasn't very crowded at that	
11:27	time	
11:28	the population was very small	
11:31	well by comparative I don't know what	
11:33	the high school classes are today but	
11:34	our classes were	
11:35	50s and 60s a little different	
11:40	small town and uh well well managed as	
11:44	it is today	
11:45	very well managed but Falmouth is a has	

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11:47	been growing and growing	
11:49	responsibly for some time	
11:53	do you um do you think that was the	
11:56	climate	
11:57	different than uh do you see	
12:01	for playing outdoors or did you have	
12:05	any longer summers than we seem to have	
12:07	today	
12:09	I go back a few years but not that far I	
12:11	think	
12:13	I think the other things that were going	
12:14	on the beach at Falmouth Heights	
12:17	was deeded over to the town and	
12:19	purchased by private sector people and	
12:21	needed over a lot of the Falmouth	
12:23	Heights	
12:24	perks really came by uh gifting	
12:27	or donating over by a wealthy group	
12:31	that owned the whole Falmouth Heights one	
12:34	financial institution owned all of the	
12:37	real estate on Falmouth Heights	
12:39	when those individual owners had	
12:42	property	
12:43	the was the situation the way it was along	
12:46	Surf Drive where	#surfdrive

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		Gunning_Village_Sts_0085
12:48	when you owned a house really not a	
12:51	cottage but kind of a palace	
12:53	did you also own the beach the beach was	
12:56	public	
12:57	uh restricted to and mandated that the	
13:00	beach was always successful	
13:01	accessible to property owners so there	
13:04	was never a restriction at all	
13:06	and that that was one of the clever	
13:07	things in the deeding	
13:09	they made sure that the population would	
13:11	get to enjoy the benefits of what they	
13:12	had	
13:13	including the ball field and	
13:16	uh so um when you were playing ball	
13:20	um how about the rules of the game did	
13:22	you have to have	
13:24	a ball of a particular weight or the	
13:26	right kind of bat	
13:27	or was it well we	
13:30	we probably so I think I don't think	
13:32	that has changed a whole lot and we	
13:34	struck out as much as	
13:36	against the good pitches and walked	
13:37	against the other ones who were not	

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13:39	quite so good	
13:40	did you have your own you had to bring	
13:42	your own ball and back oh you did always	
13:45	well you everybody came with their own	
13:46	bat and you thought that that was magic	
13:49	and your own glove everybody had their	
13:50	own glove for sure some of those	
13:53	players that you played with were they	
13:55	at the high school	
13:57	and perhaps uh we were a mixture	
14:01	our particular teams and the Falmouth	
14:03	All-Stars too were made up of	
14:05	high school Russ Robbins who I mentioned	
14:07	earlier who had signed the contract	
14:10	high school he played for the All-Stars	
14:12	I played for the Falcons a couple of	
14:14	high school players	
14:17	were in on the League the rest were	
14:18	college ball players are	
14:21	players who were really good in high	
14:22	school maybe played college who wanted	
14:24	to continue to play	
14:26	in the Cape League was a fast enough	
14:27	league that they wanted to play in it	
14:29	was a good league it was probably	

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14:31	competitive the better teams	
14:33	would play competitively with the	
14:35	college kids today and the base team	
14:38	would have	
14:39	the athletes who were minor leaguers who	
14:40	had been drafted into the military	
14:43	but we're probably the equivalent of	
14:45	almost a triple a	
14:46	team you you never beat them most of our	
14:49	ball games today	
14:51	are go for a field but um	
14:54	have you seen still pick up games going	
14:57	on	
14:58	today at the ball field I've been well	
15:01	as	
15:01	Falmouth fortunately has set	
15:03	up ball fields around the town I guess	
15:05	when my	
15:06	two youngsters played Little League and	
15:08	Babe Ruth I followed them to their	
15:10	respective	
15:11	game fields Falmouth is	
15:14	very good and very conscious of youth	
15:16	youth activities	
15:17	yes yes yes well I thank you very much	
15:21	for	

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15:22	telling us about Falmouth Heights and	
15:25	the baseball field	
15:26	well I thank you for inviting me and I'm	
15:28	glad that uh	
15:30	I didn't tell you how many times I	
15:31	struck out in the Cape Cod League	
15:35	there's a history that I probably should	
15:38	mention	
15:39	without delay one of the pitchers for	
15:42	our team was named Phil White	#philwhite
15:44	and I'll talk about Phil was a very good	
15:46	pitcher pitcher at the University of	#universityofmassachusetts
15:47	Massachusetts and very good in the Cape	
15:49	League	
15:50	but I think I want to add a little bit	
15:52	to his father and mother	
15:53	who ran the Lawrence White dairy on	#lawrencewhite
15:55	Shore Street for those who don't	#shorestreet
15:57	remember it it's right at the foot	
15:58	of as you come up Clinton Avenue and in	#clintonavenue
16:01	Shore Street intersection	
16:03	but and they they actually had a running	
16:06	dairy where they delivered milk in the	
16:08	bottle but all that was left in my	
16:11	generation was the stalls for the cows	
16:13	and next to it a field that	

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16:15	did the corn and the hay for the cows	
16:17	but Phil would be young enough to have	
16:19	remembered when his dad	
16:20	was delivering milk and the cows were	
16:22	being milked on a regular day	
16:40	[Music]	