

ELDREDGE PARK

Home of the Firebirds



Welcome to historic Eldredge Park. Named “the best summer collegiate park in the nation,” in 2004 by Baseball America, this picturesque park has served the town of Orleans for over 100 years. Over this time, substantial work has been completed to maintain, improve and modernize the park, most recently through private donations and without a single penny of local taxpayer support. Today, Eldredge Park provides the town with a beautiful facility and ambiance once described by Philadelphia Reporter Joe Parillo as “a Norman Rockwell painting come to life.”

Back in the early 1900’s, a local gentleman named Lewis Winslow “Win” Eldredge (1861-1944) acquired about 250 acres of land in central Orleans in “consideration of my affection for and interest in the young people of Orleans and my desires to provide a playground for them.”

In 1966, major steps were taken to modernize the park. The facility expanded to include a music band shell, tennis courts, picnic areas and other recreational fa-

cilities provided for in the master plan. Significantly, the field configuration was changed, moving home plate from near the existing left-field foul pole to its current location. Coinciding with this reconfiguration, a new irrigation system was added, along with new soil. The “new” Eldredge Park was “an incredible diamond of velvet turf infield on a beautiful site.” The new park debuted on July 23, 1967 when it hosted the Cape Cod League Baseball All-Star game.

One of the most distinctive elements of Eldredge Park is the steep hill that runs all the way down the right side of the field, which for years was almost impossible to sit on comfortably. That problem was solved in 1985 when Fred Perreault suggested terracing the entire hill, creating relatively level tiers on which fans could place chair and blankets. In addition to added fan comfort, capacity was expanded to around 6000, creating a unique setting that is the envy of community ballparks throughout New England.

In 2004, the Yawkey Foundation began making a series of

\$150,000 grants to each of the 10 CCBL teams. In 2009, Orleans and Yarmouth-Dennis became the last teams to receive grants. Staged in phases, and with the addition of community donations, Eldredge Park underwent \$322,000 worth of improvements.

Phase 1 was completed in 2010 and involved construction of state-of-the-art 46’ long dugouts, complete with New England styled bead boarding. A knee high padded brick backstop was built, new safety netting that extended 180’ down each foul line was added and new foul poles and a flagpole in centerfield were erected.

Phase 2 was completed in 2011, focused on improving the playing surface. The entire infield was excavated to a level 5 feet underground, and then layered with new clay and sod. Sophisticated laser-guided instruments were used to level the field. Warning tracks were widened to 15’ to conform to NCAA guidelines. Finally, both bullpens were fully restored to their original condition and the safety netting was raised another 20’.

Phase 3 was completed prior to the 2013 season and included a new sprinkler system. Fred Perreault and John Martin also cleared out two overgrown and unsightly groves, above the home plate area and adjacent to the left field foul pole, greatly enhancing the expansive, open feel of the park. Finally, bleachers were converted from wood to aluminum and new sets were added beyond the outfield fence.

Over the last 100 years, Eldredge Park has served the town of Orleans in many ways. The town has coupled a vision with an unparalleled commitment from residents, local business owners and countless volunteers to build, maintain and constantly improve the ballpark. George Mitrovich, a San Diego Civic Leader, summed up Eldredge Park in a 1998 Letter to the Boston Globe, “some teams play in ballparks with lights, some without. Some play in forgettable surroundings and some, like the Cardinals in Orleans, play in a sylvan setting so transcendently beautiful one’s breath is swept away.” ○