

Neighbors Gather for Historic Annual Meeting

by Elaine Klein

An event to remember, the Meridian Street Foundation annual meeting was held on Monday, October 7, 2002, at the Alice Carter Park and at at Dodd's Town House. The Meridian Street Foundation had donated and dedicated a bench to O. C. and Jeanette Winters in thanks for their donating a chunk of Meridian Street land to Indy Parks.

Alice Berger spoke about the history of the Alice Carter Park, which is the park property at the northern tip of the intersection of Westfield Boulevard and Meridian Street. We learned that Alice Carter was one of the earliest residents of Meridian Street and lived in the house that is now Dodd Town House. Then Bob Pinkley spoke about the acquisition of the Winters' property (see related article in this issue). Joe Wynns, the director of Indy Parks and a guest speaker at the dedication, thanked the Meridian Street Foundation for facilitating the donation of the property to Indy Parks.

Board President Cindy Zweber-Free told the members about O. C. and Jeanette Winters. O. C. Winters was a developer and builder of custom

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After the death of her husband, Jeanette Winters generously donated land to Indy Parks. In gratitude, the Meridian Street Foundation donated and dedicated a bench to the Winters, who were represented at the dedication by family friends Ellen and Douglas Swiggett, seated on the bench. Carved into the limestone bench is this quote from *The Magnificent Ambersons* by Booth Tarkington: "Most of the trees had been left to flourish still, and, at some distance, or by moonlight, the place was in truth beautiful." The bench also says, "Maintained in gratitude to the Winters by the Meridian Street Foundation."

MSF Helps Acquire New Parkland

by Bob Pinkley

In late November of 1997, Peggy Sabens alerted me that a piece of undeveloped property lying on the west side of Meridian Street between Dodds Town House and Alice Carter Park was for sale. Peggy had investigated and found that the land belonged to the estate of Mr. O. C. Winters, and that the estate might be interested in transferring the title to a local non-profit organization for tax purposes. Peggy had the name of the local Winters' attorney, who put the MSF in touch with the law firm in Boca Raton, Florida, that was

handling the estate.

In mid-December, the MSF board approached the Florida lawyers with a proposal to donate the property to the Meridian Street Historic District, with the MSF acting as intermediary. Two months later, the Winters' lawyer replied that, since the historic district was not a formal legal entity, the estate would donate the land to the MSF, provided that the MSF would pay all legal fees, that a bronze and stone monument to the Winters be placed on

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President's Letter

December 2002

Dear Foundation Members and Neighbors:

2002 has been a busy year for your neighborhood foundation—a year when our events gave all of us an opportunity to get to know our neighbors better. Our many social events including the rebirth of Meridian In Bloom Garden Tour, the Annual Easter Egg Hunt, the summer picnic, and our change in venue of the annual meeting to Dodd's Town House delighted many.

Did you see many of your neighbors on their knees poking holes in the ground this past October? In case you are wondering what all these people were doing, it was our major beautification project called River of Flowers. An overwhelming success with over 50 percent participation by homeowners. If you missed the chance to contribute to the bulb project, stayed tuned for another opportunity this spring. We can't wait for early spring to see our gardening efforts blossom.

Our very involved Land Use and Historic Preservation committee has spent countless hours working with neighbors to uphold our Meridian Street Preservation Act and to ensure that our Historic District continues to be preserved. We are so fortunate to live in a neighborhood where our historic district is recognized nationally and locally. If you know of any neighbors who our planning to make improvement or changes to their homes, please contact me to obtain a copy of the "North Meridian Street Preservation Guidelines," which are an invaluable assistance.

We have several new board members that were elected at the annual meeting in October. You will find a list of officers and board members in this newsletter. There are many committees to serve on and utilize the many talents of our neighbors. We would love to have you involved in our committees. If you want more information or would like to serve on a specific committee please call me at 921-9571.

As we close the year have a happy, healthy, and blessed holiday season!

Cindy Zweber-Free
President

New Parkland *continued from page 1*

the property, and that the deed carry a covenant stating that the property would not be built on.

Foundation board members were divided in the opinions about owning a piece of real estate. Major concerns were maintenance costs, liability insurance coverage, and the requirement for an environmental survey.

Following research by an ad hoc committee, the board decided to see if it could interest the Indianapolis Department of Parks in acquiring the land as a buffer between Alice Carter Park and Dodds Town House. This would have the added advantage of forestalling any commercial encroachment in the area.

Essentially the MSF negotiated a transfer of deed between the Winters Estate and Indy Parks. With important legal contributions from Nancy Logan, a quit claim deed was, after fifteen months of effort and negotiation, signed by Mrs. Winters on February 12, 1999: a win-win ending!

Alice Berger, Barbara Markuson, John Peoni, and Ruth Vignati also contributed significantly to this effort. The project is an outstanding example of the benefits the Meridian Street Foundation provides to the neighborhood, to its residents, and to the historic district in which we all live.

2003/2003 Board Slated

At the annual meeting, new board members and officers were introduced. We thank each one of them in advance for the many volunteer hours they will be logging on behalf of our neighborhood.

Cindy Zweber-Free, President, 921-9571	Kathy McDaniel Rome Nikosi
Elaine Klein, Vice President and Social Chairperson	Jane Nolan Joel O'Brien Melissa Oesterle, Beautification Chair
Raul Burciaga, Secretary Bill Ruddell, Treasurer	Richard Piccolo, Property Tax Issues Chair
Alice Berger, Historic Preservation/Land Use Chairwoman	Bob Pinkley Austin Ritterspach Janice Seidensticker
Phil Cox Linda Gillman Robert Herzog Roberta Lambertson Sheila Little, Public Safety Chair	Kathy Shorter Marilyn Strawbridge Rosie Sweeney Sharon Woodbridge

River of Flowers Brings Neighborhood to its Knees

by Melissa Oesterle

Hats off to more than 250 volunteers who made the "River of Flowers" inaugural year a success! Many thanks to the beautification committee members, block captains, board members, friends, neighbors, Boy Scouts, and Butler students who got down on their knees to tuck tiny bulbs into the ground in October and November.

Nearly 400,000 Glory of the Snow bulbs have been planted along Meridian Street between 40th Street and Westfield Boulevard. Roughly, that means that half the lawns on the street have been planted. We were also able to plant Tarkington Park and North United Methodist Church at 38th and Meridian. Please remember, it will take a few years for these bulbs to mature and multiply into the full spectacular River of Flowers that we are all eager to see.

Also, for homeowners whose lawns were planted, please DO NOT spray herbicide (broad leaf weed killer) on the bulbs until the foliage has died back, which should happen sometime in May. If the bulbs are sprayed prematurely, it will kill them.

Meridian Street Foundation will offer bulb planting the next two years, in the hope of creating a dramatic splash of color that length of the street that will signal the arrival of each spring. Look for information next April on how you can participate in the fall 2003 planting.



Warmly dressed and equipped with knee pads and surgical gloves, more than 250 people turned out to plant bulbs along Meridian Street.

The little red wagon carrying a boom box, drinks, and supplies became a familiar fixture along the tree, often pulled by Melissa Oesterle (left) or Alice Berger.



Raul Burciaga fertilized bulbs.



Elaine Klein, holding an empty bulb container, jumped for joy when the last of the bulbs were buried.



From left: Alice Berger, Melissa Oesterle, Robert Herzog, Bill Ruddell, and Phil Cox (accompanied by son Philip) were among the organizers of the bulb-planting project.

Nancy Logan and her daughter were among many families who contributed their labor to the project.



The Main Stem Debuts in News & Views

Beginning with this issue of *News & Views*, we will be excerpting portions of *The Main Stem*, the book written about the historic architecture of North Meridian Street and published in 1992 by Historic Landmarks Foundation. As many of you know, this book is out of print and copies are scarce and in high demand. Until such a time as we are able to reprint the book (an idea that has been revisited on numerous occasions), these excerpts may be of value.

The Showcase Heritage

In Indianapolis in the 1920s there were other prestigious neighborhoods, but there was only one Meridian Street. The houses were striking—architecturally distinctive, constructed from quality materials, and set back uniformly on lots larger than usual, even for exclusive areas. Among the variety of styles, each house complemented the design of its neighbor. The result was surprising, for there was no master plan. Perhaps the fact that many houses were built on speculation accounts for the pleasing continuity. Developers rarely embrace eccentric designs.

The new neighborhood had more than grand homes; it also claimed important people. Many of

the city's elite listed a Meridian address. But other avenues could boast of wealthy businessmen, industrialists, and professionals.

What made Meridian Street noteworthy was its concentration of writers, people whose fame stretched far beyond the boundaries of Marion County or even the state. Booth Tarkington, Meredith Nicholson, Kin Hubbard, and David L. Chambers—all nationally prominent writers—lived on the street. More important, the street and the city—sometimes thinly disguised with a fictitious name—provided the authors with a setting for their work.

Tarkington, who resided at 4270 North Meridian Street from 1923 until his death in 1946, personified the street's reputation and appeal. He loved Indianapolis and Meridian Street. His novels, sharp in their criticism of social climbers, recalled nostalgically the tree-lined streets of memory. Tarkington was the chronicler of a lost golden age, and to many people in Indianapolis, the emerging neighborhood on North Meridian Street was the best hope for its return.

In 1920, with only a few houses past 40th Street, Meridian Street acquired another identity, U.S. 31.

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Annual Meeting *continued from page 1*

homes, primarily around Williams Creek. He and Jeanette married in the 1940s and lived in three different homes in the Meridian Kessler area before



For MSF members, none of whom had met the Winters, Ellen Swiggett brought along a photograph of the couple, held here by Cindy Zweber-Free.

retiring to Florida. In addition to the Williams Creek homes and our park, the Winters' legacy lives on at Winterton, the East 86th Street office complex Winters developed.

Cindy introduced Eileen Swiggett, from Louisville, Kentucky, who drove up for the dedication, along with her son, Douglas. Mrs. Swiggett was a long-time friend of the Winters' family, and the Winters were godparents to the Swiggett children. Mrs. Winters is ill and could not make the trip to Indiana.

After the dedication, the crowd walked to Dodd's Town House to enjoy a fabulous fried chicken dinner. The evening was particularly enjoyable due to the camaraderie that had developed among neighbors over weeks of planting bulbs for the River of Flowers along Meridian Street.

Membership Drive 2003

by Virginia Handley

As the chairperson of the Meridian Street Foundation Membership Committee, I want to give you some reasons to join or renew your membership in the MSF.

Were it not for the MSF's existence since 1960, you might now witness these contrasts as you drive, bike and walk up and down Meridian Street, spanning the distance from 40th Street to Westfield Boulevard:

- Without MSF, vehicular traffic would be traveling at higher speeds and Meridian Street would be two feet wider on each side from 40th to 54th streets.
- Without MSF, a high-rise apartment building would be standing at 46th and Meridian instead of the current Governor's residence.
- Without MSF, the homes that line our street would be occupied by businesses, group homes, boarding homes, and apartment dwellers.
- Without MSF, the Governor's residence would probably be located along the White River or out by Eagle Creek Park.

Last year was another one of those years that required the MSF to be continually vigilant, as we

struggled with code enforcement issues and the possible loss of the Governor's residence.

While we are grateful for each contribution and renewal amount we receive, the key goal is to increase the number of households that join the Meridian Street Foundation. All of us benefit from the existence of the MSF; therefore, each of us should join the Foundation and give something to help it continue doing its good works.

The MSF is not an organization of "a few." Last year, 200 household were dues-paying members. These large numbers give us credibility before the various governmental agencies and courts that our committees meet with on a regular basis.

You can help by joining or renewing your membership today!

2003 Social Calendar

by Elaine Klein

The social committee has a number of activities slated, so mark your calendar today. In addition to these events, the committee is planning small gatherings this summer for Meridian Street Foundation members and neighbors. Let me know if you would like to share your yard for one of these events, 283-1835.

- Valentine's Party, February 14, at the home of Patsy and Conrad Solinger, 4906 North Meridian. Invitations will arrive in January.
- Easter Egg Hunt, Saturday before Easter, at the home of Elaine and John Klein, 4343 North Meridian Street.
- Annual Meridian in Bloom garden tour, date to be announced. (Please let me know if you would love to showcase your garden.)
- Annual Picnic/Happy Birthday Party, June, at the 100-year-old home of Marilyn and Robert Strawbridge.
- Meridian Street Foundation Annual Meeting, October 8, tentatively slated for Dodd's Town House.

The Main Stem *continued from page 4*

The designation was a mixed blessing. Federal funds became available to pave and maintain the street, but automobile traffic increased markedly. There was little of the tranquility that had characterized the lower reaches of Meridian in previous decades. Although most of the passing cars bore people on their way elsewhere, the drive up the street during the building boom of the '20s doubtless created a favorable impression of the city's prosperity and the desirability of a Meridian Street address. It was apparent that this section of North Meridian was becoming a public showcase of Indianapolis and claiming a heritage from the street's earlier decades.

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MSF Focuses on Future During Envisioning Sessions

by Kathy Shorter

Imagine Meridian Street and the surrounding neighborhoods in the year 2027! A number of MSF board members met on Saturday in May and a Saturday in November to collaborate on ideas that would make our neighborhood a better place to live.

Perhaps by the year 2027, Meridian Street will be a two-lane boulevard with a tree-lined center median. There may be archways at each end of the historic district, and traffic will be significantly slower. Alice Carter Park and Tarkington Park will be beautifully landscaped and will be used by all the neighborhood. The annual garden tour will have become well known, and a book will have been published highlighting the gardens and architecture of the neighborhood. All the surrounding neighborhoods will have street lamps like the ones on Meridian Street. Esprit de corps will flourish through block captains, a web site, crime watch, and social events. Tradition will be honored. Each household in the district will participate in neighborhood activities, and we will be known as an inclusive, positive, model historic neighborhood.

Many of the ideas that came out of the envisioning sessions seemed achievable and others seem insurmountable. The planning group decided to choose several issues and to create an action list of first steps. In December, each MSF committee will be committing to complete the appropriate first steps that will move these projects forward in 2003. For a number of the topics, information will need to be gathered and city government process will need to be better understood. We will also need to work closely with BTNA and MKNA.

If you are will to serve on any of the following committees, which will be working on new foundation goals, please contact Cindy Zwebber-Freet at



New MSF board members Marilyn Strawbridge, Bill Brown, Rome Nicosi, and Rosie Sweeney were among those attending the sessions focusing on the future of Meridian Street.



Kathy Shorter, who led the envisioning sessions, drew out scores of ideas from participants.

921-9571 or Kathy Shorter at 283-5322. We need your input and expertise!

MSF Committees:

Beautification	Public Relations
Land Use/Historic Preservation	Public Safety
Membership	Social
Property Tax Issues	Traffic

Crime Watch on Historic Meridian Street

by Sheila P. Little

Although you thought that you could leave your doors unlocked and keep the garage door open during the day, times have changed, and Meridian Street residents have to begin to become more aware of neighborhood crime. This year the Meridian Street Foundation will begin a Crime Watch effort in association with the Marion County Police Department.

We will begin organizing and maintaining block clubs on an experimental basis. We must have at least 50 percent participation from each block to maintain a club. Our contact is Officer D. Fletcher, a Crime Watch Coordinator in the North District.

Any community resident can join this effort. Members will learn how to make their homes more secure and watch out for each other and the neighborhood. Watch groups are not vigilantes. They are extra eyes and ears for reporting crime and helping neighbors. Establishing Crime Watch will allow us to complete Crime Watch Blocks with Butler-Tarkington and Meridian-Kessler neighborhoods. Since there have been recent North District daytime crimes, please join us with august enthusiasm.

News from the Neighborhood

Blue seems to be the color of baby blankets in the neighborhood this fall. **Greg and Nancy Langdon** welcomed **Jacob**, another new grandson for **Marsha and Al Langdon**. New neighbors **Joani and Greg Ossip** added a sixth youngster, **Oliver**, to their clan shortly after moving onto Meridian. And **Joel and Mary O'Brien** had **Logan**, baby number five, just before Thanksgiving.

Christina Marr, daughter of **Deborah and Danny Marr**, married **Kyle Hughes** in September. The newlyweds are happily settled in Meridian Kessler. **Rees and Wayne Olander's** son **Emerson** will wed **Magali Baker** this June in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

While speaking at a national convention in Philadelphia, **Clare Coxey**, COO of Sommer Barnard Ackerson, caught the ear of the executive editor of *Journal of Organizational Excellence*. Shortly after the convention, the magazine approached Clare, asking him to write an article covering the content of his speech, which was about the organizational development at the law firm. Clare's article, "Work and the Human Spirit Flourish Together at Sommer Barnard Ackerson," will be published in the spring.

Another neighborhood executive, **Bill Oesterle**, is also creating national ripples with his company, Angie's List, which was named by *Inc.* magazine

as one of the 500 fastest-growing, privately owned companies in the United States. The *Inc.* article was followed by a full feature in the business section of *The Indianapolis Star*.

Kathryn Crabb, daughter of **David and Ellen Crabb**, received top honors in a national French exam. Kathryn's score was perfect, making her one of six students to receive a perfect score out of 94,000 students who took the exam. Kathryn is an eighth grade student at St. Richard's School. **Robby O'Guinn**, another St. Richard's student, is currently appearing in Civic Theatre's production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. **Chris Stack**, son of **Ann and Christopher Stack** continues to pursue his acting career, currently with a role in *Roger Dodger* as one of the eponymous star's coworkers. Chris also had a recurring role in "Max Bickford," the Richard Dreyfus television show, which was cancelled.

Judy O'Bannon donated five trees to Alice Carter Park in November. The native hardwood trees will help beautify the entrance to our historic district.

In November, neighbors **Marla and Tony Smith** opened their home to the public as part of the Crossroads Holiday Home Tour. The home was beautifully decked out for the holiday season.

As part of a neighborhood effort to kick off the holiday season in style, the MSF was responsible for placing nearly 2,000 luminaries from 40th street all the way to Westfield in the historic district. The day after Thanksgiving marked the first "River of Lights" along Meridian Street. The foundation is working hard to sponsor projects that bring our neighborhood together as a community. The beautiful glowing lights along the more than two-mile stretch is just one way that we can show our neighborly pride. The spectacular scene was not only enjoyed by our residents, but also by the spectators heading downtown to the tree lighting ceremony, Pacer fans, and all of our out-of town-guests visiting for Thanksgiving. Our thanks to **Melissa Oesterle**, who spearheaded this effort, and all the other neighbors who put out the luminaries, lit them, and afterwards picked up the bags.



Judy O'Bannon, chatting here with Melissa Oesterle, generously donated five trees, which were planted in Alice Carter Park, this past fall.

Real Estate Roundup

By G.B. Landrigan, Realtor*

	Meridian Street	Pennsylvania Street	Illinois Street	Side Streets
Currently on the Market	6 available	2 available	3 available	1 available
Average List Price	\$600,633	\$472,450	\$216,266	\$289,900
Pending Sales	0	1	2	0
Closed Sales	8	9	5	8
Average Sales Price	\$680,987	\$504,111	\$231,780	\$316,059

Indianapolis Area Average Sales Price (Jan-Oct): \$143,972

The above statistics were gleaned from the Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of Realtors as well as personal knowledge of certain private sales. These statistics do not include private sales of homes not known by this writer.

**For each issue of News & Views, G.B. Landrigan provides this column for our newsletter. Many thanks to him for this feature, which constantly draws comments from readers. G.B. can be reached at: Century 21 Realty Group, gb@landrigan.com, or 767-0774.*

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