



Spring Gala on Primrose Street Will Feature World War II Project, *Chevy Chase Remembers*

Photo by George Kinter



12 Primrose Street

The Chevy Chase Historical Society is pleased to announce that it will hold its annual Spring Gala on Sunday, April 18, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Mr. and Mrs. Stewart W. Bainum, Jr. graciously have agreed to host the champagne supper, catered by Restaurant La Ferme, at their home at 12 Primrose Street, Chevy Chase, Maryland. An elegant example of the Italian Renaissance style popular in America during the early twentieth century, the house's exterior features a stucco finish, strong geometrical forms, dentil moldings, classical swags, and flanking Tuscan columns. A graceful interior and luxurious back garden combine to create a perfect setting for the society's popular spring event.

This year's gala will showcase one of the society's most ambitious and far reaching projects, "World War II: Chevy Chase Remembers." Veterans and others who experienced the war years at home and abroad have afforded CCHS many fascinating recollections. Expect also to be entertained with music of the era.

Attendance at the gala is by invitation only. CCHS will mail the invitations in March, and recommends prompt responses in order to ensure reservations. Please direct questions concerning reservations to Helen Secret at (301) 652-4878.

Chevy Chase
"World War II on the Home Front"

William Offutt

*A special invitation to our veterans
and to those who lived here during WWII*

Tuesday, March 9, 7:30 p.m.
Chevy Chase Village Hall
5906 Connecticut Avenue

Join us for a reception before the lecture

(See page 3, Inside)

Chevy Chase Historical Society
Newsletter



Chevy Chase Historical Society
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CCHS Archives and Research Center

Chevy Chase Community Library
8005 Connecticut Avenue
Tel: 301-656-6141
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E-mail: chevychasehistory@msn.com
Open 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on
Tuesdays and by appointment.

The Chevy Chase Historical Society is a non-profit organization founded in 1981 to discover, record, and preserve the history of the Maryland and Washington neighborhoods known as Chevy Chase.

Recent Acquisitions

“Recent Acquisitions” is a regular feature in the newsletter, describing documents and other items that are acquired for the society’s Archives and Research Center.

In recent months, CCHS has added the following material to its Archives and Research Center:

- Mary Gardner: A program from Columbia Country Club for the 2003 U.S. Junior Golf Championship, which was played at the Club.
- Jean Dunwoody Linehan: Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School Yearbooks from 1945 and 1946; beanie from Leland Junior High; copy of *The Tattler*, the BCC newspaper, a photograph of a Girl Scout meeting with Mrs. Roosevelt. (Mrs. Linehan is moving, and has been very generous in her donations.)
- Margaret G. Kranking: Six charming photographs of Cuba Tracewell, former resident of 123 Quincy Street, and her husband, Charles Tracewell, who wrote a column called *This and That* for the Evening Star.
- Bridget Hartman: Video tape of Chevy Chase Elementary School, about the rededication of the Library and the Faculty Fun Day, May 3, 2002.
- June Hoye: Rare catalogues, yearbooks and history of the Chevy Chase Women’s College which was formerly located at what is now the 4-H Center, as well as a history of the 4-H Center.
- William Hudnut III: A signed copy of his book *Halfway to Everywhere*. Mr. Hudnut was our speaker at the CCHS fall meeting on November 13, 2003.
- Helen Gillard: Photo collage of Stanford Street before the numerous renovations that have changed the streetscape.
- Howard Kaplan: Catalogue from an antique shop in New Orleans which features the “Chevy Chase sideboard.” The catalogue contains several pages describing the massive sideboard, which was carved in 1863 and depicts the famous battle of Chevy Chase.
- Julie Thomas: A book titled *Men I Have Met in Bed* by Chevy Chase resident Lila Oliver Asher, (**see below**), which is a fascinating memoir of Asher’s work as a young artist with the USO during WW II. Mrs Asher’s work took her to a number of hospitals, where she drew portraits of wounded soldiers.



Photo courtesy of Brooks Photographers



World War II aluminum drive in Bethesda: recycling aluminum for airplane parts.

"World War II on The Home Front" Subject of William Offutt Lecture on March 9

Remember stamp books, Victory Gardens, canning, black outs, and air raids?

William "Bill" Offutt, outstanding local historian, who always gives a riveting lecture, will address CCHS and its guests about World War II on the Home Front, on March 9 at 7:30 p.m., at the Chevy Chase Village Hall located at 5906 Connecticut Avenue. Mr. Offutt's talk will remind those who remember the war--and enlighten those who do not--about the blackouts and air raid drills, the rationing and Victory Gardens, the war bonds and scrap drives, and the rigors and excitement of everyday life in Chevy Chase during the war years of 1941 to 1945.

At the Village Hall, there also will be displayed a variety of World War II souvenirs, mementos, and artifacts. These will range from civil defense items to drawings of Petty Girls, from ration books to Life Magazines.

Bill Offutt grew up in Bethesda, and his wife, the former Eda Schrader, in Chevy Chase. He is a retired teacher and the author of the book *Bethesda: A Local History*, as well as numerous articles for the Montgomery County Historical Society, CCHS, and various publications.

The society is pleased to extend a special invitation to our veterans, and to those who lived here during World War II, to join us for this special evening. A reception will precede the lecture. Light refreshments will be served.

World War II: *Chevy Chase Remembers*

Through the Chevy Chase community's newsletters, CCHS has been asking for stories about World War II experiences from veterans, war workers, and others whose lives were affected in major ways by the war. On the home front, the society has sought stories of World War II from people who lived in Chevy Chase during the War. We want to know how all these threads wove together to shape our community, and we want say, "Thank you," to those who served. Some vignettes from the stories we have collected follow, below.



Then-Corporal Uphoff in Georgia

Village of Martin's Additions

Dorothy Uphoff Camp

WAAC, WAC, USAF (Women's Army Corps)

Second Lieutenant

1943-45

I joined the WAAC in January 1943 and spent the first night in a hotel that caught fire. I escaped by jumping from the second floor wearing one shoe and my new fur coat over my nightgown. I had just bought the fur coat; I lost everything else. The Salvation Army provided clothes the next day. Thanks to an ear infection the army never sent me overseas. I was sent to Georgia where I my rank was Corporal and I served as secretary to a unit that inspected planes until I applied to Officer's Candidate School.

I felt odd about becoming a 2nd Lieutenant, having spent two and a half years as an enlisted person. I wrote this in August 1945 to an enlisted buddy: "We went up to Lake James last Sunday to go swimming. I went incognito in play clothes with about 300 GI's, WACs, and Victory Belles. Had a very nice time and kept my mouth shut when the conversation ran to officers being a bunch of dopes. . . . [Another time,] I was sitting on the porch railing talking to the Special Services Officer (he was in uniform and the only officer present, young and good looking). Well, some lady in charge at the SMC fills a plate for him and brings it over but ignores me which was all right for I really didn't expect her to wait on me but just then one of my WACS came dashing over and said, 'Lt. Uphoff do you have my purse?' and the poor civilian was embarrassed to death as she exclaimed, 'Oh, are you an officer? Let me fix you a plate,' and from then on [she] treated me as if I were a queen—is that fair, I ask you? Guess I was a corporal in Georgia too long."



Village of Chevy Chase

John Reed

U.S. Army

69th Infantry Division, 271st Regiment

I trained at Camp Robinson and Camp Shelby where I learned to service and fire a Browning 30 caliber crew-operated, water-cooled, tripod-mounted machine gun that was little changed from a similar model used during WWI. I was in the Rhineland and Central Europe. I crossed the Rhine River at Remagen on the pontoon bridge. Elements of our division were the first U.S. forces to link up with the Soviet Union's

Red Army near Leipzig. Since I had learned some Russian while training in the States, I became part of a small group assigned to gain intelligence from the Soviet troops in what later became the Soviet Zone of Occupation. I witnessed death and destruction, shared duties with a wide variety of Americans, and gained valuable lessons from my experiences. My memories of this period remain vivid. I was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.



Bill Borders in Italy at harvest time.



G.Painter in the Army 1951

Town of Chevy Chase
George Painter
 U.S. Merchant Marine
 South Pacific 1945
 U.S. Army
 Korean War 1950-52

Village of Chevy Chase, Section 3

William Borders

Battery B, 328th Field Artillery, 85th Division
 1942-45

I was drafted after graduating from the University of North Carolina and spent my training time shuttling about among various swamps, forests, and deserts before being shipped to Italy where I took part in the May 11, 1943 offensive that took us to Rome. There I had a brief audience with the Pope, with about three hundred other soldiers, mostly Poles. Over the next two years we were moved all around Italy, including the Arno Valley (where we helped take in the harvest), Florence (some of us spent the night in a nice villa), the Apennines (most of my time was spent with a clip board and a telephone recording fire commands and checking to see that the guns were pointed correctly), the Po Valley and up the Garigliano River (when the end of the war finally came). The German troops came down to surrender: there were columns of nattily uniformed elite soldiers, followed by a mob, then the eastern Europeans who had switched sides, then many women.

This sketchy account does not convey the feeling of endless boredom. In foxholes and tents I took a correspondence course in public finance and read a number of paperbacks. There were eternal games of pinochle, and then we would be shelled. Tolstoy put it well when he wrote somewhere in War and Peace that a soldier's life consists of months of boredom interrupted by moments of terror.

We took on a cargo of lumber in the holds and barrels of gasoline on the deck. The barrels were stacked three and four high and lashed down by ropes and cable. We headed out to sea and only the Captain knew the destination. Four or five days out we went on submarine alert while I was in the engine room. Things got very tense. I glanced up and the Chief Engineer was standing at the exit door at the top of the stairs with a drawn pistol in hand. I later learned that the Chief Engineer always took that spot to ensure that no one abandoned his post. It was common knowledge that if a merchant ship gets hit by a torpedo, the guys in the engine room die. [Fortunately] we were not torpedoed.

Village of Chevy Chase, Section 5

Arnold Weiss

U.S. Army

45th Division, 970 CIC Reserves

I enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, where I served as navigator then switched to Army Intelligence (German speaker) and served with various OSS and CIC Detachments. I received the Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medal for capturing an SS Brigadier who carried Hitler's last will and testament and other documents from the Fuhrer's bunker in Berlin. These documents served as part of the prosecution's case at the Nuremberg Trials.

The Enchanting World of Flora Gill Jacobs

Turning the antique brass doorbell and stepping over the threshold into the home of Flora Gill Jacobs is like stepping back into a different era. Rare antiques, both life-sized and small, fill her 1895 Victorian colonial revival house. Yet the true enchantment of visiting this home lies not with the house, but with Flora herself. Settle back in one of the velvet Victorian sofas in the front parlor, and you can listen to this soft spoken woman recall events of the past with precise detail.

Flora Jacobs is an accomplished writer, collector, and historian. She has authored both fictional children's books and historical chronicles of doll houses. For nearly three decades, Flora has served as director of the Washington Dolls' House & Toy Museum, a museum she founded to share her extensive collection of doll houses and antique miniature toys with the public. She is also one of the founders of CCHS.

Early Passions

The story of Flora's life is a fascinating one, of a determined woman with a passion for antique doll houses and a talent for writing. A true Washingtonian, "I'm as provincial as they come," says Flora.

She was born in 1918 and educated at John Eaton Elementary School, Alice Deal Junior High School, Western High School, and The George Washington University. She began writing in school, covering sports for the *Alice Deal Star*. (Flora can entertain you for hours with tales of baseball in the 1930's and an extensive collection of baseball memorabilia and scrapbooks from her younger years.) While in college she started writing "third string movie reviews" for the now defunct *Washington Times-Herald*. Another of her scrapbooks chronicles her 550 movie reviews. At 23, she became Woman's Page and

Fashion Editor at *The Times-Herald*, working for publisher Sissy Patterson. Later she became one of three general assignment reporters for *The Washington Post*. She resigned from the Post to pursue her passion to write a book about doll houses.

Flora's interest in doll houses dates to her childhood years. She recalls making houses out of hat and shoe boxes in the fourth grade at John Eaton. When she lived on Rodman Street, NW, in Cleveland Park, she remembers her dear friend Laura Ellis having a doll house made from gas mask boxes brought back from Nuremberg after World War II by Laura's father, Colonel Ellis. Flora's fascination with doll houses prompted her to explore the prospects of writing a children's book on how to make doll houses with an editor in New York in 1945. To her surprise, her initial research revealed that there had never been a book written about doll houses, so she set out to change this. Instead of proceeding with the "how to" book, she began writing the first history on the subject of doll houses. She also began seriously collecting at about the same time. Scribner's published her first book, *A History of Dolls' Houses*, in 1953. Two more books on doll houses followed. Between 1958 and 1975, Flora also wrote four children's books.

A Victorian Residence

There seems to be an interesting anecdote behind almost all of Flora's acquisitions, even her Victorian home, which she and her husband, Ephraim, bought in 1962. The Jacobs were planning to move from their home on Thornapple Street to a larger house to accommodate their growing family. A house in Chevy Chase was being sold with an adjacent lot on which an additional house could be built. When the Jacobs' good friends, Ann and David Brinkley, suggested they look together at a Victorian house on West Kirke Street, that had a side lot, they did. According to Flora, Ann suggested, "You buy the house and lot, and sell us the lot, or we'll buy the house and lot and sell you the house." Flora reflects, "We were a couple with a baby and a cat . . . we thought the house too big." But in the end, the Jacobses did get the house and the Brinkleys got the lot.

"The house was a disaster," Flora recounts. Flora set out with a passion to restore it meticulously. The porch landing was too short because prior owners had moved the front columns back to increase the sunlight on the second floor. She extended the landing with old bricks she recovered from homes being torn down on Capitol Hill. Flora points with pride to many corrected features of the house: the low vintage radiator in the dining room she found on Capital Hill; the decorative moldings she found to frame the large mirrors above the fireplace mantles. Each item has a story, and the pleasure Flora takes in recounting these reveals her precise attention to detail.

The house is furnished with antiques bought at country sales in the Leesburg and Frederick areas. It is a grown-up version of the best of Flora's doll houses. The living room is complete with a Philadelphia tri-pod table, a jeweled wooden filigreed screen in the far-Eastern style, Victorian velvet covered sofas with buttons, a charming wicker confidante in front of the fireplace mantle, and her childhood piano. The elegant banquet sized dining room table and chairs sit beneath a chandelier of brass and Victorian glass globes. On each side of the dining room, glass cases display Flora's rare collection of miniature chairs. In fact, throughout the house, miniature antiques complement the full size furnishings. Displays of Flora's miniature collections can be found in nearly every room of her spacious home. But the largest display is in the basement where row after row of glass cases display antique Noah's Arks and zoos, miniature shops and kitchens, dozens of historically accurate furnished antique doll houses and many other one-of-a-kind collectibles.



Flora Gill Jacobs

The expansive nature of Flora's at-home collection and the interest it sparked among friends and neighbors is what led to the subsequent opening of the Washington Dolls' House & Toy Museum in 1975. Friends and their friends constantly were asking to see Flora's growing collection at her home. Flora would entertain Brownie troops with tea and cookies on her Haviland china after tours of her private collection. Yet Flora could not keep up with the requests to view her at-home collection. She began looking for a private building to house it and, after an eight to nine year search, she located a building at 5236 44th Street, NW, in the District, the museum's current site

. A Washington Jewel

The Washington Dolls' House & Toy Museum is a small treasure replete with even smaller treasures. Enter the doors of the museum, and, as at Flora's home, one steps back in time. Entrance tickets are bought through the window of an antique post office façade. As you peer inside one of the many nineteenth century century doll houses—furnished lavishly with everything from elaborate chandeliers to lace curtains—you can get a sense of life in an earlier time. The museum is a rarity in that it is a privately held museum providing an important public function of education and preservation.

There is a New York townhouse with an English basement, a New Jersey seaside hotel, turn-of-the-century Baltimore row houses, and even a group of Bliss Street houses with

a plane and blimp flying overhead. You can find "time in miniature," "cooking in miniature," "music in miniature," fanciful penny toys, and finger-sized animals lined up two-by-two entering a collection of Noah's Arks. Putting these miniature exhibits together requires a careful attention to the smallest details. Flora is quick to admit that she may be the "ultimate purist." When she buys a doll house, she rarely keeps the furnishings that come with it. Everything "must be of the right vintage, scale, and style."

The museum's rich collection features exhibits of items from around the world but focuses on "Americana." Its small privately held collection boasts many rare and valuable items, like Reed's 1884 miniature of the U.S. Capitol, Crandall's 1867 "Mount Vernon," and Shoenhut's "Teddy Roosevelt on Safari." Other famous toy makers represented include Bliss and McLoughlin.

The museum entered its thirtieth year this February. If you have not already had the pleasure of a visit, do consider one soon. The museum will be closing its doors on May 1, 2004 and its contents will be sold at auction in June by Noel Barrett, Antiques and Auctions. When asked why close now after all these years, Flora quickly responds, "The lease is up and I am 85." Flora's passion to share the joys of her collection with others, and her (non-collector) husband's unwavering support in this endeavor, is what has kept the museum open for nearly three decades.

When the Washington area nearly shut down one wintry day earlier this year due to snow, Flora was busy making sure someone could get to the museum to open it. "In 29 years, we've been closed only twice, once for a blizzard and one other time," she said. Flora opened the museum in 1975 and can be found there nearly every day, six days a week.

During our interview, Flora received a phone call from a California collector who had just learned of her plan to close the museum. She says that collectors and auctioneers have been calling every day to inquire about obtaining pieces in the museum's extensive and valuable collection. She would like to keep the collection together. She would like to see the doll houses kept intact—with the furnishings she has so meticulously chosen for the interiors—yet she knows pieces likely will be sold separately. This distresses her immensely. "You can't imagine how difficult this has been," she says. "It's like saying goodbye to good friends."

Flora recounts many stories, and through them one gets a sense of her extraordinary expertise as a collector of doll houses and other antiques, her wit as a writer, and her grace as a person. She has a tremendous number of accomplishments to be proud of, and has received accolades from collectors and writers here and abroad. Yet, she told us the one compliment she was most proud of came from the carpenter that worked with her on the restoration of her home years ago. After she was able to locate a particular type of glass paneling to enclose the side porch that he had not been able to find, he remarked, "Mrs. Jacobs, I don't know how you do it." She pauses while recounting this story as if it is too immodest to repeat. Yet anyone who spends time with this remarkable woman and reflects on her years as a writer, collector, historian, and museum director, can not help but admire her and ask the same question.

At 85, Flora Jacobs has just completed the writing of another book about her collection. It is to be published later this year. It is no surprise that she already has an idea for another book.

_1/ A separate article could be written about her husband, Ephraim Jacobs, retired antitrust attorney from Foley & Lardner, former Board Member (1977-1989), and Chairman (1984-1989) of the Board of Managers of Chevy Chase Village, and great supporter

of Flora's passion for collecting. He likes to claim that he is the only antitrust attorney to spend so many hours outside of antique shops.



Eleanor Roosevelt

This World War II photograph is a recent donation to the CCHS archives by Jean Dinwoody Linehan. The young Miss Dinwoody is the Girl Scout speaking to Eleanor Roosevelt.