

Matfield Matters

VOL. II, ISSUE I

MATFIELD GREEN, KS 66862

SUMMER 2011

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Your tax dollars at work

New water system on tap for Matfield Green

Plenty has been going on in Magical Matfield Green, even if we have not been here to write about it.

High on the list of good stuff happening is the renovation of our City water supply. The City pumps Matfield's water from two wells in the South Fork of the Cottonwood River. We are fortunate to have a good supply of high quality water available to us. However, after more than 50 years of service, the delivery system needed some attention. The City Council has been working for several years with Bruce Boettcher of B.G. Consult-



Lots of planning and funding have made this possible

ants, an engineering firm in Emporia, to determine the necessary improvements, draw up plans, and figure out how to fund the project.

For the past several months, residents may have noticed “signs of

progress.” Ditches were dug to install some new and larger water lines, several new fire hydrants were installed around town, and most visible of all, our venerable old water tank was retired. That

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HISTORY TIDBIT

Most long-time area residents are aware that the main route through town was known as Highway 13 before it became Highway 177 in 1965, but did you also know that the route has an even earlier history as a stage, mail, freight and immigrant trail between Council Grove and points to the southwest, including El Dorado, Wichita and Fort Sill in Indian territory?

Update from the Editor

I apologize for the delay in getting this issue to you. You may have heard that Kathy and I have been on a journey of a different sort at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, fighting an eight-month bout with lymphoma. The good news on June 20 from my doctor, Michael Wang, a world-class specialist in lymphoma and myeloma, is that I am in complete remission! We are grateful for Dr. Wang's expert care as well as that of the MDA staff. And we deeply appreciate all the prayers and support we have received over these past months from family and friends. We are, thankfully, back in Matfield Green and ready to “resume speed!”



Dr. Wang & Phil Miller



New fire station and community room

Good news on the Matfield Green public safety front! Mark Davis, Chief of the Chase County Fire Department, announced that bids were opened May 31 by the Chase County Commission for the construction of a new County Fire Station in Matfield Green. Ken Dreier of Americus was the contractor with the winning bid.

Mark said some years ago that he would not retire as Chief until he had a new station built in Matfield Green. Well, we're hoping he won't retire anytime soon, but the new Fire Station is just a few months from being completed. It will be built on land (just east of the old ball diamond) generously donated for the project by long-time Matfield resident John Rogler.

Adding to the excitement of this new building for residents is the addition of space for a Community Room. Individuals have been soliciting contributions to pay for our portion of the building and to add kitchen appliances, tables and chairs. A big



Heavy equipment in northeast Matfield Green signals the start of the fire station construction project.

boost to the fund raising effort came from the former Matfield Green Day committee, which donated \$5,000.

Anyone wanting to help out with a donation to this exciting new project may send their check payable to the City of Matfield Green to: Teresa Talkington, City Clerk, 301 Orient Street, Matfield Green, Kansas

66862. Contributions to this project are tax-deductible.

Christmas in July

Here's an idea for Christmas giving...and with plenty of time for you to drop hints to your Santa. We have a limited supply of the treasured Matfield Green Railroad Day caps. (Actually, they are left over from the last Matfield Green Day, September 2004, and are still in perfect condition!) Get yours now! Caps are available in red with a black bill and tan with black, wine, or royal-blue bills. Cost: \$15 each or two for \$25, which includes postage and handling. Profits from sale of the caps will go to the new Community Room project. To order, email flint-phil@wheatstate.com or call Phil at 620-753-3447. Be the first (or second) on your block to have one...or two! Money back if not satisfied.



Milestones in Matfield Township

90th birthdays and other accomplishments take the cake this summer

The **Tallgrass Spiritual Retreat Center** celebrates its 10th Anniversary with a Party on the Prairie on June 25th. Congratulations to **Rev. Billie Blair**, the Pastor in the Pasture, for her ten years of ministry in the Flint Hills!



Kudos are also in order for Matfield resident, **Emily Hunter**, Executive Director of **Symphony in the Flint Hills**. Emily, along with the Symphony Board and Staff, hundreds of volunteers and the Kansas City Symphony produced for the sixth year another spectacular Symphony in the Flint Hills event on June 11th. With 5,000 tickets selling out in less than 30 minutes this spring, those lucky ticket holders and another 2,000 attendees, including patrons, educational presenters, vendors,



The 10 Billion Beats community drumming circle is just one of hundreds of events that have taken place at TSRC in the last decade.

volunteers and musicians, enjoyed a perfect day of education and music on the prairie of the Fix Pasture near Volland, Kansas. Symphony in the Flint Hills has quickly become the premier arts event in Kansas. Thanks for all your hard work, Emily!

The year 2011 marks the 90th birthdays for three Matfield Green community friends. **Eugene Talkington** reaches 90 on July 5, beating **Charlie Swift** to the mark by one day, as **Charlie** turns 90 on July 6, and **Ila Swift** will be 90 on November 15.

We're thinking a card shower would be a nice way to

recognize these super-senior citizens. Here are their addresses if you'd like to honor them with a card:

Eugene Talkington (July 5)
102 S. Madden Ave.
Matfield Green, KS 66862

Charlie Swift (July 6)
436 R Rd
Matfield Green, KS 66862

Ila Swift (November 15)
105 N. Madden Ave.
Matfield Green, KS 66862

Pretty amazing to have three new 90 year-olds in one year in a little town of 65 people (more or less!). Matfield MUST be a good place to live...for a long time!



The Chase County recycling trailer will be in the parking lot of the Matfield schoolhouse on 7/19, 8/16, 9/20 & 10/18

New water system *from Page 1*

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New water tank arises on the west side of Matfield Green. It officially went into service at 10:05 pm on Saturday, June 11, 2011. [Photos by Jim Worster]

tank spent the first portion of its life in an oil field before its transformation in the 1950s into a water tank—but still indicating its contents in barrels!

Replacing it is a used tank the City purchased from a Marion County Rural Water District. It has undergone a complete restoration by a firm in Concordia. The new tank sits high on a hill overlooking our fair city, on the west side of the railroad tracks, just northwest of

Little Egypt Street.

So, how does a little town like Matfield Green do a necessary project of this importance and size? In our case, we were fortunate to receive more than 70% of the project's \$300,000 cost in the form of two grants ... one from the State of Kansas' Federal Community Development Block Grant and another from the Rural Development program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. To cover the re-

maining portion of the project cost, the City took out a low-interest loan from USDA, which will be repaid by residents in their increased water rates. It is the hope of the City Council that these improvements will adequately provide for our water needs for decades to come.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the new system should be fully functional!



Those who serve

Projects like the new water system would not be possible without the support of local citizens, most of them volunteering their time.

Six dedicated Matfield Green residents were recently elected to two-year terms to

serve on the City Council. Donnie Swift begins another term as Mayor. Serving as City Council Members are Tom Armstrong, T.W Burton, Katherine Dean, Phil Miller and Randy Talkington.

The City has three part-time

employees: City Clerk, Teresa Talkington; Treasurer, Lisa O'Brien; and Jim Worster, who looks after our Water System.

Our community extends a big thanks to each of you for your faithful service.

The living is juicy: a celebration of summer food traditions by Marva Weigelt

At this time of year I go a little crazy. One might be tempted to say that I take leave of my senses, but in truth I come fully into possession of my senses, or am fully possessed by them, in this gloriously sensual season. I let the sticky nectar of ripe fruit dribble down my chin. I smile with corn in my teeth and a luxurious layer of sweet cream butter shimmering shamelessly across my dimples. My shirt-fronts are artfully drip-dyed in shades of pink, red and yellow. I attempt to eat to the exact midpoint between bliss and belly-ache.

In the sum-sum-summertime I feel as if I could live on a steady diet of seasonal delights: corn on the cob; squash with sweet onions; new potatoes with butter and parsley; tomatoes with garlic, basil and balsamic vinegar; pickled cucumbers and onions; lightly salted watermelon; peaches and ice cream; strawberry-rhubarb pie and ice cream; or ice cream for its own sake. I am thoroughly sated by

the earthy delights that have sprung from branch, stalk and vine, with very few embellishments. I boycott anything that comes in a can.

One hot July afternoon I stopped by Charlie and Betty's place to see what was on offer. Just that day they had harvested five bushels of cucumbers, ten times that amount in sweet corn, and a fair number of tomatoes. The two of them were sitting in their favorite chairs outside the garage, betwixt them a wheelbarrow heaped with corn, shucking and cleaning their own share of the takings, which was destined for the freezer. I don't know what I was thinking, but I only bought half a dozen ears of corn and five pounds of tomatoes. By nightfall we had virtually decimated the whole lot.

Gluttony ought to be stricken from the list of deadly sins during July and August. This bounty from the garden is at the peak of flavor now; it will not wait for those who set a

dainty pace of consumption. Three ears of hot buttered corn and two tomatoes at one sitting is not, in my opinion, excessive. One afternoon at five o'clock I ate, on a whim, a piece of strawberry-rhubarb pie, which was so devastatingly tasty that I promptly ate another slice. I did not feel the need to be forgiven. A few hours later I ate a plateful of watermelon, rinsed the plate and reused it for yet another piece of pie. This was my evening meal—not a traditional, civilized adult meal, more like the five-course dinner of a kid left unsupervised for the evening. Every single course was zinging and screaming with a brilliant sweetness to which I enthusiastically abandoned myself, humming a few bars of "No Regrets."

Twenty-four hours after the previous visit, I was back at Charlie and Betty's—for a dozen-and-a-half ears of corn this go-round—and I was not a minute too soon. They'd sold forty dozen ears that day, and had only a half-wheelbarrow-load remaining. Just like that, the corn-on-the-cob season had come and gone; already Charlie had mowed down the stalks. The tomatoes were just getting revved up, however, so I bought another five pounds.

With such astonishing bounty on hand, this is also the season to think about provisioning for the winter ahead, to gather and wash the dusty Mason jars, to haul down the stockpot and canning kettle, to

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Juicy living *from Page 5*

blanch, peel, chop and simmer the fragrant, radiant harvest. The recipes I follow or invent are an attempt to sneak up on fresh vegetables and herbs at the peak of flavor and trap them in jars—the genie of summer in a magic lamp, released in the depths of winter to grant our wishes for extravagant flavors from another season.

Summer's abundance can be overwhelming. This is the time of year for the prolific *Cucurbita pepo*—the summer squash known to us as zucchini. A Google search with the keywords *zucchini/zucchini* yielded 1.8 million hits, including this recipe:

The Best Zucchini Recipe Ever!

- 1 bushel zucchini
- 1 raincoat
- 1 pair of sunglasses
- A moderately fast car

I've been told that August is the only month during which rural church-goers lock their cars on Sunday—to prevent exactly the sort of clandestine activity this recipe suggests. According to my calendar, August 8 is *National Sneak Some Zucchini onto Your Neighbor's Porch Day*.

Despite their foreign origins, cucumbers, which came to our gardens by way of the Far East, are not far behind the zucchini in productivity, as Charlie and Betty will be happy to tell you.

This week I've canned sixteen pints of my favorite relish, an old family recipe with which I've taken a few liberties. I started by lovingly assembling my heirloom *Universal Food & Meat Chopper No. 1*. The design

for the chopper was first introduced in 1897 and remained unchanged for the next 68 years; the company went out of business in 1965. This kitchen implement, beautiful in its utilitarian simplicity, was not passed down to me with written instructions, yet my hands seemed innately to know how to put it together. As I turned the crank with one hand and fed a cucumber into the chopper's shiny maw with the other, each revolution of the handle took me deeper into my childhood, bringing my grandparents back to life and transporting me to familiar kitchens distant in both miles and time. This is pure magic that cannot be had, I am certain, from any machine that plugs into an electrical outlet. I expect my relish to have similar magical properties.

I worry sometimes about the 79 percent of Americans who are living in cities. The citizens of cities lock their cars all the time, so there's scarcely a chance one of them would ever find two grocery sacks of unsolicited zucchini in the back seat, let alone rise to the challenge of transforming ten or twenty pounds of indigenous squash into hearty meals and fanciful desserts. Lots of metropolitan kids probably wouldn't know a zucchini from a zebu, nor are they likely to have seen vegetables enter the kitchen with stems, roots or dirt intact. How many of them will cook from recipes passed down for generations or own a canning kettle and a clever jar-lifter? What will they do when they want to get in touch with the food memories of

their ancestors, as I did by cranking the handle of my Universal Food & Meat Chopper? Will those pathways lead back to gardens, aprons, kitchens and mysterious root cellars or only to grocery store aisles, frozen dinners and the drive-through lane at a fast-food restaurant?

The relationships that deeply nurture and sustain me are those that are most intimate—bricked and mortared by a familiarity and closeness accumulated through personal investment over time. Intuitively I assume the same to be true of food: the greatest sustenance is to be had from ingredients grown close to home by people I know, including myself, and prepared for the larder or the table by loving hands, often with a rather intensive outlay of time and energy.

In the midst of the most abundant season of the year, I wish everyone rich garden earth under fingernails, sweet corn defiantly lodged between teeth, favorite old shirts splotted with vivid tomato stains, a shelf full of magic in Mason jars, and deep roots that tap straight down past bedrock and into the sweetest of summer's life-giving juices.

Marva moved west to Newton this spring but is still helping us edit and lay out the Matfield Matters newsletter. This article is excerpted from a slightly longer version that first appeared in her newsletter, Tall-grass Tales, in the summer of 2005. You can keep in touch with her by email at:

marva.weigelt@gmail.com

Visitors now pulling into Matfield Station



Many of us have watched over the years as Bill & Julia McBride and Pat Moss lovingly worked on restoration of the 1924-vintage Santa Fe Railroad bunkhouse on the north end of Matfield Green.

The culmination of those efforts and their vision is the availability of three efficiency apartments for rent by the day or

week (or even longer) for travelers and vacationers.

Matfield Station, as they're calling the project, is listed on VRBO.com (#362132) as being "great for artist retreats, bird-watchers, hikers, trainwatchers, or just for peaceful weekend get-aways, vacations, or sabbaticals."



Each fully-furnished apartment offers a porch on the front and a deck on the back, with trains passing by just 50 feet from the back decks. Each unit also has air-conditioning for summer and radiant floor heating for winter, as well fully equipped kitchens. All linens are provided.

Keep in mind that this is also a great place for your overflow company for holidays and reunions. There are several local vacation rentals now available in the Matfield Green vicinity. For more information about Matfield Station or other guest accommodations, call 620-953-2035



What's happening at Pioneer Bluffs

A busy summer is underway at Pioneer Bluffs, including a tribute on July 16 to the Kansas Sesquicentennial. "Trails Day: Celebrating 150 years of Trailblazing in Kansas" will feature live music, historical presentations, artifacts and good food! For more information and to make reservations, go to www.pioneerbluffs.org or call 620-753-3484.

The Pioneer Bluffs Garden is in full swing with lots of volunteers tending the garden and harvesting vegetables each week for nearly 30 subscribers to its Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project.

Beginning in July through September, The Gallery at Pioneer Bluffs will feature the paintings of native Kansas artist, Zak Barnes. Zak is well-known

in the Chase County area for the many Flint Hills scenes he's painted over the years. Keep up with the gallery at: www.pioneerbluffs.org/gallery/artgallery.html

And, circle October 8 on your calendar! It's the 4th Annual Pioneer Bluffs Fall Festival (formerly known as the Hog Roast). It's a big deal... you won't want to miss it!



Matfield Matters

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What's Cookin' at the Hitchin' Post

Big changes are coming for Matfield's venerable 'best hamburger' bar and grill. The Hitchin' Post will be going to seven-days-a-week operation come July.

Hitchin' Post owner **Susan Hardesty** is adding a key employee, **Polly Mitchell**, who will take the operation over on Sunday through Wednesday

while Susan will be in charge Thursday through Saturday. Polly has recently moved into the Matfield community, loves to cook and plans on adding a few new dishes to the menu, such as grilled chicken and chef salads.

Along with the good food, The Post will feature musical entertain-

ment on two nights in July and two in August. On July 3 the **RKO Blues Band** will take The Post stage, followed by the **Shrine Hillbilly Band**

on July 30. On August 7 country band **Re-wind** will furnish the music and then on August 27, Susan will be celebrating her Seventh Anniversary as Hitchin' Post

Grill-meisteress with music by the **Jazz Kats**.

So, a busy couple of months at Matfield Green's Exit Four. First Sundays will continue to be Motorcycle Sunday, but, don't forget...the Post will now be open Sundays and Mondays. Stop in, say hello to Polly and enjoy her new menu offerings.



Matfield Community Church has issued its annual "Summertime Challenge," offering

members and friends the chance to make a financial gift to an organization doing good work in the world. The recipient of this summer's contributions will be Heifer International, a non-profit organization whose goal is to help end world hunger and poverty through self-reliance & sustainability. See www.heifer.org for more information, or come to worship any Sunday this summer to add your gift to the effort!

Join us for worship on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. Note that the Last-Sunday-of-the-Month Carry-in-Dinner will NOT be held in July and August, but will resume on September 25.