



History
of

5417 31st Street



Historical Research
of
5417 31st Street, N.W.



Kelsey & Associates, Inc.

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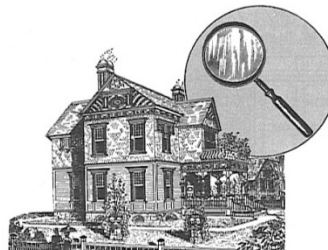
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Answer all questions with care

APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO BUILD

(NEW BUILDING)

Name Henry Herbert Lot No. 6
 Address 5417 31st Street Square No. 2294
 Nature of building Dwelling Material of building Brick
 How many buildings? one How high? two Estimated cost \$ 6000.00
 Number of stories six Number of families one Number of bricks 16,800
 Closures four (per sq. ft.) cubic contents of each building 23,000

To the Inspector of Buildings:
 The undersigned hereby applies for permission to build by the following specifications:
 Name of building Henry Herbert Address 1530 Kearney St. N.C.
 Name of architect Volney O. Chase Address 901-12 St. N.W.
 Have foundations of all buildings and yards been properly indicated on plan? yes
 Will any part of building be used for commercial purposes? no yes
 Will there be any projections beyond the building lines? no
 Has it been checked below:

Main steps	Area
Porches	Marquises
Bay windows	Vaults
Show windows	Area steps

Subsidiary application for projections (see note on back)
 Size of int. Width 40' Depth 127.5'
 Wall bearing 40' Skelton

Height of building at front corner, from sidewalk to highest point of roof 30'
 Height of terrace above sidewalk none Height of first floor above sidewalk 1'
 Give MATERIAL and THICKNESS of external walls: Foundation to 1st floor 12" A. brick & hollow tile
 1st to 2d 8" brick 2d to 3d 8" brick 3d to 4th 8" brick 4th to 5th 8" brick
 Give MATERIAL and THICKNESS of party walls: Foundation to 1st floor none
 1st to 2d 24" m 2d to 3d 24" m 3d to 4th 24" m 4th to 5th 24" m
 Will the roof be pitch, mansard, or flat? pitch Roof covering slate
 Will the front wall project beyond the front walls of other buildings in block? no
 Will building be used for electric? yes How will building be heated? H.W. oil fuel
 Number and type of elevators none Have elevator plans been filed? no
 Is there a sidewalk, curb, or improved roadway in front of proposed building? yes
 Has the street grade been obtained from the Engineer of Highways? yes Alley grade? yes
 Has a certificate of parking been obtained from the superintendent of Parking? yes

Approval of plumbing plans must be obtained from the Plumbing Inspector before this application will be considered by the Inspector of Buildings.

I hereby certify that I have the authority to make the foregoing application.
Volney O. Chase
 By HENRY HERBERT
Volney O. Chase
 1530-1532 Kearney St. N.W.
 901-12 St. N.W.

Be sure to read instructions on back of this application.

The Construction of 5417 31st Street, NW

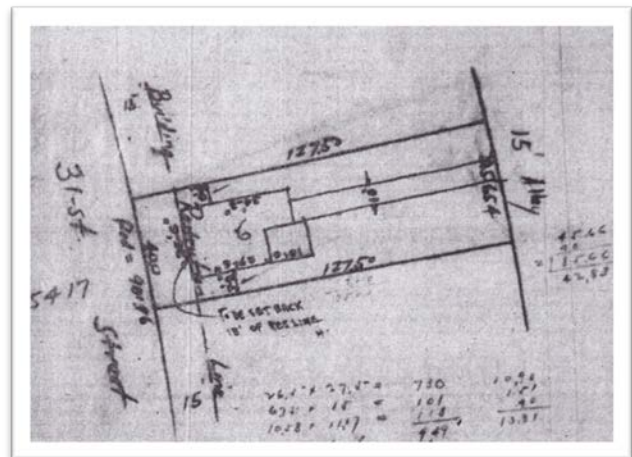


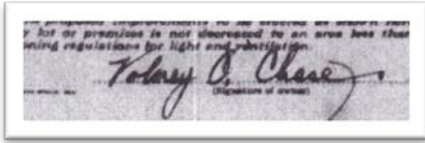
THE OWNER of the vacant lots where 5417 31st Street was to be constructed, Henry A. Herbert, applied for and was granted an *Application for Permit to Build* numbered 188473 for its construction on February 28, 1936. It was built on Square 2294 on lot 6 at a cost of approximately \$6,000.

The building permit indicated that the house was to be constructed on solid land atop a foundation composed of concrete. It would measure twenty-seven feet wide by thirty-four feet deep. The two-story houses would feature a cellar, a pitched roof composed of slate, and would be heated by an oil fired hot water system. External brick walls were to be twelve inches thick and

composed of brick and hollow tile. Herbert estimated that it would take 16,500 bricks to complete the house.

Construction commenced immediately, with a local inspector noting that the project was 30% complete on May 15, 1936. It was estimated to be 60% complete on May 28, and 98% complete on August 3, 1936.





Architect Volney O. Chase Jr.



ARCHITECT Volney Ogle Chase Jr. was born in Washington, DC in 1902, the youngest of four children born to Volney O. and Susan Williams Chase. His father Volney Sr. (1861-1917) was an 1885 graduate of the Naval Academy who had a lifelong career in the Navy, perhaps best known for Commanding the torpedo practicing ship *Montgomery*. At the time of his death in 1917, he was the Assistant to the Chief of Naval Operations when the family resided at 1856 Mintwood Place, NW.

Volney Chase Jr. followed in his late father's footsteps by graduating from the Naval Academy in 1922, where he apparently learned architectural design. He first appeared in the City Directory as an architect practicing in Washington, DC in 1931, when he indicated that he maintained an office at 502 15th Street, NW. His last entry, however, was just over a decade later, when he appeared in the 1943 directory with a residential address in District Heights, Maryland.

According to the building permit index, Chase designed relatively few houses in Washington, DC, approximately ten in total, between 1930 and 1939. His first commission was an \$11,000 house for the North Washington Realty Company at 1361 Locust Road, NW. That company also had him design a house at 1349 Locust Road, NW. Robert and Bessie Denton had him design their house at 1332 Locust that same year.

Five years later, in 1935, Chase designed a house at 6527 7th Street, NW for owner David Rosen, a house at 1152 45th Street, SE for Wesley W. Billings, and one at 1147 45th Street, SE for Andrew F. Cranford. In 1936, Chase designed the house at 5417 35th Street, NW, one at 6349 31st Place, NW for Lawrence F. Lake, and the Wilson Theater on Wilson Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia that year. In 1939, he designed the house at 1634 Montague Street, NW for the Stanley Investment Corporation and a house at 318 Peabody Street, NE for owner L. R. Humbert. Chase died in 1975 as a resident of Alameda, California.

Builder Henry C. Herbert

Builder Henry Anthony Herbert is listed as the builder of 22 houses listed in the Washington, DC building permit index that were all built between 1914 to 1939. He apparently began his budding career in 1908, however, when he obtained a permit to build a private stable at 17 O Street, NW at a cost of just \$1,600 for Henry L. Slater.

He indicated in the 1920 census that he was part owner of a lumberyard located at 412 9th Street and had been born in Washington, DC about 1885. He and his family then

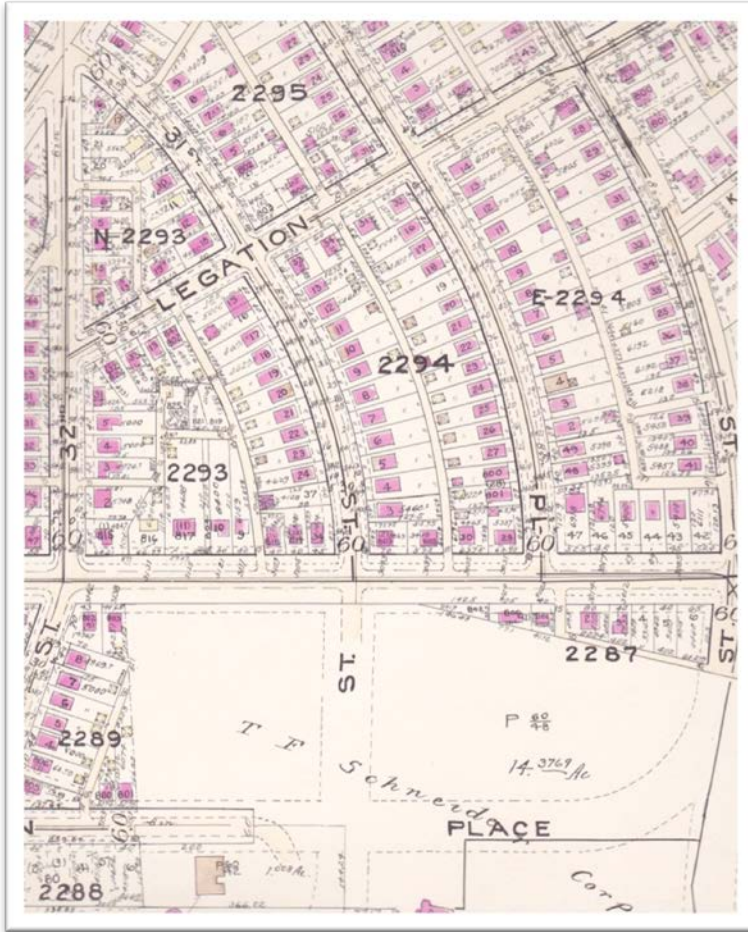
resided at 1348 Otis Place, NW. He had married the former Blanche P. Rocca on June 21, 1911.¹

Herbert's built houses include those at 1501-1503 Monroe Street, NE, built in 1914 and 1922, respectively, 3419 24th Street built in 1923, and his own wood frame house at 1530 Kearney Street, NE, which he built in 1925 at a cost of \$8,000. He designed and built the houses at 3308 16th Street, NE (1925), 1509 Lawrence Street, NE (1926), and 3725-3729 24th Street, NE (1928).

Herbert first began building brick homes in 1930, when he constructed those at 1610 and 1614 Girard Street, NE. He built the house at 5437 31st Street, NW beginning in the spring of 1931 at a cost of \$8,000. He also built those close by at 5609 32nd Street, NW in 1931 and 5417 31st Street in 1936. That same year, he constructed those at 3213 Military Road, NW, followed by 3221 Military Road a year later. The last houses on record built by Herbert in Washington, DC are those located at 4605 Alton Place, NW (1938), 7563 Alaska Avenue, NW (1938), and 3552 Brandywine Street, NW (1939).



¹ Ancestry.com subscription database.



The Development of the 5400 Block of 31st Street, NW



BIKE many surrounding residential blocks, the 5400 block of 31st Street was developed in the early twentieth century on Squares and lots that had previously been portions of farms and large country estates. In 1893, an Act of Congress officially extended the street plan of old Washington City, as designed by L'Enfant, to what is today the entire District of Columbia. A straight grid pattern was imposed on the community, and older roads were shifted, straightened, and widened, erasing much of the early physical identity of Chevy Chase DC. However, it is still possible to find remnants of the

older roads in several blocks and alleys.

According to the building permit index, the first houses built along the 5400 block of 31st Street were constructed beginning in February of 1927 at 5468 and 5470 31st Street; they were built for owner L. R. Potts and designed by the Murphy & Ames architectural firm. A year later, work began on 5440 for owner LeRoy Watkins, who had the house built at a cost of \$8,000 to the designs of the Doleman & McCaw architectural firm. Another year passed before work began on 5475 for owner John Albert Hunter, who was also listed as its designer and builder. He also built 5471 31st Street in 1929.

The house at 5432 31st Street is a Sears Catalog house, assembled for owner J. A. Curran beginning in May of 1929 at a cost of \$9,000. The house at 5460 was built in the summer of that year for owner J.M. Morris. Architect Donald Johnson designed the house at 5424 built in January of 1930, while architect George T. Santmyers designed 5459 later that year for the Columbia Construction Company. 5409 31st Street was constructed in November of 1930 for owner Azel M. Sheppard at a cost of \$9,500. He began constructing 5425 in January of 1931; both homes were designed by John Albert Hunter. That same month, work began on 5481 for owner Charles Brackett, and on 5435 for owner Benjamin Segretti. Sheppard returned to the block to build the house at 5421 31st Street beginning in February of 1931, which was also designed by Hunter.

Owner J. V. Parker built the house at 5420 31st Street beginning in February of 1931 at a cost of \$7,500; it was designed by architect John A. Melby. George S. White designed the house at 5412 for the Johnson Brothers company, which was built in the spring of that year, along with the house at 5443, designed by Charles E. Dillon and built for owner J. Harvey Robey. Construction also began on the house at 5429 that spring for owner M. Zitmore, built at a cost of \$8,000 to the designs of architect Lewis W. Giles.

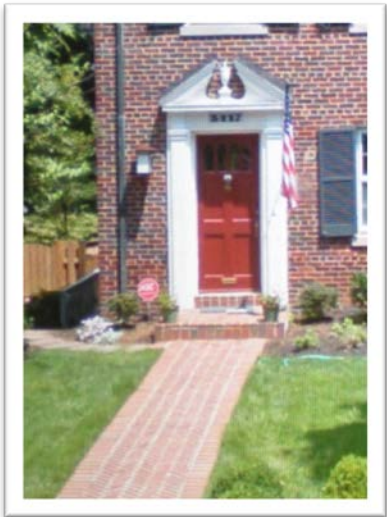
Owner and builder Henry Herbert built the house at 5467 31st Street, designed by Santmyers and constructed at a cost of \$8,000 beginning in May of 1931. The Jonson Brothers and architect White teamed up again to build the house at 5474 31st Street beginning in June of 1931. In August of that year, Benjamin Segretti returned to the block to construct the house at 5433 31st Street at a cost of \$8,000. The house at 5400 was also built beginning that month at a cost of \$16,000. It was built by the H. P. Huddleston Company and was designed by architect Charles E. Dillon.

The Paul T. Stone Company built the dwelling at 5416 31st Street in August of 1931, which was designed by Charles E. Dillon. Segretti returned that month to construct 5428 31st Street at a cost of \$8,500. The Huddleston and Dillon partnership added another house to the block in April of 1932 at 5456 31st Street. Architect Julius Wenig designed the house at 5442 31st Street for the Penn Realty Company, which was built at a cost of \$9,000 beginning in June of 1933. Miss Naomi G. Cone built the residence at 5469 31st Street which was designed by Ernest D. Stevens and constructed in the winter of 1933-34. Stevens also designed a house at 5479 31st Street built beginning in 1934 for the William H. Saunders Company. Architects usually were onsite during the construction phase, and residents in the neighborhood often contracted with them to build their own homes once they witnessed a dwelling that peaked their interest.

A permit was issued for a house at 5410 31st Street in April of 1934 for owner M. B. Swanson, but it was never built; instead, another permit was issued later that month for a house designed by architect F. G. Wilcox at the same location that was eventually constructed. Builder, designer, and owner Frank D. Phillips built the house at 5464 31st Street beginning in May of 1934 at a cost of \$7,000. The Stone Company returned to the block in July of 1934 to construct the house at 5413 31st Street to the designs of George S. White.

5417 31st Street was issued a permit to build on February 28, 1936 to owner and builder Henry Herbert who had first built a house on the block five years prior. It was designed by Volney O. Chase. Architect Dana B. Johannes designed the house at 5439 31st Street that was built in October of 1937 for owner J. C. Nealon.

In October of 1948, a permit was issued to architect John W. Piper for his own house located at 5438 31st Street that was constructed by Lee T. Turner at a cost of \$12,000. A year later, in July of 1949, the last house on the block was constructed at a cost of \$10,000 for owner and builder John F. Maurer. It was designed by architect Frank G. Beatty. The nearly completed block is seen on a 1939 Baist map on the preceding page, with subsequent additions.



Owners and Residents of 5417 31st Street



OWNER and builder Henry A. Herbert sold 5417 31st Street on September 5, 1936, shortly after its completion to Charles T. and Dagny A. Hoffman, who moved into the house from their former residence at 706 Ingraham Street, NW.²

Herbert had purchased the vacant lot on October 25, 1935 from Edith E. Proudley.³ The Hoffman's obtained private financing for the house from Arthur G. Bishop and Charles W. Stetson that was eventually paid off in 1944.

In the 1930 census, Hoffman indicated that he was employed as a "special advisor" to the US Government (below).⁴ By the time he purchased and moved into 5417 31st Street in 1936, he was employed by the Internal Revenue Service. He had been born in August of 1885 in Georgetown, New Jersey, also the birthplace of his father; his mother had been born in Ireland.⁵

Hoffman's wife Dagny had been born about 1890 in Norway, also the birthplace of both of her parents. She had immigrated in 1909 and became a naturalized citizen, according to the 1930 census. They had married in 1909, and had a son Robert in 1918, a daughter Shirley in 1919, and a son Charles Jr., in 1925.⁶

55	1885	Charles Hoffman	1885	1890	1909	1909	1918	1919	1925
95		Dagny Hoffman	1890	1890	1909	1909	1918	1919	1925
200		Robert Hoffman	1918	1918	1918	1918	1918	1918	1918

Charles Hoffman attended the University of Pennsylvania before joining the civil service in 1909. He was sent to Panama for a year during the building of the Panama Canal, and joined the Internal Revenue Service in 1918. In 1927, he was appointed to a fifteen man advisory panel to recommend changes in regulations to the IRS. Hoffman authored several articles in the 1920s for the *National Income Tax Magazine* and would serve as the Treasurer and President of the Internal Revenue Lodge 47 of the American Federation of Government Employees. He retired in 1942 and traveled extensively.⁷

In his spare time, according to his obituary, Hoffman was an electrical engineer and held nine patents. In 1929 he invented what was described as the first workable defrosting system for household refrigerators, which he sold to the Frigidaire Division of General

² It was valued at \$8,500 in 1930, when the Hoffman's also indicated that they owned a radio. The 1930 census record indicated ownership status and valuation of house as determined by the owner.

³ DC Deed records. The lot had been previously owned by the Douglass Construction Company before 1934.

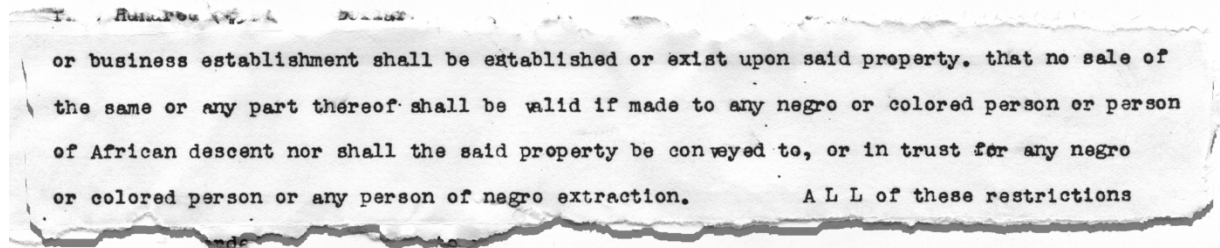
⁴ Detailed census information is sealed for a total of 72 years; the 1940 details will be released in 2014. The 1930 census is the last available in detail for researchers.

⁵ Month and year of birth revealed in the 1900 East Orange federal census.

⁶ 1930 census.

⁷ "Rites to Be Today for C. T. Hoffman," Washington Post Obituary, November 28, 1953, pg. 21.

Motors. He also held patents on an ice cream freezer, a toy electric motor, and a railroad track anchor.



Like many owners of newly built houses in Washington, DC, the Hoffman's placed a restrictive covenant on 5417 31st Street, restricting its sale to persons of the black race. Other covenants in Washington restricted home sales to people of the Jewish faith while others in the country restricted people of Mexican and even Native-American ancestry.⁸ The intent of these covenants was to maintain white only neighborhoods, with homeowners, developers, and real estate agencies collaborating to keep them viable so long as they went unchallenged in the courts. Earlier covenants barred black families from owning or occupying houses but would specifically allow for black servants to live on a property. As late as 1948, the words "no colored" or "no negroes" still appeared in printed real estate advertising. An article in *Commentary* magazine of May 1947, entitled "Homes for Aryans Only," was a plea for public education to end the practice of restrictive covenants.⁹

Coming home to a housing shortage after World War II, black and Jewish American veterans were met with these exclusionary housing policies of the time. Lawsuits were filed all over the country, with one of the early cases centered in Bethesda, Maryland in a neighborhood called Bannockburn Heights.¹⁰ Earlier challenges against restrictive covenants had been attempted in a wide variety of courts, however, with Supreme Court Justice Edward Terry Sanford declaring in the 1920s "that *making* the covenants was not against the Constitution."¹¹ The Supreme Court would hear four cases beginning in 1947, however, that challenged the courts *enforcement* of such covenants were unconstitutional. Specifically, those subject to the covenants would argue that they were being deprived of their property without due process, in violation of the 5th and 14th Amendments.

Washington had approximately 285,000 African-Americans living within the city in 1947, subject to thousands of restrictive covenants that forbade them to live in many sections of Washington "by private laws, made by private citizens in private agreements."¹²

⁸ Other examples of restrictive covenants included those targeted toward anyone who observed any other day than Sunday as their holy day, persons of 'objectionable nationality,' and even against members of any race with a higher death rate than the white race.

⁹ The use of the word "Aryan" is telling, only two years after the defeat of Hitler.

¹⁰ A Jewish man named Aaron Tushin had bought a home at 6918 Wilson Lane. The deed to the home included a restrictive covenant which the seller ignored. However, nine residents of the neighborhood filed suit to force him to move.

¹¹ Stokes, "A Case of My Civil Rights vs. Your Rights."

¹² Ibid.

Up until 1948, the courts had generally enforced restrictive covenants, although not without debate and controversy.¹³

Frederic and Lena Hodge, white owners of 136 Bryant Street, NW, along with several other white owners along the block¹⁴ initiated a District Court lawsuit to prevent black couple James and Mary Hurd to own or reside at 116 Bryant shortly after they purchased the house in May of 1944, along with several other black families that had infiltrated the block in covenanted houses.¹⁵ Their argument to enforce the covenants was the preservation of their housing value.¹⁶ Justice F. Dickinson Letts of District Court ruled in their favor, and ordered the Hurds and other black families out of their homes.¹⁷ Their case, Hurd v. Hodge eventually went before the Supreme Court in 1948, which famously overturned the ruling finding the enforcement of covenants unconstitutional.



In any event, the Hoffman's sold 5417 31st Street after just eleven years of ownership on November 7, 1947 to Benjamin F. and Agnes D. Ostergren. Charles Hoffman died in a local nursing home in late November of 1953 after a long heart illness.

According to an earlier census record in 1920 and other sources, Benjamin Franklin Ostergren had been born on December 13, 1894 in Ramsey, Minnesota; his wife Agnes had been born there about 1896.¹⁸ Both sets of their parents, however, had been born in Sweden. Benjamin's parents were Gustaf Oscar Ostergren and Carolina Lina Johnson.¹⁹ His father immigrated in May of 1867.

Benjamin Ostergren listed his occupation as a farmer in the 1920 census, and a rural mail carrier by the time the 1930 census had been enumerated. In the 1966 Haines

¹³ Cases involved the courts being asked to displace a husband from a wife in an inter-racial couple, and children from a father in a similar case. The Supreme Court issued many decisions to States and cities in the prior decades that limited them from marking off zones in that only one race or group may live.

¹⁴ Other white owners included Pasquale De Rita at 128 Bryant, Balduino Giancola at 130 Bryant, and Constantino Marchegiani of 6415 Colesville Road.

¹⁵ Others included six houses sold by real estate agent Raphael Urciolo, including 118 Bryant Street which he sold to Robert H. Rowe and his wife, and the house at 134 Bryant; as well as the house at 150 sold by Robert E. Savage and his wife to Pauline B. Stewart.

¹⁶ The covenanters also often argued that there was no way to impose a restrictive covenant on a house without the owner's consent, the owners being black or white, and that the covenant was their own property right, subject to protection under the Constitution.

¹⁷ 1947, 82 U.S.App.D.C. 180, 162 F.2d 233.

¹⁸ Month and date from the earlier, 1900 census.

¹⁹ Ancestry.com subscription. Gustaf Oscar Ostergren was born on 14 Feb 1847 in Närke, Sweden. He immigrated in May 1867 to Chicago from Ringkarleby, Närke, Sweden. He died on 24 Jun 1932 in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was also known as George Oscar Ostergren. He was first married to Carrie Nelson before 1876. Children were: Carl Oscar Ostergren, Mabel Cecelia Ostergren, Esther Cornelia Ostergren, Reuben Gustave Ostergren.

He was married to Carolina Lina Johnson on 7 Jan 1885 in St. Paul, Minnesota. Children were: Florence Caroline Ostergren, Rev. Ralph Chester Ostergren, Frances Havergal Ostergren, Herbert Livingston Ostergren, Benjamin Franklin Ostergren.

Directory, Ostergren indicated that he was employed as the department head of the Road Builders Association of America.

They likely relocated to Washington, DC to be with their eldest son Benjamin F. Ostergren Jr., who had been born on May 12, 1920.²⁰ Other children included daughters Carolyn (born about 1921) and Charlotte (born about 1929). Benjamin Jr. married Clara Jo Hopkins in May of 1951, and moved to Charlotte, North Carolina.²¹

The house was sold by the Ostergrens on September 12, 1968 to lawyers Robert M. and Patricia S. Baptiste. Benjamin Ostergren Sr. died in January of 1984 in Canoga Park, California; Benjamin Jr. died in Northridge, California on December 28, 1997.²²

At the time of their purchase, Robert Baptiste served as the Associate General Counsel, Eastern Conference of Teamsters, a position he held from 1967 to 1974. He then worked as the General Counsel, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, from 1974 to 1985, and today is a partner in the law firm of Baptiste & Wilder, P.C. He attended Tufts University (B.A. 1963), and Georgetown Law School, receiving a L.L.B. in 1966 and an L.L.M. in 1967.



The Baptiste's are current residents of Chevy Chase, Maryland. Patricia "Pat" Baptiste (left) is a graduate of Georgetown Law School, and served as an appellate attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice.

In 2011 she is currently serving on Chevy Chase Board of Managers, where she first served from 1982 to 1991 and was the first woman (of only two) to serve as Board Chairman.



Trustees for the Baptistes' sold the house on May 30, 1984 to Stephen and Andreas S. Stollmack. They undertook a major renovation of the house a few years later, transforming what had been a garage in the lower level and a screened porch on the first level of the house (above) into a large exterior deck on the first floor level (left), with covered access to the rear yard via a circular staircase on the



²⁰ WWII Army Enlistment Records, via Ancestry.com. Ostergren Jr. was drafted on October 6, 1942 at Fort Snelling in Minnesota.

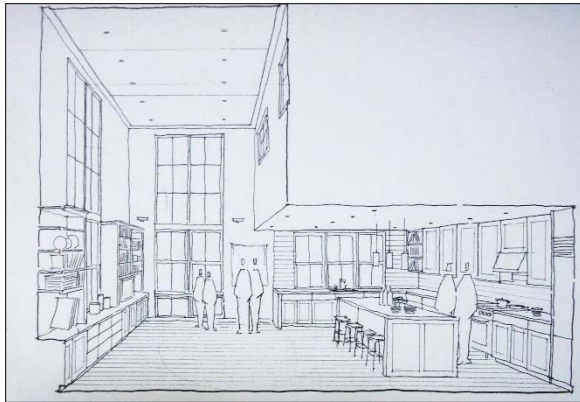
²¹ "Reside in Charlotte," *Washington Post*, May 25, 1951, pg. C6.

²² Social Security Death Index.

north portion of the façade. The new floor plan appears at right.

Stephen Stollmack is a noted author who served with the Department of Health, Education & Welfare whose work has focused on quantifying behavioral changes within inmate populations. They are now residents of Elkridge, Maryland.

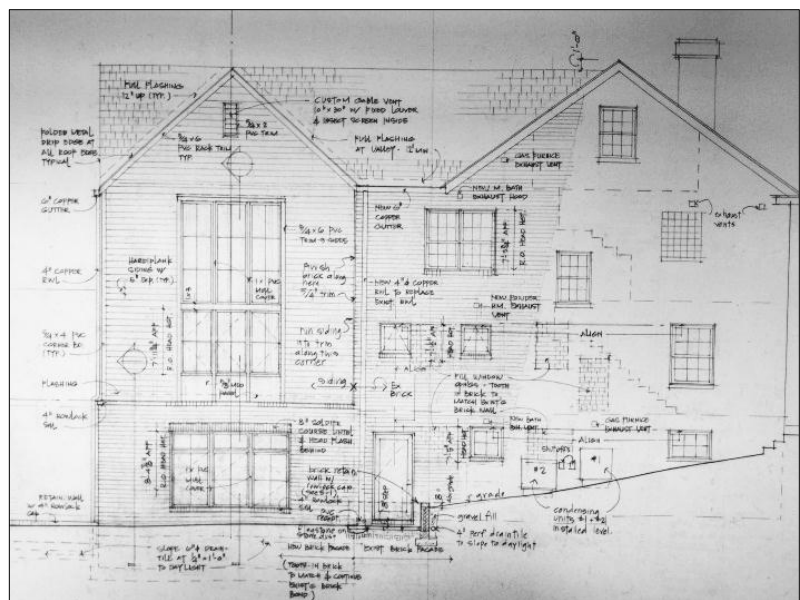
On December 22, 1993, the house was purchased by John D. Gibson and Karen L. Olick, who raised their two children Josh (b. 1995) and Rachel (b. 1999) in the house. In 2008-2009, they undertook another significant renovation of the house consisting of a three-story addition on the back and a major redesign of the interior.

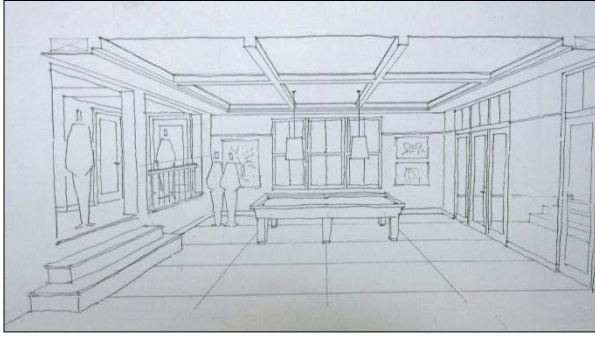


The renovation and addition were designed and overseen by Lawlor Architects. On the street level, the addition created a two-story room, open to the new kitchen placed on the southern half of the rear portion of the house. It also created a new staircase to the lower level where a large paneled family room with coffered ceiling was located, leading to a new outside patio. On the second floor, a new master bedroom was created in the addition with a new walk-in closet and a

former guest bedroom was converted to a large new master bath. Plans, elevations, and photos of the renovation are seen here and on the following page.

Karen Olick is originally from Westchester County, New York and moved to Washington, DC in 1984. She has spent her career working in political campaigns, government, and political consulting. From 1993 to 2005, she served as Chief of Staff to Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Ca.). John Gibson is from Omaha, Nebraska, originally moving to Washington, D.C. in 1981 to attend The George Washington University and





returning in 1988 upon the completion of law school at the University of Virginia. In the 1990s, he worked as a speechwriter to three different Secretaries of Defense and went on to write foreign policy speeches for both President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush. Early drafts of major Bush post-9/11 speeches were written in the attic of the house which then served as an office and guest bedroom.





Chevy Chase DC: A Short History

The land that would eventually become present day Chevy Chase and the neighborhood of Chevy Chase DC originally belonged to Colonel Joseph Belt, who was a member of the Maryland House Burgesses. A patent for

560 acres of land named Cheivy Chase, exists with Belt listed as its owner. Dated July 10, 1725, “Charles Absolute Lord and Prop’y of the Provinces of Maryland, etc.,” is listed as granting the land to Belt. The name Chevy Chase (Cheivy Chase) commemorates the battle of Chevait Chays in 1388. On September 29, 1768, Thomas Belt, son of Joseph Belt, publicized in Georgetown’s newspaper, *The Gazette*, the sale of “part of a tract of land, called Chevy Chase, containing 200 and 300 acres, about five miles from said Town [Georgetown].”

In January 23, 1815 the Bradley family came into the possession of this land and created the Bradley farm with a farmhouse located just east of what is now Connecticut Avenue, later incorporated into the Chevy Chase Country Club. As late as 1894, when the above picture was taken of Chevy Chase Circle, the area remained largely undeveloped.

In 1890, the area that was to become the new subdivision of Chevy Chase was well settled farmland, crossed by several country roads. Brookville Road ran from Tenlyltown to Brookville, Maryland. Broad Branch Road, Jones Mill Road, and Milk House Ford Road wound through the farms, and the only crossroad leading from Brookville Road to Old Georgetown Road was Jackson Road, now Bradley Boulevard.

Conceived in the 1890’s, the formation of Chevy Chase required the completion of several feats: the initial purchase of 1,712 acres of farmland situated north-west of Washington, D.C.; the creation of the Chevy Chase Land Company which had a capital stock of one million dollars; extending Connecticut Avenue five miles above its then present endpoint at Calvert St.; building an electric railway line; and building the infrastructure (schools, churches, commercial districts) for future residents.

J.H. Bradley’s large tract of farmland was a key purchase of the Chevy Chase Land Company, as it straddled the line between Maryland and the District of Columbia, and along with a handful of other farms and houses that dotted the countryside, its name was used for Bradley Road, as were several other family names in the area.

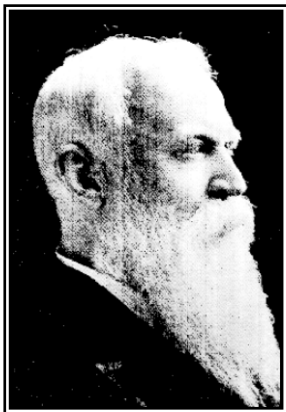
The transformation of this farmland into suburbs was initiated by the Chevy Chase Land Company, which was incorporated on June 5, 1890, by Francis G. Newlands, illustrated at right, and Senator William M. Stewart, two powerful and wealthy Westerners

known to residents of the District of Columbia as the "California Syndicate," and Colonel George Augustus Armes, a reared Army colonel involved in real estate.

When Newlands registered the Company in 1890, he indicated its purpose was for "the buying, selling, mortgaging, leasing, improving ...lands in...Maryland and lands partly with in the District of Columbia..." The Chevy Chase Land Company hired W. Kelsey Schaeopf, the former D.C. assistant engineer and Nathan F. Barrett, a landscaping expert. It was Barrett, who imparted many English and Scottish names to Chevy Chase and gave the area its wide streets. Lindley Johnson (1854-1937), an accomplished architect and designer of many country homes in and around Philadelphia and along the Atlantic Coast, developed designs for many of Chevy Chase's early residences. The bridge they eventually built across Rock Creek at Calvert Street opened the entire northwest section to new real estate ventures.



At the time of incorporation, Francis G. Newlands (1848-1917) was a young San Francisco lawyer. Early in his practice he had become an attorney for William Sharon, a senator from Nevada from 1875 to 1882, who made a tremendous fortune revitalizing and managing the rich Nevada Comstock Lode. In 1874 Newlands married Sharon's daughter. Following her death in 1882 and William Sharon's death in 1885, Newlands became trustee of Sharon's wealthy estate, and became heir to major land holdings in California and Nevada.

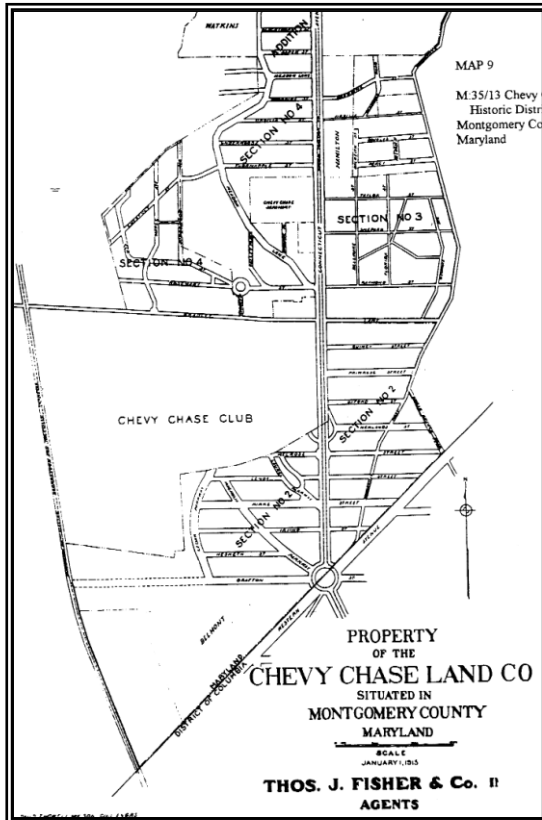


Newlands quickly moved his share of the assets to Washington. In 1892 he was elected to Congress, where he was a great proponent of irrigation and land reclamation in the West. He served as a congressman from Nevada for 10 years and then as a senator for 14 years.

William M. Stewart (1827-1909), illustrated at left, was a lawyer and two-time senator from Nevada (1862- 1875, 1887-1905), made his fortune prospecting for gold in California and representing the legal interests of the original miners of the Comstock Lode. He was a leading political figure in the West, among other things carving out the Nevada Territory and representing Western mining interests and railroads in Congress over a 29 year period.

Newlands and Stewart had experience with large scale real estate ventures and a shared confidence in the future growth of Washington. They had been involved in other speculative land ventures in the city-at Du Pont Circle, for example-albeit on a smaller scale than Chevy Chase. Newlands is most often credited with being the primary catalyst for the development of Chevy Chase, although some sources credit Colonel Ames with the original

concept. Whether or not Newlands first thought of the idea, it was he who was the driving force behind Chevy Chase in its formative years. He attracted a powerful and talented group of men to his new Chevy Chase Land Company. Stewart was a partner, purchasing \$300,000 of the first issue of Land Company stock. Perhaps more important, he was its strong legislative supporter in Congress, backing both the creation of Rock Creek Park and the charter of the streetcar line.



In the years just preceding 1890, Newlands had launched an ambitious campaign of land purchases. His goal was to buy any parcel that touched on his projected length of Connecticut Avenue. Through straw purchases made secretly by his agents under a variety of names, he quietly bought up farmland amounting to more than 1,700 acres along the entire proposed length of Connecticut Avenue from Boundary Street (now Florida Avenue) to what is now Jones Bridge Road. Edward J. Stellwagen and Armes acted as principal agents and/or brokers for the acquisitions, and all holdings of the agents and trustees were transferred to the new Chevy Chase Land Company in 1890.

Newlands was a farsighted businessman, intent on the finest quality of development. His goals are captured by a 1916 brochure, titled "Chevy Chase for Homes," which was produced by the Land Company's exclusive leasing agent, Thos. J. Fisher & Co.:

"In the ordinary real estate development too frequently everything is sacrificed for quick financial returns, but this has not been done in Chevy Chase. Back of the development, so far as it has progressed today, is a big, comprehensive plan, and the men who formulated that plan believed that the best results could be obtained only where things were done right ... Instead of developing one small tract without regard to the surroundings, the owners acquired more than two thousand acres of land and have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in street improvements and the installation of every municipal convenience. The fixed purpose of The Chevy Chase Land Company was to provide for the National Capital a home suburb, a community where each home would bear a touch of the individuality of the owner, where each home would possess an added value by virtue of the beauty and charm of the surrounding homes."

Newlands vast share of his father-in-law's estate was the cornerstone of the plan. However, two other important financial and real estate alliances were also crucial: The Union Trust Company, organized in 1899, was integral to the long term financing necessary

for large-scale development, and the real estate mortgage investment banking firm of Thos. J. Fisher & Co., organized in 1872, which became the real estate department of the Union Trust Company and the exclusive leasing agent for the Land Company. For a number of years the Fisher Company also handled all of the Land Company business from their offices. Stellwagen, vice president of the Land Company, was a link to both organizations—as president of Union Trust and president of Thos. J. Fisher & Co.

The Land Company's first task was to connect the new subdivision with Washington. Newlands privately launched the construction of Connecticut Avenue far beyond the improved streets of the city into the rugged countryside to the north, following the route of land Newlands had purchased. Workers excavated more than five miles of roadbed and bridged ravines, and constructed a series of deep cuts and fills. Much of this was done using pick-and-shovel and horse-drawn carts. Trestle bridges were constructed over Rock Creek at Calvert Street and at Klinge Valley (Klinge Street) in 1891.

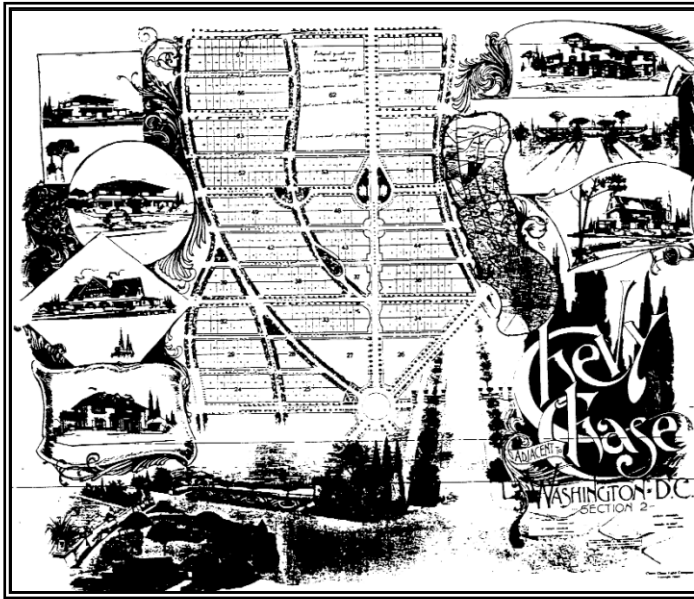
At the same time, the company constructed an electric railway at an initial cost of \$1.5 million. The Chevy Chase Land Company allied itself with the fledgling Rock Creek Railway Company, with Newlands as its president and principal stockholder. Officers of this new corporation were identical to those of the Land Company. The first segment of the line opened in 1892, and the rest soon thereafter. On May 31, 1903, the *Washington Post* reported that streetcars made the six-mile run from the Treasury at 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue to Chevy Chase in exactly 35 minutes, leaving every 15 minutes.

At the northern terminus of the line, two miles beyond Chevy Chase Circle, the Land Company built a small lake and an amusement park to lure prospective buyers. Pleasure-seekers flocked to Chevy Chase Lake on the trolley for concerts at the bandstand, which was a giant blue seashell covered with hundreds of twinkling lights. They rowed on the lake for five cents a half hour, bowled, rode the carousel and live ponies, tested their skills at the shooting gallery, and danced the two-step at the dance pavilion.

Starting in Maryland, and with the help of Frederic Law Olmsted's urban design firm for the DC portion, they laid out plans for an impressive, multi-neighborhood “streetcar suburb.” The first section of the new suburb to be laid out was just north of Chevy Chase Circle in Maryland, a section that is known today as Chevy Chase Village. Plans included broad streets, large lots, and open parkland. Strict building regulations and covenants governed what future residents' could build. Houses fronting upon Connecticut Avenue were to cost not less than \$5,000 each, and on other streets not less than \$3,000. Houses constructed on Connecticut required a setback of 35 feet; and on side streets, 25 feet. No lot could be less than 60 feet wide. Alleys, apartments, and rowhouses were forbidden, and no business was to be conducted in the section; other areas were set apart for that purpose. Stables and carriage houses were not to be erected within 25 feet of the front line of any lot. Similar restrictions were enacted in other sections developed later by the Land Company.

Research to date suggests that the first houses in the Village were built by or for officers of the Chevy Chase Land Company. An article in the November 1920 issue of the *Chevy Chase News*, written by Chevy Chase's first school mistress, Ella Given, names the first houses and their residents. According to her account, the four original homes, all in the

vicinity of Connecticut Avenue and Irving Street were designed by Lindley Johnson of Philadelphia, with Washington architect Leon E. Dessez as his associate.



Dessez was the first resident, moving into the house known today as the Lodge, just northwest of the Circle, in May 1893. Senator Newlands was the resident of a grand house originally built for Senator Stewart on the northeast side of the Circle; this house later became known as the Corby mansion for its owner, William S. Corby, who patented the first dough-molding machine. Howard Nyman, Secretary of the land Company, moved into the residence at the northeast corner of Connecticut and Irving, and Herbert Claude moved into the house at the northwest corner of Connecticut and

Irving. As described in Ella Given's article, "These four houses, artistic and homelike, struck the keynote for the community which was to grow up around them."

Newlands and the Land Company provided every comfort and convenience within their control, including water from artesian wells and attractive surroundings. Under landscape architect Nathan Barrett's direction, a gracious landscape plan with shade trees and ornamental shrubbery was devised and partially executed. In addition to native trees such as the tulip, poplar, oak, and locust, he specified many imports such as English elms, Japanese boxwood, pin oak, linden, and sycamore. Distinctive double rows of trees lined major streets.

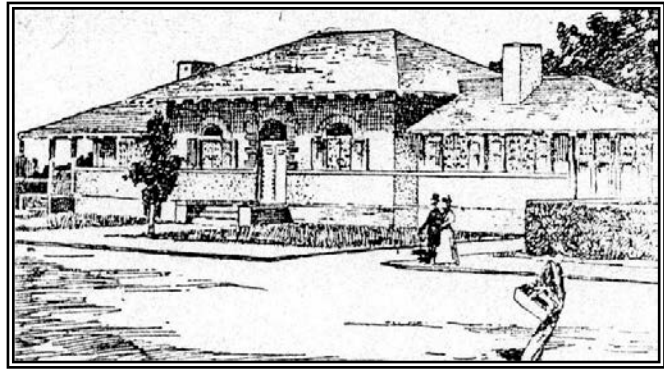
The belief that "the best suburban section is always surrounding or adjacent to the leading suburban clubs" was expressed by Thos. J. Fisher & Co.'s 1916 real estate brochure. Land Company officers organized the Chevy Chase Club in 1890 soon after the formation of the company itself, with Newlands as its first president. It was a country club devoted mainly to riding and the hunt, in the days when it was the custom to ride to the hounds two or three times a week in season. The club adopted golf when that sport became popular. The old Bradley farmhouse on Connecticut Avenue served as the first clubhouse and was later remodeled into a guest house, incorporating portions of the old farmhouse.

The Land Company donated land for the first public school. Opening its doors in 1898, it was a small, four-room building surrounded by an expanse of mud, with a plank for a front stairway. In 1901 the land Company also gave land on Chevy Chase Circle for the first church in the Village, the All Saints Episcopal Church (organized in 1897), whose first rector, the Reverend Thomas S. Childs, owned a house in the Village. The Post Office building, now the Chevy Chase Village Hall at 5906 Connecticut Avenue, was a small, pebble-dashed structure that also accommodated the public library, an "artistically decorated room" with a collection of 1,000 books. Fire apparatus which included a fire engine, hose

cart, and hook-and-ladder, as well as a fire bell, was located just south of the building. A library was also built, illustrated in a 1900 newspaper article below.

The first residential section, Section II or Chevy Chase Village, located between Chevy Chase Circle and Bradley lane opened in 1893.

The Land Company subsequently planned additional sections in both Maryland and the District of Columbia, which opened in the following order: Section III, east of Connecticut Avenue and north of Bradley Lane; Chevy Chase, D.C., located immediately southeast of the Circle; Section IV, west of Connecticut between the Chevy Chase and Columbia Country Clubs; Chevy Chase Heights, west of Connecticut about a half mile south of the Circle; and Section V, east of Connecticut above Section III. Curiously, there was originally no Section I, and although a portion of land added to Section II took this title on maps, it never gained widespread use.



The Chevy Chase Land Company was not solely responsible for developing the land. At times other developers were responsible for entire communities of homes. Otterborne Martin's Additions, and additional lands were folded into Chevy Chase's boundaries on all sides as time passed. M. and R.B. Warren planned and engineered Leland, a tract of 57 acres that was later added to Section IV. More often, however, the Land Company sold lots singly to individuals, or in small groups for development.

Despite all of the amenities, the sale of land in Chevy Chase went slowly. The first section, the Village, opened in the panic year of 1893. Only 27 houses were occupied by 1897, and it required all the long-term financial solidarity of Newlands and his company to withstand the collapse of the boom of the previous decade. In fact, disbursements exceeded receipts for years. The Land Company would pay no dividends to stockholders until 1922. Accounts of growth patterns in Chevy Chase are varied; however, one source states that Chevy Chase Village had only 49 families in 1903.

The first Chevy Chase, DC, home was built on Oliver Street in 1908. "Four square" designs were popular, as were bungalows and Dutch colonials. Many homes were mail ordered freight from the Sears catalog or from other Catalog Home Builders. The structures had to cost at least \$5,000 on a main street and \$3,000 on side streets. Because the homes were substantial and well built, most remain to this day. Today, as the original double lots are in-filled with more contemporary structures, the area retains its eclectic charm.

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The Land Company was perfectly situated, however, to benefit from the expansionary period that followed World War I. Between 1918 and 1931, sales totaled more than \$7.5 million. By 1916, Thos. J. Fisher & Co. had reported that Section II, Section III, and Chevy Chase, D.C., were practically sold out, with sites still available in Section IV and Chevy Chase Heights.

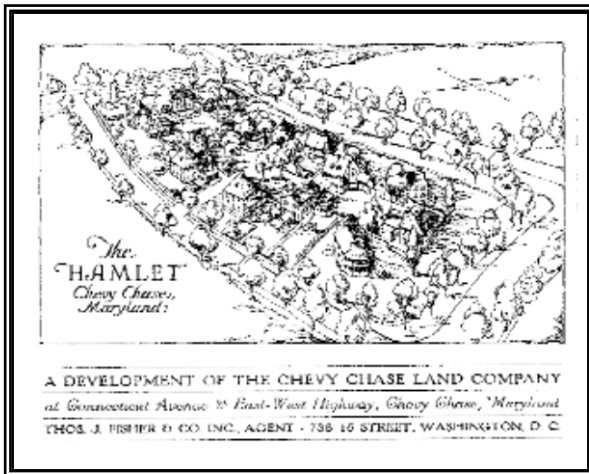
Because Chevy Chase's commercial development was strictly limited and controlled, the Land Company arranged for goods to be delivered to early residents. The *Chevy Chase News* of November 1920 described the system:

“Coal was ordered through the land Company, and during the summer months a wagon was sent into the city for ice several times a week. If medicine were needed it could be telephoned for and delivered to a car conductor at Fifteenth Street and New York Avenue, or anywhere along the route...The conductor would get off the car at Connecticut Avenue and Irving Street and put the medicine into a small box erected for that purpose.”

Newlands did, however, plan for a small shopping area south of Chevy Chase Circle on the west side of Connecticut Avenue. Among the earliest stores to open there were W.B. Follmer's Grocery Store at 5630 Connecticut Avenue and Doc Armstrong's Drugstore, adjacent to it Sonnemann's store flourished on Brookville Road.

The Land Company's early goal was a “home suburb where every home would reflect the individuality of its owner.” Houses of all sizes were erected, and Thomas J. Fisher & Co. advertised them in the 1916 promotional brochure *Chevy Chase for Homes* as “each marked by the individuality of its owner.” Although Chevy Chase was planned to “meet the requirements of discriminating people that does not necessarily mean, in our opinion, people

of great wealth. Scores of those of moderate means made their homes there. Residents have always maintained a range of occupations, from judge, senator, and physician, to teacher, bookkeeper, and accountant.”



From the outset Chevy Chase was at the best of residential design. The Land Company engaged the talents of nationally known Philadelphia architect Lindley Johnson and New York landscape architect Nathan Barrett. Johnson, a successful and sophisticated Beaux Arts architect known for

his large country houses and resort structures, received several key commissions in 1892, including six "cottages," a Connecticut Avenue office building, and homes for Stewart and Stellwagen. Along with local architect Leon Dessez, who is perhaps best known in Washington for his design of the Admiral's House (now the vice presidential residence), they set a tone of gentility with a few late Shingle style houses and Colonial style houses in vogue in the 1890's. Newlands made Dessez a director of the Land Company in 1893 and gave him the responsibility of preparing strict building regulations, as well as building two houses for sale.

Construction slowed after the panic of 1893 and did not pick up until after World War I. Virtually all of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century styles are represented today, including the Shingle, Colonial Revival, Tudor, French Eclectic, Spanish Eclectic, Mission, Neoclassical, Italian Renaissance, Prairie, and Craftsman styles. Bungalows mix

with grand Colonial Revival mansions, and designs range from formal architect designed houses to Sears prefabricated structures. An extraordinary mix of talented local designers are represented, including Arthur B. Heaton, George S. Cooper, Thomas J.D. Fuller, Edward W. Donn, Waddy Wood, Clarence Harding, A.M. Sonnemann, Porter & Lockie, and Dan Kirkhuff, as well as prominent builders or developers such as Harry Wardman, the Weaver Brothers, and M. and R.B. Warren.

The large majority of the houses built over the years are extant. Of what were apparently the original four Chevy Chase houses, three remain: Newlands' home on Chevy Chase Circle, Stellwagen's house standing in mid-block directly opposite the Corby Mansion, and Herbert Claude's house at 5900 Connecticut Avenue. Although there have been additions to the boundaries of the earliest land developed by the Land Company, the original sections still exist, each with its own distinctive character and identity.

Commercial incursions have continued to be strictly controlled. Newlands apparently planned for the Connecticut Avenue shopping district south of Chevy Chase Circle. However, the thrust of commercial development bordering on Chevy Chase was shifted in 1928 to the neighborhood's western edge, on Wisconsin Avenue, and the land Company's construction there of Chevy Chase Center in the 1950's brought additional shops and offices to that area.

Interestingly, the Chevy Chase Land Company still exists, largely owned by descendants of Senator Newlands and collateral heirs. After Newlands' death in 1917, Stellwagen became president, followed in turn by Edward L. Hillyer. Until the mid-1930's, the company sold land and liquidated assets for distribution to shareholders. In 1946 William Sharon Farr assumed the presidency, and the company strategy changed as it began to develop its holdings into long-term, income-producing properties. Farr's son, Gavin, now serves as President. A recent Land Company undertaking is an apartment building at 8101 Connecticut Avenue, occupying the original site of Chevy Chase lake and fittingly advertised as "Built by the Chevy Chase land Co. on land they selected and acquired in 1890."

Despite the passing of several characteristic features, Chevy Chase Lake was filled in during the 1930's, the electric railroad service was discontinued on Connecticut Avenue in 1935, and the bridges at Klinge Valley and Calvert Street have long since been replaced. Vast portions of the Connecticut Avenue lands owned and developed by the Company remain, and Chevy Chase itself stands just as Newlands envisioned it - a residential neighborhood: stable, comfortable, and quiet. Ninety years later it is a tribute to his long-range planning and high standards.



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