



Spring 2017

# Utopian

## Grand Reopening of Museum House is Greenbelt Day, June 4

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The Museum's historic house at 10B Crescent Road is in the last stages of restoration following extensive water damage in the fall. Furniture from the collection has been returned to the rooms and we are in the process of moving smaller items in. Though not complete, the house will be open from 1-5pm on Sundays in April and May (with the exception of Easter, April 16 when we are closed), and we invite you to come and take a peek at our progress!

We are planning a grand reopening on Greenbelt Day, Sunday, June 4! The day will start off with our annual Roosevelt Ride, only this time we will gather at the Museum house at 11am and finish the ride there in time for picnicking. The official opening of the house will be at



1pm. There will be hands-on activities for children and we will serve light refreshments as we celebrate that the long restoration process is at an end. We have new paint colors to show off, as well as buffed, gleaming floors, and perhaps most important, we have a brand new security system complete with water sensors!

We will also be rolling out our new membership options with meaningful benefits at every level.

Many thanks to Assistant City Manager, David Moran, the City of Greenbelt Public Works Department, and the IT Department who were all so helpful throughout the restoration process.



Interior of the Museum's historic house, in April, just after our Greenbelt furniture was returned from 10A where it has been stored. The rug, which belonged to the first residents of 10B, (the Lassell family) was also restored and returned.

# Museum Films Pioneer Children's Histories

By Ennis Barbery Smith



Greenbelt laundry lines. Sept. 1938. Marion Post Wolcott, Library of Congress

The Greenbelt Museum recently was able to invest in a video camera and accessories, thanks to a grant provided by County Councilmember Todd Turner. While the grant will primarily support the creation of a short film about artist Lenore Thomas Straus, having access to this equipment has allowed us (Museum staff), to begin recording video interviews with former and current Greenbelters. The Museum has filmed interviews in the past at specific events, so this new series will continue that tradition. The first interview conducted was with Donald Walker and John Schaffer, childhood friends who moved to Greenbelt as “pioneer” children in the late 1930s.

Donald Walker’s parents, Dudley C. Walker and Johnnie Mae Hightower Walker, were from Tallahassee, Florida. They moved to the D.C. area, where Walker found work as a pressman for the Government Printing Office. Their first child, Anne Walker, now Anne Walker Bittenbender, was born in 1935.

In 1937, Donald Walker was born as his parents were applying to live in Greenbelt. The Walkers were the first residents of 21-L Ridge Road.

Donald Walker recalled his mother’s role in the family: “[She] took care of us, helped us grow up, packed our lunch every day to go to school, washed on Mondays... and we didn’t have washers or dryers in those days, [washers] of the kind we’re thinking of today. Mom used to have to go out into the yard and hang the big sheets up on clotheslines, along with every other person in every other home in Greenbelt.”

John Schaffer was born in 1935 in Clarksburg, West Virginia, to Albert Joseph Schaffer and Margaret Graham Schaffer. His father was trained as a glasscutter, but brought his young family to the D.C. area in search of work, and applied to live in Greenbelt. He was initially hired by the federal government as a GS-1 and worked his way up to becoming the personnel director of the IRS, at the GS-16 level.

The Schaffers were selected to live in Greenbelt, and initially moved into 6-F Crescent Road. Dianne Margaret Schaffer, John’s younger sister, was born in 1941, and the family relocated to 25-G Ridge Road, just a few courts down from Donald Walker.

John Schaffer recalls: “During the war, those war years from you know ‘41’ to ‘45’, everything was in short supply. And

us boys would take our wagons, and would help the ladies who come out with the groceries [from the Co-op Grocery Store], put the groceries in our wagon and pull them home. I’ll never forget this one lady. I took her up to D Block, wasn’t too far, and got her groceries in. And she gave me a nickel. And so I walked away. And it was an older boy who said, ‘Did she just give you a nickel?’ I said, ‘Yeah.’ He says, ‘go back and ask her for more.’ So, I went back and knocked



Greenbelt children and wagons, Nov. 1942. Ann Rosener, Library of Congress

on her door. She knew why I was coming. She opened the door and said, ‘That’s all you get!’

The facts about Greenbelt’s history are interesting and important, but the stories of those who lived here bring that history to life. Listening to Walker and Schaffer recount their idyllic childhoods underscores how Greenbelt shaped the lives of all the children who had the opportunity to live within its boundaries.

Many memories these men shared are light-hearted stories about playing marbles, using the party line telephone system, or finding a prized Easter egg, but they also spoke about topics like World War II rationing and racial segregation. Clips will be posted on the Museum’s website and long versions will become part of our archives. If you’d like to be interviewed, or volunteer with the interview collection process, please contact Ennis Barbery Smith at [greenbelt-museumstaff@gmail.com](mailto:greenbelt-museumstaff@gmail.com) or 240-542-2064.



Donald Walker (r), and John Schaffer (l).

## Greenbelt Museum 2017 Lecture Series



### The Architecture of Victorine DuPont Homsey in Maryland by Jillian Storms, AIA

April 20, 7:30pm

In collaboration with architect Eugene H. Klaber, Victorine DuPont Homsey designed a number of educational and service buildings in Greenbelt including North End School (top, r). Learn about her work and view the exhibit, *Early Women of Architecture in Maryland*, on display in the Greenbelt Community Center April 1-28. Exhibit sponsored by Maryland Humanities Council, Women In Architecture Committee of the American Institute of Architects-Baltimore Chapter, and Baltimore Architecture Foundation. Lectures take place in the Greenbelt Community Center, 15 Crescent Road, Greenbelt MD 20770. FREE! (Portrait of DuPont Homsey, r)



## Judge Howard S. Chasanow 1937—2017

It is with great sadness that we share that Judge Howard Chasanow, a retired Maryland Court of Appeals Judge, passed away on April 2. He is survived by his wife, U.S. District Court Judge Deborah K. Chasanow; daughter, Andrea Gentle; grandchildren William and Alexander Gentle; and three sisters, Phyllis Richman, Myrna Chasanow and Ruth Heitin. Our thoughts are with his family, friends, and colleagues.

Museum staff and members of the Board were delighted early last year when another FOGM Board member, Pamela Gregory, shared that she had worked with the Judge as a law librarian. She had maintained a friendship with him and his wife over the years, and thought he might be interested in working with us to put together a very special program. It was thus a huge honor to have the Judge participate in the resulting *3 Brave Men* screening and event this past Novem-

ber. While the chance to see the film on the big screen was a treat, the true highlight of the evening was listening to Judge Chasanow's recollections of what his and his family's lives were like at what was a very difficult time for them.

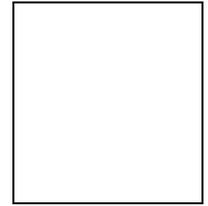
His father, Abraham Chasanow, a Greenbelt resident, Navy employee, and the subject of the film, was eventually cleared of the McCarthy-era accusations that he was a security risk. Nonetheless, it was clear from the Judge's words that the experience had a lasting effect. Although the Judge did not wish to be filmed that evening, the Museum has detailed notes of his remarks which we are in the process of editing and will make available to anyone who is interested.

Judge Chasanow impressed all of us here at the Museum with his intelligence, generosity of spirit, and willingness to share his thoughts on such an important story that, to this day, is of both local and national significance.

## Museum Welcomes Returning Staff Member

Sheila Maffay-Tuthill returns to the Greenbelt Museum in May following her recent extended leave in France. While we have thoroughly enjoyed the gorgeous photos she has sent home of her small French village, as well as the other destinations that she and her son, Jackson, and other visiting family members have visited, we very much look forward to welcoming her back! She will continue as the Museum's Education & Volunteer Coordinator. Look for her on Sundays at the Museum house, leading walking tours during the week, and stay tuned for some fun, new programs and offerings that she will be developing!





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## Greenbelt Museum Calendar of Events

### April

20 Lecture, *The Architecture of Victorine DuPont Homsey in Maryland*, 7:30pm, Greenbelt Community Center, Room 201, Free!

### June

4 Grand Reopening of Museum House at 10B Crescent. 11-5pm

**Ongoing Exhibition:** *The Knowing Hands That Carve This Stone: The New Deal Art of Lenore Thomas Straus*, Greenbelt Community Center

**Group or Walking Tours:** Interested in booking a group or walking tour? Tours are \$5 per person for groups of 4 or more and we kindly request that you book tours at least two weeks in advance. To schedule a tour or make inquiries, please call 240-542-2064 or send an email to greenbeltmuseumstaff@gmail.com. Thanks!

Would you like to receive our monthly email newsletter? Please visit our website [www.greenbeltmuseum.org](http://www.greenbeltmuseum.org) to sign up. Expect only 1-2 emails from us per month.

## Celebrate, Preserve & Share the History of Greenbelt MD

### Join the Friends of the Greenbelt Museum

**NEW OPTIONS COMING IN JUNE!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

- Cooperator \$25.00** 1 yr. subscription to the Utopian, free admission to Museum house, plus discounts on select items in gift shop, invitations to lectures, events, and programs
- Pioneer \$50.00** All of the above benefits for a household or family plus invitations to special programs or events
- Utopian \$100.00** All of the above benefits plus invitations to special programs or events
- Roosevelt Club \$1000.00** All of the above benefits plus recognition at the Museum house

Make check payable to Friends of the Greenbelt Museum, mail to PO Box 1025, Greenbelt MD 20768 or **join securely on-line at [GreenbeltMuseum.org](http://GreenbeltMuseum.org).**

FOGM is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Thank you!