



CHEVY CHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2008

“Washington’s Other Hill: Meridian Hill And the Making of a Beaux Arts Neighborhood” Is Topic of Fall Lecture

CCHS Meridian Hill Walking Tour

Fourth generation Washingtonian and Master Tour Guide Jeanne Fogle will lead a walking tour of Meridian Hill on Saturday, January 10, 2009, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The tour will be hosted by CCHS’ History-Go-Round, a series of programs on history in and outside of Chevy Chase. Cost is \$10 for CCHS members and \$20 for nonmembers. Space is limited to 25 people. Tickets can be purchased at CCHS’ November 20 fall program or by emailing cchistorygoround@gmail.com. Carpools will be provided round trip from Chevy Chase. A Dutch treat lunch will follow.

Please direct questions to Susan Elwell at (240) 277-3137.



Architectural historian Kimberly Prothro Williams will present an illustrated lecture on Meridian Hill, a distinguished District of Columbia suburb developed in the same era as Chevy Chase, at CCHS’ fall program on Thursday, November 20, at the Chevy Chase Town Hall, 4301 Willow Lane.

Around the time that Senator Francis Newlands was laying out the streetcar suburb of Chevy Chase, the wife of Missouri Senator John Henderson financed construction of a prestigious neighborhood of private residences and foreign legations along 16th Street, N.W. Mary Henderson successfully lobbied Congress to buy a three block tract

of land for European-style Meridian Hill Park, which became the centerpiece of her socially prominent enclave and today is regarded as the city’s most spectacular public park.

Ms. Williams’ lecture will provide historical background on Meridian Hill prior to Mrs. Henderson’s development of it, and will discuss the collection of Beaux Arts mansions, most built by her between 1905 and 1928. The lecture will focus on the transformation of Meridian Hill from a rugged and sparsely developed area to a grand, ceremonial gateway to the capital.

Principal of a small consulting firm specializing in historic preservation, Ms. Williams has surveyed and researched historic properties in Maryland, D.C., and Virginia. She has co-authored *Chevy Chase: A Home Suburb for the Nation’s Capital* (1998), edited *Pride of Place: Rural Residences of Fauquier County* (2004), and appeared in the CCHS television documentary, “Chevy Chase, Maryland: A Streetcar to Home.” She currently serves as National Register Coordinator for the D.C. Historic Preservation Office, where she is concluding research for a proposed Meridian Hill Historic District.

The society cordially invites the public to attend the lecture, which will begin at 8:00 p.m. following a short business meeting. Light refreshments will be served. Questions may be directed to Mary Anne Hoffman at (301) 915-0900.

Celebrating One of America’s First Streetcar Suburbs



CHEVY CHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Open 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

on Tuesday and by appointment.

The Chevy Chase Historical Society collects, records, interprets and shares materials relating to the history of Chevy Chase, Maryland, one of America's first streetcar suburbs. Founded in 1981, the nonprofit volunteer organization provides resources for historical research and sponsors a variety of programs and activities to foster knowledge and appreciation of the community's history.

Recent Acquisitions

"Recent Acquisitions" is a regular feature in the newsletter, describing documents and other items that are acquired for the society's Archive and Research Center

Donations

1. Sketches of Abraham Bradley Farm (now the Chevy Chase Club) from 1844, courtesy of the Peabody Room, Georgetown Branch, DC Public Library. Donated by Jerry McCoy.
2. Images of 8 Newlands Street and sledding at the Chevy Chase Club, circa 1935. Donated by Eleanor Ford.
3. Letters, photographs, and bulletins relating to Clair Rountree (Mrs. J.H.Price) who attended Chevy Chase School circa 1929. Donated by her niece, Clair Rozier.
4. Letters to Margaret James who lived at 7601 Connecticut Avenue and presently lives at 3817 Leland Street, and other ephemera, circa 1959. Donated by Brian Nuterangelo.
5. Emailed image of St. John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish, 6701 Wisconsin Avenue, circa 1910. Donated by Richard Hewlett.
6. Book on *Colonial and Historic Homes of Montgomery County, Maryland*. Donated by Marilyn Sutherland.
7. Four theses about Martin's Additions neighborhoods, written by students and housed at the University of Maryland. Donated by Jean Sperling.

Staff Acquisitions

1. Oral Histories of John Kay, and Spike and Fran Dabrowski.
2. Receipt from W.C. Brooke & Company, a nursery at 3518 Thornapple Street, 1909.
3. Membership receipts from Chevy Chase Association, 1907-1909.
4. Twenty-four Minnie E. Brooke postcards.
5. *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* with article about Alice Birney, who lived at 9 East Kirke Street.
6. *Spinning Wheel* magazine, April 1970, with a photo of 2 Oxford Street.
7. Five *National Geographic* magazines with articles written by Dr. David Fairchild, who lived at "In the Woods" at 8922 Spring Valley Drive, as well as two books authored by Mr. Fairchild.

To explore these items in detail, visit our online digital archives

Photography Chair Sought

CCHS seeks a Photography Committee Chair to oversee and increase the society's photographic collection. In addition to photographic prints, the chair will procure other visual media such as film, dvd/vhs recordings, postcards, slides, scans, etc., to enhance the online digital collection. S/he will set yearly goals for procurement of new images, establish a budget for new acquisitions, and report to the Board of Directors. Responsibilities in detail:

- Solicit new photographs and ensure safe handling during reproduction in-house
- Assign comprehensive descriptions, provenance, and copyright information to items
- Research and procure visual media housed in other institutions
- Recruit volunteers to assist in photo-documenting homes
- Develop programs/exhibits to showcase the hard copy and digital collections
- Ensure access to these materials for educational and scholarly use

Please call Evelyn Gerson, Director, Archive and Research Center, (301) 656-6141.

Explore and Learn More!

Unveiling the Society's Digital Archives at www.chevychasehistory.org

Thanks to last year's grant from the Montgomery County government and the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, and another generous award in 2008 (see article below), CCHS has been busy building our online digital archives with tremendous results! Interns Andria Kolesnikoff, Cecilia Peterson, and Katie Smith, along with the Director of the Archive and Research Center, Evelyn Gerson, have created an online searchable database of our holdings that features over 7,000 images of maps, photographs, objects, books, transcriptions of oral histories, and many other items found at the center.



Intern Ceci Peterson

The new digital archives reach people in Chevy Chase and beyond, and make our materials available to patrons outside of the center's Tuesday afternoon business hours. A recent upgrade in web design makes the site even more interactive! As visitors surf the site they can share their discoveries by emailing search results to friends and relatives, send CCHS feedback and more information about specific images, and order reproductions of images.

This huge undertaking also has allowed CCHS to better assess the scope, size, and content of its collections, dramatically improving how our holdings can be searched and used by researchers. For example, the photographic collection was organized thematically in filing cabinets at the center before interns accessioned over 5,000 photographic images into the database. Before digitization, researchers looking for something specific like an early photograph of Brookville Road as a dirt road might miss a charming image from the 1920s of two little girls pushing their doll carriage across an unpaved, muddy road, while a delivery truck bounces by, because it was filed under "Esch-Potter Family" instead of "Brookville Road."

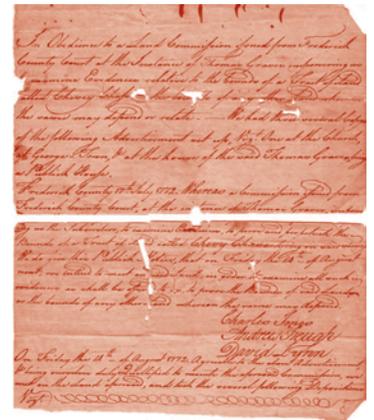
Interns have assigned "finding aids" or keywords for every record set entered so that queries will produce multiple "hits" from all parts of our collections. Now, results for "streetcar" include a comprehensive blend of numerous photographs from the early 1900s, video streaming of riders on a streetcar in 1941, lectures about the streetcar's influence on the development of this suburb, newspaper articles about the Capital Traction Company, images of Rock Creek Railway tickets, and oral histories of Chevy Chase residents who rode the streetcars as children.

Although a sizeable portion of the collections are digitized, CCHS continues to seek funding so that its interns can continue to grow the

online database. A few goals for the coming year are scanning copies of vintage neighborhood newspapers (such as the Leland, Shepherd, and Thornapple Street newspapers), entering house history records, adding archived issues of our newsletters dating back to 1981, and transcribing the society's World War II Veterans Project's oral histories. If you have photographs, historical records, or artifacts pertaining to the community, consider donating them to help build the collections. CCHS also encourages you to visit its digital archives to explore and learn more about Chevy Chase!

A substantial benefit of digitization is that it facilitates better preservation of collections, especially in the case of fragile items. Once these are scanned, transcribed, and entered into the database, they do not have to be handled again. An example of this is the oldest document in our collection (right), an ordinance regarding a "Tract of Land called Chevey Chase" which dates back to 1772 --

before the colonies declared independence from England! To see this item and read its transcription, visit the online digital archives at www.chevychasehistory.org.



CCHS Receives Multiple Grants From Arts and Humanities Council

The society's digitization of its collections, described in the article above, has been made possible in part by grants awarded to CCHS by the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County. The Council awards annual matching grants to organizations whose primary mission is the promotion of the arts and/or humanities in the County.

CCHS was delighted to receive two grants from the Council in response to its first applications for FY 2008. We received a management grant in the amount of \$8,000, enabling us to retain several interns dedicated to building the online searchable database of our collection. An equipment grant in the amount of \$2,000 funded the purchase of up-to-date equipment, including a computer, copier, and scanner. This technology has been crucial to the creation of our digital archives, keeps us compatible with archival standards, and enables us to serve our patrons more efficiently and economically.

The Council continued its support of CCHS with the award of another management grant for FY 2009. This grant, in the amount of \$7,500, enables our interns to build on their achievements of the prior year and to continue their work on our comprehensive digitized database. The database enables us to manage our collection more effectively and permits public access to our collection at any time, from anywhere, at the click of a mouse.

CCHS is extremely grateful to the Council for its faith in our programs and its willingness to support our efforts. Likewise, we are grateful to the members, donors, and volunteers whose contributions to CCHS enable us to match the Council's grants.

Chevy Chase Voices

This is the second appearance of a regular feature in the newsletter, containing excerpts from the oral histories of Chevy Chase residents that the society has taken and transcribed as part of its Oral History Project. "Chevy Chase Voices" highlights interesting aspects of the community's history in order to educate readers and to encourage them to further explore the wealth of information contained in the oral history transcriptions at the CCHS Archive and Research Center.

"It was the middle of winter in a snowstorm"

Dr. Irene Gorski Tamagna: I had a family [medical] practice ... I did pretty much everything and referred out special medical problems. I was lucky, I had access to the George Washington University, using all their specialists and the hospital

House calls were fun. I remember when I came [to Chevy Chase]. It was maybe in my second year, I was very conscientious, wanted to do a good job. It was the middle of the winter in a snowstorm, close to about one and one half feet of snow outside, and a lady in Rolling Road called me and said she was extremely short of breath, and she didn't know what to do, [the] ambulance wouldn't come through the streets because they couldn't go through -- could I come?

So I said, "I'll try." And I looked out there, [and] I could hardly

house a dog [would come and follow] me, barking. [Laughter] And I climbed up Leland Street, down Rolling Road and I arrived, followed by six dogs. I was ashamed that I had come with skis, so I left my skis a house away. And when they asked me, "How did you get here?" I said, "I just walked." [Laughter]



"Gee, in the attic I have a pair of skis"

Marjorie Zapruder: I think you should have told them you skied. That made it such a great story.

Dr. Tamagna: And that was my last time I went out skiing in the streets of Chevy Chase.



Dr. Irene Gorski Tamagna

open the door because there was so much snow. And then I thought, "Gee, in the attic I have a pair of skis," [that] I used in Austria before coming to the U.S.A. I liked to ski and I was a good skier. I said, "Why not try that?" So I took out my skis, put my little black bag on my belt and thought, "Now I'm going down to Rolling Road. That should be fun."

Living in the Alps, you would go out skiing. So I skied down Taylor Street, and the only thing I didn't know was that out of every

From the oral history of Dr. Irene Gorski Tamagna,
Chevy Chase family medical practitioner,
taken by Mary Anne Tuohey and Marjorie Zapruder on
December 12, 1988.



**Mary-Frances M. Schorr
(1934 – 2008)**

On May 28, 2008 CCHS lost one of its most dedicated and hardworking Board members with the death of Fran Schorr. A native of Franklin County, Mississippi, Fran enjoyed a career of nearly 30 years as an accomplished interior and floral designer. Her contributions to CCHS and the Chevy Chase community similarly spanned several decades. She is greatly missed.

Fran was a mainstay of the CCHS Board, serving two terms as President, leading numerous committees, and working untold volunteer hours.

From its inception in 1981, CCHS aspired to locate its headquarters and archives in the Chevy Chase Community Library. Fran led the effort to persuade the relevant Montgomery County agencies. After several years of hard work and skillful politicking, Fran closed the deal with the county and made our dream a reality.

And Fran did not stop there: she also co-chaired CCHS' successful capital campaign to raise the money to renovate its new office and archival space in the library. Then, bringing her professional expertise to bear, she headed the committee that designed our new headquarters space, oversaw the renovation process, and furnished the interior.

The CCHS annual Spring Gala, held in a Chevy Chase residence of historical or architectural significance, is one of the society's most important events. Fran either chaired or co-chaired the Gala six times in the past 20 years. She prepared the beautiful floral arrangements and centerpieces that graced the Gala houses. Most recently, she co-chaired the 2008 Gala on May 4, only three weeks before she died. How fitting that one of our last images of Fran is of her presiding over that elegant, festive evening she helped orchestrate.

In 2006, the society marked its 25th Anniversary. The Board saw this milestone as an opportunity to promote education about history, reach out to families with young children, and "give back" to the community that has supported CCHS so generously over the years. Fran and her co-chair Marilyn Montgomery orchestrated a full year's worth of events that exceeded our hopes for the year.

What we will miss most about Fran is not the work she did, but the person she was. She was a lady, in the best sense -- confident, kind, fun-loving, always appropriate, never excessive. She was innately elegant, endlessly charming, and unfailingly gracious. Whatever Fran did and whomever she was with, she conducted herself with a dignity, grace and generosity of spirit that most of us can only aspire to.

The space that Fran leaves in our lives is very large indeed. The memories she leaves are just as large -- memories that are strong, and clear, and joyful. The Board is committed to maintaining her high standards and continuing her good work. We will treasure our time with Fran throughout the years ahead and make her proud.

Fran is survived by her husband of 49 years, Burt Schorr; two children, Daniel and Serena; and three grandchildren. We are humbled and grateful that Fran's family designated CCHS to receive memorial contributions in Fran's memory.

MYSTERY!

This past summer, CCHS was fortunate to have two high school interns, Sam and Andrew Hellerstein, volunteer for us. They worked hard during hot weather, taking more than 1,000 photographs in our municipalities to document how the neighborhoods look in 2008. Within the area they covered, at least one home was razed and others were dramatically altered by the end of summer, so we are fortunate to have images of the original structures in our collection. To see the Hellerstein's historical record, query "Hellerstein" in our online searchable archives at www.chevyCHASEhistory.org.

CCHS needs help locating the addresses for the two houses pictured here. If you know them, please contact us at www.chevyCHASEhistory.org or at (301) 656-6141. The person who can provide the addresses wins a package of CCHS postcards.



The spring issue's MYSTERY! photo was correctly identified by several people as 3905 Blackthorn Street in the Town of Chevy Chase. Another mystery solved by our observant readers!



CHEVY CHASE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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