



## Pairing History with Food

The Smithsonian Discovers Barracks Row

ARTICLE BY SHARON BOSWORTH | PHOTOS BY ANDREW LIGHTMAN

The call came on a steamy day this past July. “Hi, I’m Nichole from the Smithsonian – is anyone there who can give tours?” In fact, we do give tours on Barracks Row! Lots of them ... tours for American University students for freshman orientation; tours for master’s degree candidates from urban planning programs wanting a firsthand look at the miracle on Eighth Street – their professors use Barracks Row to illustrate economic revitalization gone right.

But Nichole was calling from the Smithsonian ... The Smithsonian, the world famous museum, had an interest in a Barracks Row tour? This was unusual. As Nichole waited for an answer I flashed to the true tales of Eighth Street that our crowds love best:

- The building at 1006 Eighth St. was home to Lincoln co-conspirator Davy Herold. He helped John Wilkes Booth escape over the Eleventh Street Bridge,

setting off a nationwide, two-week manhunt.

- Thomas Jefferson rode his horse down Eighth Street in 1801 and selected the corner of Eighth and G streets SE as the site for the home of his Marine Corps Commandant.
- Every president except Nixon has visited Eighth Street. Lincoln visited Eighth Street 40 times, mostly to discuss with Major Dahlgren at the Navy Yard the latest breakthroughs in munitions design.
- Best of all, both our street and our Eastern Market Metro plaza actually appear on the first street design of the new federal city that Pierre L’Enfant created for George Washington in 1791 before the real DC ever existed.

We could definitely give Nichole and her colleagues at the Smithsonian a rollicking good tour.



Stephen Cheung: “It says Szechuan House in Chinese!”



The Greek guys at Cava.

### It’s All About Food

But that was not exactly where this phone call was going. Nichole Andonegui is tour editor of the Smithsonian Associate Magazine, dedicated to bringing the museum closer to its 50,000 local and regional member/subscribers. Once she found out that we did indeed have a tour developed, she rolled right past my reassurance that Eighth Street was right there on Monsieur L’Enfant’s map. Nichole deftly switched the subject to food.

The Smithsonian Associate Magazine has been testing the concept of neighborhood tours in Adams Morgan over the past year. The program that has emerged combines a history tour of the neighborhood with a restaurant crawl on a Sunday afternoon. To make this work, the tour has to be in a location that has both restaurants and history in abundance. Someone on Team Smithsonian had been to dinner on

Barracks Row the week before and saw a perfect fit here.

“Our neighborhood food tours are always popular – they sell out fast” said Nichole. “Our members love to explore DC neighborhoods – and different cuisines – the more exotic the better. Most of our members live within an hour of the museum, but they actually don’t know much about neighborhoods inside the city.”

After trying different approaches to the neighborhood tours, the Smithsonian recently hit upon the 3-3-3 formula: three different Sundays, three different restaurants each Sunday, and three tasting samples per restaurant. Once the neighborhood history walk is completed, the 30-person group is introduced to their first restaurant. There they begin the serious work of tasting different cuisines while the restaurant owner or chef regales the group with the fundamentals of his culture and food heritage.

### The American Adventure Continues

Cava (527 Eighth St. SE) owner Andreas Xenohristos is enthusiastic: "My parents are from Greece and Cypress. When they came to America, mom started a Greek restaurant, and dad was a carpenter." Two of their sons followed in mom's footsteps. "Our wall along the Cava dining room is full of family pictures both from Greece and here in this country," Andreas added. "I just moved to DC myself (from family home in Silver Spring). We love it here! We want to show off what a great neighborhood we've found. But I can really appreciate why the group from the Smithsonian wants to see this area with a guide. My dad tells us about Capitol Hill in the early 1990s ... and that's the picture lots of people still have in their heads. They need the Smithsonian tour to help them rediscover Washington."

Jens Piferoen, manager of Belga Café (514

and Levi's Port Café along with Cava and Belga will be part of the first ever Smithsonian Food and History Tours of Barracks Row to be held Nov. 1, Nov. 8 and Nov. 15. If you are a Smithsonian Associate, check your October issue to buy tickets. Otherwise, as you see these tours on Eighth Street this November, give a cheer and welcome the Smithsonian to the neighborhood. You may be seeing more of them. As Nichole Andonegui noted: "With 30 restaurants plus all this history, we may come back this spring for another round!"

### Want A Tour of Barracks Row For Your Group?

Amanda Didden Edwards, an architectural conservator and member of the Barracks Row board of directors, gives four tours every year with me, fall and spring, for Cultural Tourism. In late September, over



Sharon Bosworth at the Home of the Commandant's during Walking Town DC

Eighth St. SE) reports that owner Bart Vandele is excited about the coming Smithsonian tours. "We were the first Belgian restaurant in Washington," remembers Jens. "Belgium is a small country, but it has a very distinct food tradition focusing on homegrown ingredients with an emphasis on cooking with beer versus wine to develop complex intricate flavors. We are a neighborhood restaurant, but there are so few Belgian places in DC that we look forward to becoming a destination for people serious about food throughout the region. It sounds like this tour is for people who really want to understand food!"

Fusion Grill, Las Placitas, Matchbox, Capitol Hill Tandoor, Old Siam, Café 8

60 urban adventurers gathered on Eighth Street for our Saturday/ Sunday Walking Town DC tours. "It amazes me that each time we give this tour, the crowds get larger and larger," said Amanda. "People often tell me they've lived on the Hill for years but had no idea Eighth Street had so much to tell about American history. They really want to know the story behind their city! I love to learn about it myself while exploring the area that has helped shape five generations of my family."

For more information about Barracks Row, contact Sharon Bosworth, marketing manager, Barracks Row Main Street, 202-544-3188. ★

Sunday, October 18 . 6PM  
**The Klezmatics**  
 Music that is wild, mystical, provocative, reflective and ecstatically danceable.  
 DEKELBOUM CONCERT HALL TICKETS: \$42

October 29 & 30 . 8PM  
**Margaret Jenkins Dance Company**  
*Other Suns*  
 with the Guangdong Modern Dance Company of Guangzhou, China  
 KAY THEATRE TICKETS: \$37

November 5 & 6 . 8PM  
**Dan Hurlin**  
*Disfarmer*  
 The solitary life of photographer Mike Disfarmer, told through miniature puppets, 8mm home movies and Ozark mountain music.  
 KAY THEATRE TICKETS: \$37

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