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## THE HISTORY OF THE WASHINGTON GROVE

The inception of this story dates to November 25, 1931, when the City Council committee on the Washington Bi-Centennial Celebration suggested tree planting as one of the appropriate anniversary activities for the Rochester schools. This City Council Committee moved that a conference between city authorities and the Board of Education should be arranged for the purpose of formulating procedures for the establishment of a Washington Grove somewhere in the park system. Mr. George E. Eddy, representing Mr. Herbert S. Weet at this meeting, was delegated by Chairman Wiltsie to take charge of the tree planting phase of the Bi-Centennial. It was recognized that the anniversary of Washington's first inauguration, April 30, comes at a suitable time of year for tree planting ceremonies. Mr. Eddy approached the Director of Parks, Mr. Patrick J. Slavin, with these proposals of the City Council Anniversary Committee:

That the city of Rochester, through its Park Commission, set aside an area of ground to be known as the Washington Grove.

That the opportunity for the development of this project be continuous rather than limited to the year 1932. . . .

And that the planting of shrubs and trees be made annually with appropriate ceremonies on or near April 30.

Accordingly, Mr. Slavin selected two plots of ground, one of which was destined to become the Washington Grove. The site on the corner of Highland and Monroe Avenues, a two and one-half acre area, was well situated but too small for the purpose. The other area, east of Cobbs Hill Reservoir, contains twenty-five acres. This site which stood in need of reforestation due to chestnut blight offered a satisfactory solution and the City Council on March 22, 1932, appropriated the area for development by the school children under the supervision of the Director of Parks.



At the same time the following standing committee representing the public schools was proposed by Commissioner Kittrell and approved by Commissioner Wray:

Mr. George E. Eddy, *Chairman*  
Mr. David Densmore  
Miss Josephine Hoffman  
Mr. Roy F. Johncox, *Deputy Chairman*  
Mr. Howard Lewis  
Mr. John Merrell  
Mrs. Kathryn Wright  
Miss Olive Paine

This committee met to prepare plans for the first celebration on May 7, 1932. A stone boulder beside the bridle path in the selected area was considered suitable in every way to carry a bronze marker bearing this appropriate inscription:

"This area of twenty-five acres set aside by unanimous vote of the Rochester City Council dedicated to the memory of George Washington and to be known as the Washington Grove is being reforested and developed by the school children of Rochester under the direction of the Bureau of Parks."

The park department was authorized to plant sixty sugar maples as soon as conditions of ground permitted. The bronze plaque and trees were financed through contributions from the schools.

On May 7th, dedication exercises were held at Number 1 School. The auditorium was filled with school delegates and the teachers accompanying them. The following program was presented:

PRESIDING:

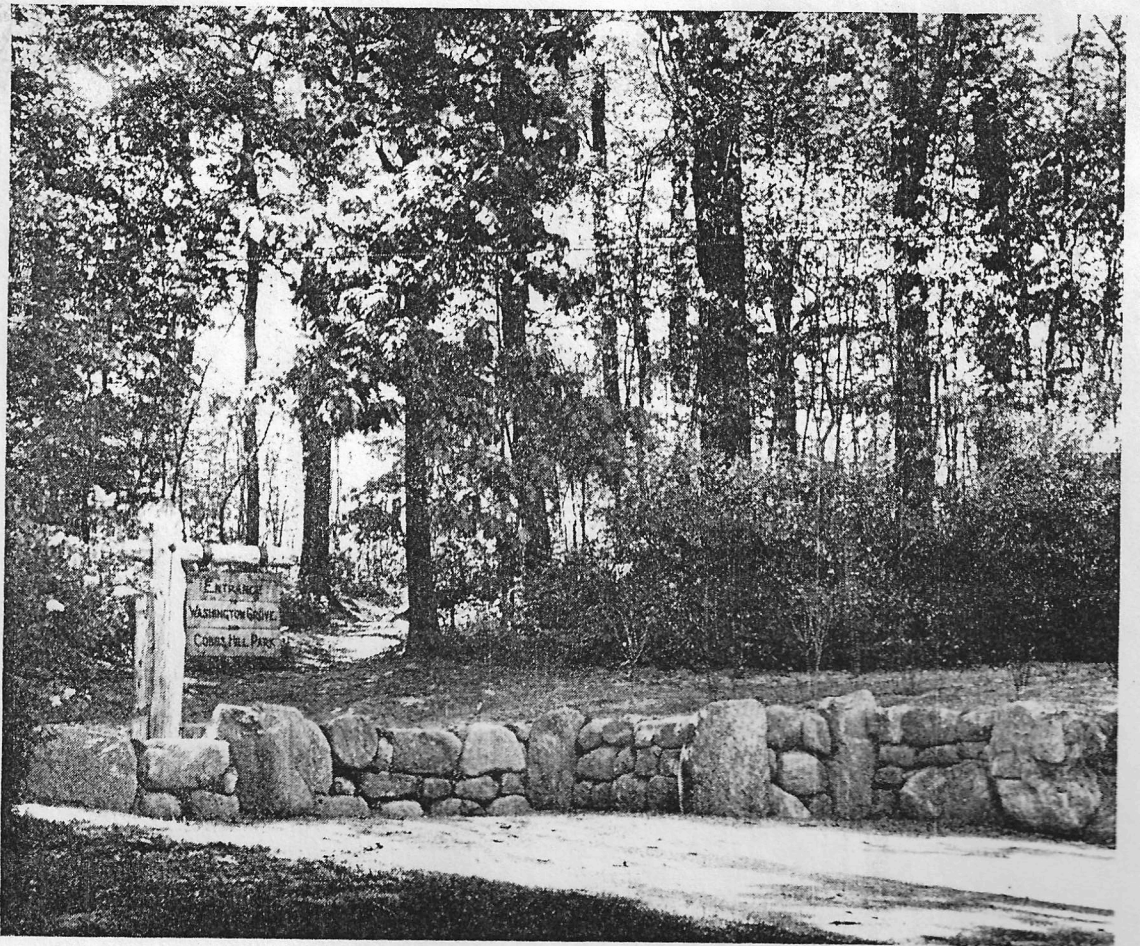
Mr. George E. Eddy, *Principal Washington Junior High School.*

ADDRESS:

Mr. R. Andrew Hamilton, *Vice-Mayor.*

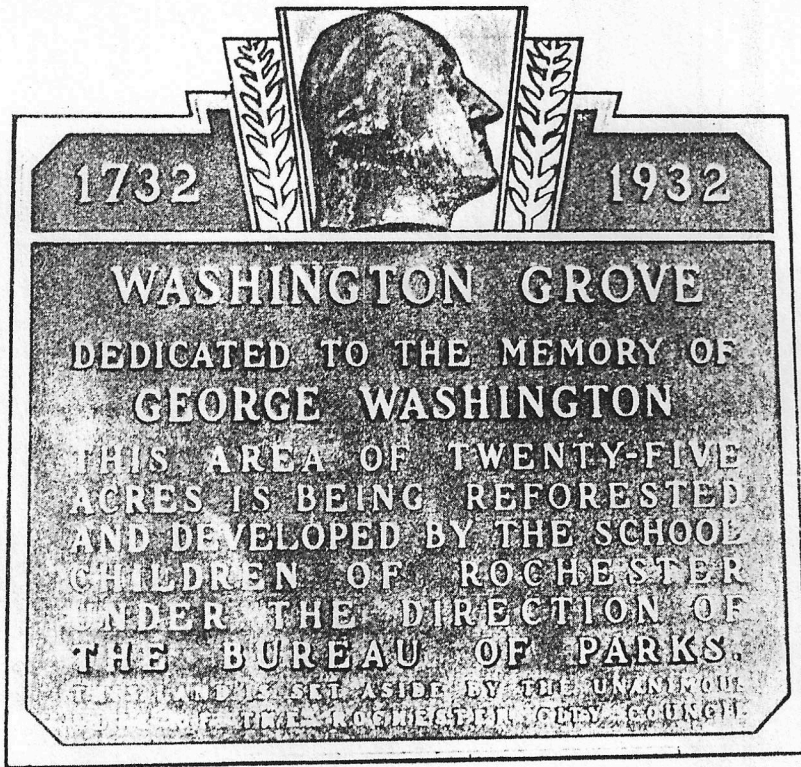


*Entrance to Washington Grove, 1932, Nunda Boulevard.*



*Entrance to Washington Grove, 1937.*





*The Plaque which records in bronze the dedication of Washington Grove.*

In the spring of 1933, it was suggested that a pictorial record be kept—showing the progress of the work in the Grove. Miss Paine was elected to act as historian of the project.

At this time 60 sugar maples were planted — one for each Public Elementary and High School. The work of planting the trees was carried on by the Park Department, Mr. Slavin, Commissioner.

The first broadcast explaining the purpose of the Washington Grove project was given over station WHAM Wednesday, April 28, 1933, at 1:30 p.m. Mr. Eddy was the speaker.

As a followup of this first broadcast Mr. James Barker, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, took pictures of the Rock, the Plaque, and the grove of trees from the west end of Nunda Boulevard. A map showing the location of the tract was drawn by Mr. Howard H. Lewis. These pictures with a frontispiece and the beginning of the historical account were bound in loose leaf covers, furnished by the Board of Education, and sent to each school to be kept and added to as a memorial. The frontispiece was designed by the Commercial Art Classes of Washington High School.

In October of this year the west end of Nunda Boulevard was definitely designated the main entrance to the Washington Grove. The next step in the development was the marking of this entrance.

The chairman was authorized to confer with the Building Department of the Board of Education and prepare a suitable design for this entrance. It is interesting to note that plans for an entrance at the particular spot chosen, were found. These designs dated back to the time Mr. Calvin Laney was Park Commissioner. In all of this part of the work the Board of Education made very helpful suggestions. These plans were studied and were finally considered inappropriate.

Mr. Eddy and Mr. Johncox, representing the Committee, met with a group of neighbors headed by Mr. Lansdale. Together they discussed the type of development that would be desirable. Mr. Storrs Barrows, architect, was suggested as one with ability to meet our needs. Mr. Barrows in turn suggested that Mr. Francis Gott, landscape architect, be



called in to help. Mr. Gott submitted plans which were approved by the Washington Grove Committee. These were again presented to the committee of neighbors and property owners in the vicinity of the Grove. This committee enthusiastically approved the plan of erecting a wall of glacial boulders and a crushed rock approach. A suitable rustic sign bearing the name of the Grove was erected. The first unit of this gateway was completed April 30, 1937. The plan calls for additional units to be built annually in accordance with the contributions received from the schools. All this is done with the counsel, approval and cooperation of the Commissioner of Parks of the city.

During these years from 1934 to 1937, there were annual Arbor Day broadcasts. The speakers became eloquent over the beauties of the Washington Grove.

Mr. Eddy, May 1, 1935: "The Grove is a beautiful woods upon a wonderful hill. It is a haven for birds and small animal life. It is a place for ferns and flowers of the wooded dell. It speaks to you of a wonderful past, it begs you to make it a glorious future for people to enjoy. What Washington Grove will become depends upon your present consideration and your thoughtful care."

In the broadcast of April 29, 1936, Mr. Howard Lewis stated that up to this time more than 300 vigorous young maple trees had been placed in the grove. He suggested—"Sometime this spring or during the summer, you may wish to visit Washington Grove. Morning is the best time. Perhaps you will enter from the west end of Nunda Boulevard or you may take a street car or subway to Colby Street, walk by Number One School, up past the scout cabin to the top of the hill where you will find set in a large rock the bronze plaque unveiled at the dedication of the Grove. Then follow one of the paths that wind in and out among the trees, down to the center of this natural wood. Once you are in among these trees, large and small, you will forget that there are city streets on all sides.

If you wait there quietly for a time, you will hear many birds, squirrels, and other small animals. You may listen to the music of the trees as the wind sways their branches. You will be conscious only of the

dry rustling leaves below, the trees and sky above, the grandeur of a forest, and language of the woodland."

These broadcasts have become a yearly event. The 1938 broadcast was the first one given from the Grove over WHAM's portable transmitter, WJEP. Mr. Harry Carpenter, Mr. Eddy and a group of students from the 7th Grade, School 3, assisted by the principal, Mr. Montfort, broadcast a conversation about trees, their care, age and how to ascertain the age. They also discussed the value of planting the Sugar Maple for the benefit of posterity.

The planting of trees in Washington Grove on Arbor Day is one of our contributions to the state-wide observance of the day.

From an economic standpoint, the sugar maple, sometimes called rock or hard maple, is the most important of the maples of this country. Its wood is used for flooring and interior finish in houses, for saddles, boats and shoe lasts. The cabinet maker is glad to get the valuable curly and bird's eye varieties of lumber often produced through irregularities of growth in the hard as well as the red maples. For fuel the sugar maple is a favorite with those who burn wood and even its ashes are useful for they are prized as a fertilizer for orchards and vegetable gardens. Toward the top of the list of its economic assets is the production of maple sugar and syrup from sap which only the sugar maple yields.

As an ornamental tree used either singly or in avenues this maple is hard to surpass. Its foliage is clean, attractive and free from insect pests. In the fall it brightens the landscapes with its brilliant coloring in yellow, orange and red. Its flowers are borne in the late spring in thick greenish clusters. By October these have developed into the well known seed keys which flutter away in the wind to lodge in some sheltered corner and appear in the spring, a host of tiny seedlings.

The sugar maple is a reliable tree, growing slowly but possessing great durability. It withstands the diseases which attack other varieties of trees and battles bravely and successfully the vicissitude of the weather.

"If the Nation Saves the Trees  
The Trees will Save the Nation."

*Charles Lathrop Pack.*