



## Heralding Herring Run Pool Park

**By Staff reports**

**Wicked Local Weymouth**

Posted Sep 21, 2010 @ 02:47 PM

"It is beautiful. It's gorgeous.... I come here to look at the pool when the herring are running. It is spectacular."

These are the words of Lorraine Pope comes all the way from Hull to take in the serenity of the new Herring Run Pool Park in Jackson Square.

How fortunate we are to be able to have the Herring Run Pool Park right in town.

Fish-adorned handrails, awesome murals painted on the side of the nearby Venetian restaurant, benches, and the music of rippling water draw people to the park at the corner of Water and Commercial streets even when the legendary herring are not running.

The vision of a park by the herring run began some five years ago.

"When the Back River trail plan was put together in 2005, there were several elements in that plan that we looked to develop," said Rod Fuqua, principal planner for Weymouth.

A lot of hard work and forethought went into constructing the park. First the building that once housed the youth center had to be torn down. Walkways and benches were installed and plantings arranged. The walkways are handicapped accessible. A coming attraction are interpretive kiosks that will explain some of the historical facts about the herring and the park.

The stone benches now in the park near the viewing area for the herring pool are precious, because the granite blocks were once part of the foundation of the Sacred Heart Church. The Weymouth Landing church was burnt into rubble in June 2005 and was later rebuilt in all its majesty.

The murals gracing the Venetian are a wonderful story in themselves. The murals were solicited from the Weymouth Cultural Council and the Weymouth Art Association, and two art works were selected for display.

The funding for the vision of the park came from the Community Preservation Act.

On Sept. 16, Weymouth officials dedicated Herring Run Pool Park.

The new Herring Run Park may have been dedicated just last week, but romancing the herring began centuries ago.

When the herring are running, we watch those silvery flashes in the river with the fascination of a tabby eying dinner. We watch like hawks, or like seagulls swooping down to claim lunch.

There may be beauty in the annual spring choreography of the herring's journey upstream to Whitman's Pond to spawn, yet some primal instinct reminds us of the day when netting some herring made the difference between eating tonight or going to bed hungry.

Herring, or alewife, were a staple for Native Americans and Colonial Weymouth, and even today are great in a red wine sauce. Commercial harvesting of the little potbellied fish with an underlip was a major industry in Weymouth during the 18th and 19th centuries. Today herring are still a main food source for water fowl and other marine life. Commercial and sports fishermen often use herring for bait to catch lobster and bass.

Herring are part of our history, our present, and our future.

Preserving the herring run in Jackson Square is preserving a crucial environmental link in the herring's life cycle as well as literally keeping our heritage alive. It also makes good sense to protect our local food sources, which are food insurance in these uncertain times.

Funding for Herring Run Pool Park came completely from Weymouth's Community Preservation Act account, and the park received the blessing of our community preservation committee. Former Mayor David Madden and the town council had voted to expend approximately \$225,000 from our town's CPA account.

When the concept of the Community Preservation Act was first introduced to voters, there was a lot of curiosity and a lot of concern. A major concern was cost. The CPA is funded by a \$25 fee on our property tax bills. At \$25 per tax bill, preserving our community is affordable. Weymouth may be a town at heart, but we are a city in size, with thousands of people paying property taxes. When you combine all those \$25s, this is a tremendous resource.

Herring Run Pool Park, a wonderful asset to our community, exists because Weymouthites pooled their resources.

This is why Weymouth embraced the Community Preservation Act.

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