



Fall 2012

Historic Takoma

N E W S L E T T E R

Welcome to Our New Home: Time to Celebrate

On July 29th Historic Takoma held a member reception to celebrate our newly obtained occupancy and use permit from Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services. We are officially open at 7328 Carroll Avenue, Takoma's historic main street.

Our new home will serve as the central repository of Takoma Park history. We invite you to stop in over the next several months as we organize our extensive collection of records and artifacts to make them accessible to the public for browsing or for in-depth research.

In addition to regular hours this fall on Wednesdays (5-8 pm) and Sundays (11 am-3 pm), please feel



Historic Takoma's new home at 7328 Carroll Avenue in Takoma Junction. Photo by Art McMurdie

FEATURED MEMBER EVENT

Sunday, September 30
Montgomery County's Rich History with Bill Offutt. 2 pm
Details, page 2.

free to say hello whenever you see us at work in the building.

Watch our website for more events beginning in September, as well as a grand opening later in the year.

Got history? We are interested in talking to you about donations to our records. We also are currently in search of large and small vintage oak tables and bookcases.

Not a member? Now is a great time to join Historic Takoma. See the membership form on the back page of this newsletter or join when you stop in.

See our Visitors Guide on the back page.



One of several bungalows on the tour. Photo by Kathy Jentz

North Takoma House and Garden Tour Scores Big with Visitors

The rain that threatened never came. The 39th annual House and Garden tour was blessed with seasonal temperatures and nearly blue skies. The Takoma Community Band added to the celebratory mood as Takoma Park citizens and neighbors joined visitors from across the metropolitan region — and beyond — to visit 13 tour stops and explore some of our most fabled homes and gardens.

Many tour goers took the opportunity to collect ideas, get questions answered, and connect with many of

the craftsmen and architects whose work was on display with an eye toward their own needs.

A tour favorite through the years, North Takoma attracted big numbers, and on-site reviews were overwhelmingly positive. Tour proceeds will support Historic Takoma's efforts to ready its new building for visitors and events.

North Takoma neighbors, in particular, turned out in large numbers, enjoying the opportunity to see the changes and transformations pro-

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HISTORIC TAKOMA NEWSLETTER



Historic Takoma, Inc.
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Historic Takoma Newsletter is a publication of Historic Takoma, Inc.
Writer/Editor: Mary Beth Hatem

HTI is a membership-based non-profit organization founded in 1979 to promote historic preservation, citizen involvement, and awareness of the community heritage of Takoma Park MD and DC. Membership is open to the public.

Contributions are tax deductible.
Federal ID No.: 52-1146960

Volunteers are welcome. Please contact HTI if you want to become more involved in the preservation of your community.

Visit us at
www.historictakoma.org

Watch this Space and Enjoy Takoma History



Photo by Art McMurdie

Historic Takoma's new home at 7328 Carroll Avenue has already become a source of inspiration and a treasure trove of knowledge for those curious about Takoma past and present. Board member Susan Robb has conceptualized and produced not one but three window displays in recent months, with more planned.

The very first window display promoted the House and Garden tour by showcasing Takoma's strong ties to the railroad. Similarly, Jazzfest was singled out for promotion and for a romp through the past. You might have seen the parade of colorful tee shirts celebrating the event's 17-year history.

Next up was a window celebrating Takoma Park's Independence Day traditions

and Belle Ziegler's pivotal role.

Filling the giant space has been more than a one-person challenge. Susan has drawn on her professional skills and assistance from a host of supporters.

She sends general shout-outs to Eric Bond and Julie Wiatt at the Takoma Voice and Mark Howard at Takoma Picture Framers for their help with photographs and their display.

Art McMurdie's train set proved a centerpiece for the House and Garden tour window. Dale Music of Silver Spring, and the House of Musical Traditions contributed musical instruments to compliment the T-shirts and posters from Jazzfest, while Clair Garman and TROHV helped livened up the 4th of July window.

Upcoming Events

Featured Member Event

Sunday, September 30 - Join us for the first in a new monthly series. Bill Offutt, Montgomery County's unofficial historian offers a spirited romp through local history. Wine & cheese reception at 2 pm, talk at 2:30 pm. Free for members; \$10 donation for non-members (or become a member).

Also of interest

Saturday, September 29 - Explore Takoma - a self-guided tour of Ward 4. 11-2 pm, from Community Center. Info: www.takomafoundation.org.

Sunday, September 30 - Diana Kohn offers a free guided tour of Old Takoma as part of Walkingtown DC weekend. 11 am, from Takoma Metro.

Sunday, October 7 - Takoma Park Street Festival. 11 am-5 pm. See you there.

Visit our website at www.historictakoma.org for updates on new events.

“You may come to look at beautiful houses, but you get hooked by the history.”

HOUSE AND GARDEN FROM PAGE 1

duced by the recent influx of what one neighbor called “an army of vans and trucks.” At some stops, the tour had the feel of a festive block party where there were only neighbors, no strangers.

History and Character

What we know today as North Takoma was farmland along the B&O railroad line heading toward Silver Spring when it caught the attention of B.F. Gilbert. Takoma Park, his newly established suburb, was barely 6 years old.

Over the years, the residential neighborhood developed with a mix of styles that allowed Tour organizers and homeowners to offer an architectural history dream tour. The homes on display reflected this rich mix with all-star representatives from each of the styles affording North Takoma its special character -Victorian, Arts-and-Crafts, American Four-Square, Greek Revival, and the bungalow.

Many of the homes on display came with inspiring back stories of graceful compromise between the need for updates and respect for original materials and the design sensibility of the home and its neighborhood.

The Survivors

Three of this year’s homes nearly missed the party, surviving a disastrous fire, a fallen oak tree, and scheduled demolition. You probably weren’t there on the fateful 1930s day, that 8 Takoma Avenue migrated to its current location at 7327, but if you were among the tour goers to visit Tour Stop 6, you experienced the drama through photographic record and journalistic account.

After 17 years in its original location, the owners faced a crisis when their 1907 home was slated for



A wraparound porch never looks more elegant than with a band. Photo by Julie Wiatt/Takoma Voice.

demolition as part of roadway modifications to accommodate increases in automobile traffic. A photo of the house relocation shows the house being rolled on logs and pulled to its new lot by ropes using a capstan turned by a team of horses.

A disastrous fire in 2008 at the gracious home built by distinguished ethnologist James Owen Dorsey in 1887 led to a 13 month long restoration by Heritage Building and Renovation, Inc. The restoration consisted of replacing all flooring with reclaimed heart pine, matching original trim, re-roofing with matching patterned slate, rebuilding the second and third floor interior and dormers, window replication with pulleys and sash weights, restoration of original fixtures and stained glass, and rebuilding one of the original front doors damaged by the fireman’s axe.

Family Matters

Tour Stop 7 offered a different flavor of ingenuity, creativity and

craftsmanship. What motivated renovation of the Craftsman-style house built in 2000 was a proactive response to changing family needs familiar to many.

The challenge: How to bring the grandparents near by and satisfy the needs of three generations. The solution: Consolidate households in North Takoma where the young parents live by adding a spacious garden-level apartment that offers independent living and easy access to loved ones.

At this stop, tour goers had the chance to get insight into the design and construction process and also the thought process that drove the project.

The proud occupant of the new space was happy to share his take on moving from his old neighborhood to relocate to his new and unusual home. “Downsizing certainly has its drawbacks, but we did some things right. We loved our old home. We knew we needed lots of

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Behind the Scenes: The Tour Docents

The homeowners who graciously open their homes may change from year to year, but many of the docents just might look familiar. Historic Takoma Board member Maribeth Oakes coordinated the massive effort of ensuring that each site on the tour was adequately staffed by docents throughout the day.

Oakes was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm of her volunteers. “What an incredible outpouring of effort. It’s difficult to imagine that there could be a tour on the grand scale of Takoma’s without the docents.

“We rely on them to smooth traffic flow and serve as the homeowners’ on site representatives.”

What does the job look like from the docents’ point of view? We asked two to share their take on what it is that they do and why they keep coming back.

In addition to ensuring that homeowner’s guidelines are respected, many of the docents pride themselves on the value-added they are able to provide. Six-time docent Loretta Newman is a prime example.

She prizes the early timeslot for the chance to visit with the homeowner(s), typically on their way out the door. Newman’s drill is always the same—



Docent Kathy Mack awaits tour visitors. Photo by Julie Wiatt/Takoma Voice.

get familiar with the surroundings, anticipate questions, and get as many answers as she can. A good part of the fun for Newman is the chance to go to school on “her” house.

What’s behind her long-term commitment to the House and Garden tour? Her list is extensive: “Respect for the work of Historic Takoma, certainly, and also gratitude for the docents who have shepherded visitors through her own home, the chance to learn about a house, the joy of adding to the enjoyment of visitors.”

For Loretta Newman, as for many of the docents, the assignment is also a chance to team up. This year’s assignment, for instance, found Loretta manning the front door and husband Don stationed at the back door. Other docent regulars also make the assignment a family affair. There are mother-daughter teams and even a father-son team.

The Tour’s predictable spot on the calendar makes it easy to plan a day of adult fellowship and fun without the drawn-out scheduling process that so often fails us.

Jean Hetherington also has rave reviews for her docenting duties. She estimates that she’s served as a docent for eight or nine years and actively laments the rare year when she has not been able to get her House and Garden tour fix. “I love doing it. If I can’t serve, it ruins my spring.”

A Takoma Park resident since 1976, Jean enjoys sharing her knowledge of various neighborhoods. Each year brings its own surprises. “It might be the thrill of sharing a breathtaking interior behind a modest front door.”

Docents play a key role in the tour. If you would like to volunteer as docent on next year’s tour, let us know by email at info@historictakoma.org.

Garlic Mustard Be Gone! Work Day at Historic Gardens

Historic Takoma’s impact on our community can be felt on a grand scale at the House and Garden tour, but the results can also be seen throughout the year.

What Takoma Park resident has not witnessed the war between invasive vines and our beloved azaleas? The historic Stuart Armstrong garden, located at Holly and Philadelphia Avenues got some loving attention from a Historic Takoma-led work team in June.

Historic Takoma organizers Susan

Robb and Maribeth Oakes issued a call for help to fellow Board members, to Historic Takoma members, and to Hodges Heights neighbors. All three groups were represented during the four-hour work day. It was not a good day for the invasive garlic mustard. Mike Welsh, gardener for the City, was also on hand to get dirty and share azalea lore.

Thanks to all who participated. Your results have been seen and enjoyed by locals and all manner of travelers traversing the heavily traf-

ficked street.

Fall workdays are being scheduled for both the Stuart Armstrong garden and the Thomas-Siegler Carriage House garden on Tulip Avenue, where bamboo is the enemy. If you are part of any group that wants to plan Takoma Park garden work days, Welsh would love to hear from you.

Anyone wishing to volunteer for our garden crew, can email us at info@historictakoma.org and we will add you to our list for alerts.

“That brought back memories. I used to live in this house 23 years ago.”

HOUSE AND GARDEN FROM PAGE 3

light, an indoor-outdoor feel. It also feels right that the style is completely different. There’s little temptation to make comparisons.”

Serious Tour Patrons

Is it even possible to visit 13 Tour Stops in one day? With so much of the best of Takoma on display, time management was the major challenge of the day. Most tour goers know not to try. They rely on the bounty of the program guide to help them choose and to fill them in on what they miss.

For some specialists, the selection process is extremely focused. Contoured planting beds, backyard ponds, flowering shrubs, delicate ferns, rare plants collected from around the world by Frederic Meyer, one of America’s leading plant taxonomists. Such were the Tour’s delights that drew the attention of Kathy Jentz, who confessed to spending two hours in one of

the tour gardens, much of that time looking through the lens of a camera. What she takes from her tour day will be shared with the large audience that follows her work online

and in her magazine, *Washington Gardener*.

For Catarina Bannier, the Tour offered a chance to indulge her passion for kit homes, especially Sears kit homes, many of which have been featured on *House and Garden* tours.

Bannier credits much of her fascination with kit homes to the chance to study Takoma Park homes and credits Historic Takoma’s Lorraine Pearsall as a primary resource. The author of two blogs which chronicle her kit house detective work, Bannier is helping to create an inventory of Sears houses in Takoma Park.

She loves the search for the small details that identify a kit home that’s been renovated, updated, and improved beyond recognition. “It’s more than just the detective work,” she says. “Houses are carriers of emotion.”



An inviting porch on the tour. Photo by Julie Wiatt/Takoma Voice.

Thank You

Historic Takoma wishes to thank the following community-friendly institutions, businesses and individuals for their support of the 2012 Takoma Park House and Garden Tour:

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Do You Know Who Lived In Your House In 1940?

Unless you have the good fortune of living in your family home, have good family records, or are in your eighties or better, chances are that question has been a mystery. But on April 2, 2012, the National Archives handed us the keys to another rich cache of historic data: the 1940 Census.

Now we can find out who lived in our old houses toward the end of the Great Depression and not long before Pearl Harbor plunged us into World War II.

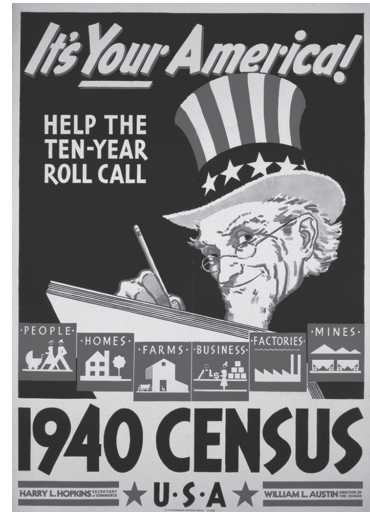
The federal government has made available on-line and free-of-charge more than 3.8 million pages of material -- digital images of the forms that a temporary army of census takers filled out as they went from house to house across America in April 1940.

The Constitution of the United States mandates that members of the

House of Representatives be apportioned among the States "according to their respective Numbers," determined by an "actual Enumeration" beginning three years after the first meeting of the U.S. Congress and every ten years after that. The Census was managed in various ways through the 19th century. In 1902 Teddy Roosevelt established the U.S. Census Bureau.

The most recent census was taken in 2010, when the U.S. population was 308,745,538. It was the 23rd national decennial count since the first census in 1790, when we had 3,929,214 (the count excluding native Americans and slaves).

Aggregate census data are copious and released as soon as practicable. However, individual personal information (such as that collected by census-takers) is not released for a



period of 72 years in order to protect the privacy of respondents. Thus, micro-data from the 1950 census will not be released until 2022.

The decennial census provides a remarkable snapshot of the nation. The microdata, albeit delayed by

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How to use the 1940 Census to Look up Your House

Start by going online to <http://1940census.archives.gov/index.asp>. We'll save you the first step by telling you that the Enumeration Districts (EDs) for the Town of Takoma Park are 16-44, 16-45, 16-46, 16-47 16-48, and 17-63 (for areas that were in Prince George's County at the time).

The next step is to look for your street, which is handwritten by the census-taker in Column 1 of the form. You can find the street by browsing the EDs quickly just to determine if you are in the right neighborhood of Takoma Park. Each ED has dozens of pages.

NAME	SEX	AGE	MARITAL STATUS
Leggett, Borch	Male	31	M
Mary	Female	28	M
John	Male	25	S
Edward	Male	22	S
Patricia	Female	18	S
Eugene	Male	15	S
Charles	Male	12	S
Bernard	Male	9	S
Joseph	Male	6	S
Raymond	Male	3	S

Once you have determined the relevant ED, you then browse through it more carefully, page by page. Houses on your street may appear on several pages because the census-taker filled in the form consecutively line by line and, if no

one was home, had to return to the house again and write the data on a later page.

The images are not always clear and handwriting can be ambiguous. Use the list of questions and codes (cited in the main text) to help interpret the responses.

A final wrinkle: the US Postal Service modified street addresses from time to time. The biggest change occurred in the late 1940s, when the USPS added a "7" to the original three digits on many Takoma Park streets. For example, today's number 7121 appears in 1940 and earlier census records as 121.

more than seven decades, enable us to construct a fine-grained demographic, social, and economic image of our town, our neighborhood, and our house as they used to be. The 1940 census data provide us not only with the names and family relationships of the residents, but also such details as ages and education, occupations, whether the family owned or rented the house (and what the house value or rental fee was) and other information, as it was provided to a trained census taker.

So, who lived in your Takoma Park house in 1940? A bit of careful re-

search will tell you with considerable precision (discounting dissembling by respondents and inevitable errors by the census takers).

You can learn much about the 1940 and earlier censuses in *Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses, 1790-2000* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002) available online at www.census.gov/history/pdf/measuringamerica.pdf.

A look at the 1940s data for Takoma Park suggests that it was not uncommon for a number of relatives to live in a household, as well as servants and boarders. Several households

are often listed separately within one house.

As in every census, the questions reflect the concerns of the times. In 1940, these included educational attainment, migration (residence five years earlier), immigration, employment, participation in federal work programs (e.g., WPA, CCC), and unemployment. This census is a reminder that 1930-40 were years of the Great Depression and of migration from the South.

A clear image of the 1940 questionnaire may be found at <http://1940census.archives.gov/downloads/1940-census-schedule.pdf>. It includes codes used by census-takers to record the responses

Prior censuses will yield earlier residents of your house, going back to 1900. In 1880, Takoma Park did not yet exist and the land was vacant. Sadly, all the microdata of the 1890 census was lost in a major fire in 1921.

The 1900-1930 censuses are available on microfilm or online through the subscription-based services of such organizations as Genealogy.com and Ancestry.com. These sites provide value added search tools. Individual users may be able to access these through local libraries.

Once you learn the names of the previous residents of your house, the door is open to internet and other research about them. In a place like Takoma Park, you have a good chance of finding out that some very interesting people lived in your house!

Pierre Perrolle, an HTI Board member, has extensive experience researching land plats and house records. He will offer additional research tips in future issues.

Takoma Park 100 Years Ago

The new building offers us space to tell the story of Takoma Park. Here is a teaser for the exhibit on display in October.



1912 was the year of the underpass. Takoma Park residents watched in amazement as construction crews tore up the intersection where Cedar Street crossed the railroad tracks at ground level (as indicated in this “before” photo looking toward Silver Spring). Tons of dirt were carted away to create a tunnel underneath the tracks.

Nearby stores suddenly gained a new first floor, and houses along

Cedar were obscured by a line of storefronts dug into the new hillside. Train passengers had to climb steep stairs to reach the train station now stranded 15 feet above street level. All in the name of progress - and safety, of course.

Visit us to discover more history. Our two photo books are available for purchase at the building and online at www.historictakoma.org.

Visitor's Guide

Historic Takoma is located at 7328 Carroll Avenue in Takoma Junction.

Getting here: We encourage you to walk or bike. Parking is available in the City's Public Parking Lot adjacent to the TPSS Co-op, and across the street from our building. Metered parking spaces are also available on Carroll Avenue and B.Y. Morrison Park, and meters are not active on Sundays.

Fall Regular Hours
Wednesdays, 5-8 pm
Sundays, 11-3

Featured Member Event
Sunday, Sept 30, 2-4 pm
"Rich History of Montgomery County." Details on page 2.

*Learn more about us
online at
www.historictakoma.org*

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*Tara magnolia ashei, featured
on this year's House and
Garden Tour. Recap on page 1.*