

Lefferts Manor

{ MAY 31, 2015 }

ECHO

THE 45TH ANNUAL PROSPECT LEFFERTS GARDENS House & Garden Tour

Sunday, May 31, 2015 • Noon–5PM
SPONSORED BY The Lefferts Manor Association

TICKETS/\$20 IN ADVANCE AT:

- Bluebird Food & Spirits** 504 Flatbush Ave.
- Gratitude Café** 499 Rogers Ave.
- Play Kids** 676 Flatbush Ave. * **65 Fen Wines** 65 Fenimore St.
- Tip of the Tongue** 43 Lincoln Rd.
- Trixie's Pet Food & Supplies** 575 Flatbush Ave.
- Tugboat Tea Company** 546 Flatbush Ave.

Online: click on the eventbrite at leffertsmanor.org

TICKETS/\$25 ON TOUR DAY AT:

- Tip of the Tongue** 43 Lincoln Rd.

Ten stops including a two-bedroom apartment; brownstone, limestone, and brick town houses dating from 1898–1930; a former driveway reconceived as an outdoor living space; and gardens galore! * Enjoy complimentary refreshments
* Discounts from neighborhood merchants and restaurants
* Special jazz performance by the Duane Eubanks Trio

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[NOTE: No children under 12 except infants in front packs only]

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: leffertsmanor.org

E-MAIL: prospectleffertsgardens2015@gmail.com

CALL: 718-693-5109 OR 718-462-0024

Like us on Facebook at:
Prospect Lefferts Gardens House and Garden Tour 2015

PARTICIPATE IN PLG HOUSE TOUR 2015!

Tour Guides Neighborhood volunteers are needed to work a 2½ hour shift and will receive a free tour ticket in return for participating. To volunteer, contact Mary Miller by May 24 at 718-693-5109 or mary.h.miller@gmail.com

Refreshment Donations Cookies, brownies, cakes, cupcakes, muffins, crudité's with dips, etc. are needed. These should be brought to 166 Rutland Rd. on Saturday, 5/30, Noon–2PM or to 77 Midwood St. on Sunday 5/31 (Tour Day), 11:30AM–noon



TOUR DAY SPECIAL PERFORMANCE
Bluebird Showcases Trumpeter Duane Eubanks

Duane Eubanks, an award-winning jazz trumpeter who has performed with some of this generation's top box-office vocalists and musicians, and who hails from a gifted family of performers, will entertain house tour visitors with two sets during the PLG House & Garden Tour. Eubanks will perform at 3:30 and 5:30 at Bluebird (504 Flatbush Ave., across the street from Phat Albert's/Planet Fitness). He'll be accompanied by Dezron Douglas on bass and Eric McPherson on drums,

Duane is the younger brother of Kevin Eubanks, the gifted jazz guitarist who led *The Tonight Show* band for many years during Jay Leno's reign.

It is thanks to the efforts of Bedford Avenue resident and Brown Harris Stevens broker Bette Cunningham that this special event is happening. Cunningham's first cousin is married to Eubanks.

All visitors need to do to attend is present their house tour guide-books at the door.

Setting It Straight

In the Echo's Spring 2015 issue, we misquoted Winston Von Engel, the head of the Brooklyn office of the Department of City Planning, regarding 13-story buildings in Crown Heights. New zoning codes will prevent—not allow—13-story buildings on blocks dominated by four-story brownstones. But the new zoning will permit a modest increase in density (height) along Franklin Avenue and will include affordable housing. The Echo regrets the error.

House Tour Impresario Carole Schaffer Turned Diversity into Unity, Neighbors into Friends

BY The Echo Staff | More than a year ago, under the headline "Prospect Lefferts Gardens is 'On the Map,'" the Real Estate section of the *New York Times* reported that some residents call PLG "Brooklyn's best kept secret."

There were a lot of voices in that piece: neighbors, real estate developers, bloggers, local merchants and brokers, all weighing in on the dreams and anxieties that come when gentrification hits a suddenly hot, working-class, predominantly minority neighborhood.

But one voice was absent in that otherwise upbeat article: Carole Schaffer's. The one woman who knew the most about who is moving into the neighborhood and who is moving out—by dint of her 30-plus years of running the Prospect Lefferts Gardens House & Garden Tour—was ironically absent from the piece.

Carole moved here in 1976 to Midwood I with her husband, Art, and soon joined the board of the Lefferts Manor Association. While the Prospect Lefferts Gardens Neighborhood Association had been running the house tour for about 10 years before their arrival, there came a stretch of years when PLGNA's management of the event went dormant. Carole jumped into the void and made the house tour her specialty

This year, the 45th Annual PLG House & Garden Tour is dedicated to Carole Schaffer. Not since the '80s has a house tour taken place in PLG where Carole was not the impresario in charge.

Stricken in 1974, at the age of 33, with Hodgkin's disease, doctors acknowledged that her heart had been damaged while fighting the malady with radiation. That treatment most likely factored in her death 40 years later, just this past October.

Outside of neighborhood historian Bob Marvin or elder grassroots activist Bob Thomason, few have done more than Carole to put this neighborhood on the map. She didn't do it by running for office or starting a blog or becoming a real estate broker. She did it by orchestrating the annual house tour with a firm discipline and an interior designer's discriminating eye.



Carole

This issue of *The Echo* includes a special insert with neighbors' reminiscences of Carole Schaffer and her contributions to PLG.

A registered dietician and nutritionist, Carole possessed the charm and grace of a cultural attaché to broaden the house tour outside of Lefferts Manor to include all of PLG.

As she told *The Echo* in 2010 when the publication was revived from a long dormancy during that year's house tour: "House tour day for me is just a wonderful spirit of community. My goal has been to showcase the diversity not only of the people, but the architecture; not just the Manor, but all of Prospect Lefferts Gardens."

Carole became a neighborhood icon—perhaps better known on first sight by homeowners than most of the elected officials of this district—as a result of her house tour management, coordination and follow-up.

Every year she pulled out a sheet of potential participants that she began compiling the year before, striving to get at least eight homes by March. Then she'd work on finding house sitters, which, Art says, was in some ways tougher than finding families to open their homes. And she'd court members of the press who lived in the neighborhood to help expose the event in their media outlets.

While she did not believe that gentrification and diversity were antagonists, she was opposed to the 23-story building going up at 626 Flatbush and protested against it and the rising rents that will come to PLG as a result.

Carole was also a big supporter of *The Echo* and got us out of the frying pan several times, fact-checking issues to detect our errors and grammatical misdeeds before we went to press. We will forever be in her debt.

This year's tour is being put together by a committee of LMA board members, longtime residents, and close friends of Carole and Art's. They all picked up the baton with the same spirit and vision that she exhibited.

But it will be a decidedly different feel this year not bumping into Carole, enjoying her handiwork, and not having the chance to watch her greet visitors and thank families for their participation.

PLG was lucky to have had her love, commitment and generosity for so many years.

Though she is gone, here's hoping her spirit guides the event for years to come.

Tour 2015: A Preview

by MARY MILLER

For 44 years, the PLG House & Garden Tour has showcased house-proud homeowners who have opened their doors to an appreciative public eager to draw inspiration from the restoration and preservation of century-old houses.

But the 2015 edition of the house tour is poised to raise the bar as one of the most diverse in terms of styles, design, and art elements.

This year's tour features homes and gardens on Lincoln and Rutland Roads, Sterling and Midwood Streets, and Flatbush Avenue.

The selections demonstrate the diversity of architecture within our community: limestones, red brick, brownstones, Federals and mini-mansions. All exhibit a wealth of original, old-world detail infused with modern technology. For example, one participant this year will feature roof access to show off their recent installation of solar panels to power their home.

Other tour stops include:

- A 1909 three-story neo-Renaissance limestone filled with contemporary sculptures, paintings, and photographs by the owner's many artist friends. History lives here, too, with family antiques and portraits. And guess who slept here—Lena Horne!
- A 1930 two-story brick has undergone a top-to-bottom renovation

(continued on page 2)



Tour Preview (continued from page 1)

which has opened up a light-filled, flowing space for gracious entertaining. Don't miss the en suite travertine bathroom which features a separate shower and soaking tub.

- The parlor floor of one home is a fabulous artist's showcase featuring large abstract oil paintings which compliment the modern loft-like floor plan.
- The interior-designer owner of a two-story brownstone has used her well-trained eye to fill this home with unusual objects as well as air and light. Her use of different forms of glass is particularly notable in the large dining room.
- A two-story limestone decorated with global appeal: West African textiles, Japanese crafts, southwestern American pottery and African baskets are all on display and comfortable with the Arts and Crafts aesthetic of this home.
- A 1901 brick-and-sandstone Romanesque Revival home is among the earliest rowhouses in the PLG Historic District and is filled with well-preserved original stained glass and woodwork, as well as family antiques and varied artworks.
- A two-bedroom apartment in a mid-20th century brick apartment building reflects the charismatic personality and wide travels of the playwright/resident. The full-width living room looks west to the treetops of Prospect Park.
- A newly created backyard garden has a serene Japanese aesthetic with warm brick pavement, wood fences, a pergola, and a wall-mounted fountain.
- The architect-owners of the three-story neo-Tudor brought a "handyman's special" into the 21st century. Their latest project was installing a solar array that has made this home capable of producing all the electricity they use!

HOUSE TOUR DAY MERCHANT DISCOUNTS

A dozen neighborhood merchants, ranging from wine stores to restaurants to toys and high fashion, will offer generous discounts and coupons on house tour day to tour-goers. A list of the participating merchants will be included in the house tour brochure and at www.leffertsmanor.org. Just show your tour guidebook to enjoy the savings.

1915 Neo-Tudor on Rutland I Goes Solar by SANDRA SKOLAR

Since 1915, the sun's energy-abundant rays have drenched the roof of the Rutland I home on this year's house tour. But 2015 is the first time those rays will be captured to power the electrical needs of the three-story, neo-Tudor home.

Installation of a 21-module solar array on the roof is the latest in a series of renovations by architect-owners John and Roberta Woelfling.

The couple bought their fixer-upper in 1999, 25 years after a fire destroyed its original interior.



Since then, they've been on a mission to undo a shoddy 1970s post-fire rehab by remodeling their home while adhering to some of the design principles that once informed the parlor floor.

Respectful gestures to the past included adding high, white-painted baseboards, incorporating 1878 vintage Reed radiators, and using natural cherry wood framing to demarcate the now-open living and dining rooms, just as an elaborate wood-paneled pocket door had once gracefully separated them. The same cherry framing introduces a fully contemporary kitchen.

Missing from the upgrade was central air-conditioning, which the Woelflings, a family of five, decided to install two years ago. To offset the expected increased energy consumption, they agreed to minimize the environmental impact by having solar modules affixed to their roof.

Was it easy?

Anne L. Thompson-Scrething's Patio Gardens apartment is as vibrant, colorful and proudly Afrocentric as the woman who has called it home for more than half of her life.

For 38 years, Anne has occupied one of the coveted two-bedroom units with a terrace, which she often uses to entertain guests. It also offers views of the ever-rising downtown Brooklyn skyline and a bird's-eye view of Prospect Park's tree line.

While that could be the description of higher-floor apartments on her line of the building in a real estate brochure, what can't be captured so succinctly is how Anne has turned the space into a mini African art gallery. Practically every wall and horizontal surface is adorned with something from Africa.

As the result of decades of being a world traveler, she has decorated her home with African masks, figurines, straw hats, an elaborately carved serving bowl—said to be 70 years old—and other tribal icons. For a year, she lived in Senegal and Gambia collecting and buying art.

Playwright Transforms Home Into African Arts Gallery by MILFORD PREWITT



Among her prized possessions is a 60-year-old wooden statue of a Maasai chief.

Anne was motivated by Malcolm X to visit Africa, and originally had no intention of collecting art but fell in love with its uniqueness, sim-

In 2004, Sonnet Takahisa and Hollis Headrick were living with their fourteen-year-old son, Tylor, in a Park Slope co-op.

Tylor frequently visited the home of a classmate who lived on Rutland Road between Bedford and Rogers. The two families became friends and Sonnet and Hollis decided to look for a house in the neighborhood.

They were especially drawn to the light-filled open spaces of a limestone house on Rutland II. Built in 1909 with a strong Arts and Crafts aesthetic, its former owners had opened up the first floor while preserving original details such as stained glass windows and parquet floors.

In 2004 the family moved in, filling their new home with their Stickley and craftsman inspired furniture, as well as their collections of art, pottery and textiles. There was even enough room for



Teenager Spurs Family's Move To Rutland II by JOAN KELLEY

fields of arts and education. Hollis is currently president of Arts and Cultural Strategies, Inc. as well as co-president of PLG Arts. He is also a drummer and percussionist performing with the neighborhood ensemble, Axiom Addicts, as well as several jazz, pop and improvisation ensembles.

Drawing on her experiences as a teaching and learning expert, Sonnet is now the Deputy Director for Engagement and Innovation at the Newark Museum.

Having their house on the tour this year does mean they'll be too busy on tour day to work as volunteers. Hollis enjoys being a tour guide and Sonnet loves working, with other members of her book group, in the refreshments area.

They wanted to put their house on the tour because they enjoyed meeting neighbors and visitors when the house was on tour in 2006, and they also wanted to honor Carole Schaffer for her many years as the tour coordinator.

After 11 years, the house needed new paint and a few other improvements—the tour was the incentive to get the work done. Now they look forward to sharing it with tour visitors.

Joan Kelley lives on Rutland Road with her husband, Dennis. They are proud to be part of this year's event honoring Carole Schaffer's hard work and dedication to the community.

Lions and Mirrors and Sculptures, Oh My! by RINA KLEEGER

After living in a rented Manhattan loft for 26 years, Rosa Brownell (a pseudonym for the sake of her privacy) moved to her home on Midwood I in 2006. Among her requirements for her new home: room for both the life-size plastic lionesses that now reside in her garden (she can see them from the kitchen window) and for a giant mirror she salvaged in 1982.

Her five-bedroom, three-bath home met these requirements, with the bonus of generously proportioned rooms that are bright and pleasing. She loves the sunlight, as well as the un-loftlike luxury of being able to close doors for privacy.

Before she bought the house, one family had lived in it for about 45 years. The 93-year-old owner had been a dancer at the Cotton Club; her cousin Lena Horne had slept here.

The house had been "modernized" before Rosa bought it: mantels removed, wood trim and paneling painted. Using skills acquired during her years as a loft-dweller and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, she spent innumerable hours restoring these details to their original state. She updated the kitchen before moving in and redid the three bathrooms later, one at a time; rewired from top to bottom; and installed Ethernet, which seemed the wave of the future in 2006.

Rosa does most of this work by hand and by herself: stripping paint and refinishing the stairs, mantel, and even exterior back brick walls. She did the back wall one summer and the side walls over two other summers. Preparing the house for its first showing on the tour, she is scraping and painting cornices on weekends.

She says her garden is coming together following hard-won experience as well as classes at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. She replaced the chain-link fence with lattice in the first year, built a raised planting bed in back, and added sculptures including one by Stan Smokler—made

ply and the beauty of brown and black wood, and shipped home as much as she could afford.

After the death of her husband years ago and with her two sons away in the military, Anne turned one of her bedrooms into a serene and cozy library and reading room, with plush sofas and lamps with soothing illumination.

Her dining and living rooms are essentially one space that stretches the length of the apartment and features a cabinet filled with the many playwrighting honors and awards she has earned in her career.

She didn't start writing until her fifties, giving up a previous career as a nurse in a men's prison, right around the time her husband—a guard captain at the same prison—passed away from heart disease.

She says her husband's death in addition to the deaths of several siblings to AIDS were the catalysts that launched her writing career.

Anne is a Jean Dalrymple Award-winning Off- and Off-Off Broadway playwright and a

Hollis's drum set. They became active in the neighborhood and each year help organize Rutland II's block party. In 2005, with several women from the block, Sonnet started a book group that is still going strong 10 years later.

The couple are passionately involved in the fields of arts and education. Hollis is currently president of Arts and Cultural Strategies, Inc. as well as co-president of PLG Arts. He is also a drummer and percussionist performing with the neighborhood ensemble, Axiom Addicts, as well as several jazz, pop and improvisation ensembles.

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from a saw blade—that was inspired by the rose window at Chartres Cathedral.

Rosa loves the neighborhood, the history, the new friends she's made. She treasures the diversity on the block, including people her own age who played in her house as children, as well as the more recent arrivals. She is delighted to display works by local artists—photos by Carlos Augusto and Fabian Palencia; oils by Noel Hefe; molded paper leaves by Martin Ettlinger. She enjoys having enough room to host a PLG Arts chamber music performance and a contemporary folk opera.



Rosa Brownell has progressed from the biggest refinishing jobs to smaller ones, but she wants it proclaimed that she does not consider her house finished. "Come back in ten years for that," she says. (House tour organizers: are you listening?)

director/producer who has worked with the American Theatre of Actors for 20 years. There she wrote, directed and produced the plays *Looking For Love In Darkness* (about the AIDS epidemic) and *You Shouldn't Have Told* (about child molestation).

She's published by Samuel French, LLC, has written more than 30 plays, and worked with some of the top box-office draws in the business. Her work has earned the accolades of critics and fans throughout the country.

Anne was already entrenched in her life in Patio Gardens when Donald Trump, who even now she calls "that Trump kid," took over the building after his father gave it to him to manage and unwittingly launched his career as a billionaire developer.

She remembers when a teenaged Laurence Fishburne lived in the building with his family while filming *Cornbread, Earl and Me*.

Later, Malcolm Jamal Warner, who portrayed Theo Huxtable on *The Cosby Show*, lived with his family at Patio Gardens during the height of that TV show's popularity, Anne fondly recalls.