

NORTHWEST PASSAGES

THE PEOPLE AND PLACES OF NORTHWEST WASHINGTON

NOVEMBER 18, 2009 ■ PAGE 19

D.C. native reinterprets teen years as Web show

By **STEPHANIE KANOWITZ**
Current Correspondent

Move over, “Beverly Hills, 90210.” There’s a new kid on the 1990s teen-show block. Forget Brandon, Brenda, Dylan and Kelly; instead, 18 D.C. teens make up this cast. And where that other show was confined to TV, this series is much more cutting-edge: It’s available only online.

“Orange Juice in Bishop’s Garden” is the brainchild of 27-year-old Otessa Ghadar, an Adams Morgan native who decided to re-create the wonders of coming of age in the District in the ‘90s a time when she and her friends took advantage of D.C.’s museums and cultural scene.

“One of the things that I feel strongly about is that it is set in the ‘90s, because I think it’s interesting to have a trip down memory lane for people who are a little bit older, and ... interesting for current teenagers to see how things were different and how they were also the same — how there are elements of commonality in life,” said Ghadar, who graduated from Columbia University in May with a master’s in film and is now back in D.C.

“Of course, there are things that are different that they find interesting, like, ‘How did you get by without Facebook?’ and ‘I



can’t believe you didn’t have a cell phone! You must have just been lost all the time!” she added.

The idea for the show, whose second season will start in January, came to Ghadar while she was working on her master’s thesis. A bout of writer’s block on one idea led her to work on another, and “Orange Juice” poured out.

“It just started growing and growing until the next thing I knew, there was an ensemble cast of kids and all their stories were interconnected,” she said.

After first putting pen to paper in January 2008, Ghadar began



Bill Petros, top left; courtesy of Otessa Ghadar, top and left
Adams Morgan resident Otessa Ghadar, top left, dreamed up her online series after a bout of writer’s block. “Orange Juice in Bishop’s Garden,” above and left, is set in ‘94 D.C.



filming the nine episodes of the first season six months later. To find her cast, she held auditions at D.C. high schools with strong performing arts programs such as Duke Ellington School of the Arts and the Field School.

The cast and crew are locals,

and filming takes place throughout the District, with a heavy representation of Ghadar’s old stomping grounds — Cleveland Park, Woodley Park and, of course, Bishop’s Garden at the Washington National Cathedral, a popular teen hangout.

Ghadar, who writes and produces all the episodes and has directed some, put the series online to meet the viewing demands of her target demo-

graphic.

People, especially those under 30, “are actually viewing more media content than ever before,” she said. “Maybe they’re not going to spend \$9 to go to the movies, but they’re constantly watching things on the computers, on their phones. I wanted to be part of that. I thought it was exciting.”

She keeps episodes short — about seven to nine minutes each for season two — and ensures that
See **Bishop’s**/Page 38

HOME & GARDEN

LEED designation comes to homes

By **AMANDA ABRAMS**
Current Correspondent

The peaceful Spring Valley neighborhood, with its tall hardwoods and stately Colonials, almost feels like it belongs to another era. But halfway down one street is a house whose respectable white brick facade and peaked roof hide a radical ambition: to become a state-of-the-art, certifiably green home that runs on a fraction of the fossil fuels its neighbors use.

It’s not an easy transformation — the 1940s-era house has been gutted and is undergoing a full renovation and addition. But by February, it will be one of the District’s four LEED-designated homes. The certification program, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental



Bill Petros/The Current

Workers are fully renovating a Spring Valley house, which will become one of D.C.’s first LEED-designated homes.

Design, is already fairly well-established for commercial buildings, but its applicability to
See **LEED**/Page 27

New book fills Georgetown history gap

By **LINDA LOMBARDI**
Current Correspondent

Strolling past the lovely old row houses of Georgetown may make you long for the good old days. But read the new book

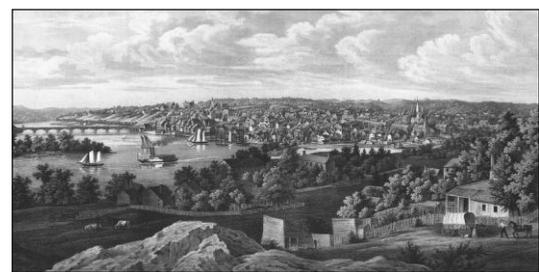
“Remembering Georgetown: A History of the Lost Port City” and you’ll see that life in D.C. was never simple — and that some things never seem to change.

Of course, we’ve got it better in many ways: We’re no longer ankle-deep in mud when walking the streets or riding in unheated streetcars strewn with straw to keep our feet from freezing in the winter. And it may be hard to believe, but

fashionable Georgetown, synonymous with high society since the 18th century, suffered such a decline in the early 20th century that it was considered one of the city’s worst slums.

But many aspects of the times reported in Missy Lowe and David Mould’s book sound oddly familiar.

Even in the early 1800s, the scantily clad younger generation shocked its elders, wearing “low-necked and short sleeved dresses, covered only by a little cape,” according to local writer Grace Dunlop Ecker, whom



Courtesy E. Sachse & Co., 1855

An engraving of ships approaching the waterfront is in “Remembering Georgetown.”

Lowe and Mould quoted.

Budget woes and jurisdictional conflicts go way back as well. In the post-Civil War
See **Book**/Page 28

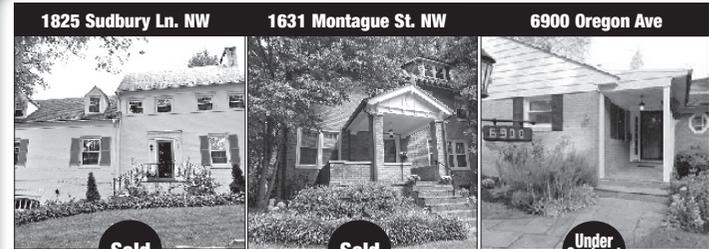
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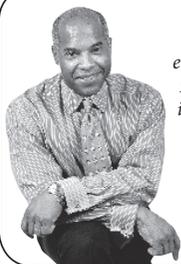
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BOOK

From Page 19

period, Washington was so behind on its bills that creditors tried to repossess the furniture in the mayor's office. Fire and police service was affected by conflicts among the different local governments. And nothing sounds more contemporary than the fact that the political parties "were bitterly divided on most issues, impeding progress on sorely needed improvements."

The book tells the story of Georgetown all the way back to when the first Europeans settled in the area, both in terms of the day-to-day life of the residents and their connections to bigger events in history.

Some of these big events are familiar, like the Civil War, when many buildings like those of then-Georgetown College were pressed into service as barracks and military hospitals. But you might not know that Georgetown also played a role in the dawning of the computer age. In 1892, Georgetown businessman Herman Hollerith invented the punch card machine to automate the census, which accomplished in one year what would have taken 10 to hand-calculate. It made him a millionaire, and his company eventually became IBM.

Author David Mould, a former reporter who has worked in public affairs for NASA and more recently the Tennessee Valley Authority, says he's a "history buff" who has always been bothered by books that "don't have the interesting little stories that make history come

alive for people."

He found an important source for such stories in a handful of old books about Georgetown "written largely by little old ladies who grew up there," said Mould. He had to do quite a bit of sifting, of course. "There was page after page of who lived where and who was

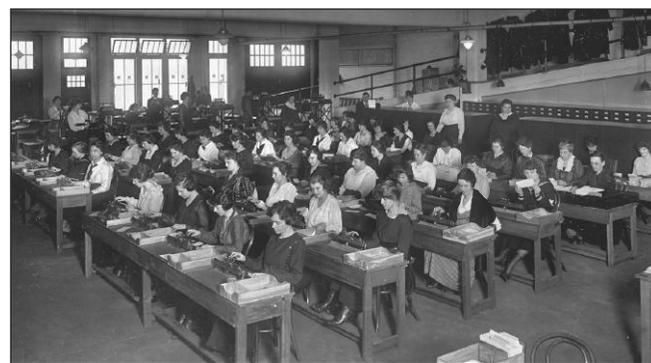
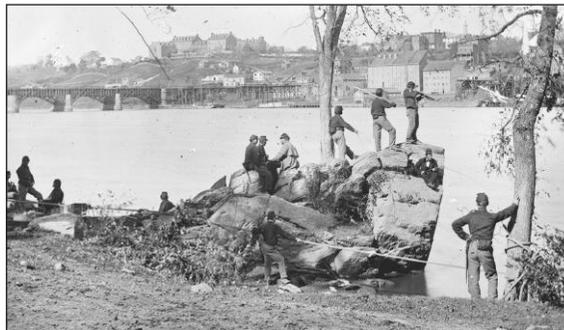
2007.

McCoy says there aren't as many books about the history of Georgetown as one might think, and many of those that do exist are out of print and expensive. In the old Peabody Room, he said, "there were all these bookcases full of beautiful books, and people would say, 'Are all these books about Georgetown?' and I'd say no."

Rather, the collection contained many books about D.C. in general and Maryland (since Georgetown was once part of that state). Only about half a dozen works were specifically about Georgetown on the collection's "ready reference" shelf.

So the book fills a real need, according to McCoy. "It has an index, and we librarians love indexes," he said, but it's also inexpensive and accessible to all.

And that accessibility was part of Mould's goal. One of his favorite stories is about the house at 3017 N St., where many famous people have lived, including Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. But there's also an anecdote from



Courtesy of the Library of Congress
Civil War soldiers look across the Potomac at Georgetown, top, and the machines at Herman Hollerith's Tabulating Machine Company, bottom — developed to automate the census count — grew to become IBM Corp.

married to whose cousins and who had a nice party," he said. "It's like panning for gold — you do it enough times and you find a nugget."

Mould, who lives in Spring Valley, learned of these sources from Jerry McCoy, the archivist for the D.C. Public Library and author of the book's forward. And probably no one knows its value better than McCoy, who has spent much of the last couple years cataloging items that were saved from the Georgetown history collection when a fire engulfed the library in

the 1800s, when workers altering a basement wall found a perfectly mummified cat that was the subject of great interest in the neighborhood. Said Mould, "That's the sort of thing that separates the history books that you want to keep reading from the sort that you have to force yourself to keep reading."

Lowe and Mould will sign copies Dec. 6 from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Presse Bookstore booth at the "Merriment in Georgetown" festivities, which will be held on Wisconsin Avenue between M and Prospect streets.

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