



HISTORIC BELLE GROVE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

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Neighborhood Meeting

Thursday
Oct. 8, 2009
at 7:00pm

at St. Paul's
Church, corner of
Bond & Green

Join us and meet your
great Belle Grove
Square neighbors!



Happy Halloween!



by Mitchell Edmondson

As the evenings grow shorter and the days grow cooler, fall is slowly making its appearance felt in our Historic Belle Grove Square. With the fall season comes one of my favorite holidays – Halloween. Halloween’s origins date back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in). The Celts, who lived 2,000 years ago in the area that is now Ireland, the United Kingdom, and northern France, celebrated their new year on November 1. This day marked the end of the summer, the harvest, and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with human death. Celts believed that on the night before the new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On the night of October 31, they celebrated Samhain, when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth.

As the years passed, the holiday celebrated on October 31st was

further influenced by other religions and local customs. As European immigrants came to America, they brought their varied Halloween customs with them. Because of the rigid Protestant belief systems that characterized early New England, celebration of Halloween in colonial times was extremely limited. It was much more common in Maryland and the southern colonies. As the beliefs and customs of different European ethnic groups, as well

as the American Indians, meshed, a distinctly American version of Halloween began to emerge. The first celebrations included “play parties,” public events held to celebrate the harvest, where neighbors would share stories of the dead, tell each other’s fortunes, dance, and sing. Colonial Halloween festivities also featured the telling of ghost stories and mischief-making of all kinds. By the middle of the nineteenth century, annual autumn festivities were common, but Halloween was not yet celebrated everywhere in the country.

During the late 1800’s when our neighborhood was already an established part of Westminster, there was a move in America to mold Halloween into a holiday more about community and neighborly get-togethers, than about ghosts, pranks, and witchcraft. Victorian periodicals and postcards helped create a more uniform holiday celebration. At the turn of the century, Halloween



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Monarch Butterflies Take Off From Belle

parties for both children and adults became the most common way to celebrate the day. Parties focused on games, foods of the season, and festive costumes. Parents were encouraged by newspapers and community leaders to take anything “frightening” or “grotesque” out of Halloween celebrations. Because of their efforts, Halloween lost most of its superstitious and religious overtones by the beginning of the twentieth century.

By the 1920s and 1930s, Halloween had become a secular, but community-centered holiday, with parades and town-wide parties as the featured entertainment. Due to the high numbers of young children during the fifties baby boom, parties moved from town civic centers into the classroom or home, where they could be more easily accommodated. Between 1920 and 1950, the centuries-old practice of trick-or-treating was also revived. Trick-or-treating was a relatively inexpensive way for an entire community to share the Halloween celebration. In theory, families could also prevent tricks being played on them by providing the neighborhood children with small treats. A new American tradition was born, and it has continued to grow. Today, Americans spend \$2.5 billion annually on Halloween, making it the country’s second largest commercial holiday.

In honor of my favorite holiday, Bruce and I will be handing out candy to all the ghost and goblins who wonder to our door. We will also have cider and cookies for all who dare to visit 1 Park Avenue.

Hope everyone has a spooktacular Halloween.

Editor’s note: information courtesy of the History Channel – visit online at www.historychannel.com.

At this time of year, families go through a familiar late-summer ritual: packing up the children and shipping them off to school. Cars filled to the hilt unload their cargoes on various campuses, followed by hugs and teary goodbyes. Parents who have nurtured their offspring from infancy know it’s time – the youngsters have to test their wings.

Right here in our Belle Grove neighborhood, that’s sort of what has been going on since mid-August and into September. At one house, there is a “mom” who has watched a multitude of her “kids” quite literally fly away. She raised them from their tiny beginnings and watched them grow into beautiful creatures who had to go fulfill their destiny.

Now, even though the kids are headed on a long flight – about 2,000 miles – there was no need to pack. Then again, the kids were leaving less than a month after they were born.

Over at 17 Chase Street, Rebecca Frager – you’ve probably heard her playing the harp on her front porch – has spent several summers collecting butterfly eggs, letting them grow into caterpillars and then monarch butterflies in a protected environment before releasing them into the sky. The

orange and black monarchs who emerge in late summer and early fall migrate to Mexico.

“Even after all the years I’ve done this, the amazing transformation of a tiny white dot on a leaf into a gorgeous butterfly still is a thing of wonder,” Rebecca says. “And I love to share it with my family and friends. My grandchildren especially can’t get enough of them.”

When she started out, Rebecca used to make regular trips to clumps of milkweed plants – the host of monarch caterpillars – that grow wild in the area. On her way home from her job as a high school librarian or on summer days when school was out, she would pull her car to the shoulder at several spots she had scouted and collect eggs or caterpillars.

She put the eggs and tiniest caterpillars on pieces of milkweed leaves in a small perforated plastic container. When they got big enough, she transferred the caterpillars to stalks of milkweed kept in a cage on her back deck.

The latter part of the process has remained the same, but now Rebecca no longer has to travel the roads of Westminster with an eye for milkweed. She planted a patch of it in front of her house,

now grown so thick it needed to be tied back after a heavy spring rain left the plants scraping the sidewalk. Another chunk grows in the backyard and still more resides in the alley.

Almost daily from June through September, she peruses the plants, searching for the little white dots – usually on the undersides of leaves – left behind by a momma monarch. Her daughter Sara sometimes joins in the hunt, 10-year-old grandson Alek lends a hand, and his 3-year-old brother Clayton – whose enthusiasm compensates for his lack of acumen – has been known to leave his tricycle behind to give an assist.

“The eggs are so tiny, you can easily miss them,” Rebecca says. “But after a while, your eyes sort of get trained to find them.”

She’ll also be on the lookout for young caterpillars, often less than a pencil point in length. What they lack in size, though, they make up for in appetite. In the course of three weeks, a monarch caterpillar munches away at enough milkweed to increase 3,000 times in size. It would be like a human baby growing to 21,000 pounds within weeks of birth.

In the cage on the deck, the caterpillars – who sport a



Grove Square

distinctive black and yellow ringed body as they reach chubby maturity – eventually climb to the top, anchoring themselves through the netting and then curling into the shape of a J. Such a caterpillar will quickly – within a day – form a chrysalis, inside which it turns into a monarch. The chrysalides look like little green acorns.

They darken in seven to 10 days, signaling the imminent arrival of a butterfly. The monarch expands, breaking open the chrysalis, and its wings pump up as if being filled by an air hose. The butterfly holds tight to the netting, flapping its wings, drying them off. The monarch will start to flit around after a day and is actually ready to take to the air about three days after it emerges.

“We love it when we’re lucky enough to actually catch them when the butterfly is born,” Rebecca says. “The kids come running, and their eyes go wide. I can even get my husband off the couch to watch them emerge sometimes.”

Though she raises the monarchs throughout the summer, it is only the late emergers – those born after the first couple of weeks in August – who get a finishing touch before she bids them bon voyage (though, given their destination, maybe it should be *vaya con dios*).

Using material she receives from the Monarch Watch organization based at the University of Kansas, Rebecca attaches little stickers to the butterflies’ wings after assigning each a number and noting its sex. (You can tell the boys from the girls by a subtle difference in the markings.) This enables the monarch watchers to keep track of the butterflies’ migration pattern as they travel to Mexico to overwinter or hibernate for several months.

The butterflies born earlier in the summer don’t get the sticker treatment, because they hang around locally, producing the eggs that eventually become the ones who will travel to the land where they are called *mariposas*.

Come late next spring, the whole process starts all over again, as the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the migrators make their way back north. Most of the monarchs joining the migration each fall are four to five generations removed from those that made the journey the previous year. How they know to come back and how they know to go to Mexico has something to do with an internal navigation system, but is considered by monarch experts to be a real mystery.

With some concern over reports of diminishing numbers of monarchs, we can do our share to keep these beauties flying through our lives by simply planting milkweed. The more ambitious could even follow

Rebecca’s example by creating a monarch way-station and actively raise the butterflies.

If you’re interested, go to <http://www.monarchwatch.org>. Or just stop by and ask Rebecca. She’d be glad to share some milkweed seed and talk to you about becoming a butterfly mom or dad.

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Tips for raising your own monarchs:

- Plant nectar flowers – lots of them. Adult monarchs feed on them.
- Plant milkweed. Common milkweed (the kind you see in fields) is best. The monarchs seem to prefer it, though there are other kinds of milkweed available.
- Use an aquarium with a screen top or taller plastic containers with holes in the lid.
- Have a good supply of paper towels, toothpicks, and tin foil.
- Clean the containers out daily – the caterpillars eat and poop all the time.
- Read and learn as much as you can about the monarch butterfly.
- Include the whole family – children of all ages can participate in this activity.
- Join a monarch raising forum – lots of shared information is available.
- Keep a journal and take tons of pictures.
- Have fun, share the enthusiasm, and know you are doing something beautiful.



Neighborhood Meeting Thurs Oct 8

At the neighborhood meeting on Thursday, October 8, 2009, 7:00pm at St. Paul's UCC at the corner of Bond and Green streets, we will be discussing the possibility of the Belle Grove Square Neighborhood hosting the 2010 home tour. We will also be discussing neighborhood signage and having a monarch butterfly habitat in our park.

Westminster Holiday Home Tour 2010

Earlier this week the City of Westminster sent out letters to some residents around Bell Grove Square asking if they would be interested in hosting the 2010 Holiday House Tour. This is an amazing honor and I am hopeful that several residents will volunteer to have their homes in the tour.

As most of you know, Bruce and I own the house at 1 Park Avenue. Our house needs lots of work and at this moment I can't imagine lots

of folks wandering through our house and admiring its "historical greatness." We are going to volunteer to have our house in the tour and hopefully knowing that will motivate us to get busy and get the remodeling to some sort of conclusion by then.

If you are interested in learning more about the home tour and possibly volunteering to have your home in the tour please come to the board meeting on October 8th at St. Paul's or call Tim Rogers with the city of Westminster at 410-848-4628. We will have an official from the city that will answer any questions and give more information about the tour.

Bond Street Paving Delayed

As reported in the Carroll County Times, budget cuts have caused the repaving of Bond Street from Main Street to the city limits to be postponed.

Mayor Kevin Utz said he empathized with residents who've been waiting for the roads to



Pictured above is an illustration from the program for the 1996 holiday house tour in Belle Grove Square. The illustrations of the homes and buildings were drawn by Westminster art students.

improve, especially since he grew up on Bond Street, but the city had no choice.

Spooky Ghost Walks

Every year the Public Library of Carroll County, Maryland, is a ghost host! Since the early 1980s, the library has held the Carroll County Ghost Walk. At this event, visitors come to the library and learn about local ghost legends and sightings. Afterward, they head out into the streets to tour the town of Westminster and see the spooky spots for themselves.

The Ghost Walks will start on October 7th and will begin at 6:30pm on various evenings. Please contact the library at 410.386.4488 for more information.

Box Lunch Talks

Over the years, legends and ghost stories abounded in Carroll County about the wicked deeds of Legh Master, a wealthy English ironmaster who settled near Westminster about 1771. On Tuesday, October 13th Don Riley, author of the new book *The Ghost of Legh Furnace*, presents the findings from his research into Master's life in England and Maryland from Noon to 1:00.

Admission is \$1.00 for Historical Society of Carroll County members and \$4.00 for non-members. The discussion will take place at the Carroll Post, American Legion, corner of Green and Sycamore in Westminster.

Bring a lunch - dessert and beverages provided. Or buy lunch at the Legion. Lunches must be ordered by 11:30; call the Legion at (410) 857-7953 for selections and to place a lunch order.



The new publication *The Ghost of Legh Furnace* by George Donald Riley, Jr. is available through the county Historical Society.

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

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