Cemetery Tour Reveals History

By Sue Filbin, Northrop neighbor

Late in August 2019, historian Bobbie Scott guided the first tour of St. Mary’s Cemetery, which is located roughly in the middle of our neighborhood near 46th and Chicago Avenue. Bobbie talked with the operations manager, walked around the hilly site several times, then explored internet sources to learn about a few of the regular and notable people buried among the 65,000 resting in St. Mary’s 60 acres.

The tour started at the Kelly mausoleum. Brothers John and Anthony came to Minnesota in the 1850s and owned and operated grocery stores. A story that Bobbie said may be “partly true” is that Anthony Kelly bought a 20-acre farm on Chicago Avenue in the 1870s. Because neighbors didn’t want a cemetery near their property, a priest arranged for a trade that resulted in the current location of St. Mary’s Cemetery, although Bobbie acknowledged that the “early history of St. Mary’s is a little bit murky.” She also learned that the original entrance was on Elliot Avenue and that the cemetery was enlarged in 1904.

On the top of the cemetery’s highest hill is a monument to firefighters that was built in 1892. Another just like it was erected in Lakewood Cemetery. The monuments are 29 feet tall and cost $3,000 each when they were erected by the Minneapolis Fire Department Relief Association. Lists of firefighters’ names are incised on a six-sided portion of the obelisk, beginning with Cornelius Fredricks, who was killed.

Uncovering the story behind Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District

By Steve Date, Communications Committee, and Website/Social Media Manager

Race-related conflict is not new to south Minneapolis. In fact, prejudice and racial discrimination is a big part of Field Regina Northrop’s (FRN) history. One example is our storied past regarding housing patterns. Restrictive and exclusionary covenants and “red-lining” policies prevented people of color from owning homes in many Minneapolis neighborhoods, including much of FRN, through the first half of the 20th century.

In that segregated post-war decade, there were three main Black residential areas in Minneapolis — the near Northside, Seven Corners and the Southside, which included the Regina neighborhood. According to the Minnesota Historical Society, “From the 1930s to the 1970s, an African-American neighborhood flourished on the city’s Southside, between East 34th and 46th Streets and from Nicollet Avenue to Chicago Avenue.”

Fourth Avenue South was the heart of the Southside Black community.

In the early 1950s, Archie Givens, Sr., an African-American realtor, bought more than 60 lots and recruited Edward Tilsen, a Jewish, white real estate developer, to build homes on 3rd, 4th and 5th Avenues in the Regina and Bryant neighborhoods. Givens’ idea was to build modest-sized, affordable houses and establish a stable neighborhood of owner-occupied homes.
primarily for Black people, but open to any race. They built 53 homes, nearly all bought by African-American or mixed-race families. Many of the houses were located south of 42nd St., in an area that was previously mostly white.

The Givens/Tilsen project was groundbreaking in more than one sense. It was “the nation’s first federally supported commercial housing development open to homebuyers of all races,” according to the City of Minneapolis.

In 2017, the Minneapolis City Council voted to grant historic designation to the Tilsenbirt Homes in the Regina and Bryant neighborhoods. This designation was the result of efforts by residents in 2015 who wanted to preserve African-American history in these neighborhoods. Owners of Tilsenbirt houses were asked if they would agree to the regulations on renovations and other changes and be included in the official historic designation. About two-thirds of them opted in. Small brown signs identify the Tilsenbirt Homes Minneapolis Historic District.

The Tilsenbirt Company, now managed by Edward Tilsen’s great-grandson, Geoff, has built or remodeled thousands of homes in Minnesota since 1952.

Archie Givens, Sr., went on to become a successful real estate developer and is known as the first African-American millionaire in Minneapolis. He and his wife, Phoebe, started the Archie and Phoebe Mae Givens Foundation in 1972.

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in a mill explosion in 1881. The last name listed is that of Emmett Kaufmann, who died in 2015.

More fascinating stories

During the almost two-hour tour, Bobbie introduced guests to a woman who ran for governor of Washington in 1912 on the Socialist Party ticket, a railroad steam engineer who died at age 37 when his leg was severed between two train cars, and Sister Xavier Carol, who died “in her 28th year of religious life.” She is buried under a maple tree with many other nuns who cared for the children at “the orphan asylum,” now St. Joseph’s Home for Children, which is located across 46th Street from St. Mary’s and is operated by Catholic Charities.

Heritage and heartache

Many names on the grave markers denote the countries of Poland, Ireland and Germany, with more recent burials representing people from Spanish-speaking countries. A consistent theme throughout the tour was that of immigration, poverty, hard work, initiative and lives ended by epidemics of flu, fevers, famine, tuberculosis and unknown afflictions.

One section of the cemetery is set aside for priests, sisters and orphans and is also the resting place of WWII refugees. Further on are the aged markers of members of the GAR – Grand Army of the Republic – who fought for the Union Army in the Civil War.

A tour planned for this August was postponed until 2021, but neighbors are welcome to respectfully enjoy the serene surroundings of the cemetery. Dogs are allowed, if leashed and waste is picked up.

A longer version of this article first appeared in The Catholic Cemeteries Heritage newsletter and is used by permission. tinyurl.com/stmaryshistory2
President's letter

Hello Neighbors,

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. As true as this is, I have had the fortune of having a number of quasi first impression opportunities within FRNNG. When I was approached to join the board, I visited a few meetings before joining. Later, I accepted the role of co-rep for Regina.

Quickly getting my feet wet, I was involved in the bylaw revision and organizing a neighborhood cleanup. I also served as first vice president before becoming interim president. Becoming more involved in the community has been a rewarding experience. As with any new venture in life, there were adjustments to make and lessons to be learned, but the gains outweighed the challenges.

My current role is short term (until our next elections), however, in no way do I want this to be a “lame duck” experience. In the vein of adjusting, I would like to present how I, and others within the association, feel we can make FRNNG better. Who knows, maybe even make FRNNG “the neighborhood association of choice.” To some this may seem a lofty goal that borders on conceit, but why not strive to be the best?

I want to recognize the valuable contributions of all who have helped FRNNG evolve to where it is today. Space and time don’t allow me to share all of the names of past and current contributors, but to all of them we need to say, thank you! With that, I am going to give all of our potential contributors (and that would be you) an opportunity to join the ranks.

The first way you can contribute is with your feedback/input. Please share your thoughts on how we are doing or can better ourselves.

Next, we invite you to join with your neighborhood group. Maybe now more than ever, you see the need to invest in making your neighborhood a wonderful place to raise a family, build a business or simply enjoy life. We need people power to fulfill our goals. Being on the team helps facilitate making necessary changes to improve, advance and execute our mission.

Are you, older and wiser, younger and energetic, a willing worker full of fresh ideas? Are you a native-born Minnesotan or like me, a transplant? Whether you own a home, are renting or run a business in FRN, if you have a desire to make the neighborhoods better, we need you!

There are other ways to contribute to our neighborhoods, such as becoming a block club leader or volunteering for a local event or community service. All of these endeavors have a way of helping us get to know our neighbors, a foundational component to overcoming barriers that keep us from having an equitable society. As we get to know each other, hopefully we will realize we really have more in common than meets the eye.

I hope you will consider getting involved and making some new first impressions yourself!

FRNNG Annual Meeting

With all that has happened this year, “business” is anything but “usual” right now. We are exploring the best options to hold our postponed annual meeting and elections. Hopefully, they will take place in early fall. Thank you for your patience and thoughtful consideration for participation. We will let you know via a mailing and social media when the details are finalized.
8th-Ward update
Andrea Jenkins, council member

Dear Neighbors,

We’re experiencing extremely challenging times. The murder of George Floyd propelled our city into further crisis, beyond the coronavirus pandemic we face. We face growing encampments throughout the city, recovery for the damage to small businesses and increased violence in our communities here and around the country in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd and other unarmed Black people. We’re working hard to address these issues.

My colleagues and I are working to create a Public Safety Continuum that keeps everyone safe. We’re embarking on a year-long process with residents. We’ve established, by resolution, a Future of Community Safety Work Group, which will include staff from the Office of Violence Prevention, Department of Civil Rights, City Coordinator’s Office, in coordination with the 911 Working Group, Division of Race and Equity, Neighborhood and Community Relations and other relevant departments.

The work group provided recommendations for engaging with specific cultural and stakeholder groups, the community at large and relevant experts who can partner with the City to help Minneapolis transition to a transformative new model for cultivating community safety, including budget and resource needs.

We’re at a pivotal moment in history. There’s been an unequal balance of power for far too long. As the council member for the 8th Ward, I ask for your engagement, your patience and your humanity as we work to solve these centuries-in-the-making issues. View the City’s webpage dedicated to Transforming Public Safety at: www2.minneapolismn.gov/charter/WCMSP-225116

Declaring racism a public health emergency

In the days following the murder of George Floyd, I vowed to declare racism a public health emergency. Sadly, we know this was no isolated death at the hands of police. The rate at which Black people are killed by police in our county is three times that of our white counterparts, despite Black people making up only 12 to 14% of the U.S. population.

Systemic racism is at the root of social determinants of health that negatively impact our Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, leading to vastly disparate health outcomes, including the murder of George Floyd. This extends into housing, education, employment and criminal justice. We see these disparities exacerbated further during times of emergency, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately impacts and claims the lives of BIPOC communities.

This is why I authored the Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Emergency in the City of Minneapolis, approved by the council on July 17, which states, “A multitude of studies connect racism to inequitable health outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), including cancer, coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, high infant and maternal mortality rates, demonstrating that racism is the root cause of social determinants of health.”

This resolution means the City is committed to several actions. View the resolution in its entirety, online: tinyurl.com/declaringracismemergency

City launches a web page for the Office of Violence Prevention

The City of Minneapolis’ Office of Violence Prevention has a new web presence describing its work, which uses a public-health approach to address the roots of violence, intervene at the first sign of risk and lead healing in its aftermath, with this in mind:

- Violence is not inevitable. As with other health conditions, we can prevent and treat violence, and we can heal from it.
- Violence has roots in social, economic, political and cultural conditions.
- Violence takes an unequal toll on communities of color and on specific neighborhoods in Minneapolis. Violence prevention must include work to dismantle structural racism.
- Everyone has a role to play in creating communities that don’t include violence. It takes all of us to make our communities safe, healthy, hopeful and thriving.

View the webpage at: tinyurl.com/violenceprevent

Vote on or before Nov. 3

Vote by mail. Apply for a ballot no later than 10 days before Election Day. Visit: tinyurl.com/votebymailmpls

Vote at the Early Vote Center, 980 E. Hennepin Ave., which is especially helpful to people who need language support or other accommodations, such as curbside voting. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. The center will also have Saturday hours closer to Election Day. Learn more at: tinyurl.com/voteinpersonmpls

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National Night Out: Mark your calendar for September 15

By Jennifer Neale, Crime Prevention Specialist, Sector 3

National Night Out (NNO) is our city’s annual community-building event that promotes neighbors getting to know each other, keeping our blocks safer and creating a better place to live. NNO encourages relationships between neighbors to bring back a true sense of community, which is needed now more than ever!

This year, Minneapolis will celebrate NNO on September 15. Many block clubs, old and new, will be seen in streets celebrating this event. For kids, it’s a night to play in the street and not worry about vehicle traffic. For many, it’s a time to share a potluck and reconnect with neighbors and meet new ones. It’s not too late to plan for your NNO block event. Talk with your neighbors today.
tinyurl.com/NNOmpls2020

Using a Pandemic to Fight Crime

City-wide, many crime stats are up since the community has been isolating and dealing with current events. But it doesn’t need to be this way. As residents, you can help your neighborhood be safe. Here are things you can do right now while at home.

• Get to know your neighbors.
  Maintain social distancing and start with neighbors you might not know. Knowing your neighbors is a key component of fighting back against crime. You should know who belongs in your neighborhood and who doesn’t, who drives what car, when your neighbors are on vacation, what other family members reside there, etc. This is how we build community!

• Be observant. Criminals can operate in broad daylight because too often, no one is paying attention. While you’re at home, use this time to focus on paying attention to the world right in front of you. If you frequently walk, consider walks in the alleys, too.

• Consider investing in security cameras. Technology has come a long way in terms of picture quality, better pricing and convenience of viewing the footage.

Ultimately, there are things you can do to stay safe and fight back against crime in positive ways, even during a pandemic.

Greetings, Field Regina Northrop Neighbors!

By Steffanie Musich, Commissioner 5th District, Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Board

As I write to you today in this second week of July, we’re still weathering the changes wrought by the coronavirus pandemic, and park staff is beginning the work of implementing the board’s recent action to take steps to manage encampments on park lands with interagency partners at the city, county and state, as well as nonprofits, to enhance safety, reduce environmental impacts and enable recreational use of park amenities by all park users.

Changes to park operations related to the coronavirus are ongoing as knowledge about the virus and how it is spread continues to evolve. The park board’s pandemic response team is still working closely with the Minneapolis Health Department, Minneapolis Office of Emergency Management and the Minnesota Department of Health, which is leading the statewide response.

As our community navigates the changes to our lives wrought by this global pandemic and a growing population of unsheltered Minneapolis, I am thankful for continued efforts by park patrons to adapt to these changing conditions. When you arrive at a park, if it is busy and social distancing is not possible, please choose a different park to visit. Neighborhood parks tend to be less busy than those along bodies of water. A full listing of Minneapolis parks and their amenities can be found here: tinyurl.com/findparkmpls

To help Minneapolisians stay active, a number of virtual and socially distanced programs have been developed. Please visit tinyurl.com/parkscovid-19 For details about the park’s response to the virus, you can also subscribe to updates to be made aware of changes as they occur.

Planning and construction projects for the Minnehaha Creek Corridor, Hiawatha Golf Course within Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park, and Shoreline Restoration at Lake Nokomis are all underway. Each individual project has a project page at tinyurl.com/mpsparksp-projects where

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Local businesses adapt to pandemic

Parkway Theater
by Steve Date, Communications Committee, and Website/Social Media Manager

Parkway Theater co-owner Ward Johnson says he and partner Eddie Landenberger were feeling they’d “hit their stride” by early March this year. The calendar for movies, live music, spoken-word events, comedy shows and private events was booked solid for several months out.

COVID-19 shut it all down in a matter of a few days. Ward and Eddie had learned a lot about managing the 90-year-old theater since buying and renovating it in 2018, but the unexpected new learning curve this year was steep. Running a theater with no audience had not been in the plan.

Keeping customers informed during the shutdown was important, which they did though an already strong online presence. But as postponed bookings turned to cancellations and the whole world seemed to be closing down, one way they chose to let us know they were still alive was decidedly low-tech, not to mention “theatrical.” Regularly changing marquee posts that play on titles and lines from popular movies — starting with “I’ll be back” — have been bringing smiles to passersby. Ward says most of the ideas are now coming from Facebook friends.

The theater has been closed, but not asleep. One thing they’ve been doing is producing livestream shows. They’ve been working to make the theater into a no-audience live-streaming space, complete with the lighting and sound equipment necessary to produce high-quality shows for the web.

They also have a Virtual Cinema program, which Ward says, “has also been doing pretty well.” Independent and small studio films are streamed for a fee — a portion of which goes to the Parkway.

Neighbors want to know what’s going to happen with the restaurant space vacated in April by El Burrito. As of the late-July publishing deadline, Ward told me they hadn’t yet found a new tenant. “We’ve had a lot of conversations with Twin Cities restaurant owners, but we want to take our time and be selective about a business that fits the neighborhood and is also a good partner for the theater.”

While looking forward to the time when they can pack the house again, Ward and Eddie are carefully monitoring the trajectory of the pandemic and aren’t anticipating having live audiences in the near future. Whether the governor’s guidelines are 25% capacity or 50%, it’s not really enough to break even. More importantly, when they polled the staff, the consensus was to not reopen until it’s safe for both the audience and the workers.

Spa Sweet
by Sonja Boatman Anderson,
Spa Sweet owner

Spa Sweet has been open for business on 48th and Chicago since 2013. We have loved being part of the Regina neighborhood and have always received a lot of support from this community. The day we were mandated to close was one of the hardest days I have experienced as a business owner. I built my company from the ground up, so having to close on such short notice was very difficult and emotional for me.

I immediately had to figure out how we were going to communicate with our customers and let them know that although the spa wasn’t open, we were still here for them. Mostly through social media, I made sure to post updates many times a week on the temporary closure, educational information and information on how our clients could purchase products and gift cards. I was so grateful and impressed with how many of our clients reached out with support and purchased skincare products and gift cards while we were closed. It really helped keep the business afloat during the shutdown.

When we were allowed to reopen, I spent many hours completing the required Preparedness plan, as well as implementing specific protocols for cleaning and disinfecting our spa and preparing for social distancing. The health and safety of our customers and my staff was my first priority upon reopening.

To ensure health and safety protocols are met, we are now working by appointment only. We also have staggered shifts to reduce capacity and lengthened appointment times to accommodate disinfecting protocols. We have also implemented contactless check-in and check-out procedures and are now offering virtual consultations so we are able to connect with our clients more safely and easily.

The Spa Sweet team is dedicated to creating a safe and relaxing space to welcome our clients back. We’re grateful to be back to work in a neighborhood we love.

Do you have a story relating to coping with the limitations of doing business during the pandemic? Please share your story with us by emailing editor@frrng.org ✤
Heather’s Restaurant nestles into the neighborhood

by Patricia Miller, Communications Committee

March 18 should have been the grand opening for Heather’s Restaurant. But COVID-19 and a state shutdown of all restaurants intervened. Instead, owner and chef Heather Asbury rallied, reworked her plans and opened her restaurant’s walk-up window for carryout-only service.

That first day set the tone for a not-what-she-ever-expected way or time to open a restaurant. “The take-out window saved the restaurant. But we knew right away some of our menu items, like mussels, wouldn’t ‘travel’ well, so we’re making a lot more sandwiches,” Asbury says. “We also introduced a nightly special, which means I get to cook a different dinner for neighbors every night.”

The pandemic also has played havoc with the availability of some ingredients, such as Brie and peanut butter. A new menu every day allows Asbury to cook with what’s available and in season. “It’s like a chef challenge every day,” she says.

Asbury adds that her training at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America and years as a chef for Nordstrom stores and Uptown’s iconic restaurant, Lucia’s, has given her a solid foundation for running her own eatery.

“There are moments when I feel like I’m doing what I’ve always done,” she says. “At Lucia’s you really got to know the neighborhood and the people. That’s what’s happening here. I love being involved with the community; it gives more meaning to my work.”

Asbury has been overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from the neighborhood and community. “When we first opened, people wouldn’t order, they’d just make a donation, saying they wanted to make sure we made it,” she says. “During the riots, we had to board up, and neighbors kept watch on the building. Everyone has been so patient and understanding when things don’t work out just right. I can’t stress how nice our customers are.”

Heather’s Restaurant now open seven days a week, and in July, christened its new patio. With eight socially distanced tables, customers now have another option for enjoying food with friends. Until the coronavirus subsides, Asbury doesn’t see opening the airy, welcoming 47-seat café with its green, mosaic-backed bar to the public.

“I’m already looking ahead to January and what we’ll do when it gets cold,” she says. “We’re looking at all the options from heaters to even moving the bar to the patio.”

While opening in the midst of a pandemic and social unrest may not have been ideal, Asbury says, “If times had been normal, I don’t think it would have felt as magical.”

Learn more about Heather’s Restaurant and check the daily menu at heathersmpls.com/.

Welcome new members! FRNNG committees are growing

We are pleased to announce new members to two Field Regina Northrup Neighborhood Group (FRNNG) committees:

• Ramona Haines, Communications Committee.
• Elaina Moss and Joel Sass, co-chairs Greening Committee

Ramona Haines
I recently joined the FRNNG Communications Committee and am working to help grow the group’s social media presence.

Elaina Moss
I am a mother of two children, and I live in Northrop. My favorite flower is echinacea.

In 2015, I completed the Hennepin County Master Recycler Composter training and have worked with my place of employment on improving and putting in place better recycling practices. I have been a Hennepin County Master Gardener for three years. Most of my Master Gardener volunteer hours are spent here in our neighborhood.

I love learning and have completed train-
Legacy home: Maureen and John Trepp

By Steve Date, Communications Committee, and Website/Social Media Manager

Maureen and John Trepp have deep roots in the Northrop neighborhood. Since 1981, they’ve lived in the house where Maureen grew up on Minnehaha Parkway near 16th Avenue. John lived nearby on 49th and 10th Avenue as a child. While they’re both now retired, Maureen was a teacher in the Minneapolis Public Schools and John was director of Tasks Unlimited, a nonprofit organization.

Maureen remembers when her family moved into the house in December, 1955. She was in kindergarten and transferred from Keewaydin School to Northrop.

The house was built for a doctor in 1923. An exam room is still recognizable near the front entry. Then, as now, Minnehaha Parkway was a desirable address. Maureen remembers that several legislators, as well as many professional people, lived near them, and there were few original owners of these 1920s-era houses still around. “This neighborhood was heavily Republican,” John adds, “that is, until Kennedy got elected.”

The majority of the families were Catholic. St. Joseph’s Home for Children is on the site of a Catholic orphanage. “The land that is now Shenandoah Terrace was owned by the diocese,” John says, “and when the church sold off the land, there were restrictions on who could buy a lot. Blacks were excluded, as were Protestants.”

Maureen recalls waving to President Kennedy’s motorcade as it drove past her house on the way downtown from the airport. “Before 35W was built, taking Minnehaha Parkway to Bloomington Avenue and then downtown was the preferred route from the airport,” she says. Kennedy wasn’t the only president she saw go past the house. She also waved at Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson.

They both say the Minnehaha Creek area was a great place to grow up. The combination of city life and the natural areas around the creek and Lake Nokomis were wonderful for kids. “The creek itself hasn’t changed much,” Maureen says, “but there weren’t all the paved paths for biking and walking like now.”

“It was the peak of the Baby Boom, and it seemed like there were 30 kids on each block,” John says. “There wasn’t much available for organized park activities, but we gathered every day at the open area around 12th Avenue and the Parkway. We played either baseball or football 364 days a year, taking only Christmas Day off.”

The business nodes from the old days are still the same, but all the businesses have changed. At 48th and Chicago, they remember going to Stillman’s Grocery (now Turtle Bread), Shenandoah Pharmacy (now Pizza Hut) and matinee shows at the Parkway Theater.

In the northern part of the Northrop neighborhood there was a Country Club Market where El Colegio is now, and Bowlerama a block up. Near 46th and Bloomington was Mechi’s Grocery and Sadoff’s Drugstore (now Sfit). On Cedar, the old Red Owl store became Bergen’s Super Value, a Pure Oil station was where I.E. is, and Dave’s Popcorn stand stood where Speedway is now.

In 1981, Maureen, John and their children lived at 41st and 10th. They’d bought the house with the understanding that when Maureen’s parents decided to move out of their Minnehaha Parkway home and downsize, they’d “trade houses” with them. That didn’t quite happen because her parents decided they wanted a condo, but John and Maureen did get to buy the family house.

The Trepp children — Tessa, Ethan and Phoebe — attended Minneapolis Public Schools and went on to college, careers and families. Now Maureen and John have five grandchildren who visit often and play in the same house and the same neighborhood that provided some of Grandma and Grandpa’s earliest and best childhood memories.

Watch for the $1.00 Campaign

Since The Night On 48th Street Fundraiser has been postponed due to COVID-19, we ask you to please generously support our $1.00 Campaign. The campaign letter will arrive in your mailbox after Thanksgiving on November 27. FRNG accepts any amount of donations.

5th District, continued from page 4

you can subscribe to updates and catch up in detail on what’s happened since my last update to you.

My newsletter, the 5th District Dispatch is a great resource for more frequent updates about the parks that I send out once or twice a month to help keep my constituents informed. You can subscribe at http://eepurl.com/QZ_9. ✤
Let’s Help Our New Neighbors

By Steve Date, Communications Committee, and Website/Social Media Manager

Have you noticed a lot of new trees this year while out walking? The ones planted by the city have a green bag around the base and an ID tag on one of the branches. These new neighbors are important to us, and they need our help.

I didn’t live in south Minneapolis as a kid, but I remember how the streets were lined with large elm trees. The canopy was tunnel-like, with the upper branches meeting over the street. When I go out for a walk now, the few remaining towering American Elms remind me of those days.

The “urban forest” is important because it “improves quality of life, increases property values, lowers heating and air conditioning costs, reduces stormwater runoff, prevents erosion and provides wildlife habitats,” according to the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board.

In the 1970s, Dutch Elm disease ferociously marched through the Twin Cities. Block by block the beautiful elms came down, leaving an ugly, barren landscape. Lack of diversity in tree planting decades earlier made the loss of a single tree variety so devastating.

“Elmer the Elm,” the mascot for the Minneapolis public tree replanting program, was launched in 1976 during the Dutch Elm scourge. I suppose city officials thought a happy cartoon tree would cheer people up, but I doubt Elmer lifted many spirits by asking residents to wait several decades for new trees to grow. But wait we did, and our urban forest was eventually re-established with other species.

Many of those replacements were ash trees. The Emerald Ash Borer was first detected in Michigan in 2002 and arrived in Minneapolis 10 years ago. Because of more diverse planting, the loss of ash trees has not caused quite as much destruction as Dutch Elm did. But the damage is significant, and it will continue.

Elmer has made a comeback. The Minneapolis Park Board plants over 9,000 young trees each spring. While the “boulevard” — a narrow strip between the sidewalk and the street — technically belongs to the city, the MPRB is asking us to care for these baby trees by monitoring and watering them. Most of these little guys are doing well, but the occasional failing example reminds us how important our assistance is.

Since the City of Minneapolis uses some of our tax money to plant a Maple, a Swamp White Oak or perhaps a Catalpa Speciosa next to our yard or business, isn’t giving it a drink once a week the least we can do to protect our investment? For more information: minneapolisparks.org/elmer

New members, continued from page 7

ings offered by Metro Blooms and Lawns to Legumes. I am excited to bring what I have learned to projects in our neighborhood. I love this neighborhood and can’t wait to make it a little greener. You can follow my garden activities fussygirlurbanfarm on Instagram.

Joel Sass

I’ve been living in the Field neighborhood for over 15 years and love the amenities of our parks, Minnehaha Creek and the many front yard gardens of our neighbors. My partner and I decided to replace our front lawn entirely with landscaping, which we find makes yard work more like recreation and less like a chore. About three years ago I joined the volunteers who are expanding the plantings in the pocket park on 49th and 2nd Ave. I’m a self-taught gardener and a firm believer in the value of learning by doing. As Greening co-chair, I am eager to expand community involvement in enjoying the outdoors while caring for this beautiful little park and helping others discover their green thumbs.

If you’d like to volunteer to help Elaina and Joel make our neighborhood more beautiful and have fun while doing it, they can be reached at the FRNNG Greening Committee email address: greening@frnng.org

Family Dental Clinic

Andrea L. Newton, DDS | Julie E. Clouse, DDS
4454 Chicago Avenue 612-823-6262
www.familydentalclinic-mpls.com
Building lifelong relationships one smile at a time

Close to Home, newsletter for the Field Regina Northrop Neighborhood Group • frnng.org • September/October 2020
Before you buy, ask your neighbor!

By Jeannie Piekos

Recently I sat down (well, virtually) with Mandy Burgess Stein, administrator for our neighborhood’s Buy Nothing Project (BNP) to find out more about the group and how she happened to be involved.

What is the Buy Nothing Club?
The Buy Nothing Project is a network of community groups where neighbors can give, receive, lend and express gratitude for goods or services. It began in 2013 as an in-person social experiment to see how creating a hyper-local gift economy could help neighbors connect and strengthen the community. Soon after, the founders created the first online Buy Nothing Group (BNG), and the project has since blossomed to include groups all over the world.

When and how did the BNG in this neighborhood begin?
We spent eight years living in Austin, Texas, where Buy Nothing Groups blanketed nearly every area of the city, and my own group was such an amazing resource for me during that time! When we moved back to Minneapolis in 2017, I discovered that Buy Nothing didn’t have a big foothold here yet, and if I wanted a neighborhood group, I was going to have to step up and start one.

Our group covers the Bryant, Bancroft, Regina, Field and Northrop* neighborhoods, and for a few years, membership climbed steadily. Then when the pandemic hit and people started staying home and needing to rely on their community more, membership requests really took off. We are now over 300 strong, and it’s such a joy to watch people give and receive and express gratitude every day. There have also been more and more groups popping up in other neighborhoods since ours started.

Why is Buy Nothing important to you?
Initially, I loved Buy Nothing simply because it gave me a way to get rid of my extra stuff. However, since becoming the administrator for our local group, I’ve become much more passionate about the community-building mission of the BNP. It’s been amazing to be a witness to and recipient of all the kindness, generosity, history and connection that is a part of Buy Nothing. In addition to getting to know my neighbors, it’s helped me live more zero-waste, save money, avoid a little bit of capitalism and stay out of stores during the pandemic. It also gets me out of the house, even on days I’d rather not.

I love biking around the neighborhood picking up or delivering gifts, finding out that the house I often admire belongs to someone I now have a connection with. I also get a lot of people picking up gifts from my stoop (where I have a designated “Buy Nothing Bin”) while I’m out gardening or working in the yard. So despite the pandemic and our current no-contact pickup policy, I still get to have conversations with my neighbors. I think the magic really happens when people get to know each other well enough that they can offer items directly because they know just the person for it, whether it’s their style, or they have kids just the right age for hand-me-downs.

What’s the best story about an item(s) that was given away?
This spring, my kids decided to give away their scooters they had outgrown. They were enthusiastic about offering them to neighbors through the group and were so touched when some hand-drawn thank-you cards arrived a few days later. It made me so happy that they felt so connected to our neighbors and community, especially during social distancing. I love to get them involved when I can, and I often let them read the responses to my posts and pick the recipients, if it involves kids’ items. I love that my kids are growing up with it being totally normal to ask neighbors for things, just like the old days.

What’s the best story of an item you’ve received?
My favorite items to receive are vintage tools. I have a growing collection that I hope to restore someday, mostly furnished through Buy Nothing over many years! One neighbor gave me a vintage handsaw a while back, and someone else saw my enthusiasm and offered me some of their dad’s old tools, which included hand planes handmade by their grandfather. I treasure that stuff, and the history is such a bonus to me. I also just received a vintage steamer trunk that is going to be the coolest restoration project.

How can neighbors be involved?
I encourage everyone who is interested to look for a group in their neighborhood, and if there isn’t one yet, consider being the one to start it! I can guarantee you there are people in your area hoping it will happen; I field requests from all over the city. You can use the group to whatever extent you’d like. Some people only check in when they have something to give away. Others follow every post. But I think that no matter how involved you are, you’ll find that you will gain more connections with your neighbors and a greater sense of community.

What if interested people aren’t on Facebook?
Buy Nothing groups are accessible only through Facebook*. If you have items you’d like to offer, or are in need of some-

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Vote at the polls on Election Day. We will have COVID-19 protocols in place to provide a safe and healthy environment. Find your polling place at: tinyurl.com/pollfinderminn

2020 Census
Complete the 2020 Census before October 31! Minnesota leads the nation in response, yet we need everyone counted. A complete and accurate count will help shape the future of your community and inform how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are distributed for important programs and services in health care, emergency and disaster response, education and infrastructure. Complete the census online at 2020census.gov.

Enjoy a safe, physically distant National Night Out (NNO) on September 15! It’s not too late to plan for your NNO block event. Talk to your neighbors today, and don’t forget to wear your masks.

FRNNG Interim President David Fransoe (right) presents a $500 check to Pastor Daniel B. McKizie of New Creation Baptist Church, 1414 East 48th Street.

FRNNG Donates to Neighborhood Food Shelves
The Field Regina Northrop Neighborhood Group (FRNNG) donated $500 each to the New Creation Baptist Church, Sabathani Community Center and Holy Cross Lutheran Church to help re-stock their food shelves during the pandemic.

Before you buy, continued from page 10

thing, you could ask neighbors to post on your behalf, as long as they are fully transparent about posting for you.

*Buy Nothing Groups aim to cover a population of between 15,000-20,000 people. Larger areas end up with groups that are too large to foster real, in-person connections. I worked with the regional Buy Nothing admin to create the boundaries of our group based on population and what made sense, based on existing groups, as well as boundaries for other future groups.

** Find a group: tinyurl.com/findBNGmpls or search “Buy Nothing (your neighborhood)” on Facebook.

Little Free Libraries
FRNNG received the first few Little Free Libraries. There will be a painting session soon and then they will be distributed to the community.

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