Frederick Gutheim, Capital Catalyst

by Jane C. Loeffler

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Long before the word "network" was used as a verb, Frederick Gutheim had turned networking into an art form. His immensely productive career as a planner, public servant, historian, and educator owed much to that talent. I was working with him in 1972, for example, when he needed to assemble a prestigious-sounding committee to "sponsor" the Frederick Law Olmsted Sesquicentennial and attract foundation support. He told me to listen in on the extension, then he picked up the phone and called his old friend cultural historian and architectural critic Lewis Mumford in Amenia, New York. Surprised as I was to hear Mumford's voice on the phone, I was more surprised to hear Gutheim tell him how many luminaries would be endorsing the Olmsted effort. Based on the assurance that he was in good company, Mumford agreed to lend his name to the project. Gutheim thanked him and, as was his habit, hung up abruptly. Mumford thus unwittingly became the first member of the committee. Getting the others, Gutheim said, would be easy, and of course, with Mumford on board, it was.

Another example of Gutheim in action occurred when he learned that Washington author Laura Wood Roper had completed a biography of Olmsted. Without meeting the author or seeing the manuscript, Gutheim telephoned her at her Georgetown home and advised her to publish it to coincide with the sesquicentennial. She replied that she had no publisher. "How about Hopkins?" he asked. She liked the idea but expected nothing to come of it. Moments later, Gutheim called a close friend and editor at Johns Hopkins University Press, and just moments after that, the editor phoned Roper to offer her a deal that she happily accepted. The book deal did not benefit Gutheim directly but did yield a prize-winning volume—*FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted*—an asset to the sesquicentennial he had orchestrated.

Gutheim operated like a magician at times, but his effectiveness was no mystery. It came from knowing people everywhere and knowing how to tap mutual interests. It came, too, from a commitment to civic betterment, a passionate belief in planning as a method of rationalizing resources, and a strong interest in architecture and the cultural

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Frederick "Fritz" Gutheim pets one of "the girls" at his rural home, Mount Ephraim, Dickerson, Maryland, October 1985. During his 55-year career in the Washington area, the wide-ranging planner and educator often led decision-makers in planning cities and transportation systems and in preserving historic structures and landscapes. His ability as an intellectual matchmaker may have been his most powerful weapon in the many battles he waged over the direction of civic change. Photograph by Robert H. Loeffler.

landscape. He saw the Olmsted celebration, for example, not only as a spotlight on the historical figure of Frederick Law Olmsted, but as a way to spark interest in long-neglected Olmsted parks in cities across America and in the broader issue of preserving open space. The abundance of Olmsted-related exhibitions, publications, plans, courses, and community organizations that grew out of the 1972 sesquicentennial is testament to his vision.

I met Frederick Gutheim in 1971, when a letter from him crossed my desk at the U.S. Office of Environmental Education. After our meeting, he offered me a job. Subsequently we collaborated on many projects. When he died in 1993, he left behind boxes of remarkable but incomplete memoirs, in addition to other writings, notes, and lectures. This article is based primarily on these previously unexamined papers.[1]

In a talk at the National Building Museum in 1982, Gutheim described himself as an "instigator," and that description is apt.[2] Not one to walk a picket line or block access to a construction site, he was the sort of activist who operated behind the scenes to get the right people to make the right decisions. Fortunately for Washingtonians, he focused much of his enthusiasm on the national capital area—as an influential

Gutheim's father August stands in front of his new Oldsmobile with Allen and Barbara, his children by his second marriage, and grandson Nicholas at Mount Ephraim, New Year's Day 1951. Courtesy, the author.

Mount Ephraim, a red brick farmhouse on six acres of rolling farmland near Sugarloaf Mountain, became the Gutheims' home in 1941. The couple remained in their rural retreat until 1991 despite its distance from Washington. Photograph by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, National Park Service.

member of the planning team that gave Pennsylvania Avenue its splendid new look; as advocate for the Metrorail system to link city and suburb; as champion of Reston, the Virginia new town that he saw as an alternative to suburban sprawl; and as protector of scenic roads and open countryside, precious assets in nearby Maryland. On these and so much else, Gutheim made a difference. Moreover, as author of *The Potomac* (1949), *Worthy of the Nation* (1977), and numerous other books and articles, he set the standard for writing on local planning and environmental history and shaped the way the region came to see itself. Although his career took him from Helsinki to Addis Ababa, he concentrated his efforts in Washington, D.C., a place he loved, interpreted, and improved for more than 50 years.

Gutheim was born in a house on Fayerweather Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1908, but he grew up in Washington. His father, August Gutheim, also born in Cambridge, descended from French Huguenots who emigrated to the United States in the 1860s from the German village of Rhoden in the principality of Waldeck. August Gutheim's stern nature left its imprint on the young Frederick, who associated his father's cool personality with New England. Gutheim later wrote that when he struck out on his own, "It was against New England that I rebelled as much as against my father."[3] Even as a youngster, the boy, known as Fritz, was drawn more to the warmth and gaiety he associated with his mother, who was born and raised in a large, close-knit German immigrant family in the western Pennsylvania town of Erie.

August Gutheim studied law at Northeastern College Law School in Boston, while working as a traveling auditor for the Boston & Maine Railroad. When he was 27, he met and married Augusta Meiser, also the same age and already into "spinsterhood," according to their son's recollection. Fritz

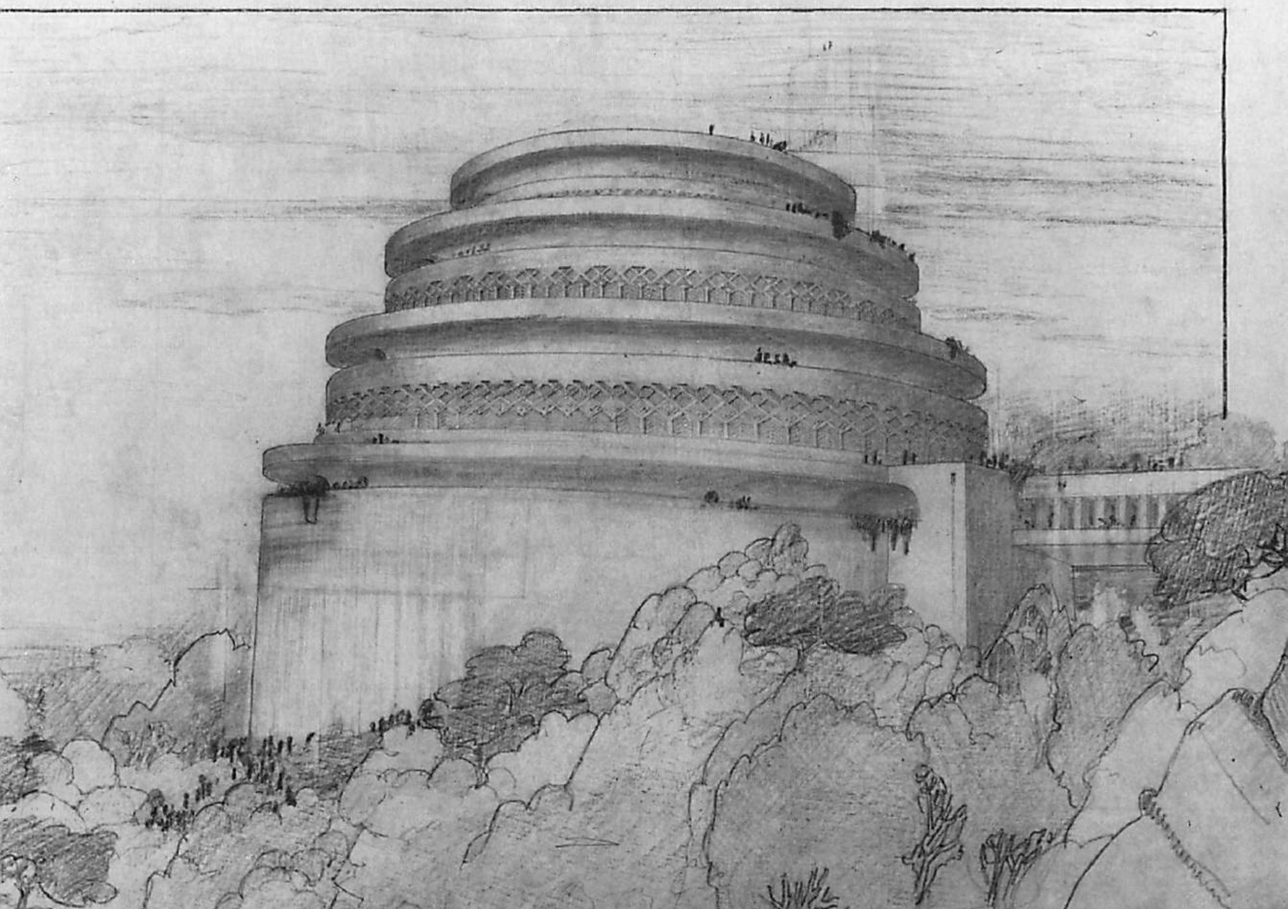
Gutheim's memoirs reveal that his mother found the sober circumstances of her new Cambridge household "distasteful," and that "she was never reconciled to his [father's] view that playing cards was a waste of time, the theatre an extravagance, and the most pleasure in life was to be had from reading books and the company of a few close and rewarding friends."[4]

The first child of this marriage, Fritz moved to Washington with his parents in 1908, when his father passed the Massachusetts Bar and accepted a position with the Interstate Commerce Commission. After a stint in a boarding house on Farragut Square, the family moved briefly to an apartment on Quarry Road near the National Zoo. On his father's shoulders, Fritz journeyed downhill to a dark wooded area near the zoo's east entrance to observe Halley's Comet (1910); it must have been a "powerful recollection," as he put it, because he was only two at the time.[5] Soon after, the family moved into a house on Oakwood Terrace at the end of Washington's Mount Pleasant streetcar line in a community largely made up of transplanted New Englanders. The house faced the woods of Rock Creek Park; through the woods and across Piney Branch were Blagden's farm and the rural acreage that bordered the built-up city in what is now the Crestwood neighborhood.

With her husband frequently out of town on business, Augusta Gutheim often retreated to her family home in Erie. There Fritz and his younger brother Robert learned the joys of farming, woodworking, baking, boating, and caring for animals, and were doted upon by an array of aunts and uncles. Augusta's father supplied meat and provisions to the coal and ore steamers that traveled the Great Lakes to Milwaukee, Gary, Duluth, and other western ports. Her son Fritz's proudest moments, he later wrote, were taking the tiller of his grandfather's motor launch and handling the horses' reins as he and his uncles assembled the needed cargo from slaughter houses, wholesale grocers, and barrooms. It is no surprise that Erie loomed in his memory as such a pleasant place. "Compared to it," he wrote, "Washington was an arid environment, and the children one knew [were] tedious and inexperienced." Looking back, he described Erie as his "principal family reference," noting, however, "my attitudes remained conventionally New England."[6] As a boy, he was already measuring himself against his often-distant father.

This drawing of an "Automobile Objective" atop Sugarloaf Mountain was created for Gordon Strong, then the mountain's owner, by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1924. Fortunately Strong rejected the plan, which Wright later inverted in designing the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. © The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, Ariz.

By his own estimation, young Gutheim was an indifferent student in grade school and high school, and his parents despaired over his academic future. His career at Sidwell Friends School came to a halt soon after he was caught smoking near the school. He completed high school in Georgetown at Dr. Devitt's Preparatory School, best known as a cram school for the U.S. military academies. Gutheim began a school newspaper and, realizing that few students knew anything about choosing colleges or areas of study, wrote a column on educational options. This led him to discover Alexander Meiklejohn's new program at the University of Wisconsin. Previously, as president of Amherst, Meiklejohn had shocked the academic community by inviting a poet with no academic credentials—Robert Frost—to speak on campus. Because of that and the fact the Meiklejohn had tried to fire nearly all the elderly Amherst professors, the Amherst trustees fired him. He moved to New York, where he organized his ideas into a plan for what he called "integrated learning," and it was not long before Glenn Frank, president of the University of Wisconsin, offered him



the chance to test his theories on the progressive Madison campus.

Attracted by Meiklejohn's hands-on approach to learning, Gutheim was among the 119 freshmen who gathered in the fall of 1927 to participate in his Experimental College, which served as the first two years of a four-year degree program at University of Wisconsin. With no academic departments and no typical exams, the program ignored tradition. First-year students studied Periclean Athens. In a survey of history, literature, economics, and art, second-year students investigated American society and the attributes that distinguished it as a civilization. They studied *The Education of Henry Adams* and prepared a regional analysis of a familiar place to help them understand the relationship between planning and place.[7]

Gutheim might have chosen Washington for his study, but instead he selected the region around Erie, because, he said, even then he realized that Washington was unusual. He was intrigued by the capital's dual nature—federal city and non-industrial southern town. To him, this dichotomy made Washington "abnormal," whereas industrial Erie was "normal." Guided by political scientist John Gaus, who introduced him to the idea of planning as decision-making, Gutheim wrote a paper examining the railroads' stranglehold on "the greatest natural port on the Great Lakes." That project, he later said, taught him the importance of region as a shaping force in planning.

The Experimental College also introduced Gutheim to two men who influenced him professionally—historian Lewis Mumford and architect Frank Lloyd Wright. When Mumford was invited to Wisconsin to give a series of lectures on American civilization, "he had no academic credentials at all," Gutheim noted, "but that didn't bother the Experimental College any. Nobody had ever

studied American civilization before. . . . What was specifically American about it was a question that had never been raised."[8] Gutheim read Mumford's work and spent the summer looking at the buildings Mumford talked about and reading recent publications, including the New York State Regional Plan Report of 1926. Mumford was generous with advice and introductions, and Gutheim looked to him as an intellectual role model.

Meeting Frank Lloyd Wright in 1928 was a different experience for the undergraduate. Armed with a letter of introduction from his Washington schoolmaster Devitt, Gutheim looked up Philip LaFollette, then district attorney for Dane County, where Madison is located. LaFollette introduced him to the political landscape of the region and also to Wright who, at that time, was being pursued by creditors. The sheriff was attempting to seize Wright's personal property, including his Japanese prints, when LaFollette, accompanied by Gutheim, arrived at Taliesin to intervene. Gutheim found himself enchanted by the workshop and its small, committed community of draftsmen. As he later noted, Wright was then "famous, but forgotten." He was broke and his house unheated, but architects still came to learn from him "what they could never learn in conventional schools." Gutheim attached himself to the group and began the task of organizing Wright's papers, which he found in disarray. He enjoyed the company of architects and visited Taliesin almost weekly while at Wisconsin. Soon after, he convinced Wright to let him edit and publish a volume of his papers (*Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, 1941). Gutheim parlayed his association with Wright into a professional asset and eventually became a spokesman for the architect and his professional comeback.[9]

Polly Gutheim relaxes at her beloved Mount Ephraim with Sugarloaf Mountain behind her, circa 1951. Courtesy, the author.

Despite his enthusiasm for architecture and its history, Gutheim never expressed an interest in becoming an architect. By 1931, when he graduated from Wisconsin and returned to Washington, he was seriously interested in politics and hoped to follow in his father's footsteps by pursuing a career in public service.[10] He was ambitious and set his sights high. He attended the Round Table on Regionalism at the University of Virginia in the summer of 1931 hoping to find himself a job. There he met Louis Brownlow, Clarence Stein, Benton MacKaye, and other noted advocates of regional planning. Franklin Roosevelt addressed the gathering at Charlottesville, pointing to ways in which economic development might be achieved through regional planning and the harnessing of hydroelectric resources. In the speech, Gutheim recognized the voices of MacKaye, who first conceived of the Appalachian Trail (1921), and Stein, who founded the Regional Planning Association of America (1923).[11]

With a letter of introduction from John Gaus, Gutheim sought out Brownlow, who interested him partly because Brownlow had never attended school. As Gutheim tells it, Brownlow became a journalist, came to Washington, married the daughter of the chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, and was appointed a District commissioner. He subsequently managed the City Housing Corporation, which built the pioneering American garden city at Radburn, New Jersey; developed his expertise in city management with a succession of positions; established the Public Administration Clearing House in Chicago; and organized the Charlottesville Round Table. As it happened, Brownlow knew that the Spelman Fund, a Rockefeller-related activity, had just given the Brookings Institution a grant to study the housing conditions of American Indians. He sent Gutheim to meet Louis Meriam, who was administering the grant, and Meriam gave Gutheim his first job as a junior staff member in the Institute for Government Research at Brookings.[12] At that time, Brookings was located in buildings on Jackson Place; Gutheim's father, who had by then established his own law practice, worked in a townhouse on the same block.

After touring the West and drafting his report on Indian housing, Gutheim returned to Brookings to work with Meriam on two additional projects. He helped the Washington Housing Association draft a bill to create the first local housing authority, a project that introduced him to architect Horace Peaslee, long active in Washington housing circles, and John Ihlder, who Gutheim regarded as "the top housing professional in Washington." The second project was a survey of existing social planning programs for the Washington Council of Social Agencies. Collaborating with local leaders on the survey, and encouraged by Meriam, who had worked closely with leading social workers in the Children's Bureau and the Women's Bureau, Gutheim "flirted with the idea of a career in social work" in 1932. "Those were days when it was hoped that social welfare administration would be a major element in dealing with unemployment and Depression-related problems," he wrote, "and it was exciting to see what it looked like from the top." He went on to observe that social planning was one element of comprehensive city planning, "but the bridge we were trying to build between the two fields was one that neither group was ready to cross."[13] Social planning and housing were closely related. Gutheim's growing interest in housing policy was prompted at least in part by his fondness for housing expert Catherine Bauer, a Mumford protégé. He formed close and lasting friendships with other young idealists including landscape architect Dan Kiley and architect Oskar Stonorov, designer of the Carl Mackley Houses in Philadelphia (the first

project approved by the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration).

As Gutheim described it, "the advent of the New Deal was a time of great confusion." Not sure what to do, he turned for advice to the authoritative Brownlow, who urged him to return to school at the University of Chicago. New planning and housing programs at Harvard or Columbia would have better suited his interests, and Washington was where he really wanted to be, but heeding Brownlow's advice, he enrolled in a doctoral program in history at Chicago in 1933—a move he later described as "a mistake."[14]

"Compared to the heady atmosphere at Brookings," Gutheim said, "what I found at Chicago was pale and timid."[15] Instead of living with other students at the university, he chose private housing; joined the Quadrangle Club, which had no student members; lunched with the faculty; and accepted a part-time job with the Illinois Housing Association, where the chairman of the board was Jane Addams. He soon knew "everybody in Chicago," but, as he said, all these moves were "in the wrong direction." Somehow he fancied himself, at age 25, "too old, too experienced, [and] too sophisticated" for graduate school, an experience he compared with "reentering 8th grade."

Home for Christmas in 1934, Gutheim attended a tea dance given by Edward Bruce at the Mayflower Hotel. There he met Mary "Polly" Purdon, who, Gutheim later said, "carried the cosmopolitan air of so many New Deal newcomers to Washington."[16] He was intrigued by the "tall, willowy brunette in a yellow dress," and also by her background. Her father, Eric Purdon, hailed from Northern Ireland, managed sugar plantations in the Philippines, and served as British vice consul at Ilo Ilo before his untimely death before the outbreak of World War I; her mother, Mary, an American "Army brat," met and married her husband in Manila and then embarked on what Gutheim called "a migratory life" when she found herself a widow with two small children.[17] Fascinated by Mary Purdon's resourcefulness, and even more by her daughter's charm, Gutheim obtained permission from his graduate program (with Brownlow's help) to spend a month in Washington, ostensibly to help a friend set up a job training program for college students interested in federal service. Sure of his intentions, and, as he put it, not vetoed by her family, he married Polly in 1935, and she moved with him to Chicago.

A year later, the much distracted and conflicted student failed his final examinations after what he described as a "delinquent off-and-on three-year career as an intellectual shoplifter."[18] His failure committed him to what he called "an unconventional career in a labyrinth of arbitrarily closed doors." Lacking the academic credentials that Brownlow thought he needed, he abandoned academe in 1936 and returned to Washington. Taking advantage of his network of contacts, Gutheim found a position with the Federal Writers' Project editing architectural essays in the state guidebook series. This task let him broaden the prevailing definition of architecture, he later said, to include vernacular structures such as brick schoolhouses and log cabins. His other contributions to the New Deal effort included drafting the planning sections of the Tennessee Valley Authority Act, the pioneer regional planning and economic development legislation, and working at the U.S. Housing Authority in its Division of Research and Information, when public housing still constituted a positive ideal. Meanwhile, he and his wife moved into a tiny row house at 2913 Dumbarton Avenue in Georgetown, a neighborhood popular among New Dealers.

On the Maryland side of the Potomac, across from Mount Vernon, Virginia, lies the Accokeek Foundation's National Colonial Farm. Gutheim promoted this innovative agricultural preserve to protect the shoreline from development and to save Mount Vernon's historic vista. Photograph by Robert H. Loeffler.

As an editor for *The Magazine of Art*, Gutheim enjoyed renewed contact with longstanding friends such as Constance Rourke, whom he had met through Mumford. To a series he edited, Rourke contributed an essay on regionalism in art. Her essay, as well as her professed intention to write a book on the history of the Ohio River, prompted him to think about writing the regional history that later became *The Potomac*.[19]

In 1941 the Gutheims moved to Dickerson, Maryland, in upper Montgomery County, where they bought an old red brick farmhouse on six acres of rolling farmland near Sugarloaf Mountain and close to the Potomac. Embellished with Victorian details, the house was built in 1868 by local builder William T. Hilton. Known as Mount Ephraim, the picturesque property remained their home for 50 years.[20] When they bought the virtual ruin from the estate of a fencing master named François Darrieulat, the property was encumbered with various liens and easements, most held by Gordon Strong, owner of a 3,000-acre estate on Sugarloaf Mountain. Son of a Chicago multi-millionaire railroad executive and real estate tycoon, Strong had discovered Sugarloaf while on a long bicycle trip. He fell in love with the mountain, an outrider of the Catoctin range at the edge of the Appalachians, and set about buying the land, already twice-cut for wood and charcoal and abandoned by owners who had quit paying taxes on the land once the timber was gone.[21] Although Strong reluctantly returned to Chicago to run the family business, he always maintained ties to the property he named Stronghold, and he was selective about his neighbors. (When Harold Ickes, secretary of the interior, expressed President Roosevelt's interest in the place as a retreat from Washington, Strong refused, forcing Ickes to look further north, where he chose Camp David near Thurmont.) He approved of the Gutheims' purchase partly because of Gutheim's prior association with Frank Lloyd Wright. Nearly 20 years earlier, Strong had retained Wright to design what Wright called an "automobile objective" at Sugarloaf (1924), but he had rejected Wright's scheme, which would have capped the mountain with a tourist attrac-

Plans, Plans, Plans

Author, Planner, Private Citizen-Gutheim Works to Build County

More and more the question is being asked in Montgomery County, "Who is Frederick Gutheim?"

Except for the first six months of his life Frederick Gutheim has been a Montgomery County resident. With a best-selling book he has drawn the interest of the nation to this part of the country. His internationally recognized skill as a land and housing planner has been called upon to help direct the county's post-war development. But very few people know anything of the life of Frederick Gutheim.

He is active in three separate fields: he is a planning consultant, a writer and a citizen interested in regional planning problems.

Mr. Gutheim has been most in the public eye lately because of his membership on the Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission since its creation in

MR. GUTHEIM

UMCPC. The planning staff is a division of the county manager's office, says Mr. Gutheim, and the UMCPC ought to be "biult into the structure of the county gov-

Gutheim married a Washington girl, Mary Purdon.

Worked with Brookings

One of his first jobs was with the Brookings Institute where he concentrated on housing problems among Indians. He helped relocate an entire Indian village that was to be flooded out by a dam.

After serving as executive secretary of the Illinois Housing Association, he entered the field of Federal housing and planning where one of his first jobs was to draft several portions of the legislation creating the Tennessee Valley Authority. The TVA job revealed to Mr. Gutheim for the first time, he says, the possibilities of regional planning.

His work with Federal housing programs took Mr. Gutheim up to and through World War II. He lingered awhile in Europe after the conflict to work for the

tion resembling a ziggurat. (The same scheme, inverted, later provided Wright's design for New York City's Guggenheim Museum.)

Despite its name, Mount Ephraim is not a mountain. It was named for Ephraim Harris—"a mountain of a man," according to Gutheim—who had worked there as a farmer, storekeeper, and postmaster a century earlier. Darrieulat had made wine there during Prohibition. Landscape architect Dan Kiley prepared a plan that replaced the vineyard with gently sloping terraces. Another friend, architect Julian Berla, drew plans for modernizing the interior of the house, converting the big farm kitchen into a living room, creating a small kitchen in the front of the house, converting the front parlor into a library, and adding walls of bookcases and other built-in storage. As the renovations progressed, Gutheim wrote Frank Lloyd Wright that his house was "a genuine Victorian monstrosity." He declared, "It is devoid of architectural interest but at least is clean, comfortable, convenient, and—the last 'c'—cheap. It will do until the war is over and we can afford to build something afresh."[22] A puzzling comment, perhaps, from someone who later became a leading preservationist, but Gutheim never believed in preservation for its own sake, always advocating it as a part of a larger planning process. He was also captivated by modernism. He may have even hoped that his comment would lead to the offer of an original design from Wright. Whatever his true feelings about the architecture, he and Polly furnished the house with pieces by modernists Alvar Aalto, Bruno Mathsson, and Eero Saarinen. His long-time friendship with Aalto and his support of Finnish architecture had begun in 1937 when he worked as a consultant on the 1939 New

This 1956 Montgomery County Sentinel *feature on Gutheim was an early indication of his growing reputation as an important "citizen interested in regional planning problems." Courtesy, the author.*

York World's Fair, and Aalto designed the Finnish exhibition there.

Between 1941 and 1943, when Gutheim served as area representative for the National Housing Agency (Federal Works Agency) in Hampton Roads, Virginia, he commuted to his Maryland home each weekend by boat and train. In 1944, at the age of 36, he was drafted into the Army (despite deafness in one ear). When he received orders to go overseas, he bought two sheep, presented them to his wife, and told her that they would ensure her of a supply of meat in his absence. "That was our entry into the livestock business," he later observed. From then on, the Gutheims always kept sheep and chickens, taking special pleasure in "the girls," as they called the flock.

Gutheim's unit arrived in France as the war ended, but he wrote a report on what he saw in France that landed him a job as chief of the French Mission for Urbanism and Reconstruction in Washington after the war (1945-46). The mission's work included purchasing building materials for repairing bombed or vandalized French properties, advising on the reconstruction of the decimated French building industry, and providing research on the retraining of French architects, engineers, and planners who had been held in German prison camps.[23]

When a Chicago friend referred him to a position as writer/editor at the *New York Herald Tribune*, Gutheim eagerly accepted and moved to New York in 1947. In news stories and editorials, he condemned New York's infamous Robert Moses and the dangerously unchecked power he wielded over the city's parks and highways; he criticized efforts to rob New York of its "fast-vanishing past" and called for legal protection for buildings with design value; he battled New York University over the destruction of Greek Revival houses and decried the university's "piecemeal and opportunistic creeping around Washington Square." Faced with a foe such as Moses, Gutheim pushed for preservation as a political strategy, not just as an expression of nostalgia. "What interested me, of course, with my political orientation," Gutheim said, "was the use of zoning powers and other legal devices to preserve not just individual buildings, but the whole range of values inherent in old towns, whole districts like Greenwich Village, and landscape features like Central Park or the Bronx River Parkway."[24]

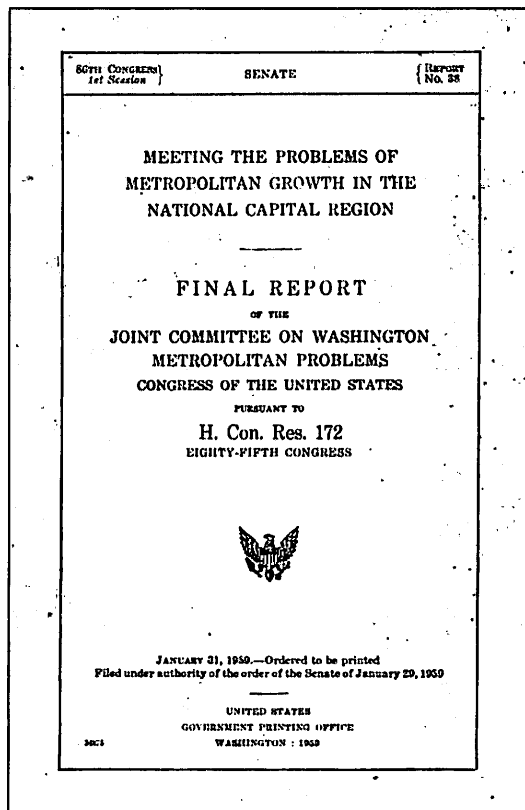
Gutheim quickly made a name for himself in New York, and his career in journalism looked bright, but the move north did not go smoothly for the family. Polly longed to return to Mount Ephraim, and after a year, she did return to Maryland with their young son Nicholas, adopted as a baby in 1945. Gutheim was caught in what he described as a "theatre of conflict." He tried to commute, found it impossible, and reluctantly resigned from the *Tribune* in 1950 to return home to a far less glamorous and less influential position in public relations for the American Institute of Architects in Washington.

In 1949, after ten years of interrupted effort, he published *The Potomac* to critical acclaim. The book established his reputation as a planner, historian, and authority on Washington and soon became the classic reference on the region's environmental history. It attracted a popular audience in addition to historians and geographers and was so popular, in fact, that *The Saturday Review* featured a quotation from it in its famous weekly double-crostic on October 28, 1950.[25]

Like Mumford, Gutheim lived far from the bustle of town even though he was committed to the life of the city. Unlike his mentor, however, he played an active role in community affairs. When the Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission formed in 1950, for example, he was

a founding member and strong supporter of provisions to preserve farmland and protect the Seneca Creek watershed. In 1952, when he left AIA, Gutheim became a vice president at Galaxy, Inc., a consulting firm founded by his old friend Robert Ware Straus. Projects for Galaxy included an exhibition on regional planning produced for the U.S. High Commissioner in Berlin and similar work for a Munich conference on social work and the International Geophysical Year.[26] By 1956, when he launched his own consulting practice, he was a local celebrity and featured speaker on matters pertaining to zoning and development in the suburbs and downtown. Gutheim became known as an advocate for a "green wedge" along the Maryland and Virginia banks of the Potomac River. He opposed the Central Intelligence Agency's move to Langley, Virginia. His clients included Columbia University, Southwestern Research Institute, the American Committee to Improve Our Neighborhoods (ACTION), Webb and Knapp, and AIA.[27]

Robert Ware Straus called on Gutheim for professional advice on behalf of the Accokeek community, located on the Potomac's Maryland shore, 12 miles south of Washington. Before the Gutheims bought Mount Ephraim, they had considered moving to Accokeek to be with friends there. Once home to the Piscataway Indians, Accokeek is located in southern Prince George's County, Maryland, directly across the Potomac River from Mount Vernon. By 1945 the area had begun to experience growth problems, and by the early 1950s, Straus and his neighbors were looking for ways to protect its scenic beauty and bar amusement parks, high-rise apartments, and other proposed developments that threatened to ruin the vista from Mount Vernon. Gutheim proposed an original idea—an "agricultural historical museum." He outlined a plan to conserve the land through the purchase of scenic easements, and his shrewd political insight aided Straus and his neighbors in protecting the area.[28] Gutheim's recommendations led to the creation of the Accokeek Foundation (1957) and its innovative agricultural preserve, the National Colonial Farm (1958). Wilton C. Corkern, a former Gutheim student and now director of the Accokeek Foundation, points out that Gutheim was not content to "preserve" the property; he wanted it to be used in a way that would secure both its historical identity and its scenic value. Both were achieved at Accokeek.



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MEETING THE PROBLEMS OF METROPOLITAN GROWTH IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

FINAL REPORT

OF THE

JOINT COMMITTEE ON WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN PROBLEMS

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

PURSUANT TO

H. Con. Res. 172

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As staff director of the Congressional Joint Committee on Washington Metropolitan Problems in 1958, Gutheim helped produce this report on metropolitan growth and promoted legislation that created the National Capital Transportation Agency in 1960. Courtesy, Montgomery County Historical Society.

Maryland Congressman Dewitt Hyde called on Gutheim when a transit strike paralyzed Washington during the hot summer of

1956 and his furious constituents could not get to and from work. Gutheim urged Hyde to seize the opportunity to implement existing legislation authorizing a regional mass transportation plan. Hyde complied, naming him to prepare a mass transportation survey (1958), which revived the idea of a system that included a subway. Downtown merchants, who had only begun to open branches in the suburbs, and major newspapers, filled with retailers' advertising, had long opposed such a plan because it threatened the primacy of their downtown flagship stores.

This work resulted in Gutheim's appointment as staff director of the Congressional Joint Committee on Washington Metropolitan Problems in 1958. The "Bible Committee," named after its chairman Senator Alan Bible (D-Nevada), was charged with reviewing transportation options, but most of its members, as Gutheim later pointed out, were "hopelessly innocent of experience or interest in metropolitan problems." As director, Gutheim organized hearings on the transportation survey he had authored. In 1960 his two-year tenure resulted in congressional legislation creating the National Capital Transportation Agency. He also proposed an advisory group similar to the one that advised the U.S. Information Agency. In 1961 President Kennedy appointed him to the new National Capital Transportation Agency Advisory Board. Looking back at that effort, Gutheim commented that the board "didn't need a great deal of statutory power in order to have political power; the Presidential appointment gave us our legitimacy."[29]

Gutheim posed for this formal portrait in 1962 while working as founding director of the local urban think-tank, the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies. Courtesy, Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library.

As chairman of the advisory board from 1961 to 1965, Gutheim articulated the compelling need for mass transit and guided the lobbying effort even as it was assaulted by retail and highway interests. For example, he defended the need for parking lots at outlying stations. These had been authorized in the original legislation but were removed in the first amendments at the behest of shopping center developers who did not want competition from shops at the station plazas. He wanted Washington to model its transit system after prototypes in British and Scandinavian new towns, where stations were integrated with transit, pedestrian circulation, parking, housing, and shopping. He also wanted to build the system's urban core by first unifying the central city and then adding suburban extensions.[30] But, as he later lamented, spokespersons for suburban commuters quickly gained the upper hand. The allocation of subsidies also influenced the project, and the plan came to resemble the spokes of a wheel, permitting suburbanites to come and go, but making it difficult for District residents to get around town efficiently.

If Washington's Metrorail system was not built according to his model, his contribution was crucial, as noted by attorney Thomas Farmer, a Kennedy advisor and Gutheim's successor as chairman of the National Capital Transportation Agency Advisory Board. Farmer first met Gutheim in 1959 when the two joined the fight to stop a proposed eight-lane extension of Interstate 70S that would have cut a swath through neighborhoods in Northwest and Northeast Washington. The two worked vigorously to stop the highway and promote mass transit. According to Farmer, Gutheim was "the substantive mentor for the whole subway planning effort. Intellectually, the real input came from him."[31]

Gutheim's experience on Capitol Hill convinced him that Washington needed to take advantage of the rising tide of interest in urban problems (defined in the 1950s in terms of demography and spatial distribution rather than social ills). Months after leaving the Committee on Washington Metropolitan Problems, he secured seed money from the Ford Foundation and matching funds from the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation and launched the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, one of the first urban think-tanks. As director of the center between 1960 and 1965, he gathered economists, demographers, planners, and political scientists together to study area issues and to predict trends. His successor Atlee Shidler later noted that Washington led other metropolitan areas in removing racial barriers from its housing market as a direct result of demographic and housing studies conducted by the Washington Center under Gutheim's presidency.[32] Gutheim's brainchild, renamed the Greater Washington Research Center, continues to serve as an area resource.

At the helm of the Washington Center, Gutheim was recognized as an expert on Washington, contributing articles to the *Washington Post* and consulting on area projects, including the new town of Reston, Virginia. Robert E. Simon, Jr., purchased 7,000 acres of Northern Virginia countryside in 1961. Zoning would have permitted him to build four houses per acre, a development that would have resembled Levittown and other "bedroom" suburbs. But he saw the site as perfect for a new community with recreation, commerce, and high- and low-density housing—a project he had dreamed of for years.[33] He retained planners and architects to draw up plans for the project, designed in the tradition of British garden cities, American prototypes, including the New Deal town of Greenbelt, Maryland (1935), and more recent efforts such as the Finnish new town of Tapiola (1952). Nothing was possible without special approval from members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, however, who viewed Simon's unusual scheme with skepticism and hostility. To make matters worse, the board was not known for its honest dealings. When Simon was approached for a "$20,000 loan," he politely declined. He relied, instead, on Gutheim, who put his ingenuity and political savvy to work. Simon recently recalled, "As president of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, Fritz had standing in the community which he could use, and did use, in the finest sense of the word, to provide public relations for the project."[34] Gutheim shared Simon's commitment. His compensation was the pleasure of seeing the land developed well.

According to Simon, in the days before the final vote in the summer of 1962, "Fritz turned himself into a dynamo," which resulted in seven articles published in the *Washington Post*, including an editorial, and six in the *Washington Star*, including another editorial. Gutheim wrote two of the *Post* ar-

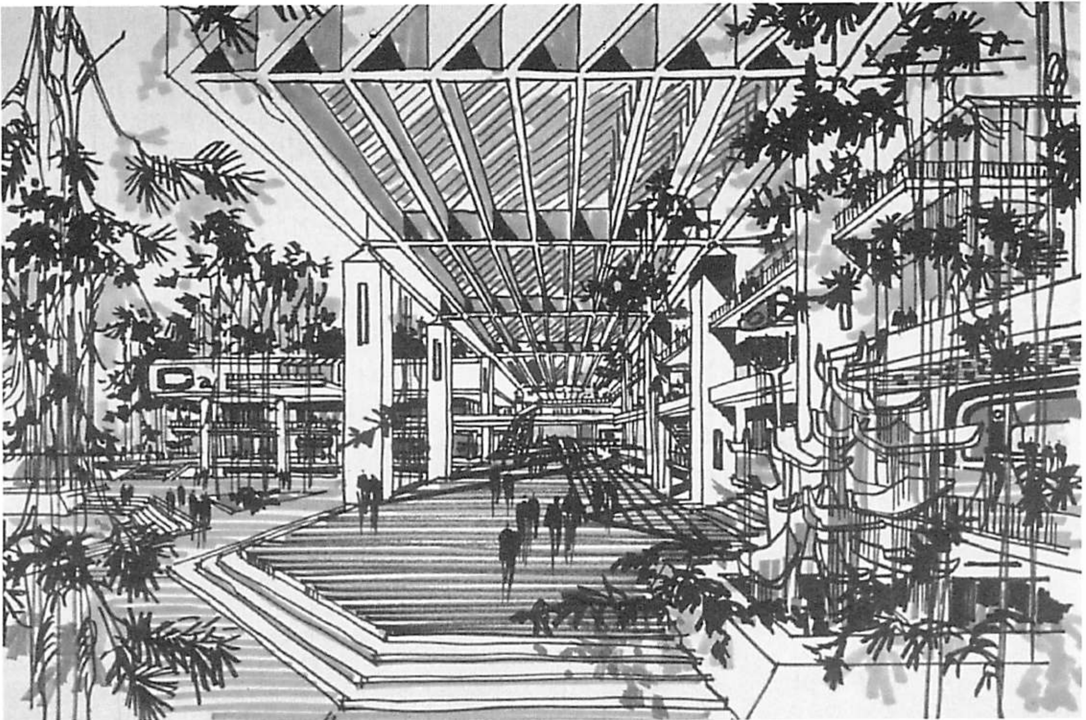
This artist's rendering shows a proposed development at Metro Center, early 1960s. Gutheim advocated lively stations integrated with transit lines and parking, shopping, and residential areas. Photograph by Bob Yeargin; courtesy, the author.

ticles himself.[35] "The Virginia papers ran headlines that looked like war had been declared," Simon added. The articles explained the Reston plan and urged the Fairfax supervisors to back it. The result was a 7-0 vote in favor of the new town project, named for its founder (using his initials RES). Simon attributed his "public relations coup" to Gutheim's ability to achieve good publicity and his meticulous behind-the-scenes work.

When President Johnson finally called for a cleanup of the Potomac River in the mid-1960s, Interior Secretary Stewart Udall appointed Gutheim to the AIA-Interior Department Planning Task Force on the Potomac (1965-66). Gutheim wrote the final report, a turning point in the river's history and the basis for its revitalization, which is now spearheaded by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. Change did not occur overnight, but it did occur. As Gilbert Gude noted in 1995, "The work and report of this task force spawned innovative ideas and initiatives which continue to catalyze the thinking and efforts of all who have an interest in the Potomac watershed."[36]

Ever the advocate for the river, Gutheim also championed Washington's downtown, and he put his planning knowledge, political sense, and networking skills to work for Pennsylvania Avenue. He had called attention to the dilapidated parade route just before President Eisenhower's inauguration in 1953. His provocatively titled article, "The Mess in Washington," appeared in the January 1953 issue of *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* and called upon the president to reverse two decades of neglect by creating a plan for a capital "worthy of the nation."[37] The article was intended as a wake-up call to the incoming Republican administration, but the Republicans took no action. Dismayed by the neglected property along the Pennsylvania Avenue route of his inaugural parade, President Kennedy finally initiated the redevelopment of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The planning process began in earnest in 1961 when Daniel Patrick Moynihan,



Fairfax Project Would House 75,000

Reston Community Decision May Alter Suburban Growth

JUL 1 1 1962

By Fredrick Gutheim

Architectural critic Gutheim is president of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies.

Fairfax County officials are nearing a decision on Reston, the beautifully wooded 10-square-mile tract where New York developer Robert Simon has projected a diversified, compact community of 75,000 people.

Gutheim

The principal point of decision involves adoption of a new section of the County's zoning code providing for "a residential planned community."

But more fundamental still will be a development policy implied in this decision that may change profoundly the pattern of suburban growth. Not only Fairfax . . . Washington's fastest growing county—but the rest of the Washington metropolitan area will be influenced by this decision, and so will the 2 million new residents expected to swell Washington's population in the next 20 years.

The Washington Post

On Thursday the Fairfax County Planning Commission meets to take final action on the proposal. Next Wednesday the County Supervisors have scheduled a public hearing on it.

Suburban builders used to build houses a few at a time. Now the average development is likely to produce 200 or more houses. Washington has also seen homebuilders like the Broyhills, whose Sterling Park project near Dulles Airport proposes 3500 houses and 3000 apartments on its 1800 acres, or Levitt and Sons whose Belair project envisions 4500 houses on 2250 acres.

These residential communities have comprised single family houses, usually with several sizes and styles, shopping centers and commercial recreation like swimming pools and bowling alleys and

The provision of 15 school sites, coupled with pedestrian and bicycle ways, will make it possible for children to walk to school—less than a mile—with a great saving of school bus time and costs. Village centers will provide stores, churches and other civic facilities. More intimate in scale, they will be a refreshing change from the auto-dominant shopping centers, with their huge parking lots, now rising throughout Fairfax.

By planning a relatively self-contained community, Whittlesey & Conklin, the designers, offer a new kind of convenience in the daily living routine of suburban families. Starting with earlier land development plans prepared by Harland Bartholomew and Associates, they have reflected the firm's experience in such "new towns" as Kittimat, the Aluminium Co. of Canada's community in British Columbia, Chandrigarh, the new capital city of East Punjab, and many other developments in the United States running back to the Greenbelt towns of the Roosevelt years.

In "First Villages," as the initial development unit is called, the apartments are arranged to form a continuous belt developed at ground level in a paved promenade as urban in character as a boardwalk.

The initial sketches show what possibilities are offered by the development to well-

whom Gutheim had met earlier on Capitol Hill, became assistant secretary of labor under Arthur Goldberg. Moynihan asked Gutheim for advice about a new building for the Department of Labor. The two soon redefined the problem of office space in more cosmic terms. Rather than looking at the downtown as a series of separate sites, they would look at it as a whole. President Kennedy created the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space that year; Moynihan and Gutheim collaborated on its 1962 report recommending government-sponsored redevelopment of Pennsylvania Avenue. In June 1962, Kennedy created the President's Advisory Council on Pennsylvania Avenue with San Francisco architect Nathaniel Owings as chairman, Moynihan as vice chairman, and Gutheim as council member. On Gutheim's recommendation, at least three of his friends—Vermont-based landscape architect Dan Kiley, Seattle architect Paul Thiry, and D.C. architect Chloethiel Woodard Smith—were invited to join the council, and Gutheim's otherwise limited influence was parlayed into something greater.

The first Pennsylvania Avenue plan (1964) emphasized removal and replacement, in typical urban renewal fashion. Its centerpiece was a tremendous paved plaza called National Square, which led directly to a new

Gutheim wrote this Post *article (left) in 1962 in support of the planned community of Reston, Virginia, an alternative to what he called "slurbs"—low density, look-alike communities of "look-alike families." His efforts helped persuade the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to approve the project. These lakeside units (below) are typical of Reston's innovative mixture of medium-density towhouses, higher-density apartments and traditional single-family dwellings, a combination that helped preserve much of the natural setting. Courtesy, Gutheim Collection, University of Wyoming; the author.*

and prominent White House gate located southeast of the Treasury Department. The council conceived of this vast space "not as another park but a popular gathering place, truly urban and truly national."[38] A series of interlocking plazas led to the other main vista, a view of the Capitol at Pennsylvania Avenue's east end. Moynihan and Gutheim authored the Advisory Council's final report as presented to President Johnson in April 1964. While arguing that Pennsylvania Avenue was inseparable from adjoining areas, the report emphasized the special character of the "grand axis." It called for recessed shopping concourses and substreet parking, controlled signage, and monumentally scaled architecture. It also called for demolition of landmarks thought to be economically unviable such as the Willard Hotel.

In March 1965 Johnson established the Temporary Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue to advise on the feasibility and phasing of the plan. At the commission's request, Pennsylvania Avenue and adjacent areas were designated a National Historic Site later that year. Work began on the new FBI building in 1967, the first new construction near there in years. Soon after, crews started work on the new Capitol reflecting pool, built over the Center Leg Freeway tunnel (today one of the few remaining vestiges of a 1959 plan for an elaborate system of urban freeways). The Willard Hotel closed in 1968, and while its owners fought in court for permission to demolish the old hotel, the Department of Labor began to build its new headquarters at the other end of the avenue. Commission Chairman Owings retained Gutheim in 1968 as a consultant to write and edit a comprehensive report detailing the group's proposals, to direct planning, and to advise on political matters and necessary legislation. Owings later praised Gutheim for a "brilliant job."[39]

In 1969 the National Capital Planning Commission approved a downtown urban renewal plan, incorporating the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission's recommendations, but activists opposed the demolition of key buildings and fought to win historic landmark designation for properties, including the Willard, the Evening Star Building, the U.S. Tariff Commission Building, and the National Bank of Washington. Gutheim gradually came to imagine ways to reuse old and neglected buildings, many of which were architecturally distinguished. He met with friends Ernest Connally, William Murtagh, and Joseph Watterson in December 1968 to discuss the growing interest in historic preservation. They invited others to join them to address historic preservation as a community issue. The expanded group first met February 12, 1969, at the Arts Club of Washington, launching the Historic Preservation Round Table, which continues today.[40]

When congressional funding for the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission ended in late 1969, President Nixon established a task force to draft legislation creating a development corporation to oversee implementation of the Pennsylvania Avenue plan. But by the time Congress created the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation in 1972, Gutheim was questioning key elements of the earlier plan. In 1974 he branded it an "unworkable urban disaster." He faulted it for its grandiosity, its already dated emphasis on "urban renewal," and its failure to consider conservation alternatives. "In all of the Pennsylvania Avenue plans there has not been a single map showing 'existing conditions.' No effort has been made to state the value of things as they are," he said, "[or] to inventory historical sites and architectural landmarks."[41] Even as he decried the lack of attention given to preservation options, he

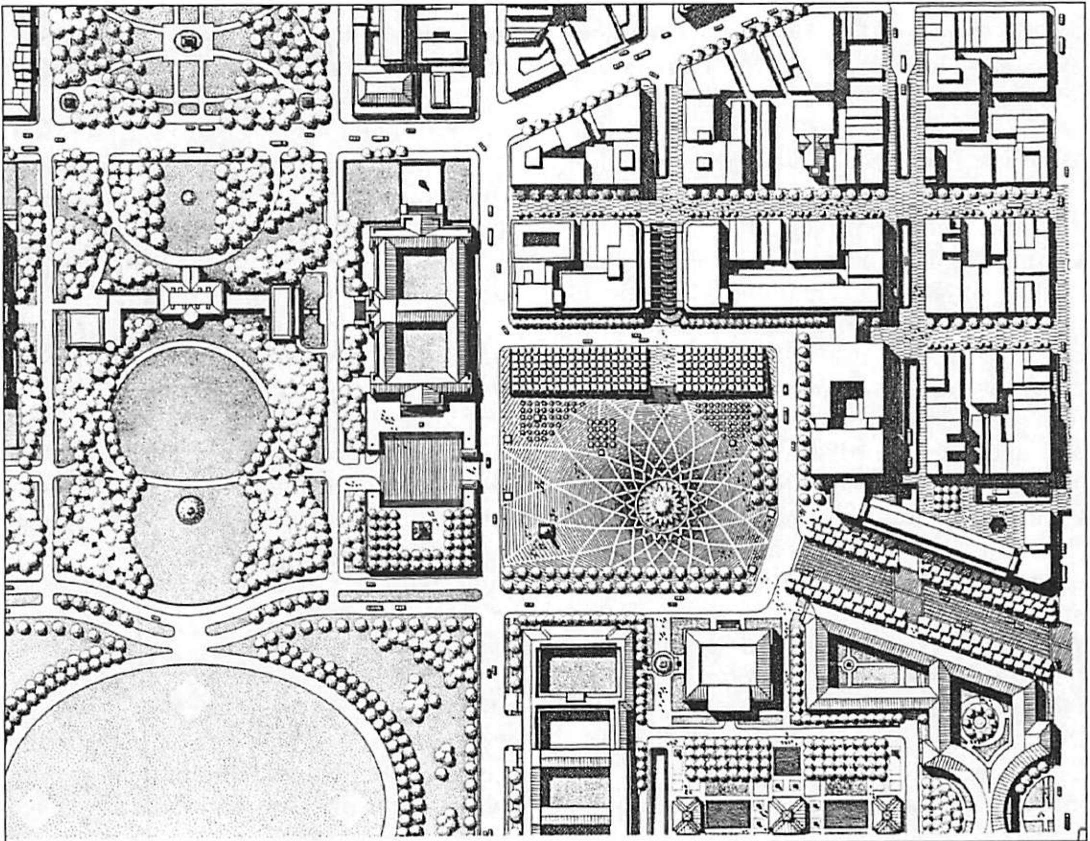
The 1964 plan for redeveloping Pennsylvania Avenue called for an enormous National Square. The vast open plaza offered a new entrance to the White House grounds at left. If executed, the plan would have necessitated demolition of the Willard Hotel and other landmarks. Courtesy, Ronald Eichner.

viewed the issues as part of a larger planning problem that had an array of solutions.

Gutheim began teaching urban history at George Washington University in 1971. In 1975, he founded what would become the university's widely respected graduate program in historic preservation. He had previously taught at Central Washington State University and Williams College and served on visiting committees at Harvard, Princeton, and Carnegie Mellon.

In 1972 Gutheim directed the year-long Olmsted Sesquicentennial. In 1974 the Architect of the Capitol named him to the Capitol Master Plan Group. At the same time, he served as a consultant to the United Nations and the U.S. Information Agency on projects, including a housing and planning mission to Zambia.

Gutheim focused his attention on his own backyard in 1974 when the proposed construction of a PEPCO wastewater treatment plant and expansion of a generating station at Dickerson threatened the Sugarloaf area. He helped organize Sugarloaf Regional Trails, a joint effort between the local citizens' association and Stronghold, Inc., trustees for Strong's 3,000-acre preserve at Sugarloaf Mountain. He led the effort to link the Sugarloaf area to the C&O Canal National Historic Park. He also arranged for the Maryland Environmental Trust to accept conservation easements from large landowners and helped to persuade the State of Maryland to create a 2,000-acre multiple use resource area near the mouth of the Monocacy River. Initially funded by the Montgomery County Planning Board and the National Endow-



ment for the Arts, Sugarloaf Regional Trails also produced a series of interpretive guides that built a constituency to protect the region's landscape.

Not interested in holding on to "oldness" for its own sake, Gutheim wanted instead to reinvigorate tradition. For that reason, he rarely called himself a preservationist, preferring to be known as a planner. He published two invaluable reference books documenting the history of Washington as a planned city, *The Federal City: Plans and Realities* (1976) and *Worthy of the Nation* (1977). Revisiting themes that he had explored earlier in *The Potomac*, he co-produced three films with Baltimore filmmaker Robert Cole, including "Potomac: American Reflections" (1984), winner of three Emmy awards. These films introduced new audiences, including television viewers, to the richness of the area's cultural landscape.[42]

For his contributions to historic preservation, the Maryland Historical Trust honored Gutheim with its Calvert Prize (1976), and the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission awarded him the Montgomery Prize (1989). For his record of public service, the University of Maryland and the George Washington University awarded him honorary degrees. Friends and former colleagues celebrated his achievements with written tributes at his 80th birthday party in 1988. In 1990, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture recognized him with an award honoring his "lifelong and enduring contribution to education in architecture," and the National Trust for Historic Preservation presented him with the Crowninshield Award, its highest honor, "for unyielding devotion to preserving America's architectural and cultural heritage." Also that year, the American Institute of Certified Planners designated him a "National Planning Pioneer," adding his name to a select group that included Daniel Burnham, Frederic Delano, and Pierre Charles L'Enfant. Unlike most of the others, Gutheim was still around to see his name added to the roster.

Although a man of influence, Gutheim is relatively unknown—partly because of the nature of planning, and even more because of his personality. As a child, he was keenly aware of his father's serious and restrained nature; it was his father whom he aimed to please and whose personality most influenced his own. Although faulting his father as a "workaholic," Gutheim admired him as "the civil servant, the expert and the intellectual."[43] The result was a man so reserved that even his wife Polly described him as "mysterious."

His colleague Atlee Shidler remarked that there are "few individuals who have had such an enormous impact on any one metropolitan area," but Shidler also pointed out that Gutheim did not always promote his own ideas well. "Part of him prefers to stay in the background," he said, "and to some extent he is forced there by his own personality." Gutheim recognized this himself. He felt more comfortable, he said, "colored gray, rather than in brighter hues, not a leading character but in a supporting role, on the team but not the star."[44] On an even more self-critical note, Gutheim described himself as "intellectually impetuous and imperious." For a man who once hoped for a career in politics, such a personality was clearly a liability.

Gutheim was uncommonly generous and kind to students, colleagues, and friends, even if he seemed cool and distant to those who knew him less well. Former student Suzanne Unger, for example, described her initial reaction to him as one of "terror."[45] Others echo the sentiment. Typically, former students refer to him with deep affection tinged with awe. To many, including myself, he was a valued mentor whose influence shaped interests and careers.

For years Gutheim tried to write an autobiography, but the project never moved beyond short essays, outlines, and disconnected notes. "The immigrant me, my difficult foreign name, my warmly remembered old-world grandparents, my parents' careful

Historian Dana White presents Gutheim with an album of testimonials from colleagues and friends on his 80th birthday, March 3, 1988, at George Washington University. Gutheim founded GWU's popular Historic Preservation Program in 1975. Photograph by Robert H. Loeffler.

maneuvers to avoid the embarrassments of rejection, and my own early social experiences warned of obvious practical difficulties in the world of politics," he wrote as he approached 60 and began reflecting on the past.[46] But he rarely moved beyond such general, if provocative, observations. One reason for his frustration was that he could find no way to reconcile his private self—the quiet personality, the dry and understated wit—with the expansive public outlook that fueled his commitment to civic betterment. Without a doctorate or interest in scholarly production, he was often an outsider in academic circles. By continuing to live far from town and maintaining his independence, he grew more isolated and deprived himself of a long-term institutional affiliation that could have provided collegial support and financial security. This was especially crucial in Gutheim's case because he paid little attention to finances. (If he had expected a substantial inheritance from his attorney father, that hope faded when his father remarried after his mother's death and started a new family.)

Not content to write or talk about pressing issues, Gutheim concluded early that the only way to have influence was "to make things happen," and that he was most effective as a catalyst, an intellectual match-maker who brought together better-positioned, knowledgeable people and helped them implement schemes that reflected his own thinking. Like Henry Adams, with whom he compared himself, Gutheim believed he was more useful as a citizen without public office, an outside critic and adviser. Yet once his remarkable network of friends and associates gradually disappeared, he could no longer make the "magic" he once had. A reluctant retiree, he died in 1993 at the age of 85 leaving his legacy in the Washington landscape and in the scores of students and younger colleagues who continue to "make things happen" in the capital region and beyond.

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