

Waldo Homes Neighborhood News

Newsletter of the Waldo Homes/Neighborhood Association – December 2008 Issue

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December Meeting

The December meeting will feature a dialog with Beth Gottstein, City Councilwoman-At-Large.

White Elephant Gift Exchange

The December meeting will feature a white elephant gift exchange. Participation is not required and all are welcome to the refreshments and fun. Those who choose to participate should bring a wrapped gift, put it in the in the pile and receive a ticket.

- Gifts should be something from around your house – not something new.
- Gifts should be “appropriate,” inexpensive and suitable for either a man or a woman.

Save the Date – February 10, 2009

A WHA pot luck dinner is being planned for the evening of Tuesday, February 10, at the Broadway Methodist Church, 74th and Wornall. The dinner is being organized by Dowe Harris and further details will be forthcoming.

Can you do the CAN-CAN? – By Connie Sherman

Bill and I are still collecting cans at 8405 Cherry. Just drop your bags off at the side of the driveway and we will do the rest. The past 3 years we have collected enough cans to put over \$400 in the coffers. This allows us to donate snacks, drinks, and pizza for the annual South Oak Park clean-up we do every October. If you need help with pickup, you can call 816-363-6215. So keep drinking and recycling - WHA thanks you!

Editor's Note: The following interview is with one of the longest continuous residents in the WHA. If you or a relative have a similar “claim to fame,” please contact us so we can share that part of WHA history with others.

Gracie Crass Interview – By Larry Arnold

For 167 years we've had an answer to the oft-repeated question: “Where's Waldo?” And for more than half that time, one of the Waldo Homes Association's own members has been able to answer “It's where I live!”

Brought by her parents to Kansas City in 1923 from Kentucky, Gracie Crass was four years old when she moved into her family home on what is now 80th Terrace. She still lives in that residence where she and her sister were raised, just south of the city limits for Kansas City which after 1909 stopped at 77th Street. Her home finally was included in Kansas City after the 1947 annexation

Agenda for the next meeting

December 13, 2008 10:15 AM – Waldo Library
– Come early, doors open at 10:00 AM.

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| • Welcome – M. Donegan | 10:15 |
| • Minutes – A. Kurtenbach | 10:20 |
| • Treasury Report – T. Gordon | 10:25 |
| • CPAC Report – D. Harris | 10:30 |
| • Refreshments – White Elephant Gift Exchange | 10:35 |
| • Speaker – Beth Gottstein | 10:50 – 11:15 |

went south to 85th Street—106 years after Dr. David Waldo bought the first 1,000 acres that became Waldo.

Her vision for Waldo Homes Association (WHA) is simple to state, though harder to accomplish: “It needs to be for the community; do it all for the community.” At the same time, however, she recognizes that “people today are reluctant to do anything.” That's not the way it was in years gone by.

“Dad bought land out here before hardly anyone else...finally, a year or so later, others started to come...we didn't have any water, electricity, not anything out here, for a few years.” Gracie still has the oil lamp she used until there were enough houses built in the area that the electric lines were extended.

The only rules for building a house just outside city limits in Jackson County were that it had to have three rooms and cost \$1,000. At least two of the houses in nearby blocks were old street cars or railroad boxcars, Gracie recalls, noting that “people who came out wanted a church and a school.”

A missionary, John T. Hartman, paid \$40 of his own money for a tent to start a church where the Crossroads Church building is now. In a 1925 Kansas City directory, Hartman is identified as a field representative for the Presbyterian Board of Publication, who was known for starting Presbyterian churches in the area. The Crossroads Church building's cornerstone reads “Founded 1923, erected 1947,” the later date referring to the brick building that was added on the west.

Gracie attended school in the church building for a couple of years until the John T. Hartman School was built in 1925 at 79th Terrace and Main, where the Kansas City Academy is now. The school grew until they had 8 grades in the school but “they closed it in 1951.”

During the Depression no one had money to go to high school at Center or Southwest, so in 1933 the Hartman and Ruhl school district superintendents got together and arranged to have high school classes in the Hartman School. Named the Ruhl-Hartman School, the offices were upstairs on the third floor along with the grade school, as Gracie remembers, and all the high school classes and everything else was below. Later it was closed when the John T. Hartman Elementary School on 81st and Oak was built.

Even though it was “an accredited high school, no one had money to go to college,” Gracie said. She did get a one-year scholarship which she used at a downtown KC business school. Gracie’s mother died about a week before Gracie finished that one year, but as soon as she was through, she went to work to help her sister with schooling. Her sister went on to become a nurse in the area, and until her sister’s death at the end of last year, Gracie was a frequent visitor, arriving and leaving on the 12-block round trip just as she goes everywhere—on foot.

Gracie went from job-to-job for awhile, just to get a job. As World War II was coming, she even helped out taking blood as part of the physical examinations for the would-be soldiers. Gracie then worked for awhile in the office of a laundry and dry cleaning company, not planning to stay long but “getting experience.” Before too long, she went to work for a stock brokerage, Harris Upham, and stayed there for 40 years. In the ‘70s it became Harris Upham Smith Barney, before the company finally settled on just Smith Barney.

Gracie’s view of community is shaped by the Depression, of course, but helping and sharing were the standard in the Waldo community for years.

For clothes, Gracie recalls when “we would take old inner tubes and make sandals for summer. We would get two pairs of shoes a year,” and when one pair started looking a bit ragged, that pair became the everyday and school shoes, while the other pair was kept for Sundays.

Dresses for Gracie and her sister were the colorful and hand-sewn result of their mother’s trading efforts. She would keep the sacks from the 100-pounds of flour or sugar and then would trade sacks with the other women in the area to get a matching set of bags to make a dress.

Two big wells “across the street” provided the water for the washboard cleaning of the clothes and she remembers thankfully when electricity came to the area and they were able later to get a washing machine.

“Everybody helped everybody,” Gracie points out. From taking flowers cut from your garden or food to a family suffering illness or death, to sharing gas rationing cards, to sharing the one bicycle in the neighborhood, community is how they survived. Food and beauty came from gardens grown on vacant lots, shared resources from the neighbor who had a cow, pig and goat, and wild flowers from “the forest” (which is now Santa Fe Hills).

While some got milk delivered to the door, others would go out (south) and buy from the farmer. The iceman in Waldo would get 50-pound blocks of ice and put in the icebox, but her father made one that could hold 100 pounds. “We had plenty of grocery stores, theatre, eating places (not McDonalds)—a little city of its own. If we needed formal attire was about the only reason for going downtown (Kansas City).”

Waldo had its own taxi service for years before Yellow Cab bought it, then “we lost it all.” There was the Dodson-Waldo streetcar that “was always on time, but most of us walked.” There were only two automobiles in the entire neighborhood for years. Gracie still walks everywhere she goes, regularly attending the WHA meetings held in the Waldo Branch of the Kansas City Public Library. She makes it to the Waldo Festival most every year and knows that the WHA is involved in Oak Park and other community events.


Times were hard, she notes, “but compared to today, those were the good old days—happy and safe.” Without a doubt, Gracie has seen changes come and go in the WHA area but she still points to “community” as the answer. “People have got to have people look after one another.”

That should be the aim of the WHA, Gracie emphasizes. “For the community, do it for all the community.”


How the White Elephant Gift Exchange Works

A ticket is drawn. The person having that number chooses a gift from the pile and unwraps it for everyone to see. The next ticket is drawn and that person can either choose to take the unwrapped gift from the first person or choose a wrapped gift from the pile. If he/she chooses a wrapped gift, he/she unwraps it for everyone to see. If he/she chooses to take the already unwrapped gift from another person, that person gets to choose another gift from the pile and unwrap it. The next ticket is drawn and that person can choose to take any one of the previously unwrapped gifts or a new one. This continues until all gifts are unwrapped. You get to take home the one that you have at the end of the exchange.

December 2008
Waldo Homes Association

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Pearl Harbor Day	8	9 CPAC 4 PM 	10	11 Leaf and Brush Pick Up for Thursday trash day	12	13 WHA 10:15 AM Library
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 WHA News- letter Articles due to Editor
21 First Day of Winter	22 Hanukkah	23	24	25 Christmas	26	27
28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve			

January 2009
Waldo Homes Association

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 New Year's Day	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10 WHA 10:15 AM Library
11	12	13 CPAC 4 PM 	14	15	16	17
18	19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	20 WHA News- letter Articles due to Editor	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31