

John Oktavec

Master Screen Painter

Bio

The tradition of painting door and window screens for decoration and privacy began in 1913 in Baltimore when my grandfather William Oktavec moved to the city from Newark, New Jersey. He had painted his first window screen while on the job at Eclipse Air Brush Company in New Jersey for a secretary whose work was often disturbed by people on the sidewalk outside her office. With the newly painted screen, the secretary could see out, but no one could see in.

In Baltimore, Oktavec painted a screen to [advertise] the fruit at his corner grocery store at North Collington and Ashland Avenue. Before long, he began to get requests for painted screens, and others in neighboring ethnic communities started to join in the tradition. By the 1930s, East Baltimore row houses sported almost 100,000 painted door and window screens.

- <http://www.mdhs.org/kids/pscreens.html>

William had four sons, Albert, Bill, Bernie, and Richard. Al had done screens as well, but Richard kept the artform alive to pass it on down to me. I'm John Oktavec, Richard's son. I presently carry on the tradition for a third generation. We come from an artistic family and love to dabble in many art forms but are probably best known for Painted Window Screens.

www.OktavecsPaintedScreens.yolasite.com



