

Glen Echo Park

Glen Echo Park
Maryland

National Park Service



For almost 100 years, the land on which 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**, from 1899 to 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 are host to 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, as child or adult, you played miniature golf, saw yourself distorted in the Hall of Mirrors, danced to the music of Glenn Miller, sunned on the sand beach of the Crystal Pool, or rammed your bumper car into someone else's while sparks flew from the electrified ceiling.

Every Wednesday, Thursday, 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. All through the year you can picnic, 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; 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.

Then: An Amusement Park In 1899 the Baltzleys rented Glen Echo to the Glen Echo Company, which installed a full-fledged amusement park. For the next 60 years the amusement park was one of the most popular spots in Washington. The rides and the ballroom attracted thousands—the pool alone held 3,000 people. But tastes changed, and by the mid-1960s Glen Echo's heyday was over. Attendance dropped markedly, and at the end of the 1968 season the owners announced the park would close. But the land and the remnants of buildings that reflected a history of architectural tastes were still there.

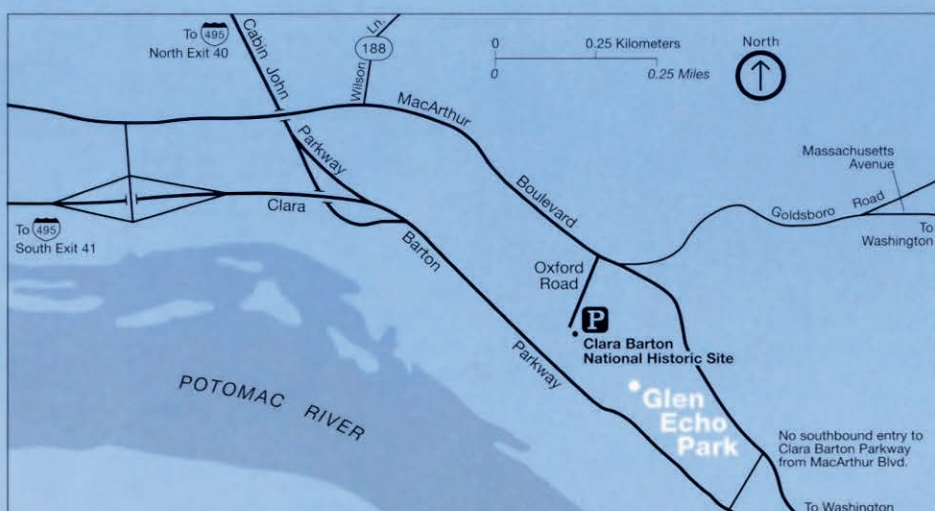
Now: A Cultural Arts Park Community action on the part of a group of public-spirited citizens helped to assure the future of Glen Echo Park. In 1971, through a land exchange with its owners, Glen Echo Park was acquired by the Federal Government. Between the time the amusement park closed and the beginning 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 purchase the carousel, so it could be kept at the park for

public enjoyment. Bringing the park into public ownership saved the land from possible development that could have adversely affected the natural beauty of the Potomac Palisades and the bordering C&O Canal National Historical Park and Clara Barton 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 amusement park buildings, to repair and refurbish these structures, and to bring them back to life. In exchange, the groups agreed to open their facilities for public classes and to provide free demonstrations and performances. Other artists came to teach in the multipurpose classrooms. With the addition of the summer Chautauqua Season, the park has continued to flourish.

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

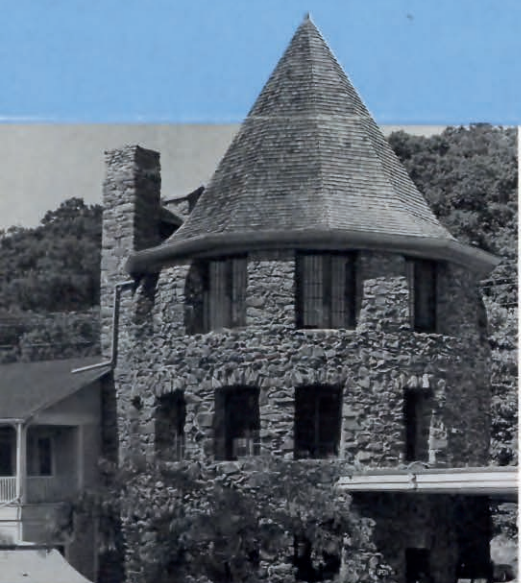
Glen Echo Park is located in Glen Echo, Md., just north of the District of Columbia. Parking is available in the large lot on Oxford Road, just off MacArthur Boulevard. Glen Echo Park is a unit of the National Park System, which consists of more than 360 parks representing important examples of our country's natural and cultural heritage. For further information about this park, write to the Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway, Turkey Run Park, McLean, VA 22101. For information on park programs call 301-492-6282.



Glen Echo Park

“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 the society.”

—Chautauqua philosophy, 1891



The Stone Tower is the last remaining building left complete from the 1891 Chautauqua period at Glen Echo. It now houses a gallery that shows the work

of Glen Echo artists who teach and create in the park.



Glen Echo's heyday as an amusement park is typified by the Dentzel Carousel, brought to Glen Echo in 1921. It is equipped with a Wurlitzer Military



165 band organ. The carousel is run May through September on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends. It is a delight to ride and to watch.



The yurts are designed after an ancient Mongolian dwelling. They were government surplus items recycled into studio spaces in the 1970s.

About Your Visit

A stop at the Park Office serves as a good introduction to Glen Echo Park. Here information on all park activities can be obtained. The office is open from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. daily.

Glen Echo Park artists and other educators provide the public with classes in painting,

music, photography, ceramics, glass, dance, and other fine arts year-round. Theater productions and ranger-led programs are also available throughout the year. Dances, demonstrations, workshops, and festivals are offered during the summer season. The carousel runs May through September, noon to 6:00 p.m. on weekends and 10:00 a.m. to

2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Picnic facilities are available on a first-come, first-served basis. We invite you to join in some of the park activities during your visit.

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