



HISTORIC BELLE GROVE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

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« Park Honored for Arbor Day »»

by Mitchell Edmondson

Just a few years before George and Maria Matthews donated Belle Grove Square Park to the city of Westminster in March 1877 a movement was growing in the Midwest that eventually spread nationwide - Arbor Day. A man named J. Sterling Morton had

moved his family to Nebraska and quickly planted many trees and shrubs around his home because he appreciated the beauty that a tree can bring to a barren landscape. He and his fellow settlers missed the trees they had enjoyed in other parts of the world and realized that trees could provide a break from the cold winter wind and lend

needed shade during hot summers.

Mr. Sterling spread his love of trees to his fellow Nebraskans and encouraged civic organizations and groups to join in the movement to plant more trees. On January 4, 1872 he first proposed a tree planting holiday to be called "Arbor Day." The Governor of Nebraska officially proclaimed Arbor Day on March 12, 1874 and other states soon followed suit. During the 1870s other states passed legislation to observe the holiday and the tradition was picked up in schools nationwide in 1882.



The cherry trees in Belle Grove Square park were planted as part of the city's bicentennial celebraion in 1976.

Each spring the City of Westminster observes Arbor Day, and this year our neighborhood park has been selected by the City of Westminster to receive a special honor. Belle Grove Square Park will have new cherry trees planted to replace some older trees that have reached the end of their lifespan. According to the Arbor Day foundation, most cherry trees

Be sure to join us for the next Belle Grove Square Neighborhood Meeting

Thursday, April 16th, 2009

7:00pm at St. Paul's UCC, Bond and Green Streets!

See you There!

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have a lifespan of fifteen to twenty years. Since our trees were planted for the bicentennial celebration in 1976, it is indeed time for them to again receive some attention.

We will be having a special neighborhood meeting with Steve Allgeier, a member of the Tree Commission, so he can meet with neighborhood residents and present the project as well as gather input. He will explain the plan for the tree removal and the planting of the new trees. A special flier will be distributed to all of the neighborhood houses in the coming days, inviting residents to attend, as soon as we know the meeting date - it has to happen within the next couple of weeks in order for the work to be done in time for the Arbor Day ceremony.

The new flowering cherry trees to be planted are planned to be the *Prunus x yedoensis* 'Afterglow' variety, selected because they are better suited for our climate here in Maryland and should hold up better with our winter weather. We have been told that the new trees will be of good size and will grow to enhance the beauty of our park. Sometime during the next few weeks, Belle Grove Square Park will host an Arbor Day celebration sponsored by the City of Westminster, and volunteers will work to spruce up the park and plant the new trees.

Of course it is hard to see some of our cherry trees removed, but it's great that the city is willing to commit the resources to remove the older trees and plant new healthy ones that will help our park continue to be a very special place for the neighborhood and for all of the citizens of Westminster.

Editor's Note: We will distribute flyers as soon as we know more about the meeting with the city's arborist and the Arbor Day celebration being planned for the park.

Cherry Trees in Washington DC & Maryland

Flowering cherry trees in the area surrounding Washington DC have a long history, and have contributed a great deal of beauty not just to the nation's capital but to our own Belle Grove Square neighborhood.

When do the cherry blossoms bloom and when do they reach their peak?

The date when the Yoshino cherry blossoms reach their peak bloom varies from year to year, depending on the weather. Unseasonably warm and/or cool temperatures have resulted in the trees reaching peak bloom as early as March 15 (1990) and as late as April 18 (1958). The blooming period can last up to 14 days. They are considered to be at their peak when 70 percent of the blossoms are open. The dates of the National Cherry Blossom Festival are set based on the average date of blooming, which is around April 4th.

How many cherry trees are there?

Approximately 3,750 cherry trees are on the Tidal Basin in Washington, DC. Most of the trees are Yoshino Cherry. Species include Kwanzan Cherry, Akebono Cherry,

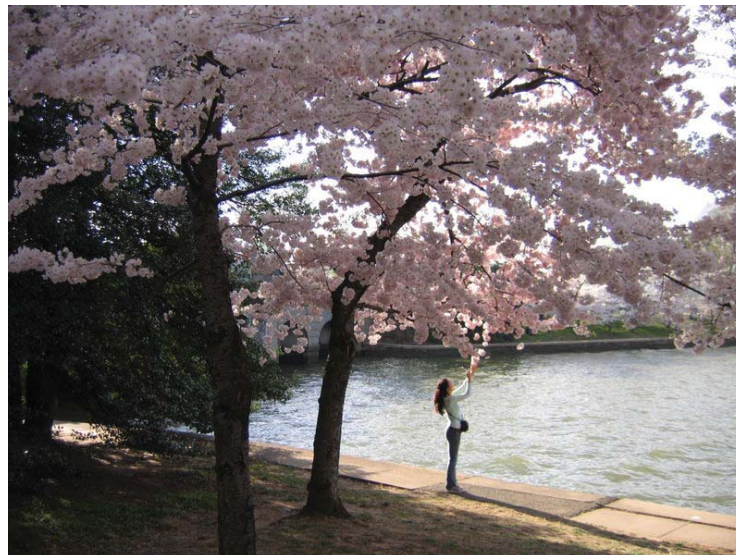


Takesimensis Cherry, Usuzumi Cherry, Weeping Japanese Cherry, Sargent Cherry, Autumn Flowering Cherry, Fugenzo Cherry, Afterglow Cherry (as is planned for our park), Shirofugen Cherry and Okame Cherry.

Where are the cherry trees located?

Washington, DC's famed cherry trees grow in three park locations: around the Tidal Basin in West Potomac Park, in East Potomac Park (Hains Point), and on the grounds of the Washington Monument. In 1912, the people of Japan sent 3,020 cherry trees to the

United States as a gift of friendship. First Lady Taft and the Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese Ambassador, planted the first two cherry trees on the northern bank of the Tidal Basin. These two original trees are still standing today near the John Paul Jones statue at the south end of 17th Street. Workmen planted the remainder of the trees around the Tidal Basin and East Potomac Park.



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Letters to the editor are welcomed. Letters submitted may be edited for space or clarity.

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Neighborhood History

This month we are moving up Green Street from the houses we featured in January and February this year to feature St. Paul's United Church of Christ, a magnificent historic building at the corner of Bond and Green Streets.

St. Paul's can trace its beginnings back to May 23, 1868 when members of the Reformed Churches in Carroll County sought to erect a house of worship in downtown Westminster.

St. Paul's church building was completed by a congregation of twenty-five members at a cost of \$16,500. In eight years, the mortgage was paid in full. Dedicated for use in 1870, St. Paul's church building was praised for its beauty among the churches of the Maryland Classis. Despite being shortened after it was knocked down by a major storm, the church steeple still rises high above Belle Grove Square and is visible from nearly every road leading into the city.

In 1893, a parsonage was built and served as a home to over a dozen pastors in the following 100 years. In 1993, the parsonage was rededicated as Parish House, currently home to church offices and a conference and meeting space.

The 1950s were a decade of significant growth and change, beginning with the addition of the Fellowship Hall and ending with the purchase of the Royer building and remodeling of the Sanctuary.

St. Paul's was initially established as part of the German Reformed Church in the United States. In 1934, the German Reformed Church, with roots stretching back to the 1700s in the mid-Atlantic region, merged with the German Evangelical Synod in North America, whose members settled largely in the Midwest in the 1800s, to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church. In 1957, the Evangelical and Reformed Church merged with the Congregational Christian Churches whose history includes the Pilgrims and the earliest settlers of America. The result is the United Church of Christ, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in June, 2007.

Throughout its history, St. Paul's United Church of Christ has been especially attentive to matters of social justice - in a variety of ways, the church and its congregation have maintained a firm commitment to community service and worldwide mission.

On September 7, 2008, St. Paul's became the first church in Carroll County to declare itself to be Open

Neighborhood Association to be recognized by city

Historic Belle Grove Square Neighborhood Association will be formally recognized at the March 9, 2009 Mayor & Common Council Meeting at 7 pm. Members of our Board will be present for this historic meeting, and all neighborhood residents are welcome and invited to attend.

This will be the first time the City of Westminster has formally recognized a Westminster neighborhood. We will be sharing this honor with the Tri-Street neighborhood, representing the areas around the intersections of Pennsylvania Avenue, West Main Street and Union Street.



The current St. Paul's church building was built as the German Reformed Church, dedicated in 1870.

and Affirming to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.

During the same Congregational Meeting, St. Paul's committed \$400,000 to create the St. Paul's Foundation which will be used to target root causes of major social problems regionally, nationally and internationally. The church is also preparing to become a Partners in Care Congregation with the Maryland National Guard, providing supplemental support to Guard members returning from war-zone deployments and engaged in other duties.

Pastor Marty Kuchma has been pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ since July 2005.

For more information about St. Paul's UCC please visit www.stpauls-ucc.org.

King Park playground equipment installed

By the middle of May, city officials hope Westminster's King Park playground will be outfitted with new playground equipment designed especially for children ages 5 to 12. \$80,000 for the project came from Project Open Space grant money and contributions from developer Robin Ford Builders.

King Park is located just a few blocks from our neighborhood between Park Dr. and Chase St.

The playground will have seamless turf, a safety swing, numerous transfer stations and a seesaw with hand and footholds, which everyone can use, but especially targets improved inclusiveness and accessibility by disabled children.



It's March - spring gardening is upon us!

March Gardening

According to the Maryland Cooperative Extension, this is the best time to plant, move and re-plant trees and shrubs. It is possible to move small trees now, but avoid digging trees up and re-planting in wet soil, wait until the soil dries out. It is okay to plant trees and shrubs as long as your soil is not saturated with water.

Common planting mistakes include planting in compacted or poorly drained soil, planting too deep and buying damaged plants with poor root systems. Avoid planting Bradford pear, silver maple, willow and other trees with weak, brittle wood. They are susceptible to breakage in high winds and to other problems that could require removal in the future. High winds and soft,

saturated soils can lead to the tilting of young or newly planted trees. Pull these trees upright and gently tamp the soil down over the root system. Staking young trees is no longer recommended.

If you plan to plant a new crabapple tree or replace an old one, be sure to select a scab resistant cultivar.

Trees and shrubs can be pruned before new growth and when the worst of the winter weather is over. Remove branches broken by winter weather, prune out dead or diseased branches and make any necessary cosmetic cuts. It is not necessary to paint pruning wounds. In fact, wound dressings will impede the natural healing process. You may notice excessive sap bleeding from pruning cuts on elm, maple, birch, dogwood, beech, walnut, magnolia, tulip poplar and redbud - this bleeding is harmless to the tree. Prune out winter burn damage on hollies and other evergreen shrubs. Prune winter damaged canes of non-climbing roses back to healthy wood.

Heavy pruning of healthy twigs and branches of spring flowering shrubs at this time will reduce the number of blooms. To rejuvenate older, multi-branched shrubs, remove only one-third of the oldest wood, to avoid removing all flowering or fruiting branches at once.

For a bright vase of color indoors, the prunings of spring flowering shrubs can be brought in and placed in water to encourage early blooms - forsythia, pussy willow and some blooming ornamental fruit trees work well for this.

Shrubby perennials like buddleia (Butterfly bush) that flower on new growth can be cut back to the ground before new growth starts. Roses can be pruned now to maintain shape and control diseases. To determine whether or not a branch is alive, simply scrape the bark with a sharp knife and look for green tissue.

Remove and destroy bagworm bags from affected trees - principally on evergreens. The bags contain hundreds of eggs that will hatch out and feed next spring, so discard or destroy them before they do.

Over-Seeding a Lawn

Late February to early March is a good time to over-seed a lawn in Maryland. As the ground thaws, it opens up, providing an ideal bed for grass seed. The recommended grass to grow in the mid-Atlantic region is "turf type" tall fescue. "Turf-type" refers to the finer textured blade as compared to the coarser textured tall fescues like K-31, now used mostly for ball fields, along highways and still in use by some homeowners. The "turf-type" tall fescues are a noticeable improvement in appearance. They also have very good drought tolerance, are tolerant of a lower soil pH than most grasses, and are insect and disease resistant. Tall fescues do

however have a more bunching habit of growth than bluegrass and creeping fescues.

The first step to a successful lawn is to have the soil tested. This should be done every three years. Add the recommended lime and fertilizer following the soil test instructions. To prepare for over-seeding rake away excess leaves and leftover grass or thatch. There is no need to loosen the soil, as freezing and thawing already have loosened it. For tall fescues, broadcast the seed evenly at a rate of 6-8 lbs per 1000 sq. ft. for bare areas, or half this much over an existing lawn. There is no need to water, as the soil will still be adequately moist from snow and rain. The seed should germinate in April when the soil warms.

Transportation key to growth

Did you know that the Westminster we know and love today owes a great part of its early growth to the building of the Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike in 1807, for trade between Baltimore and Pittsburgh?

The road was routed through Westminster only after considerable lobbying by the town's residents. Westminster quickly developed into a transportation center. Conestoga

wagons and mule drivers constantly passed through. Horse-drawn buses started to offer passenger service between Westminster and nearby towns. Numerous businesses opened along Main Street to serve the travelers and the increasing local population.

More than fifty years later, the arrival of the Western Maryland Railroad in 1861 brought prosperity to Westminster. The new Western



Horse drawn bus - photo from Princeton Historical Society

Railroad passenger station that opened in 1896 brought many new visitors to our young city and led to the construction of new hotels and factories.

Another burst of growth can be attributed to the construction

of Maryland Route 140 in the Westminster area in 1952 and completion of Interstate 795 in 1987. These road projects helped attract additional business to Westminster and made the commute to Baltimore easier for Westminster residents.