World War II and the immediate postwar period brought many changes to the suburb in the city, although some of them would not emerge entirely for a number of years. These included higher taxes, economic reforms, the subdivision of larger estates, the growth of automobile suburbs and drive-in shopping centers in adjoining Montgomery County, and the partial decay and subsequent revival of Chestnut Hill's own shopping district. In these respects Chestnut Hill became less isolated and in the process more likely to be affected by conditions in surrounding communities. Its semi-isolation on the borders of the city was coming more and more to an end, although it would take several decades for many residents to realize it and to begin facing its implications.

At the same time the identification of Chestnut Hillers with res-
idents in nearby Mount Airy and Germantown began to erode as inhabitants of the Hill perceived that these communities were in decline. The decay of these other suburban neighborhoods within the city became symptomatic to many Chestnut Hillers of a more general decline in Philadelphia. Over the next four decades, mounting problems in the city below, combined with the rise of new automobile suburbs beyond Chestnut Hill, would erode though not destroy the dual identity with suburb and city that had characterized life in Chestnut Hill since the middle of the nineteenth century.

In response to these changes, many of them perceived as threats, civic-minded residents of Chestnut Hill organized themselves more effectively than ever before and paved the way for suburban quasi government a decade or two later. In the process, socially prominent residents continued to see themselves as talented and capable individuals who could employ reason, persistence, common sense, and local organization to solve problems in their community, much as progressive leaders had done a generation before. This self-confidence was reinforced by the fact that Chestnut Hill remained home to many leaders on the local and national level, some of whom were responsible for a new city charter in Philadelphia and an ambitious commitment to urban renewal in the City of Brotherly Love.

Many of the forces bringing change to Chestnut Hill in this post-war period were economic and demographic. For example, rising federal income taxes, increasing real estate taxes, and the disappearance of domestic servants all contributed to the subdivision of large estates on the Hill, and to the more intense development of these properties. Steeply graduated tax rates on the wealthy during World War II, for example, and relatively high taxes thereafter left less money for maintaining large properties than in the past. During the 1930s, the city of Philadelphia also changed the property tax assessments for large estates in Chestnut Hill, now defining them as residential properties rather than as undeveloped land, which had been their designation in the past, and raising their assessments accordingly.

At the same time, social and economic factors over several decades, culminating with the war itself, made servants more expensive and difficult to find. One factor was the decision to limit immigration
severely in the early 1920s, resulting in a declining supply of recent arrivals, who had gone into domestic service in great numbers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ironically, these immigration restrictions had been urged by the very WASP establishment that depended upon a pool of cheap immigrant labor for its own way of life. New Deal labor legislation, such as federal minimum wage laws and the right to form labor unions, would also help to raise wage levels throughout the economy—including, indirectly, the remuneration of servants. But the new opportunities during and after the war were what truly began to decimate the servant class. Young female servants found that they could earn much higher wages in Philadelphia's wartime defense industries than they could scrubbing floors or preparing and serving meals in some Chestnut Hill home. They could now afford to live on their own and enjoy the accompanying personal freedom.

World War II meant military service for young male servants and the sons of older servants. After the war, these veterans could go to college or vocational school with all expenses paid by the G.I. Bill. This same legislation made them eligible for low-interest loans to start their own business or to buy a new house. Thus for many young servants, or the children of servants, the war provided undreamed opportunities. Above all, they did not have to return to Chestnut Hill and take up their old lives. One man, who was particularly bitter about how his parents had been treated as domestic servants, wrote the author that even being killed or maimed in battle was better than a servant’s life in Chestnut Hill:

My father and mother worked for several families after arriving from Ireland in 1911. My father stayed with [one Chestnut Hill family] for 47 years. The only relief he had, he often said, came during the years he spent in the army in the First World War... I'm glad I left and took a few hits in World War II. Uncle Sam was a better employer.1

Another man, whose father had been a chauffeur for many years on the Hill, remembered that his father’s employer never took the slightest interest in their family. Even when one of the young children died, the mistress of the household expected the chauffeur/father to
bring the car around to the house within an hour of the dead boy’s funeral. Other servants, or the children of servants, recalled that some large households provided only one bathroom for a dozen or more servants and then complained if their domestics did not bathe every day.

Such accounts would have come as a shock to many wealthy Chestnut Hillers, who wanted to believe that their servants were largely contented with their lot. Certain upper-class residents even hoped that local domestics might become something of a hereditary class in America whose descendants would be happy to work as servants for generations. Knowing of such attitudes, some men returning to the area after the war decided to settle in some community near Chestnut Hill, such as Flourtown or Ambler, where they would not be marked for life as the gardener’s or chauffeur’s son, no matter what they did in their own right. “The servant problem,” and especially the shortage of servants, became constant topics of polite conversation in Chestnut Hill during the war and for decades thereafter.

Several of Chestnut Hill’s large estates began to undergo significant changes, including Henry Howard Houston’s Druim Moir, now the home of his son, Samuel F. Houston; and the two adjoining estates, Stonehurst and Krisheim, that belonged to the elder Houston’s daughters, Sallie Henry and Gertrude Woodward, respectively. In March 1942, just three months after Pearl Harbor, Samuel Houston wrote to his daughter, Eleanor Houston Smith, that he intended to tear off the tower and third floor of Druim Moir in order to reduce his tax burden and to make the house easier to dispose of after his death. Despite protests from Eleanor about the impending shortages of building materials and increasing wartime labor costs, he completed his renovation plans that summer. Following Houston’s death in 1952, his heirs gave Druim Moir to the Episcopal church as a home for retired clergy.

Sallie Henry’s mansion next door at Stonehurst had been demolished by her children after her death in 1938. None of them wanted to live in it or to continue paying the high property taxes. In the early 1950s they engaged the architect Oscar Stonorov to build a series of apartments and townhouses on the grounds.
Krisheim, whose grounds directly abutted the Stonehurst property, Gertude Woodward was furious when she realized what the Henry heirs were doing. She hated to see the destruction of so much open land, believing that it was a betrayal of her father’s wish to maintain a rural atmosphere on the far West Side of Chestnut Hill. Defending his family’s actions, her nephew-in-law, Donald D. Dodge, tried to explain their decision within the context of new demographic realities: “Growth of populations surrounding great cities simply does not stand still; our whole manner of life has been changed by the automobile.” Dodge went on to say that Henry Howard Houston himself, “being the practical man that he was,” would have understood such changes and the need for alternative uses of the land. Although she was never really happy about the resultant Cherokee development, Gertrude eventually reconciled herself to the inevitable. Following her death in 1961, the Woodward children gave Krisheim to the Presbyterian church for a conference center.

As it turned out, all three estates belonging to the Houston/Henry/Woodward heirs were developed in ways that preserved some open land. This was particularly true at Krisheim, where no additional building occurred in front of the house or directly across McCallum Street near the stables and former vegetable gardens. The Cherokee development at Stonehurst meant dozens of new structures, but they were carefully sited within a wooded landscape that produced a park-like setting for the dwellings. At Druim Moir the grounds fronting the property remained open and undisturbed until the late 1950s, when Springside School was built along Cherokee Street, although much open lawn remained between the school and Druim Moir itself.

It was on the far East Side of Chestnut Hill, however, that post-war pressures to sell and develop large estates resulted in the greatest demographic changes for the community. In the early 1950s, the sale and development of the Randal Morgan estate alerted Chestnut Hillers as nothing else could have that the world of large country estates was coming to an end, and that they would have to confront the question of land development and land-use planning more seriously than ever before. Once the Morgan tract was developed, it added more than 2,000 individuals to the local population, it greatly increased
traffic congestion, and it introduced the first shopping center and high-rise apartment building into the community. Chestnut Hillers also found that they had to cope for the first time with powerful absentee landlords, individuals whose interests did not always coincide with the locals’ view of the community’s welfare. A generation later, in fact, the Morgan Tract development would become a major scene of criminal activity in Chestnut Hill. In the many protracted attempts to block the development of the tract, residents created a powerful community organization that later formed the basis for a quasi government in Chestnut Hill.

What Chestnut Hillers called the Morgan Tract (and later Market Square/Chestnut Hill Village) lay in the far southeastern corner of the community. Although most of the eighty-five acres were on the
Community Organization

Chestnut Hill side of Stenton Avenue, about one-third of the property lay outside the city limits in adjacent Springfield Township of Montgomery County. The estate was bounded on the west by the Reading (SEPTA’s Chestnut Hill-East) Railroad, on the south by Cresheim Valley Road, on the east by Pine Road, and on the north by Willow Grove Avenue. There was also a small parcel of land, known as the “dogleg,” that extended slightly north of Willow Grove Avenue between the railroad tracks and Crittenden Street. During the Civil War, the lower part of the property had been the site of the Mower Hospital.

About 1900 the tract was purchased by Randal Morgan (1853–1926), an extremely wealthy man who had made a fortune in oil. He was also general counsel for the United Gas Improvement Company, a powerful and often despised Philadelphia utility. Morgan built an impressive house facing Willow Grove Avenue, devoting the rest of the grounds to formal gardens and a working farm. Called Wyndmoor, the estate’s name eventually encompassed and replaced the older designation of Springfield Village, the small collection of shops and houses just east of Stenton Avenue. The whole residential section east of Stenton Avenue thus came to be known as Wyndmoor.

In 1950 the Morgan estate gave an option on the entire property to Temple University, which then planned to abandon its site in North Philadelphia and to build a new campus in Chestnut Hill. Upon learning of this intention, neighbors grew alarmed and entered into negotiations with Temple president Robert Johnson and others in order to work out a plan that would cause the least disruption to the residential neighborhood that bordered the Morgan Tract. In the process, residents established a group known as the East Chestnut Hill Neighbors. Its organizer was Joseph Pennington Straus (b. 1911), an attorney who then lived at 8210 Crittenden Street. Straus had grown up in a prominent family in West Philadelphia and had settled in Chestnut Hill twenty years earlier. After service in the navy during World War II, he returned to Chestnut Hill, where he became a community leader.

In the midst of the negotiations, Straus and the East Chestnut Hill group learned that Temple had changed its mind about building
a campus in Chestnut Hill and had decided to remain in North Philadelphia. Recent federal and state legislation had provided a mechanism for public funds, as well as the power to condemn adjoining properties and thereby to obtain the land that Temple needed for expansion around the existing site on North Broad Street. Under these changed circumstances, the university decided in February 1954 to transfer its option on the Morgan Tract to Mayer I. Blum, a well-known Philadelphia builder and member of the Temple board. The fact that this arrangement looked like a flagrant conflict of interest did not seem to bother either Blum or the other board members.\(^{11}\)

Blum's plan was to build an ambitious combination of six high-rise apartment buildings, an unspecified number of single-dwelling houses, and a 50,000-square-foot shopping center. According to some estimates this plan, which never materialized, would have added some 5,000 people to the approximately 9,000 residents of Chestnut Hill in the 1950s—an increase of about 70 percent. Because the Morgan property was then zoned for R-I, a residential classification that required at least 10,000 square feet of land around each property, Blum would need a special zoning ordinance from the Philadelphia City Council. Blum knew that the council would be reluctant to approve his precise plans if the community put up stiff opposition. He accordingly approached the Chestnut Hill Community Association in hopes of quieting community fears and of gaining their assent not to oppose the project at city hall.\(^{12}\)

The Chestnut Hill Community Association had been founded seven years before, in the fall of 1947, by a group of civic-minded residents who believed that other organizations were not as effective as they should have been in dealing with local problems. Its first presiding officer (then known as the chairman of the association) was Sidney B. Dexter (1896–1973). Dexter was a banker and member of Philadelphia's Committee of Seventy, in addition to being head of the city's Civil Service Commission for sixteen years.\(^{13}\) According to Dexter, many of the early members had been active in the Germantown Community Council, established in 1933–1934, an organization that had superseded and would later replace the G&CH Improve-
ment Association. Now they concluded “that Chestnut Hill was too remote from the center of the Germantown sphere of influence,” an indication that Chestnut Hillers were beginning to disassociate themselves from Germantown early in the postwar period.

Ironically, Dexter’s descriptions of the new organization’s goals were remarkably similar to those of the now nearly defunct G&CH Improvement Association, renamed in the early 1940s as the Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill Improvement Association in a renewed effort to show that it was interested in the welfare of all three communities. These goals were “to coordinate the efforts of the community in securing the improvements which were so much desired by the residents and business people of the Hill.”14 It almost sounded as if Dexter had the older improvement association in mind as he and others launched their new group. Dexter was also an active member of the local businessmen’s association, now called the Chestnut Hill and Mount Airy Businessmen’s Association. Thus on the level of both ideas and individuals, the new Chestnut Hill Community Association was connected, however loosely, with its predecessors in community improvement, a record of persistence that has been equaled by few urban communities in the nation.

The Community Association soon became a well-respected organization, in part because it was led by socially prominent members of the Hill. Of the first sixteen chairmen, or presidents as they were later called, all but five were listed in the Social Register. Even the five who were not listed, all but one of them male, were prosperous or highly successful professionals. Ten of the sixteen were lawyers and two were solid local merchants. There was one physician, one hospital administrator, and one banker. The only woman to serve as head of the organization before 1980 had studied architecture but did not practice her profession. Twelve of the sixteen were Episcopalians, one was a Quaker, one was a Presbyterian, one was a Unitarian, and one was a Roman Catholic, who had been reared a Quaker, but had converted to his wife’s faith. All these chairmen/presidents lived in the socially prestigious neighborhoods of North Chestnut Hill or the West Side. An examination of the names of those who served as board members before 1971 shows that nearly all of them resided in these
same sections of the Hill. In both 1961 and 1971, for example, only one of approximately thirty board members lived on the East Side of Chestnut Hill.

These backgrounds were very similar to those of the past leaders of Chestnut Hill's improvement organizations and civic groups. Like their predecessors, they sought primarily to maintain a pleasant suburban lifestyle, as they and their social counterparts defined it, within the city of Philadelphia.15

The early Community Association was run by a self-perpetuating board, an executive council of four, and a chairman selected by the board. Any individual could join the association by paying dues of two dollars per year, but members did not have any voting privileges. Under this arrangement, the group obtained a number of improvements for the Hill, with a particular focus on the Water Tower Recreation Center.16

It was the threat of Blum's ambitious plans for developing the Morgan Tract, however, that gave far greater visibility and force to the Community Association than it had enjoyed during its first half dozen years or so. The association chairman Alexander Hemphill, then controller of the city of Philadelphia, appointed a special Morgan Tract Committee to deal with the crisis. Its coordinator was Joseph Pennington Straus, who also continued to head the East Chestnut Hill Neighbors. Other members of the committee were Walter Miller, a manufacturer and fellow member of the East Chestnut Hill group; John Bodine, a prominent Chestnut Hiller and Philadelphia lawyer; George Woodward, Jr., who was now managing the family properties in Chestnut Hill; and Richard Stevens, also a lawyer. Hemphill and the Morgan Tract Committee then held public meetings on 10 March and 12 May 1954 to inform residents about what was transpiring. Hundreds of citizens descended on the Water Tower Recreation Center for these assemblies, believing that they faced the greatest upheaval in their community since the end of the war. In the meantime, the Morgan Tract Committee had held several discussions with Blum and Temple president Johnson.17

As a result of these meetings and consultations, the Community Association tentatively agreed to support three high-rise apartment
Joseph Pennington Straus addresses a large meeting of the Chestnut Hill Community Association on the subject of the Morgan Tract development, c. 1954. *Local.*

buildings (half the number that Blum had planned), for a total of 1,240 dwelling units, and a 50,000-square-foot shopping center. The remaining tract would have to be developed for individual family residences, each with at least a half acre of land. To ensure that any agreement would be legally binding on Blum, or on anyone else who might buy the property from him, the association insisted on “covenants running with the land.” Blum objected to this last provision because he feared that financing would be harder and more expensive to obtain, as lenders would worry that such covenants might make it difficult to sell the property if for some reason Blum defaulted on his loans. The result was an impasse. Blum became more and more frustrated and allowed his option on the Morgan property to expire in October 1954.¹⁸

More anxious than ever to dispose of the tract, Temple arranged to sell it in November 1954 to the Summit Construction Company, a subsidiary of Schafran Associates, whose central offices were in New York City. Now the community would have to deal with an absentee landlord who had no personal connections with either Philadelphia or Chestnut Hill. Just as worrisome were Summit’s even more ambitious plans for developing the tract. They wanted to construct
twelve eight-story apartment buildings that would house 1,250 families, in addition to a 100,000-square-foot shopping center and a 400,000-square-foot parking lot. Summit also insisted on placing the shopping center directly along Stenton Avenue, a plan that would obliterate the semirural atmosphere along the far east side of Chestnut Hill. It was also evident that such a large shopping center would be regional in character and not just a collection of shops to serve local residents.¹⁹

Needing local support for a zoning ordinance, Summit entered into negotiations with the Community Association's Morgan Tract Committee. The talks were protracted and dragged on throughout 1955, 1956, and 1957.²⁰ Finally, in May 1958, Summit Construction agreed to a compromise that included legally enforceable covenants "running with the land" that would be in effect for twenty-five years. The number of apartment units would be reduced slightly to 1,200 and the shopping center would be built, not on Stenton Avenue, but at the west end of the property along the railroad tracks. The center would be limited to 75,000 square feet, with a perimeter of trees and shrubs to screen it from Crittenden Street and Mermaid Lane. Flashing or protruding signs and drinking establishments were forbidden. At a mass meeting of some 800 Chestnut Hill residents on 12 May 1958, the Community Association approved this agreement over-
whelmingly.\textsuperscript{21} Construction did not begin, however, until the fall of 1961, when the first individual dwellings were started. Work on the only high-rise apartment building to be completed at the site, the present Morgan House, began the following autumn.\textsuperscript{22}

This would not be the end of the protracted Morgan Tract dispute. But the role played by the Community Association had given that body a higher profile than ever before in the community. Once again, self-confident, well-educated, and professionally resourceful Chestnut Hill residents had persisted long enough to make a real impact on the development of their community. In this case, however, they were unable to block the development of the Morgan estate, their first preference, and had to settle instead for limiting the development.

Yet while such residents were negotiating over the Morgan property, other demographic forces, in Philadelphia as well as in communities in outlying Montgomery County, were beginning to subject Chestnut Hill to other pressures. Chief among these was the huge migration from the city of Philadelphia to surrounding suburbs after World War II. Although Philadelphia reached its peak population of nearly 2,100,000 in 1950, up from just over 1,900,000 in 1940, its rate of increase was only a little over 7 percent. This compared to an increase of over 28 percent in the four surrounding counties in Pennsylvania (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery), which now had a combined total of slightly more than 1,000,000 people.\textsuperscript{23} Over the next four decades Philadelphia would actually lose population as the suburban counties grew even larger.

Until this postwar boom in construction beyond the city limits, Chestnut Hill had been surrounded on the north and east by relatively undeveloped land, some of it occupied by large estates, and some of it by farms and rural villages such as Barren Hill, Plymouth Meeting, and Spring Mill. In fact, so long as commuters had depended upon railroads instead of automobiles, Chestnut Hill remained a somewhat isolated enclave at the end of a commuter corridor in the northwest corner of Philadelphia. But now that postwar prosperity had put the automobile within reach of nearly everyone, the rural land around Chestnut Hill could be transformed into acre after acre of new dwell-
Diagram of the completed Market Square/Chestnut Hill Village development. The high-rise Morgan House is near the corner of Mermaid Lane and Stenton Ave. ERG.
ings. Many of the open, rolling vistas over the Whitemarsh Valley would disappear in the process. Automobile commuters on their way to and from the city, it was feared, would clog Chestnut Hill's quiet streets, and convenient parking at one-stop shopping centers in the new suburbs might even lure Chestnut Hillers away from stores on their own main street and touch off a spiraling commercial blight along Germantown Avenue. Such a fate had already befallen other suburban neighborhoods in the city, such as West Philadelphia and nearby Germantown.

For obvious reasons, the automobile would also help to undermine Chestnut Hill's connection to downtown Philadelphia. So long as the train was the dominant form of transportation, the downtown served as a giant terminal for travel, business, and pleasure. Now automobile owners in Chestnut Hill could point their vehicles in almost any direction and drive to work or shopping centers in neighboring suburbs as easily as, and perhaps even more conveniently than, taking the train downtown. They could drive door to door, on their own schedules and in the privacy of their own cars. The automobile thus became one of the prime factors in weakening the dual identity that Chestnut Hillers had felt with Philadelphia and their suburb in the city.

Not surprisingly, local newspapers alerted Chestnut Hillers nearly every week to the changes taking place in new developments all around the Hill. This was especially true of the Herald, a weekly publication that in 1946 began serving Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill as well as adjacent Springfield and Whitemarsh townships. One such subject of press notices in the early postwar period was an undertaking by the Houston estate to develop Upper Roxborough, a parcel of 1,000 acres that had been put in trust by Henry Howard Houston for his heirs. Between the two world wars, Samuel F. Houston, the principal trustee of the estate, had tried to develop these Roxborough lands in several ways, all of them failures to a large degree. In the 1920s he had tried to open the area to large estates such as those in the Gwynedd Valley, but wealthy and socially prominent Philadelphians had thought that the area was too close to mill towns such as Manayunk and Conshohocken ever to be fashionable. He did succeed
in getting the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania to begin a cathedral there, but it was never completed for a variety of reasons. Just before World War II he tried to sell land in the area for a new veterans hospital, but it was built near the University of Pennsylvania instead. After the war Houston tried to sell some of this land to the United Nations, then looking for a permanent headquarters, and a bit later to Temple University. Having failed in all these efforts, Houston and the estate decided to create a shopping center and surrounding residential area of modest homes on land that had once been a gentleman’s farm called Andorra. The resultant Andorra development, begun in early 1950, became the first set of small houses and apartment complexes built in Upper Roxborough on Houston estate lands. In order to facilitate automobile transportation in the area, the estate pressed for an extension of Henry Avenue into Upper Roxborough, in addition to a bridge across the Wissahickon Creek at Cathedral Road that would provide easy access to Chestnut Hill. The Henry Avenue project would be completed, but the bridge would fall victim to opposition in Chestnut Hill (see chapter 8).

With or without a new bridge to Chestnut Hill, Upper Roxborough would witness tremendous growth over the next two decades. But it was the two Montgomery County townships near Chestnut Hill, Springfield and Whitemarsh, that would experience the greatest growth during the 1950s and 1960s. In August 1953, for example, the Herald reported that a record number of building permits had been issued in Springfield Township the month before, amounting to the then impressive value of $442,000. School enrollments were rising apace, spurred by both the baby and the housing booms: in the fall of 1953 there were 280 more pupils enrolled in the township’s school district, for a total of 2,596. In order to cope with the rising tide, the township had awarded contracts for a new high school the preceding February.

In Whitemarsh Township the population was also rising steadily, up from 4,855 in 1940 to 5,977 in 1950 and to an estimated 7,620 in 1952, for an increase of 64 percent in just a dozen years. Like their neighbors in Springfield, Whitemarsh authorities were forced to
build new schools. Even two-centuries-old St. Thomas's Episcopal Church at Whitemarsh had to expand its physical plant and parking facilities in 1953.²⁶

In order to take advantage of potential shoppers in the new suburbs, investors raced to build shopping centers and department stores. In September 1952 the Herald announced that a shopping center had opened in the Springfield Township community of Oreland that included a drugstore, dry cleaner, and Acme supermarket. The article then went on to speculate that the new center posed a possible threat to Chestnut Hill merchants. Three years later, the newspaper reported the grand opening of another such facility in Springfield: the Flourtown Shopping Center at Bethlehem Pike and East Mill Road. Plans for a shopping center in Erdenheim, just east of Chestnut Hill at the corner of Stenton Avenue and Bell's Mill Road, were successfully opposed by residents of the area.²⁷ A little further afield, but within easy driving distance of the Hill, several major department stores had opened or expanded their suburban branches: Strawbridge and Clothier, as well as Wanamaker's, in Jenkintown; Gimbel's in Cheltenham; and Lord and Taylor on City Line Avenue.²⁸

In Philadelphia, too, there were many signs of change during the postwar period. In 1951 a group of reformers that included a disproportionate number of Chestnut Hill residents obtained a new municipal charter that provided for a strong mayoral system, a smaller city council, and genuine civil service reform. The following year a slate of reform-minded Democrats swept out the Republican machine that had held Philadelphia in its grip for the better part of sixty-seven years. At the head of the ticket was Joseph S. Clark, Jr., born and reared in Chestnut Hill and a member of one of its most socially prestigious families. Also victorious was Richardson Dilworth, another Chestnut Hill resident of patrician background, who was elected as Philadelphia's district attorney. Dilworth would succeed Clark as mayor in 1955 when the latter won a seat in the United States Senate. Members of their administration included other Chestnut Hillers, such as lawyers Sidney Dexter and Shippen Lewis, both members of the mayor's new Civil Service Commission. Lennox L. Moak, a new-

comer to Chestnut Hill, was Clark’s finance director. There were so many residents of Chestnut Hill in high places at city hall that it would have been no exaggeration to call it a Chestnut Hill regime.

This predominance of Chestnut Hillers in Philadelphia’s reform movement is understandable, because the reformers themselves stood in the Progressive tradition that had long attracted the kinds of businessmen and professionals who lived in the community. Indeed Dr. Woodward, a survivor from the Progressive Era, had chaired a committee in 1947 that began the process that led to charter reform four years later. At the same time, Chestnut Hill remained the most at-
tractive residential area in Philadelphia and continued to attract wealthy and well-educated residents who wanted to vote or hold office in the city, as well as already elected city officials.

Once elected, the reformers committed themselves to an ambitious plan for urban renewal that was drawn up by City Planning Commissioner Edmund Bacon. A scale model of these plans was exhibited at Chestnut Hill Academy in the spring of 1952 as part of a four-week program at the school to acquaint both students and the wider community with "the civic, physical, and cultural problems confronting today's metropolitan cities. . . ."32 There visitors could revel in vistas of shiny glass and chrome office towers and efficient new parkways. Such plans, combined with the excitement of Clark's reform movement, could only have encouraged the men and women of Chestnut Hill to plan for their own future.

Chestnut Hillers may have also been encouraged by knowing that several other past or present residents of the community were or had been in the forefront of local and national events. These included Republican Hugh Scott, who had served for many years as the area's U.S. congressman and then was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1958. With former mayor Joseph S. Clark also in the Senate, locals could boast that both of Pennsylvania's senators hailed from their little suburb in the city. George Woodward's son Stanley Woodward had made a national reputation for himself by serving as assistant chief of protocol for President Roosevelt, as chief of protocol for President Truman, and from 1950 to 1953 as the U.S. ambassador to Canada.33 Thomas Gates, Jr., who had grown up in Chestnut Hill, became secretary of defense under President Eisenhower. Chestnut Hillers were proud, too, that the University of Pennsylvania had chosen a house at 8212 St. Martin's Lane for its presidents. Among these were Harold Stassen, whom Americans were already coming to know as a perennial Republican candidate for the national presidency. Thatcher Longstreth, whom Philadelphians would soon recognize as a Republican mayoral candidate and later as a city councilman, also moved to Chestnut Hill in the 1950s. It was in the 1950s, too, that the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania selected St. Martin's Lane as home for its bishops when it purchased number 7737.34
Despite these examples of local leadership, Chestnut Hill residents awakened slowly to the challenges and opportunities posed by the postwar era. Familiar as they were with the look and feel of Chestnut Hill, it did not occur to most that what earlier generations had created and sustained on the Hill might be affected by recent cultural and demographic currents. Two decades of national emergency, first the Great Depression and then World War II, had probably distracted them from local civic groups. By the time the war had ended, the generation that had created and managed the civic organizations that were founded early in the century had retired or died. As in most communities throughout the nation, it was the generation that had fought the war and who were now in their late twenties and early thirties who would step forth to lead Chestnut Hill.

More than anyone else, it was Lloyd P. Wells (b. 1921), a newcomer to the Hill and a very controversial figure, who aroused residents and organized them to face many of their postwar problems. Wells had been born in St. Louis, Missouri, to a wealthy and socially prominent family that could trace its American roots to early New England. Although he had the advantages of family wealth and high social status, Wells suffered from severe dyslexia as a child, and even as an adult found it difficult to read and write. Education proved such an obstacle that he was unable to graduate from high school, although he later managed to earn a certificate in business from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School. As if in compensation, Wells possessed an aptitude for mechanical devices of all kinds. During World War II he served as an airline pilot with Northeast Airlines, carrying military personnel and high-priority equipment across the North Atlantic. After the war he married Jean Ballard of Chestnut Hill and came to live in the community in 1947.55

Without a college degree, Wells could not hope to enter such professions as law, banking, medicine, or corporate management. Faced with the prospect of making a living, he decided to utilize his mechanical aptitude by joining with two other men to open a hardware store in Chestnut Hill. They opened their store, Hill Hardware, in 1948 at 8615 Germantown Avenue, just south of the avenue’s historic junction with Bethlehem Pike.56
Lloyd P. Wells (left) in a typical pose along Chestnut Hill streets, 1969. *Local.*
Wells's early experiences in business awakened him to a number of problems facing Chestnut Hill at the time. The most urgent, according to him, was parking. Increasingly heavy traffic on Germantown Avenue and the difficulty of finding a parking space near the store threatened to destroy his business almost as soon as it had opened. The solution, it seemed to Wells, lay in the unused backyards behind the business establishments on both sides of the avenue. By joining them together, merchants could create off-street parking lots that would allow their customers more convenient access to their stores. In his own words, it was a case of "enlightened self-interest" that would benefit the merchants in particular and ultimately the whole community.37

Wells took his parking idea to what he saw as the logical forum, the Chestnut Hill and Mount Airy Businessmen's Association, a merger of the old Chestnut Hill group and its counterpart in Mount Airy. Although the association had been involved in civic affairs for thirty or forty years, it had become less active. Dominated by a group of older businessmen, it was largely content to sponsor such noncontroversial activities as the Hill's Fourth of July celebration and various window display contests. Wells and several young acquaintances, including Logan Bullitt of the Dorothy Bullitt dress shop, Jack Warner of Warner Shoes, and Bill MacDonald of MacDonald's Cleaners, decided to push the off-street parking scheme. Among the older generation, they were able to enlist Russell Ferrier, manager of the Chestnut Hill branch of the Broad Street Trust (now part of Continental Bank). As might be predicted, they made little impression on the Businessmen's Association or on fellow merchants, who, unwilling to give up control of their property, refused to cede their backyards to a joint parking venture.38

In the fall of 1951, Wells approached the newly elected mayor of Philadelphia, Joseph S. Clark, Jr., a political reformer and lifelong resident of Chestnut Hill (see also chapter 8). Hoping that Clark's commitment to municipal improvement might inspire him to help with the Hill's parking and traffic problems, Wells discussed the issue when he chanced to meet the mayor one day at the Philadelphia Club downtown. Although Clark admitted the validity of Wells's argu-
ments, the mayor told him that it would be politically ‘inexpedient’ for him to invest city resources in a small, privileged, and predominantly Republican community such as Chestnut Hill. Wells, like many residents in the past, was discovering that Chestnut Hillers could not rely upon Philadelphia’s city government to solve the problems of the suburb in the city.

In 1953, the frustrated Wells and his young associates in the Businessmen’s Association decided to contest the nominating committee’s recommendations and attempt to take over the association’s board. Although the rebels campaigned vigorously for votes among the organization’s 150 or so members, they lost their bid to overturn the old guard by a large margin. But rather than give up altogether, the defeated slate met the next day in the conference room of the Broad Street Trust. After several hours of excited discussion, they decided to form an independent organization, the Chestnut Hill Development Group. This group would eventually replace the Businessmen’s Association entirely and become the springboard for many other community organizations over the next three decades.\textsuperscript{39} Although the older Businessmen’s Association continues to exist on paper at the time of this writing, it is completely moribund as a functioning group in the community. Partly in recognition of this fact, the Development Group officially changed its name in 1990 to the Chestnut Hill Business Association.

By the time that they had formed the Development Group, Wells and the others were coming to realize that Chestnut Hill needed to face far more than parking problems if it were going to compete with the shopping centers being built all around it.\textsuperscript{40} Such economic and demographic threats from the new suburbs were already generating a body of literature that criticized the suburban way of life. The reaction of Wells and most other Chestnut Hillers, however, was not to join the chorus of condemnation, but instead to try to imitate some of the advantages of the newer automobile suburbs.\textsuperscript{41} Thus instead of identifying with the many ways in which the postwar suburbs were threatening cities such as Philadelphia, Chestnut Hill began to associate itself in certain regards with the newer suburbs outside the city. From a prosperous older suburb on the edge of the city, this
reaction was understandable, if not predictable. Over the next three decades, many residents of Chestnut Hill would identify themselves so strongly with the newer suburbs that they would propose to secede from the city altogether.

Among the immediate problems that Wells and others faced on the Hill was the deteriorating condition of many local businesses. In the early 1950s, for example, about 30 percent of the available floor space in the business district along Germantown Avenue was vacant. Low commercial rents, only five cents per square foot in some cases, left little incentive for landlords to improve properties. Many shop facades were marred by neon signs, some seventeen altogether between Southampton and Rex avenues, several of which were over ten feet high. Architecturally, the stores presented a jumble of styles
and ages: authentic colonial and Victorian, twentieth-century art deco, and plain, functional designs from recent decades. Worse yet, many of the original facades had been defaced in futile efforts over the years to keep up with the latest fashions in commercial decoration. Under the circumstances, Wells and others believed that Chestnut Hill’s business district looked as dilapidated as those in West Philadelphia or certain portions of Germantown. Wells feared that this “blight” might spread to residential areas immediately beyond the commercial district. Residential property values would then begin to fall, many homeowners would leave for the newer suburbs, and Chestnut Hill would decay still further, eventually losing its semirural character and ceasing to be a suburb in the city of Philadelphia.42

Drawing upon his familiarity with Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts and Palm Beach in Florida, with their uniform architectural styles and compact, one-stop shopping, Wells conceived of Chestnut Hill’s commercial district along Germantown Avenue as a cooperative “horizontal department store.” Essential to this concept, Wells believed, were sufficient off-street parking, harmonious
The Masonic Building, originally the Knights of Pythias Hall, at 8427 German-town Ave. Constructed in 1889. Photo from early twentieth century. Local.

Masonic Building in the 1950s, before its “colonial” renovation. Notice that the Romanesque arch has already disappeared from the left side of the building. Local.
architectural facades, trees and other landscaping, joint advertising, and cooperative extension of credit, all of which would market the whole shopping district rather than individual stores. Above all, merchants would have to stop competing with one another, Wells insisted, and learn to cooperate for the good of all. In the process, they and everyone else in the community would profit.\textsuperscript{43}

As the “coordinator” of the fledgling Development Group, Wells began to appoint committees to work on the various areas of concern. Because he did not want to waste time arguing over means and ends, he openly appointed individuals to these working groups who already agreed with him. At the same time, he consulted community professionals and sought the advice of various groups in Germantown and elsewhere in Philadelphia, including the Germantown Community
The Chestnut Hill Hotel, 8229 Germantown Ave., soon after its completion in 1894. CHHS.

Council (a significant link to older civic organizations in the area), the Germantown Historical Society, and the Citizens' Council on City Planning.\(^44\)

On the parking question, Wells continued to talk to property owners adjacent to his hardware store. When some of them still refused to join their backyards, Wells himself purchased a strategically located lot at the northeast corner of Germantown and Evergreen avenues in December 1952 and contributed it, together with Hill Hardware's backyard, to the parking project.\(^45\) Two months later, in February 1953, a Parking Company was incorporated, with Russell Ferrier as its president and Wells as one of its board members. In June of that year the first parking lot opened, extending along the rear of several establishments and beginning just around the northeast corner from Evergreen and Germantown avenues. The parking lot was an immediate success; by May 1955 over 100,000 patrons had
made use of it. This success began to feed upon itself, and eventually there were eight lots in the system, each piece of property being leased to the Parking Company for a token fee of one dollar per annum. By the late 1980s, the lots were serving over half a million customers each year.\textsuperscript{46}

On the question of a uniform architectural style for the shopping district, Wells decided that it would be colonial.\textsuperscript{47} He was influenced in this by the Germantown Historical Society, which was then hoping to restore the area around Market Square in the colonial style. Wells also realized that this was a style that would appeal to Chestnut Hillers, many of whom were proud of their early American roots. He further argued that some of the shops inhabited genuine colonial structures—though they were a distinct minority. Besides, the eighteenth-century motifs were relatively clean and simple, thereby making it easy for merchants to remodel their facades into something vaguely colonial. Finally, Wells believed that it would remain a rel-
Robertson's Flowers, 8501-8507 Germantown Ave., during its remodeling in 1952. CHHS.

Atively permanent style—unlike the latest contemporary design—that would not change and thus require proprietors to remodel their store fronts every decade or so in order to keep up with current trends.

One could of course object that most of the renovations were far from authentic, with some merchants merely placing fake dividers (in order to simulate small panes of glass) in their plate glass windows and hanging a painted wooden sign outside. Some of the "colonializations" even destroyed the integrity of certain buildings, producing a facade that looked far worse than what had been there before. An example of this is a formerly attractive Romanesque/Gothic-style commercial building at 8427 Germantown Avenue, built in 1889 and belonging to the Masonic Lodge. Early photographs show a massive rounded stone arch on the north side of the building. On the second story there were Romanesque and Gothic stained glass windows. Its
Robertson's Flowers after remodeling. CHHS.

renovation in the colonial style, achieved in 1960 by making all the windows rectilinear and then dividing them into small panes of glass, has left the building looking cold and somewhat top-heavy.\textsuperscript{48}

Equally inappropriate was the renovation of the Chestnut Hill Hotel. Built in 1894, it was originally designed in an eclectic Victorian style with Romanesque highlights. Nearly all these features were destroyed in 1957–1958, when an awkward two-story-high portico and columns were placed across the front of the building.\textsuperscript{49} Above the doorway the renovators erected a large scrolled pediment that no eighteenth-century builder or architect would have contemplated. The result is a hotel facade that looks stark, artificial, and out of place in a community that had long prided itself on tastefully designed structures. Fortunately, there was no attempt to alter the facade of the Streeper drug store building (now the site of the Batten and Lunger Pharmacy) on the southwest corner of Germantown and Evergreen avenues. Erected in 1891–1892, it is a superb example of the
picturesque Gothic Revival style, with its steeply pitched roof line and fancy stucco and half-timbering on the massive gable ends.\textsuperscript{50}

The colonial renovations understandably worked best with the commercial district's eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century structures, with its Colonial Revival edifices from the early twentieth century, and with other buildings of plain design. To be fair, one should admit that few if any merchants would have been willing to spend the funds necessary to restore each establishment to its original style. Nor would it have been easy to work out guidelines about which structures should be rendered in the eighteenth-century manner and which should be restored more accurately to their original motifs.

In any case, Wells promoted his plan for uniform colonial facades in much the same way as he did all the Development Group's programs—by arranging for an initial and well-publicized success, which then encouraged others to do likewise. In this regard he made effective use of the \textit{Herald}, the principal weekly newspaper then serving Chestnut Hill. He obtained the full cooperation of its publisher, Thomas Birch, by submitting articles himself, thoroughly briefing Birch on everything that was undertaken, and directing a great deal of local advertising to the newspaper. For his part, Birch ran front-page photographs of newly restored facades, often showing before and after views of the same building side by side. These images gave valuable publicity to the cooperating merchants, impressed the public at large, and caused other proprietors to renovate.

The most appealing of the early colonial renovations was undertaken in 1952 by George Robertson and Sons, florists, whose shop on the northeast corner of Germantown and Highland avenues had once housed a late-eighteenth-century inn and stagecoach stop. That same year De Palma's furniture store announced that it would renovate in the colonial style. Over the next decade, enough other establishments cooperated with the Development Group's remodeling plans that the "restoration" of the Chestnut Hill shopping district was declared complete in 1961. To celebrate this event, merchants staged a colorful parade on 20 April, with most of the marchers attired in period costume.\textsuperscript{51}

Wells used the \textit{Herald} in the same way to persuade merchants to
plant ginkgo trees in front of their properties. These articles featured photographs of store owners standing proudly beside a newly planted specimen, sometimes with a shovel in hand. Each tree cost the merchant thirty-three dollars, with planting being supervised by a well-known Chestnut Hill florist, Russell Medinger. The Development Group also began a cooperative advertising campaign on WFLN, Philadelphia’s classical music station. The commercials invited listeners over and over again to visit “the 100 extraordinary shops of Chestnut Hill.”

Yet many of Wells’s plans for greater cooperation within the community would prove elusive. Although the Development Group had made a good beginning in this direction by 1955, there were many merchants who ridiculed their plans as too visionary, opposed such projects out of sheer stubbornness or, in some cases, resisted Wells
and his followers because they felt that their own authority was being threatened by younger men in the community. By his own admission, Wells was often outspoken and undiplomatic in his crusades for local improvement. Some critics described his tactics as ruthless and totalitarian. Certain merchants took such a dislike to Wells that they would cross the street if they saw him coming. Feeling both angry and wronged, Wells resigned as coordinator of the Development Group in early 1956 and left for Florida for a year with his wife and three children. As it turned out, this was the first of Wells's three resignations from Chestnut Hill's civic life.

Like the improvement associations and other community groups before them, the organizations created by Wells and others after World War II focused almost wholly on solving problems in Chestnut Hill. The organizers' major goal was to preserve and improve life on the Hill as defined by its more prosperous residents. In focusing on Chestnut Hill as a suburb in the city while continuing to work in Philadelphia and to participate in the city's culture and politics, they reinforced their dual identity with city and suburb.