



## CHEVY CHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2017

### Readers Build Community: The Literary Culture of Early Chevy Chase *Spring Program on Sunday, March 19*



*The Chevy Chase Reading Class, c.1905*

Between 1896 and 1914, a remarkable group of early Chevy Chase residents created a “community of readers”, whose passion for reading led to the first community associations and institutions in the newly-established Chevy Chase. The story of these residents, and how three particular literary groups created a foundation for social and civic association in the new suburb, is told in CCHS’ newest online exhibit, *Chevy Chase Reads*. The launch of this exhibit, and the story behind it, will be celebrated at the CCHS 2017 spring lecture, “Readers Build Community: The Literary Culture of Early Chevy Chase.”

Historian and developer of the online exhibit, Dr. Gail Sansbury, will discuss how the Chevy Chase Free Library Association, the Chevy Chase Reading Class, and the Literary Club of the Chevy Chase Association were formed in the early days of Chevy Chase, and how their legacies continue to impact and enrich the community today. Her illustrated lecture is on Sunday, March 19, at 4:00 pm at the Chevy Chase Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Avenue.

Nearly all new Chevy Chase residents were former Washingtonians. They found the bucolic, rural setting a welcome change from the hustle and bustle of the big city, yet they had

a strong desire to bring their urban cultural life with them. They formed clubs based on an array of interests, but the most popular clubs were related to literature and libraries. Sansbury will explore how these groups created the cultural, social and intellectual base for the young community.

The new *Chevy Chase Reads* exhibit is now available to the public on the CCHS website at [www.chevychasehistory.org](http://www.chevychasehistory.org). CCHS is indebted not only to Sansbury for producing the exhibit, but also to Bob Andrews, a CCHS volunteer who made invaluable contributions to the research and writing. The CCHS website features a number of other online exhibits as well, telling stories of local history on topics ranging from Chevy Chase Lake Amusement Park to Chevy Chase Junior College.

Sansbury holds a B.A. and M.A. in American History from the University of Rhode Island, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Urban Planning from UCLA. She moved to Washington after retiring from a career as an educator in the California State University system. She was a member of the planning faculty at Cal Poly Pomona, teaching planning history and urban design; she taught in the American Studies program at San José State University; and she was a senior lecturer in the Cultural Studies program at California College of the Arts and in the Women and Gender Studies program at San Francisco State University. Sansbury’s research, writing, and speaking engagements have focused primarily on urban and community history, women’s history and housing history. She also has led or participated in numerous local history projects, many involving oral histories. From 2012 – 2016, she was the Director of the CCHS Archive and Research Center.



*Dr. Gail Sansbury*

The March 19 program is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. Prior to the lecture, CCHS will hold a brief annual meeting, at which the membership will elect several directors-at-large.

*Celebrating One of America’s First Streetcar Suburbs*



**CHEVY CHASE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Open 10 a.m. to noon, 1 to 3 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. The organization provides resources for historical research and sponsors a variety of programs and activities to foster knowledge and appreciation of the community's history.

# News from the Archive and Research Center

## New Feature on CCHS Website

CCHS is happy to announce a new feature on its website, [www.chevychasehistory.org](http://www.chevychasehistory.org), titled "Artifact of the Week: Items from our Collections". Each week a different object, photograph, document, or other historic item is highlighted along with a brief explanation of its origin and significance. CCHS hopes web viewers will enjoy this new feature and welcomes feedback, so please take a moment to check it out online.

## Volunteer Opportunities for Middle School and High School Students

CCHS has been approved to welcome students from grades 6-12 to earn Student Service Learning (SSL) hours in fulfillment of their Montgomery County Public School graduation requirements. The Society offers many volunteer opportunities for students, including setting up for events, helping with office work, or assisting with the preservation of our collections. CCHS welcomes students who need volunteer hours, as well as students who are just looking to share their passion for history by volunteering their time, energy, and skills.

## Remembering Eleanor Ford, Gentle and Gracious Dynamo



Eleanor Johnston Ford, a relative of the founder of Chevy Chase who herself helped found the Chevy Chase Historical Society and masterminded its massive photo collection, died on December 27 in Scarborough, Maine. She lived in Chevy Chase from the age of four until she and her husband George moved to New England in 2008.

"I rollerskated on Connecticut Avenue," she recalled in CCHS' 2006 documentary film, *Chevy Chase, Maryland: A Streetcar to Home*.

"It certainly was, before so much traffic, before the Beltway, one of the quietest places one could ever hope to have."

And Eleanor was the hardest-working Board member CCHS could ever hope to have. A serious historian and meticulous researcher, she was the final fact-checking stop for any Society project during her decades on the CCHS Board. In addition to buiding the Society's photo collection, which now boasts more than 10,000 images, she created numerous exhibits on Chevy Chase's early history. She was named CCHS' first Director Emeritus in 2008.

CCHS is grateful that the Ford family has designated CCHS to receive memorial donations in Eleanor's memory.

## CCHS Research Tees Up New Take on Chevy Chase Golf

Among the amenities that attracted residents to the new suburb of Chevy Chase were golf courses. The courses at the Chevy Chase Club, celebrating its 125th anniversary this year, and the Columbia Country Club are well known. But these two venerable courses were not the only golf links that existed in Chevy Chase. There once was a third.

About 1890, the Chevy Chase Land Company purchased a tract of land from Arthur T. Goldsborough that had been part of the former 125-acre Belmont farm. The tract was bounded by Grafton Street on the north, Wisconsin Avenue on the west and Chevy Chase Circle on the east. Thirty-five years later, in 1925 and 1926, the property was designated in two sections, Section 1 and Section 1A, in anticipation of residential development. But what happened to the property during those intervening 35 years? Was it used? If so, how?

In 1903, a 30-acre portion from Section 1A was deeded to two developers who platted a subdivision called "Belmont." But the property was never developed, and in the mid-1920s it was reacquired by the Land Company.

It was a different story for the rolling land known as Section 1 and the remainder of Section 1A. In 1892, the Land Company temporarily donated the tract to the newly formed Chevy Chase Club, which used the property, at least in part, as a hunt club. The club occupied the Goldsborough farmhouse as its clubhouse until 1894. Subsequently, the property was leased to the Bannockburn Club, a golf club that was established in 1910 and operated at that site until about 1913 when it moved from Chevy Chase to a new location in the Cabin John area.

The southern boundary of the land leased to the Bannockburn Club is uncertain. At the time the club was formed, Western Avenue did not exist west of Chevy Chase Circle, according to a Thos. J. Fisher & Company map from 1911. (See photo.) On this map, the Bannockburn Club golf course stretched across the Maryland/District line into DC.

For a short time after the Bannockburn Club moved, the property was used by the English Cricket Club.

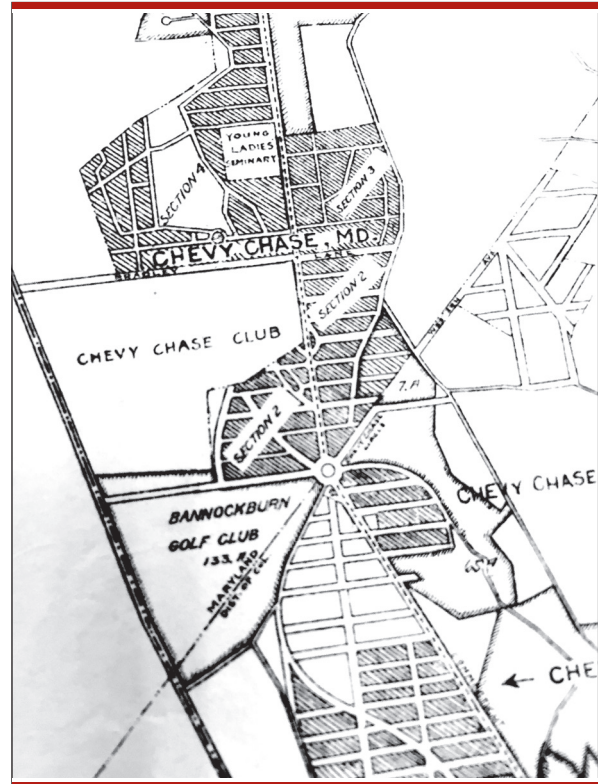
In June 1915, the *Sunday Star* newspaper reported that a new club had taken over the golf course vacated by the Bannockburn Club. The organizers had planned to call it the Friendship Club, but ultimately decided on the name Kirkside Golf Club, reflecting that fact that one fairway extended to the small church ("kirk" in Scottish) just west of Chevy Chase Circle. At this point, according to the *Sunday Star*, the club had 25 active members, mostly

former Bannockburn members who lived in Chevy Chase and did not want to follow the club "the great distance" to Cabin John.

By September 1916, the *Sunday Star* reports, the Kirkside Club had increased its ranks to 125 members, including 40 women. But a long waiting list remained.

The par 35 course included 26 acres of rolling countryside. As described in the *Sunday Star*: "No. 6 [hole] is a drive straight along a level fairway to a green across the Reno road." This newspaper account suggests that, like the Bannockburn Club's course, part of the Kirkside Club golf course extended into DC. Finally, in July 1926, the Kirkside Club closed when the golf course property was earmarked for residential development.

While Sections 1 and 1A have long since been fully developed as commercial and residential properties, it is fun to image that land as open space, rolling hills and golf links, complete with streams and possibly sand bunkers. If anyone has photographs of the Bannockburn Club, the English Cricket Club or the Kirkside Club, CCHS would welcome a copy.



**This portion of a map of the "Chevy Chase Heights Development" dated March 27, 1911, by Thos. J. Fisher & Company, shows the location of the Bannockburn Club golf course. Map courtesy of the Chevy Chase Land Company.**



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## MYSTERY!

*"Mystery!" is a regular Newsletter feature, inviting all history-loving sleuths to help solve "mysteries" contained in the CCHS Archive. This image is from a 2008 donation by John F. Deeds, a Chevy Chase and DC native. CCHS would like to identify these two lovely women posed like bookends, as well as their location. Does anyone know either the place or the subjects of this photograph?*

*If you can help solve this mystery, email [chevychasehistory@msn.com](mailto:chevychasehistory@msn.com) or call 301-656-6141*

