

# 106 SUCCESS STORY

## Building Remnants Provide Insights into Early Chautauqua Community

Glen Echo, Maryland



“Due to the successful application of the Section 106 process, from following a well-designed Memorandum of Agreement to the cooperation and efficient communications amongst park staff, construction contractors, and the Maryland Historical Trust, the project had a successful outcome on several fronts, and opportunities were presented through innovative mitigation to create unique interpretive features to help tell the story of this historic property.”

—MATTHEW VIRT  
Cultural Resources Manager/  
Archaeologist

### THE STORY

Glen Echo Park, located northwest of Washington, D.C., began as a short-lived late 19th century Chautauqua assembly community, teaching sciences, arts, languages, and literature to the public. By the early 20th century, the Chautauqua assembly community had been transformed into an amusement park. With abundant electricity available from the Washington and Great Falls Electric Railroad, the trolley line that extended to Glen Echo along the Potomac River, Glen Echo Park became “A Resort for the Refined” featuring a carousel, bowling, a pony track, shooting galleries, boating, and a dance pavilion. Glen Echo was a popular Washington-area amusement park for decades but closed in 1968, and most of the amusement rides were sold. In 1970, the General Services Administration formally acquired title to Glen Echo Park, and the National Park Service (NPS) assumed management developing a cultural arts program similar to the original Chautauqua concept. Glen Echo Park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

### THE PROJECT

In the early 2000s, NPS planned a rehabilitation and reuse program for the park and its historic buildings. One building was a 1914 amusement park maintenance shop and superintendent dwelling called the Yellow Barn. The decayed wooden barn was unsound and infested with termites. The rehabilitation plan called for dismantling and replacing the decayed parts of the structure. Part of the reuse plan required basement excavation to make space for upgraded utilities.

### THE 106 PROCESS

NPS was responsible for complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) which requires federal agencies to identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the historic property when adverse effects may occur. NPS consulted with the Maryland State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), resulting in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Photos: Above, a view of the imprint of Chautauqua-era building; Right, rehabilitated, reconstructed Yellow Barn east elevation; Chautauqua Building west foundation (photos courtesy NPS)

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Photos: stone tile mimicking foundation; hatch with preserved foundation (photos courtesy NPS)

that allowed for the deconstruction and replacement of the decayed wood; documentation, disassembly, and reassembly of a stone wall that was a part of the building; and the excavation of a basement for the needed utilities. During excavation, work crews encountered stone foundation wall sections beneath the 1914 barn. In accordance with the MOA, NPS halted the work and contacted the SHPO for advice on how to proceed with the project.

Both parties agreed to proceed with archaeological investigation and documentation, historical background research, and architectural examinations. Background research revealed that the 1914 barn was constructed on the remains of an 1891 Chautauqua-era “store” or “arcade” that had contained shops and a post office and served as part of the entryway to the Chautauqua assembly. The original building burned in 1914 and was replaced by the Yellow Barn. Sections of the surviving foundation in the way of the planned basement were removed, but a portion of the foundation was kept intact.

The 1914 construction of the Yellow Barn had also covered up a remaining ghosting pattern (visible imprint) of the “store”/“arcade” on the neighboring building, against which both structures had been built. In addition to preserving as much of the foundation as was possible, the construction of the repaired Yellow Barn incorporated interpretive elements for the earlier building. The final structure includes an openable hatch to view a remaining portion of the 1891 foundation, a line of tiles that follows the original location of the foundation, and the wall of the neighboring building, which includes the architectural ghosting pattern.

## THE SUCCESS

The Yellow Barn has now been successfully rehabilitated and repurposed, with interpretation of the original 1891 building. The construction crew was alert and halted their work before they could destroy the foundation, and the subsequent rapid consultation with the SHPO allowed the project to continue without much delay. NPS went beyond the necessary documentation and research to include interpretive elements to the new structure. The interpretation highlights the history of the space, presenting information that might not have been discovered if the foundation had been left entirely in place and the basement left unexcavated. The observant work crew, rapid consultation process, and innovative interpretive elements make the Yellow Barn a good example of how historic preservation and modernization can come together to create greater outcomes than either might manage alone.

## ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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For more about  
Section 106 and  
the ACHP go to  
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