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THE SOCIAL NETWORK

Annual Mapleton Hill Rummage Sale Introduces Neighbors

Mapleton Hill's Rummage Sale a True 'Social Network'

It started small and simple, but 'the sale' has blossomed into a neighborhood event that brings residents together

by Ralph Loos
Editor

What may be a mystery by the time spring of 2094 rolls around – when once again residents of North Boulder's Mapleton Hill sift through their cabinets and closets for ill-favored trinkets and trousers – is exactly how the annual neighborhood rummage sale began.

What certainly won't be known in that distant time is how the event's official logo, a simple impromptu drawing of four actual neighborhood houses, came to represent an event that began simple and small but grew into an event of festival proportions. True, thousands of neighborhoods across the country hold rummage sales each year.

But few have evolved into an unplugged version of "social networking."

"It's not only re-purposing and shuffling your stuff, which is what a rummage sale does, it has also become a chance to meet new neighbors and say hello to old ones," said Kelly Wyatt, who is credited with kick-starting the Mapleton Hill Rummage Sale nine years ago. "It's a pretty neighborhood, a historic place, and people like to get out and walk through it. The bonus is that you might find something you need for a good price."

This year's sale is set for June 9, but preparation began back in February, when Wyatt and others began their regular marketing efforts. Emails were e-mailed, fliers were flown, posters were posted and advertisements were advertised.

Of course, each of the aforementioned actions included the all-important logo.

"That drawing is an interesting part of the Mapleton Hill Rummage Sale history," said Wyatt, whose desire to unload household stuff and get to know her neighbors led to the first rummage sale. "We were making fliers for the very first sale and a neighbor just kind of jotted it down, just drew some houses. It's been on top our fliers and yard signs ever since. It just really stuck."

The logo isn't the only thing that stuck. The past few years have featured 60 to 70 houses participating, and even more eager shoppers coming in from outside the neighborhood.



The official logo of the Mapleton Hill Rummage Sale was designed by Leslie Rosenberg, who simply drew her house and neighboring houses. Photo by Ralph Loos



Youngsters in the neighborhood annually set up lemonade stands, selling drinks, cookies, candy, donuts and even gluten-free snacks. The stands have become an important part of the rummage sale. Photo courtesy of Kelly Wyatt

"I'm not sure what I started," said Wyatt. "But it has been fun for our neighborhood and a great way to recycle stuff."

It has also been good for the neighborhood's youth, many of whom set up lemonade stands selling everything from cookies and candy to gluten-free snacks. Adults have benefited from eager shoppers who desire their "trinkets and trousers."

Just as important, the rummage sale has become a form of socializing for the neighborhood's residents.

"These days people are so busy and it's hard to meet the people who live right down the street," said Wyatt. "This rum-



Residents in the Mapleton Hill Neighborhood, along with their four-legged friends, mingle in front of a house participating in the annual rummage sale. The event not only brings neighbors together, it introduces people from outside the area to the beauty of the historic homes and streets. Photo courtesy of Alex Besser

mage sale has brought neighbors out and they get to meet and greet a lot of people who live nearby. It has gotten so big that everyone looks forward to it."

Leslie Rosenberg, the neighbor who created the Mapleton Hill Rummage Sale logo, has lived in the neighborhood for about 10 years. She credits Wyatt with getting the sale off the ground.

"To think of what it has become is kind of amazing," said Rosenberg, who described the process as "just a group of neighbors getting together" to hold a sale. "Nobody looks at it as a way to make money. It's more like a festival. The bonus is you can do your spring cleaning and get rid of things you don't need."

In what some in Mapleton Hill might consider "breaking news," Rosenberg offered some insight into the logo she created after being challenged to do so.

"It's actually my house and the house Kelly Wyatt lived in and two other actual houses," she said. "I wasn't just drawing random houses. I was drawing our houses."

A small and simple start

Wyatt was fairly new to Mapleton Hill, one of Boulder's most historic neighborhoods, in 2004. She had two young kids and shrinking storage space. While she was never much of a

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6 LISTINGS FOR THE 2013 RUMMAGE

- **Furniture, vintage items, table lamps**, exercise bike, new men and women's clothes, handcrafted beeswax candles, craft items, magical items not found elsewhere, decorative accessories, books, author signing of award winning book.
- **Retro clothes, New car bike rack**, new Bolder-Boulder memorabilia, picnic table, 2 grills, Jewelry, Sleeper Sofa, Recliner, books, home decor and art, lamps, desk.
- **Signed Neil Diamond LP**, 1994 Audi Quattro, oak furniture, old road signs, antique tools, stereo equipment, rugs and carpeting, and more.
- **1930s White treadle sewing machine**, willowware, collectible art work, vintage Mags, old record albums.
- **Mid-century furniture, tribal rug**, circular oak dining table, tiger wood antique dresser with mirror, vintage baby's changing table, large metal garden basket, antique books, old trophies, footstools.
- **Books, old books, newish books**, teacher books, definitely a book for you!

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“garage sale person,” her mother-in-law and other people she knew were quite experienced.

“They each told me they like sales that were multiple family sales, where you could go to one sale and also hit several others without having to get in your car, by walking around,” said Wyatt. “So that kind of put an idea in my mind. One day I just walked around my block here and started thinking maybe a neighborhood sale might be a good idea.”

Wyatt’s thinking was that Boulder is a very “green” place. And shuffling goods from one family to another eliminates waste and garbage.

“No matter what neighborhood you live in, everybody accumulates stuff, especially people with young children,” she said. “I thought people here might be attracted to the idea of moving things to other families instead of throwing those things away.”

With homemade fliers in hand and in her kids’ red Flyer wagon, Wyatt walked around the neighborhood that first year and made her pitch.

“I just knocked on the doors and said ‘Hi, I’m Kelly and I’m your neighbor’ and then I just explained what we wanted to do,” she said. Only a handful of homes participated at the beginning. “Word-of-mouth started to take over after that.”

Wyatt eventually saw the need to encourage visitors to take advantage of the “pretty” neighborhood.

“When I send out emails and do posts about the event I always tell people to bring bags, park their cars and walk the event,” said Wyatt. “It has been very popular and the crowds can be large. I even get contacted by people from outside Boulder and out of state asking for the date months in advance.”

Not your grandfather’s lemonade stand

The entrepreneurial spirit lives in Mapleton Hill – one only has to examine the number of lemonade stands set up by neighborhood kids during the annual rummage sale.

Alex Besser’s three boys wasted no time in getting involved shortly after they moved to Mapleton hill, setting up a lemonade stand during the 2010 sale and earning a good chunk of cash for the effort.

“The kids were making more money than the adults, but the adults got to empty their crowded closets,” Alex Besser said with a laugh. “I think the neighborhood kids get a lot out of the rummage sale, honestly. It’s nice to have a neighborhood even outside where you can meet other kids and adults.”

Besser, who moved with her husband and her sons to North Boulder from California in 2009, fell in love with the neighborhood at first sight.

“I had to rub my eyes,” she said. “It was perfect and I was immediately impressed. When I experienced the sale in 2010, I was even more impressed. It is so causal and so fun.”



Kelly Wyatt sits on the porch of her home in the Mapleton Hill neighborhood of North Boulder. Wyatt started the annual rummage sale in 2004, shortly after moving into the neighborhood. The event has become an annual social event. This year’s sale is June 9.

Photo by Ralph Loos

Adding to the event’s popularity was the Whitier Elementary School Garden Show, which for a few years coordinated its tour with the rummage sale as a way to take advantage of the number of people visiting the neighborhood.

A neighborhood for the ages

While Besser, Wyatt and Rosenberg are relatively new to Mapleton Hill, Catherine Schweiger has lived in the neighborhood for more than 40 years. She has embraced the annual rummage sale.

“Until Kelly came along, there were a few households that had sales, but nothing like this,” said Schweiger. “It really is a great place, and has been for a long time.”

Mapleton Hill, which dates back to 1882, is one of Boulder’s oldest neighborhoods. It was established about a decade after Boulder was incorporated. About one-third of the 500 homes in the neighborhood were built between 1895 and 1900. The City of Boulder designated Mapleton Hill a Historic District in 1982, and representations of almost every 19th century architectural style has been preserved.

Though she’s been in the neighborhood longer than most, Schweiger doesn’t sit on the sidelines when it comes time for the rummage sale. Asked about the most unusual item she’s seen in the sale, the Nebraska native recalled an item she managed to sell herself – despite some skepticism.

“I had some of my mother’s household items that I really wanted to clean out and put them in the sale,” explained Schweiger. “One item was a ceramic bulldog – a rather ugly ceramic bulldog. I never thought it would sell. Everything is a treasure to someone, I guess.”

No leftovers here

Wyatt, who begins organizing the sale in February, charges participating homeowners a few dollars for the cost of advertising and making posters for the neighborhood.

When the sale day is over, participants have the option of donating the items that were not sold. Trucks show up and are loaded with the unsold goods, which are then donated to the Vietnam Veterans of America. When those trucks are loaded and the streets of the Mapleton Hill neighborhood are once again cleared, there is a short period of rest and reflection.

How far into the future can the Mapleton Hill Rummage Sale endure? Wyatt said as long as people in the neighborhood continue to enjoy it, there’s no need to expect an end date.

Which means that come 2094, residents will be able to celebrate 100 years of lemonade and cookies, trinkets and trouser – and an endearing logo that began as simply as the event itself.

Rummaging a Definition

Evolution of word and event appear to have beginnings on 16th century shipping docks across Europe.

These days, a neighborhood rummage sale is celebrated as an event – or at least as a way to unload clutter and belongings.

Interestingly, the expression “rummage sale” was actually born in an environment that included old ships and docks.

According to historical references, the word rummage entered the English language in the early 16th century, and at the time was spelled “romage.”

Romage was a nautical term that referred to packing casks and other cargo in the hold of a ship. That, of course, was the noun usage. The verb usage included the act of “romaging.”

A French noun came from a verb that spelled arrimer, arimer, and aruner (to pack or arrange cargo).

Many believe the word probably had a Germanic origin, with “rum” meaning “room or space.”

Eventually, the English noun came to refer to “the vast collection of miscellaneous cargo items themselves in the hold.”

The term rummage sale seems to have developed during the 19th century, experts say. An Oxford dictionary of trade products and trade terminology from the mid-1800s defines the term rummage sale, a “clearance sale of unclaimed goods at the docks, or of odds and ends left in a warehouse.”

At times in history, the word simply meant rubbish, as in “Rummage, lumber, rubbish” (1847, Oxford) and “A good riddance to bad rummage” (1880, Oxford).

Later, people outside the shipping dock areas began modern rummage sale by holding bazaars to benefit various charities.

Two quotations discovered from the late 1800s refer to the bazaars: as “A novel but most successful experiment was tried by way of what was termed a ‘rummage sale’” (1890, Oxford) and “It is almost impossible to dispose of gentlemen’s hats at rummage sales” (1895, Oxford).

Today, of course, a typical rummage sale is the sale of miscellaneous items.

That said, many of today’s dictionaries suggest the word “rummage” refers to “any confused miscellaneous collection of things.” The verb form is used “to rummage through a collection or items.”

