



The Oella Almanac

A publication of the Oella Homeowners Association

Spring 2007



Editor's note: If you have any suggestions or contributions for the newsletter, please e-mail Amanda at laueram@yahoo.com or drop them off at any HOA board meeting. Contributions may be subject to editing.

News from the Board of Directors

The board is pleased to announce a 3-year Oella HOA beautification project. Director Toni Mullin will oversee improvements to our common areas. Look for new trees, flowers, and other plants, as well as improved lawn maintenance in our neighborhood. To save money, most of the planting will be completed by volunteers. We're always looking for more hands!

The HOA website address has changed from www.oellahoa.org to www.oellahoa.com due to some difficulties obtaining renewal password information.

On Easter, the 700-800 block of Oella Ave. was vandalized with spray paint. President Richard Gambrell, Secretary Amanda Lauer, The Oella Co., and several of the Oella Mill contractors removed paint from road signs, buildings, and salt boxes. If you spot any more vandalism, please call the police.

Please note: 2007 regular meetings of the Board of Directors will be held on the second Monday of each month in the small meeting room at the Westchester Center. All HOA members are welcome to attend. There is usually a yoga class meeting in the main hall, so please be mindful of the yoga patrons as you enter the building.

Check www.oellahoa.blogspot.com for frequent community news updates and events. If you have

an announcement for the blog, send it to laueram@yahoo.com.

Where Do Your HOA \$\$ Go?

Everyone in the HOA is subject to quarterly dues, but do you know where those hard-earned dollars go? The following is a sampling of services that your HOA dues support. Special assessments for parking lots are paid by the residents who use them, so not all members pay the same amount in dues.

- Mowing, mulching & weeding of HOA common areas
- Treatment and removal of dead trees from common areas
- Planting of new trees, bulbs, and perennials in common areas
- Plowing & salting (except private drives)
- Replacement & filling of salt boxes as needed
- Insurance for our community spaces
- The new mill race bridge
- Paving/parking lot maintenance
- Meeting room rental fees (a bargain at \$11/hr!)
- Website fees
- Billing supplies (paper, envelopes, etc.)
- Electricity for parking lot lights
- Consultation with lawyers
- Protection of property values!

Things that are not covered by your dues:

- Weeding flower beds and walkways on your lot
- Mowing your lawn
- Shoveling snow from sidewalks on your property
- Trash cleanup

- Upkeep of stone walls
- Weeding & leaf cleanup along county roads
- Trimming of trees on private property
- Maintenance of the exterior of your home

Weeding common areas costs \$35/hr/man. You can help keep costs down by spending a few minutes pulling weeds in the common area near your house.

Architectural Review Committee (ARC) Update

Spring is a great time to make repairs to the exterior of your home. Remember that any changes to the exterior must be reviewed and approved by the ARC *before* you make them. If you are just replacing or repainting something in kind, no approval is necessary. The ARC attempts to respond to all requests within 30 days. This process helps retain property values and ensures that Oella will maintain its beautiful streetscape. Your cooperation is appreciated! Contact: Charles Wagandt at the Oella Co. (803 Oella Ave.) 410-465-1700 for ARC requests.

Pet Corner

Warm Spring temperatures mean it's time for pets to start shedding up a storm! Reduce vacuum time by combing or brushing your pet twice a week (more for long-haired varieties). Wire brushes are best for getting loose hair from the undercoat. After brushing, wipe your pet with a damp paper towel to reduce dander.

Spring also signifies the arrival of fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes. Protect your pet with a natural repellent such as Sentry Natural Defense, available at pet stores. This product is made of a mixture of essential oils instead of chemicals, so it is safe for use around children. And don't forget that monthly heartworm pill!

Please remember that it is important to pick up after your pet—this includes along the Mill Race trail. Pet poop is very bad for the environment, and feces makes our community spaces dangerous for people. The

HOA provides Mutt Mitts for your convenience at several locations. Let's extend a very big **thank you** to all of the volunteers who refill the Mutt Mitt holders, working to keep our properties poop-free!

Volunteer Opportunities Right in Your Back Yard!

"Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present." –Albert Camus

There is a wealth of opportunity for volunteering in Oella. Whether you have 15 min. or several hours to spare, consider becoming active in one of Oella's organizations.

Oella Garden Club: Looking for something low-key? The garden club is a very informal group...no dues, no regular meetings, no by-laws! The club gets together on occasion to discuss how we can beautify Oella's community spaces, to weed, and to plant donated or purchased plants. Last year, the club worked on the area around the Historic Oella sign, the stone wall along the 700 block of Oella Ave., and the area under the tree near the Short Brick Row driveway. The club is always in need of extra hands or plants for our projects. Info: write to Amanda at laueram@yahoo.com

Oella Historical Society (OHS): The mission of the OHS is to preserve Oella's historic treasures and provide educational opportunities about Oella to the community. Current projects include an oral history project documenting interviews with former Oella Mill workers, archiving photos and other materials, writing a complete history of Oella, and creating a walking tour of Oella. New members are always welcome. Info: Chris Innes innes@smart2.net

Greater Oella Community Association (GOCA): GOCA has been working to improve Oella for years. Among GOCA's numerous activities are community parties, beautification projects such as the memorial garden at the Westchester Center, and meeting with county

officials to address community issues. GOCA also runs a neighborhood watch program that patrols the neighborhood to discourage crime. For information, contact Jay Patel at the Country Store or attend one of the meetings listed in GOCA's newsletters.

Westchester Center Foundation: oversees operations at the Westchester Community Center located on Westchester Ave. Board members are needed. www.oella.org

Patapsco Heritage Greenway: Promotes the preservation of the history and natural beauty of the Patapsco River valley. Yearly events include a winter feast, a garlic mustard pull, and stream cleanups. www.patapscoheritagegreenway.org

The Oella Homeowners Association Board of Directors: The board of directors oversees the operations of the Oella HOA. Elections for the board occur at the annual meetings of the members in December of each year. Terms are for 3 years, though opportunities to fill partial terms do arise. Interested in running for the board? Contact the any current board member (listed on the Oella HOA website).

Oella Mill & Oella Ave. Updates

The long-awaited opening of the renovated Oella Mill and repair of the collapsed portion of Oella Ave. will soon be upon us! The Mill plans to begin renting the first apartments around May. Construction of a new retaining wall for Oella Ave. near Pleasant Hill Rd. is scheduled for this Spring. Be sure to check the blog at www.oellahoa.blogspot.com for the latest news and to post comments, questions, and concerns.

Classifieds

If you have any useable goods or materials that you want to get rid of, a service to advertise (such as babysitting, gardening), or a request for something (like carpool buddies), you may post your item here. Please provide your preferred

contact method for potential "takers" (it will be published along with your listing). All arrangements are the responsibility of the interested parties.

Oella on Yahoo: Join the Oella HOA Yahoo Group. E-mail OellaHOA-Subscribe@yahoo.com.

Plants needed for Oella's common areas: If you have any extra plants, bulbs, or mulch to spare, e-mail Amanda at laueram@yahoo.com or drop them off at 748 Oella Ave. Thanks!

Carbon Balance Your Car: You can neutralize your car's environmental impact by supporting projects that reduce greenhouse gases. Visit www.terrapass.com for more information. Receive 10% off by using coupon code: FRIENDS.



Spring on Oella Ave.
photo courtesy of Joe Jones

Reminiscences about the Old Mill

The April meeting of the Oella Historical Society involved more than just talking about the past. Those who attended were able to *live* it, thanks to a delightful discussion with O'Neal "Smitty" Smith, longtime resident and former weaver at the mill. Smitty shared many of his personal and work experiences.

Smitty came to Oella in 1942, when he was 17, looking for better work than he had had as a weaver at Danville Riverside Cotton Mill in Virginia. There, the employees only worked three to four days a week, not enough to allow a young man to make his way. A neighbor of Smitty's family had a sister in Oella, and he boarded with the sister's family when he arrived. They lived in the Granite Hill area. He later married a daughter in the family.

Smitty's first inclination on arriving in Baltimore was to get work in the shipyards, but he started working at the Oella mill within a few days. Though he had been a weaver in Virginia, he deliberately avoided the position here—at first. He was later given to see that a young man with a family to support would need more money, and weaving paid better.

"We didn't make a lot of money," he said, "but we made more money at W. J. Dickey & Sons than they paid at the biggest weaving companies in the country." Interestingly, men and women were paid equally for the same job.

Weaving was a "fascinating and rewarding job" for Smitty. Trains brought in washed and cleaned raw wool from all over the world to the mill, and to turn such a raw product into garment-ready fabric made Smitty's work very satisfying. At that time the mill produced material for men's suits and sport coats and women's wool dresses. The material was also sold to the Army, Navy, and Marines.

The work could be dangerous, however. The shuttles, several inches long and pointed, occasionally shot off the machines, becoming dangerous missiles to anyone unlucky enough to be in their flight path.

Although the mill workers received two weeks' vacation each year (including one week when the mill shut down), Smitty rarely took the time off. He kept right on working, drawn to the

machines and what he could help create. He would even get up in the middle of the night and head down the street to the mill—which ran three shifts—to try out something the Lord had instructed him to do.

To call him just a worker, however, would not be telling the whole story. Though he had only a high school education, he was a gifted inventor. Stanley Dickey asked Smitty if he could create a color selector card wheel for the high-speed weaving machine, which would allow colors in the fabric to run both ways.

One day he was just looking at the machine when he heard the Lord say to him, "If you'll do this to the machine, it'll do what you want it to." Smitty told Mr. Dickey he could do the color selector.

Dickey & Sons provided him with the materials and the time he needed to work on it. Seven months later, he had created a two-color selector—and he got a patent on it as well. Later, he invented a four-color selector that gave even more options. He got a patent on that invention, too. Though he never received royalties from his patents (the company that bought the first patent closed as knits started to replace woven cloth), he had the satisfaction of knowing that he'd done something no one—not even trained engineers—had done to that point.

But more important and satisfying to Smitty than the work and the relatively good pay was the wonderful way Dickey & Sons treated the workers. "We were like family," he said. When his father died in California, he didn't have the money to fly out for the funeral. The company paid for his ticket.

Even after Smitty left the company around 1968 to go into sales, he continued to do weaving at the mill and fix the machines as he was needed. They never questioned his hours. "I never worked for a company that treated the workers the way they did," he said. If you like the work you do, Smitty believes, you will be successful. And he is proof of that.

Smitty continues to live on the Ellicott City side of the Patapsco River, looking down on the valley and the mill where he spent so many "fantastic years." *Written by Holly Bohart*