



HISTORIC BELLE GROVE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

VOLUME 3 ~ ISSUE 6 ~ JUNE 2010



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**2nd Annual
Belle Grove Square
Neighborhood
Pot Luck Picnic**

**Thurs., July 15th
at 7:00pm**

**Belle Grove
Square Park**

**Join in or come out and
meet your great BGS
neighbors!**

Don't Ask, Don't Get!

by Mitchell Edmondson

As most of you know Westminster recently passed a 14-cent hike on property taxes. According to the Carroll County Times the council passed a resolution to dedicate the new revenue from the tax rate increase to capital improvement projects. The 14-cent tax increase, which is a 31.8 percent increase, will generate approximately \$2.56 million in revenue. For a politician, raising taxes must be one of the hardest career decisions to make. The fact that our city officials decided to do it demonstrates their concern for the welfare and future of our city. The fact that our city officials make such critical decisions to see to it that our city continues to maintain its streets and infrastructure helps our city stand out - one only as to take a short drive to see what happens to communities that refuse to make the hard decisions that improve residents' quality of life.

Department of Public Works
Director Jeff Glass said his

department's plans were reevaluated, and it will work on the worst streets first. Public works will also try to work in conjunction with BGE as it replaces old gas lines so construction on roads that need to be worked on can be kept to a minimum. Even though Bond Street was specifically mentioned by the mayor it is believed that repairing Bond Street will be delayed because the old gas line that runs down the street is scheduled to be replaced in three years. Because the street will have to be torn up to replace the gas line, it would be wasteful to spend money fixing the street now to only have to rip it all up and patch in again three years.

I for one am hoping that when Bond Street has its gas line replaced and the street repaired that we can convince the city to help replace the sidewalk along Bond Street like was done on Green Street. Usually sidewalk replacement is the responsibility of residents; however, since Bond Street is such a heavily traveled street and is one of the main sidewalks into the downtown

area, it would be great if we could somehow get this sidewalk replaced.

As we are thinking through what we would like to see accomplished in our neighborhood, it would also be nice to see some historic lighting added to the sidewalk along Bond Street. Bond Street and West Green Streets are the most traveled streets in our neighborhood and they both have lots of pedestrian traffic. Next month we will be asking neighborhood residents to complete a survey and let us know what they would like to see for the future of our neighborhood. Since the city should be finished with their Pennsylvania Street project soon, perhaps we should be deciding what we would like to see happen in our neighborhood. If we don't have a plan and ask for improvements we will certainly not get them. As the city plans for its future, lets make sure they think about our neighborhood when they are trying to get grants and other funding for city improvements. Again, if we don't ask for it - we can be sure we won't get it.

Neighborhood News & Updates for June 2010

Neighborhood picnic

Next month on July 15, 2010 at 7:00 we will be having our second annual picnic. Neighborhood board members will be supplying the hot dogs, hamburgers, and fixings. If you would like to bring a tasty side dish to share please feel free to add to the menu. Remember, you don't have to bring a thing, but a smile and a healthy appetite, but you're more than welcome to join in helping make it a great neighborhood spread! Get ready for an evening of fun and great visits with your neighbors.

If it is raining at 6:00 the event will be rescheduled for the following Thursday evening.

Art in the Park

Art in the Park will be held on Saturday, June 5, 2010 in the park behind Westminster City Hall. This event is held rain or shine. "Art in the Park" is a juried venue that provides local and regional artists and artisans a chance to exhibit and sell their work in a relaxed, festive atmosphere. This year's Art in the Park will feature



Artists gather to set up for last year's Art in the Park near City Hall. Admission is free and this year's event will be held June 5.

dozens of talented artists. This is a great place to find that unique painting or gift. The festival has been expanded this year with more exhibitors, demonstrations, free kids crafts and live musical performances.

Neighborhood yard sale a big success

Despite the threat of rain, our first neighborhood garage sale was a big success. We had nine neighbors participate and a great number of visitors to our yard sales found some amazing bargains. We not only got to rid our homes of no longer needed "treasures," we also had the chance to meet and visit with fellow neighbors and visitors to our lovely Belle Grove Square.

Newmont Military Band to perform in park June 18

Get ready for an evening of historic entertainment: on June 18, 2010 our neighborhood's city park will be the site for authentic late 19th century music. The Newmont Military Band honors the tradition



Belle Grove Square neighbors gather and visit at the start of the neighborhood picnic in the park last year, July 24, 2009.

of brass bands in America, as a re-creation of a small-town brass band of the late 1800s. Their program is representative of the music played on the town green in the late 19th century. There are songs of "the war," songs of love, marches (including Sousa's), dances, and songs from the old plantations. Musical selections are chosen from American Band and Windsor Military Band programs documented in the *Claremont Advocate* and the *Vermont Journal* between the years of 1890 and 1905.



The Newmont Military Band poses during an appearance at Center Church, Weathersfield, Vermont, Sept. 20, 2009.

The Newmont Military Band, brought together by Lawrence Jones, of Windsor, Vermont, actually began as a cornet band, and was formed in 1995 as a re-creation of a small-town brass band of the late 1800s. A couple of years later, the clarinets were added. Most of the brass instruments played by the musicians in the NMB are originals, i.e., were either manufactured prior to, or based on, designs drawn before 1895. These

brass instruments—cornets (not trumpets), alto horns, tenor horns, baritone, and tubas—have a more mellow sound than many of today's brass instruments, and they require a different level of skill to produce the sound so indicative of the old-time bands.

So get out your lawn chairs and get ready for an evening of music much like would have been heard when our neighborhood was founded more than 140 years ago.

Corbit's Charge to be relived June 26-27

The Corbit's Charge Commemorative Weekend will occur on June 26th and 27th. The event provides a quality educational experience for visitors of all ages through a Civil War encampment; military demonstrations of artillery, small arms, drilling, and horsemanship; performances of period music; participation of authentic Civil War living historians and traditional artisans, such as blacksmiths, tinsmiths and caners; guided tours and the presentations of published authors, speakers and museum displays relating to the Civil War period. It also remembers those who fought bravely in this city in 1863 with wreath laying ceremonies at the Corbit's Charge monument that was dedicated in 2006 and the burial site of Lt. Murray. The encampment and most of the major activities are held on the grounds of the Carroll County Multi-Service Center Building at 224 North Center Street.

Neighborhood History

Church of the Brethren has long history on the square

Our neighborhood has two very prominent churches fronting our square. As you know, St. Paul's UCC is celebrating its 140th anniversary this year. Church of the Brethren also has been around many years. According to the History of Western Maryland the original church on the site was a German Baptist church that our neighborhood founder George Matthews helped build and attended. The German Baptist church was dedicated in August 1868 with the Rev. Daniel Wilson being the pastor. It was purchased from the Baptist by the Brethren for \$2200.00 on May 9 1879. The original trustees of the Brethren church were Henry Warner, John Englar, D. D. Bonsack, Uriah Bixler, and Dr. Lewis Woodward. The German Baptist trustees who sold the church and its buildings were the Rev. Isaac Cole, Julia J. Cole, George Matthews, Charles L. Morgan, Isabella M. Matthews.

The church building was described

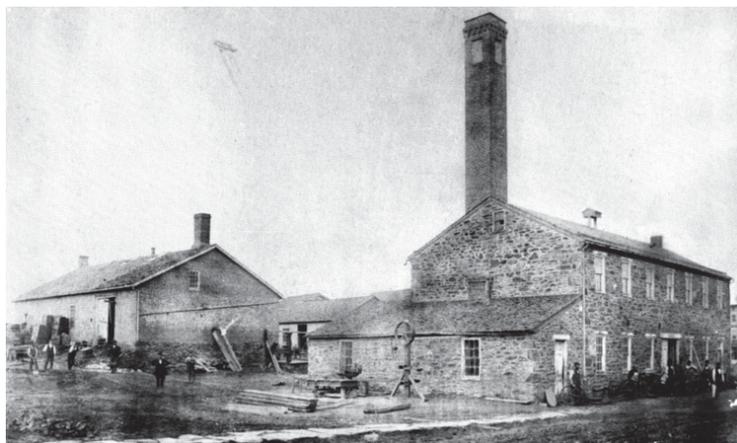
as a handsome brick structure. The Brethren congregation was a part of the Pipe Creek Congregation. In November 1880 a Sunday school was organized and its superintendent was Dr. Lewis Woodward.

Dr. Lewis Woodward' son Dr. Lewis Klair Woodward would later buy the house at 1 Park Avenue in 1928 from the Matthews family. He and his wife lived there until their deaths in 1967 and 1969.

Neighborhood founder George W. Matthews was quite a busy man about town

Our neighborhood founding father was a busy man when he first moved to Westminster. He bought the land where our neighborhood was developed in 1866 and set up his business in the building currently occupied by O'Lordans.

According to the History of Western Maryland, in addition to building two houses in Belle Grove Square, he and Elijah



The stone building at 14 Liberty Street was built between 1867 and 1870, when Elijah Wagoner and George Matthews operated a machine shop and foundry there. In 1875, Wagoner bought out Matthews's interest in the business. Unfortunately Wagoner's creditors foreclosed on the property in 1878. The B. F. Shriver Canning Company bought the building in 1881 and operated there for about 20 years. This image dates to the early 1870s. (CCHS)



In this very early photo taken from the rooftop of St. Paul's church, neighborhood founder George W. Matthews's home at 1 Park Avenue is shown. In the lower right corner, a white picket fence around Belle Grove Park can be seen - the fence was built to keep hobos out of the park who rode into town by railroad.

Wagoner built the stone building at 14 Liberty Street and operated a machine shop and foundry. It opened as a foundry where they developed and refined innovative machinery such as the "Lion Fodder Crusher", making the job of local farmers easier.

George Matthews cared about agriculture in Carroll County and because of his concern he was also involved in the Carroll County Agricultural Society. The Carroll County Agricultural Society was incorporated March 8, 1869 by John E. Smith, Jeremiah Rinehart, William A McKellip, Richard Manning, David Fowble, Hashabiah Hanes, George W. Matthews, and John L. Reifsnider. The object of the association was "to improve agriculture by attracting the attention, eliciting the views, and combining the efforts of the individuals composing the agricultural community of Carroll County, and aiming at the

development of the resources of the soil so as to promote the prosperity of all concerned in its culture."

Grounds containing thirty acres of land were purchased on the Baltimore turnpike at the east end of Westminster, just outside the corporation limits. They were enclosed with a substantial fence, and stabling was erected for the accommodation of five hundred head of stock. A race-track, half a mile in length was constructed and all the necessary preparations were completed for the annual exhibitions of the association. George W. Matthews was an officer of the society and he served in several leadership positions.

In 1875 George Matthews sold his interest in machine shop and devoted more time to developing and selling real estate. He relocated to East Main Street where he ran the Intelligence Office and Land Agency.





A one room school house is depicted circa 1895.

Westminster Main Street as it once was

As Mayor Utz pointed out recently, Westminster's main street used to be a very busy place when he was a kid. Before the expansion of 140 and the development that quickly followed, downtown Westminster was a very busy place. As noted by Kale Mathias in Carroll County Maryland A History 1837 – 1976, downtown on a Saturday night two people couldn't walk abreast. You would have to thread your way through the crowds. The big crowds came in the summer and fall when it was warmer and the farmers would come in early and

park their cars and stay there all evening until they went home. They would stand around and meet the people and talk to their friends. In addition to visiting with friends, the farmers spent money at the dozens of clothing stores, drug stores, hardware stores, movie theaters, and other establishments that crowded the northern side of Main Street. The golden age of business and entertainment on Main street occurred largely between 1900 and 1930. The Great Depression of the 1930's meant that there was less money to spend on Saturday nights and the radios which began to appear in nearly every home during the same period meant that many people



Ever wonder why one of our busiest streets is named Bond Street? Bond Street is named after James A. C. Bond who was a successful Westminster attorney. Bond Served as an attorney for the B&O Railroad and was appointed an associate justice of the 5th District in 1899, going on to build this house on East Main Street at Court Street, near to the court house where he served.

began to stay home to listen to their favorite programs.

Moving pictures appeared in Carroll County in the first decade of the twentieth century. At one time downtown supported at least three theaters as well as others

spread throughout the county. Some of the earliest theaters were Ki-Yi O Motion Picture Parlour, and the Star both of which were located on West Main Street. There was also a theater located in the Albion Hotel and the opera room in the Odd Fellows Hall.



The Star Picture Theater, one of the earliest in Westminster, stood near the corner of Main and John Streets and shared a building with Shaw's drugstore. Theater manager George Osborne posed outside the business in this 1908 image. The Star was demolished in 1923 to make way for the construction of a new theater, which eventually became the Carrol Arts Center.

Early public schools

daughter Belle Matthews.

As noted in Carroll County Maryland A History 1837 – 1976, before the Civil War the education of children was a local endeavor and more children attended private schools than public ones. In 1865 the Public School Law was enacted and the beginning of free, universal education financially supported by a state school tax on all citizens was started. Teachers received a salary of \$50.00 per year for the first fifteen pupils and for every additional pupil up to 25 an additional \$2.50 each. The school year was divided into two terms with the first term of 49 days and the second term of 46 days.

In the book, History of Western Maryland, our very own Belle M. Matthews is listed as being a teacher of 29 pupils during the 1881 and 1882 school year. Our neighborhood of Historic Belle Grove Square is named after George and Maria Matthews'

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