



# HISTORIC BELLE GROVE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

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**St Patrick's Day  
Neighborhood  
Progressive Dinner**

**Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup>  
6:30 - 9:30 pm**

**RSVP REQUIRED  
BY FEBRUARY 28  
443-293-7203  
SPACE IS LIMITED!**

*Come out and meet  
your great neighbors!*

## Our Neighborhood's Secret Is Out

*by Mitchell Edmondson*

At our last neighborhood meeting it happened again: residents from nearby streets have been attending our meetings and some of our events. Of course they are all welcome to come and participate - it seems as if word has gotten out about our neighborhood and the things we are doing to help improve our neighborhood and city. We are a caring and generous neighborhood; however, it makes me wonder if there are not some things we could do to help these neighboring streets and areas.

The streets and residences surrounding our neighborhood affect our own and it would only seem natural that we would want to also work to make adjoining neighborhoods safe, clean, and welcoming because they are right next door. As we work on our neighborhood plan, we are discovering that in order to make our neighborhood great, we might also have to work to make sure neighboring streets

and neighborhoods are addressed. Streets such as Liberty are lined with old historic structures and they too have played a vital role in our community's history. We have been approached by folks further up along West Green Street, Liberty Street, and West George Street to not forget about them.

As a part of our neighborhood plan, we will likely be making suggestions on improving Liberty Street. We will briefly discuss the neighborhoods surrounding our Historic Belle Grove Square and make recommendations to help organize and improve the neighborhoods for those residents.

Perhaps there is more we can do than simply welcome folks to attend our meetings and events. We have asked the question on our surveys as to whether we should increase the size of our neighborhood or not and the answer has always been a resounding "no". Maybe instead of changing our neighborhood boundary, we could just welcome

neighborhood friends to play a part in our own neighborhood? Or we could work with the city to try to help organize their neighborhoods too? These are just a few things to think about as we try to construct Westminster's first detailed plan for a historic neighborhood.

Another issue that we will likely want to address in our the plan concerns preservation. Historic preservation has every time ranked as the number one concern on our neighborhood surveys. While Belle Grove Square along with Willis Street were recently included in a new type of zoning, historic structures can still be torn down in our neighborhood and houses can be altered in ways destroying their character. I know that this is a controversial subject. The city of Westminster tried to create historic neighborhoods in the 1980s and the city was still not then ready.

In coming newsletters we will try to better address the pros and cons of becoming a real historic district with relevant articles and facts.

## What exactly is a Neighborhood Plan?

A neighborhood plan is a document that describes a detailed vision for the future of a neighborhood.

An effective neighborhood plan will create detailed goals and strategies for reaching that vision. Ideally, neighborhood plans are created by the people who live, work and play in that neighborhood. Approval of a neighborhood plan requires careful review and acceptance by a majority of people in a neighborhood and also by the Planning Commission and the City Council. In that way, it is a commitment by all those involved to work toward the vision it embodies.

A neighborhood plan in of itself is not a binding agreement or contract. It is a set of general principals and recommendations for action. A good plan will be explicit about the steps necessary to implement its goals and the people who must be involved to make it happen. Neighborhood plans get implemented only when neighbors, with assistance from their neighborhood planners, work to get the plan's recommendations acted upon by the appropriate parties. Some neighborhood plans will lead to the development of new City policies or regulations, but the results of every plan will be different based on the unique needs of that neighborhood and the people who are involved. A neighborhood plan provides an articulated, shared vision to guide decision-making. Our neighborhood is in the process of creating our neighborhood plan.

Last year members of our neighborhood met and roughed out the priorities for our neighborhood. In March or April, an outline of the neighborhood plan will be presented for neighborhood residents to review.



General Nathaniel Greene of the 1st Maryland Regiment threw back a British attack and countered with a bayonet charge. As they reformed their line, William Washington's Light Dragoons raced to the rescue of raw troops of the 5th Maryland Regiment who had buckled under a furious assault of British Grenadiers and Guards at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, March 15, 1781.

## February an eventful month for Maryland

Maryland was one of the thirteen colonies that revolted against British rule in the American Revolution. On February 2, 1781, Maryland became the 13th state to approve the ratification of the Articles of Confederation which brought into being the United States as a united, sovereign and national state.

It was Maryland who held out ratifying the Articles of Confederation until 1781 due to border disputes with neighboring states. By 1778, nine states had approved. However, ratification was delayed by some small states that had misgivings about the western land claims of certain states. Maryland in particular demanded that these states give their claims to the general government. When assured that most western lands would be ceded to the United States, Maryland ratified the Articles. By March, 1781, all states had approved the Articles of Confederation.

Maryland also became the seventh

state admitted to the U.S. after ratifying the new Constitution. The following year, in December 1790, Maryland ceded land selected by President George Washington to the federal government for the creation of Washington, D.C. - the land was provided from Montgomery and Prince George's counties, as well as from Fairfax County and Alexandria in Virginia (though the lands from Virginia were later returned through retrocession). The land provided to Washington, D.C. is actually "sitting" inside what was the state of Maryland.



Neighbor Natalie Inskeep receives an award by Mayor Kevin Utz on Jan 10, 2011 for her help with the Historic Home Tour, which sold 23% more tickets than the previous tour in 2008.



During the last meeting, it was decided that the our first neighborhood progressive dinner will be held on March 18, 2011 from 6:30 to 9:30pm and each house may choose to incorporate a St. Patrick's Day theme if they like.

Appetizers will be served at Mitchell and Bruce's house at 1 Park Ave., the main course at Martha's and Howdy's house at 32 Bond St., and dessert at Laurie and Wayne's house at 9 Park Ave. There will be a strict limit on the number who can attend the dinner in order to make sure everyone can be served so be sure and call us to sign up by calling 443-293-7203 no later than February 28th if you are interested in attending!

We are also looking for volunteers to help prepare food for the events at each house. If you would also like to bring food or help, please contact us so we can get you in touch with the homeowner.

The evening of March 18th should be memorable with great food and company - hope to see you there!



## Moonshine in Belle Grove Square?

In the 1880's the Women's Christian temperance Union organized in Carroll County and held conventions, meetings, and parades to further their cause. An act was eventually passed and Carroll County went dry on May 1, 1915.

Forty-one salons were closed in Carroll County, but drinking liquor was not absolutely prohibited. Citizens could still travel to neighboring cities outside the county and could buy any amount of liquor provided they brought only one gallon a month into the county (an exception that was apparently heavily exceeded).

In 1919, the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited the sale and manufacture of alcohol, was ratified. It went into effect on January 16, 1920.

Prohibition was the period in United States history in which the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors was outlawed. It was a time characterized by speakeasies, moonshining, and bootlegging operations.

Champ C. Zumbun, a former chairman of the liquor board who helped raid such operations, reported that moonshining and bootlegging in Carroll County wasn't nearly as prevalent as in the mountains of Virginia or Tennessee, or in Southern Maryland, where the whiskey would go to supply Washington, DC. But there definitely were a few stills in the county, from tea-kettle size operations to larger



Volunteer Norma Jean Swam receives an award from Mayor Kevin Utz on behalf of Westminster Church of the Brethren for their efforts on the historic homes tour held Dec. 11, 2010, which raised money to benefit the local Historic District Commission.

versions putting out a few hundred gallons of whiskey a day.

According to a local neighbor, it was during this time that an illegal moonshine operation was operated out of one of the houses right here in Belle Grove Square. Even more astonishing is the fact that this "speakeasy" was located nearby the German Reformed Church which today is now St. Paul's United Church of Christ. Parishioners in the early 1900s complained and fought for years to

run the "moonshine" operation out of business with little success.

On December 5, 1933, the 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified. The 21st Amendment repealed the 18th Amendment, making alcohol once again legal. This was the first and only time in U.S. history that an Amendment has been repealed. With the 21st amendment, operations of this sort were no longer necessary and they shut down.

## Royer Replacement

As most neighbors have no doubt noticed, the Royer house is no longer standing along West Green Street. St. Paul's Church has removed the building to replace it with a new structure to match the same footprint and with a similar appearance. The new building will be modern inside and fully accessible by wheelchair unlike the present one which has many obstacles, and the renovations will also include a new elevator, kitchen, and meeting spaces.

## Yard Sale in May

Our neighborhood will once again be holding a garage/front porch sale in May. So, start organizing those unwanted treasures lying around the house and get ready for the sale. More details such as the day and times will be included in coming newsletters this spring.

## Board Elections Held

At our last neighborhood meeting, Bruce DeVault was elected president of the board, Laurie Walters vice-president, Dan Hoff treasurer, and Eileen Churchill secretary. All elected officers serve a one year term and elections for the new year are held each January.

## Westminster Parks & Rec.

Be sure to visit the Parks & Recreation Dept. online at [www.westgov.com/recreation/rec\\_main.html](http://www.westgov.com/recreation/rec_main.html) to see their full calendar of events! You'll be amazed at how much the city has going!



The Blue Blazes whiskey still at Catoctin Mountain, Maryland, was a large commercial operation. More than 25,000 gallons of mash were confiscated from 13 two thousand gallon vats when the operation was raided in July, 1929. Moonshine is still illegal in Maryland to this day, because of health concerns due to the common use of lye and lead pipes, as well as other safety issues.

# February Catastrophies

While the groundhog in Pennsylvania may or may not predict six more weeks of winter, one thing for sure is that the month of February can bring some very big storms. Two of the worst storms ever experienced in Westminster occurred during the month of February.

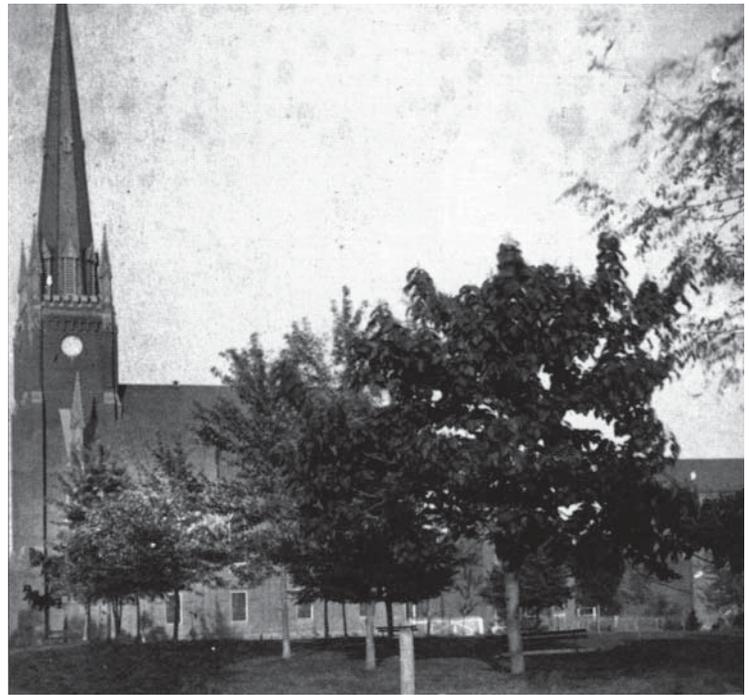
It was during the month of February in 1893 that our neighborhood experienced one of the most severe storms in our neighborhoods history. On February 19, 1893 a severe storm tore Westminster and caused damage throughout the county. The Democratic Advocate provided the following details of the storm and its damage to our neighborhood:

The greatest damage from the storm, in this city, was probably sustained by St. Paul's Reformed Church, the towering steeple of which was blown down and now lies in the adjoining grounds. In its fall it struck the slate roof on the northeast side of the brick tower and crushed it over a considerable space, breaking, at the same time, some of the sustaining timbers. Some large stone ornaments were also knocked from the tower and front wall of the church, and the bell wheel was broken. A number of the memorial windows of the edifice were broken and the roof on the southwest side was somewhat damaged by timbers from the residence of Mr. Thomas H. Bankard, about a hundred yards west on Bond street. The church is probably damaged to the amount of \$2,000.

The roof, with its sustaining

timbers, of the dwelling of Mr. Bankard, was caught up by the wind and carried across the corner of Belle Grove Park, part of it falling on a tree of considerable size, crushing it to the ground, and the remainder landing on the roof of the Reformed Church, as already stated. Some of the bricks at the top of the wall were knocked off and broke through the ceiling of a room occupied by George L. Stocksdale, Esq., who had just fitted it up with a handsome carpet, suite of furniture and costly rugs, which were somewhat damaged. Mr. Bankard's loss approximates \$200.

On February 21, 1902, a rain and sleet storm occurred that the American Sentinel newspaper hailed as "The Great Sleet Storm." The Democratic Advocate proclaimed: "The wreck of the system in this city of the Western Maryland Telephone Company was nearly complete. Two-thirds of the poles were down, cross-arms broken off and wires snapped and tangled all over the city, particularly from the railroad east." The American Sentinel coverage of the storm reported that the



The steeple at what is now St. Paul's United Church of Christ, toppled during a February 19, 1893 tornado that caused widespread destruction in Carroll County. The tall wooden spire was originally built in 1868-70 and was not reconstructed after the tornado's damage. Photo from Images of Westminster, CCHS

beautiful trees in Belle Grove Square present an ugly sight with the many jagged and unsightly snags left by their broken limbs.

So, remember this February, as you clear your sidewalks yet again, it could have been worse!



## Report any suspicious activity

Do not hesitate to contact the Westminster Police about any suspicious activity you see happen - they want to hear from you!

You can make an anonymous report by calling **410-857-TIPS (8477)** or texting your tip to 847411 (tip411), or you can make an online report at [http://www.westgov.com/police/police\\_activity.html](http://www.westgov.com/police/police_activity.html).  
To report a crime currently in progress, call 911.



## Tip: Tired of throwing out red bags?

If you don't read the free papers, take just a moment to call the phone number inside the paper whenever you receive one and ask them to stop delivery to your address. Free papers laying around make the neighborhood look bad, and can invite crime by advertising when you may be away from home.

How to reach us:

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Westminster, MD  
21157

email: [newsletter@bellegrovesquare.org](mailto:newsletter@bellegrovesquare.org)

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

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