

# A new light shines on the Druid Hill Park archway and its neighbors

[Jacques Kelly](#)



Baltimore Sun |

Nov 02, 2019 | 6:00 AM



The archway at Madison Street was the entrance to Druid Hill Park until Druid Hill Lake Drive cut it off. (DIPAOLA / Check with Baltimore Sun Photo)

Not all the action in this weekend's Brilliant Baltimore Festival is downtown. Druid Hill Park's 1868 stone entrance arch will be artistically lighted Sunday

night as part of an effort to show off the neighborhoods around the lake-reservoir.

Community activists want to raise the profile of their neighborhoods — Reservoir Hill, Mondawmin and Auchentoroly Terrace.

The event, "Arches and Access," takes place Sunday from 5:30 to 9 p.m., when the lights will go on. There will also be a family-friendly light parade from the archway at 2600 Madison Ave. to the Rawlings Conservatory at 3100 Swann Drive.

The Arches and Access team is composed of Courtney Bettle and Jessy DeSantis, who live in Reservoir Hill, and Graham Coreil-Allen, a public artist who lives on Auchentoroly Terrace. Kate Jennings directs the Reservoir Hill Improvement Council.

An Arches and Access Evening Wander Druid Hill Park Walking Tour is on for Nov. 8, from 7 to 9 p.m. Participants are asked to dress warmly, bring flashlights and be prepared to discuss a "riptide of traffic priorities." The park's history is up for discussion as well as "the challenging impacts of highways on local neighborhoods as well as the engineering behind the ongoing Druid Hill Park reservoir construction."

Coreil-Allen is advocating for putting the roads on a pedestrian-friendly diet.

"I would make the large streets around the Druid Hill Park smaller, into two-lane streets with protected walking and biking paths alongside," he said. "I'd make crosswalks to the park from every side street too."

He noted that many of his neighborhood's residents take buses, walk or use wheelchairs.

"About half the residents who live around the park don't have the use of cars," Coreil-Allen said. "The 1948 Druid Hill expressway was poorly designed."

The Madison Avenue arch was completed in 1868 after a delay of two years. It was designed by the young Baltimore architect George Frederick, who was micro-managed by his world traveler boss, John H.B. Latrobe, the president of the Druid Hill Park board. When completed, it was compared to London's Marble Arch.

But Baltimore's arch was a type of stone quarried in Nova Scotia, brownish in color and designed to blend in with the park's woodland quality.

"The block was the largest ever quarried from the Nova Scotia quarry and are the largest freestone blocks ever imported to this city," a Baltimore Sun article said.

The first shipment of the stone meant for the arch never reached Baltimore.

"The vessel was never heard from after sailing," The Sun said. "All on board perished."

In 1889, Druid Hill Park was used as a test site for outdoor electric lighting, then a new technology. The park superintendent's wife threw a switch that year that turned on a series of 50-candlepower electric lamps mounted on cedar poles. The park used the Westinghouse patent electric system and used Brush Co. generators. A Sun article said the artificial lights helped brighten "heretofore gloomy pathways."

No one knows why the archway park entrance became a magnet for preachers who sought this location to speak out against the perils of alcohol. Some blasted liquor and beer, others warned against wine and one

Methodist pastor took to his soapbox to condemn hard cider.

Complaints about the roads leading to Druid Hill park are nothing new. An 1869 writer to The Sun condemned of "miserable conditions" for those arriving by horse and carriage.

"It is too narrow to be safe and too dusty to be agreeable." The writer demanded water wagons to dampen the road. The roadway was so constrained that that two carriages could not pass. "In the case of a reckless driver or a runaway, a collision is unavoidable."



Jacques Kelly came to the Evening Sun as a summer intern in 1969 and later joined The News American. He's been with The Baltimore Sun since 1986. As a local columnist and reporter, Jacques writes about neighborhoods for readers who like learning more about their city. He also writes local obituaries.

## Latest Baltimore City