



Gifford Park's Pride

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn and Play

April 1999

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

GPNA Spring Cleanup Set For April 24

The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association spring cleanup has been scheduled for **Saturday April 24**, from **10:00 am to 2:00 pm** in the Gifford Park south parking lot. The cleanup is for all GPNA members, and for those who donate time and money to the Association.

Items that will not be taken at the dumpster site are as follows: concrete, tires, tree brush, yard waste, hazardous materials, paint, oil, and herbicides. Although tires and tree brush will not be taken at the dumpster site, there are locations in the city where they can be taken. Tree brush may be taken to the chipper site at **11th & Locust**, and tires may be dropped off at **22nd & Washington**. The dates and times for these sites are **April 10, 17, 24, and May 1** from **9:00 am to 3:00 pm** only.

As in the past, volunteers will haul your trash for a small donation to the Association. If you need the hauling service, it is very important that you call one of the numbers below prior to the cleanup date.

As usual, volunteers are always needed to help out with the cleanup. If you own a pickup, and/or have some free time on April 24, your help would be greatly appreciated. Please call one of the numbers below to volunteer.

Since this newsletter is only being mailed to the Association members, it may be a good idea to tell some of your neighbors about the cleanup.

JIM (551-1344) LEO (345-1433) MIKE (341-8224)

10th Annual GPNA Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 3rd

Noon (Sharp!)

Rain or Shine

at Gifford Park

Children Ages 12 & Under



**Bring Your Easter Baskets
& Be Ready To Hunt!**



Next Meeting

**Thursday, April 1
7:00 P.M.**

**Guest Speaker:
Mayor Hal Daub**

**St. Joseph's Hospital
Besic (Glassed-in) Dining Room**

Historically Speaking...

Golden Spike Days

Sixty years ago in April, Omahans turned back the clock 70 years to celebrate the driving of the last spike in the railroad across the continent. Prompting the celebration of the event was the world premier of the film "Union Pacific" produced for Paramount Pictures by Cecil B. DeMille and starring Barbara Stanwyck, Joel McCrea, Robert Preston and George Raft. Omaha was selected for the premier showing because, of course, Omaha is the headquarters of the Union Pacific Railroad.

Omaha began preparing for the event early in the year. Men began to grow beards, side-burns and mustaches. Ladies searched attics and old trunks for crinoline dresses, gingham gowns, hoop skirts, shirt waists, shawls and bonnets. If the attics weren't fruitful, the department stores of the time had special sales of appropriate clothing for both men and women. No one seemed to care that there were only three styles of dresses—they came in several sizes and colors. Men wore beaver hats, silk shirts, frock coats and striped trousers—items also sold at special sales.

Omahans were ready to celebrate, and celebrate

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GPNA OFFICERS**PRESIDENT**

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

VICE PRESIDENT

Chris Foster 342-6006

RECORDING SECRETARY

Jean Peck 344-0722

TREASURER

Sandy Saner 341-8939

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CLEAN-UP

Mike Wilwerding 341-8224

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Eva Swanson 345-1707

MEMBERSHIP

Chris Foster 342-6006

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NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

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PARK

Mike Bacome 933-7506

PARKING VIOLATIONS

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Anne & Linda Chapman 348-0464

TOOL LENDING

Tom Rose 932-6191

WATCH GROUP

Mike Wilwerding 341-8224

WEEDS & LITTER

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

YATES ACADEMY LIAISON

Dana Carlton 346-4575

Editor's note: If you have something that would be of interest to our neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for our monthly newsletter. Editorials must be approved by the GPNA Executive Board. Articles can be left at the GPNA Office; please include your name and phone number. Contact Sue Wilwerding (342-2795) or Chris Foster (342-6006) for information regarding the newsletter.

From the Desk of the President

Lots of things have been happening lately in the neighborhood. Other than the shootouts, most of them are good.

The Weed and Seed Unit of the Northeast Precinct has been spending a lot of time in the area recently, to good effect. In addition to the drug busts and traffic stops and arrests, members of the unit participated in a neighborhood survey along 33rd street on Saturday March 20 th in cooperation with eight members of the Association. Residents along 33rd street and one block east and west of 33rd St. on Davenport, Cass, California, Webster, and Burt Streets were visited, and an eleven-question survey was completed at each residence. Promotional materials for the Association were also distributed, along with a worksheet that could be used in the event residents suspected that drug or other criminal activity was being conducted at a specific location. The police department will be tallying the results of the survey and providing the results to the Association. Personally I found it very interesting to get acquainted with the people living in that area. Hopefully we will be seeing some new faces at our meetings as a result of the personal contacts made. Thank you to **Sgt. DeJong, Officers Atkinson, Auston, Brumfield, LeClair, Kula, Watson, and Heath** for your help. Thank you also to **Dar Sweazy, Julie Kalkowski, Mike and Candy Bacome, Chris Foster, Jean Peck, Sandy Saner, and Jim O'Brien** for your help. I expect the information we gain will be very helpful in solving our problems.

We will be holding our annual Easter Egg Hunt in Gifford Park on Saturday, April 3, 1999 at noon. Park cleanup will start at about 10:00AM, and distribution of candy and goodies will start at about 11:30 AM. **Shelly Rose** has graciously agreed to be responsible for organizing this event. Please consider coming down to help clean up the park and provide crowd control. You might even catch a glimpse of the Easter Bunny.

As part of the clean up effort, KOB will be accepting tires at 22nd and Washington St. There is no charge to persons taking tires there. We expect to have members circulating throughout the neighborhood on April 10 picking up abandoned tires and transporting them to the site. If you would like to help, call **Mike Wilwerding** or me. If you have tires that you want to keep, best put them out of sight, since we'll probably just pick up all of them we can find. If you have just a few tires to get rid of, we'd appreciate it if you would take them down to the site yourself, as we expect we'll have about as many as we can handle.

As you may have noticed, we don't have a garage sale scheduled for this year. Since we always generate a great deal of traffic at the dumpster site, we thought we'd try something new this year. For want of a better term, we'll be having a pot-luck garage sale in the park the day of the cleanup. If you have items that are too good to throw away, but of no further use to you, put a price on them (price to sell, please) and bring them down around 9:00 AM on April 24 to the park. If you have items but can't transport them, call Leo, Mike, or me and we'll arrange to have them picked up the day of the cleanup. We'll array the items (along with salvaged items from loads picked up) in the hopes that people coming down to drop off trash might be interested in taking home valuable items at bargain prices. All proceeds, as usual, will go to the Association treasury. Items left at the end of the

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Historically Speaking...Golden Spike Days

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they did. Downtown was transformed with an 1869 look with false fronts on the stores, particularly on Douglas Street where the Omaha Theater, slated for the premier showing, was located. The film was simultaneously shown at the Orpheum and the Paramount. People flocked to town to see and be seen. They came on Saturday of the week before, they continued on Sunday afternoon and Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday, the official beginning, President Roosevelt pressed a button on his desk in Washington to open the doors of the old City Auditorium, the scene of the Historical Exhibition. Street dances were also planned. Waxing of the streets had been scheduled for certain locations, but the eager people couldn't wait and danced without the wax. School children throughout the city wore costumes to school for the whole week. Their teachers did too. People everywhere were taking pictures. The weather was perfect. Hardly anyone appeared without a costume.

A Union Pacific train, of course, brought the celebrities to Omaha. Chugging in front was a woodburning engine, built in 1838, which had been used in the movie. Immediately behind was a giant twin-unit turbo-electric locomotive, the latest thing on wheels. There were modern Pullmans and coaches. In the rear were five coaches built during the Civil War that had also been used in the movie. The train stopped along the way at several Nebraska cities and each time thousands turned out to greet the celebrities. When the train arrived in Omaha the celebrities were paraded from the Union Depot to the uptown district. The streets were lined 20 people deep to get a glimpse of them.

Several parades (both planned and impromptu) were held with bands, floats, horses, carriages, equestrians, bicycles, and costumed people. The planners thought perhaps as many as a hundred thousand people might come, but an estimated two hundred fifty thousand showed up. Whisker clubs had been started early. The thought was that perhaps ten thousand men might grow some facial bush, in fact, twenty-five thousand attempted it. A man was almost afraid to show himself without some sort of whiskers. Many contests were held for the finest appearance. The grand champion was declared to be J. A. "Al" Swanson of Standard Blueprint Co. "Queen of Gingham" was Joan Ralston.

Seven thousand people turned out for the costume ball on Saturday night at the Coliseum. U. P. President, W. M. Jeffers, and his wife led the grand march. Dan Butler who was mayor of Omaha, and Mr. Heber Grant, President of the Mormon Church and his wife, were also at the head of the grand march. General Chairman of the Golden Spike Days was W. O. Swanson. He was also King of Ak-Sar-Ben that year. Paul Whiteman's orchestra played for the dancing. It is safe to say that a "good time was had by all."

Golden Spike Days were held again the next year with a lot of enthusiasm, but things are never quite the same the second time around. A big drawing card was the appearance of George Burns and Gracie Allen. Gracie announced her candidacy for President of the U.S. running under the "Surprise Party."

Golden Spike days were truly a golden moment in Omaha's history. We had a "Ball."

by Eva Swanson



The Girls Glee Club from Yates Elementary School participated in Golden Spike Days by dressing in costumes from the 1860's and singing for the event. Our very own GPNA historian, Eva Swanson, was a member of the Glee Club (she is pictured in the back row, the first girl on the left side). Eva, who was in 8th grade in 1939 when the Golden Spike Days took place, remembers that the whole town got involved in the celebration and that " a good time was had by all." (Photo courtesy of Eva Swanson)

From the Desk of the President . . .

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day will take the last dumpster out of town.

As mentioned in the last newsletter and at the last general meeting, Mayor Hal Daub is scheduled to be our guest speaker at the April 1 meeting. In anticipation of a larger than usual crowd, we have arranged to use the Besic Dining Room for that meeting, so we'll be in the same room we use for the holiday banquet. Please plan on attending.

As also mentioned at the last meeting, we are in need of volunteers for the nominating committee, which will be responsible for identifying candidates for the elective offices, to be presented at the May meeting. The bylaws require that the committee be composed of 5 members. I have agreed to head up the committee, so I need 4 volunteers. If you would be willing to help, please see me at the April meeting. As it stands right now we need to find at least one candidate. If you or someone you know would be willing to spend a few hours per month in service to the neighborhood and the Association, please come forward.

Now that the snow is gone (hopefully) all of the litter and trash that has accumulated throughout the winter is visible, and with the March wind blowing, a bunch of it has ended up in my yard and a lot of other yards throughout the neighborhood. I've been making an effort to pick it up on a regular basis, and I hope you'll do so too. With all the bad publicity (undeserved in my opinion) that the neighborhood has gotten recently, I think we need to do all we can to keep up appearances in the neighborhood.

Hope to see you at the meeting.

by Jim Wilwerding

What's Happening in the Neighborhood . . .

The GPNA would like to thank **Officers Brian Heath** and **Gary Kula** for appearing at the March general meeting and addressing some of the concerns about recent events that have occurred in the neighborhood. Officer Heath also discussed plans for the neighborhood survey in the 33rd and California St. area. Also present was **Diedra Andrews** from the NE Precinct's Community Resource Center, who offered to assist the Association in a variety of ways. Thanks, Diedra!

Enjoy a beautiful (hopefully!) spring morning by volunteering to help with the **10th Annual GPNA Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 3rd**. Volunteers are needed to help clean the park prior to "hiding" the goodies, and with supervision of the children prior to the hunt. Call **Shelly Rose** at **932-6191** if you'd like to help.

Harry Dirgo of the Watch Group received a "Citizen Patrol Volunteer of the Year" award at the Omaha Coalition of Citizen Patrollers Fourth Annual Recognition/Awards Banquet held on March 25th. Also present representing the GPNA were **Mike and Terry Wilwerding**. Congratulations on the well-deserved award, Harry!

Liturgical artist **Robert Aldern** from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, SD, will be in Omaha at the First Central Congregational Church on **Saturday and Sunday, April 17th and 18th**. "Liturgy Expressed as Visual Art" is the theme of the weekend. On Saturday the 17th at 1 p.m., Mr. Aldern will present some of his work in slides and in panels followed by discussion and a social time. On Sunday the 18th, he will present an educational forum for adults at 9:15 a.m. and be in worship at 10:30 a.m. The public is invited to this event at the church, which is located at 36th and Harney St. There is no charge.

Gifford Park residents are invited to the opening of a new contemporary jazz worship service beginning **Saturday, April 10th, at 5:00 p.m.** at Augustana Lutheran Church (38th and Lafayette). "Saturday Night Alive" is designed to blend the unique musical riches of jazz offered by leading local musicians with the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Musicians and lovers of jazz alike will commune with God through this powerfully spiritual music native to America. Stay for a light meal gathering to be held following the service. On **Saturday, April 24th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**, a spirituality workshop "Finding God in Everyday Life" will be held at the church. **Father Richard Hauser**, Professor of Theology at Creighton University, will lead the workshop, which is designed for all who desire to live a deeply Christian life in the midst of busy daily schedules. The \$15 per person charge will include lunch. For information about these events and/or to register for the workshop, call Augustana at **551-4728** or E-mail the church at augustan@novia.net.

Last Chance for 1999!

Free Tax Help for Basic Tax Returns

April 3 & 10: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

April 7 & 14: 9 a.m. to noon

at the GPNA Office - 33rd & California St.

Call 551-3629 for information

