



## CHEVY CHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010

### Leading Music Scholar and Composer Ruth Crawford Seeger Will Be Subject of Spring Lecture

The Chevy Chase Historical Society's Spring Program will feature lively and engaging lecturer Dr. Judith Tick, Matthews Distinguished University Professor of Music at Northeastern University, speaking on "Ruth Crawford Seeger: The Woman and the Artist." The public is invited to the program on Wednesday, May 5, at 8:00 pm at the Chevy Chase Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Ave.

Dr. Tick is an authority on American music, particularly women musicians. She has delighted audiences with her presentation regarding Seeger. Her lecture will offer a unique opportunity to share her understanding of this remarkable artist!

Long time Chevy Chase residents may remember Seeger as a neighbor on West Kirke Street and, a music teacher, as well as stepmother to Pete Seeger and mother to Peggy and Mike Seeger, all well known American folk singers. She also is considered by many to be the most significant American female composer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A force in the American modernist music movement, she was the first woman to receive the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship, an honor bestowed on her twice.

Introduced to folk music by poet Charles Sandburg, Seeger also became an American folk music collector and scholar. Her three books of folk songs for elementary school children have been in print since the early 1950s and are key texts in primary



Dr. Judith Tick

music education. Seeger's life and contributions are the subjects of Dr. Tick's book *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (1997), winner of an ASCAP Deems Taylor Award.

Dr. Tick also is co-editor with Jane Bowers of the anthology *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition 1150-1950* (1986), a pioneering work in its field, and author of *American Women Composers Before 1870* (1983). The Seeger biography and her article on "Charles Ives and Gender Ideology" have won awards from the Society for American Music. She also wrote the entries on "Women and Music" for *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (1986) and the 2001 revised edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*. In collaboration with art historian Gail Levin she published *Aaron Copland's America: A Cultural Perspective* (2000), and she is an Associate Editor of *Musical Quarterly*.

In 2000, she received a Distinguished Alumna Medal from Smith College. In 2004, she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as an "innovator in the field of musical biography." Her most recent book, *Music in the U.S.A.: A Documentary Companion*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2008.

Before the lecture CCHS members will elect four directors-at-large. The nominees are Carol Coffin, Angela Lancaster, Helen Secretst and Mary Anne Tuohey. Light refreshments will be served. Please direct questions to Shelly Brunner at (301) 907-8072.





## CHEVY CHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 15145  
CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20825

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### CCHS Archive and Research Center

Stephanie Brown, Director  
Chevy Chase Community Library  
8005 Connecticut Avenue  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
Tel: 301-656-6141 • Fax: 301-656-5114  
[www.chevychasehistory.org](http://www.chevychasehistory.org)  
E-mail: [info@chevychasehistory.org](mailto:info@chevychasehistory.org)  
Open 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
on Wednesday 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 acquired for the society's Archive and Research Center.

## Donations

1. USGS Map of Washington and Vicinity, 1943 (reprinted 1947). Donated by James Wright.
2. A brick salvaged from the demolition of Leland Junior High School in 1988, together with photos of the demolition. Donated by Julie Thomas as part of the Julie Rude Thomas Collection.
3. The 1959 issue of *CHIPS*, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School Literary Magazine. Donated by Julie Thomas as part of the Julie Rude Thomas Collection.
4. A photograph of Chevy Chase Fire Chief William F. Lanahan, showing Chief Lanahan and his firefighters posed on their new 1927 fire truck outside of the Chevy Chase Village Hall. Donated by Dorothy J. Lanahan.
5. Municipal Records of Section 5 of Chevy Chase Village. Donated by Section 5.
6. Eighty-eight Minnie Brook postcards. Donated by Julie Thomas as part of the Julie Rude Thomas Collection.
7. A digital image of the Capital Crescent Trail under snowcover. Donated by Joe Frankl.
8. Digital images of 4413 Ridge St. under snowcover. Donated by Elizabeth Johnson.
9. Video recollections of the Blizzards of 2010 donated by: John D. Barnes; Andrea and Susannah Berlowe Binder; Virginia Ceaser; Mary Anne Hoffman; Elizabeth Johnson; Naomi Kaminsky; Don MacGlashan; Clara and Jessie Modlin; John Murtagh; Lawrence M. O'Rourke; Pat O'Rourke; Hope Pinkerton; Max Ross; Kathy Strom; Ollie Thomas; Teagan Tsui-Rosen; Trina Ulrich; Deborah Vollmer; Erin Walk; Johanna Walk; Liam Walk; Mier Wolf; Jane and Dennis Wood; and Saralee Zakroff.

## Staff Acquisitions

1. A Capital Traction Company rail ticket.
2. A postcard of Chevy Chase Seminary.
3. The programme from the 1947 Columbus Horse Show, held at Meadowbrook Show Grounds in Chevy Chase.
4. A slide of the Chevy Chase Fire Truck parked behind the Women's Club of Chevy Chase.

To explore these items in detail, visit the CCHS online digital archive at  
[www.chevychasehistory.org](http://www.chevychasehistory.org)

## SAVE THE DATE!

### The Chevy Chase Historical Society 2010 Champagne Supper

**Sunday, April 25, 2010**  
**5:00 – 8:00 p.m.**  
**at 3911 Bradley Lane**

This historic Georgian-style country house was built in 1910 by Dr. Ryan Devereux and is the site of the 2010 D.C. Design House showcasing the talents of 19 top interior designers

**Your ticket will include a tour of the custom decorated and landscaped D.C. Design House followed by supper in the garden**

By invitation only • Invitations will be mailed in late March

## CCHS Welcomes Stephanie Brown, New Director of its Archive & Research Center



**Stephanie Brown**

*Last October, with gratitude and regret, the society said "au revoir" to the previous director of its Archive & Research Center, Evelyn Gerson, who brought the center's operations "into the twenty-first century" during her five year tenure. We always will be in Ms. Gerson's debt for putting us in the vanguard of similar historical societies with respect to the technological accessibility of our archive. Her successor, Stephanie Brown, already has dug into the substantial responsibility of directing the center, so we are pleased that she also has found time to be interviewed for this introduction to our readers.*

Ms. Brown received honors in history at Williams College, has a doctorate in history from Stanford University, and most recently served as Associate Curator of American Material Culture and Historian at Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens. Her husband Cory Modlin, a North Bethesda/Rockville native and a Senior Engineer with Texas Instruments, is a welcome addition to the society's leadership's "distaff side," which gracefully supports our efforts.

"I grew up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and met Cory when we were graduate students in Palo Alto," relates Brown. "Clara and Jessie, our identical twin daughters [now students at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School], were born as we were finishing our dissertations. In 1999, When they were four, we decided to move to the Washington area to be closer to family. We wanted a neighborhood that had trees and sidewalks, a sense of history and of place – and where we could walk to shopping and Metro! We bought the first house we saw in the Town of Chevy Chase."

As part of settling in, Brown attended her first annual town meeting. She mentioned to neighbor Jean Linehan that she was interested in volunteering, and needed a "way in." Mrs. Linehan, "knowing my background, marched me directly to [then-CCHS

Photographic Chair and Board Member] Eleanor Ford." Soon she found herself working on the oral history project of the history committee created by Town Mayor Bill Hudnut, which dovetailed with her oral history work at Hillwood.

Last fall, former Center Director Gerson learned that her own family would be moving to Indianapolis. CCHS Vice President Bridget Hartman and Communications Chair Mary Anne Hoffman suggested Brown as a successor. To the society's delight, Brown accepted the position.

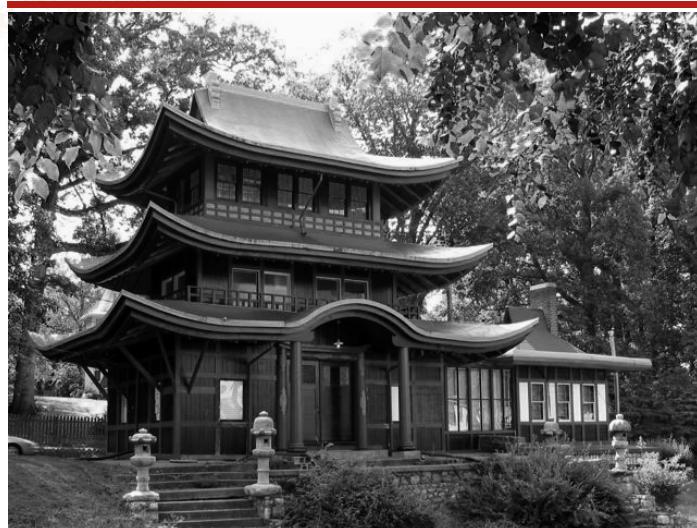
Please join us in welcoming Stephanie Brown, by visiting the center, calling to say hello, or sending a message to [Stephanie@chevychase.history.org](mailto:stephanie@chevychase.history.org).

### **"History-Go-Round" Walking Tour of National Park Seminary**

A 90 minute walking tour of the National Park Seminary in Silver Spring, Maryland on Saturday, April 10 will trace the seminary's history from a 19<sup>th</sup> century hotel to an exclusive girls' school, to a World War II army rehabilitation center, through years of deterioration, and to rebirth as a residential community. The 10:30 a.m. to noon tour will be hosted by CCHS' "History-Go-Round," a series of occasional programs on history in and outside of the Chevy Chase community.

Save Our Seminary, the local group that rescued the historic property, will lead the tour. The cost is \$5 for CCHS members and \$10 for nonmembers, with space limited to the first 25 individuals to make advance reservations. A Dutch treat lunch at the Daily Dish on Grubb Road will follow.

To make reservations for the tour and/or lunch, email your name and number of tickets desired to [julie@chevychasehistory.org](mailto:julie@chevychasehistory.org), and send a check to CCHS, P.O. Box 15145, Chevy Chase, MD 20825. You will receive directions, the tour meeting place, and information on possible carpools. **The reservation deadline is April 1.** Please direct questions to Julie Thomas at (301) 951-0138.



**Pagoda on grounds of National Park Seminary**

## Celadon

### East Meets West in Chevy Chase

In 1938 the Japanese drove the Chinese Nationalist government, led by President Chiang Kai-Shek, from its capital of Nanking. By the spring of 1940 the nationalists sorely needed financial assistance. Although the outcome of the sympathetic Franklin Delano Roosevelt's campaign for a third presidential term was uncertain, Kai-Shek sent Soong Tse-Ven, known as T.V. Soong, his brilliant economic advisor, to Washington to attempt to borrow funds to shore up his beleaguered government.



Chiang Kai-Shek and T.V. Soong

Soong was the man for the job. He was the third child in the fabled Soong family, whose members, including his sister May-Ling, Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek, heavily influenced Chinese politics and American policy toward China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A Harvard man with a doctorate from

Columbia, Soong moved as easily in western as in eastern circles. In the 1930s he had served as Kai-Shek's Vice Premier, Acting Premier, and Finance Minister; in 1942 he would become Minister of Foreign Affairs; and in the late 1940s he would serve concurrently as full Premier and Finance Minister. His family fortune, his company the China Development Finance Corporation, and his other astute international financial dealings, as well as his chairmanship of the Bank of China, his governorship of the Central Bank of China, and his seats on the boards of other major Chinese banks, arguably had made him the world's most well to do man.

He and his elegant wife, the former Laura Chang (Chang Lo-Yi), once a Shanghai debutante, stayed at first in a suite at the Shoreham Hotel. As author Sterling Seagrave observes with wry in his comprehensive book *The Soong Dynasty*, "most other guests were unaware that the Chinese man snorkeling in the hotel pool was single-handedly keeping China afloat."



T.V. and wife Laura Soong

Since FDR's people were occupied with the presidential campaign, the Soongs' stay lengthened, and they looked for a house to rent. That process also lengthened as Mme. Soong, missing China, rejected one property after another.

Meanwhile, the Nicholson family was enjoying a bucolic home life in Chevy Chase, which daughter Dorothy Nicholson Stabell recalls as "somewhat provincial, [as in] other small towns." The boundaries remained fixed, she explains, so families with children arrived and stayed. Young peoples' lives revolved around the Avalon Theater, the E.V. Brown School, Gill's Drugstore, town meetings, Minnie Hawk's dancing class, and baseball played on unbuilt lots.



The Soong family: T.V. (center); May-Ling, who would marry Kai-Shek (upper R); and Ching-Ling, who would marry Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (lower R)

Dorothy's parents, Mollie Davis Nicholson and Jesse W. Nicholson, built 7 Newlands Street in 1910. They then built



**Mollie Nicholson with children Jessie Frank, David Brown, and Dorothy.**

103 Newlands in 1922 to improve on the plan, increasing the square footage and amenities, and moved their young family to the new residence. Although 103 now occupies a large lot at the northeast corner of Brookville Road and Newlands Street, in 1922 Newlands had not been put through from Brookville Road to Broad Branch Road and the three story dwelling was situated on a block sized open area. Well proportioned, festooned with awnings in warm weather, it rested gracefully among several willow trees.

During World War II, Mr. Nicholson, who had grown up on a farm in Frederick County, and had become a lawyer with the Inheritance and Gift Tax Division of the Internal Revenue Service, planted a "victory garden" on the property. Dorothy's brothers, Jesse and David, purveyed the yield of

fragrant blooms of 300 peony shrubs nodded in the spring 1940 breezes.

"Mother was famous for cleaning and painting [the interior of] the house every year," Dorothy remembers. That spring, Mrs. Nicholson "painted the entire upstairs pale green." It would prove to be a fateful choice.

Dorothy thinks it was a realtor's call that first informed the Nicholsons that the Soongs might be interested in renting their house. "My parents said, 'We have an opportunity to rent the house to Chinese diplomats,'" she relates. "Dad was retiring; Mother thought it was a good transition time; and Dad's friend Geneva Dunham wanted to rent out her apartment at the Shoreham. It happened overnight – we simply fell into it."



**103 Newlands Street**

The pivotal factor turned out to be the pale green Mrs. Nicholson had chosen for the upstairs of the house, a color close to the "celadon" created and widely used in China. Dorothy was present when Mme. Soong visited the house with several Chinese associates. She remembers the homesick Madame as feminine and refined, a petite woman dressed in simple Western garb, who stood in the upstairs hall and said, "I like this color. It reminds me of my home in Shanghai."

The Nicholsons rented the house to the Soongs fully furnished, down to the silver service. Geneva Dunham left her apartment at the Shoreham for her Montana ranch, the Nicholson's occupied the apartment, and the Soongs left the Shoreham for their two year stay at 103 Newlands.

Once relocated to the spacious, stucco house with its attractive grounds, the Soongs engaged in stylish entertainment of the cabinet and 'kitchen cabinet' officials of FDR's administration. As a genial host, author Seagrave notes, "T.V. overcame his preference for steak to serve Chinese food for his important guests, who seemed to expect it." Only after dining is he said to have had the cigars and playing cards he enjoyed brought forth for more western gentlemanly amusement.



**Jesse Nicholson relaxes in his Morris Chair**

corn and tomatoes through the neighborhood. Dorothy, a student at the National Law School (later absorbed into George Washington University Law School), had a west facing bedroom, her desk in front of a window where her mother grew violets on the sill. In the yard below, the



**T.V. Soong chats with (L to R) Special Assistant Harry Hopkins, FDR, and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau**

The women also dealt diplomatically with differing expectations. For example, Dorothy recounts, when Mme. Soong invited Mrs. Nicholson to tea, the latter learned that the silver service was not in service but in the basement. "Aren't you using it?" she inquired? "No," replied Mme. Soong, "we don't use silver in China." "Then do you mind if I take it?" "Not at all." The Soong servants packed the silver, and the Nicholsons moved it to the Shoreham.

T.V. Soong succeeded in his mission, obtaining \$600 million in loans from the United States to his government, thereby helping to stave off the latter's defeat. In 1942 the Soongs returned to China and the Nicholsons to their house. Dorothy sums up the experience from her family's perspective: "We thought it was rather an exotic chapter in our lives."

Dorothy received her law degree in 1944 and joined Mr. Nicholson in forming Montgomery County's first father-daughter law practice, Nicholson & Bates. Mrs. Nicholson founded the National Society of Arts and Letters on the front porch of 103 Newlands. (Dorothy would found the Washington, D.C. Chapter.) During a major renovation of the Chevy Chase Village Hall in the 1940s, the back porch of 103 served as the polling place in a local election.

The third family to own the house, Thomas B. Leachman, Jr. and Virginia (Ginny) A. Leachman and their children Elizabeth, Tommy, and Larson, have resided there since 1986.\* Ginny and Dorothy enjoy an ongoing friendship. Elizabeth Leachman and Dorothy's granddaughter Sophie in Norway "Facebook" each other. And Ginny confirms Dorothy's account of Mrs. Nicholson's regular spring painting of the house's interior. When the Leachmans purchased the house, Ginny says, the painters scraped down an area to show her the layers. "I remember seeing that green – that celadon green."

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\* Margaret Hartigan acquired 103 Newlands in 1966. Her son Charles Hartigan and his wife Frances purchased it in 1968.

Among the sources of the information contained in this article are:

- CCHS Oral History of Dorothy Nicholson Stabell, taken by Mary Anne Tuohey and Alice Kinter on March 4, 1988
- CCHS Interview of Dorothy Nicholson Stabell and Virginia A. Leachman on April 17, 2009
- Seagrave, Sterling. *The Soong Dynasty*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.
- Pakula, Hannah. *The Last Empress: Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and the Birth of Modern China*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009.

We also gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Carol Coffin, Edward D. Wang and other children and grand children of Chinese Nationalist cabinet ministers, Lily Chiu Reid, and Patricia Lynes Adamson.



**Montgomery County "first": Dorothy and Jessie form father-daughter law practice**

## Chevy Chase Voices

"Chevy Chase Voices" is 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. It 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.

### "When Rock Creek Was a Playground for Local Children"

And Jones Mill Road was a country lane, and horses were grazing on Brierly Road, Fred Winkler and his twin sister Sally were growing up in 1920s Chevy Chase. So recounted Ellouise Schoettler in her Curator's Statement at the Woodend estate during an Audubon Naturalist Society reception on December 4, 2005. Fred Winkler's oral history as told to Ms. Schoettler formed the basis of an exhibit that was displayed at the reception, entitled "A Rock Creek Childhood: Recollections of Fred Winkler," that Schoettler later donated to CCHS. The following excerpts from the oral history illustrate the colorful aspect that Rock Creek lent the lives of children who lived near it in that bygone era.



#### The Rock Creek Navy

Fred Winkler and his friend, Remus Day, who lived in the neighborhood, found a wrecked canoe in the creek after a spring flood and restored it.



Fred Winkler and Remus Day of Rock Creek Navy man the oars

**Mr. Winkler:** We had three boats, the canoe and two flat bottomed boats that we built. We called ourselves the Rock Creek Navy. We paddled south to the trestle or north to an island in the middle of the creek. At that time the creek was four to five feet deep and the banks were much steeper than they are today.

Every spring the creek flooded over the banks. Sometimes the strong currents broke the boats loose from the pier and we would have to look for them and bring them back. Our side of the creek was pasture land and across the creek the land belonged to a local dairy – this was before Rock Creek Park was created was established – it was mostly rolling open pasture land on both sides of the creek.

#### Splish, Splash!



Anglers and friends gather at fishing hole

**Mr Winkler:** Living near the creek was fun. In the summer we cut poles and used earth worms for bait to catch small sunfish – we called them sunnies. I have heard that some people caught eels. There was a swimming hole down near the trestle and kids came from all around to swim. In those days Rock Creek was half as wide as now and deeper. In winter ice flowed over the banks. Pop could get sand from the creek when he needed it to make concrete for the greenhouse. Now the creek has more silt than sand.

## Snow Stories: Society and Friends Capture History in the Making

The Town of Chevy Chase's annual chili dinner is always a lively event. At this year's February 21<sup>st</sup> dinner, the buzz naturally was about the town residents' experiences with the winter's historically heavy snowfall. CCHS was there, encouraging diners to share their "snow stories" for inclusion in the society's archive. Stephanie Brown, Director of our Research and Archive Center, her family, Vice President Bridget Hartman, Communications Chair Mary Anne Hoffman, and Oral History Chair Julie Thomas asked people to share their stories about the successive storms, and collected the accounts of more than two dozen people, aged six to 79.



These young Chevy Chasers helped CCHS gather stories, giving out thank-you cupcakes. L to R: Liam Walk, who filmed the dinner and stories for the Chevy Chase Elementary School news channel; Clara Modlin; Erin Walk; and Jessie Modlin.



Ridge Street resident Betsy Johnson (L) was among those who shared their stories. Corey Modlin (R), husband of CCHS Center Director Stephanie Brown, captured the storytellers' memories on videotape.



CHEVY CHASE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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