



HISTORIC BELLE GROVE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

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Happy Thanksgiving!



by Mitchell Edmondson

It will soon be that time of year when family and friends sit down around the dinner table for that wonderful holiday we call Thanksgiving. Most historians would agree that the first American Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1621 to commemorate the harvest reaped by the Plymouth Colony after a harsh winter. The colonists celebrated it as a traditional English harvest feast and they invited the local Wampanoag Indians who had helped the pilgrims survive the winter.

In the years that followed, days of thanksgiving were celebrated throughout the colonies after fall harvests. The turkey was the traditional dish for the Thanksgiving feast. The turkey got its name because Christopher Columbus thought that the land he discovered was connected to India, where peacocks are found in considerable number. He believed turkeys were a type of peacock (they're actually a type of pheasant). So he named them "tuka", which is "peacock" in the Tamil language of India. There is no official reason or declaration for the use of turkey as the centerpiece of the Thanksgiving feast. They just happened to be the most plentiful meat available at the time of the first Thanksgiving in 1621, starting the tradition. The earliest Thanksgiving feasts would also include fish, berries, watercress, lobster, dried fruit, clams, venison, and plums.

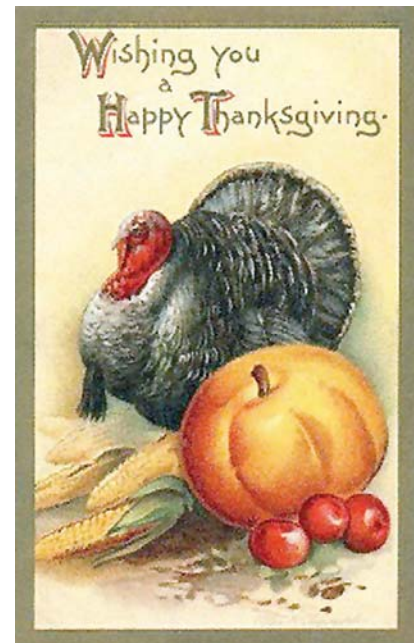
George Washington was the first president to declare the holiday, in 1789. By the mid-1800s, many states observed a Thanksgiving holiday. Our neighborhood of Historic Belle Grove Square was founded just a few years after President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation on October 3, 1863, setting aside the last Thursday of November, "as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise."

Since all of the houses in Belle Grove Square are more than a few years old, many families before us have gathered around the table to share a Thanksgiving

Day feast. As we all prepare for Thanksgiving dinner this year, just for a minute try to imagine all those families who before you enjoyed a Thanksgiving day dinner in your home. Imagine a time before electricity, cars, and television. Though times have changed, the gathering of family and friends to share this national holiday continues. Here's hoping that you and your family have a wonderful Thanksgiving Day holiday.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Mitchell



Victorian-era Thanksgiving holiday postcards

Neighborhood Association meeting to be held Thursday, Nov. 20th at St. Paul's

It seems hard to believe that summer has gone and been replaced with a chilly breeze and blowing leaves. Our fountain has been silenced for the year and will soon be replaced by a holiday tree. This past year has brought about changes for our Historic Belle Grove Neighborhood. We have started what may be Westminster's first neighborhood newsletter, decided on our neighborhood name and mission statement and are preparing to apply to be one of Westminster's first recognized neighborhoods. In order to apply to be officially recognized by the City of Westminster, we must first approve our bylaws and elect officers. At our first neighborhood meeting, proposed bylaws were discussed. Enclosed in this month's newsletter is the proposed bylaws to be voted on during our November association meeting. Since the first draft in September, neighborhood residents have been working to polish and improve them. Please read them over and come prepared to vote on them. They may not

be perfect, but they should be a strong starting point for our neighborhood. The good thing about our bylaws is that they can always be amended and improved as needed.

We will also be voting on our neighborhood officers. After visiting with neighbors and asking for nominations in our newsletter, the proposed board members are Bruce DeVault - President, Laurie Walters - Vice President, Eileen Fisher Churchill - Secretary, Dan Hoff - Treasurer. It is hoped that we can move forward with approved bylaws and officers and complete the necessary paperwork to be recognized by

the City of Westminster. After getting official recognition from the city of Westminster, the next step will be to get street signs installed at the borders of our neighborhood. We have visited with city officials about this plan and they are working on a sign ordinance regarding the installation of neighborhood signs. The city has expressed an interest in helping us with this plan. They have suggested possibly installing some type of signage atop existing street signs. We are also looking into the possibility of installing signs on the back of existing stop or other street signs. It is estimated that we will only need about five or six signs and the cost is not yet known.



Some examples of other neighborhood association signs are depicted shown mounted on the backs of city stop signs around neighborhood boundaries.



Belle Grove Square area residents showed some Halloween "spirit" in decorating for the holiday.



Residents Attend Planning Meeting

On October 9th, Historic Belle Grove Square neighborhood residents Bruce DeVault and Mitchell Edmondson voiced support for the proposed Neighborhood Association Recognition ordinance that was discussed by the city Planning and Zoning Commission. The proposed ordinance was unanimously passed the commission and will be sent to the city council for consideration. This ordinance will allow neighborhoods that meet certain criteria established by the city to be recognized by the City of Westminster. The proposed ordinance will help the city and neighborhoods work together to improve city neighborhoods.

At the meeting, planning and zoning officials stated that they were impressed with the efforts of Belle Grove Square residents to organize and hoped that other neighborhoods would follow our example.

City Vision Workshops

The City of Westminster has been conducting Community Vision workshops that allow residents to express their ideas about the future of Westminster. The last workshop is scheduled for November 6th at 7:00 at the Westminster Elementary School. If you have questions about the workshop, please call the planning department at 410-848-7967.

Neighborhood Holiday Decorating Contest

The holidays will soon be upon us and we would like to announce that this year the Historic Belle Grove Square Neighborhood Association will be giving out prizes for the best decorated houses. Be sure to check out next month's newsletter for more information.

Street Repairs Canceled

On Monday, October 13th, Mayor Thomas Ferguson and the Common Council rejected all bids for street repairs and approved paying back the \$3.5 million loan it borrowed in July to complete street repairs in Westminster. Bond street, Park Street, and Park Avenue that had been slated for the first phase of street repair will not be repaved. The mayor and council felt they couldn't put the city's faith and credit behind such an expensive project during a tough economic time.

Also to save money, some city offices will be switching to a four-day ten-hour workweek. According to City Administrator Marge Wolf, extended hours will also enable people to have greater access to city services.

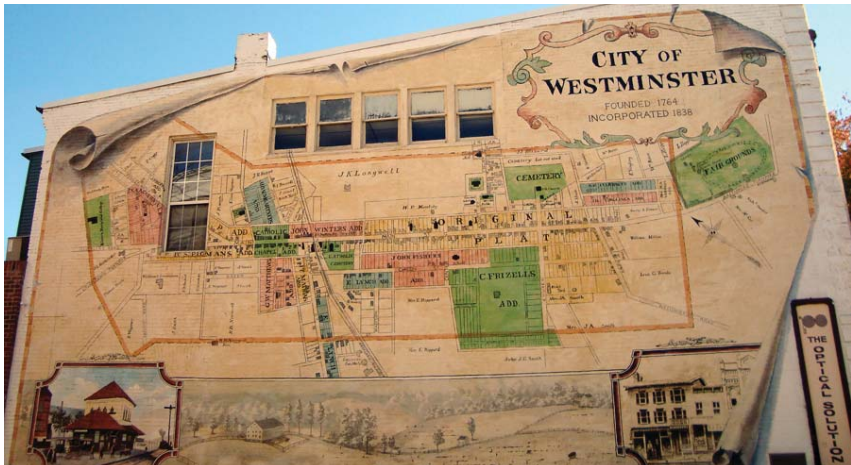
Vandalism Reported

Several neighborhood residents have reported damage to their property in the last few months. Most of the reports involve vandalism and other crime in the alleys in our neighborhood. It has been suggested that more lighting in the alleys may help reduce crime. Please keep an eye out on your neighbor's property and call city police if you see any suspicious activity.

Holiday House Tour

The 2008 Holiday House Tour will take place Saturday December 6, and will showcase historic homes from Westminster's "West Side" neighborhoods. Homeowners on West Main, West Green, Westmoreland, and Chase Streets have volunteered to show off their homes in full holiday decoration. The bi-annual Westminster Holiday House Tour seeks to promote awareness of and interest in the City's historic neighborhoods through a festive walking tour of homes delectably decorated for the holidays. Tour-goers are treated to an evening of live seasonal music, refreshment, and good cheer as they connect with the places and the people that formed our community. Proceeds from the event benefit local historic preservation initiatives. The Westminster Historic District Commission sponsors the event with assistance from local florists, businesses, and participating homeowners and charities.

As one of its first projects, the Historic Belle Grove Square Neighborhood Association has volunteered to make the luminiers that will help light they way to the homes on the tour. We will be gathering on one of the Saturday's in mid November to make the luminiers and all those who volunteer to help will receive a free ticket to the home tour. Please call us at 443-293-7203 if you would like to help make the luminiers for the home tour.



Westminster map mural depicts early city history at Locust Park

Neighborhood Highlight

Each month we will highlight a property in our neighborhood. This month the property being highlighted is 24-26 West Green Street. This house is at the border of our neighborhood and is located across the street from the homeless shelter ran by the County of Westminster. This house was built around 1875 and as noted by Christopher Weeks in his book "The Building of Westminster in Maryland" is one of the few original double houses on West Green Street. Presumably the builder was interested in building rental property. Our section of town was still largely open when this house was built and was not nearly as developed as neighboring Main Street. By 1876, many of the lots in the Matthew's addition had already been built upon.



Each half of the brick structure is a mirror image of the other. The entrance doors are placed side by side in the center of the building. A large cornice tops the door and is supported by seahorse-shaped brackets. Each side of the duplex has five double hung windows and existing hooks indicate that the house

earlier had shutters. A simple cornice with decorative corbels runs across the façade. A string course band runs below the corbel brackets. The house has a window in the center of the gable end to provide light for the attic space. Twin brick chimneys are located at each gable

end of the house and were used for stoves that once heated these late Victorian rooms. The house has been expanded in the back to allow additional square feet for tenants. Storm doors and windows have also been added to help make the structure more energy efficient.

Our Beginnings

The city of Westminster can trace its roots back to July 1754 when William Winchester purchased a 167-acre tract of land along Little Pipe Creek. According to Images of America Carroll County, in 1764 Winchester Divided 16 acres on the northern part of White's Level into 45 lots. Streets were laid out along King Street. By 1768 all the lots had been sold. The town was commonly known as Winchester's Town, but Winchester officially named his town "Westminster" after his home in England. King Street

was renamed "Main Street" around the time of the American Revolution.

As Westminster continued to grow, our neighborhood of Belle Grove Square was one of the first neighborhoods to be annexed by the City of Westminster. Our neighborhood can trace its roots back to 1866 when George Matthews purchased the land that would be developed into Belle Grove Square. In the 1877 Illustrated Atlas of Carroll County, Maryland, our neighborhood can clearly be seen with the park located in the center of the G.W Matthews Addition.

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