



# Browncroft Crier

NEWSLETTER OF THE BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SINCE 1973 - Volume #213

P.O. Box 10127, Rochester, New York 14610  
<http://browncroftna.org>

Spring 2024

## BNA Executive Committee

### Officers:

President

Frank Fields

Vice-President

Cassy Petsos

Secretary

Sara Castro

Treasurer

John McQueen

### District Reps

Elm

James Nicholson

Corwin

Holly Petsos

Croydon

David D. Kaiser

### BNA Email:

contact page on <http://browncroftna.org>

### Crier Editor -

Cassy Petsos

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## BNA ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 14, 2024

7:00 P.M. at the  
Peace of Christ Parish  
553 Humboldt St.

**Guest Speaker: Cynthia Howk, Retired Architectural Research Coordinator for the Landmark Society of Western NY will give**

**“Discover Browncroft: A Beautiful Part of a Beautiful City”**



This illustrated talk will focus on the Browncroft neighborhood and its relationship to



the development of the City of Rochester during the early 20th century, when the city expanded, through annexation, to its current boundaries.

Local history, architecture, cultural influences, and expansion of mass transit to outlying areas, such as Browncroft, the 19th ward, and Maplewood will be featured.

### Matters of Business

Election of Officers for 2023-2024

Treasurer's Report

Reports and Information Sharing

2024 BNA Events Planned

Refreshments and Social Gathering

## BNA OFFICER NOMINATIONS

### President

A candidate for President is being sought.

### Cassandra Petsos, Vice President

“Cassy” is looking forward to continuing as an officer in the Vice-President position. She has lived in Browncroft her entire life and has been involved in neighborhood work most of that time as a member of BNA since its first year, working on beautification, traffic, zoning, historic preservation, and the newsletter. She says that Browncroft has been a wonderful neighborhood to grow up in, and she hopes the characteristics that made it that way will continue long into the future.

### John McQueen, Treasurer

John has graciously agreed to continue on as BNA Treasurer. He has done an exceptional job keeping the account and membership log up-to-date, providing the Board with financial statements, and keeping the bills paid. He and his wife, Kathy, have lived in Browncroft for 42 years and have loved it from the start. John says “The physical appeal of the neighborhood (beautiful homes, yards, streetlights, streetscape), the urban location and the friendliness of the neighbors make Browncroft the premier spot in the City. Our four children enjoyed where they lived and made lifelong friends here.” John is retired. He was a lawyer with Nixon Peabody since 1977. He is a volunteer with other organizations, such as the Rochester Public Library.

### Sara Castro, Secretary

Sara has been the BNA Secretary since 2022 and has graciously agreed to continue in this position. She and her husband Mel

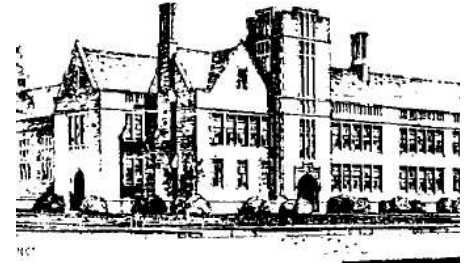
## SCHOOL # 46 HAS BEEN RE-NAMED

The Rochester City School District voted on February 12 to rename Charles Carroll School to Austin Steward Elementary School. Six other schools were renamed honoring African American men and women of historic significance to the community, as well, at the Board of Education meeting.

Austin Steward, who was born a slave in 1793 in Virginia, was brought to New York State by his master, William Helm, who hired him out to other employers. He escaped to Canandaigua c.1813 where he did farmwork in the summer and attended Farmington Academy during the winter. Although Helm found him in 1815, Steward was able to remain free due to taking

have lived on Beresford Rd. for 40 years. They have three children, two of whom attended #46 School, and 7 grandchildren. Before retiring approximately four years ago she was a dental hygienist for 26 years, returning to college in her forties, then working as a Physician Assistant for 18 years at Unity Hospital. Her interests include reading, hiking and traveling with friends.

She says “We love city living, especially in our beautiful Browncroft neighborhood. So many conveniences: exceptional elementary school, public library, easily accessible bus route, restaurants, drug and grocery stores, banks, post office, hardware store and dry cleaners. All within walking distance! Not to mention the street lights, sidewalks and stunning magnolia trees that complement the beautiful architecture of our homes.”



advantage of the state’s Gradual Emancipation Law of 1799 with the assistance of the New York Manumission Society.

Steward came to Rochester c.1817 and opened a successful grocery store, in spite of racial hardship, and taught “Sabbath” school in the city. In the late 1820s he served as the subscription agent for *Freedom’s Journal and the Rights of All*, as well as a vice-president at the first black national convention in 1830. He was very involved in the abolition and temperance movements, and gave an oration at the July 5, 1827 ceremonies celebrating New York State slave emancipation.

In 1831 he left Rochester for the Wilberforce colony, but returned in 1837 and opened another business and he was appointed to oversee black schools in the City. After his business was destroyed by fire, he moved back to Canandaigua c.1842 and taught school.

His impressive resume continues throughout the 1800s until his death in 1865. His work as an abolitionist and educator predates Frederick Douglas in Rochester. It is fitting that he has a school named in his honor.

*This information was gleaned from the “Documenting the American South” website whose source was “The Black Abolitionist Papers: Vol. II edited by C. Peter Ripley, et al © 1992 by the University of North Carolina Press.”*

# ***BNA EVENTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2024***

## **The Shaded Browncroft Garden Walk**

The Browncroft Neighborhood is graced with lovely homes, mature trees, plantings and gardens. Before we became a residential community, the land was the site of the Brown Brothers Nursery which



cultivated flowers and fruit trees to be sent around the country in the early 1900s. In the last few years, residents have organized to replant shade trees to ensure that future generations are able to enjoy the shade canopy that, most of which, current residents have enjoyed as a result of trees planted 100 years ago.

We are celebrating this ongoing legacy of unique greenspaces with “The Shaded Browncroft Garden Walk” on Sunday, June 16th, from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

The tour will begin at 312 Beresford Road where a flyer with a map of participating homes will be provided at the welcome table.

This year we will be asking for a contribution of \$5.00 per person or \$15 per group with all proceeds to benefit “Shaded Browncroft” and the planting of new trees to regenerate the historic Browncroft landscape that is a legacy of the Brown Brothers Nursery Company.

The historic Browncroft Rose Garden, situated in the middle of the neighborhood, will be en route as tour goes travel north and south to see the private gar-

dens. Please help us get out the word by inviting your friends and neighbors to join you on the walk.

This is your opportunity to showcase our beautiful community in all of its varied forms by welcoming visitors to enjoy your greenspace. If you would be willing to open your garden, please sign up by Friday, June 7th, and describe it’s features.

In addition, the hosts will be invited to a special thank you private garden tour and get-together on Wednesday, June 19th, from 6 to 8 p.m. starting at the Rose Garden and ending at 312 Beresford Road for light refreshments. This is just for the hosts, to give them an opportunity to see the other gardens, too.

Finally, if you know of any garden or yard that should be on the tour, please contact one of the Garden Walk committee members:

Patrick Phillips 315-525-8648  
mpatrickcphillips@gmail.com

Joyce Nagle 585-362-1415  
joycemnagle@gmail.com

Jim Nicholson 585-482-1084  
jrn2800@yahoo.com

## **Family Picnic**

**Thursday, July 18th**

**5:00-8:00**

**Hazelwood Grove Lodge  
- Ellison Park**

**Free for all BNA families**

**Bring a dish to pass**

Plans are underway for the Annual BNA Family Picnic scheduled for Thursday, July 18th at the Hazelwood Grove Lodge at Ellison Park.

What could be better than gathering with friends and neighbors on a summer night for grilled hot dogs and a delicious variety of dishes to pass!

The Events Committee will be meeting in early May to begin organizing this popular event. We welcome your input especially in organizing children’s activities. If you would like to join our committee or have questions about the picnic please contact Ann Kanthor at [bnaevents2@gmail.com](mailto:bnaevents2@gmail.com). More details will be shared soon!

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## **Movie in the Park Saturday, August 17th**

George Grevin is planning another film viewing in August in the Browncroft Rose Garden with refreshments.

Movie begins at night-fall when there is darkness. The title has not been determined. Suggestions or requests can be submitted to BNA’s website.

Raindate is August 24th.

## DID YOU SEE IT?!

Well maybe not. But the Solar Eclipse on April 8th was there behind the clouds, evident only by the fall of darkness that occurred at 3:20 p.m to the cheers and clapping of neighbors who gathered in the 46 School Playground or Browncroft Rose Garden to share the moment.

Despite the disappointment of not witnessing the moon's shadow and the sun's corona, neighbors seemed happy to be with family and friends and meet neighbors at this once-in-a-century happening.



**Browncroft Rose Garden**



**46 School Eclipse Activity**



## NEW BOOKS FOR NEW STUDENTS

The Browncroft Neighborhood Association has a tradition of giving a fall welcome gift of 2 books to every kindergarten students at #46 School. In recent years books have been purchased at the Hipocampo Children's Book Store. We will be collecting donations for the 2024 class at the Annual BNA meeting on May 14th. You can also send or drop off a donation ( checks made out to BNA) to Ann Kanthor at 175 Dorchester Rd. Rochester, NY 14610. Your support of this project is greatly appreciated!

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## REMEMBER: HISTORIC TAX CREDITS MAY BE AVAILABLE

Before starting your home improvement projects this season know that there are tax credits for residents living in the Browncroft Historic District, which is situated from Merchants Rd., southerly to Blossom Road, through the Division of Historic Preservation (SHPO) of the NY State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. To find out if your project is eligible for a 20% income tax credit you can contact the Division staff at 1-518-237-8643 and request to speak to the staff person who handles Monroe County. The staff is very helpful at facilitating the process and getting you signed up. You can also access instructions and application forms at <https://parks.ny.gov/>

Photos at 46 School - courtesy of Anna Pensgen and Kathy Edelman

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## TREASURES FOUND BY OWNER IN CORWIN HOUSE

Jeff and Margaret Leathersich discovered some treasure in the walls of their bungalow style home at 121 Corwin Road while doing home improvements, and shared them with the BNA History Committee.

[Browncroft has very few bungalow style houses, which were popular at the turn of the 20th Century and featured many interesting arts and crafts details.]

The treasure consisted of pictures of the house under construction and pictures of the owners, Walter and Mary Freeman. This find piqued Jeff's curiosity and he has delved a little into the lives of the Freemans to discover, along with the photos, some anonymous love letters to Walter, a divorce, and Mary moving on to care and support her children. She became a successful female broadcaster – probably the first in Rochester – as the Director for Female Programming for WHAM Radio, and lived to be 100 years old.

Here are some of the pictures Jeff had digitized to share with us. If anyone has more information about the Freemans, please share with BNA and we will pass it along.



121 Corwin Road front



Margaret Freeman at WHAM



121 Corwin Rd. from rear - note streetlight at left

## HISTORIC BRIGHTON GROUP HOSTING LEANDER MCCORD TALK

Years ago what is now Browncroft was in the town of Brighton.

The June 16 meeting of Historic Brighton will feature 1920s architect Leander McCord, who designed many homes both in Browncroft and in Brighton.

The meeting will be held **Sunday, June 16 at 2 p.m. at Brickstone Winter Garden at 1325 Elmwood Ave,** next to Joey B's Restaurant. All are welcome.

This is another opportunity for homeowners to catch this lecture previously given by Zoom to BNA during covid times.

[www.historicbrighton.org](http://www.historicbrighton.org)

## MAY/JUNE EVENTS AT THE WINTON BRANCH LIBRARY

**5/9/24 2:00-3:00 pm: Eldercare Guidance for Families and Advocates** presented by the Elder Justice Committee of Metro Justice of Rochester

**5/14/24 5:30-6:30 pm: Gardening with Native Plants** presented by Cornell Cooperative Extension

**6/11/24 5:00-7:30 pm: Summer Music Party!** Free snacks, face-painting, balloon sculpting, Summit FCU prize wheel. Music provided by Blue Sky Band starting at 5:30

**6/18/24, 5:30- 6:30 p.m..** "Shipwrecks of Lake Ontario" Presented by Jim Kennard, who has been diving and exploring shipwrecks since 1970.

## Go Green.

Spring is the time when we think environmentally because it is the time the beauty of nature seems impressed upon us the most. So here are a few reminders we all can do in a neighborhood setting to be green now and throughout the summer:

-Think of your yard as a habitat for birds, bees and other insects and plant native trees and flowers for pollinators.

-Plant trees to clean and cool our air and beautify the neighborhood. Diminish lawn areas.

-Refrain from using pesticides and herbicides on the lawn that kill good insects and the birds that eat them, and are health threats to pets and yourself.

-Pick up litter that happens onto your yard and front public right-of-way, and detracts from the beauty of the community.

These things will bring us and our natural world a little closer.

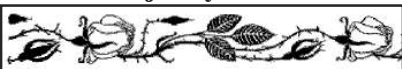
*Happy Spring*

## Spring Clean-up

**Browncroft Rose Garden  
Saturday, April 27th  
10:00 a.m.  
(Rain date May 11th)**

### Many Volunteers Needed

**Please come and bring your tools: pruners, loppers, weeders and hoes. We have rakes. No experience needed, just you!**



# CITY OF ROCHESTER 2024 PROPERTY TAX REASSESSMENT

City property owners whose property valuations went up since the last assessment are concerned about the 2024 City wide reassessment that will be final May 1st when the City files it with the State of New York.

Since everyone received their reassessment notices in late 2023, the City has distributed two brochures explaining the periodic reassessment requirement, how property owners could contest their reassessment if they felt it was inaccurate as to what the market value of their house would be, and conducted public information meetings in each of four city quadrants. March 19th was the last day to file a complaint to contest the amount.

The City has explained that, although a property's assessment may go up, the increase in assessed value may not necessarily increase that property's tax in many instances. This is because taxes are based on the total amount of money the City needs to fund the budget (the tax levy) divided by the total assessed value of all the properties in the city to come up with the tax rate per \$1000. If the total value of all the City's properties went up and the tax levy remained the same, the rate per \$1000 would go down. Of course, not all valuations of city property would go up. Some will go up while some will go down based on what properties were sold for in the last three years. The reassessment will reapportion what is collected equitably.

We all know that Browncroft homes have been selling quickly and buyers have bid the prices up to live here – it's a beautiful neighborhood of single-family, owner-

occupied properties. Also, North Winton Village has been reported as a highly sought after neighborhood in national newspapers. But we are not the only neighborhoods to see an increase around Rochester. So I asked Michael Zazzara, the City Assessor, about that, as well as other post-assessment questions, and here are the answers he was kind enough to supply:

1. Which neighborhoods increased in value, which neighborhoods remained the same, and which neighborhoods decreased in value. Can you give us the answers to those questions either from general knowledge, or is there software at your disposal that sorts assessed value by streets?

Answer: The city is divided into 132 different market areas or value neighborhoods. Every one of the 132 value neighborhoods has seen an increase. The areas that had seen the largest increases were in the northeast such as Beechwood, 14621, and Marketview Heights.

2. Are the new assessed values already showing on the real property information site?

Answer: The new assessed values will not be uploaded to the Property Information page until we complete the formal grievance period known as the Board of Assessment Review. They are still considered tentative values until we file the Final Assessment Roll with New York State on or around May 1, 2024. The tentative values are available in a searchable text document under 2024-25 Tentative Assessment Roll. <https://cityofroch->

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# KATHY BOYLE TO ASSUME ROLE OF HOSPITALITY CHAIRPERSON

BNA has been without this important position filled for many years.

Kathy has been unofficially doing the work for the past year, ensuring the meetings are cordial with refreshments. Now she is anxious to work on providing welcome packs of information to new neighbors about the neighborhood amenities, businesses and history.

This is an important job and she will need volunteers to help. Please contact her: [knboyle84@msn.com](mailto:knboyle84@msn.com).

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## Reassessment

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[ester.gov/assessment/](http://ester.gov/assessment/)

3. Will the photos be updated soon, and if so will the 1995 photos be archived and accessible somewhere, whether in your system or with the City Library/Historian's website?

Answer: There are no plans to update the photos city-wide. With other resources such as Google Maps, which provides street and aerial views, it doesn't make sense to incur the cost. However, some photos get updated. Our Appraisers are equipped with tablets they take out into the field when doing work. When they visit a property for a sale inspection or a permit review or new construction, they take a photograph and that automatically updates when they return.

4. Though the time to contest an assessment is up, and the City has to submit their final numbers

to the state in May, can the assessment change for a given property between city-wide reassessment time periods for any reason?

Answer: You are correct, the filing deadline for a formal grievance was March 19, 2024 and we have to file our Final Assessment Roll on May 1, 2024 with New York State. The only way we can change an assessment on a property between city-wide reassessments is if there is a physical change to a property such as new construction, additions, fire damage and splits/merges of properties. The only other reason is if our data or inventory of a property is significantly incorrect. If a property owner in between reassessments feels that their home is over assessed we can review it and can make a change.

5. Is there anything additional that you feel should be known or understood?

Answer: We have mentioned it at every neighborhood meeting, assessments can go up, but owners can still see a tax decrease. It depends on the percent of increase for that particular property. Many owners in the city that had an increase in assessment will see a tax decrease.

For further information visit the Assessor Bureau's page: [Cityofrochester.gov/assessment](http://Cityofrochester.gov/assessment)

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## Tax Credits

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[shpo/tax-credit-programs/](http://shpo/tax-credit-programs/). Scroll past the income properties and go to the "Homeownership" category. The Landmark Society, [\[marksociety.org/oldhousehelp/\]\(http://marksociety.org/oldhousehelp/\), will also help you through the process for a fee.](http://www.land-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Basic requirements to be aware of:

1. The applicant must own and live in the house.  
2. The house must be in an historic district listed in the New York State and National Register of Historic Places and is in a qualified census tract (Browncroft HD qualifies)

3. The rehabilitation expenses must be \$5,000 or more with a minimum of 5% of that spent on exterior work.

4. All projects must be approved before work is begun in order to assess compliance. Any work that is inconsistent or deleterious to the historic architecture of the house would not be included under the tax credit.

Typical projects can include wall repairs, masonry, chimneys, stairs, interior and exterior, roofs, central air and heating systems, plumbing, electrical and lighting, interior and exterior finishes but excluding artificial siding. The work can include doors and windows, excluding vinyl. You must check with SHPO to see what would qualify, or not qualify, and then submit your paper work.

Not eligible for tax credits are: changes to the original materials, landscaping, fencing, additions and work on what is not part of the original structure because the purpose of the program is preservation.

This is a tax credit, so the savings on a minimum \$5,000 project would be \$1,000!

# A WARM WINTER GATHERING

January 26th marked the return of BNA's *Winter Gathering* at Glendoveers. Friends and neighbors gathered for a delicious buffet dinner and warm camaraderie.

Many thanks to The BNA Events Committee including Ann Kanthor, Kathy Boyle, Jane Way, John McQueen, Cathy Smith, Sara Castro and Cassy Petsos for taking the initiative to plan this event.

One of the highlights of the evening were the many raffle items donated by area merchants.

BNA wants to thank the following merchants for their generous contributions! We are so fortunate to have these businesses in our neighborhood and we hope that you will reciprocate their generosity when you are out shopping or looking for a place to dine.

## MANY THANKS TO:

Winfield Grill

Silver Iguana

Captain Jim's

Mayer Hardware

Balsam Bagels

Khong Thai

Cuisine

Euphoria Liquor

Wild Flour

Rizzi's Restaurant

jensArtisan breads

China Garden

Kitchen

Pasta Shoppe

The Hive Beetique

Lucky's Restaurant

Mark's Pizzeria



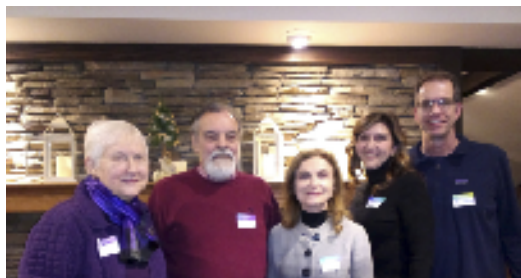
Cathy Smith & John McQueen to Welcome



Party Planners Kathy Boyle, Cathy Smith, Jane Way



President Frank Fields & Pat Fields



Beresford Rd. Group