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Gary & Diana Ditto's Newsletter

Fall 2020

Kensington's New Murals Creating Beauty and Community

By Antoinette Kranenburg

The bridge on Frederick Avenue was the place to be this summer. Over the course of three hot August weeks, brilliant wildflowers emerged from Nicole Bourgea's brushes and paints, along the low walls framing Frederick Avenue where it crosses Silver Creek.

Drivers slowed down to look, fascinated walkers stopped to chat. "Nice to meet neighbors like you!" Bourgea greeted a neighbor, as she seamlessly continued to work and answer questions.

Commissioned by Kensington's Greenscape Committee, the mural welcomes people to the Clum-Kennedy Park and highlights Kensington's garden town character. The one-acre park between Kensington Parkway and Silver Creek is across from the Queen Anne house, where the three daughters of newspaperman Cornelius Clum were born, grew up and lived most of their lives.



Nicole Bourgea at work (unmasked for the photo)

When Helen, Mary and Bertha Clum grew up there were fields, farms, woods and creeks to explore in and all around Kensington. When the Second World War ended development in the area took off, and in 1947 the sisters bought the overgrown land.

The avid gardeners gradually created a peaceful garden, with curving paths, flowering shrubs, plants and wildflowers. Most mature trees in the park started as seedlings they found or given by fellow gardeners. The grape arbor near Frederick Avenue was created with wild grapes the Clum sisters dug up from a soon to be developed block on Kent Street.

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THE DITTO GROUP
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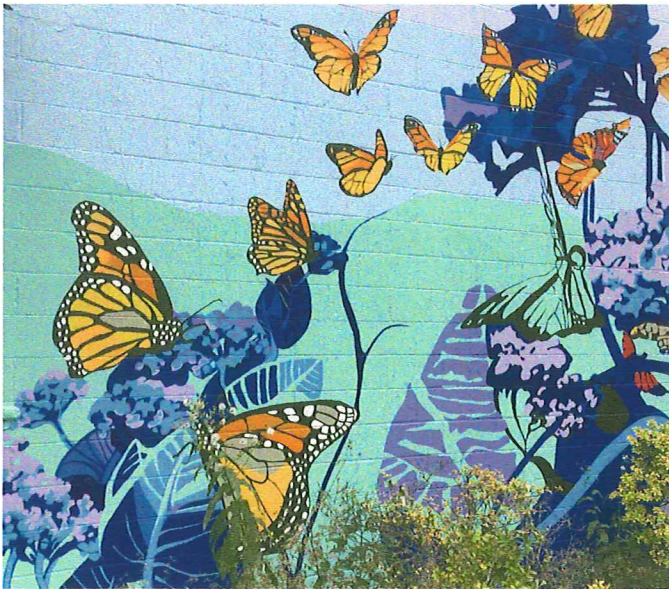
— Murals continued

Bertha, the youngest of the three, enjoyed painting local scenes and kept journals, handwritten in pen, with drawings of wildflowers and notes of where she found them. Bertha Clum's gardening journals inspired Nicole Bourgea's design for the pair of murals.

"Finding wildflowers is not all luck, you have to keep your eyes open" Bertha Clum twines through the luminous wildflowers – Jack-in-the-pulpit with its bright red berries, trout lilies, Joe-Pye weed, bluebells, daisies and more. It is first sentence of one of Bertha journals and resonates with Bourgea. "It is about caring, about diversity, how each note and color brings out the others."

Bourgea wants to bring art to people right where they live. "Beauty is our birthright!" By design Bourgea's projects in Kensington and around the Washington area have something unexpected. She intends her murals to invite interaction and create community.

Community members were part of creating the fabulous mural on the Jubilee Association's building on Montgomery Avenue. Jubilee provides opportunities and support to adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Bourgea chose the monarch butterfly migration to illustrate that we rise by lifting others.



The Monarch Butterfly mural at 10408 Howard Avenue

Nicole Bourgea is a DC native, born in Providence Hospital, and the oldest of three girls. The sisters grew up in Washington Grove, a historic county town near Gaithersburg. There were gardens and wild nature to explore, a lake to jump into, snapping turtles to find.

Close in age and best friends, her sisters went along with her wild schemes. Their mother is an artist and teaches at Brookewood School. They used her paintings as backdrops for the shows they put on for the neighborhood.

She and her husband and five children live in Homewood. Evenings and weekends are family time. When told that she gets things done, Bourgea says she is "pretty Type A for an artist."

Bourgea shares that when she was 22 and an overwhelmed new mother, she became friends with Jean Reasoner Plunket, the granddaughter of the artist Abbott Thayer and a successful portrait painter in her own right. Then in her eighties, Plunket encouraged her "It isn't easy being a Mom and an artist, but I did it!"

Bourgea appreciates that Kensington is diverse and has sense of history, but it is not stodgy. "It is an art town, with a community of artists and makers to connect with."

In Bertha Clum's later years, her friend and neighbor Frank Kennedy helped her to maintain the garden. In 1984 Bertha sold the Clum Garden to the Town for a nominal fee, with the request that it be named in his honor.

After Bertha's death, in 1987, the garden was renamed the Clum-Kennedy Park.



Visit www.nicolebourgea.com, find her on Facebook at Nicole Bourgea, call (240) 393-3360, or email nicolebourgea@gmail.com.

Bertha Clum's Journals



From Thirtyseven Years of Gardening 1947 1984 by Bertha Clum

The Kensington Historical Society printed Bertha Clum's journals, which are kept at the Archives. Julie O'Malley, guiding light of the Historical Society and the Archives, remembers that it was Lorraine Kennedy, Frank's wife, who hand colored the illustrations.

The Clum sisters volunteered and supported our community life and organizations throughout their lives. By becoming a member you support the work of the Kensington Historical Society, which is all-volunteer including the Kensington Archive, a wonderful resource.

Membership is \$20 per individual, \$30 per family. To join please go to www.kensingtonhistory.org

Staying High and Dry

Gary Ditto on dealing with water issues

What to do about ground water issues and wet or damp basements? During my 40+ years working as a Realtor that is what I am asked consistently. Given the increase in torrential downpours, I know that many homeowners struggle with this issue.

Participating in over 2,000 home sales, each accompanied by a home inspection, I soon learned that 90% of water problems can be successfully resolved by the following:

- 1. Gutters that are clear of debris.** Typically, gutters should be cleaned and flushed with a hose twice a year – once in late fall when the leaves are down and in late spring after the pollen has dissipated. There are many options for “gutter guards” if you wish to investigate some of the systems in the marketplace. Many customers have been very happy with products they have chosen.
- 2. Gutters downspouts that “carry” the water away from the house.** I heartily advise downspout extenders that are buried in the ground.
- 3. Creating a positive grade of clay-content soil around the exterior of your home.** This will allow ground water to flow away from your house, not towards it. A landscaper can bring in the clay content soil and regrade the exterior or you can have some delivered and do it yourself.
- 4. Window wells should be kept clean and should elevate approximately 6 inches above the earth.** Ground level window wells are an invitation for water to penetrate. Be sure that the bottom of the window well is several inches below the window. Covers are very useful. Some window wells require a custom cover to be built. It is important to have a good seal, so check the covers periodically for damage or leaking. Installing a drain or a sump pump in a window well is also a consideration.
- 5. Tree branches overhanging the house and gutters should be trimmed as much as possible.**
- 6. Exterior stair wells often have a drain at the bottom, which should be routinely cleared of leaves, twigs, etc.** I have seen many homemade “guards” created by homeowners to help large debris from filling this important drain – from mesh netting to upside-down colanders. It is important to keep this drain clear and having it “snaked” by a plumber once in a while is a good idea.

The above solutions will resolve most water issues and they are not expensive. It is a good idea to start with easy solutions before investigating the expensive ones.

Diana and I have lived in our house for almost thirty years. During that time, I have raised the grade around the house at least four times and elevated the window wells once.

The earth around the exterior of any house continuously compacts. I suggest that you carefully walk the around your house looking for evidence of any of the issues listed

A great way to check to see how the water is pooling or moving away from your home is to don a raincoat and a good pair of boots during a storm or during a 3-to-4-day rainy period and take a walk outside and examine the perimeter of your property. You will be able to see where you need to add more soil, where water is collecting on your property, and where you need to take action or remediation.

I frequently see houses with plant-beds framed with timber or brick walls surrounding portions of the house. It is often the case that these “beds” have created a catchment area that traps rainwater and channels it down the foundation wall into the basement. Mulch and top soil can create the illusion of a positive grade, but both hold water and can be part of the problem. It is important to make sure that you have a positive grade away from your foundation in the bed, so that water does not drain into your basement.

For severe water issues, if all else has failed, you may need to consult a water proofing company. If you go this route, I suggest that you do a lot of research as it is complicated, costly and not always a sure thing.

Water proofing companies usually recommend the installation of a drain tile system in your basement that directs the water into a drain where the water is then pumped out by a sump pump. During a major storm or hurricane, you may lose the electric power to your house, so you will need a battery back-up or even a whole house generator so that the pump will operate in the event of a power outage.

A few weeks ago, we had a severe drenching that delivered 4 to 6 inches of water in two hours. It was an unbelievable amount of water in a short time frame. Sump pumps have a pipe that is approximately 2 inches in diameter most cannot keep up with a deluge of this force, which is why I think it is important to follow all of the guidelines above to keep your home safe from water penetration.

Feel free to call us (301-215-6834), and we will be glad to stop by your house and offer our comments if you wish.



QUESTION: Would you like to receive the Ditto Group's newsletter by email? Please send your request to: Gary @thedittogroup.com.

Gary and Diana Ditto's Newsletter welcomes ideas and news items from community members. We are grateful to Nicole Bourgea and Julie O'Malley. The editor is Antoinette Kranenburg of Kensington, assisted by Cherry Wunderlich.



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The Ditto Group Real Estate Activity



4520 Saul Rd
 Parkwood/Kensington
 Under Contract - \$959,000



8811 Walnut Hill Rd
 Chevy Chase Hills/Chevy Chase
 Under Contract - \$908,000



4101 Byeforde Ct
 Byeforde/Kensington
 Active - \$825,000



9830 Capitol View Ave
 Capitol View Park/Silver Spring
 Sold - \$679,000



3004 Fayette Rd
 Homewood/Kensington
 Coming Soon - \$650,000



10416 Drumm Ave
 Homewood/Kensington
 Sold - \$620,500



3121 Plyers Mill Rd
 Oakland Terrace/Kensington
 Sold - \$590,000



2801 Jennings Rd
 Oakland Terrace/Kensington
 Sold - \$540,000



3706 Astoria Rd
 Newport Hills/Kensington
 Sold - \$437,500



12618 Epping Rd
 Glenmont Hills/Silver Spring
 Active - \$399,000

Looking forward to the Train Show's return?

Check out *All Aboard! — a Virtual Celebration of the Kensington Train Show*. This great new video is filled with the sights, sounds, stories and delighted folks that surround trains.

Have a look: <https://sites.google.com/view/kensington-historical-society/welcome>.