



**FRIENDS OF BRIGHTWOOD PARK
QUARTERLY MEMBER NEWSLETTER**

March 15, 2021

As Spring approaches, we look forward to new life in the park. With longer days and fairer weather ahead, there will be much to do in the park! Take a walk to enjoy a quiet time in nature. Spend time revitalizing the park. Participate in fun educational, art, and wellness programs.

Events Calendar:

March:

- March 14** Girl Scout Birthday Week badge event
- March 19** “Welcome Spring” classes for ages 2-3, 4-5 and 6-7.

April:

- Date tbd** Seasonal Changes classes for ages 2-3, 4-5, and 6-7
- April 22** Earth Day event – check FriendsOfBrightwood.org for details

May:

- May 1** (rain date May 2, 2021) Paint En Plein Air with Westfield Art Association
- May 2** Green Team clean up in Brightwood Park 10 a.m. to noon
- May 4** 10 a.m. Yoga Flow class 1st of 4 sessions
- May 11** 10 a.m. Yoga Flow class 2nd of 4 sessions
- May 18** 10 a.m. Yoga Flow class 3rd of 4 sessions
- May 25** 10 a.m. Yoga Flow class 4th of 4 sessions

June:

June 1 10 a.m. Yoga Flow Make Up class rain date

Coming Soon:

Sunday Morning in the Park Hikes: To be scheduled once a month to discuss invasive and native plants and learn ecology of the park. (See below)

Clean Up Days: To be scheduled with town approval, weather and Covid permitting.

Have you seen?

Brightwood Park's celebrity Eastern Screech Owl!



Photo by Chuan-Chu Chou

History Corner:

ONE FAMILY'S AMAZING JOURNEY FROM VIRGINIA THROUGH NEW YORK, WORLD WAR II TRENCHES, WESTFIELD, MOSCOW AND BACK AGAIN



Margaret Ann Glascoe
149 Liberty Street

The story of Margaret Glascoe is similar to many of the African-American families who purchased or rented property at the future site of Brightwood Park in Westfield, New Jersey. Their aspiration for a better life motivated them to move north from Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas at the onset of the 20th Century. However, in the North, they still encountered racial prejudice and struggled to make a better living. This is a story of hope,

faith, endurance, setbacks, and loss.

Margaret was born on a small farm in 1882 in the piedmont region of Virginia, about 50 miles southwest of Charlottesville. She was the youngest daughter of Patrick and Sarah Hagar's six children. Patrick was the son of a slave owner and enslaved mother. Margaret's mother died when she was 2 years old, and her father died when she was seventeen. By then, most of her siblings had already begun moving north. Before 1900, Margaret also moved to New York City, where her two brothers had found work. Her brother, Charles, was a barber and taught Margaret his barbering skill.

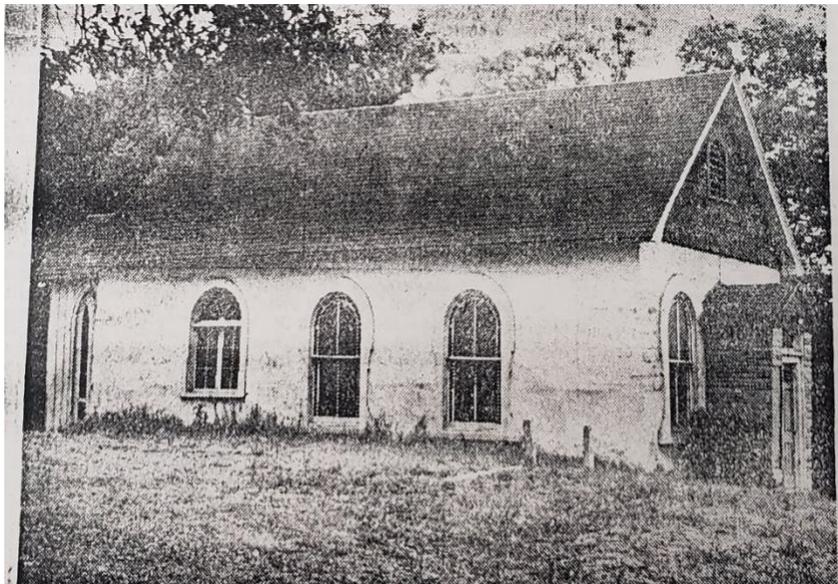
In 1905, Margaret married Archie Patterson, who had moved north from North Carolina sometime after 1900. In 1910, they had a son, Lloyd Walton Patterson. Archie died soon after Lloyd's birth, but Margaret remained living with her in-laws in Manhattan and worked as a barber. She eventually found steady work in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Margaret joined the A.M.E. Zion Church in Poughkeepsie. There, she met Stephen Glascoe, who was an active member of the church. They married on Christmas Eve, 1917, the day before Stephen reported for active duty in World War I. After basic training, Stephen was sent to France where he was assigned to the 369th Infantry Regiment, an all African-American unit, commonly

referred to as the “Harlem Hellfighters”. The 369th spent 191 days in frontline trenches, more than any other American unit. In February 1919, after the war ended, Stephen was honorably discharged and returned home suffering from poison gas exposure during his time in the trenches. Stephen reunited with his wife Margaret and his stepson Lloyd at their home in the Bronx.

Over time, Stephen’s health deteriorated. Margaret was advised that Stephen needed to move to an area that had better air quality. In the Spring of 1925, she purchased a home at 149 Liberty Street in Westfield. Sadly, Stephen died just three months later, leaving Margaret once again to fend for herself and Lloyd, now fifteen years old.

Margaret had difficulty finding work as a barber in her new town. To make ends meet, she became a laundress and took in boarders. She also joined St. Thomas A.M.E. Zion Church, located just around the corner on Fanwood Avenue. Lloyd enrolled in Westfield High School. In 1926, Margaret was notified by the school that Lloyd was doing poorly and may have to repeat his grade. She used her savings to send Lloyd to Hampton Institute, a mostly African-American school located in Hampton, Virginia. Lloyd graduated in 1931 and returned to Westfield, seeking work in theatrical design.



Photograph of St. Thomas A.M.E. Church in 1964.

In 1932, Margaret was active in her church and in the greater community of Westfield. She participated in food nutrition classes at St. Luke’s A.M.E. Zion Church on Downer Street and formed a local chapter for the “advancement of colored people.” Lloyd could not find employment in New York’s theater industry and was frustrated that he could only get odd jobs, such as mowing lawns and

house painting. An ad in a New York newspaper attracted his attention – a Russian film company was seeking African-American actors to travel to Russia to make a movie entitled “Black and White”. He applied and was accepted to join 20 other African-Americans who set sail on the SS Europa bound



for Helsinki in the spring of 1932.

In the photograph to the left are the actors onboard the SS Europa – Lloyd Patterson is in the rear row in white shirt and sweater vest, the poet Langston Hughes is directly below him in the white jacket.

Upon arriving in Russia, the acting entourage was greeted with great fanfare, housed in one of Moscow’s best hotels, and introduced at elaborate parties to

Russia’s elite. However, it soon became clear that the original screenplay meant to portray the racism and class war between the capitalist white owners and the black workers in a steel factory in Birmingham, Alabama was a hopeless caricature of life in the southern states. Langston Hughes was engaged to rewrite the script. Weeks passed and eventually the Communist Party organizers of the film decided to cancel the production. The actors were offered the option of a free tour of Eastern Russia, transportation home to the United States, or the opportunity to stay. Three in the entourage, including Lloyd Patterson, chose to stay. In a letter to his mother, he wrote, “Mother, life out here is simply bubbling over like the water in a tea kettle. There is so much work here that there is a lack of workers. They don’t even notice that I am black here. Leave everything and come to the Soviet Union.”

Several months after his arrival in Russia, Lloyd met and married an artist, Vera Aralova. They had their first of three sons, James Lloydovich Patterson, in 1933. A year later, Margaret answered her son’s entreaty and traveled to visit him, his new family, and this promised land.



Margaret stayed with her son for six months. She eventually sought and found work as an electric winder at the Stalin Automobile Factory. She wrote a story entitled “I am Among My own People in My own Country”, which appeared in a 1935 edition of “The Negro Worker”, a publication produced by the Communist Third International (COMINTERM). In it, Margaret relates how difficult life in the United States was for her and extols how good her life in Russia has been. She concludes by writing, “I now feel at home, I know the comrades, the factory, Moscow, and the whole country. I am beginning to live!”

Margaret with her grandson James in 1934.

In 1937, Margaret Patterson returned to the United States, arriving by boat to New York City. It is not known what prompted her return, but it is speculated that the Great Purge instigated by Joseph Stalin in 1936 changed Margaret’s outlook on her newly adopted country. It is also not known if she returned at all to her home on Liberty Street. In the 1940 Census, she was living at her family home in Massies Mill, Virginia.

Lloyd Patterson died in 1942 from injuries sustained during the German bombing of Moscow. Margaret died on December 27, 1944, at the age of 62, and was buried in Massies Mill. Her home at 149 Liberty Street was foreclosed by the Town of Westfield in 1956 for non-payment of taxes.

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery’s scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek –
And finding only the same stupid old plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

Excerpt from the poem “Let American Be America Again” by Langston Hughes - 1936

Education Committee:



FOBP's Education Committee is committed to bringing the beauty of Brightwood to more of the greater Westfield community and providing opportunities to learn about and enjoy this nature preserve. Keep an eye on our web page FriendsOfBrightwood.org and the Westfield Recreation Department for details and sign up information!

Photo by Chuan-Chu Chou

Nature Programming

FOBP joined the **Westfield Girl Scouts at Brightwood Park** on Sunday, **March 14** in a highly successful and widely attended celebration of Girl Scout Birthday Week. This was a badge event for the scouts and an opportunity to meet FOBP volunteers and learn about our nature preserve. With Chuan-Chu Chou's photos, we were able to show the girls a variety of wildlife and plants that make their home in the park throughout the year. The girls toured the park and delighted FOBP volunteers with very thoughtful and insightful questions. Many girls expressed interest in partnering with FOBP to work on badge projects including age appropriate clean up and planting activities.

The Education Committee is working with the Westfield Recreation Department to offer nature classes for preschool and primary age children. On **March 19** there will be three "**Welcome Spring**" classes for ages 2-3, 4-5 and 6-7. In April, FOBP volunteers will work with the Recreation Department to offer a series of four classes, for the same age groups, focused on seasonal changes in the park: signs of Spring in the air, the pond, the trees and plants, and the animals.

Currently, we are working with the Recreation Department to plan a family celebration of Earth Day on **April 22**. Watch our website and Facebook as plans evolve.



Photo by Chuan-Chu Chou

Art in the Park

Paint en Plein Air at Brightwood Park

Date: **May 1, 2021, rain date May 2, 2021**

Painters should pre-register for the event through the Westfield Art Association:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/art-in-the-park-plein-air-painting-tickets-145867602927>



Painting

by Vickie Williams

Painting will be timed from 1 PM - 3:30PM with participants exhibiting their finished paintings of Brightwood Park in the Parking Lot for judging at 4:00 PM. Paintings should portray nature found in the park. Registration is open to all painters, not just WAA members. Prizes will be awarded for the top three places and an honorable mention.

Wellness

FOBP/Westfield Recreation Department Fitness in collaboration with EXD Wellness:

YOGA Flow– 4 week session

Dates: Tuesday's 10:00 am

May 4 1st of 4 sessions

May 11 2nd of 4 sessions

May 18 3rd of 4 sessions

May 25 4th of 4 sessions

June 1- Make up rain date

Yoga Flow is a well -designed class for those 18 and over that will keep you moving through sequences of traditional Sun Salutations and standing postures. Linking movement with breath to help build strength and endurance while working on balance and flexibility. Class will end with a well- deserved Savasana.

Open to all levels

Suggested Props: Yoga mat, blanket and blocks if needed as well as a strap for stretching
(can substitute with a towel or belt)

Sign up through the Westfield Recreation Department.

If you are interested in Pilates, Restorative Yoga, or Children's yoga classes, let us know!

Park Health Committee:

We understand that the town is hoping to include budget items for two significant issues in the park:

- Fencing: Tropical Storm Sandy damaged the park's perimeter fence in many locations. Repairs may take a number of years to complete. However, we are optimistic that the repairs will begin this year.
- Pond aeration: The past few years the pond has had significant algae/duckweed blooms. The bubblers in the pond have not functioned to properly oxygenate the water. Without sufficient oxygen levels, any attempt to treat the water would have resulted in a fish kill. The town has advised that the bubblers will be addressed this year.



Photo by Kevin Redden

Park Clean Ups

Westfield's Green Team is organizing a park trash clean-up day around Earth Day activities on **May 2**. FOBP members are encouraged to sign up for this event.

Additional clean-up days will be organized as needed. For updates, please check the Clean Ups page under the "Preserve" menu on www.FriendsOfBrightwood.org

Invasive Plants

Now that the snow is melting and winter is hopefully coming to an end, members of FOBP will be volunteering with the Westfield Parks Invasive Plants strike force to continue to battle the invasive plants in the park. Starting with cut stumping the Wisteria vines and then moving on to the Amur Honeysuckle, Barberry and other invasive plants. When the Japanese Knotweed re-emerges following last Fall's effort to cut back, we plan to attack it again to curtail its invasion around the parking lot.

Once the Knotweed is successfully removed, we will plant native perennial plants and tree saplings along the pond shoreline and a wildflower garden on the embarkment. We will need to protect these new plantings with fencing to prevent damage from the deer.

We will work with the town's approval and support on these projects.

Hikes

Weather permitting, we will have informative hikes on invasive and native plants for educational enjoyment. The hikes will be once a month on a Sunday and for a limited number of walkers. If you are interested, please email FriendsOfBrightwoodPark@gmail.com to arrange a mutually convenient Sunday.

The hikes are inspired by the work of Doug Tallamy, Ph.D. author of New York Times best seller, **Nature's Best Hope**. For more information on Dr. Tallamy's approach to conservation, watch his presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WY4aV5hqkxY>.

Park Infrastructure

We have a newly formed committee that is studying the park to identify projects for which FOBP will want to raise funds. For our first year, we are considering potential projects including:

- Entry signs at both ends of the park;
- Flower/native plants garden; or
- Kiosk type structure for maps, information, etc.

Fund-Raising

FOBP also formed a Fund-Raising Committee to coordinate with Park Infrastructure on projects that will improve the park and make it sustainable. Once FOBP has a firm proposal and cost projection, we will make a presentation to the town's Recreation Commission and ultimately the town council to seek approval. After that, our committee will be in a position to seek out grants and otherwise raise funds.

Notes From the President:

We don't inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children. —
Native American proverb

With an eye to preserving Brightwood Park for generations to come, FOBP is laying the groundwork for a restored nature park. Guided by science and ecological study, we know that the park can support a healthy forest ecosystem.

At just 44 acres, Brightwood Park has a variety of features with some undisturbed "gem" old growth hardwood tree forest areas, ponds and wetlands, and sections of previously cultivated land and home ruins. Each section presents a unique set of opportunities and challenges.

With some trees likely 200 years old, the undisturbed forest areas are particularly significant ecologically. Described by ecologists as "high-value," it is critically important to preserve these areas from encroaching invasive plants such as Japanese Wisteria, Knotweed, Porcelain Berry vine, and Amur Honeysuckle. In particular, Wisteria is a beautiful but deadly vine as it spreads exponentially and strangles the life out of the most robust trees. The photo below depicts the devastating impact of Wisteria on an old growth tree in the park.



If you have walked through the park, you may have noticed cut Wisteria vines swaying down from tree tops like Tarzan ropes. These represent ongoing efforts to save our trees.

Ecologists agree that preservation of the gem areas will also require fencing either around the entire perimeter of the park or, at the least, around the pristine forest areas. While this won't keep invasive plants at bay, it will prevent deer from browsing on native understory plants. The problem is that native wildlife feeds mostly on native plants. This browsing allows invasive plants to flourish while preventing native plants from taking hold. Ecologists have recommended fencing to preserve these high value areas of the park.

Brightwood's ponds are also in need of help. Last year, the bubblers were non-functional. With low water oxygen levels, the town's pond contractor was unable to treat the pondwater to prevent duckweed and algae blooms. The bubblers must be restored to allow better oxygenation of the water. Additionally, the lake shore habitat needs to be restored by removal of invasive plants and planting of native shrubs.

As Noel Taylor noted, "man does depend on nature for his existence." Brightwood Park serves as an important ecological feature for our overall health – particularly in our suburban environment. Doug Tallamy, Ph.D. explains that nature involves many specialized relationships that are built upon the diversity of native flora.¹ When that diversity disappears, it will reverberate through the food chain. Already, scientists have documented a loss of biodiversity amongst insects and birds. As for Brightwood Park, in 1981, Noel Taylor documented a wide variety of plants in the park, some of which have since disappeared. From an ecological standpoint, this park presents an important opportunity to restore biodiversity.

Members of FOBP have invested time and talent in the park to address these and other issues. However, time and talent alone will not solve the challenges. For this reason, FOBP voting members agreed that our organization should form new committees to study the needs of the park and fund-raise as may be required.

¹ I encourage you to watch Doug Tallamy's presentation:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lrddy3bO3UE&feature=youtu.be>.

We look to the model of Friends of Mindowaskin Park that successfully collaborated with the town to revitalize that park.

The Park Infrastructure committee is tasked with collaborating with the town to identify the most pressing needs in the park. It will investigate costs and make recommendations to our Board for projects that should be funded. Our Fund-Raising committee is tasked with seeking out grants and other sources of revenue to address the projects our Board and the town agree should be funded. If you have any experience or desire to join us on either committee, please sign up on our website: FriendsOfBrightwood.org.

We welcome you all on this mission. Please continue to visit our website as we update it frequently.

Peace,
Denise Ricci
President

Friends of Brightwood Park Merchandise

FOBP will be taking pre-orders for caps and T-shirts on our website through April 15 for mid to end of May delivery. To place an order, please visit:

<http://www.friendsofbrightwood.org/shop.html>.



Take a Hike!

It is a great time to get outdoors! There are about 1.6 miles of trails in Brightwood Park.

