



CHEVY CHASE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

FALL 1998

Fall Program Focuses on Making Family History Lively

A Creative Touch To Family Storytelling

Details make history come alive. They make it fun to learn and easier to remember. Every family tree is a goldmine of stories which become more precious with age. The fall program, which is scheduled for 8 p.m. on Tuesday October 13th is a unique and intensely personal study of one woman's own family. Please come to see:

Flesh on Old Bones Featuring Ellouise Schoettler

Ellouise Schoettler is an artist who lives in Chevy Chase. *Flesh on Old Bones* is a performance she has created which combines family and local history, storytelling and visual arts to spotlight moments in the lives of ordinary people. It focuses on preserving bits of social custom and American history. The women in her family lines are featured and celebrated in abstract fabric collages. As each woman is introduced, "her" collage is set on an easel. The resulting exhibit forms the backdrop to the performance, during which Ms. Schoettler creatively rereads ordinarily overlooked documents and letters to reveal the people who made them. How and where she found these papers which date from 1824 to 1940, is an integral part of the performance.

Ms. Schoettler has lectured frequently on women artists and artists' issues. She is a former president of the Maryland College of Art and Design and has served as a member of the Board of the Arts Council of Montgomery County. She has been active in Washington area and national artists' organizations since the mid-1970s. She earned a Masters of Fine Arts at American University. Her exhibition record includes one-person shows at Creative Partners Gallery in Bethesda, Strathmore Hall Arts

Center in Rockville, Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina and Loyola College in Baltimore. Her collage works were included in BOOK ART VI at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC.

As she explains, "About eight years ago when someone asked me questions about my family I could not answer I realized I knew little about our history beyond my grandparents. The search is absorbing. The research—finding bits and pieces of history to make the story closely resembles my collage making process. As the two merge I experience my self as a collage."

We hope that you will attend this thought provoking performance and that you will find in it the stimulus to begin to research your own family. If there is sufficient interest, we will have Ellouise Schoettler return this winter to conduct a one-day workshop on "Telling your Family Stories." Begin the process by coming to the Chevy Chase Village Hall at 5906 Connecticut Avenue at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 13th. Light refreshments will be served.

Historical Society Preserves Oral History Of Chevy Chase

To study the history of a community, there are government records and legal documents, plats and maps, buildings, hardscape and landscape, and after all of that, there are the people.

Some people are well known and well documented in the official records, but most residents are simply a part of the general texture of a community, though they are always important to their own families. As years pass, even the daily events of ordinary people become interesting, especially for members of their communities. That's why people like to know who has lived in their
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The Clean Drinking Land Grant & Clean Drinking Manor

By Angela A. Lancaster

“What’s in a name?” A classic query, and one often heard from anyone under the age of, say, 10 years old. “Why did they name it that?” My 10-year-old often asks. So I gladly agreed to research Clean Drinking Manor. Perhaps I could get a little smarter, or at least sound that way.

Clean Drinking was one of the land grants of the English crown that form present-day Chevy Chase. Clean Drinking was granted in 1698, surveyed in 1699 and patented in 1700. Land grants needed names to receive the proper recognition, and as far as we can tell, Clean Drinking was the name that was originally given for the 700 acres granted by King Charles I in 1698. The grant was made to William Dent, who in short order signed the property to Colonel John Courts (reported as Coates in some articles). Courts died in 1699, and the property passed to his daughter, Anne. She then transferred title to her cousin also named John Courts, around 1705. John farmed the land, but it seems to have been a barely operational farm when Charles Jones, married to John’s daughter Elizabeth, became owner in 1750.

The land originally covered the area from north of the Columbia Country Club, bounded on the east and north by Rock Creek, and on the west by a line several blocks west of Connecticut Avenue. Although the land grant was made in 1698, the Manor house was not built until 1750 by Charles Jones.

[In an 1895 article, it was reported that the original stone house was destroyed by the British during the Revolutionary War, and the one bearing the title was rebuilt in 1786. This doesn’t seem to fit other reports and it’s not clear that there was an earlier house. John Courts may have had a small stone farmhouse on the property when he farmed the land between 1705 and 1750. But 1750 seems to be the most consistent date given for the construction of what became known as the manor house.]

The stories of Clean Drinking and the Jones family become intertwined after 1750. The Jones family became Lords of the Manor until the house collapsed in the early 1900s. The manor house was a frame mansion, located on what is now Jones Mill Road, just 7 miles from the White House, and was half surrounded by a broad verandah. There were extensive gardens and English roses gracing the front entryway. Large lilacs and a maze were also features of the garden.

Charles Jones was reported to be a man of substance and ambition. He built a mill on his property and a bridge to facilitate access. He was a slave owner, and left a considerable estate on his death in 1789. The manor house and adjacent property came to his son, Charles Courts Jones. The son was not as ambitious as his father was, and the estate began a period of decline with much sold to maintain existence, until Charles Courts Jones’ death in 1837. The property was willed to his sister Eleanor, who kept the property only briefly, until she deeded it to (her and Charles’ nephew) John Courts Jones. John C. Jones tried over the next several decades to rebuild the original estate. As the farming economy began to improve, Jones re-purchased several portions of the old estate lost by Charles Court Jones. By 1870, he had reassembled much of the original property. By the end of the century, the manor house was still owned and occupied by Mrs. John Courts Jones—the lady of Clean Drinking Manor, with “quick wit and stunning memory”—until her death in 1896, well into her 90s. Her son, Nicholas E. Jones, was the last occu-



Clean Drinking Manor circa 1925

pant of the Manor house, where he lived until his death in the early 20th century. After he died, the house fell into decay.

The site of the original 700 acres of Clean Drinking is occupied by many different buildings today. The Bethesda Retirement and Nursing Center occupied the site of the Manor House in 1990, and now it is Manor Care Nursing and Rehabilitation Home. The buildings currently on the entire land-granted acreage include Woodend, the Audobon Society's 40 acres, Hayes Manor, the Howard Hughes Institute and the new housing development of Chevy Chase Manor, on the east of Connecticut and south of Jones Bridge.

The stories about the origin of the name Clean Drinking all post-date the granting of the land. We do know that there is a spring, reported to have a constant water temperature of fifty-three degrees. Although the property started out at 700 acres, it was divided between the various family members until the Manor house ended up in the 1800s with only 25 acres. Although it was re-assembled, it never regained its original acreage. Other family members built on the property, and some of the old foundation ruins can be found on the Audubon's property today. This explains, in part, the confused history of the original land grant. And has led to many legends and stories about Clean Drinking.

One story has it that it was General George Washington who named the spring, "Clean Drinking" in the mid-1700s when he visited the Jones family manor house. The story is that Gen. Washington stopped here with a few of his men on his return from Pittsburgh after his defeat by the British General Edward Braddock in 1755. After stopping at the spring, he and his men went up to the manor house to rest and visit the family. In fact, there is reported evidence that Washington did spend time at the Manor house as the guest of Charles Jones, but the naming of the estate would have taken place prior to his visit.

Another more credible legend has it that the name came from the original group of surveyors who had "drunk clean" their supply of wine and headed to the spring in 1699 for sustenance. This story seems to have the most currency, for there was even a ditty passed down by the Jones family:*

*He broke his bottle
At the spring with a will,
And the name of Clean Drinking
Clings to it still*

Indian arrowheads can be found around the site of the spring, so it must have provided clean water for Native Americans. A small building and plaque mark the site of at least one of the Clean Drinking springs today.

*reported by William Maury in *200 Years of Clean Drinking Manor*, Towne, July, 1996

Historical Society Preserves Oral History Of Chevy Chase, *continued from page 1*

home before them, and why they love to see pictures of what their own house used to look like. It's why oral histories are so very special. They can provide the minuties of daily life during an earlier era, which can be so difficult to determine any other way.

For example, stories about the milkman and the milk deliveries, and a glass milk bottle are a novelty. Knowing your own police officer (singular) is hardly common now, but Office Reinhold Springirth, the first officer in Chevy Chase Village, was so well known and figured in so many stories, that the current police staff named their original decoy mannequin for him. No doubt that personal touch added to the quirky charm of the story of his theft, leading to that surprising national coverage. Just so you know, although Officer Springirth was never recovered, his successor has been named Officer Austin, in honor of the second policeman to work in the Village. There are stories about him in the oral histories too.

The Historical Society has done over eighty oral histories. These histories will be an invaluable contribution to future historians and are available in our Historical Society archives. This is one of the many ways your Historical Society will make history come alive for future generations.





Clean Drinking Spring

You can visit the Clean Drinking spring. Go east on Jones Bridge Road to Jones Mill Road. Take a left, then an immediate right onto Savannah Lane. Follow the lane and signs for the Georgetown Trail in Rock Creek Park. When the road ends, walk down the macadam path, past the white post on the right. That marks the end of private property. Go into a cleared dale at that point on the right side of the path, and you will see a small stone building with a spring flowing out of a pipe into the creek bed. The plaque indicates that the Colonial Dames of Maryland and the National Park Service marked the site on 1978 as the Clean Drinking Spring for Clean Drinking Manor.