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## Sylvester Baxter Delta plaque re-discovered at Fellsmere Park in Malden

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It was a crazy idea. Could the dedication plaque be on the underside of the stone?

It turns out the idea was just crazy enough.

In their quest to re-discover the Sylvester Baxter Delta dedication plaque 20 years after they first found it in Fellsmere Park, Ward 3 City Council candidate Brian DeLacey and Lenny Merullo grabbed crowbars and lifted a boulder they believed to be at the right spot.

And, sure enough, the plaque the Malden Garden Club installed to honor the former Malden resident and prominent urban planner decades ago was there, on the underside of the rock.

But, here's the strange part. That's where the plaque was 20 years ago and nobody ever turned the rock over so people could see it.

That wasn't going to happen when DeLacey and Merullo unearthed it the second time, on Oct. 6.

"This time, we flipped it over ourselves," DeLacey says.

Baxter, DeLacey says, was an influential player in the creation of Fellsmere Park and the metropolitan park system and has been recognized as a forefather of the former Metropolitan District Commission, which was eventually folded into the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

The Sylvester Baxter Delta is a triangular island located at the entrance to Fellsmere Park where Savin Street and Fellsmere Road meet.

"Twenty years ago," DeLacey says, "I'd been doing some research on the Emerald Necklace and I kept bumping into this guy named Sylvester Baxter."

One piece of research led to another, and while reading old copies of Malden newspapers on microfiche and microfilm, DeLacey found a front page story about the dedication of the delta. And, there was a photo of Baxter.

Using the photo and other clues, DeLacey and Merullo went in search of the plaque.

“We found ourselves wading through weeds and tall grass,” DeLacey says. “We saw the stone but there was no plaque. We thought, ‘What is the chance the plaque might be on the bottom of the stone?’”

The stone, roughly 2 1/2 feet tall and 3 feet wide, probably weighed between 300 and 400 pounds.

“We got crowbars,” DeLacey says, “and we came back and we took a peek underneath, and lo and behold the plaque was there.”

But, then DeLacey got busy with other things and he lost touch with it. Recently, he reconnected with a Sylvester Baxter expert he had spoken with years ago, and that renewed his interest and led to the re-discovery of the plaque.

But, he also learned something curious when the expert told him that he had recently visited the Sylvester Baxter memorial.

“Oh, that’s good. So, you went to Fellsmere Park,” DeLacey said to him.

The expert said, “No. It was at Assembly Square Mall,” which is in Somerville.

DeLacey says, “And, I thought, ‘That’s just not right.’”

He checked it out, and sure enough there is a large, prominent Sylvester Baxter Riverfront State Park located along the banks of the Mystic River near Assembly Row. The park was officially dedicated in September.

“But,” DeLacey says, “we have the original right here in our backyard. This is a great connection with the history and geography of the area.”

Merullo recently presented their findings to the Malden Historical Society, and the Sylvester Baxter Delta has been landscaped so the stone and plaque are easy to find.

The historic landmark has been added to the latest draft of the Fellsmere Park Management Plan, details of which can be found at [FriendsOfFellsmerePark.org](http://FriendsOfFellsmerePark.org).