

EVENT PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park Present

The Georgetown Waterfront, Port Town to Urban Neighborhood, 1880-1920

By Kathryn-Schneider Smith with an update *The Century Since 1920-2022* by Ann Satterthwaite

Washington, DC – On June 2, 2022 Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park will unveil the book *The Georgetown Waterfront, Port Town to Urban Neighborhood*, at a free book unveiling and talk at Grace Episcopal Church, 1041 Wisconsin Ave NW, from 6:00-7:30pm. The talk will celebrate its publication which coincides with the 10th Anniversary of the beloved National Park. The free event is sponsored by the Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park.

The event will feature Washington historian Kathryn Schneider Smith, city and environmental planner Ann Satterthwaite—authors of the book—and Meg Hardon who serves as the President of Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park. The event is free and open to the public.

Full Description:

A new book, *The Georgetown Waterfront*, explores the evolution of that Potomac River neighborhood from a colonial port to an industrial area, to the lively urban community it is today with a grand National Park as its centerpiece. A book unveiling and talk which is open to the public will be held at Grace Episcopal Church, 1041 Wisconsin Ave NW, on Thursday, June 2 from 6:00 pm to 7:30 p.m. The talk will celebrate its publication which coincides with the 10th Anniversary of the beloved National Park. The event is sponsored by the Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park.

The authors, Washington historian Kathryn Schneider Smith and city and environmental planner Ann Satterthwaite, will share their stories about the changes over two centuries that have left their mark in the unique mixture of old and new buildings and streetscapes of this riverfront neighborhood. Smith, honored with the DC History Center's first annual Visionary Historian Award, has specialized in the history of Washington's diverse neighborhoods. Satterthwaite, a nationally known environmental

planner, and past president of the National Association for Olmsted Parks is a long-time Georgetown resident who was pivotal to the creation of the park and it now its ongoing support.

Smith's section of the book, *Port Town to Urban Neighborhood*, traces a dramatic shift at the turn of the 20th century when three-masted schooners carrying ice and coal, mules pulling boats on the C & O Canal, and waterwheels powering the paper and flour mills gave way to smokestacks, and steam-driven industry. Enlivened by a rich array of historical photographs and oral history with residents of the time, her work explores the way these changes affected diverse communities of watermen, shopkeepers, craftsmen and other working people who made the area home. Smith's study was first published by The George Washington University Center for Washington Area Studies in 1989. The 10th Anniversary of the national park inspired this new, augmented edition.

Satterthwaite's contribution, *The Century Since*, brings the story up to date. Nuisance industries increased in the neighborhood until the 1960s when Washington's strong historic preservation movement began to turn its attention to the unique mix of old buildings and fascinating streetscapes on the waterfront. Thanks to citizen activism and a local government sensitive to preservation, she writes, the Georgetown waterfront escaped urban renewal and the massive multi-lane freeways that tore through the waterfronts of most major American cities.

"This is a valuable look at the process of urban change with significance beyond our Georgetown neighborhood," says Meg Hardon, Board President Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park, who will serve as emcee of the June 2 program. The organization partners with the National Park Service to maintain this urban oasis of lawns and landscaped greenspace, with stairs to the river for watching ducks as well as boat races, and a fountain to cool the feet of all ages. It honors the oldest occupied part of the nation's capital. Georgetown was chartered as an independent town 1749 and it was not absorbed into the government of the District of Columbia until 1878.

The book was published by Posterity Press. The cover design is by Denise Arnot.

The talk will be held from 6:00-7:30pm at Grace Episcopal Church at 1041 Wisconsin Ave NW, Washington, DC. Admission is free.

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About Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park

Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park (FOGWP) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded to raise awareness of the park and to help support park enhancement and maintenance. FOGWP has a Friends Group Agreement with the National Park Service to enhance community support for the park. FOGWP is the fourth volunteer citizens' organization established since 1978 to advocate for the park.

About Grace Episcopal Church

Grace Episcopal Church is a friendly congregation marked by a commitment to service and witness in our community, the arts of all kinds, especially music, with offerings ranging from blues to Bach; simple but reverent worship; education and formation for children and adults alike, with wide-ranging conversations about faith and life; and building community both within and without the church's walls and the gates opening onto its grounds. True to its history, Grace Church is committed to not only continuing its outreach program to the disenfranchised of the community, but also to providing a spiritual refuge for everyone living and working in the Georgetown area regardless of their religious affiliation

About the Authors

Satterthwaite and Smith share a love for the layers of history that remain on the landscape—the tobacco warehouses at the foot of Wisconsin Avenue, the stone Gothic Grace Church on the hilltop once the property of Georgetown's first mayor Robert Peter, and the tiny rowhouses on Cecil Place—all mingling with the 1949 Whitehurst Freeway and the modern buildings that began to rise in the 1970s. The place is a rare mosaic. New uses abound; a city incinerator is now a luxury hotel, old mills have become offices and condominiums.

Satterthwaite writes as an active participant in the evolution of the neighborhood; she worked for decades to replace the unsightly parking lot for hundreds of cars on this precious piece of Potomac riverfront with a national park, including a pivotal encounter with Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt that turned the tide toward success.

Kathryn Schneider Smith, now living in Maine, spent decades in Washington in an enterprise she describes as community-based public history, involving residents and visitors in an expanded appreciation for the character of the residential city beyond the monuments. She is author or editor of four books on the history of the city including *Washington At Home: an Illustrated History of Neighborhoods of Washington, D.C.*; the founding director of Cultural Tourism, DC responsible for the creation of the Neighborhood Heritage Trails and the Art on Call boxes across the city; the co-creator of an NEH-funded DC history curriculum in the DC Public Schools; the past president of the board of the Historical Society of Washington, DC, now the DC History Center, and the founding editor of its journal, *Washington History*. She has also served as chair of the Board of Advisors of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In addition to her Visionary Historian Award, she has been honored with a DC Lifetime Achievement Award in Historic Preservation, the Mayor's Award for the city's African American Heritage Trail, a Public Humanities Award from the DC Humanities Council, and a Momentum Award from the Downtown DC BID.

Ann Satterthwaite, a graduate of Radcliffe and Yale, has worked as a city planner around the country from Charleston South Carolina to Green Springs, Virginia on amenity planning involving historic preservation, recreation, culture and the environment. Ann, living in Georgetown, has been involved for forty years in efforts to convert the messy waterfront into a public park. During this time, she won two National Endowment grants and wrote two books on the community benefits of civic engagement and cultural activities—*Going Shopping: Consumer Choices and Community Consequences* (Yale University Press) and *Local Glories: Opera Houses on Main Street* (Oxford University Press). She has served as president/chairman of the National Association for Olmsted Parks and on the board of many organizations including Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park.