



HISTORIC BELLE GROVE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

VOLUME 3 ~ ISSUE 7 ~ JULY 2010

Neighborhood Picnic July 15!



Inside This Issue:

2 Neighborhood street signs

Survey: So what now?

July music at Locust Park

Common Ground

3 Park hosts summer services

Victorian house colors

4 Summer Ice Houses

Ice Cream Social Aug 3rd!

**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!**

by Mitchell Edmondson

Nothing says July like a picnic. As you all know our neighborhood was organized during the Victorian Era. Picnics were very popular with the Victorians, perhaps because it gave them the opportunity to escape from their formal dining rituals. However, etiquette books explained that the rules of proper manners at a picnic should not be any different than at a dinner party, and society demands that one should be loyal to these rules whether dining under the tree or under the chandelier.

Picnics were a way for Victorians to escape from their daily civilized routines, but that didn't mean they were without servants. Often the food was delivered in a separate carriage ahead of the guests and catered by two or three servants. Etiquette manuals reminded a gentleman that women have more tender nerves and more rapid imaginations and that consideration should be taken when choosing a picnic site, and

so a site set above a cliff selected for its splendor view may alarm the female diners. Care must also be taken to see that the guests are not seated upon an ant hill. There should also be certainty of shade as it is quite impossible for a lady to hold her parasol during lunch and nothing is more uncomfortable for a lady than to be exposed to a merciless sun.

Each gentleman should endeavor to do his utmost to be amusing and entertaining. Once the last bite of pie or cake was eaten should a gentleman have musical talent and have with him an instrument, such as a cornet, which is barely tolerated in the enclosed walls of the drawing room, should be perfect to perform out-of-doors.

Usually games were played such as croquet, blind man's bluff, or even tag.

On Thursday, July 15, 2010, our neighborhood will hold its second annual picnic in the park. Historic Belle Grove Square Neighborhood Association board members will be providing hot dogs, hamburgers and drinks. If you have the time to make a tasty side dish to share, please feel free to bring it to the picnic. Remember, you do not have to bring a thing to the picnic besides a friendly smile and an appetite! Please join us in the park around 7:00pm. If it is raining at 6:00 the picnic will be rescheduled to the following Thursday.

Hope to see you all there!



Neighbors start to gather at last year's picnic, July 24, 2009.

Neighborhood News & Updates for June 2010



A completed neighborhood street sign is shown here while the mounting brackets were being tested. The signs should be installed within two weeks.

Neighborhood street signs to be installed

Sometime in the month of July we should see our new Historic Belle Grove Square signs make their appearance on our street signs. The City of Westminster will be installing the signs. A special piece had to be ordered to affix the signs. Much thanks to the City of Westminster and the neighbors of Historic Belle Grove Square for making the installation of the signs possible. We will be the first neighborhood in Westminster to have Historic Street signs to highlight our neighborhood.

Survey: So what now?

Now that our street sign project is finished, it is time for us to think about what if anything we would like to see happen in our neighborhood. Would you like new benches in the park, better lighting in the park, new sidewalks on Bond Street, or historic street lighting? Would you like to increase the size of our neighborhood to include the houses on Liberty or possibly those along West Green? Would you be interested in having our neighborhood become a Historic

protected neighborhood like the homes in Uniontown are?

By completing the attached survey you will let us know the issues that are important to you and where you would like to see our neighborhood go in the future.

After the surveys are collected, the neighborhood association will meet and discuss with city officials to determine how we can best achieve our common goals to make Belle Grove Square an even better place to call home.



The Westminster Municipal Band will be performing on August 22, 2010 from 6 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. Bring your lawn chairs and blankets for an evening of music.



Construction is underway at Westminster Library downtown, where sidewalks and landscaping are being upgraded, and a new piece of statuary becomes one of the city's first pieces of public art.

And downtown... Music in Locust Park

During the month of July great music can be heard on Thursday evenings in Locust Park. "Songs at Six" concert series will occur every Thursday from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 in July. While at the park, check out the construction going on at the library. The library has new sidewalks and is currently working on the new pedestrian ramp from the city's Diffendal parking lot.

Common Ground

Another great local event is the annual Common Ground on the Hill. This year's events are scheduled July 4 - 10 & July 11 - 16, 2010. Common Ground consists of two weeks of workshops, classes, dances, art exhibits, and concerts on the beautiful campus of McDaniel College in central Maryland. For more information see <http://www.commongroundonthehill.org> or call 410-857-2771.



Belle Grove Square Park hosts several summer services

As many of you noticed, our park has been the home of Sunday afternoon church services for the past few weeks. The local Nazarene church was meeting every Sunday in the park and

not only having a church service but also providing hot dogs and hamburgers for attendees. The church also provided rousing music for everyone to enjoy.

Coming up in August, our two neighborhood churches, St. Paul's UCC and Westminster Church of the Brethren will be conducting a joint service in the park.

Victorian house colors

by Mitchell Edmondson

As some of you know, Bruce and I have been busy trying to get our house ready for the December 2010 Holiday Home Tour. Agreeing to have our house as a part of the tour has definitely motivated us to get things done around the house. Besides working on the interior, we have decided to fix the roof and have the exterior painted. Thanks to our great neighbors across the park, I have learned quite a bit about Victorian exterior paint colors.

According to Roger Moss in *Century of Color Exterior Decoration for American Buildings 1820/1920*, when English novelist Charles Dickens traveled to America in the winter of 1842 he would later write that “all the buildings looked as if they had been painted that morning... Every house is the whitest of white; every Venetian blind the greenest of the green.” American Architect Andrew Jackson Downing wrote an article published around the same time in which he criticized the use of white paint on houses.

Downing helped start the movement of using colors found in nature to paint exteriors of Victorian homes. In *The Architecture of Country Houses* he stated that the use of white paint was “too glaring and conspicuous.” He believed that white paint did “not harmonize with the country.” Andrew Jackson Downing stated that homes should be painted colors that copy nature. He did not like the use of the color green because “houses are not built of grass or leaves.” However, Downing did not think it would be proper to paint the house all the same color. He believed that features such as window facings, blinds, and cornices should “confer the same kind of expression on a house that the eyes, eyebrows, lips, ect., of a face, do upon the

human countenance.” As a result of Downing’s writings, Victorian homes started being painted in more earth tone colors. Trim work was painted in colors that visually accented the decoration installed on the house. Architect designed buildings from the late 1840’s through the Civil war reflected the new style.

During the time our neighborhood was being developed the population of the United States doubled (between 1860 and 1890). This population increase had a dramatic influence on the building trades and the hundreds of companies that developed to supply the burgeoning market. A number of technological innovations in the post-Civil War decades influenced the color of American buildings. The paint industry developed both the machinery to grind pigment in oil and containers in which this ready-mixed paint could

be shipped safely. The railroad network spanned the nation and it allowed manufacturers in urban centers such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago to reach distant markets.

The development of inexpensive paper and high speed presses encouraged colorful advertising brochures and architectural pattern books that reached thousands of Americans building houses. The availability of pattern books for building houses and trade catalogues supplying products such as stoves, tile, millwork, and paint helps to explain the homogenization of American building in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1880’s a house built in Central City, Colorado, or in Zanesville, Ohio would probably share stylistic characteristics and would certainly be painted in the same palette of greens, olives, grays, yellows, and browns—colors much darker and richer than those advocated by the pre-Civil War generation of architects.



The wide range of colors which might have been used for exterior decoration in the late 1860s and early 1870s is well illustrated in this rare Harrison Brothers “Town and Country” paint card of 1871. The pale Downing colors survive together with the darker palette that will dominate house colors for the next twenty years.

As Roger Moss points out in his book, America did not automatically switch to the rich colors of the post-Civil War years with the arrival of the first train loaded with Lucas, Devoe, Seeley Brothers, or Sherwin-Williams ready-mixed paint. The “browning” of America was a gradual process. Roughly speaking, there were four major color phases in the nineteenth century: late Federal through Neoclassical (c. 1820-1840); Gothic and Italianate Revival or early Victorian (c. 1840-1870); late Victorian (c. 1870-1890); and Colonial Revival (1890-1890), which saw a return to Neoclassical detailing and a renewed interest in early American architecture. These four periods have a fairly definable color palettes ranging from dominant white with green shutters, through the pale earth tones, to the dark, rich colors that most people associate with late Victorian buildings, to the gradual return to white and light pastels.

As the nineteenth century waned, American architecture began to return to simpler lines inspired in part by our colonial past. With this revival, paint colors changed. Body colors moved toward pastels. White again became the most popular trim color and even was used for sash. We can look around our neighborhood and see the way these different movements in architecture influenced the types of homes built in our neighborhood. Since many of the homes in our neighborhood were built toward the end of the nineteenth century, we have several homes that reflect the colonial architecture of the period.

So, after some advice from our neighbors and researching paint colors in Roger Moss’ book, we have decided to paint our trim work in white and use paint colors from a paint card of 1871 (just after our house was built) for the shutters and doors.

I would tell you the colors, but that would spoil the surprise - hopefully it will all be done soon!



Uniquely important in the Summer: ice houses

Ice houses were important for many reasons. They allowed farmers to keep their milk and cream cool. They also allowed one of life's most simple pleasures to be developed. The simple pleasure I speak of is ice cream. The origins of ice cream can be traced back to at least the 4th century B.C. Early references include the Roman emperor Nero (A.D. 37-68) who ordered ice to be brought from the mountains and combined with fruit toppings, and King Tang (A.D. 618-97) of Shang, China who had a method of creating ice and milk concoctions. Ice cream was likely brought from China back to Europe. Over time, recipes for ices, sherbets, and milk ices evolved and served in the fashionable Italian and French royal courts.

After the dessert was imported to the United States, it was served by several famous Americans. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson served it to their guests. In 1700, Governor Bladen of Maryland was recorded as having served it to his guests. In 1774, a London caterer named Philip Lenzi announced in a New York newspaper that he would be offering for sale various confections, including ice cream. Dolly Madison served it in 1812.

James Workman Beacham, Jr. of Avondale, Carroll County owned one of the first ice cream factories in the county. He grew up working on his father's farm and when his father died he purchased the farm from his mother. About 1888 he established his ice cream business. He was the postmaster of Avondale and when the post office was built it included his ice cream plant. A nearby pond supplied he ice in winter which was cut and hauled by mules to the plant and stored below ground covered with straw. According to James W. Beacham, a man named Abe Danner was in charge of making the ices and ice



Typical ice house of the 1850-1930 period. Sketch by Elinor Hull, Westminster, Maryland 1982, from Legacy of the Land.

Free Ice Cream Social Belle Grove Square Park

Tues. Aug. 3rd, 7:00pm for National Night Out!

cream. Mr. Danner would always make the kids bring up ice from under the plant before he would give them a treat of the ice cream.

by Alice Rinehart Reifsnider:

As the hot days of summer role on, nothing quenches the thirst like a glass of iced tea. We only have to head to the refrigerator to fill our glass with ice to cool down on a hot summer day. During the time our neighborhood was built, access to ice was much harder. As we were excavating in our back yard for new drain lines, we found the remains of what was believed to be an old ice house. Below is a story written by local resident Alice Rinehart Reifsnider that explains how a glass of something icy cold could be accomplished more than 150 years ago.

The ice house on Israel Rinehart's farm where I lived was built in 1850 or earlier. It was dug about 12 or 15 feet below the ground, was square and made of logs, with a shingled cupola roof which rested on the ground. There were logs in the bottom also.

The pond from which the ice was taken was in a meadow. When the ice was thick enough, three or four men harvested it. They used a low-bed wagon with a lift hood to pull the ice onto the wagon. Each block of ice was made by drilling a hole with an auger into the ice, then sawing to the size block they could handle. The ice was then hauled to the ice house near the farm house. One end of a wide board was put in the door, the other end rested on the wagon. One man would lift the block by tongs onto the board

and let it slide down. Several men in the ice house would pack it in layers, keeping it away from the sides of the house. Each layer was covered with leaves and straw. It took several trips to fill the ice house, which was then covered with straw and leaves and a layer of burlap bags.

As there was no refrigeration, the ice was used to keep butter after it was churned and before it was made into prints to sell to the huckster. It was also used to make ice cream and put into water coolers for drinking water. We used a hammer to chip off the size of ice we wanted. It kept all summer; very little melted.

Some farmers had large ponds and sold the ice to manufacturers in town to make ice cream.

How to reach us:

Historic Belle Grove
Square Neighborhood

443.293.7203

1 Park Avenue
Westminster, MD
21157

email: newsletter@bellegrovesquare.org

www.bellegrovesquare.org

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

Entire contents
copyright © 2010
All rights reserved.