In the mid-1850s a number of forces converged, both locally and in the world beyond, to encourage a portion of Chestnut Hill to develop as a suburban community of the romantic mid-nineteenth century. These included the arrival of a commuter railroad, religious and associationalist concepts of architecture and the home, and a burgeoning industrial growth—all somewhat contradictory characteristics of the late romantic period in Europe and America. In the United States particularly these forces encouraged many prosperous citizens to abandon the congestion, noise, and disease of city streets for the more relaxed and healthful air of nearby villages.

Because many of the men, in particular, maintained strong ties to their businesses, professions, clubs, and cultural organizations in the
city, they enjoyed the best of both worlds—urban and suburban. In Chestnut Hill, they created a suburb in the city that allowed them to identify with both Philadelphia and their suburban homes. Even those who did not commute daily began to experience something of this dual identity after Chestnut Hill became an official part of Philadelphia in 1854.¹

The wealthy new suburbanites congregated in certain sections of the Hill, where they built expensive, architect-designed houses that less prosperous residents of the community could never hope to afford. Soon after arriving, they began to create a set of religious, social, educational, and cultural institutions that made life in the suburb more convenient and that set them off from the remainder of the local population. Thus, in addition to separating themselves residentially from the rest of the city, they also sought to isolate themselves from less favored sections of Chestnut Hill. This contributed greatly to the fragmentation of Chestnut Hill, and to the city of Philadelphia as a whole.²

The initial suburban development in Chestnut Hill, later called North Chestnut Hill, would coexist for several decades with the gateway village, whose characteristics disappeared only gradually. The community thus remained home to dozens of shopkeepers and artisans, older residents as well as newcomers, who found the Hill a good place to make a living. Still others found the village an excellent real estate investment.

Coming to the Hill at the same time as the suburbanites were scores of domestic servants, adding yet another element to the population. Perhaps half of these were Irish men and women who formed the Hill's first Roman Catholic population and found themselves quite unwelcome. Their socially prominent employers were likely to be Episcopalians, who provided the basis for yet another (and highly prestigious) denomination on the Hill. (See also chapters 5 and 6.)

The coexistence of these groups resulted in new social layers and communal identities. For instance, the presence of prosperous newcomers on the Hill led citizens throughout the Philadelphia area to begin viewing Chestnut Hill as an upper-class suburban community (despite the existence of many working-class families), instead of as
a rural village on the metropolitan fringe. Chestnut Hill thus remained a collection of localities and interests that were established at different times and that overlapped at certain points.

Among the factors that led to Chestnut Hill’s emergence as a nineteenth-century suburb were the rapid industrialization and accompanying population growth of Philadelphia. In 1850 the city’s sheltered seaport at the head of Delaware Bay was second (after 1820) only to New York in the value of goods moving across its docks. Philadelphia’s vast agricultural hinterland continued to pour grains, dried fruits, cured meats, and other produce into the port city for sale up and down the Atlantic coast, and even in Europe. Since the 1820s, Philadelphia had also been the major distribution center for anthracite (hard coal), brought down from the mines above Reading, first by canals and then on the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, which was chartered by the state legislature in 1833.5

Having witnessed the great success of the Reading, the legislature incorporated an even more important railroad in 1846. This was soon called the Pennsylvania Railroad, and would forge its rails across the mountains to Pittsburgh by 1854 and eventually link Philadelphia to Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, and points further west. The Pennsylvania, with its headquarters and principal terminus in Philadelphia, became the most important railroad in America, as well as the country’s largest corporation.4

With all its advantages in transportation, in addition to its nearby large sources of coal (the essential fuel for industry and railroads in the nineteenth century), Philadelphia would come to be known as the “workshop of the world.” By 1850 it led the nation in the production of textiles, machine tools, and railroad locomotives, and supported a flourishing ship-building industry. Not surprisingly, the population of Philadelphia City and County soared between 1840 and 1850, from 285,748 to 408,672. Nearly 30 percent of these were foreign-born, the largest group of recent arrivals having fled the devastating potato famine in Ireland.5

As might be expected, there were great extremes in living standards among Philadelphians in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1845 the city contained an estimated ten millionaires, along with
234 men who were worth $100,000 or more. At the other end of the scale, unskilled factory operatives earned only seventy-eight cents per day in 1854, and carpenters earned about ten dollars for a sixty-hour week. Many of the poorest residents of the city lived in South Philadelphia, where dozens were forced into begging and prostitution in order to support themselves.⁶

Like other cities with densely packed slums, Philadelphia's mortality rate began to rise alarmingly at midcentury, with epidemics of cholera, smallpox, and typhoid fever visiting the metropolis every few years. Accompanying such health problems were increasing levels of crime and violence. Much of this violence was aimed at racial or religious groups. Philadelphia blacks, who numbered about 20,000 in the late 1840s, were frequent targets of mob violence. But the worst such incident was directed against Roman Catholics in the late spring and summer of 1844. Several Catholic churches and schools were burned, and 5,000 state militiamen had to be called in to quell the rioting. Before the smoke had cleared, fifteen people were killed and over fifty were seriously injured.⁷

These anti-Catholic riots provided the final impetus for a long-considered consolidation of Philadelphia City and County. Under a consolidated system, proponents argued, the city could create a large enough police force to contend with most instances of mob violence, in addition to having the jurisdiction to pursue criminals, who often escaped punishment by fleeing into the surrounding Philadelphia County. Civic leaders also believed that the larger, consolidated tax base would provide greater funds for desperately needed municipal improvements and services, as well as put an end to the wasteful duplication of multiple taxation districts. There were elements of competition and pride behind the idea, too. The consolidation would make Philadelphia the largest city in the United States in land area, and it would ensure that the city would remain the nation's second-largest municipality in population, after New York, well into the foreseeable future. Thus, in early 1854, the Pennsylvania state legislature passed an act that combined the city of Philadelphia, which was only about two square miles before the merger, with surrounding Philadelphia County. The result was an enormous expanse of 129 square
FRANKFORD BOROUGH enlarged out of Whitehall Borough  
P.L. 302, April 5, 1853

BELMONT DISTRICT erected out of Blockley Twp.  
P.L. 422, April 14, 1853

Philadelphia County just before the city/county consolidation of 1854, showing major subdivisions. Philadelphia Bureau of Surveys.
miles (including Germantown and Chestnut Hill) within the consolidated area.⁸

Many residents of Chestnut Hill, and of German Township at large, were dubious about the idea of a city/county consolidation. Some feared that it would result in higher taxes, whereas others suspected that their communities would lose a sense of local identity. An emotional editorial on 12 February 1851 in the *Germantown Telegraph*, a weekly newspaper that served the township, summed up such feelings:

> From every quarter of the county, we hear but one sentiment relative to the villainous scheme to unite the rural parts of the county with the city. Meetings are being held, and remonstrances are being signed, representing this scheme in its true light, to the legislature. We have no doubt these representations will be heeded, being, as we are, well assured that this body will never inflict such a gross wrong upon a portion of their constituents who happen to reside within a certain distance of the city of Philadelphia.⁹

Urban businessmen and professionals, in contrast, tended to favor the scheme, believing that it would help to restore order, stimulate economic growth in general, and provide new opportunities for speculation in real estate. Because the question was entirely under the jurisdiction of the state legislature, with no provision for local referenda, there was little that residents of the township could do. However, the act became more palatable after the city agreed to assume the debts of the subdivisions within the county, and to assess farmland within the county at lower rates than developed properties. It was also comforting for many of those who contemplated a move from downtown up to Germantown or Chestnut Hill to know that they could continue to vote in municipal elections, now that both communities were part of the city.¹⁰

Although the city/county consolidation helped the municipality to cope better with certain situations, such as fire fighting and law enforcement, numerous members of Philadelphia’s middle and upper classes despaired over continuing urban problems. For them the dirty and noisy streets, the rising crime rates, and the ever-present threat of epidemic disease made the central parts of the city appear an increasingly undesirable place in which to live.
Philadelphia County just after the city/county consolidation of 1854, showing ward divisions. Philadelphia Bureau of Surveys.
In addition to these more practical objections to urban life, more educated Philadelphians had begun to shun the city on philosophical, aesthetic, and religious grounds. Sharing the main tenets of romanticism, they believed that a regular exposure to nature was essential to physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Yet it was not a wild or untamed nature that attracted them, but one that humans had curbed to some degree—or even “improved.” They were likely to find such surroundings on the urban fringe, in such gateway villages as Chestnut Hill.

Many clergymen, in addition to the authors of books on domestic life, encouraged the move to the suburbs. Influenced by the romantic/transcendental views of the day, they believed that nature was an emanation of the divine. God was ever-present in nature and observable in its overwhelming beauty; frequent exposure to nature could thus draw the individual closer to God. Religious spokesmen also believed that it was easier to establish and maintain a proper Christian home in the suburbs, where children in particular would not be exposed to urban vices. These same preceptors held that women were especially receptive to the spiritual healing and moral lessons of nature. Their prescription for an ideal Christian setting thus comprised an attractively appointed home in a semirural setting, presided over by a loving wife and mother who was insulated from the hard and often immoral world of work in the city.11

It is impossible to tell how many individuals in Chestnut Hill were consciously motivated by romantic/transcendental concepts of nature. Editorials in the Germantown Telegraph embraced such concepts as early as 1852. Looking forward to the building of a railroad into Chestnut Hill, the writer proposed that it would “open a vast field for cottages for at least a mile on both sides of [the route], presenting some of the handsomest sights in the country. . . .”12 Just a year before, the same newspaper had linked the fresh air and natural beauty available in Germantown and Chestnut Hill with increased health and morality: “A clean, fresh-air’d, sweet, cheerful, and well-situated house,” the writer extolled, “exercises a moral as well as a physical influence over its inmates, and makes the members of the family peaceful and considerate of the feelings and happiness of others. . . .”13
Three decades later, the Reverend S. F. Hotchkin was moved to even greater eloquence in his history of Chestnut Hill. Contemplating the rolling countryside as it appeared from one of the larger houses on the northeast side, he wrote:

The magnificent and varied scenery which meets the eye at this point, . . . and indeed throughout the Hill, should move a thankful and devout mind to praise God who piled up the hills and hollowed out the valleys, which in their light and shade, under sun and shower, covered with green grass, or shining with a pure snow mantle, draw exclamations of delight and wonder by their exceeding beauty.\textsuperscript{14}

The most rapturous descriptions were reserved for the wild and romantic Wissahickon Creek, with its sparkling waters, jutting cliffs, and shifting patterns of light and shadow. Local lore was already full of stories about noble Indians, bottomless pools, and star-crossed lov-
ers who had jumped to their deaths from the rocky heights. Poets tried to capture its beauty in verse. Even John Greenleaf Whittier succumbed to the beauties of the creek during a visit to Philadelphia:

And when the miracle of autumn came,  
And all the woods with many-colored flame  
Of splendor, making summer's greenness tame,  
Burned, unconsumed, a voice without a sound  
Spake to him from each kindled bush around,  
And made the strange new landscape holy ground!  

Another famous visitor to the Wissahickon was Edgar Allan Poe, who made extended visits to a friend at East Falls on the Schuykill River. From there Poe often walked up the Wissahickon Creek. Inspired by its haunting sights, he published a sketch in 1844 entitled "Morning on the Wissahickon." In one long paragraph he summed up the whole transcendental love affair that drew so many visitors to its banks:
Not long ago I visited the stream . . . , and spent the better part of a sultry
day in floating in a skiff upon its bosom. The heat gradually overcame me,
and, resigning myself to the influenee of the scenes, I sank into half a slum-
ber, during which my imagination reveled in visions of the Wissahiccon [vic.]
of ancient days—of the "good old days" when the demon of the Engine was
not, when pic-nics were undreamed of, when "water privileges" were neither
bought nor sold, and when the red man trod alone, with the elk, upon the
ridges that now towered above. . . .\textsuperscript{17}

Such romantic enticements to suburban living were reinforced by
an earlier tradition of building country houses on the outskirts of cit-
ies like Philadelphia. During the eighteenth century, wealthy Phila-
delphians attempted to imitate their English counterparts by owning
houses in both the city and countryside, the latter serving as retreats
during the hot summer months. Germantown became a favored site
for such houses, including Grumblethorpe, built in 1744 by John
Wister, and the spectacular Cliveden, erected in the 1760s by
Benjamin Chew, who was later chief justice of Pennsylvania. Even
President George Washington and his cabinet found refuge in Ger-
mantown during the deadly yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Wash-
ington stayed at what has come to be called the Deshler-Morris
House (the main portion erected in 1772), and liked it so well that
he returned the next summer with his wife, Martha, and her grand-
children.\textsuperscript{18}

It was the railroad that allowed prosperous Philadelphians to
spend more time at these country retreats, as well as in newer sub-
urban residences. Ironically, these very railroads became one of the
great despoilers of the romantic landscape that suburban dwellers so
admired. Thus, from the very beginning, suburbanites lived contra-
dictory and even compromising lives as they sought to escape from
the ugly and artificial scenes that they were creating in their very own
banks, businesses, and law offices. It was a contradiction that few
suburbanites—or their descendants—would either recognize or
admit.

Prospects for this escape into the suburban fringe opened in the
early 1830s, when a group of Germantown entrepreneurs built the
Philadelphia, Germantown, and Norristown Railroad, with the first
Locomotive “Old Ironsides” and coaches of the Philadelphia, Germantown, and Norristown Railroad, as they appeared when the road opened in 1832. GHS.

trains arriving in Germantown in late 1832. In addition to stimulating commerce and manufacturing in the area, it made Germantown into Philadelphia’s first true railroad suburb, and one of the earliest such suburbs in the United States. Later this pioneering line became part of the Reading Railroad system.¹⁹

Anxious to share in Germantown’s good fortune, residents of Chestnut Hill welcomed the establishment in 1833 of regular stagecoach service from the Germantown depot (at Germantown Avenue and Price Street) to various points on the Hill. At first the fare was twenty-five cents, but a year later it was reduced to eighteen and three-quarters cents in order to attract more riders.²⁰ Yet even the lower price was beyond the reach of workers, who generally earned less than a dollar a day at the time. Only wealthier men could afford to commute in this way.

By 1851 there was also Jacob Peters’s horse-drawn omnibus service, which ran hourly between Philadelphia, Germantown, and Chestnut Hill.²¹ In 1859 it was superseded by the horsecars of the Germantown Passenger Railroad. These were multipassenger vehicles that ran along iron rails. The fare from Chestnut Hill to downtown was seven cents. The horsecars were slow and stopped fre-
Horsecar of the Chelten Ave. line. Similar to the horsecars used in Chestnut Hill. Photo c. 1890. GHS.

Quently to allow passengers to get on and off. Like the electrified trolleys that replaced them between 1894 and 1896, they were most useful for short distances along the main arteries into the city. They also had the virtue of being comparatively cheap and, like the trolleys, were favored by less prosperous residents. Yet a one-way fare of even seven cents meant that a worker could not afford a round-trip commute from Chestnut Hill to more industrial areas of Philadelphia. Thus low wages and relatively expensive transportation ensured that Chestnut Hill would attract commuters mainly of upper-middle- and upper-class backgrounds.²²

The establishment of a railroad to Germantown, with stage and then omnibus connections to Chestnut Hill, resulted in a few well-to-do suburban commuters living on the Hill as early as the 1840s. Among these was Jesse Kneedler, who owned a successful dry-goods company downtown on Market Street. During the winter the Kneedlers lived in town on Washington Square, but each spring they returned to their property (still standing) at 8864 Germantown Avenue
Early electrified trolley car. The words “Roxborough” and “Chestnut Hill” appear on the side of the car. Photo c. 1890s. CHHS.

in Chestnut Hill. Rather than taking one of the public conveyances, Kneedler was driven each morning in his own carriage down to Germantown, where he caught the train to his office in the city. His habit of spending his winters downtown, where he could enjoy the social season and avoid difficult carriage rides along icy, muddy, or snow-covered roads, was shared by other early suburban residents of the Hill and would persist into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Kneedler himself would settle permanently in Chestnut Hill by the 1880s. He and his descendants played an active role in the community’s civic life for several generations.25

The necessity in the 1840s of commuting in a horse-drawn vehicle to the train station in Germantown stood in the way of extensive suburban development in Chestnut Hill. Thus, in the spring of 1848 a committee of local men obtained an act of incorporation from the state legislature that would allow them to raise funds and build a railroad from Chestnut Hill to Germantown. Two years passed, however, be-
fore the group held a public meeting at Chestnut Hill's Eagle Hotel (the former Cress Hotel, which now houses Robertson's Flowers) on 1 August 1850 to discuss the venture and to encourage residents to buy stock in the project. In March 1851 they held another public meeting at the home of William Stallman, owner of the local stagecoach line, where citizens were again urged to invest.\textsuperscript{24}

A month after this meeting, the \textit{Germantown Telegraph}, which always went out of its way to boost local ventures, reiterated the call to buy stock in the new transportation project, going so far as to say that investing in the railroad was a moral and civic duty. "Those who feel an interest in the road," the newspaper proclaimed, "will not only have to subscribe liberally themselves, but each man must consider himself a 'committee of vigilance' to procure subscriptions from others who may not come forward voluntarily for that purpose."\textsuperscript{25} In April 1852, the newspaper was still urging local residents to do their duty by purchasing stock, this time citing the profit motive. According to the writer, a particular property had just sold for "\textit{three times} [italics original] the amount it would have commanded three or four years ago, and 33 percent more than it was offered for only one year ago."\textsuperscript{26}

Such economic considerations were not lost on the railroad's first board of managers, elected in early 1852, who hoped to make a profit themselves on the line, now known officially as the Chestnut Hill Railroad. These were Coffin Colket, who was elected president of the company, John Hildeburn, Cephas G. Childs, George W. Carpenter, Samuel S. Richie, Augustus L. Roumfort, Clayton T. Platt, James Smith, and H. K. Smith. Colket was a Philadelphia merchant and entrepreneur, with offices at 312 North 7th Street. Carpenter had made a fortune in the drug business and lived in a huge Greek Revival mansion (now demolished) in Mount Airy known as Phil-Ellena. Roumfort also lived in Mount Airy and had been the head of Mount Airy College, a well-known military school of the day situated on the grounds of the present Lutheran Theological Seminary at Allen's Lane and Germantown Avenue. Because the rail line would also connect Mount Airy to Germantown and central Philadelphia, both Carpenter and Roumfort stood to benefit directly from it. At least three
Gravers Lane Station of the Reading (Chestnut Hill-East) line. The station was designed by Frank Furness and built in 1885. Photo from early twentieth century. *Local.*

of the other directors were pioneer suburbanites in Chestnut Hill: Hildeburn, a commercial merchant; Platt, who was also a merchant; and Childs, a well-known lithographer and publisher. Richie was a highly successful chandler. The backgrounds of James Smith and H. K. Smith remain obscure.²⁷

In April 1852 the board engaged the firm of Sidney and Neff to undertake the construction from Chestnut Hill to Germantown. The railroad officially opened on 3 July 1854, with its terminus at Bethlehem Pike and Chestnut Hill Avenue on the site now occupied by the station of the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority’s (SEPTA) Chestnut Hill-East line. A modest wooden structure served as the first depot. There originally were four trains daily, each way. The earliest left Philadelphia for Germantown and Chestnut Hill at 6:00 A.M., while the first train from Chestnut Hill departed for the city at 7:40. The last trips of the day were at 6:00 P.M. from the city, and at 7:40 P.M. from Chestnut Hill. The one-way fare was twenty cents—again more than members of the working class could afford on a daily basis. Riders had to change trains at Germantown, where
an engine pushed the cars up to Chestnut Hill. Returning trains took advantage of gravity, coasting all the way back to Germantown. Besides carrying passengers, the railroad provided freight service to and from the Hill.\textsuperscript{28}

By any measure the Chestnut Hill Railroad proved an instant success. In January 1855, after just six months of operation, the board of managers declared a 3 percent dividend. The managers were also delighted to report that the total number of passengers for 1855 stood at an impressive 85,295.\textsuperscript{29} This flourishing line would remain an independent corporation until it was leased to the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad in November 1870. The Reading then erected a new two-story stone station in 1872. On the second floor was a large meeting room that was used for several decades by many civic groups on the Hill. This structure (now demolished) and the smaller one that preceded it were the first unofficial community centers in Chestnut Hill.\textsuperscript{30}

The Chestnut Hill Railroad would not only prosper for many years, but it, and the Pennsylvania line built later on the West Side of the Hill, also would prove an excellent vehicle for creating and maintaining a semirural suburb for the upper-middle- and upper-class commuter. The round-trip fare of thirty-five to forty cents made rail commutation much too expensive for the average worker, who counted himself fortunate to make a dollar a day; only prosperous Philadelphians could even consider a daily trip by rail. The railroad also meant that land lying more than a half mile away on either side of the tracks would likely remain open and undeveloped, because most commuters did not want to walk more than several hundred yards to the station twice each day. Later the automobile would open adjoining tracts of land for development, and in the process change many older suburbs by obliterating the semirural atmosphere that had made them so attractive. In Chestnut Hill, both human and natural factors (to be discussed later) would mitigate many effects of the automobile age for several decades after its arrival.\textsuperscript{31}

The railroad would also encourage a dual identity with both city and suburb. The Chestnut Hill Railroad and all subsequent railroads in the Philadelphia area, like those in other metropolitan areas, had
their main terminals downtown. By the end of the nineteenth century, these rail lines were like the spokes of a wheel, leading thousands of people in and out of the urban hub on a daily basis. In addition to male commuters, riders included women on shopping trips or on visits to clubs, theaters, and other cultural attractions. Both men and women traveled downtown to see doctors and dentists, and some children commuted to schools in the city. Until the advent of the automobile, all roads literally led to the city.

It was during the first stages of this railroad age that the earliest suburban development in North Chestnut Hill emerged. Even as the Chestnut Hill Railroad was nearing completion, several enterprising men had already taken the first steps toward developing the valuable land surrounding it. Among these early real estate entrepreneurs was a prosperous Philadelphia lawyer named Samuel Austin. He purchased 5.75 acres of land immediately southeast of Bethlehem Pike that in the early nineteenth century had been part of the Levi Rex farm. He then widened a small wagon road through the property to fifty feet and extended it down to Stenton Avenue. Because the new thoroughfare began at the highest elevation in Chestnut Hill, Austin named it Summit Street. It commanded a superb view (then unobstructed by buildings and trees) of the rolling Whitemarsh Valley below, and thus offered an ideal site for the romantic suburb.32

Unlike Henry Howard Houston’s project several decades later on the West Side of Chestnut Hill, Austin did not develop Summit Street as an integral unit. He probably lacked the funds, and he followed the practice of Germantown developers, who for several decades had been buying up long strips of farmland off the main road, cutting new streets down the middle of them, and selling rectangular lots on either side.33 It was thus individual purchasers, some of whom bought several lots for their own speculative purposes, who built dwellings along either side of Summit Street. The street was almost completely developed by the Centennial year of 1876, with approximately twenty dwellings on its two-block length.34

In this era before zoning laws, Austin and other developers were almost completely free to do what they wanted. They hired their own surveyors, laid out and paved streets themselves, and subdivided the
properties into whatever lot sizes they chose. Their general practice was to deed streets and other rights-of-way to the city. The sale of individual lots was recorded by the registrar of deeds, whose office also drew diagrams of the lots onto plat maps. Because the city of Philadelphia forbade the construction of wood-frame houses as a fire precaution, developers had to build with either brick or stone. This requirement reinforced the traditional use of stone in Chestnut Hill and resulted in a pleasing uniformity of color and texture, despite different architectural styles. It was up to the developer or the individual property owner to arrange with private companies to provide gas and other utilities. Once the city took over water and sewage systems, an agreement had to be made with municipal authorities to extend these services to new developments.³⁵

Many of the houses built on Summit Street started out as second residences. Their owners maintained townhouses in the city and retreated to Chestnut Hill in the summer to escape the heat, and sometimes in the winter to enjoy sledding, skating, and other cold-weather sports “in the country.”³⁶ Such dwellings were transitions between the older tradition of building a country house and the emerging custom of living in a suburban residence to which one commuted in all seasons.

Whether or not they were year-round residents, those who settled with their families on Summit Street were men of some wealth whose principal place of business was in the city. Among these early residents were the bookseller and merchant William Goodwin; landscape gardener James Gleason; conveyancer (or real estate agent) Charles C. Longstreth; merchant Daniel C. E. Brady; lumber merchant John Naglee; attorney and Common Please Judge Martin Russell Thayer; publisher George B. Cowperthwait; marble importer Charles Heebner; Philadelphia Inquirer publisher William Harding; carriage maker George Watson; drug manufacturer Spencer Janney; Adams Express executive Edward S. Stanford; rope manufacturer George Weaver; merchant Norman L. Hart; Nicholas Biddle’s daughter Anne Biddle; and attorney Samuel Austin himself.³⁷

Most of the Summit Street houses were executed in the Italian palazzo style that was then popular in the eastern United States. Ar-
Italianate house at 100 Summit St., c. 1860. Photo by author, 1991.

Architectural writers such as Alexander Jackson Downing and Philadelphia’s own Samuel Sloan insisted that this style was well suited to suburbs. Based loosely on villas in the countryside around Florence and other northern Italian towns, it was urbane enough for metropolitan commuters, and less organic and therefore less rural in its associations than the Gothic Revival cottage. The Italianate villa, with its reminders of a distant time and place, also appealed to the romantic imagination.38 The most spectacular of these villas on Summit Street is the stuccoed stone residence (number 100) built between 1855 and 1861 by carriage maker George Watson at the southeast corner of Prospect Avenue. Still standing in 1991, it features prominent brackets, overhanging eaves, a third-floor balcony, and a huge campanile-style tower on the east side. Smaller and more domestic in feeling is 17 Summit Street, built about 1861 by merchant Norman L. Hart. This stone structure, also still standing, has deeply hooded dormer windows, a wooden front porch with graceful rounded arches filled with fretwork designs, and a square tower on the west side that was demolished in 1948. Around the spacious front yard there is a
cast-iron ornamental fence that sets the property off from the street while at the same time inviting entry through the gate.\textsuperscript{39}

The other houses on Summit Street were in the Gothic Revival, Mansard, or early Tudor Revival styles. Although writers of architectural treatises proposed that Gothic motifs were most suited to rural cottages, more subdued Gothic designs did appear in suburbs during the post–Civil War period. Characterized by steeply pitched gables and fretwork carpentry, such houses were associated with medieval churches and thus thought to be appropriate for the proper Christian home. Numbers 52 and 54 Summit Street still provide excellent examples of this style. Both of these stone houses contain high,
peaked gables and pointed windows. Bordering the roof gables of number 52 are wide barge boards, their centers ornamented with cutout quatrefoil patterns.\textsuperscript{40}

Having been built on farmland, Summit Street was treeless at first. But by the end of the nineteenth century, a canopy of trees reached from one side of the street to the other. The wide front lawns also were filled with trees and shrubs. Stepping onto Summit Street from near the busy intersection of Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike still gives the walker a sense of moving into a green and sheltered world that is far removed from the workaday life of the city below.

The only rival to Summit Street in North Chestnut Hill was the Norwood Avenue development undertaken a block or so away by Charles Taylor, a successful Philadelphia grain merchant. Taylor had come to Chestnut Hill in 1849 and was one of its suburban pioneers. Over a period of several years he accumulated about forty acres of land. On it he built a spacious house called Norwood (now demolished), described by a contemporary writer as being in the English cottage style. In 1860 he opened his land for development by running a road, now Norwood Avenue, through the property, extending from Chestnut Hill Avenue on the south to Sunset Avenue on the northern end of the tract.\textsuperscript{41}

Unlike Austin on Summit Street, Taylor built at least four houses himself and offered them for sale. He sold the other parcels of land to individuals, who then built their own dwellings. Among the residents of Norwood Avenue were Colonel George H. North, a banker and broker; Charles B. Dunn, another successful banker; Arthur Howe, a prosperous leather merchant; Edward S. Buckley, an iron plate manufacturer; Morris S. Waln, a commercial merchant; and William Disston, whose family-owned saw manufacturing works (Henry Disston and Sons) in the Tacony section of Philadelphia had become one of the most spectacularly successful industries in the United States. Various members of the Disston family would live in Chestnut Hill over the decades and help to form the inner core of its upper class.\textsuperscript{42}

The houses on Norwood Avenue were just as impressive as those
on Summit Street and were likewise executed in Italianate, Gothic Revival, Mansard, and early Tudor Revival styles. Framing the entrance to Norwood Avenue, on the Chestnut Hill Avenue end, were two corner houses, both built fairly close to the street. But as one moved down Norwood Avenue, the houses were set back much further, giving the avenue the appearance of a rural lane, without either sidewalks or curbings. A leafy arcade formed from parallel rows of elms invited entry to the road, which led downhill towards a thickly wooded ravine and creek, one of the small rivulets that project like long jagged fingers into many areas of Chestnut Hill. Unlike Summit Street, Norwood Avenue and its residences have undergone serious degradation, with several dwellings, including those on the corners at Chestnut Hill Avenue, having been demolished by institutions in the neighborhood (see chapter 9).

In addition to the Norwood Avenue and Summit Street residences, there were large, attractive houses on several other streets in North Chestnut Hill that extended north and east from the railroad station, where residents enjoyed the best views in the area. These
included Chestnut Hill Avenue, Germantown Avenue (north of Rex Avenue), Stenton and Prospect avenues, the far east end of Gravers Lane, Crittenden Street, and the eastern extremities of Willow Grove Avenue.

One of the largest and most impressive residences on these streets stood at the northeast corner of Stenton Avenue and Summit Street. Called The Evergreens, its owner was Thomas Potter, who had made a fortune in the manufacture of oilcloth and later in life became president of the City National Bank of Philadelphia. The now demolished house was in the Italianate style, a massive three-story edifice with a square cupola rising from the center of its hipped roof. In 1883 Potter’s son Charles located himself in a house at the northeast corner
of Prospect and Evergreen avenues. Named The Anglecot[t], the
dwelling was designed by the well-known Philadelphia architect Wil-
son Eyre, Jr. It remains one of the most artful examples of the shingle
style in America.⁴⁴

Just two blocks away, at the northeast corner of Stenton Avenue
and Gravers Lane, was the Patterson compound, containing two
Queen Anne houses (the present numbers 493 and 495) built between
1876 and 1885 and owned by Christopher Stuart Patterson. His fa-
thor, Joseph Patterson, Sr., had been president of the Western Na-
tional Bank, and at his death in 1887 he left an estate worth the then
handsome sum of $600,000.⁴⁵ One block west of the Patterson dwell-
ings, and on the other side of Gravers Lane, was the attractive Grav-
ers Lane station of the Reading Railroad (1883), designed by
Philadelphia’s renowned Frank Furness in his own unique style.⁴⁶

By the middle 1880s, the developed portions of North Chestnut
Hill extended from approximately Rex Avenue on the south to Sunset
Avenue on the north. The western boundaries reached a block or so
beyond Germantown Avenue, and on the east they ranged just be-
Wyncliffe (1875–76). Now part of Temple University’s Sugarloaf Conference Center. CHHS.

Beyond Stenton Avenue into Wyndmoor in Springfield Township. There was also a southern “dogleg” between Stenton Avenue and the Chestnut Hill (Reading) Railroad tracks that ran down to Willow Grove Avenue.

The land north of Sunset Avenue was much farther from the railroad station, was generally quite hilly, and was accordingly cheaper than the real estate further south. This land remained in large parcels best suited for larger estates, like that of Joseph Middleton at Germantown and Northwestern avenues. Another formidable estate in this area was Wyncliffe, a large Gothic Revival dwelling built in 1875–1876 at the northwest corner of Germantown Avenue and Bell’s Mill Road that is today part of the Sugarloaf Conference Center of Temple University. The ample size of such estates made them prime candidates for institutional use at a later date. Examples are
the Morris Arboretum at Germantown and Hillcrest avenues; the Woodmere Art Gallery, on the northeast corner of Germantown Avenue and Bell’s Mill Road; the Chestnut Hill Hospital, between Norwood and Germantown avenues; and Chestnut Hill College at Germantown and Northwestern avenues.\textsuperscript{47}

The location of the Chestnut Hill Railroad also determined that tracts just south and west of the rail line, which did not enjoy views of the Whitemarsh Valley, would become sites of small dwellings for craftsmen, shopkeepers, and certain domestic servants. Known for many years now as the East Side, this portion of Chestnut Hill is characterized by small single dwellings, semidetached “twins,” and row houses, many built in red brick. Yet these residences, too, were generally set back from the street by at least twenty-five feet, providing room for trees, small lawns, and flower gardens, thereby giving something of a suburban flavor to these otherwise urban-style units. (See also chapters 5 and 6.)

It was these less prosperous residents of the East Side, who did not commute and who lived in Chestnut Hill all year around, who identified themselves most closely with the Hill. Their wealthier male neighbors in North Chestnut Hill, on the other hand, had to divide their time and energies between their homes on the Hill and their various business, cultural, and social activities downtown. Several residents of North Chestnut Hill illustrate this phenomenon well. Publisher Cephas Childs, for example, was secretary of the Philadelphia Board of Trade and a director of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Owen Sheridan belonged to a number of Philadelphia clubs, including the prestigious Farmer’s Club of Pennsylvania (an organization strictly for gentlemen farmers) and the elite First Troop, Philadelphia City Cavalry. He also owned a house in the city, where he lived during various times of the year. Banker Charles B. Dunn listed the Philadelphia Art Club and the City Club among his affiliations. Oilcloth manufacturer Thomas Potter was chairman of the Philadelphia School Committee for many years, an active member of the city’s Common Council, and a member of the Academy of Fine Arts. Dozens of other Chestnut Hill residents boasted similar connections in the larger city, and thus maintained a dual identity, one
with their homes in Chestnut Hill, and the other with their business and cultural activities in the city. For the time being, city and suburb could coexist in a happy equilibrium—at least for those who could afford a home on the Hill and the costs of commuting back and forth to the city.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Chestnut Hill was increasing its reputation as a fashionable summer resort. A few prosperous Philadelphians had been going to the Hill to escape the enervating heat and humidity of the city since the late eighteenth century, putting themselves up in the old stage hotels or boarding in farmhouses. The arrival of the railroad in 1854 then made Chestnut Hill much more convenient for vacationers. By 1880 there were several hotels that catered to summer guests. In North Chestnut Hill there was the Eldon, named (for now forgotten reasons) in honor of the British jurist Lord Eldon, and opened in 1884. It stood at the southwest corner of Bethlehem Pike and Stenton Avenue, where it commanded an impressive view of the valley below.⁴⁹ Since 1945 it has formed part of the Fairview Nursing Home. Across Stenton Avenue in Springfield Township there was also a water cure spa, built around a spring on the farm of Barclay
Lippincott (the exact location of the property is uncertain) and complete with a forty-room boarding house.\textsuperscript{50}

Between the forks at Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike stood the Maple Lawn Inn, a remodeled and enlarged older structure that opened in 1876. It was long nicknamed the Dust Pan, owing to its location on these busy thoroughfares. Demolished in 1927, it has since been the site of two gasoline stations, and at the time of this writing it is slated to be occupied by a cluster of new shops.\textsuperscript{51}

Over on the West Side of Chestnut Hill, near the Wissahickon Creek, was the Park House, constructed about 1865. Destroyed by fire in 1877, its successor was the Wissahickon Inn, now home to Chestnut Hill Academy (see chapter 3). Just below the Park House in the Wissahickon gorge is the Valley Green Inn, built about 1850. Never a residential establishment, the inn, which continues to flourish, was famous for its waffles and catfish.\textsuperscript{52} Further north along the creek was the now demolished Indian Rock Hotel, which sat on the Roxborough Township side, opposite a dramatic rock formation where local Lenni-Lenape (Delaware) Indians had reportedly held tribal councils before they were forced out by European settlers. The Indian Rock Hotel was a favorite stop for coaching parties—or for hikers on an expedition to Indian Rock itself.\textsuperscript{53}

Besides being good for the hotel business, Chestnut Hill’s reputedly healthy climate gave rise to several hospitals and charitable institutions. Short-lived but very impressive was the Mower General Hospital for convalescing soldiers, built beside the Chestnut Hill Railroad tracks during the Civil War. Opened in January 1863, the hospital and grounds occupied a tract of some twenty-seven acres between the rail line and Stenton Avenue. The hospital’s entrance was near today’s Wyndmoor station on SEPTA’s Chestnut Hill-East line (the old Chestnut Hill and then Reading Railroad). The structure was built entirely of wood, with some thirty-four wards (containing 4,500 beds) radiating out from a central core. Over 20,000 patients passed through its doors before it ceased functioning in May of 1865. Demolished after the war, its site would later become part of the Randall Morgan estate and is now in the Chestnut Hill Village/Market Square development.\textsuperscript{54}

Two decades later, the City Mission of the Episcopal Church,
Lithograph of Mower General Hospital, 1863, which stood just east of the intersection of East Willow Grove Ave. and the Reading (Chestnut Hill-East) Railroad. CHHS.

attracted by the pure country air of Chestnut Hill, decided to locate a tuberculosis hospital near the corner of Stenton and Evergreen avenues, just across the township/county line in Wyndmoor. The latest treatment for this dread disease called for exposing patients to as much fresh air as possible, placing their beds outside on porches during all but the coldest weather. Officially known as the Home for Consumptives, the main structure was designed by Frank Furness. Some local citizens protested the decision to locate the facility there, but it remained a fixture of the community for decades and is now part of the All Saints rehabilitation complex.\textsuperscript{55}

A home for orphans was established in Chestnut Hill during its early suburban period, the Bethesda Children’s Christian Home, now defunct. After occupying several sites, including the Park House Hotel, the home settled at the southeast corner of Willow Grove and Stenton avenues in 1878 in a building (now demolished) that was donated by Henry J. Williams, a wealthy Chestnut Hill lawyer. By 1883, there were 140 children living at the institution.\textsuperscript{56}

With the increasing number of people in Chestnut Hill—whether they were commuters, summer vacationers, consumptives, or or-
phans—there was an obvious need for additional utilities and institutions. Over a twenty-five-year period, leading residents established a library, a waterworks, a private club, four new churches, and two private schools.

Of utmost importance was a sufficient source of pure water. Although Chestnut Hill was now part of the consolidated city of Philadelphia, municipal authorities apparently could not or would not supply the community with a waterworks. As local residents would soon learn, city hall would often prove unresponsive to calls for public services in their somewhat isolated corner of the city. Consequently, several leading citizens established their own Chestnut Hill Water Company, which was incorporated in 1856. Its president, Charles
Heebner, owned a forty-acre estate in Chestnut Hill that ran east of Germantown Avenue between Southampton Avenue and Hartwell Lane.\textsuperscript{57}

The water company built a small reservoir on Heebner’s property near the intersection of Hartwell Lane and Ardleigh Street, where the Water Tower Recreation Center now stands. In 1859 the company erected a 125-foot-high water tower made of local stone. Nearly a century and a half later, the tower (though bereft of its wooden water tank at the top) stands as a local landmark. Just after the Civil War, the city of Philadelphia purchased the local waterworks and made it part of its own system of distribution.\textsuperscript{58}

A supply of gas, largely for lighting purposes, had been obtained
several years before when the Germantown Gas Company agreed in late 1853 to provide service to the Hill. Suburban residents might have reveled in Chestnut Hill's rural scenery, but they wanted to enjoy all the conveniences of city life at the same time, a typical sentiment of the suburbanite who wished to have the best of both worlds. Although there would be complaints about both the quantity and quality of gas piped to the Hill, it would be used to illuminate most prosperous homes in the community until the early twentieth century.69

It was also private initiative that led to Chestnut Hill's first library. The donor was Henry J. Williams, also the principal benefactor of the Bethesda Home. As a devout Presbyterian, he did not want any meetings or activities to take place on the premises that were not consistent with Christian principles, and he called his new institution the Christian Hall Library. He had the building constructed of local stone and appointed fourteen trustees to administer the library, with the Reverend Roger Owen, a Presbyterian clergyman, as its president. (As was true of many other early institutions in Chestnut Hill, the trustees operated under the common law rather than through a corporate charter.) Opening in early 1871, the Christian Hall Library functioned at first only as a reading room.60 Several years later it became a subscription library and finally a free library. On the second floor of the building Williams provided space for a group called the Christian Hall Association, which held both religious services and social functions. Because purely secular activities were banned from the premises by its charter, Williams erected a frame structure behind the library where other organizations and clubs could hold their meetings. At his death in 1879, Williams left an endowment of $15,000 to support the institution he had founded. In 1896 the facility merged with the Philadelphia Free Library system, and in 1909 a new building, erected under a grant from the Carnegie Library Fund, replaced the original structure.61

Williams's insistence upon a Christian character for his library was much in keeping with the idea that the romantic suburb should be a thoroughly Christian community. The flurry of church building in Chestnut Hill between 1850 and 1860 attested to the popularity of
this ideal. Three Protestant denominations and a Roman Catholic parish joined the preexisting Methodist and Baptist congregations. A community of Roman Catholic nuns, the Sisters of St. Joseph, also settled on the Hill during the decade.

The Presbyterians were the first to organize. Despite the older Baptist and Methodist congregations, the majority of residents in 1850 seem to have been either Presbyterians or Lutherans, thus leading several Presbyterians in the area to believe that they might start their own church. The arrival of the Reverend Roger Owen that year, who had come to open a boys academy, encouraged the Presbyterians further. Owen was soon asked to preach regularly at the Union Chapel. The response was so encouraging that the faithful decided to establish the First Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill in May 1852. Owen became its pastor, a position that he would hold for the next thirty-three years. Among the names appearing in the charter were such important and prosperous local figures as Owen Sheridan, Joseph H. Hildeburn, and George V. Rex. For several
years the Presbyterians met in the Union Chapel—or in the hall at the railroad station. They built their own church in the summer of 1852 at the northwest corner of Germantown and Rex avenues on a parcel of land donated by George Rex that now houses a Seventh Day Adventist congregation. Its designer was the famous John Notman, better known as the architect of Holy Trinity and St. Clement's churches downtown. Even at this early period, residents of the Hill were able to use their wealth to engage one of the region's top architects.\(^{63}\)

If there were few Episcopalians in Chestnut Hill during the first half of the nineteenth century, the arrival of prosperous vacationers and suburban residents greatly augmented their numbers. Taking note of this fact, several members of the denomination began holding services whenever possible at the Union Chapel. In 1855, after two years of sporadic worship, they decided to form a parish. They held an organizational meeting at the railroad station in June of that year
and organized themselves as St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Among the first vestrymen were prominent local men such as Cephas G. Childs, Charles Taylor, and Joseph H. Hildeburn. Hildeburn, like several others who had joined the Presbyterian fold only three years before, had perhaps gone with the Presbyterians initially only because there was not yet an Episcopal church on the Hill.

The Episcopal organizers decided to raise a chapel, which was ready for use in September 1856. It still stands as part of a larger structure on the south side of Chestnut Hill Avenue, opposite the entrance to Norwood Avenue and just a block below Samuel Austin's Summit Street development. They engaged as architects John E. Carver and later the firm of Sidney and Merry. Although not as celebrated as Notman, all three architects were highly regarded practitioners of the sort who would appeal to a wealthy and socially conscious congregation such as St. Paul's.

After finding their first rector unsatisfactory, in part because of his extreme youth, the St. Paul's vestry selected the Reverend J. Andrews Harris, who remained for the next half century. As the number of well-to-do suburban residents increased on the Hill, the membership of St. Paul's grew apace. Although some of these newcomers probably had not been Episcopalians when they arrived, they soon converted to this prominent denomination in order to climb the social ladder or to solidify their positions in the community. Since the colonial period, the Anglican church and its American successor, the Episcopal church, had been the religion of the upper classes. In England, the Anglican church was the church of the king, the nobility, and the landed gentry. For this and other reasons, St. Paul's would remain Chestnut Hill's most fashionable church.64

The last Protestant group to establish themselves in Chestnut Hill during the nineteenth century was the Lutherans. Started as a mission of Christ Evangelical Church in Germantown, members on the Hill organized themselves as Evangelical Lutheran Christ Church of Chestnut Hill in late 1860. The congregation met at various locations around the community until completing their own church in 1871, a structure that remains at the northwestern corner of Southampton and Germantown avenues. Architect Charles M. Burns, Jr., was not
as well-known as the designers of St. Paul’s Episcopal and the First Presbyterian Church, a fact that may reflect the modest means of the congregation, as demonstrated by early membership lists. Most were of German ancestry. As German ethnic identity declined in Chestnut Hill over the decades, and especially in the twentieth century, the size of the Lutheran fold would dwindle. The Baptist and Methodist congregations would likewise suffer declining numbers as the farmers and laborers who made up the bulk of their congregations gradually disappeared from the area.65

Surprising to some is the fact that Chestnut Hill’s Roman Catholic parish, known in recent decades as Our Mother of Consolation (OMC), was founded at the same time as the great Protestant expansion on the Hill during the 1850s. There had been few Catholics in the area, which had been populated almost exclusively by descendants of German, Scotch, Scotch-Irish, Welsh, and English Protestants. But accompanying the new suburban residents was a demand
for domestic servants, many of whom were Irish Catholics who had come to Philadelphia in the wake of the potato famine.

Yet it was the prominent Chestnut Hiller Joseph Middleton, a convert from Quakerism to the Catholic faith, who founded the Hill’s Catholic parish in 1855. It was he who purchased a lot for the church on the north side of Chestnut Hill Avenue, almost directly across the street from the future St. Paul’s Episcopal, who provided the bulk of the funds for erecting a church, and who apparently designed the church himself. In selecting this site, Middleton placed the parish in the heart of North Chestnut Hill, destined to become a bastion of wealthy, Anglo-Saxon Protestantism where the vast majority of the Hill’s first Roman Catholics (except for live-in servants) could not afford to settle. Anti-Catholic Know-Nothings in Philadelphia attempted several times to prevent the building of this Roman Catholic church in Chestnut Hill (see also chapters 4 and 5).  

Three years after the founding of Chestnut Hill’s Catholic parish, a small group of nuns belonging to the Sisters of St. Joseph settled in Chestnut Hill. The order was founded in France during the early seventeenth century, and the sisters had originally come to Philadelphia in 1846. In 1858 they purchased Joseph Middleton’s Monticello, a seven-acre tract with house that had once contained the old Deewees paper mill. There the sisters established their mother house, later the headquarters for a network of several thousand nuns who were assigned to missions throughout the Middle Atlantic States. By then specializing in education, the sisters founded Mount St. Joseph’s Academy (for girls) in 1871 and Chestnut Hill College (for women) in 1924. For decades the sisters kept largely to themselves, and were seldom seen around Chestnut Hill. Their students came from beyond the neighborhood for the most part, with the result that many Protestant residents of the Hill knew little or nothing about the academy or college for decades. The sisters’ open, rolling grounds, augmented by further purchases of land, would do much to preserve the semirural flavor so important to the romantic suburb. 

If they were ignorant about the Catholic institutions in their midst, well-to-do Protestants in Chestnut Hill were quick to create or support a set of private schools for their own children. Over the
Springside School, which stood at the northeast corner of Norwood and Chestnut Hill avenues. Photo c. 1910. Local.

decades these schools would not only educate their boys and girls, but also serve as a means of inculcating a sense of upper- and upper-middle-class community. Children of well-to-do families would go to school with youngsters of a similar background and make lasting friends within that group. They might remain totally oblivious to other children on the Hill, who may have grown up only blocks away but who attended Catholic or public schools.

The first of the private schools was Chestnut Hill Academy, a boys boarding school founded in 1851 by the Reverend Roger Owen and his brother Joshua T. Owen. Although this institution closed about 1856, the name Chestnut Hill Academy was used by another school, founded in 1861, that remains the principal private school for boys in Chestnut Hill more than a century later.69

Several private schools for girls arose during the early suburban period, but the only one to last into the late twentieth century was the Springside School. Opened in 1879 in a house on Summit Street, this institution was originally known as Miss Bell and Mrs. Comegys' French and English Boarding School for Little Girls. Several years
later it moved to the northeast corner of Norwood and Chestnut Hill avenues. Because a spring ran through the Norwood Avenue property, the school eventually came to be known as Springside. Its founders, Anna Loraine Bell (Mrs. Walter D.) Comegys and her unmarried sister, Jane Bell, were the Tennessee-bred daughters of Senator John Bell, who had run unsuccessfully for the presidency against Abraham Lincoln in 1860 as the Constitutional Unionist candidate. Following Walter Comegys' death in 1877, Anna joined with her maiden sister to open the school. Because of the family's connections in the South, many of their early boarders came from that part of the country. They also attracted day students from Chestnut Hill.\textsuperscript{70}

In their early brochures the Bell sisters extolled the same conveniences and healthy atmosphere that had drawn prosperous residents to the Hill over the past two decades:

> Although within the city limits and consequently possessing all the advantages which Philadelphia affords, [the site] has been selected after mature consideration, as the best location for a school, on account of its extreme healthfulness and entire freedom from all malarial influences. Residence within three minutes walk of depot. Twenty-three trains daily, to and from the city.\textsuperscript{71}

Like the Hill's other residents, the students could enjoy the best of two worlds—urban and suburban.

Socially prominent adults in Chestnut Hill founded the first of several exclusive clubs during the early suburban period, the Chestnut Hill Agricultural Society, incorporated in 1857 by an act of the state legislature. Its members purchased a five-acre tract on West Springfield Avenue that was not far from the future Wissahickon Inn. Its first president was the ubiquitous Owen Sheridan, with mill owner Charles Megargee as vice-president and merchant Daniel Brady as secretary. Membership was limited to 150. Far from being devoted to genuine agricultural subjects, the organization was something of an early day country club. A description of the new club in the \textit{Germanstown Telegraph} underlined the exclusionary nature of the Agricultural Society:

> A number of wealthy gentlemen have purchased a tract a little southward of Chestnut Hill and have enrolled themselves into a club or company. . . . The
select character of the company is guaranteed by balloting for every stockholder—two negative votes being sufficient to exclude the applicant for membership.72

The article went on to say that each member might bring his family to the grounds and "mansion" on the site, where a "first-class steward" was on hand to serve meals or refreshments.73 But most striking of all to the reader more than a century later, at a time when suburbanites are often apologetic or even defensive about their privileges, is the flagrant description in a local newspaper of the club's discriminatory practices.

Thus, by the mid-1880s North Chestnut Hill was a successful suburb in the far northwestern corner of Philadelphia. It was complete with dozens of romantic villas, private schools, a fashionable Episcopal church, an exclusive social club, and a convenient rail link to downtown, as well as supplies of gas and water. In Chestnut Hill prosperous Philadelphians could enjoy the wealth and culture of the city without having to live with its filth, disease, and poverty. Although they successfully identified with both city and suburb, their peaceful residences on the edge of the city allowed them and future counterparts to ignore many of the city's worst problems. At the same time, their drive for social and cultural homogeneity within Chestnut Hill would keep them from identifying with the interests of humbler residents and thereby contribute to community fragmentation on the Hill itself.