During the first three decades of the twentieth century, distinct social patterns had emerged in Chestnut Hill. Although demographic figures for 1930 provide a static and quantitative picture of these social contours, the personal accounts of men and women from these years add a vital dimension to understanding life on the Hill. They also help to illuminate the various loyalties of local residents, both between Chestnut Hill and the rest of Philadelphia, and within Chestnut Hill itself.

Divided as they were by occupation, religion, ethnic background, and social class, the inhabitants of Chestnut Hill lived in separate worlds during the first decades of the twentieth century. They attended different churches, went to different schools, courted and married within different groups, and spent their leisure time in dif-
different ways. There were thus four or five distinct communities in Chestnut Hill at the time—communities that would continue to exist to varying degrees into the 1990s.

Where Chestnut Hillers spent Sunday mornings and how they felt about other religious groups give one indication of how they viewed their own and the other worlds of Chestnut Hill. The two Episcopal churches, St. Paul’s in North Chestnut Hill and St. Martin’s on the West Side, attracted more upper- and upper-middle-class residents than any other denomination. Of the two, St. Paul’s was and remains the more uniformly upper class.1 This was particularly evident in the 1920s. In 1924, St. Paul’s chose the Reverend Malcolm E. Peabody to be its rector. He was the son of the Reverend Endicott Peabody, famed headmaster of Groton School and the very
epitome of the Episcopal establishment in America. Four years later, St. Paul’s laid the cornerstone for a splendid new Gothic Revival church, designed by Chestnut Hill architect Clarence C. Zantzinger. St. Martin’s, by contrast, almost failed during the 1920s after rector’s warden Samuel F. Houston insisted on selecting a former army chaplain as rector in 1919. Unfortunately, the man had been born and reared in rural Alabama and was not well liked by his upper-crust parishioners. Eventually, the vestry, with support from the bishop, forced him to resign, yet another example of how influential Chestnut Hillers were able to have their way with higher authorities, in this case ecclesiastical ones.²

The Presbyterian church also attracted a number of prominent Chestnut Hillers. It, too, was an established denomination, having originated in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. However, the local Presbyterians had suffered a split in 1889, when a group from the First Presbyterian Church had bolted to form Trinity Presbyterian Church, with new facilities, now demolished, on the northwest corner of Germantown Avenue and Gravers Lane (known in 1990 as the Jones Oldsmobile site). After a series of protracted negotiations, the two congregations reunited in 1929 as the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, and following World War II they erected a large, attractive stone building just north of the Chestnut Hill Hospital on Germantown Avenue. Although there is no documentary explanation for this split, older members of the congregation attribute it largely to social cleavages. According to this explanation, less prominent members of the faith, some of them servants of Scotch-Irish background, charged that the more well-to-do brethren were running the church too much to suit themselves. Angry at the constant slights, humbler members of the congregation left the fold and started Trinity.³ If this account is more or less true, it is one of at least two local examples of how social divisions were substantial enough to create serious problems in individual churches.

The other example of social disruptions at church occurred among the Hill’s Roman Catholics when Italians began to arrive in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only to find that Our Mother of Consolation (OMC) was dominated by an Irish clergy and
Irish parishioners. Not speaking any English at first, the local Italians did not even have a priest to whom they could confess. As a result, some Italians did not bother to go to church at all, and many refused to send their children to the "Irish nuns" at the parish school. Had there been more Italians in Chestnut Hill, they probably would have tried to start their own "national parish," as Italians and other ethnic groups did all over Philadelphia at the time.

Relations among the Protestant denominations in Chestnut Hill were generally cordial. Indeed, some individuals remember that they thought nothing of attending the youth group at another church, especially if it seemed more interesting than their own. But there was considerable ill feeling between Protestants and Catholics, and by both of them against Jews.

Local Catholics continued to remember attempts by the Know-Nothings to keep them from building a church in Chestnut Hill, long after the events were forgotten by Protestants. They also harbored considerable misgivings about the theology and spiritual standing of Protestants. Reflecting on his experience in the 1920s and 1930s, one Catholic remarked:
Back in those days, the Protestant was a "Protester." We all thought you were no good if you went to St. Paul’s [Episcopal]. . . . We weren't even allowed to go to any services in a Protestant Church. I mean the nuns, and the priests, and my family, too, [wouldn't allow it]. . . . If one of your playmates died and was being buried from St. Paul’s or the Presbyterian Church, you dared not step your foot on those premises. . . . I never could understand it, but I had to follow the rules. . . .

Joseph McLaughlin recalled that his membership in a Boy Scout troop that met at St. Martin-in-the-Fields caused him trouble with the principal at OMC’s parish school:

I guess we were in the scouts a couple of years and one day the Mother Superior sent for me . . . . and she wanted to know what Boy Scouting was about. . . . When it came to the climax she [asked], "Have they tried to convert you?"

Another Catholic, who did not want to be identified, also related her childhood feelings about Protestants:

I remember going past Jenks [public] School on the way home [from OMC] and praying for all those poor children in there because they really didn’t know [the truth]. . . . When I look back on that I can laugh and hope that I didn’t show that kind of prejudice to anyone.

From the Protestant side, Henry Disston II recounted how his parents objected when they discovered that two servants were in the habit of taking him to the Catholic Church with them:

The Irish maid and the Irish nurse . . . spent a lot of time with me, and at tea time they would take me down into [their] dining quarters off the kitchen and we would have tea and Irish bread with caraway seeds. And when they’d want to go to Our Mother of Consolation . . . they would sneak me off with them. . . . My mother and father found out and read the riot act to them. In those days Roman Catholics and Episcopalians were a little more divided than today. . . .

Many Protestants were prejudiced against Catholics because they associated the church with the working and servant classes in Chestnut Hill. They also criticized Catholics for "obeying orders from the pope" and "not thinking for themselves" in religious matters. Some
of the more prejudiced Protestants also vented themselves verbally against the Sisters of Saint Joseph, whose mother house was at the foot of the Chestnut Hill College campus. Referring to the creek that runs through the grounds, they dubbed the nuns “witches of the Wissahickon.”

Out of ignorance more than prejudice, many local Protestants did not even realize that the nuns operated a four-year liberal arts college on the site. If they thought about Chestnut Hill College at all, they supposed that it was some sort of indoctrination program for new nuns. Even in 1990, residents of Chestnut Hill would be introduced to faculty members from the college and, upon meeting them again, would ask, “How is everything over at Chestnut Hill Academy,” thereby revealing that they were still only vaguely aware of the college’s existence. Historian John Lukacs, who has taught at the college since 1947, contends that certain Chestnut Hillers have maintained an almost “willful ignorance of the college.”

Sister Mary Julia Daley, who has lived at the college for nearly sixty years, reflected at length on this isolation of the sisters and the college, and attributed some of it to the nuns’ way of life:

I came here when I was 26 years old. So I’ve had my entire life here. . . . I think, on the whole, [that] we weren’t and still aren’t . . . acceptable. And I can understand it. You see, there is a great deal of blue blood in Chestnut Hill. They are elegant people and historically associated with the founding of the city, and we just did not move in that class of society. And when we were nuns in those days, it was less possible for us than it is now . . . to go out. . . . We had rules . . . that kept us out of public life. . . . Because of not knowing what we could do and not do, there was this feeling, “We don’t understand the nuns and we don’t know what they can do.” And so that was an obstacle.¹¹

Chestnut Hillers have been more reluctant to talk about prejudice against Jews, perhaps because of the shame that many have felt about anti-Semitism in the aftermath of World War II and the Nazi Holocaust. One individual, who for many years has been associated with Chestnut Hill Academy in various capacities, deplored the way in which local realtors tried to discourage Jewish families from settling on the Hill:
The real estate agents really made an effort not to sell to Jews in those days. [The prospective Jewish buyer, after looking over a house, would say, “Do you think that I and my family would be happy here?” And that was an opportunity for him to find out and for the agent to say, “No, I don’t think you would be.”]

He also related that during his student days the local hotel keepers would not let rooms to Jews, and that this caused considerable trouble at Chestnut Hill Academy when parents with German (and seemingly Jewish) last names were turned down for reservations at local hotels. It apparently never occurred to school officials that one way to deal with this situation was to protest against the anti-Semitic practices of hotels in Chestnut Hill.

Distinct school populations also marked the Chestnut Hill experience during the early decades of the twentieth century and continue to exist at the time of this writing. Upper- and upper-middle-class parents usually sent their children to one of the local private
schools, such as Springside for girls or Chestnut Hill Academy for boys. Another popular school among this set was Miss Catherina Zara's, now defunct, which took both boys and girls in the early grades, and girls alone in the upper elementary years. Then there were some parents who preferred private schools elsewhere in Philadelphia, such as Episcopal Academy, which was then downtown, or Germantown Academy and William Penn Charter School in Germantown—all of which were exclusively male. There were also the coeducational Quaker schools, such as Germantown Friends.

Very few children from Chestnut Hill went to private schools on the Main Line, however, a custom that was and is reciprocated by youngsters on the Main Line, who seldom cross the Schuykill River and Wissahickon Creek to attend schools in Chestnut Hill. Some have attributed this pattern to a paucity of bridges across the Schuy-
kill and Wissahickon, but others have pointed to a polite but very real social rivalry between Chestnut Hill and the Main Line.

There were also those parents who sent their sons off to New England boarding schools at age twelve or thirteen. Philadelphians had never taken to this tradition as enthusiastically as their Yankee counterparts, preferring to keep their children at home in day schools. But some of the wealthier families in Philadelphia (and Chestnut Hill) did adopt the boarding school tradition. Without question, the most favored of these for boys were St. Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire, and the St. George’s School in Newport, Rhode Island, both run as closely as possible along the lines of an English “public” (in reality, private) school.14

After secondary school, well-to-do Chestnut Hillers sent their sons to a select list of colleges, confined for the most part to the University of Pennsylvania, Haverford, Swarthmore, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Princeton had the greatest prestige among Philadelphians at the time. For aspiring lawyers, many believed that the perfect combination was an undergraduate degree from Princeton and a law degree from Penn. Until after World War II, Chestnut Hill women generally did not go to college. Because their main missions in life were thought to be rearing children and superintending a large household, college seemed pointless.15

Catholic children in Chestnut Hill attended their own set of schools. Most went to the parish school at OMC, but those who lived below Springfield Avenue were members of Holy Cross parish in Mount Airy, a somewhat arbitrary decision made by the archdiocese that had the effect of splitting the Hill’s Catholic population. However, some of the more prosperous Catholics sent their children to private academies run by religious orders. The Sisters of St. Joseph have operated two such elementary schools in Chestnut Hill: Norwood for boys and Fontbonne for girls. They also have run a secondary school for girls known as Mount Saint Joseph’s Academy. Catholic boys could commute to LaSalle High School, run by the Christian Brothers, to St. Joseph’s Preparatory School, operated by the Jesuits, or to Roman Catholic High.16

Those who attended the Jenks Public Elementary School in
Chestnut Hill, and its predecessor, the Gilbert School, seem to have been largely Italians and not-so-wealthy Protestants. After graduating from Jenks, these children went on to Germantown High School. Although Jenks was an attractive and well-equipped facility built in the early 1920s, upper- and upper-middle-class Chestnut Hillers generally would not consider it for their children. This was partly because of a weak public school tradition in Philadelphia, probably because the first public schools, with the exception of Central High, had been part of a drive to educate the poor. Sending one’s children to the proper private schools would also help to ensure that they mixed with youngsters of their own background. In any case, there were never enough students from Chestnut Hill to fill Jenks School, forcing authorities to bring children in from neighborhoods beyond the Hill.

As a consequence of these different school traditions, children belonged to five educational groups in Chestnut Hill: private day schools, private boarding schools, private Catholic schools, Catholic
parish schools, and the local public schools. It was thus entirely possible for youngsters growing up within several blocks of one another to never meet in school—or anywhere else on the Hill. This fact, combined with strict courtship rules, meant that there was little chance that they would marry someone of a different background.

The most elaborate courtship customs were practiced by the upper classes in Chestnut Hill. Here parents presided over an elaborate process that began its familiar course as soon as a daughter was born. In some families, a special trip was made to Caldwell’s jewelry store in downtown Philadelphia (which maintained registries for weddings, coming-out parties, and the like), within several weeks of the baby’s birth in order to reserve a date for the child’s coming-out party—a full eighteen years in advance. If this were not done right away, they worried, all the more attractive dates on the social calendar would be spoken for.

The next step was securing an invitation to Miss Louise Lockwood’s dancing class at the Philadelphia Cricket Club. Boys and girls from the best families could expect to go as a matter of course, but other parents might have to worry a bit. For them it was essential to enroll their children in one of the Hill’s private academies; the schools sent a list of youngsters to a committee of mothers, who chose from among them for the dancing class.\(^\text{17}\)

After Miss Lockwood retired in the 1940s, she was succeeded by Miss Mary Waln Graham and later by Margaret Harris Dale, the latter a granddaughter of the former, long-time rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, J. Andrews Harris. Mrs. Dale remained head of the dancing class until the mid-1970s.\(^\text{18}\)

Children in grades three through six danced on Wednesday afternoons; the older children went on Friday evenings. Most of them were already familiar with the Cricket Club’s row of neocolonial pavilions, but they must have felt awkward at first in the Georgian Revival ballroom, with its large Palladian doorways that opened onto the terraces and tennis courts beyond. Here they were supposed to master the art of formal dancing, along with the finer points of ballroom etiquette.\(^\text{19}\)

Mary Wickham Porcher Bond, who went to Miss Lockwood’s during the early years of the century, remembered the class vividly:
We all went to dancing class, which the boys hated and the girls loved. We'd walk over in every-day shoes, and we always had a pretty little silk bag to carry our slippers in, and when we got to the Cricket Club we'd put on our patent leather slippers . . . and we had a wonderful time.20

After completing Miss Lockwood's sequence, the youngsters graduated to the yet older "Friday Evening" and then to the "Saturday Evening" classes downtown at the Bellevue Hotel (and later the Warwick Hotel), conducted first by a Mrs. Wurts and later by Mrs. E. Naudain Duer. There they mixed with social contemporaries from the Main Line and other communities. After three years at the "in town" subscription classes, a young lady was ready for her debut.

The debut, or coming-out party, had originated in England and France, when young ladies were presented for the first time at court. The practice had been adopted and simplified by colonial Philadelphians and had continued ever since. Its purpose was twofold: to introduce young women to socially prominent Philadelphians of the older generation, and to find a mate among the most recent crop of suitors. If all went well, she fell in love, got married, and began the process all over again of rearing children and introducing them into polite society.

The girls typically came out at age eighteen. A round of parties and balls began in the fall, with a flurry of events clustering around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. The pace slowed during the winter months and then picked up again in the late spring. Parents or friends might sponsor a variety of events, all with their own set hours and activities. There were tea dances in the late afternoon, followed by dinners, dinner dances, and balls in the late evening. At the height of the season, the more popular debutantes went from one party to another and arrived home not so early the next morning. After several hours of sleep, they were up and preparing for the next round of dining and dancing.

A bachelor's role in the coming-out process was not so well defined. The young ladies were presented and the men were there to meet and court them. Parents always tried to round up more boys than girls, so that each debutante had numerous partners in the course of an evening. If there were an equivalent to the debut for young gentlemen, it would be an invitation to join the First City
Troop, a Philadelphia cavalry unit that dates back to the eighteenth century. 21

A coming-out party could be a major ordeal for the girl's family, and most engaged a social secretary to help. She arranged the details and provided the all-important list of acceptable young men. Chestnut Hill parents called on the indispensable services of Mrs. J. Edward MacMullan or Mrs. Wirt L. Thompson. As Emily Rivinus Bregy remembered it:

Mrs. MacMullan and Mrs. Thompson were the social hostesses [i.e., social secretaries] of Philadelphia, and whatever Mrs. MacMullan said went and whatever Mrs. Thompson said went. They would give you a list of all the eligible bachelors because you didn't know all those people.

Mrs. Thompson was a lady herself—and a very close friend of my mother and father—who fell on hard times and got into this business of being a social hostess... You called them and said, "The date is the 14th of June, and would you see that you line up Jimmy Duffy [the caterer], and line up Albers [parking service], and will you line up Robertson's for the flowers?" They arranged for all that. And if a boy got drunk at a party—and they used to get drunk at a lot of parties—they were crossed off the list or else you were told, "He's no good..." And if they did anything else, or if their parents weren't quite up to it, they just weren't on those lists. So they were in charge. They had a lot of power. 22

Some of the debutante balls were elaborate. Mary Bond described one such affair during the 1916 season:

[It was on] the roof garden of the Bellevue... The scene was a hunt, and all the waiters had to dress in hunt clothes. And they had live horses! They had stalls up there with straw in them and we could lean over a fence... and pat [them]. I always wondered how they got the horses up there in the Bellevue elevators...

At the Assembly [Ball] there was always plenty to eat. There were eggs and champagne. When the champagne showed up the fights began and the boys would rush from table to table trying to snatch a bottle away... 23

Italian parents in Chestnut Hill were just as strict in their own way about courtship as were the socially prominent families. They expected their children to marry others of Italian descent and went to great lengths to bring about the desired results. The experience of
Joseph Galante, owner of a local food market, who came to Chestnut Hill from his native Sicily as a child. Photo by author, 1985.

Joseph Galante, who came as a boy from Sicily in 1914, was fairly typical:

The family was quite strict. The family—my father—had friends that had children and this was the way of meeting young girls and young fellows. . . . We were supposed to go out with the daughters of my father’s friends from South Philadelphia or West Philadelphia. . . . And then, of course, they tried the matchmakers. But it didn’t work. . . . I married an American girl of German background. [My parents] didn’t like it. . . . But after . . . our first child was born, that mellowed everything.  

Galante’s rebellion was unusual, because for decades the Hill’s Italians generally married within their own set. Some even went back to ancestral villages to find wives, and the practice continued to some degree into the post–World War II period. Sante Romano, a popular tailor in Chestnut Hill, was one who followed this tradition. He and a friend went back to Italy in the summer of 1955, and both returned married:

We rented a car and we traveled all over Italy and then we decided that we wanted to get married. And we fortunately, I guess, had met two nice girls.
In the same town—you know how it is—everybody knows each other’s family. And this young woman was available and I asked for the hand. I knew her when she was young. I knew the family. . . . And then we just went together for four months and we got married.26

Youngsters of middle-class and non-Italian working-class backgrounds seemed to have the most freedom in courting, at least in the 1920s and 1930s. Joseph McLaughlin remembered that he and others met girls on the number 23 trolley while on their way to Roman Catholic High downtown:

You got to be social with them. They knew who you were and you knew where they were from. The problem was that there wasn’t enough money around [during the depression]. A lot of us would ask them for a date and they’d say, “I’ll see you inside.”26

Others spoke of fraternity and sorority dances at Germantown High or of big-band entertainments at Sunnybrook, outside Pottstown.27

The ways in which people spent their leisure time also reflected the distinctions among the different communities of Chestnut Hill. Wealthier and more socially prominent residents, of course, had the most time to spare for such activities, and many of their free hours were devoted to sports. These sports, like their homes, schools, and personal manners, continued to be influenced by British models.

In addition to an affection for British ways, upper-class Chestnut Hillers and their counterparts in other American suburbs had also taken to sports in the nineteenth century as a part of the romantic/transcendental ideal. For it was not enough merely to escape from the crime and disease of the city; one also needed to counteract the physical degeneration that resulted from too much sedentary office work. Some religious spokesmen in England and America even associated physical weakness with sin and promoted what has come to be known as “muscular Christianity.” These men recommended team sports in particular, at school and later in adult life, so that players could build their bodies at the same time that they learned the values of team spirit and fair play.28

One such example was cricket, which was played in Chestnut Hill until the 1920s, after which faster-paced team sports replaced it. An-
other British import on the Hill, and in other elite suburbs, was golf. Golf was originally a Scottish game and was so closely identified with Scotland that American golfers commonly donned woolen caps and tweed suits with knickers, or the cotton equivalents in warm weather, when they went onto the links. Playing golf gave an individual some social distinction, because it was played on courses that were expensive to build and maintain, and that until recently belonged almost exclusively to private country clubs. The Philadelphia Cricket Club built its first golf course in 1895, and in 1905 the club held the first in a series of national golf tournaments, including the United States Open in 1907 and 1910. In 1922, the cricket club inaugurated a much larger course outside Flourtown. The older greens remained in Chestnut Hill, but by 1990 were reduced to a single nine-hole course.
Many prominent Chestnut Hillers also joined the Sunnybrook Golf Club, located initially in Springfield Township near Oreland and later in Whitemarsh Township near Militia Hill.  

Prosperous Chestnut Hillers likewise adopted the British affection for tennis, another expensive sport that required special equipment and well-tended courts. Local residents started a Chestnut Hill Tennis Club in the mid-1880s, with courts somewhere along Bethlehem Pike. Among its early members were Alexander W. Biddle, Eli K. Price, Jr., and Mrs. J. Willis Martin. In 1895 the club began holding an annual "open tournament." The Cricket Club also built tennis courts and a clubhouse in 1909, replacing much smaller facilities that had been built across the street near the Wissahickon Inn in the late nineteenth century. For decades the Cricket Club hosted important competitions, such as the Women's National Tennis Tournament, the Women's Atlantic Seaboard Tournament, and the Girls National Tournament.  

The creation of such tennis, cricket, and golf clubs was itself an integral part of the suburban ideal. The club grounds—particularly the golf courses—were planted to look like romantic parks where members could enjoy being in the out-of-doors—hence the name "country club." In the future the various clubs' open spaces would play an important role in maintaining the semirural atmosphere of Chestnut Hill.  

Even more than golf or tennis, the mania for fox hunting among a few of the wealthiest residents demonstrated an attachment to British sporting life among upper-class Chestnut Hillers. Requiring wealth, leisure, and abundant land, it was the supreme gentleman's sport on both sides of the Atlantic. As early as 1891, upper-class residents from Chestnut Hill helped to organize the Pennbrook Hunt, which met on John R. Fell's estate near Fort Washington. In order to ensure authenticity, the group imported a dozen hounds from England. By the early twentieth century, Chestnut Hillers were participating in the Whitemarsh Valley Hunt, held on the estate of George D. Widener, located just north of Chestnut Hill and now known as Erdenheim Farms. A hunt held there in October 1925 was described by the Chestnut Hill and Mount Airy Herald:
Throng of men and women prominently identified in social, club, financial, and professional circles, were augmented by many of the hunting set, from New York, Long Island, Washington and Baltimore. . . . Several officials . . . met on horseback, in their pink riding coats.52

Yet another sign of wealth and leisure among Chestnut Hillers was their penchant for travel abroad. Every summer the newspapers were full of the comings and goings of local residents to England or the Continent. Typical of these was an obsequious notice in the Germantown Telegraph in July 1930. It projected a stay at an English country house, followed by leisurely automobile trips through Scotland and southern Europe:

Mrs. J. Wilmer Biddle, of “Binderton House,” Chestnut Hill, who sailed for Europe last Saturday on the Belgenland with her daughters . . . will, upon her arrival in England, go to Henley-on-Thames to be the guest of her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Gwynne Kepple-Palmer. Later Mrs. Biddle and her daughter will visit Scotland and then will motor through southern Europe before returning about October 1.53

In its own polite way, the article attributed every characteristic of upper-class life to the Biddles: enough wealth and leisure to undertake a prolonged visit to England and the Continent; marriage of a
Francis and James Bond (standing) building a sand castle at the New Jersey shore, 1905. James Bond would later wed Mary W. Porcher of Chestnut Hill. Ian Fleming would take the name for his fictional "Agent 007" from this James Bond. Author's collection.

daughter into the English upper class; and attendance at the aristocratic Henley Royal Regatta.

If other prosperous Chestnut Hillers did not join the summer exodus to Europe, it was likely that they would spend July and August in Maine. Although local residents went to several spots on the Maine coast, Northeast Harbor on Mount Desert Island was the most proper place to go—so much so that it was dubbed "Philadelphia on the rocks." There they could escape the semitropical heat of many Philadelphia summers.54

For a large and well-equipped household, the annual move to Maine was a major undertaking. Dr. George Woodward's son Stanley remembered the whole experience with some amusement: "We were all packed off—family, cook, maids, horses, carriages, coachmen, . . . a sweet grandmother, and [the nurse] Miss Blong."55 When Stanley's uncle, Samuel F. Houston, went off to Maine with his family, he took along a couple of Druim Moir cows so that the children's digestion would not be upset by strange milk.56

Members of Chestnut Hill's working class, as might be expected, spent their summers very differently, back in Chestnut Hill. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, boys swam behind the aban-
donden mill dams along the Wissahickon. They and their families also went picnicking in the Wissahickon woods on Sundays or, if they were lucky, visited any of several soda fountains along Germantown Avenue. During the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, there was the annual July excursion by rail to Atlantic City, organized by the Chestnut Hill Businessmen's Association.57

Another treat for those left behind in Chestnut Hill was a short trip to White City, an amusement park in nearby Erdenheim at the northwest corner of Bethlehem Pike and Paper Mill Road. Also known as Chestnut Hill Park, this pleasure center was one of many trolley-car parks that were built at the ends of trolley lines all over the country as a way of attracting riders on evenings and weekends. Centered by a small lake and covering about sixteen acres, White City belonged to H. B. Auchey, who later owned the famous Philadelphia Toboggan Company, which made high-quality carousels and other amusement rides.

Many well-to-do inhabitants of Chestnut Hill objected to the park, claiming that it brought a rowdy group of visitors through the Hill. Thus, in early 1912 a syndicate of wealthy local residents, made up of George C. Thomas, Jr., Charles N. Welsh, Wilson Potter, and
Jay Cook III, bought the property for approximately $500,000 and demolished the park. They maintained that the park "lowered the tone of the entire suburb; that it depreciated the value of the land and that its existence kept desirable persons away from Chestnut Hill." This was another example of a group of Chestnut Hillers using their wealth and influence to control development in or around their community. The men planned to use the park site to build "high class houses." For unexplained reasons, these were never built, and in 1923 they sold the land to Springfield Township as the location for a new public high school. All that remains of the park is the miniature lake along Montgomery Avenue.

During the winter months, less prosperous Chestnut Hillers could attend the movies, at least after July 1914, when the Belvedere Theater opened its doors. Ten years later the Chestnut Hill Theater, another movie house, was established at 8320 Germantown Avenue. There were also frequent dances on the second floor of Joslin’s Hall at 8434 Germantown Avenue, a building that now houses the offices of the Chestnut Hill Community Association and the Chestnut Hill Local.

Members of Chestnut Hill’s middle and working classes could join a variety of clubs. In 1889, for example, the Knights of Pythias built a new lodge hall at Highland and Germantown avenues. The following year, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, an Irish fraternal order, opened a branch in Chestnut Hill. Local Italians formed their own clubs. In 1924, Italians from northern Italy, most of them quarriers and stone masons who were born in or around the village of Pofabbrò, some forty miles north of Venice, founded the Venetian Club in an old house at 8030 Germantown Avenue. In 1930 they erected a three-story addition to the front of the structure (still standing), equipped with a bowling alley, lodge and game rooms, and a large ballroom with stage on the upper floor. Considering themselves to be distinctly different from the southern Italians on the Hill, many of whom made their livings as gardeners, they excluded the latter from membership. The southern Italians responded by forming their own Bocce Club, whose present headquarters are on East Hartwell Lane.

In addition to this split within the Italian community, there was
continuing friction between the Irish and Italians on the Hill. Besides Italian resentment over Irish domination of the local Catholic church, there were name callings and fistfights between Irish and Italian boys. Both groups, however, could agree on disliking individuals whom they considered to be snobs or social climbers in North Chestnut Hill and the West Side. These were not people who already belonged to the Hill's upper class; rather, they were those who desperately wanted to break into it or who pretended to belong. East Siders took to calling them "half-cuts," meaning people who were "phony" or "a cut below" the real upper class. Over time, however, this definition became less precise and was used in a mildly derogatory way to describe anyone who did not live on the East Side—anyone who was not "none of us."

Nobody whom the author interviewed in North Chestnut Hill or the West Side had ever heard of the term half-cut. This is not surprising, because Chestnut Hillers usually have known very little about the real lives and thoughts of workers and domestic servants in their midst—although they sometimes liked to think that they did. In contrast, East Siders knew (and still know) a great deal about upper- and upper-middle-class residents, but usually will not discuss it outside their own trusted circle, a habit of domestic servants in particular, who proved the most difficult to interview.

Such distinct ways of viewing themselves and others reveal that there were several communities within Chestnut Hill during the first decades of the twentieth century. Although each of these groups depended to some degree on the others, and although there was little outward hostility, this suburban neighborhood in the northwest corner of Philadelphia did not function as an integrated community. Powerful effects of these different worlds would influence events for decades to come.