

EMORY GROVE and WASHINGTON GROVE SELF-GUIDED HISTORICAL TOUR



Johnson Park/Ball Field **18000 Washington Grove Ln, Gaithersburg, MD 20877**

The land for Johnson Park was purchased in 1947 by Edward Johnson, a wealthy resident of Emory Grove. He built a baseball field with stands, dug-outs and lights on which barnstorming Negro League teams played regularly in the 1940s and 1950s. Johnson Park was also the site for the Emory Grove Camp Meetings attended by thousands of African Americans throughout the mid-Atlantic region through much of the 20th century. There was both a tabernacle (outdoor worship facility) and a dance hall that stood on the property of Johnson Park that were frequently used by the old Emory Grove Community. The land became the property of MNCPPC as part of the failed urban renewal project that razed the Emory Grove community.

The Longview School (now called South Lake): 18100 Washington Grove Lane

The Emory Grove Consolidated Colored Elementary School was built in May of 1950 to consolidate elementary education for African American students in the local region. Significantly, this was 4 years before the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. The school was named by a fourth-grader, Shirley Duvall of Emory Grove, who recognized that one could then see almost to Damascus from the windows of the new school. The school is currently being used as a holding school for schools being renovated or rebuilt. It is currently occupied by South Lake Elementary School and houses 875 students, hence the 32 modular classrooms behind the building built in 1950 for 200.

World War II P.O.W. Wall: intersection of unmarked lane to Emory Grove Cemetery near 18100 Washington Grove Lane at 39.1522592, -77.1649258

During World War II, the Allied forces faced a dilemma: what to do with hundreds of thousands of POWs. Prison camps in Europe were overflowing. So thousands of prisoners were loaded onto ships and sent to America, about 425,000 in all between 1943 and 1945. Mostly Nazis, but some Italians, they were incarcerated in more than 500 prison camps across the U.S.

About 13,000 ended up at Fort Meade, just outside Annapolis Junction in Maryland. They were not to sit idly. Area farmers were desperate for help with millions of men overseas, so they began petitioning the Army to use prisoners as day laborers in canneries, mills, farms and other places deemed minimal security risks. The Army agreed, and eventually set up 19 POW camps across the Maryland countryside, filled with able-bodied prisoners ready to work.

Two hundred of them were brought to a camp in Emory Grove, just outside of Gaithersburg. Tents had been erected, and military police stood guard along the fenced perimeter—26 armed soldiers under the command of two officers. The Walls at the entrance of the Emory Grove UMC Cemetery (the same road that was used for the entrance of the POW Encampment) was built by those POWs.

Emory Grove UMC Cemetery walk down the : intersection of unmarked lane to Emory Grove Cemetery near 18100 Washington Grove Lane at 39.1522592, -77.1649258.

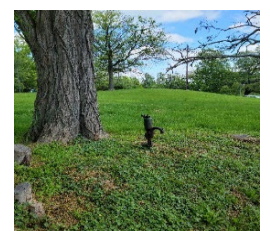
The Land for Emory Grove UMC Cemetery was donated to the church by Edward Johnson who also owned what is Johnson Park. The oldest grave that can be seen (there are almost certainly older ones) is from the late 1800s. Edward U. Taylor, the de facto superintendent of Colored Schools before desegregation, after whom the Edward U. Taylor School in Boyds, MD is named, is buried prominently with his family. The cemetery is actively used to this day.



Upper County Community Center **8201 Emory Grove Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20877**

The murals on the front of the Upper County Community Center contain paintings of former residents and business owners who lived in the Emory Grove Community (i.e., Cromwell's, Duvall's, Johnson's, and Tyler's).

Mrs. Braxton's Well: 39.1491012, -77.1678752. – Other than the Emory Grove United Methodist Church, Mrs. Braxton's well is the only other remaining artifact from the original Emory Grove community. The pump is located on Emory Grove Road, directly across the street from Emory Grove United Methodist Church.



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Emory Grove United Methodist Church 8200 Emory Grove Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Emory Grove Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1874 by community members shortly after the establishment of the town. The congregation later (1939) became a part of Methodism's Central Jurisdiction, an all Black church within the Methodist denomination, until The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968. This building was built in 1903 for approximately \$3000, and was renovated in 1961 to include a basement Fellowship Hall and kitchen, as well as the parsonage next door which had been originally built in 1911.

The church is now a leading partner in the redevelopment of the town which will feature the church as the historic center of the town and the addition of new housing.

Boundary Street: intersects with Washington Grove Lane between Fair Haven and Towne Crest Drive, across the street from Mercy Seat Chapel

Boundary Street forms part of the northern boundary of Washington Grove. It dates to 1878, when the Grove purchased a 5-acre parcel along the east side of Washington Grove Lane. The property adjacent to Boundary St. was owned by Rufus Clark, whose family was active in Washington Grove.

In 1976-1977 a proposal to install a sewer along Boundary St. to facilitate the development of apartments and townhomes on the north border of the East Woods was rejected by the WG town council. This led to the resignation of the Mayor Philip K. Edwards, who wrote "The possibility, however slight, of a harmonious, and mutually beneficial relationship with our neighbor was dashed, in my mind, when that vote came out as it did."

Intersection of Grove Ave/Washington Grove Lane

The first Washington Grove Camp Meeting was in 1873 (see entry under WG Sacred Circle). In 1876, the Camp was surrounded by a perimeter fence, a continuous wall of chestnut boards. In the early years relations with the Emory Grove community were cordial: in 1879 the *Sentinel* reported that the Association invited the Emory Grove Association to worship at Washington Grove. By 1897, with Jim Crow practices endorsed by the U.S. Supreme Court (*Plessy vs Ferguson* 1896), things had changed. The trustees voted to close the gates of the Association during the Emory Grove Camp Meeting. Thus, the Sunday-dressed attendees coming by train to the Emory Grove Camp were required to walk along the dusty road (now Washington Grove Lane) to Emory Grove to attend camp meeting.

In 1972, there was still no sidewalk along Washington Grove Lane. According to Edwards the road was "particularly treacherous. There was no shoulder, and the yards dropped off sharply from the road." Emory Grove children used the route to walk to the junior high school, while adults used it to access jobs or transportation in Gaithersburg, or to go to the 7-11 in the Grove, the only grocery within walking distance. The County planned a 'temporary sidewalk' (an asphalt strip, lacking a foundation) which was supported by some in the town, including the Mayor, but vigorously opposed by residents along the route. The Town communicated to the County conditions that it knew would kill the project. As a result, the County built a sidewalk right up to the northern boundary of Washington Grove. A decade later, an agreement was reached to continue the sidewalk route through the town boundary.



Washington Grove Train Station 100 Railroad St, Washington Grove, MD 20880

The train brought thousands to the Emory Grove and Washington Grove Camp Meetings. Originally there was a simple 'depot' to receive passengers, but in 1906, a new station was built to accommodate the larger number of visitors.

Edwards's description of the 1906 station demonstrates the Jim Crow policy in Washington Grove at that time: "It featured separate men's and ladies' waiting rooms, each with a pot-bellied stove, separated by the ticket office a window for each for the men and ladies, and one outside for blacks."

Washington Grove Sacred Circle: 39.1411660, -77.1744034

In 1873 a number of D.C. churches, led by the Foundry Church (Methodist Episcopal) of Washington D.C. organized the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association which had 400 shareholders the first year. The first Camp Meeting took place in August 1873 with several days of rain followed by sun with an estimated 5000-8000 visitors. The following year there were 250 campers in tent sites placed around the circle and radiating outwards on the avenues. That year there were a reported 10,000 visitors. Activities included meeting, praying, singing, and attending multiple sermons each day. At the end of the evening

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sermon, converts would come forward while the congregants sang “Almost Persuaded”. An open-air tabernacle was constructed on the circle in 1877, in service until 1905. It was replaced by the Auditorium in Woodward park. Camp meetings were phased out between 1924 and 1928.

Tent sites around the circle and up the avenues were gradually replaced by cottages, often constructed with African American labor. The Washington Grove Superintendent from ~1883 to ~1893 was an African American W. A. Scott who first appears in the treasurer’s records in 1878, and was described by Milburn (who wrote an early *Reminiscence of Washington Grove*) as having been a “pioneer cottage builder” in the early 1880s. Scott built many cottages in Washington Grove, including the house he lived in, but did not have the opportunity to own it, presaging the racial covenants that prevented anyone but white people to own houses in Washington Grove for decades. Again, likely a result of Jim Crow, he was replaced with a white superintendent in 1893. Emory Grove residents were also employed by Washington Grove residents as groundskeepers, housekeepers, and childcare ‘maids’/nurses. J.H. Nugent performed ‘scavenger service’ for many years visiting each cottage three times a week to collect the ‘night soil’. He was paid at the rate of \$1.50 per day in 1914, which included additional chores to make up a full day’s work. This would be about \$43 in 2022 dollars. Underpayment of African Americans was the norm in all lines of work. For example, in 1917, African Americans teaching in the segregated ‘colored schools’ (such as the ‘colored school’ named “Washington Grove School” located in Emory Grove) were paid a little more than half of their white peers of similar training and experience.

Washington Grove United Methodist Church 303 Chestnut Ave Washington Grove, MD 20880

The Washington Grove Methodists had been using McCathran Hall as their chapel from the time it was built in 1901, but the building increasingly was also used for Town functions. The congregation needed a place of their own and so acquired the site on Chestnut Rd in 1948. Funds were raised and the church was built in 1954.



McCathran Hall 300 Grove Ave, Washington Grove, MD 20880

McCathran Hall was built in 1901 to serve as a chapel and gathering place for residents, originally named “Assembly Hall” and renamed in honor of long-serving Mayor Irving Leroy McCathran in 1957. With its formal dedication on July 4 1902 came the first Washington Grove Chautauqua. The Chautauqua movement arose out of a Methodist Camp Meeting in Chautauqua NY, and was aimed at cultural enrichment. It featured a series of presentations on various secular topics: philosophy, science, home life, travel, humor, music, drama. Well known lecturers would travel the Chautauqua circuit and make a stop at Washington Grove. Example topics in 1904-1905 were “stereo-optics and moving pictures,” “civic bacteriology”, traveling to the Matterhorn, “the Ideal Woman”, “Reveries of a Bachelor”, “The Great Hendrichson: magician and shadow graphist”, “Costumes of the people of Russia, Japan, and Greece”, impersonations by Ellsworth Plumstead, J. Franklin Caveny the “Famous Chalk Talker, Artist, Humorist, and Lecturer”. A lecture of likely racist stereotypes titled “Uncle Rastus” was “so popular that numbers of persons had to be turned away.”

The Chautauqua programs proved so popular that an Auditorium with larger seating capacity was built in 1905. The Assembly Hall continued to be used for religious services until 1954 as well as for Association (Camp Meeting having been dropped from the name in 1906) and Town Meetings and occasional other functions.

Washington Grove was incorporated as a town in 1937 and the first Town Meeting was held on July 10 of that year. In 1996 an addition to McCathran Hall was undertaken to provide for additional office space, restrooms, and housing of archives. Today, McCathran Hall is used for Town Meeting, Council meetings, voting, musical events, special lectures, films, the Town Holiday Show, Summer in the Parks, and private events sponsored by town residents.

Woodward Park/Auditorium Center St at Grove Rd., Washington Grove, MD 20880

Behind the tennis courts in Woodward Park is the location of the former Auditorium, constructed in 1905 to serve the growing Chautauqua summer events. Seating capacity was 1400. Some more Chautauqua topics included “Theoretical and Actual Power of the King of Great Britain”, “John Paul Jones”, “Pamahasikas ‘Birds and Dogs’ (live animal show), “Halley’s Comet, Wonder of the Heavens.”



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But also included were racist interpretations of plantation life such as “Old Plantation Days” and “Mammy’s Reminiscences”. After the Chautauqua years, the Auditorium continued to be used for shows and entertainments.

A popular event was the annual Minstrel Show, which first appeared in 1908 put on by Washington Grove residents. After spending most evenings of August in rehearsals, the shows took place around Labor Day. A big parade beginning at the train station went down Grove Avenue to the Circle and then on to the Auditorium. In the Washington Grove archives is a photo taken in 1916 of about 40 men, most dressed in white pants and shirts with bow ties and their faces in “blackface” taken at the Auditorium. The event was published in all the newspapers including performers and songs performed. One song “When Uncle Joe Plays a Rag” includes the line “When Uncle Joe plays a rag on his old banjo, Ev’ry body starts a-swaying to and fro, Mammy waddles all around the cabin floor.” Washington Grove was well known in the area for this event “visitors from all parts of the county attended” writes the Sunday Star in August 1910. In June, 1927, the Washington Grove band was advertised to “give a minstrel” in Germantown.

Theatre performances were a regular part of Auditorium events. There were annual performances by a group from Washington. In the 1930s, the Grove Athletic Club put on shows, for example a mystery “The Ghost Bird” in 1938. In the 1940s the “Banbury Players” put on shows. The children of Washington Grove put on a production of “Little Black Sambo.” In 1949 there was an effort to have a regular summer theatre at the Auditorium. Everything went favorably with regard to scheduling, funding, security, insurance, etc. But the stumbling block was the insistence by the Town that use of the Auditorium would be revoked “at any time if the race segregation problem was not handled in accordance with the established exclusion policy of the town.” The theatre group responded that they “could not and would not attempt to enforce a policy of segregation by exclusion of negroes from attendance.” According to Edwards, this led to the early demise of the Auditorium, which was demolished in 1963.

Woodward Park includes a basketball court, baseball/soccer field, picnic area, and playground open to all. Permits are required for groups of 10 or more.

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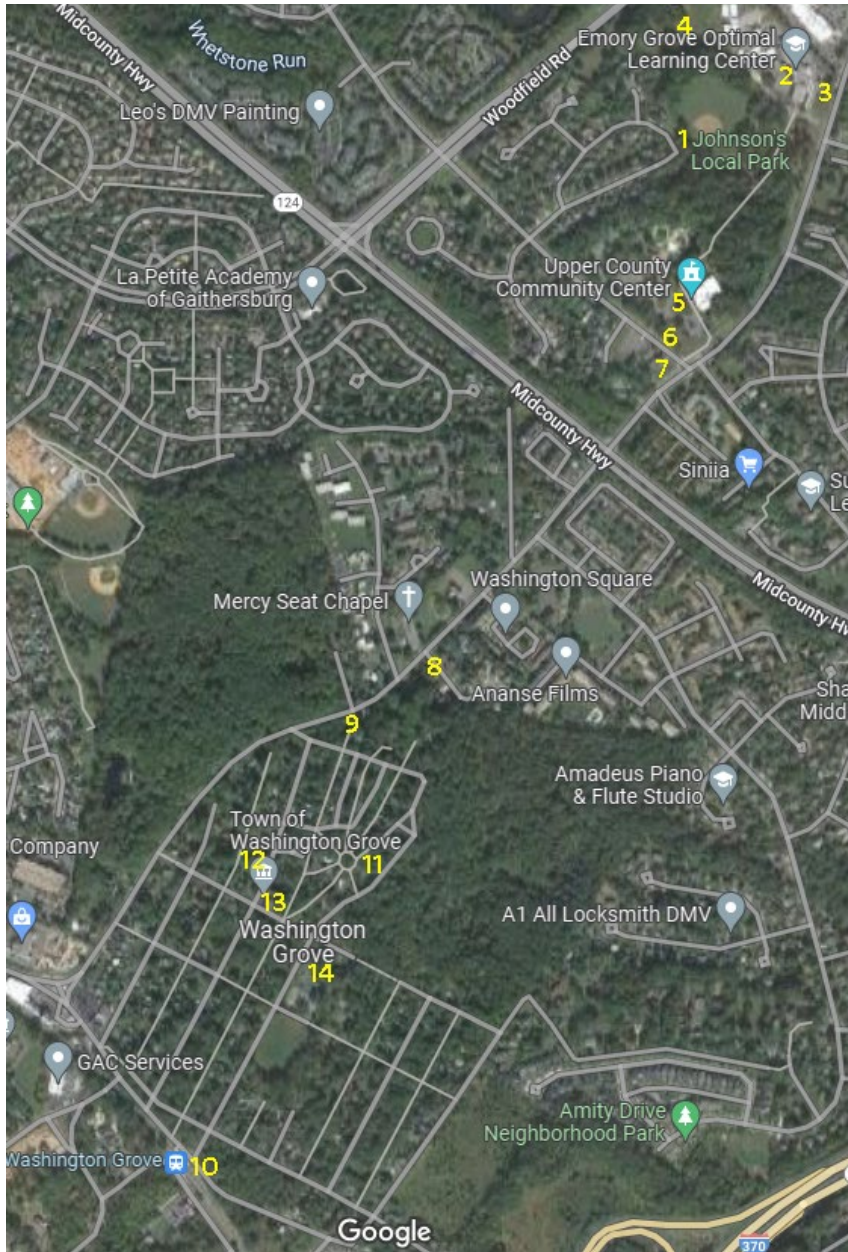
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EMORY GROVE and WASHINGTON GROVE SELF-GUIDED HISTORICAL TOUR



Emory Grove & Washington Grove Self-Guided Historical Tour

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2. The Longview School
3. WWII POW Wall
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5. Upper County Community Center
6. Mrs. Braxton's Well
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10. Washington Grove Train Station
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EMORY GROVE and WASHINGTON GROVE SELF-GUIDED HISTORICAL TOUR

18000 Washington Grove Ln

Gaithersburg, MD 20877

- ↑ Head southwest toward Emory Grove Rd
0.2 mi
- 4 min (0.2 mi)

8201 Emory Grove Rd

Gaithersburg, MD 20877

- ↑ Head southeast toward Emory Grove Rd
456 ft
- ↶ Turn left onto Emory Grove Rd
59 ft
- ↷ Turn right onto Washington Grove Ln
180 ft
- ↷ Turn right
Destination will be on the right
131 ft
- 3 min (0.2 mi)

8200 Emory Grove Rd

Gaithersburg, MD 20877

- ↑ Head southeast toward Washington Grove Ln
131 ft
- ↷ Turn right onto Washington Grove Ln
0.6 mi
- ↶ Turn left onto McCauley St
125 ft
- ↷ Turn right onto Chestnut Rd
0.1 mi
- ↷ Turn right
Destination will be on the left
85 ft
- 14 min (0.7 mi)

303 Chestnut Ave

Washington Grove, MD 20880

- ↑ Head east toward Chestnut Rd
85 ft
- ↷ Turn right onto Chestnut Rd
423 ft
- ↶ Turn left onto Center St
Destination will be on the left
66 ft
- 2 min (0.1 mi)

300 Grove Ave

Washington Grove, MD 20880