

GABRIEL'S REBELLION

(Adapted loosely from An Illustrated History of Bryan Park, by GW Poindexter (2003) published by Friends of Bryan Park.

In the late 1700s, Gabriel was a slave at a plantation owned by the Prosser family in Henrico County, northwest of Bryan Park. He was a blacksmith, in his mid-20s, described as tall, strong, and intelligent. The year 1800 was a year of turmoil in Virginia; George Washington had died in 1799, and an upcoming presidential election sparked contentious debates about the appropriate role of the new nation's government, states' rights, and the quest for freedom and equality from slaves, indentured workers and women.

In Richmond that summer, social unrest was near the boiling point. Surreptitiously, Gabriel and a dozen more leaders frequently met at Young's Spring, just downstream from Young's Millpond (where the lower dam is today) to plan an insurrection. They devised a three pronged attack: one group would set fire to the warehouses at Rockett's Landing; a second group would storm the penitentiary and its powder magazine; and a third would seize Governor Monroe. They had recruited more than 500 sympathizers, and planned to strike late Saturday night, August 30th, but an enormous storm that night blew out the Brook Road bridge, and the rebellion was postponed for the following evening.

By Sunday morning, word of the plot began to spread. Church and school bells tolled the alarm, conspirators were rounded up, and Gabriel fled into the Chickahominy Swamp. On September 23rd, he was captured and jailed in Norfolk. He did not testify at his trial, and was hanged on October 10th, the last of twenty-seven conspirators to go to the gallows.

Derome Scott-Smith, the founder of the Richmond African-American Repertory Theater and a theater/drama teacher at George Wythe, has been commissioned by Friends of Bryan Park to write a one-man play, imagining a monologue Gabriel might have made while in prison. It speculates on his burning desire for freedom, recreates the planning for the plot, describes his perilous undertaking, and ruminates on the nature of captivity.

Each performance, in Bryan Park, will begin at twilight, by torchlight; and certainly will thrill you and chill you. Because it will be weather-dependent, please check our website for upcoming performances.



**The Bryan Park 2110 Time Capsule -
Would you like to write a letter to the Future?**

Friends of Bryan Park will be burying a 100-year time capsule on Saturday, September 25th, 2010, as part of the Centennial Celebration for Joseph Bryan Park

This Summer, we are inviting all City students (K-12) and citizens to submit letters for consideration to be enclosed in the time capsule, and asking them for suggestions about what item(s) they would like to include in the capsule.

The entries should include three main subjects:

1. In about 100 words, tell us about yourself, your age, the neighborhood where you live, and what you like to do.
2. In 100 to 200 words, tell us what you think the future will be like, 100 years from now.
3. Tell us what item you would like to see included in the time capsule.

Judges will select the 100 most interesting letters submitted and identify the best 10 items you suggested for placing in the time capsule.

All entries must be submitted by August 31st.

Either send an email, to timecapcontest@friendsofbryanpark.org or send by US Mail to: FoBP Time Capsule Contest
P.O. Box 15481
Richmond, VA 23227-5481



FoBP Accomplishments -- 2009

- Park Inspection Walk with City Park Managers
- Weeded & cleaned upper pond riparian buffer
- Worked with "Riverines" Master Naturalists to control invasive plants
- Worked with Wooster Alumni and St Christopher students on Park cleanups
- Exhibited FoBP materials at VEGGIEFEST in June
- Fourth annual Ice Cream Social in July
- Printed Bryan Park Note Cards (three sketch-scenes of Park)
- Continued work on FoBP Adopted Triangle in Azalea Gardens - placed benches
- Worked with Sportsbackers and Ukrops for water/rest stations for race runners and night bike ride through park.
- Printed 2 FoBP newsletters
- Monthly maintenance of Wildflower garden
- Met with Henrico County Environmental Department about reducing urban trash and erosion and sedimentation in Upham Brook watershed (about 10 square miles)
- Worked with Chesapeake Bay Foundation and regional college students on "Alternative Spring Break" (community service projects rather than beach get-aways)
- Constructed permanent paved area around benches at Helen Bryan Norman garden
- Martha Stewart Radio features JBP Azalea Gardens on weekly Secret Gardens Program
- Held Astronomy nights in park in August and September

**City Council issues Resolution recognizing
100th Anniversary of Joseph Bryan Memorial Park.**

Third District Councilman Chris Hilbert invited Friends of Bryan Park, Bryan Family members and friends to attend the Centennial recognition and resolution ceremony at the January 11, 2010 Council meeting.



*Friends and Supporters of Bryan Park
(left to right): JR Pope, Parks and Rec Dept Director; Councilman Chris Hilbert, Sally Chamberlin*; Donna Lacy*, Bonnie Somers, Eileen Tangly; Bucci Zeugner*, Nancy Baker*; Rick Sinsabaugh* (behind Nancy); Susan Ridd*; 'Trudy' Bryan, Barbara Taggart; Berta Bryan Boccock, John Zeugner* and Paula Phipps (* denotes current board member)*

Bryan Park Pond Repairs Completed!

We'd like to congratulate the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities for completing the substantial repairs to the lower pond and the Azalea Garden Pond. At the lower Young's Pond, the deteriorated western and southern pond walls were replaced with concrete poured-in-place retaining walls, finished with a cobblestone-impressed pattern (see detail below). Furthermore, on the bridge/spillway between the upper and lower ponds, about half of the concrete bollard posts, damaged over the decades, were replaced with nearly identical replicas! The City, the Parks and Rec Department, and the contractors, Bryant Construction Co., should be commended for such a successful rehabilitation project.



They also did an excellent job of cleaning out the sediment and aquatic vegetation that had overwhelmed the Azalea Garden pond, and restarted the fountain in the center.



Outstanding work, thank you ALL!