

New Brook Farm Educational Programming

February 10, 2012

Overview and Mission

The educational mission of New Brook Farm (NBF) is to share information and raise awareness of the historical, social, archaeological and environmental significance of the Brook Farm site with adults and students in Greater Boston and neighboring areas. In addition, through farm and classroom experiences, NBF hopes to promote healthy and “green” practices in the growing, distribution and preparation of food crops.

This mission will be achieved on and off-site through tours, workshops, lectures and hands-on activities. Much of this programming will be in partnership with other community entities such as the West Roxbury Historical Society.

Educational activities will highlight the historic nature and “inspiring thought” of Brook Farm. Hands-on topics will range from farming and gardening to food preparation and related arts and crafts.

Adult Education

The educational opportunities offered through New Brook Farm will take place in a variety of locales including the Brook Farm historic site, community centers, local churches and restaurants, depending on the type of activity and/or the expected number of attendees. Workshops will be open to the public with the occasional exception of a special event that will be offered to NBF members exclusively.

Workshops

- **Historic Brook Farm** – The Brook Farm property is best known as the site of an important, though short-lived, nineteenth century Utopian community. NBF will host a series of talks on topics related to the history of “The Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education,” such as Transcendentalism, archaeological findings, history and culture, leaders within the community, daily life, and consideration of the successes and failures of this social experiment. The series will also include talks on other periods in the site’s well-documented history, which spans its pre-colonial use by native people, colonial dwellings, Camp Andrew (a Civil War training ground), the Roxbury Alms House, and, more recently, the Lutheran Orphanage.

- **The Edible Garden** – NBF will host cooking classes using the produce from the farm. Workshops will include traditional food preparation techniques (e.g., canning and preserving) and healthy eating options. Classes will include preparation of American favorites as well as the exploration of ethnic foods and food trends with guest chefs from our Boston neighborhoods. As NBF plans to grow hops in collaboration with our Massachusetts brewery partner, we will also offer classes on brewing beer, artisan beers and beer appreciation (*see Community Partnerships below*).

Note: New Brook Farm will be partnering with the Lutheran Social Services Refugee Program and distributing through the NBF CSA some diverse produce from Africa, Asia, and elsewhere that refugees from those places are now growing in Massachusetts. (For more information on our partnership with LSS, see Community Partnerships below).

- **Gardening Workshops** – NBF will present workshops and/or lectures in the winter and spring taught by Boston horticulturalists. These workshops will focus on plant material, design, color, nature, sustainability, compost, organics and miscellaneous garden-related topics (e.g., Photography in the Garden, Landscape Architect Frederick Law Olmstead, Armchair Garden Travel Adventures, Making a Certified Wildlife Habitat in Your Own Backyard, Historical Houses & Gardens, Tools, Garden Sculpture, and Bee Keeping).
- **Arts & Crafts** – NBF will offer workshops on traditional and contemporary arts & crafts as they relate to the history of Brook Farm and to farming and gardening (e.g., knitting, lace making, weaving, printing, glass, building stone walls, and wood work).

New Brook Farm Tours

Visitors have come to Brook Farm from the surrounding West Roxbury community and from countries all over the globe. NBF will enhance the visitor experience of this historic site and its environment in a number of ways, including:

- **Self-Guided Historical Tours of Brook Farm** – Our goal is to install markers throughout Brook Farm displaying key historical information via text and graphics. This “open tour,” available year-round, will focus on Brook Farm and its landmarks, farm, buildings, philosophical beliefs, leaders, residents, significant events and reasons for its demise. We are in the process of collecting historical postcards and photographs, artwork, information from historical reference books and the West Roxbury Historical Society, and oral histories from orphans who lived at the Lutheran orphanage on the property to incorporate into our interpreter program (*see Community Partnerships below*).
- **Self-Guided Nature Tours at Brook Farm** – The Brook Farm site and its immediate environs offer much to appreciate in terms of its fauna, flora, land

formations and water features (including vernal ponds, endangered species, swamps, bluebirds and wildlife). We will be developing materials for self-guided tours (available year-round) to explore the environment of Brook Farm, as it, too, has had a long and changing history. Our goal is to install markers throughout the property with key information presented via text, graphics and other media. We look forward to providing a new perspective on the land and all its treasures for our visitors.

- **Guided Tours of Brook Farm** – New Brook Farm sponsored its first guided tour of the historic site in November 2011 led by Bob Murphy, president of the West Roxbury Historical Society. More than 20 adults and youth attended, many of whom were first-time visitors. This will continue as a semi-annual event with Mr. Murphy (or other volunteers) to lead our historic tours and an environmentalist or naturalist to lead our guided nature explorations.

Other Educational Programs

New Brook Farm has committed as an organization to providing a variety of educational opportunities to the West Roxbury community:

- **“Evenings”** – A series of conversations will feature creative and inspirational thinkers, leaders, authors, chefs, horticulturists and food / cultural notables. “Evenings” will provide interesting educational experiences as well as fundraising opportunities.
- **Pruning Clinic** – The Pruning Clinic will be an annual spring event that provides one-on-one, hands-on pruning instruction at the homeowner’s property by experienced horticulturists along with a New Brook Farm volunteer. This is also a potential fundraiser.
- **“Trip Lady”** – Historically, “Trip Lady” has organized adventures to all types of inspiring gardens (e.g., private, historic, public, notable nurseries, nature hikes, restaurants with gardens) and other places of interest in New England. “Trip Lady” will be based at New Brook Farm and will continue to offer tours to exclusive gardens, while scheduling events that will complement the workshops offered at NBF. These may include trips to other farms, artisan cheese tours, artist studios, breweries/wineries, and the kitchens of notable chefs and authors.
- **West Roxbury Library Community Reads** – New Brook Farm will explore partnering with the Friends of the West Roxbury Library to sponsor a “community read” of *The Blithedale Romance*, a novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne based on his recollections of Brook Farm, where he lived from April to November 1841. We will invite the community to read this book in the spring of 2013. This program will culminate in a special event on the book and its author at Brook Farm during our first season (see Community Partnerships below).

Educational Programming for School-Age Children

New Brook Farm (NBF) programs for Kindergarten-Grade 12 will focus on collaborations with the Boston Public Schools (BPS). Members of the NBF Education Committee have met with the BPS Senior Program Director for History/Social Studies, who expressed enthusiasm for introducing NBF content. All curriculum units to be developed by NBF will align with BPS and state curriculum frameworks.

We will begin with one unit for grade 3 in history/social science and gradually expand to offer units for elementary, middle and high school classes in science and nutrition, history/social studies, and English Language Arts (ELA). Some of the activities that could be implemented with field trips to New Brook Farm include nature journaling, observing a garden, study of soils, and composting.

Elementary School – Curriculum for Grade 3 Unit

The Boston Public Schools' current history and social studies curriculum for grade 3 focuses on the geography and history of Massachusetts and its cities and towns, engaging students with resources from local historic sites and biographies of Massachusetts figures who made important contributions to society in various fields.

Brook Farm's history provides a rich wellspring for a two-week unit of study, providing a lens into Massachusetts culture, society, and civic challenges in the mid-19th century. Students will explore motivations behind the formation of a Utopian society – what social ills the intentional community sought to correct, and through what practices. Along with learning about some of the remarkable cultural personalities and social reformers who frequented Brook Farm, they will also learn about the “Institute of Agriculture and Education,” a progressive, experimental school for children, operated by the community and based upon its Utopian vision.

In contrast, Brook Farm's later history as the site of the Lutheran Orphanage gives a window into the realities faced by children who had few or no social connections or resources. Drawing upon the oral histories of those who lived in the orphanage as children, the students will explore both the hardships and benefits of orphanage life as well as its grim alternative in the orphan trains that transported children from the northeastern cities to the rural Midwest, where they often became subject to years of indentured servitude. The history of Brook Farm provides fodder for a wide range of discussions about the social challenges faced by Massachusetts citizens and the visionary and problematic ways that those problems were addressed.

High School Curriculum – History and Social Studies

The West Roxbury Education Complex is within walking distance of the Brook Farm Historic Site. It houses two high schools: Urban Science Academy and West Roxbury Academy. Members of the NBF Education Committee will meet with the headmasters or designees of both schools in spring 2012 to discuss integrating NBF units into the curriculum. We anticipate that our activities with these schools will initially take place in the classroom and eventually integrate experiences at the farm.

Educational Resources

In developing science and ELA units, we will draw on the rich resources of Mass. Agriculture in the Classroom, available on their website and at their spring and fall workshops.

High School Internship/Community Service Program

The planning and implementation of the Self-Guided Historical and Nature Tours will serve as the basis for the Internship/Community Service Program for teenagers in public or private schools in West Roxbury. New Brook Farm volunteers (adults) overseeing this project will provide support, guidance, mentoring and resources to high school students. Students will be responsible for implementing these initiatives, from historical research through tour installation, including fundraising for needed materials. We are excited and confident that this will be a challenging, valuable, and unique experience for these teens who will be making a significant, long-term and visible contribution to Brook Farm (*see Community Partnerships below*).

Community Education and Outreach

New Brook Farm has developed a Power Point presentation on Brook Farm, past, present, and future that we show when meeting community groups about our efforts. We expect that the demand for these meetings will increase as the project progresses.

- During the summer of 2011 NBF met with attendees of the Roslindale Farmers Market (average attendance 5,000) to discuss historic Brook Farm and upcoming plans for its revitalization. This was a resoundingly positive experience, as many had no knowledge of Brook Farm or its history. Through this process, we also increased our contact list by 75 people.
- We have also met with a West Roxbury neighborhood group, the Highland Civic Association, to share and discuss our goals for the Brook Farm site.

- We will be speaking to additional groups throughout 2012 (library, neighborhood groups, social clubs, our NBF neighbors, and civic and community organizations). Thus far, these efforts, have led to enthusiastic support for this project.

Community Partnerships to Support Our Educational Mission

We are working on the continued development of the following partnerships or groups and will continue to reach out to others in the greater community as we establish and build New Brook Farm:

The Gardens of Gethsemane

Alan McKinnon, President

New Brook Farm Neighbor

Member: New Brook Farm Special Advisory Council

- The Gardens of Gethsemane occupies land that was originally part of historic Brook Farm. Mr. Mc Kinnon has been involved in the New Brook Farm Project from the onset and has a collection of noteworthy historical photographs and postcards that he is permitting us to use in our educational programs and in our self-guided tour of New Brook Farm.

Boston Architectural College (BAC), Gateway Project

- A team of BAC students under the direction of NBF volunteers has done an extensive study of the site to help plan the farm and gardens. The students have also developed preliminary concept drawings of a visitor center with an outdoor classroom and indoor space for programs. Though construction of a visitor center is several years down the road, it is a key component of our vision to create an exceptional educational resource in our community.

Lutheran Social Services (LSS):

- LSS, one of the previous owners of the Brook Farm property, is now working with refugees from Asia, Africa and other places (along with other projects). Refugees have an opportunity to “lease” land through LSS in order to grow food, much of which is from their native homeland. We are exploring the possibility of including some of these vegetables, such as Calaloo, in the NBF CSA. This would provide some consistent income to these individuals while providing a new and diverse food experience for our members. The NBF CSA would include an information card on the item, its origin, instructions on use and recipes.
- LSS had an orphanage on the property. We are actively working to locate those orphans and document their stories for our educational programs with children and adults and to use as a part of our self-guided tour.

- LSS has some historical artwork of author Nathaniel Hawthorne, a Brook Farm resident and investor, as well as a drawing of the original landscape of Brook Farm. We are working closely with LSS to produce copies to use on our self-guided tours and for educational programs.
- In addition, LSS has indicated that they have accounting ledgers from Historic Brook Farm. We plan to examine them for their historical significance and use in our educational programming, where appropriate.

MA Brewing Companies

- Gottlieb F. Burkhardt was a 19th century owner of Brook Farm and a brewer by trade. We would like to reconnect this piece of Brook Farm history to our current project by growing and selling hops to an interested local MA brewing company with which we can build a strong partnership/sponsor relationship. This would significantly benefit both parties: Massachusetts beer companies need locally grown hops, and sales would generate income and special educational opportunities for NBF.

Theodore Parker Unitarian Universalist Church (TPC)

- Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister, abolitionist and leading Transcendentalist, served as the pastor of the West Roxbury parish church during the time of the Brook Farm community. He was a frequent visitor, friend and contemporary of the residents of Brook Farm; and many of the Brook Farmers attended Parker's church.
- TPC has offered its parish hall to NBF since the onset. The TPC minister, Lilli Nye, is a member of the New Brook Farm Board of Directors.
- We will partner with the church in spring 2012 for their annual plant sale, a church tradition for members of the congregation and the West Roxbury community. The church will sell perennials, annual, herbs and vegetable seedlings to raise funds for the church. NBF will provide a gardening seminar and run a fundraiser for NBF. Both groups will publicize and promote the event. This is the first public step in this partnership.

West Roxbury Historical Society

- The West Roxbury Historical Society (WRHS), founded in 1931, has been an invaluable resource to West Roxbury residents and others on the history of the neighborhood.
- The president of WRHS has led tours of Brook Farm for our Board of Directors, volunteers and friends. We will continue offering tours twice a year as an ongoing educational opportunity.
- In addition, WRHS has stored its vast collection of historical archives and artifacts in the Claflin Room, a designated secured room within the West Roxbury Library. WRHS has given NBF access to the Claflin Room for our ongoing research.

Friends of the West Roxbury Library

- The Friends of the West Roxbury Library sponsors lectures and events throughout the year to benefit the West Roxbury branch of the Boston Public Library and the community. In recent years the Friends have organized several “Community Reads” programs in which the community is invited to read a book chosen by the Friends and participate in public discussions, talks by the author, and events related to the book. NBF will propose partnering with the Friends in a “community read” of Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance*.

West Roxbury Saves Energy

- West Roxbury Saves Energy (WRHS) is a local non-profit that organizes programs for West Roxbury residents, schools, community organizations and businesses through the year with a focus on saving energy and money. The organization recently featured the process and the progress of the New Brook Farm initiative in its monthly newsletter. WRSE will co-sponsor a compost workshop with NBF.

Closing Statement

New Brook Farm’s educational mission is two-fold: to build awareness of and respect for the history, archeology and natural beauty of the land now known as Brook Farm; and to bring current “green” farming/gardening practices to the community. Through NBF’s strong array of hands-on and classroom experiences, local residents will grow in their knowledge and competence in a variety of farming, gardening, food and related creative experiences, and in their appreciation for this unique “hidden gem” in our neighborhood.

Addendum

New Brook Farm Project Timeline for Educational Programming

To plan and develop the New Brook Farm Project, our goals for educational programming, tours and special events will be phased in over a three-year period. Events or activities in Phase I will begin in the 2012 calendar year, Phase II in 2013, and Phase III in 2014. The following list illustrates the phase for each part of the New Brook Farm Project.

By Program:

Adult Education

Workshops:

Historic Brook Farm	Phase I
The Edible Garden	Phase II
Gardening Workshops	Phase I
Arts & Crafts	Phase III
New Brook Farm Tours (Preparation)	Phase I
Self-guided Historical Tours of Brook Farm	Phase II
Self-guided Nature Tours of Brook Farm	Phase II
Guided Tours of Brook Farm	Phase I
Other Educational Forums/Opportunities:	
“Evenings”	Phase I
Pruning Clinics	Phase III
“Trip Lady”	Phase II
West Roxbury Library Community Reads	Phase II

K-12 School-Age Education

Elementary: Curriculum Unit, Grade 3 History/Social Studies	Phase I
High School: Curriculum Unit, History/Social Studies	Phase II
High School Internship / Community Service	Phase II

Community Education

Phase I

Addendum

By Phase:

Phase I:

- Historic Brook Farm Workshop
- Gardening Workshops
- New Brook Farm Tours (preparation)
- Guided Tours of Brook Farm
“Evenings”
- Elementary: Curriculum Unit, Grade 3 History/Social Studies
- Community Education

Phase II:

- The Edible Garden Workshop
- Self-guided Historical Tours of Brook Farm
- Self-guided Nature Tours of Brook Farm
“Trip Lady”
- West Roxbury Library Community Reads
- High School: Curriculum Unit, History/Social Studies
- High School Internship / Community Service Program

Phase III:

- Arts & Crafts Workshops
- Pruning Clinics