

BELLE GROVE SQUARE

GEORGE W. MATTHEWS AND HIS WIFE MARIA MATTHEWS, DEVELOPERS OF "MATTHEWS ADDITION" WHICH COMPRISED THIS SECTION OF EARLY WESTMINSTER, ON MAY 2, 1877 CONVEYED THIS PARCEL OF LAND CONSISTING OF 24,975 SQUARE FEET TO THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER FOREVER AS A PUBLIC SQUARE, FOR THE PURPOSES OF RECREATION AND AMUSEMENT OF ITS INHABITANTS.

HISTORIC BELLE GROVE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

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Belle Grove Square Neighborhood Yard Sale:

**Saturday Morning
May 22nd, 2010**

**In Front Of
Houses Around
The Neighborhood**

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

Happy Anniversary Belle!

by Mitchell Edmondson

Historic Belle Grove Square can trace its beginnings back to 1866 when George W. Matthews (a Carroll County Grosvenor) bought the land from John B. Boyle for \$3,000.00. He laid out 30 lots, with most of them fronting a one acre square. George himself built two houses around the square and the other lots were eventually sold and homes were built which we still grace our neighborhood. George and his wife Maria eventually donated the one acre plot of land now known as Belle Grove Park to the City of Westminster in May of 1877. The park was originally known as LaFayette Square but was renamed in honor of George and Maria's daughter: Carrie Belle.

Our neighborhood will celebrate its 144th anniversary this year and our neighborhood is a part of the Westminster Historic District. If you visit Locust Park across from the library you can see our neighborhood included on the painted mural in the park.

In August of 2008 our neighborhood association was organized using almost the exact foot print of the G. W. Matthews addition. We have adopted bylaws and have an elected board which meets quarterly. We also have an internet site that has put our neighborhood on the world map: www.bellegrovesquare.org.

Now that our neighborhood has achieved most of its highest priority initial goals, it is time to start thinking about the future. Sometime in the next few years Bond Street will undergo some major roadwork when a new gas line will be run down the middle of the street. During this time we might have the opportunity to try to achieve things for our neighborhood such as new sidewalks (as was done down Green Street) or historic street lighting. You may have noticed that Pennsylvania Avenue is being spruced up by the city and maybe if we work together with the city we can eventually get some things done for our own neighborhood.

Maybe it would be nice to get historic street lamps installed on our streets and in the park? Other neighborhoods in Maryland have been able to achieve such goals. Maybe we could get some of the utilities buried underground? Maybe we should expand our neighborhood to incorporate more historical housing? If we work together we can achieve great things for our neighborhood. Yes, money is tight and most cities are cutting back, but I do know that we won't get things if we don't ask for them and have a plan. Other neighborhoods across the country have found ways to install lighting, improve sidewalks, and beautify their neighborhoods. So, what is next? What would you like to see happen with our neighborhood? In next months' newsletter we will be conducting a survey to find out what is important to you and what should we do to make our neighborhood a better place to live.

In another section in this newsletter we have an article

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Neighborhood News & Updates for May 2010

Happy anniversary, cont'd.

about the Mayor's commitment to reviving downtown. He emphasizes that creating housing will allow more folks to live and work downtown. I believe that since we are one of Westminster oldest and most organized neighborhoods, we should play an active role in working with the city to make the downtown area a destination for not only Westminster residents but also for visitors to our great community.

City provides free mulch for neighborhood

You may have noticed the large container of mulch located along Park Place. The city of Westminster has generously agreed to give our neighborhood mulch for our flower beds and gardens to help beautify our neighborhood. The mulch program is part of

the City's recycling efforts, and is made from the Christmas trees and tree limbs picked up by the city this past season.

The container will remain in place until Monday May 10, so stop by and help yourself! If you need some mulch bring over a bucket, a wheel barrow, or some other container and help yourself. If we run out, we can get more. The landscaping mulch is provided free of charge for the residents of Historic Belle Grove Square Neighborhood and our two neighborhood churches. Much thanks to the City of Westminster and Parks Department for their generosity in helping us to arrange this.

Neighborhood front yard sale May 22nd

On May 22, 2010 our neighborhood will be hosting its first neighborhood yard sale. Neighbor Laurie Walters will be placing an ad in the local newspaper publicizing the event



Neighbors start to gather at last year's summer picnic in the park.

and we will also place signs on Main Street and Liberty Street announcing the sale.

Each resident will be responsible for conducting their own sale at their home and will keep all proceeds from items sold.

If you would like to contribute to the cost of the newspaper advertising, please drop your donation by 1 Park Avenue and we will see to it that it goes towards costs for the yard sale advertising.

Neighborhood picnic coming up July 15th

Mark your calendars for an evening of fun. On Thursday, July 15, 2010 we will be celebrating summer in the park with great food and visits with neighbors. We will once again be asking neighbors to bring a tasty dish to share and the board members of the neighborhood association will be supplying the meat and fixings. The fun will start at 7:00 in the park. If it is raining at 6:00 the picnic will be rescheduled for the following Thursday. Hope to see you all there.

Street sign update

Our neighborhood is on the verge of doing something very

special. Sometime in the very near future we will become the first neighborhood in Westminister (if not in Carroll County) to place historic street signs marking our neighborhood. We have raised the money needed through the generosity of neighbors and the City of Westminister's Historic District Commission, and have placed the order for the signs to be manufactured. It will take about three weeks to make the signs and then some additional time for city employees to install the signs but they should be installed by mid-Summer around the square.

Memorial Day parade and ceremony

On May 31, 2010 our city will have its annual Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony. The parade starts at 10 am on Pennsylvania Avenue and ends on Church Street at the Westminister Cemetery. A memorial service will begin at



Memorial Day Parade heads down Main Street in May '08.



A roll-off container of free landscaping mulch is provided by the City of Westminister, and will be along Park Place at Belle Grove Square Park until Monday May 10th. Feel free to help yourself!

11 am in the cemetery. For more information please contact Daniel Bohn at 410-848-6179.

Butterfly news

Our neighborhood received permission from the City to install a sign in our park that recognizes our neighborhood as an official Monarch Waystation. Expect to see the sign permanently installed before our July picnic.



Monarch Waystation plaque shown temporarily propped up in the park before installation.

Happy birthday to St Paul's Church

On Sunday, May 23, 2010 St Paul's UCC will celebrate its 140 anniversary. At their 10:45 worship service they will be honoring their past, claiming their present and looking forward to their future. St Paul's UCC was built just four years after G. W. Matthews bought the land for our neighborhood.

The church has been a prominent feature in our neighborhood for many years and its Senior Pastor Marty Kuchma is also one of our neighbors on West Green Street.

St Paul's UCC has worked with our neighborhood association over the past several years and has been very supportive of our efforts to make our neighborhood one of

the best in Carroll County. Our quarterly neighborhood association meetings are held in a space generously provided by the church.

Mayor Kevin Utz and his vision for the City's downtown

Our local newspaper Carroll County Times recently featured an article by Lyndi McNulty detailing Mayor Utz's commitment to keeping our downtown alive and vibrant.

Mayor Kevin Utz has a new vision for the City of Westminster.

"My passion is to rejuvenate the Main Street I knew as a kid," he said. That means new development and bringing back people to live in downtown Westminster so that they can support Main Street.

"My parents took me downtown every Friday and Saturday night. It was so crowded you couldn't walk. We went to Penny's, Rosenstock's and Mather's. That is what I remember from my childhood."

How is the Mayor planning to achieve his goal?

"One, I would like to redevelop the residential market place downtown," he commented.

Utz said he wants condominiums



Downtown Westminster depicted in this undated postcard view.



Westminster Mayor Kevin Utz

and town homes to be built downtown, whatever would fit the landscape. In an effort to start that process, he has asked the City Administrator to pull out the plan that was developed for the Md. 27 and Main Street corridor a few years ago. After he reviewed it, he said, "The plan was exactly what I was looking for. These residents could walk downtown and use the services. Attracting larger corporations will not happen unless they can see the vision of people supporting it by walking to places of business. I see that as the struggle many businesses are having downtown."

"What gives me the hope that it can happen, is the success of Fallfest, the Holiday parade, and the tree lighting celebration," Utz said. "It is clear that people know where downtown is. They need

something to bring them there on a regular basis."

Our historic neighborhood of Belle Grove Square has played a role in the development of Westminster's downtown. We were the first neighborhood annexed by the city of Westminster in 1877 and are currently the only neighborhood that has an elected board and bylaws in Westminster.

Our neighborhood also has a commitment to the success of downtown Westminster. After all we live in the downtown area and want to see the downtown area succeed. We will be working with the City of Westminster in their endeavor to make our downtown a destination for not only for visitors but also for ourselves.

Memorial Day history

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. There are many stories as to its actual beginnings, with over two dozen cities and towns laying claim to being the birthplace of Memorial Day.

There is also evidence that organized women's groups in the South were decorating graves before the end of the Civil War. While Waterloo N.Y. was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, it's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day.

It is more likely that it had many separate beginnings; each of those towns and every planned or spontaneous gathering of people to honor the war dead in the 1860's tapped into the general human need to honor our dead, each contributed honorably to the growing movement that culminated in Gen Logan giving his official proclamation in 1868.

It is not important who was the very first, what is important is that Memorial Day was established. Memorial Day is not about division - it is about reconciliation - it is about coming together to honor those who gave their all.

Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11, and was first observed on May 30th, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. The first state to officially recognize the holiday was New York in 1873. By 1890 it was recognized by all of the northern states. The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war). It is now celebrated in almost every State on the last Monday in May (passed by Congress with the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 - 363) to ensure a three day weekend for Federal holidays), though several southern states have an additional separate day for honoring the Confederate war

dead: January 19 in Texas, April 26 in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10 in South Carolina; and June 3 (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee.

Cresap's War ends in this month in 1738

In 1629, George Calvert, 1st Lord Baltimore in the Irish House of Lords, fresh from his failure further north with Newfoundland's Avalon colony, applied to Charles I for a new royal charter for what was to become the Province of Maryland. Calvert's interest in creating a colony derived from his Catholicism and his desire for the creation of a haven for Catholics in the new world. George Calvert died in April 1632, but a charter for "Maryland Colony" (in Latin, "Terra Maria") was granted to his son, Cæcilius Calvert, 2nd Lord Baltimore, on June 20, 1632. The new colony was named in honor of Henrietta Maria, Queen Consort of Charles I.

On March 25, 1634, Lord Baltimore sent the first settlers into this area, which would soon become one of the few predominantly Catholic regions in the British Empire (another was Newfoundland, where religious



The area of conflict for Cresap's War is depicted above.

disputes led to the first flag's coloring). Maryland was also one of the key destinations of tens of thousands of British convicts. The Maryland Toleration Act of 1649 was one of the first laws that explicitly dictated religious tolerance (as long as it was Christian). The act is sometimes seen as a precursor to the First Amendment.

The royal charter granted Maryland the Potomac River and territory northward to the fortieth parallel. This proved a problem, because the northern boundary would put Philadelphia, the major city in Pennsylvania, partially within Maryland, resulting in conflict between the Calvert family, which controlled Maryland, and the Penn family, which controlled Pennsylvania.

This led to the Cresap's War (also known as the Conojocular War), a border conflict between Pennsylvania and Maryland, fought in the 1730s. Hostilities erupted in 1730 with a series of violent incidents prompted by disputes over property rights and law enforcement, and escalated through the first half of the decade, culminating in the deployment of military forces by Maryland in 1736 and by Pennsylvania in 1737.

The armed phase of the conflict ended in May 1738 with the intervention of King George II, who compelled the negotiation of a cease-fire. A final settlement was not achieved until 1767, when the Mason-Dixon Line was recognized as the permanent boundary between the two colonies.



Local neighbor Mitchell works on a flower bed of Irises in Belle Grove Square Park. All of the flower beds in the park are maintained by volunteers including area neighbors and Woman's Club of Westminster. The Irises shown above were donated by Dolly Lohr of Hartley, Iowa. If you would like to contribute flowers for the park or money to be used for sprucing up the park please contact us anytime at the address/phone to the right.

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

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