



CHEVY CHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2015

Down by the Old Mill Stream: The Story of Peirce Mill



**Peirce Mill expert
Steve Dryden**

the last survivor of a 19th century complex of some eight mills that once operated along Rock Creek. It was built in the 1820s on the site of a pre-Revolutionary War mill. Many local residents still remember childhood visits to the mill during the 1930s and 1940s and recall the sounds of the whirring machinery and the smell of freshly milled flour. Patrons included President Harry Truman, who frequently purchased flour and meal from the mill for use by White House cooks.

Writer and preservationist Steve Dryden will tell the fascinating story of Peirce Mill on Sunday, March 22, 2014, at 4:00 p.m., at the Chevy Chase Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Avenue.

Steve Dryden has had a lifelong interest in the history and the natural environment of the Washington area. Since 1997 he has served as the Vice President and Program Manager of the Friends of Peirce Mill, that raised \$3 million for the restoration and reopening of the mill in 2011. His book, *Peirce Mill: Two Hundred Years in the Nation's Capital*, is the first comprehensive history of the mill. The book will be available for purchase and signing at the program.

Dryden has made numerous important contributions to the restoration and preservation of Washington's natural environment. He is the founder and director of Rock Creek Songbirds, an initiative to restore habitat for migratory birds in Rock Creek Park. He worked for the Audubon Naturalist

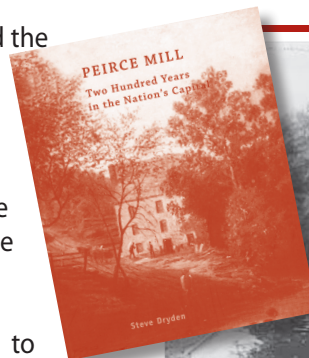
Society, where he continues to volunteer; was a co-founder and board member of the Rock Creek Conservancy, dedicated to protecting the lands and waters of Rock Creek Park; and served on the board of the Montgomery Countryside Alliance, charged with protecting the 90,000 acre Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve.

He also has been a journalist, writing and reporting for Bloomberg News Service, *BusinessWeek*, United Press International, *The Washington Post* and the *International Herald Tribune*.

The program is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. Please direct questions to CCHS at (301) 656-6141 or at chevychasehistory@msn.com.

As a complement to the program, Dryden will lead a CCHS History-Go-Round field trip to Peirce Mill on Saturday, April 11, 2015. Participants will have a special opportunity to see the historic mill in action. See details on page 3.

Please note: before the program, CCHS will hold a brief annual meeting at which the membership will elect five officers and four directors-at-large. Nominees are: President, Angela Lancaster; Vice President, Susan Bollendorf; Recording Secretary, Kirsten Williams; Corresponding Secretary, Helene Sacks; Treasurer, Carolyn Greis; Directors-at-Large, Julie Cannistra, Catherine Cecere, John Higgins, and Mary Sheehan.



Celebrating One of America's First Streetcar Suburbs



**CHEVY CHASE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20815

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Open 10 a.m. to 2 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.



Photo by Burt Schorr

À Bientôt

This spring, after two decades of extraordinary service to CCHS, Wendy Adams will complete her leadership responsibilities on the society's Board of Directors and as its Newsletter Editor. Wendy first acted as liaison to CCHS with Historic Chevy Chase, D.C., which she chaired in the mid-1990s. Since 2000 she has faithfully managed the production of the Newsletter, which is published three times a year and mailed to every household in Chevy Chase as well as to many friends and supporters throughout the country. Her dedication, skill, high standards, and hard work have resulted in a Newsletter that is as enjoyable as it is informative. Wendy's tireless dedication to the Newsletter, as well as numerous other society programs and activities, has contributed greatly to the growth of CCHS and to the preservation of our local history. We extend our deepest gratitude to Wendy and wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

Save the Date!

For our younger audience and for the young at heart CCHS will hold an "architectural scavenger hunt" on Saturday, June 6th from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. Participants will meet at the Chevy Chase Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Avenue, and join us on a hunt for interesting and historic architectural elements and neighborhood features.

History-Go-Round Tour of Peirce Mill

CCHS will continue its commemoration of the 125th anniversary of Rock Creek Park with a History-Go-Round tour of Peirce Mill on Saturday, April 11, 2015. The tour will be led by Steve Dryden, Vice President of Friends of Peirce Mill, who also is delivering the CCHS spring lecture on Peirce Mill on March 22. Dryden is a leading authority on the mill and the author of its first comprehensive history, *Peirce Mill: Two Hundred Years in the Nation's Capital*.

Participants will see the mill's gears and waterwheel in action as the miller grinds corn, and visit the adjacent Peirce Barn, with exhibits on the "Peirce Plantation" as well as historic mills of the Rock Creek Valley. The visit will offer a window on Washington's agrarian past and well as its industrial revolution era technology.



Peirce Mill's machinery in motion as a miller grinds corn

Afterward a picnic box lunch will be served and discussion will continue with Dryden about his work with Friends of Peirce Mill and the group's raising of the funds to restore and reopen the shuttered mill in 2011.

The tour will begin at 11:00 a.m. Directions to the meeting point at Peirce Mill will be provided to registrants. Participants will provide their own transportation, but CCHS will assist in forming carpools if requested.

The price of the tour and lunch is \$15. The price of the tour without lunch is \$10. Space is limited and reservations must be paid for by check in advance. To make a reservation or for further information, please email Mary Sheehan at msheehan246@aol.com.

Recent Acquisitions

"Recent Acquisitions" is a regular feature in the Newsletter, describing documents and other items acquired by the society's Archive and Research Center

The Center has received a series of three aerial photographs showing the area where the Chestnut Farms Dairy once was located. Donated by Mr. and Mrs. Allen M. Bissell, the former owners of the former dairy property on Glengalen Lane, the photos show the area of East-West Highway between the intersections of Brookville Road and Beach Drive, in 1944, 1963, and 1970.

The January 1944 photograph (first, below) shows the farmland with wooded areas on both sides of the highway, but, by October 1963 (second, below), both the open farmland and the woods were subdivided for housing, reflecting the boom in post-World War II development.



Wooded dairy farmland on both sides of East-West Highway in 1944



Open and wooded farmland subdivided for housing by 1963

Please come see these unique aerial photos, and another item that the Bissells donated -- a Chestnut Farms Dairy milk bottle, one we have not seen before. It is especially distinctive, with vertical ridges, and includes the name of the founder of the dairy, G. M Oyster, Jr., in fancy raised script on one side.

Do you have any materials related to local dairies and farms? We would like to add them to our collection, so please let us know!

Martin's Additions Celebrates 100 Years

And Looks Forward to Its 100th Anniversary

By Jean Rogers

On the top page of the stack of papers dated early March 1984, the petition drive statement reads:

The undersigned hereby petition the Montgomery County Council, pursuant to Section 21 of Article 23A of the Annotated Code of Maryland, to specify the date and time for a special election at which the question of incorporation, under the attached Charter of Incorporation for the Village of Martin's Additions will be presented to the voters of Martin's Additions.

The undersigned affirm that they reside in Martin's Additions and are registered to vote in Montgomery County elections, or own property in Martin's Additions.

A description of the proposed area that would be incorporated is the same as that of the present Special Taxing District of Martin's Additions to the Village of Chevy Chase, and is included in Article II of the proposed Charter.

Volunteers would gather as many signatures as possible, hoping to achieve council approval of a vote. The effort to raise Martin's Additions' status to a municipality was surging ahead with the development of a new Charter of Municipal Incorporation delivered to all the residents of this special taxing district. The vote would take place on February 5, 1985.

But let us step back in time, in order to view the development of the activist roots of the village's efforts.

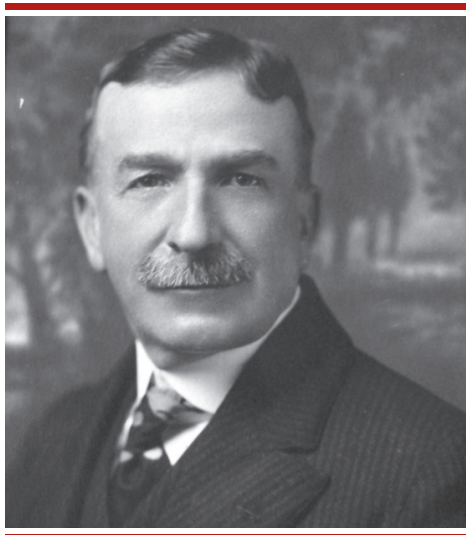


Photo courtesy of Robert Donnelly

Harry M. Martin, founder of the Village of Martin's Additions

H.M. Martin's Additions to the Village of Chevy Chase were begun in 1905 and 1907 by developer Harry M. Martin. The land area was established in 1916 as a taxing district by an act of the Maryland State Legislature. It granted the governing Citizen's Association limited powers to provide local services. The Citizens' Committee, as it was long known, operated for decades.

The community drive and commitment underlying the 1984 move to incorporate were consistent with the character of Martin's Additions as noted in earlier historical writings, and consistent with descriptions of Martin himself. As long time resident and former Citizens' Committee secretary and treasurer Wallace Janssen wrote for the 1985 celebration of incorporation, "The Village of Martin's Additions has been a study in citizen involvement for nearly 80 years. . . . Note is made of another group of citizens who gathered 79 years ago [1906] to draft its first 'Constitution and By Laws.'"

In an earlier document titled, "Notes on a Neighborhood Birthday," Janssen described the village's organizational drive and community commitment. "Life was 'rugged' in the Village of Martin's Additions in 1906. The streets had merely been cut through -- sidewalks, paving, lights, sewers, gas and water were only substances of things hoped for. Typical American Citizens, the pioneers (residents of what would be known as Martin's Additions) were soon organizing. The date was December 11, 1906 and the yellowed pages of the old minute book start with a neatly written 'Constitution and By Laws of the Chevy Chase Home Association.' Its object was the advancement of the public interests of the membership; dues--25 cents per year."



Photo courtesy of Robert M. Truax and Jean Rogers

Members of a newly formed Presbyterian congregation met at Martin's home in 1906. He helped them buy a lot at Connecticut Avenue and Chevy Chase Parkway in 1907, and the original Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church building shown here was constructed in 1910.

Clearly, the spirit of the red haired go getter Harry Martin has been present in the community's pioneers and organizers. His strong hand as a developer and an early community activist in the village is evident in the stories of his pursuits. His desire to create a subdivision of affordable homes below the prices being offered by the surrounding Chevy Chase Land Company development and to allow commercial establishments created a very different character for Martin's Additions, one that persists

celebrates a 30TH Anniversary

10TH Year of Self Government

Sperling

today. Committed to the community he established, Martin built a large house for himself on Cummings Lane (or Cedar Avenue as he named it) that still stands today. It is a wonderful testament to the era of origin -- broad porches, awnings, and large windows.

Martin was a bachelor, a devoted uncle and a refuge for his many siblings, nieces, and nephews. He was a mover and a shaker, donating time, money, and knowledge to many aspects of the communities he touched. After developing Martin's Additions he moved on to Kensington and Norbeck. He also was a bit cantankerous, described as a "fearsome old gentleman" by a relative, but his nature allowed him to accomplish a significant amount of development and advancement of the communities he lived in.



Photo courtesy of Robert Domellig

The gracious home of Harry Martin on "Cedar Avenue"

Citizens in the 1970s and 80s grew anxious about talk at higher levels of government that miscellaneous government entities like special taxing districts would be disbanded. They decided to secure and increase the scope of their authority as neighboring Sections 3 and 5 of the Village of Chevy Chase had done in 1982 by adding their names to the list of incorporated county municipalities.

In 1983 a Committee on Municipal Incorporation charged with the responsibility of exploring the possibility reported to the Citizens' Committee that it had found municipal incorporation to be the correct direction for Martin's Additions to take. It would offer the village the constitutional right to exist that is granted to municipalities. It would change the village from a special taxing district to a municipal corporation with its own charter. The residents' strong motivation to pursue incorporation stemmed from a desire to preserve their community as a cohesive, recognizable entity. By eliminating the ambiguous legal operating status of a special taxing district, continuous, increased local control and legislative adaptability would be

assured. Martin's Additions wanted the same protection that was given to the entire class of municipalities, regardless of size.

Achieving the status of a municipality, though, is no simple feat. The petition compiled by residents in March 1984 was a merely a request to the county council to allow the eligible voters of Martin's Additions to hold a referendum to determine whether the governmental status would change, not a petition to approve incorporation. Happily, the petition signatures far exceeded the minimum requirements.

In December 1984 the council passed a resolution granting the village the right to vote on incorporation. A whole new Village Council would also have to be selected by popular vote at the same time as the vote on incorporation. The local coffee shop, the Olympia Cafe, * was chosen by the County Board of Elections as the official polling place. Shortly after the referendum of February 5, 1985 the results were in: overwhelming approval of incorporation by a margin of 189 to 15. Five council members were selected, four of whom are alive today, and three of whom live in Martin's Additions.



The story behind this familiar Brookville Road sign is out, and residents of Martin's Additions are celebrating it.

This month village residents are gathering at La Ferme Restaurant to celebrate the successful efforts to create and be recognized as a municipal corporation 30 years ago. The restaurant stands on the property that once was part of the first 18th century home in the area, known as "No Gain." The community also will begin its countdown to the celebration of the 100th year of self government. Harry Martin's spirit and energy live on

* The Olympia Café remains a vibrant spot for community gathering and decisionmaking. It still is used as the location for the annual Council Elections for Martin's Additions.

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 explore the wealth of information in the oral history transcripts at the CCHS Archive and Research Center.

Neighborhood Life Along "Tiger Cat Lane," Remembered by Cuba Tracewell

The following account of life in the Village of Martin's Additions, **including the 1985 reception to mark the village's incorporation**, is excerpted from the oral history of Cuba Tracewell taken in 1985 by Mary Anne Tuohey and Marjorie Zapruder. Close family friend, Margaret Kranking, also participated.

Mrs. Tracewell was a native of Logansport, Indiana, who came to Washington as the bride of Charles E. Tracewell in 1917. (Mr. Tracewell's father, Robert J. Tracewell, was a Congressman from Indiana and later Comptroller of the Treasury.) Cuba and Charles Tracewell first met when she was 11 years old and he was a junior at Wabash College, who came with a friend to enjoy her mother's home cooked meals. He gave her a copy of the book *The Secret Garden*, and they corresponded during the years until their marriage.



Photo courtesy of Julie Rude Thomas

Cuba Tracewell, Circa 1925

When we moved to 123 Quincy Street in Chevy Chase in 1930, Charlie was a columnist for *The Evening Star*. He wrote [a column entitled] 'This and That' . . . for 36 years. It was not a political column. He could write about anything he chose, cats, dogs, books, music, people, especially people. . . . He wrote about just little things on the street . . . life and everything. After we moved out here, [he got some of his material from the people who gathered for coffee at the Brookville Pharmacy. And] he got interested in birds, and he wrote a great deal about feeding the birds. [In his column, Brookville Road was 'Tiger Cat Lane.'] [S]hortly after we moved in, Herb Corn down at the *[Star]* said that we ought to subscribe to the Thornapple Street News. It was a paper that the kids up on Thornapple Street put out with a lot of help from their mothers. It [had] an account of the holdup at Brookville Pharmacy. . . . [T]his man . . . came in and ordered a soda and then pulled out a gun and demanded the money and the drugs. [T]he owner then was a Mr. Schwartz, and the story ended up with, 'And then Mr. Schwartz drank a Coca Cola!'

"The [Brookville Pharmacy] wasn't nearly as large as it is now. It had a row of booths opposite the soda fountain. [I have a wonderful painting by Alexander Clayton of the shopping center on Brookville Road. Mr. Clayton] was an artist and he lived in that white house across from the filling station. And the living room, which was a very long room along Brookville Road, was his studio. . . . So he did this painting one snowy day. . . . Charlie looked him up in old copies of the *Star* and he seems to have been a boy genius. He had a lot of publicity for his artwork. And he is a very successful portrait painter.

"[In the foreground of the painting is the gas station, and then there is a green tin building.] I don't know what was in there . . . [b]icycles or something like that. And then the DGS [District Grocery Store], the pink building, and next to that the drug store. And then there was a little tailor shop and then the Safeway on the corner. And, of course, across the street, Brooke Farm. When we first moved here, Brooke Farm was a school for young boys. And they had an old streetcar parked in the back yard, along Taylor Street, for the boys to play in. . . .

"People would go to the drug store every morning [after the children were off to school] and drink coffee. Charlie used to call it 'my club.' [There were many 'regulars,' and much camaraderie and conversation.] Some man who didn't live around here said to me one morning, 'It just does me good to come in here and drink coffee with all these people. It's so friendly.' Doc and Hattie Shapiro ran the counter for quite a while. . . . Their son Joe ran it after Doc [and Hattie died.] Hattie would hand deliver prescriptions if you were really sick . . . they lived across the street from the drug store and [Doc] would get up in the middle of the night, if people had an emergency. . . .

"One funny thing happened. I was up there just before Christmas and [Hattie] was at the counter drinking coffee with all of us and opening her mail, and she opened a Christmas card, and she said, 'This is the worst Christmas card I ever saw in my life!' I said, 'I agree with you, it is!' And then she looked at it and she said, 'Oh, my God, it is yours!' I think Charlie wrote that up. I have [another] cute story about the drugstore . . . I have a friend who grew up near Pinehurst Circle and he had a pony. And one day he rode the pony up Brookville Road, when he was a little boy, and into the drugstore. And then he grew up and married and moved to Delfield Street, and he went in and said to [Doc], 'Do you remember me?' And [Doc] said, 'Yes, I do. You're the SOB who rode your pony into the drugstore!'

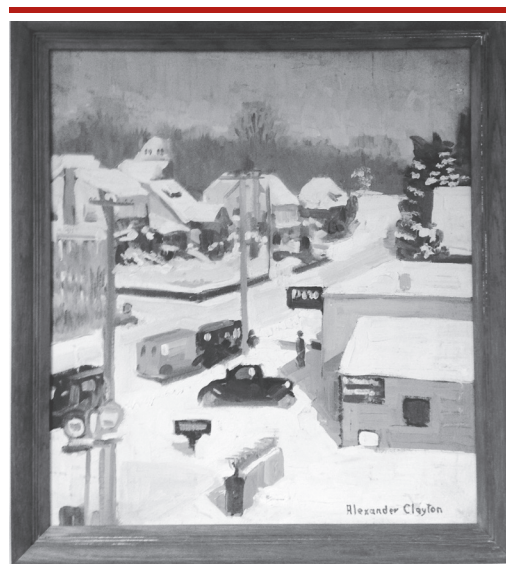


Photo by Gail Sansbury

Andrew Clayton painting of Brookville Road shopping area

"And one day when I was going up Brookville Road, I heard the oddest noise and I thought, "What sort of parent would get a child a toy with a noise like that?" Then I saw this lamb standing in the middle of the road. I managed to get it over to the sidewalk, where it followed me into the drugstore and went directly over to the food counter! To say it caused a sensation is putting it mildly. Hattie said it belonged to the children next door to her, who had got it for an Easter gift. It had [grown] large enough to jump out of its pen. I carried it across the street and put it in its pen, and I have never liked to eat lamb since. . . .

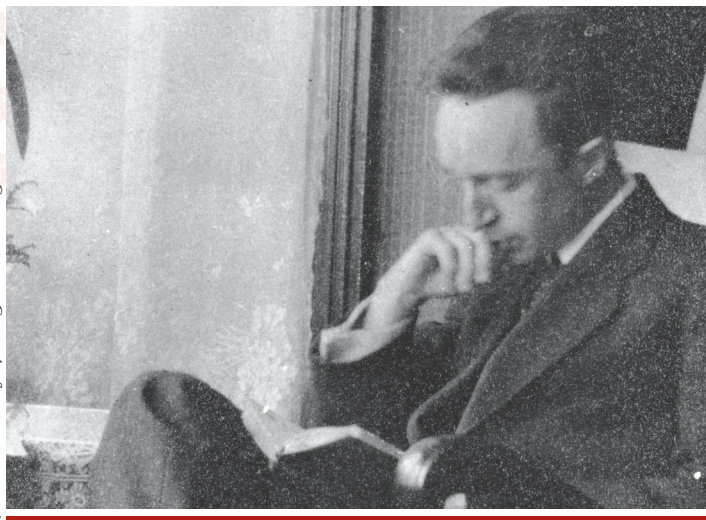


Photo courtesy of Margaret Kranking

The Star's "Templeton Jones" in contemplation

"When we moved here, the paving [on Brookville Road] stopped about 100 feet past here, and there was practically no traffic. After living on S Street [NW] where a bus went by every twelve minutes and there was a lot of traffic, when we would hear a car, we'd run out and look! Then they paved the rest of it, and you know, in 24 hours there was just more traffic. . . how did [people] find out so quickly that it was a good road?

"[Charlie] used to go over to Connecticut Avenue and get the bus and I think that he had to transfer at the Circle. Then sometimes later on, when he came home, he would transfer to the Western Avenue bus. . . . [H]e'd come trudging up here. He was crazy about home. I'd be working out in the yard and I would see he was coming along, and when he turned the corner, home was in sight. He couldn't walk fast enough! . . .

"[Charlie and I] walked along "Tiger Cat Lane" many times and always loved it. One of my fondest memories is of walking down the road on a gorgeous October day. Whomever was ahead of us was smoking a pipe, and it was the most heavenly pipe smell I'd ever experienced! Many little things like that stick in one's memory. **I went to the reception for the incorporation of Martin's Addition on Sunday. . . . It was a lovely party. . . . [Wallace Janssen, from Raymond Street, had] researched some old records and said that Martin's Addition got together and paid 20 dollars to get one row of planking laid over to Connecticut so they wouldn't have to walk through the mud. You know, when you talk about traffic and how things have changed, it just brought it all back, that Brookville Road was a mud road."**

Majorie Zapruder's notation of March 23, 1987: "Everything Mrs. Tracewell said was said with such charm and humor that we found we were laughing at the end of each paragraph. The laughter is not noted in the transcript, but if it were, it still would not fully indicate the delightful way in which Mrs. Tracewell told her memories to us."

Charles E. Tracewell was the alter ego of Templeton "Temp" Jones, the lovable character he created whose observations on the multitude of everyday things others accepted as routine comprised his popular column in *The Evening Star*. The man called 'the gentle critic, the puckish savant of the newsroom' signed his name to 11,278 'This and That' columns. The following column begins with an exchange between Anne Marie, the daughter of family friend Margaret Kranking (who participated in the taking of Cuba Tracewell's oral history) and her playmate Ruth.

This and That

By Charles E. Tracewell

"My daddy," said Ruth, "has killed dozens of snakes."

"My daddy," said Anne Marie, "has killed hundreds of ants."

So another of childhood's battles ended in a draw. The battle of the insects, however, is not so easily resolved in real life. Despite humanity's recently augmented armamentarium of sprays and other death-dealing things, the insect world goes right ahead increasing. The ancient injunction to multiply must have been heard by the insects first.

"How can you tell termites from flying ants?" somebody asked.

"You can't," said the other. "Only the expert can."

And, if the truth were known, maybe at times he can't either. There are millions of species of insects, with more being discovered all the time. This is one of humanity's last frontiers, along with outer space. In each of the species of insects there are countless numbers. The only thing that saves humanity in this eternal battle is that most of them are so small.

If you like insects, really admire them, you have won a point already. Then you will not shrink away at the gorgeously colored woody caterpillar, but admire it. There is one way to meet life head on—and like it. Otherwise, there are so many inimical things in life, so many terrible looking creatures, that a sensitive soul has all he can do to get through the day. Living and liking are not synonymous, but the closer we can get them, the better off we are.

Insects come a dime a dozen, as the saying has it, especially in summer time, when the torrid conditions of the great bowl of life in the Mediterranean are duplicated almost everywhere.

"What is so rare as a day in June?" the poet asked, but he might as well have said July or August. Then come the perfect insect days. They have been waiting all winter and some of them all spring, in many odd forms and ways of life. Some in the ground, others in cocoons and still others in grandma's attic.



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MYSTERY!



In 2008, John F. Deeds, a Chevy Chase, D.C. resident, donated over 300 black and white photographs to CCHS. We have identified some of the photos, but there are many more that we can't identify, like the one above. It has a handy clue, though: the handwritten date of "Nov. 2 1918" was written on the edge of the photo. Does this landscape look familiar? Can you help us? Write to us at chevychasehistory@msn.com.

Congratulations to Marjorie Zapruder for correctly identifying the Mystery! photograph in the Fall 2014 newsletter. She identified the child on the tricycle as Judge Edward Northrup. And she found the house in the background, 11 East Kirke Street, not far from the Northrup family's home on East Lenox Street. Thank you, Marjorie.