

Memorial Park



The line is now fading, but long-term Needham residents remember when Rosemary St. formed the “boundary” between Needham Center and Needham Heights. The “separation” reflected social and economic changes in town, as new industries and immigrants transformed the Heights economy from farms to manufacturing, and created a new political and social culture that clashed with the more traditional culture of the Center.

However, despite any sense of separation, the construction of Memorial Park was an act of unity. Needham had just recovered from the twin traumas of World War I and the influenza epidemic. The town was more fortunate than many, suffering relatively few losses from either event. Nevertheless, it had been two generations – the Civil War – since Needham had faced such tragedy.

On April 19, 1921, two parades set off with music and fanfare – one from the Center, and one from the Heights – meeting in the middle at the place known as Richwagen’s Hill. 1700 people (one-third of the town) brought wheelbarrows and shovels to dig down the hill and create a level field that has been used ever since as a park, playing field, and gathering place. The new Memorial Park was dedicated “To Those of Needham who Served their Country in the World War, 1917-1918, and in Memory of Those Who Died in Service.” In 1995, additional monuments were dedicated in honor of Needhamites who served in the country’s other wars.