

# Glen Echo Park

Maryland

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

**From Past to Present.** For almost 100 years, the land on which the present Glen Echo Park sits has been dedicated to people. *First*, in 1891, as a National Chautauqua Assembly, a center where people could participate in the sciences, arts, languages, and literature—*Then*, until 1968, as a famous amusement park—*Now*, coming full circle, as a park emphasizing arts and cultural education for the community.

In this latest incarnation, the land and the historical remnants of former buildings host a variety of activities for both the community and visitors. You can simply wander on the Midway and remember the sights and sounds of an old amusement park where you came as a child or adult to play miniature golf, see yourself distorted in the Hall of Mirrors, dance to the music of Glen Miller, sun on the sand beach of the Crystal Pool, or whack your bumper car into someone else's while sparks flew from the electrified ceiling.

Every Wednesday and weekend during the summer you can still ride and listen to the tunes from the antique, hand-carved Dentzel Carousel, preserved through community effort. You can visit an art exhibit in the stone Chautauqua Tower, the only usable structure from the earliest incarnation. And on summer Sundays you can listen to a concert, watch a craft demonstration, attend a workshop or festival, or tour the Clara Barton National Historic Site—all this and more as part of the "Chautauqua Summer Season."

All through the year you can picnic, walk, visit the workshops of artists now housed in the park, or take workshops in art forms that range from ceramics, through dance and music, to painting and drama. Glen Echo Park travels forward to where it began . . .

**First: The Chautauqua Assembly.** It began when Edwin and Edward Baltzley conceived of promoting the sale of land and houses by

establishing a Glen Echo Chautauqua "to promote liberal and practical education, especially among the masses of the people . . . and to fit them for the duties which devolve upon them as members of society." The Chautauqua Movement was already popular and, financing their efforts with the profits from Edwin's inventions, the Baltzleys opened theirs in June, 1891. It was a success until Henry Spencer, operating the Spencerian Business School at the site, died of pneumonia. Rumors spread that he had died of malaria, and the rumors were enough to make people stop coming to this "Rhineland of the Potomac." That brief season was the only Chautauqua Assembly on the site.

In the years that followed, from 1893 to 1898, the Baltzleys rented Glen Echo to different fundraising organizations which continued using the land for public shows and entertainment.

**Then: An Amusement Park.** In 1899 the Baltzleys rented Glen Echo to the Glen Echo Company, who put a full-fledged amusement park on the land. For the next sixty years the amusement park was always ahead of the times, and one of the most popular spots in Washington. The rides and the ballroom attracted thousands—the pool alone held 3000 people. But tastes changed and by the mid-sixties Glen Echo's heydays were over. Attendance dropped markedly and at the end of the 1968 season the owners announced the park would close. But the land was still there, occupied by remnants of the buildings which traced in their facades a history of architectural tastes.

**Now: A Cultural Arts Park.** Community action on the part of a group of public-spirited citizens helped to assure the future of Glen Echo Park. In 1971, through a land exchange with its owners, Glen Echo Park was acquired by the Federal government. Between the time the amusement park closed and the beginning of National Park Service management, many of the rides were sold

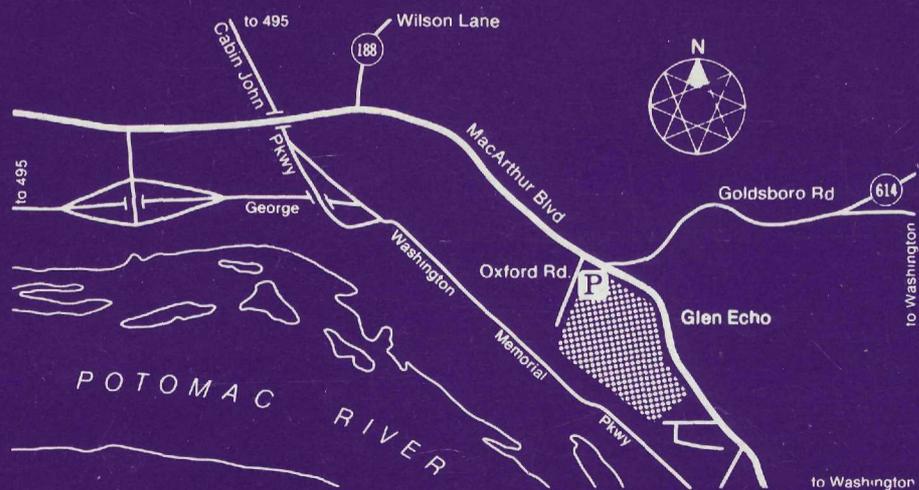
including the historic Dentzel Carousel, brought to the park in 1921. A group of interested individuals organized a fundraising campaign to repurchase the Carousel, thus enabling it to be kept at the park for public enjoyment. Bringing the park into public ownership saved the land from possible development which could have adversely affected the natural beauty of the Potomac Palisades and the bordering C & O Canal National Historic Park and George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Through consultation with educators, artists, community leaders, and special interest groups, an initial theme evolved—to use the land as a resource center, an educational and cultural forum where artists, students, teachers, and visitors could meet and exchange ideas, as well as learn from each other. It was not a new idea but a recycled one from the days when the park functioned as the Chautauqua Assembly. Once again, Glen Echo would be a learning center.

Professionals in fields ranging from performing and visual arts to consumer-oriented topics were invited to move into the remaining buildings of the amusement park, repair and refurbish these structures and bring them back to life. In exchange, the groups agreed to open their facilities to the public with classes, as well as provide an assortment of free demonstrations and performances. Other artists came to teach in the multi-purpose classrooms, thus widening the scope of activities. With the addition of the summer Chautauqua Season and its several large festivals, weekend dances, and lectures for the public the park has continued to flourish.

**Future: A Cooperative Effort.** Drawing on its history and the enthusiastic interest shown in its cultural revitalization, the land and structures of the park will be developed through cooperation of government and private sectors to advance opportunities for the public to enjoy its many resources.

Glen Echo Park is located in Glen Echo, Maryland, just north of the District of Columbia. Parking is available in the large lot at the junction of MacArthur Boulevard and Oxford Road. For further information on park programs, contact the staff at Glen Echo Park, MacArthur Boulevard, Glen Echo, MD 20812 or phone (301) 492-6282.



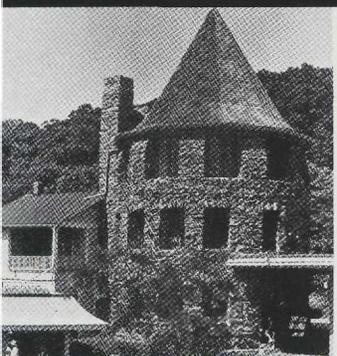
To promote liberal and practical education, especially among the masses of the people; . . . to prepare its patrons for their several pursuits and professions in life, and to fit them for the duties which devolve upon them as members of society.

Chautauqua philosophy, 1891

## About Your Visit

A stop at the stone tower/gallery serves as a good introduction to Glen Echo Park. Here information on all park activities can be obtained, and work produced by Glen Echo artists can be seen. The gallery is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and weekends noon-5 p.m.

Four sessions of classes are taught year-round by artists and educators, some of whom are members of the artist residency program. Visits to artists' studios are encouraged—try the door or inquire at the gallery for information on studio hours and tour arrangements. Concerts, demonstrations, workshops and festivals are held on Sundays mid-May through September as part of the Chautauqua Summer Season. The Carousel is run May through September, weekends 12 noon-6 p.m. and Wednesdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Picnic facilities are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Glen Echo's chief resources are the people who make the park happen. We hope you will join in some of these activities during your visit here.



The Stone Tower is the last remaining building left complete from the 1981 Chautauqua period at Glen Echo. It now houses a gallery which shows the work of Glen Echo artists who teach and create in the park.



Brought to Glen Echo in 1921, the Dentzel Carousel is equipped with a Wurlitzer Military 165 band organ. The Carousel is run May through September, weekends and Wednesdays.



The yurts are designed after an ancient Mongolian housing structure. They were government surplus items recycled into studio spaces when the current cultural programs began at Glen Echo in the 1970's.

