The Chestnut Hill Community Association and the Chestnut Hill Development Group had both emerged by the mid-1950s as the Hill’s most important organizations. While the Development Group had led a renewal of the Hill’s commercial district, the Community Association had undertaken complex and protracted negotiations over the Morgan Tract development. During the next two decades, both organizations retained their influence in Chestnut Hill, but the persistent activities of the Community Association in particular spawned several other institutions and formed the basis for Chestnut Hill’s emerging quasi government.

Like earlier community organizations, Chestnut Hill’s quasi government worked mainly to preserve and protect a pleasant way of life on the Hill. Despite some increasing awareness that conditions else-
where in the city affected the quality of life in Chestnut Hill, most residents hoped that they could continue their dual identities with city and suburb and reap the economic rewards of living in a large metropolitan area without having to experience the less attractive side of urban life.

One is tempted to connect this renewed civic activism on the Hill to a national movement of neighborhood organizations during the 1960s and 1970s, which was spawned in part by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which called for community action groups. Despite this wider atmosphere of civic activism, Chestnut Hill’s quasi government would appear to be an indigenous movement. It grew most immediately out of the Community Association that was formed in 1947 and took on renewed life in the mid-1950s over the Morgan Tract dispute. There is no evidence in the minutes of the Community Association or in Chestnut Hill’s local newspapers that the founders and subsequent leaders of the Hill’s quasi government were directly influenced by a national impulse toward neighborhood organization. Rather, the powerful community organizations that arose in Chestnut Hill during the postwar period would seem to have emerged from a continuing sense of being a suburb in the city, combined with the initiative and skills of its successful residents. It is possible, of course, that Chestnut Hill’s quasi government was energized in a more general way by the spirit of community activism that swept the United States during the 1960s.

The word “quasi” is used here in its literal sense to mean “having a likeness to.” Thus quasi government in Chestnut Hill is defined as a set of local institutions that function somewhat like government. Although employed for the first time in the late 1960s to describe what had already come to exist in Chestnut Hill, quasi government had actually evolved over many decades, and through a succession of organizations.

Community leaders in the postwar period appeared largely ignorant of earlier precedents, but it is obvious to the historian that the most recent organizers dealt with being a suburb in the city in much the same ways as their predecessors had. Weak local government and a tradition of privatism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth cen-
turies had forced Chestnut Hillers to create a series of institutions, such as a fire company, burial ground, library, and schools. After the city/county consolidation of 1854, local residents had discovered that they could not depend upon the municipality for a waterworks or paved roads—at least in the beginning. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chestnut Hillers had created improvement associations, first to raise funds and provide their own public works and then to put pressure on the city to make repairs and improvements.

The efforts of the Germantown and Chestnut Hill Improvement Association in particular had reflected the main tenets of the Progressive Era, with its emphasis upon organization, efficiency, and political reform. These activities, supplemented by the undertakings of the Chestnut Hill Businessmen's Association and especially of the Community Center, could also be seen as manifestations of the organic city concept, which held that very different neighborhoods, each focusing on its own well-being, were essential to the city's welfare. Such sentiments continued to hold sway in Chestnut Hill during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s as socially prominent and successful residents led and staffed local civic organizations. These individuals came overwhelmingly from North Chestnut Hill and the West Side. They were also largely male at first, although volunteer work by women contributed greatly to the success of civic activities.

It was these residents who launched Chestnut Hill's quasi government in earnest about 1957 with a restructuring of the Chestnut Hill Community Association. This movement was led by Joseph Pennington Straus and the redoubtable Lloyd Wells.

In 1957 Wells returned to Chestnut Hill and his various civic activities. As the founder and head of the Development Group, he had been concerned about the Morgan Tract Development. His earlier difficulties in trying to convince residents that they should cooperate for the good of the entire community had set him to thinking about how he might create a forum where problems could be solved as selflessly as possible. His answer was to transform the governing body of the Community Association, then made up of a small, self-perpetuating board. He would replace it with a thirty-member board,
two-thirds of whom would be the heads of nonprofit institutions on the Hill. In theory, these directors of hospitals, schools, churches, and the like spent much of their time trying to promote the well-being of everyone in their institutions rather than working for profit or for undue personal gain. They and their institutions also stood to benefit from policies that promoted the welfare of the entire community. Although no one could expect them or their institutions to be perfectly altruistic, Wells believed that they would be less self-serving than individual residents or businesspeople.²

This concept of institutional representation on the Community Association board may have been inspired by the Germantown Community Council, which was essentially a clearing house for local organizations. If so, neither Wells nor anyone else in Chestnut Hill avowed that the idea of institutional representation had come from the Germantown group. Yet Wells has been known to borrow ideas from many sources, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he had the Germantown Community Council in mind when he set out to restructure Chestnut Hill’s Community Association.

In any case, Wells presented his idea in the spring of 1957 to Straus, who was then chairman of the Community Association. Straus approved the plan warmly, maintaining that the new structure would allow the organization to confront virtually any problem facing the community:

The new plan will find the Association interesting itself in every phase of community life. . . . To my thinking this will give the Community Association a great deal more standing, and greater usefulness. . . . We’ll be able to receive all the problems facing the community, to discuss them and to act upon them. We will be able to serve as a sounding board for community complaints and activities.³

In order to pursue its new means and ends, the Community Association obtained a corporate charter and drew up a set of bylaws. The latter were drafted by Straus and formally approved by the membership in December 1959.⁴ The bylaws allowed “any individual or organization interested in the welfare of Chestnut Hill” to join the association, whether residing in the community or not. The body was
originally governed by two groups of directors. The first group, later dubbed the board of presidents, comprised twenty persons, "each of whom . . . is the principal officer of a non-profit organization having its principal activity in Chestnut Hill." The other group of directors, numbering ten in all, would be elected "at large" from among the association's membership. Officers would consist of a president (instead of the former chairman), vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, all to be elected by the combined board of directors, who had the authority to make decisions for the association between regular meetings. In 1967 the bylaws were amended to allow for a single board of seventy-five directors, only half of whom had to be from nonprofit organizations. In 1971 the bylaws were amended again to allow for seven student representatives from high schools and colleges in the community, an obvious bow to the nationwide trend of inviting young people to represent themselves in a variety of organizations and institutions.\(^5\)

The original objectives of the association, as set forth in the certificate of incorporation, were modest and emphasized research and education:

to educate the residents of that section of Philadelphia known as Chestnut Hill, and its environs, in subjects useful to the individual and beneficial to the community; to lessen the burdens of government; to lessen neighborhood tensions; to combat community deterioration; to engage in non-partisan analysis and research and to make the results thereof available to the public, including research in land use planning and development, and to inform the public of the results of such expert advice; to educate the citizens of their civic responsibilities, and to keep them informed of all activities of religious, educational, social and patriotic organizations active in the Chestnut Hill Community; to provide awards for outstanding citizens and organizations contributing to the leadership and growth of the Chestnut Hill community; and to initiate and assist charitable and educational institutions in the Chestnut Hill area.\(^6\)

As it turned out, the reformed Community Association and its committees would use tactics that were remarkably similar to those of the old Germantown and Chestnut Hill Improvement Association and its predecessor, the Chestnut Hill Improvement Association. Like the more recent of these two bodies, which had not collapsed
entirely until the early 1950s, the Community Association often functioned as a lobbying group to pressure the Philadelphia City government and its various agencies. But like the much older Chestnut Hill Improvement Association, it soon began to raise its own funds in order to undertake a variety of projects. When asked by the author, neither Straus nor Wells could recall that they had ever heard of the two improvement associations. But similar tactics could well be explained by similar circumstances; like their predecessors, they had to deal with the reality of being a suburb in the city.

Although unaware of past parallels, these reformers of the Chestnut Hill Community Association realized that communicating with their public was essential to success. Leaders of the G&CH Improvement Association had known this earlier in the century, and Wells had made effective use of the Herald to promote his concept of a horizontal shopping center along Germantown Avenue. But Wells's happy association with the Herald came to an end when the newspaper was sold in 1952 to a regional syndicate called the Weekly Review Publishing Company. At first, Wells enjoyed good relations with the new editorial staff, who happily continued the old pattern of supporting the Development Group's projects in exchange for stories and advertising from local merchants. However, the arrangement broke down around 1954 when Wells learned from City Councilwoman Constance Dallas, a Democrat, a Chestnut Hill resident, and the first woman ever elected to council, that the Herald refused to cover her campaign for reelection. As it turned out, the Herald's publisher was a very partisan Republican who did not want to give Democratic candidates any more coverage than he had to. This became even more evident in 1956 when the Herald filled its pages with glowing accounts of President Eisenhower's campaign for reelection while barely mentioning the existence of his Democratic challenger, Adlai Stevenson.7

Although Wells was then a Republican himself, he was both angry and indignant at the Herald's lack of community spirit in refusing to provide coverage for a local resident's political campaign. He decided that he and other community leaders should start their own newspaper. They called their monthly publication the Chestnut Hill Cymbal, the inaugural edition of which appeared in December 1955. In this
first issue, the publication board, which included both Wells and Straus, proposed to open their newspaper to all views. Controversy would not be avoided, "but rather sought in the belief that constructive argument is a vital factor in achieving broader comprehension." 

The new newspaper was written and edited by a volunteer staff, all amateurs in the business of running a newspaper, who wrote essay-type articles on a variety of community subjects. After a year and a half of publication, however, the *Cymbal* expired in June 1957, a victim of the *Herald*'s continuing appeal as a local newspaper, the lack of strong financial support, the inexperience of its publication board, and Wells's own temporary departure from Chestnut Hill in early 1956.

The decision to reform the Community Association, however, reignited interest in a community newspaper. It was Wells who again proposed the idea. The question of whether the Community Association should sponsor a newspaper was debated heatedly before the board decided to adopt the project in December 1957. The paper's name would be the *Chestnut Hill Local*, referring to both the commuter's familiar name for the two local train lines and the fact that it would be Chestnut Hill's local newspaper. During the first few years, the *Local* struggled to survive with the same sort of volunteer staff, mostly female, who had run the *Cymbal*. Even after the *Local*'s finances were strong enough to allow a paid editorial staff, almost all its editors and writers were women. According to those associated with the newspaper then and later, this was because the pay was so low that only married women whose husbands made good salaries could afford to work on the *Local*. These women were attracted to the newspaper because of the opportunity that it gave them to use their intelligence, education, and skills, and to have a positive voice in the community at a time when few positions of power and influence were open to women. Ellen Newbold (later the second Mrs. Lloyd Wells) became the *Local*'s first full-time editor in 1961. She was succeeded in 1979 by Marie Reinhart Jones, the present editor.

Because the *Local* was owned by the Community Association, and thus by all its members, the question of just who was its publisher and who controlled editorial policy would become thorny issues in
the future, particularly after the *Local* became a powerful instrument of public opinion. Some of the most protracted and passionate civic battles in Chestnut Hill would revolve around control of the *Local*.\(^\text{11}\)

As the *Local* was struggling to establish itself, the Community Association was busy dealing with numerous issues. In order to maintain an ongoing examination and discussion of various problems, the association created numerous standing committees. By 1970 these included committees on aesthetics, conservation, land use planning, maintenance, parking, pollution, station grounds, traffic, transportation, zoning, cultural affairs, education, mental health, political action, recreation, religion, and senior citizens. Later these and succeeding committees were grouped under three divisions, each headed by a vice-president: the physical division, the operational division, and the social division. Besides these Community Association committees, there were several independent organizations, such as the Development Group, Parking Company, the Chestnut Hill Realty Trust, and the Chestnut Hill Historical Society. To ensure that these groups worked in harmony with the Community Association, Wells proposed a system of interlocking directorates. As implemented, this meant that there were representatives of each independent organization on the Community Association board. The board also chose several directors to serve on the boards of the independent organizations, such as the Development Group or the Historical Society.\(^\text{12}\)

Given the continuing concerns over the Morgan Tract, it is not surprising that the Land Use Planning Committee was one of the most active from the beginning. There was a consensus that the survival of Chestnut Hill as a suburban neighborhood depended upon more effective control over real estate development. In the very first issue of the *Local*, for example, an editorial warned:

Chestnut Hill, . . . which is within the city limits, lies close to congested sections of Philadelphia and is already heavily populated. We are, therefore, continually threatened by "Urban Blight," the downgrading of a community caused by the uncontrolled and unplanned extension of a great metropolis. It is our purpose to foster the continuation of the work which has already been done by such groups as the Morgan Tract Committee of the Chestnut Hill Community Association and the Chestnut Hill Development Group, to fore-
CHESTNUT HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

51 non-profit institutions

Interlocking Directorates

- C.H. Development Group
- C.H. Historical Society
- C.H. Music Association
- C.H. Parking Foundation

- Chestnut Hill Local
- C.H. Community Fund
- C.H. Preservation and Development Fund

Operational

- Annual Meeting
- Art and Design
- Repinwall Fund
- Awards
- Bird in Hand
- Budget
- By-Laws
- Legal
- Local Management
- Long Range Planning
- Membership
- Nominating

Staff

Social

- Blood Availability
- Community Gardens
- Crime Prevention
- Education
- Health
- Pastoral Park Concerts
- Political Information
- Public Safety
- Recreation
- Religion
- Senior Citizens
- Youth

Physical

- Aesthetics
- Land Use Planning
- Maintenance
- Parks
- Railroad Station Grounds
- Street Trees
- Traffic and Transportation
- Zoning

Organizational chart, Chestnut Hill Community Association, 1990. ERG.
stall such deterioration in Chestnut Hill, and to preserve and better our com-

munity as a distinct and distinctive residential and commercial center.\textsuperscript{15}

Most of all, Chestnut Hillers worried about what was happening directly south of them in Germantown. It, too, had been a suburb in the city, but was now undermined in several ways: by excessive de-

velopment, by the decay of its aging housing stock, by racial tensions, and by the flight of many prosperous residents into Chestnut Hill itself, or into suburban communities outside the municipality. In the words of another early editorial from the \textit{Local}:

Many years ago Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill were distinct suburbs of Philadelphia[,] as Ambler is today. These areas were vacation spots where people of wealth spent their summers in green country towns. As Philadelphia grew, Germantown and Mount Airy were swallowed up and lost not only their green environment, but also much of their general attrac-

tiveness, and many of the former residents moved farther afield.

Now Chestnut Hill remains as the last bastion of the "Green Country Towns" within the city limits. \textit{The Chestnut Hill Local} is frankly and, we be-

lieve, justifiably, concerned about succumbing to the fate suffered by our southern neighbors. . . .

There is an old and very trite saying that "Home is where the heart is." If we are not careful, our hearts may lie in Chestnut Hill, but our homes may be elsewhere.\textsuperscript{16}

The editorial writer might have added, but did not, that local res-

idents had been worried about changes in Germantown and Mount Airy for over a decade. The decision to leave the Germantown Com-

munity Council in 1947 and to form a separate Chestnut Hill Com-

munity Association, in addition to the abandonment of the Chestnut Hill and Mount Airy Businessmen’s Association in favor of a de-

velopment group that would serve Chestnut Hill alone, were both signs of a rising isolationist mentality on the Hill.

A concentration on land use and real estate development, which had begun with the Morgan Tract controversy, was also a new departure for community organizations in Chestnut Hill. Until the postwar period, the existence of attractive housing and pleasant neighborhoods elsewhere in Philadelphia, combined with the rural nature of much of adjoining Montgomery County, meant that Chest-
nut Hillers could afford to leave the question of land development to market forces. Now they felt compelled to try to oversee it themselves.

Several factors promised to make this task a difficult one. First, because Chestnut Hill remained within the city of Philadelphia, it would have to work with the zoning regulations of the larger municipality, unlike suburbs outside the city, such as those on the Main Line, which could formulate and apply their own zoning and development directives. Second, intense building in the new suburbs around Chestnut Hill, along with the increasing success of its own commercial district, was resulting in rising land values and property taxes on the Hill, with concomitant pressures and inducements to build on every available piece of land. Finally, local residents and institutions themselves could not always agree on proper land use, leading to much division within the community itself. These factors gained momentum over the years and would not be felt in their greatest force for another two or three decades.

Under the circumstances, the first new group established by the Community Association was a Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC), formed in April 1958—even while a new charter and bylaws were being drawn up and debated by the parent organization. The LUPC was a direct descendant of the Morgan Tract Committee, which had been the first local group to concern itself extensively with land use in the community. It would remain the most important committee of the Community Association despite its mixed record of success and failure over the years.

One of the Land Use Planning Committee’s first assignments was to draw up a long-range plan for Chestnut Hill. In April 1960 they asked for assistance from the Philadelphia Planning Commission, which agreed in August to help. This collaboration between local planners and city hall led to considerable friction in Chestnut Hill, as various interest groups grew suspicious of the LUPC’s motives and authority. Among the most alarmed were residents of the East Side, who were angered by the LUPC’s opposition to renting apartments on the upper floors of homes in the area, a common practice on the East Side even though zoning regulations forbade it. East Side
residents were also incensed at a proposal by the Development Group to extend the commercial district "laterally" for a block or so on either side of Germantown Avenue in places where it seemed feasible. In order to make themselves heard, inhabitants formed the Mid-Chestnut Hill Residents Association, which reached a peak of about 500 members.

Doubtless contributing to their irritation was the knowledge that so many of the Community Association's leaders were socially prominent residents from the West Side and North Chestnut Hill. In 1961, for example, the earliest year for which figures were available, an analysis of the board of directors of the Community Association revealed that only one of the twenty-four directors who lived in Chestnut Hill had an East Side address. Ten years later, in 1971, the figures were virtually the same, when only one of the thirty-three board members from the Hill lived on the East Side. Suspicions raised by this domination of the board by inhabitants from the wealthier sections of the Hill erupted at a meeting of the Mid-Chestnut Hill group in September 1959, where a number of the assembled wanted to know how much Lloyd Wells was being paid as the executive director of the Community Association and "who was paying him." Such socioeconomic clashes would continue for decades and sometimes thwart community cooperation.

Despite such clashes, the community managed to agree on general zoning revisions for Chestnut Hill. As a tool for urban planning, zoning had not existed in Philadelphia at all until the early 1930s. At that time most of Chestnut Hill received the highest residential and commercial classifications. But the R-1 category required only a minimum of 10,000 square feet for each residential lot, a figure that would do nothing to keep large estates from being divided and developed. Most of the northeastern quadrant of Chestnut Hill received an R-2 designation, which allowed for small businesses and institutional use. The LUPC therefore decided in late 1963 to ask city council to upgrade the entire northeastern section of the Hill to R-1, with exceptions for institutions, such as the hospital and Chestnut Hill College, that already existed in the area. Although it took ten years for the council to act, the rezoning was accomplished in September 1973.
Community Reorganization

In the meantime, however, the LUPC (and its parent organization, the Chestnut Hill Community Association) suffered several defeats. One of these, in the early 1960s, involved an eleven-story apartment building in the 200 block of West Evergreen Avenue that was eventually named Hill House. The LUPC opposed it from the start, believing that it was inappropriate for a community made up largely of single dwellings, twins, and a few modest row houses. They also feared that such a high-rise facility would contribute to traffic congestion. In July 1963 they hired legal counsel to represent them before Philadelphia’s Zoning Board of Adjustment. When the board decided in favor of the developer, the LUPC and the Community Association appealed to the Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia. When the judge also ruled in favor of the developers, the LUPC and the Community Association petitioned Pennsylvania’s highest court to hear an appeal. Only when the high court refused to take the case did the local planners concede defeat, having marshaled the considerable wealth and talent of Chestnut Hill in their crusade. In the long run, Hill House turned out to be a favorite spot for more affluent elderly residents of the Hill, many of whom did not drive cars. Given this outcome, the time and resources of the LUPC and the Community Association do not seem to have been well spent.21

At the same time that the battle over Hill House was unfolding, the LUPC and the Community Association also failed to guide the development of a property in North Chestnut Hill called the Volkmar estate. Known as Greystock, the property had belonged to George C. Thomas in the nineteenth century and most recently to his aged daughter, Mrs. W. Schuyler Volkmar. The tract, which commanded a view of the valley below, bordered Norwood Avenue on the east, Sunset Avenue on the north, Germantown Avenue on the west, and the Chestnut Hill Presbyterian Church on the south.22 The initial alarm was sounded by the North Chestnut Hill Association, an organization of residents that had been founded back in May 1944.23 Adding to their concern over development of the property may have been the fact that their group had been founded in Mrs. Volkmar’s barn and had continued to meet there for many years. Before anything could be done, the property was sold to a developer.24 Reflect-
ing on this alleged loss, an editorial in the *Chestnut Hill Local* proposed that there were some lessons that the community could learn from the Volkmar tract:

There is an easily read lesson written into the Volkmar Estate case, settled last week by an independent buyer. The big question mark is whether Chestnut Hill will have the wit to mark, learn and digest it.

The lesson, we believe, is this: If we are to maintain control over the growth of Chestnut Hill or be smashed by it, we must activate, put teeth in, [and] delineate the Chestnut Hill Land Company. . . .

It is unrealistic to hope that the great estates will remain open tracts of land. We should have learned that lesson when Temple University sold out to the Summit Construction Co. It is pessimistic, however, to think that nothing can be done. It is creative thinking to plan for attractive development of our open spaces.25

Once again, the community may have overreacted. Several expensive and attractive single dwellings were built on the Volkmar property that in no way marred the appearance of North Chestnut Hill or degraded the housing stock of the community in general. Still reeling from the sting of the Morgan Tract development, editors and residents alike tended to respond negatively to the disappearance of any open land, regardless of how responsibly and attractively it might be developed.

The Chestnut Hill Land Company, to which the editorial referred, had been created to provide funds with which the community might purchase properties on the Hill before they fell into the hands of outside interests such as Summit Construction Company. By developing the properties themselves, or by selling them to others who would agree to develop them in ways deemed suitable by the LUPC and the Community Association, the Land Company could ensure that the properties were not marred by excessive or inappropriate building.

Although the Land Company did not make much progress, its successor, the Chestnut Hill Realty Trust, did somewhat better. Founded in September 1965 by the ubiquitous Lloyd Wells, its stated purpose was “to assist the community in its struggle to achieve an orderly and enlightened pattern of land use development.”26 By April 1967 it listed eighty-one stockholders who had raised $165,000 at
$100 a share. As a private corporation made up of local citizens, the Realty Trust did not have any official connection with the Community Association, but it would work closely with the organization in the years just ahead to develop real estate on the Hill.

The Realty Trust's first successful project was the purchase and renovation of the Allen Garage, near the northwest corner of West Highland and Germantown avenues. By 1968 it had transformed the garage into a bright complex of shops, most of which opened onto an interior courtyard. The miniature shopping center also included a restaurant called 21 West. A decade later the Realty Trust would develop another successful shopping complex at the forks of Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike.27

Yet another organization that emerged from the community's increasing efforts to direct local real estate development was the Chestnut Hill Historical Society. Like so many recent organizations on the Hill, it was born out of a perceived crisis, this time the threatened destruction in 1966 of the third floor of the VFW building at 8217-19 Germantown Avenue. The veterans organization had decided to take this action because it could not afford to make needed repairs on the upper story. But the structure, built in 1859, was one of the Hill's few good examples of Greek Revival architecture. To Anne Spaeth and Nancy Hubby, both new residents of the community, the demolition of its upper story would be a great loss. Enlisting the aid of Shirley Hanson, another recent arrival in the neighborhood, the three women wrote letters to the newspapers, circulated petitions, and within a short time raised $30,000 to save the third floor and restore the building's exterior.28

With this success behind them, Spaeth, Hubby, and Hanson, with the support of Wells and the Community Association, launched the Chestnut Hill Historical Society in May 1967.29 In some ways this was not an entirely new venture for Chestnut Hill, because many of its residents had belonged to and supported the Germantown Historical Society, founded in 1900 as the Site and Relic Society. The Germantown group had designated the former German Township, which included Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill, as its domain for study and collection of archival materials. It had also
taken an interest in architecture throughout the region, making several surveys that included Chestnut Hill. The founding of a separate Chestnut Hill Historical Society was thus another sign of how residents of the Hill were detaching themselves emotionally from Germantown.

In other respects, however, the establishment of the Chestnut Hill Historical Society represented a new and greater level of interest in the preservation of historic buildings, an effort that paralleled similar preservation movements around the country. In Philadelphia, the historic preservation movement had made a modest beginning in the late 1920s with a survey of the city historical district undertaken by the Civic Club and the Philadelphia chapter of the American Institute of Architects. During the New Deal of the 1930s, federal grants had allowed a more extensive documentation of Philadelphia buildings, as well as the first restorations in the historic district downtown. After World War II, the city’s commitment to urban renewal and the res-
toration and renovation of the Independence Hall area by the National Park Service focused more attention than ever before on historic preservation.31

Joining this trend toward the documentation and preservation of historic structures, the newly founded Chestnut Hill Historical Society set to work immediately on an architectural survey of Chestnut Hill and adjacent Wyndmoor. Believing that time was an all-important factor in preserving the architectural character of the community, they mobilized a group of amateur volunteers who completed their task in eight months. To supervise the work, the Historical Society hired the city planning firm of Willard S. Detweiler, Jr. Becoming more and more caught up in the project, Detweiler offered to write and publish an illustrated volume on the history of Chestnut Hill architecture that appeared in 1969.32

As with the Chestnut Hill Local, much of the work of the Historical Society has been undertaken by women in the community. Its founders were all women, its executive directors have all been women, and virtually all the volunteers who researched the architectural survey were women. According to Shirley Hanson, one of the founders of the Historical Society, she and her associates were young married women with college degrees, unlike most of their female counterparts in earlier generations on the Hill, who did not go to college. They discovered that the cause of historic preservation was an ideal outlet for their creative energies. They had homes and small children to care for, and they could work at preservation projects on their own schedules. As women from upper- and upper-middle-class families, they had grown up in households where women were taught that they had a duty to help care for the wider community. For Hanson, these early experiences as a volunteer led her to earn a master's degree in urban planning and to a career as a planning consultant. Compared to the early twentieth century, when volunteer activities became an end in themselves for women, they were now becoming the first steps to careers, at least for some.

Over the next two decades, the women of the Historical Society, which included men on its governing board, would become active participants in Chestnut Hill's quasi government and do much to pre-
serve the historical character of the suburb in the city.\textsuperscript{33} But, like the Community Association and other institutions of quasi government, its members and leadership would come almost entirely from North Chestnut Hill and the West Side, where education and social inclinations made for an interest in architectural preservation. Although men and women from the East Side have also expressed an interest in the Hill’s past through letters to the newspaper and attendance at historical lectures, they have thus far not found positions on the Historical Society’s self-perpetuating board.\textsuperscript{34}

In addition to growing concerns over historic preservation, the leaders of Chestnut Hill’s quasi government grew alarmed over the increase in automobile traffic through Chestnut hill during the post-World War II period. Although automobiles had first appeared on the Hill early in the twentieth century, they were confined in the early decades to the wealthiest inhabitants. Even many of these residents continued to use one of the two train lines to commute to and from work each day. Thus despite the advent of automobiles, the Hill continued to be a railroad suburb throughout the first half of the twentieth century. After World War II, however, widespread prosperity permitted local artisans, shop clerks, and even the better-paid domestic servants to own cars. The emergence of automobile suburbs north and east of Chestnut Hill also brought more motor vehicles into its streets.\textsuperscript{35}

In considering the matter of traffic on the Hill, however, individuals as well as organizations were often of two minds. On the one hand, the idea of major traffic arteries in or around the community seemed a sensible way to ease the congestion on older and narrower streets, such as Germantown Avenue. On the other hand, new “through routes” threatened to destroy Chestnut Hill’s semi-isolation from surrounding communities and attract even more traffic from commuters from the newer automobile suburbs in Whitemarsh and Springfield townships driving through the Hill on their way to and from the city. In order to study these problems and make recommendations, the Community Association created a standing committee on traffic.

Plans to construct highways linking Chestnut Hill more closely
to surrounding communities went back for decades in some cases. This certainly was true of the recurring schemes to construct a direct route between Chestnut Hill and the suburbs of Philadelphia’s Main Line, which lay due west of Chestnut Hill. The earliest public notice of such a route appeared in an article in the Germantown Guide on 14 June 1890. Even then, according to the Guide, the purpose of the highway was partly to open land for development.36

Given the holdings of Henry Howard Houston on the Roxborough side of the Wissahickon, it is probable that Houston himself had a hand in promoting this undertaking. Although nothing came of this earliest proposal, the fact that the Houston estate renewed the campaign for the Main Line route in 1907 adds credence to speculations that the idea may have originated with Houston.

Nothing substantial came of the proposal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it lay dormant until the mid-1920s, when the Philadelphia City Council gave serious consideration to the project. In February 1927, the council passed the necessary legislation and appropriated $1 million for construction. According to maps drawn up at the time, the road would enter Chestnut Hill’s West Side at the corner of Gravers and St. Martin’s lanes. From there it would proceed east through the middle of Pastorius Park. The depression came before construction could begin, and little was heard of the intersuburban route until 1937, when the Chestnut Hill and Mount Airy Businessmen’s Association appointed a committee to study the proposal once again. But the continuing depression and then World War II meant that there was little possibility of executing the route during the next decade.

After the war, the Houston estate began pressuring the city government to revive the Chestnut Hill–Main Line route. By then the Businessmen’s Association had reversed itself, fearing the additional traffic that the route would create in Chestnut Hill and stating in November 1953 that it “utterly opposed” the construction. Two years later, Charles Woodward, an heir to the Houston estate, came out publicly against the route. The Community Association also went on record in 1955 as opposing it. Bowing to such local pressure, the city dropped it from the six-year plan in 1955, and it was never seriously
reconsidered. As a result, Chestnut Hill and the Main Line remained separated by both the Wissahickon Creek and the Schuylkill River. Anyone wishing to drive between the two would continue to take an indirect and convoluted path that led either through Mount Airy and Manayunk to the south or through Conshohocken to the north.  

Another ambitious highway plan involved in the extension of Lincoln Drive (which already connected Mount Airy and Germantown to downtown Philadelphia) into the heart of Chestnut Hill, where it would intersect with Bethlehem Pike. This idea also extended back for more than half a century to 1891, when the Fairmount Park Commission drew up initial plans for the road. However, nothing serious was done about bringing the route into Chestnut Hill until the late 1920s, when the necessary surveys were done and curbs were constructed between Allen's Lane and Creshheim Creek, where a bridge would be constructed to take it across to the Hill. In this case, too, the depression probably interrupted further work. Meanwhile, Dr. Woodward had begun to have second thoughts about the Lincoln Drive extension. Although he had originally supported its continuation into Pastorius Park, where it would intersect with the east-west route to the Main Line, he now realized that heavy automobile traffic would interrupt the quiet of his Cotswold Village on the edge of the park. In late 1938 he sent a letter to the G&CH Improvement Association opposing the extension.  

After World War II, when the Lincoln Drive project was revived by the city, there was some initial support for it in Chestnut Hill. On a television program in September 1952, for example, Lloyd Wells called upon the city to complete the Lincoln Drive extension as soon as possible. As he put it, the old prrevolutionary roads in the area were "strangling business and causing great economic losses." In January 1953 the 22nd Ward Planning Committee, of which Wells was a member, also pressed for the completion of the Lincoln Drive project. Within several years, Wells had changed his mind and joined the Community Association in opposing the extension into the Hill. By late 1962 the project was abandoned by the city for good. In November of that year the Chestnut Hill Local summed up the whole problem with Lincoln Drive by saying, "A wide Avenue in this area
heavily loaded with traffic would have spelled its ultimate deterioration.  

Although the Lincoln Drive extension and the Chestnut Hill–Main Line highway were successfully blocked by community opposition, there still remained the problem of how to ease the traffic flow on Germantown Avenue, which remained the only direct route through the Hill. The eventual solution was a series of street and road improvements that were designed to divert traffic around the edges of the community. This was accomplished by widening Cresheim Valley Drive on the southern boundary of the Hill, thereby providing a convenient link between Stenton Avenue on the eastern boundary of the community and Lincoln Drive to the south (via Emlen Street in Mount Airy). Stenton Avenue was also widened into two lanes in either direction in order to accommodate increased usage around the Morgan Tract project and to funnel traffic from East Mount Airy along the eastern edge of the Hill. This project included an improved intersection at Bethlehem Pike, Stenton Avenue, and Paper Mill Road. The creation of the Route 309 Expressway in Springfield Township also lessened congestion in the old Bethlehem Pike into Chestnut Hill. Finally, the extension of Henry Avenue through Roxborough, just across the Wissahickon Creek, provided another relatively fast route into center city. Thus by the late 1960s a loop of improved thoroughfares had deflected much traffic from local streets. This was accomplished at the expense of surrounding communities, such as Roxborough, Mount Airy, and Oreland, which had to endure traffic that otherwise might have gone through the Hill. Once again, Chestnut Hillers’ wealth, persistence, professional skills, and influence at city hall had resulted in preferential treatment from municipal authorities.  

In addition to tackling problems of traffic and land use, Chestnut Hill’s evolving quasi government sought to deal with an array of social difficulties, many of which had deep roots in the community’s past. This social activism may also have been stimulated by such national phenomena as the civil rights and ecumenical movements and the general reformist atmosphere of the 1960s, although there is no direct evidence of this connection.
Road network showing major thoroughfares around and through Chestnut Hill, 1982. ERG.
Among these social initiatives were the attempts by the Community Association’s Community Relations Committee to create a social center where local youth could congregate in the evenings and especially on weekends. Between 1964 and 1970, the Community Association spent approximately $35,000 on this project. Its first teen facility was called The Orange Ell and was located at 8434 Germantown Avenue, the former Joslin’s Hall and later the headquarters of the Community Association and the Chestnut Hill Local. Its successor, known as The Loophole, was further down the Hill in the 7900 block of Germantown Avenue. This second facility was owned by a non-profit organization called Teenagers Incorporated. But both centers drew more youngsters from outside the local community than from Chestnut Hill itself. Neighbors at both locations objected to the noise on evenings and weekends. As a result, the Community Association abandoned the project in January 1971.45
Another social initiative was the Community Association's Religion Committee's attempt to encourage the ecumenical movement that was sweeping the United States. The Vatican II Council (1962–1965), which encouraged understanding and dialogue between Roman Catholics and other religious groups, did much to open the way to a better relationship among churches.

As with so many other projects, Lloyd Wells was in the forefront of this movement for religious understanding on the Hill. He not only believed that it was the right thing to do, but he also feared that the gulf between the largely Catholic East Side and the largely Protestant West Side and North Chestnut Hill would have to be breached if quasi government were to work effectively. Wells accordingly made sure that Catholics on the Hill were nominated to serve on the Community Association board. Among them was Sister Grace Miriam, S.S.J., then principal of Our Mother of Consolation parish school. Through Sister Grace Miriam, Wells learned of the need for more classroom space at the school. In response, he arranged to have neighboring St. Paul's Episcopal Church open its Sunday school rooms and auditorium for use during the week by the OMC parish school.44

Another important participant in Chestnut Hill's ecumenical movement was the Reverend John Casey, O.S.A. The jovial Irish-American priest was a rabid sports fan and became such a constant spectator at Philadelphia Flyers hockey games that the players made him their unofficial chaplain. A talented amateur musician, the priest was always happy to sit down at a piano and play a few show tunes. Accompanying him everywhere was his three-legged Boston terrier, Bugsie.

Father Casey realized soon after arriving in Chestnut Hill in 1963 that there were strained relations among the local churches. "There was a very bad feeling between the Protestant churches and the Catholic church," he recalled. "There was no communication between the churches. The clergy had nothing to do with each other."45 Determined to improve the situation, the new priest decided to invite all the clergy in Chestnut Hill to a meeting. It was so successful that they agreed to take turns hosting an informal luncheon once a month. They also decided to join forces to conduct various activities, including a
joint Thanksgiving service. In September 1967, Father Casey invited
the entire community to an open house at OMC.\textsuperscript{46} The Chestnut Hill
Local became a helpful ally in this process, running stories about im-
proving relations among the churches.\textsuperscript{47}

It had become clear to Wells and others in the Community As-
sociation that educational divisions on the Hill continued to work
against a sense of community spirit. A chronic lack of funds and con-
stant teachers’ strikes in the Philadelphia public school system also
alarmed Chestnut Hill’s quasi government. As early as 1960, the
Community Association’s Education Committee proposed to begin
helping the Jenks Public School. In addition to assisting the school
with various fund-raising drives, the Education Committee urged
state and local legislators to vote more monies for schools, even if it
meant raising taxes. In the early 1970s the committee, under the
leadership of Dr. George Spaeth, went much further to propose a
community-wide “alternative school.” Like the Philadelphia School
District’s Parkway School, which made use of various institutional
facilities around the city, the Hill’s new experiment would be a
“school without walls.” Credit for its courses would be given, through
prior agreements, by such area institutions as Germantown Friends
School and Penn Charter School. The committee also proposed that
Chestnut Hill’s Jenks School offer courses once a week on the en-
vironment and the creative arts. Neither of these proposals was im-
plemented, although the idea of making Jenks into a more attractive
alternative school would eventually bear fruit in the early 1980s.\textsuperscript{48}

Far more sensitive was the question of racial integration, a topic
of increasing concern all over the nation. For Chestnut Hillers, some
of whom unfairly blamed all of neighboring Germantown’s troubles
on a rising black population, integration was an unwelcome subject.
Wells confronted the issue at a Community Association meeting in
early 1961, urging the group to foster integration on the Hill. His
remarks were met with such hostility by certain members of the board
that he resigned as executive secretary of the association.

Wells’s decision four years later to return to active participation
in civic affairs on the Hill was prompted in part by a racial incident
in the community. It involved two black couples who were refused
seats in a local restaurant. One of the women was the director of the Chestnut Hill branch of the Free Library. Her husband was a respected attorney with a degree from Harvard Law School. Upon hearing their story, Wells was furious. He decided that the Community Association would have to take a more active role in promoting race relations.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, there were some signs of constructive action in Chestnut Hill on the subject of race. In 1965 the Community Association held discussions on integration with its Mount Airy neighbors.49 There was a quiet decision in the mid-1960s at Springside School, initiated by headmistress Eleanor Potter and approved by the school’s board, to recruit and admit the institution’s first black students. By 1990 just over 20 percent of the students came from minority groups.50

In early 1967 several Chestnut Hill churches joined with religious groups in Germantown to sponsor a six-week seminar entitled “Black Power—White Power.” Later that year, Episcopal Bishop Robert DeWitt, who was in the forefront of Philadelphia’s civil rights movement, challenged parishioners at St. Martin-in-the-Fields to open themselves up to men and women of all backgrounds and races. In 1968 the Chestnut Hill Development Group announced that it would help to establish a fund in memory of the recently assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to help young “Negroes” in North Philadelphia to start their own businesses.51 Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the Chestnut Hill Local, under its editor, Ellen Newbold (Wells), did much to promote improved race relations.52

In order to deal more aggressively with such social problems, Lloyd Wells had decided to establish a local political party and then to take control of the Community Association. With about thirty others, he founded the Greene party—a conscious reference to William Penn’s “Greene Country Towne.” By 1969 they had won control of the Community Association, and Wells was elected its president for two years. Wells dubbed Greene party opponents the “White party,” a label that many in the so-called opposition rejected and despised.53

The Greene party set forth its activist philosophy in the Chestnut Hill Local on 9 March 1972. In the area of education, the party would
try to provide better resources while trying to break down some of the divisions that separated the various school populations on the Hill. To achieve this, they would encourage "the private and parochial schools in the community to share their facilities and resources more actively..." In order to promote greater harmony among the churches, they would urge religious leaders to offer "their particular talents to community activities." A year earlier, Wells had suggested that Chestnut Hill could not afford to take an isolationist stance toward problems, but would have to seek cooperation with surrounding communities.

In a referendum in which the entire Community Association membership was invited to vote, the bylaws were amended in 1972 to provide for the election of all directors by the membership. The next year, the Community Association established a network of block captains who would serve to channel information back and forth between the association and the neighborhoods. The idea was somewhat similar to the old G&CH Improvement Association's Auxiliary Committee, but there is no evidence that the earlier model inspired the later one.

In an effort to dramatize the quasi-governmental nature of their undertaking, the Community Association decided in 1974 to call its annual membership dues a "quasi tax." But in order not to exclude younger or less prosperous residents of the Hill, an amendment to the bylaws set the minimum "tax" at just one dollar. Anyone over age fourteen could pay the minimum amount and enjoy the "privilege of voting and participating in all benefits and activities of the Community Association." As it turned out, most everyone continued to pay the prevailing membership dues, which also entitled one to receive the Chestnut Hill Local each week.

In order to raise additional money for charitable purposes, the Greene party proposed a Chestnut Hill Community Fund that would receive tax-deductible contributions. The fund was established in 1972, and contributions totaled nearly $19,000 by 1975 and just over $40,000 in 1990. It was also in 1975 that Dorothy Y. Sheffield proposed that the association approve a thrift shop, eventually called Bird In Hand. Its purpose was to raise additional revenues for the fund, es-
A portion of the Top of the Hill area (Germantown Ave. and Bethlehem Pike) before its redevelopment by the Realty Trust. Photo c. early 1950s. *Local.*

especially for tree planting and landscaping around the Hill. Located in the Community Center building and staffed by local women, the shop would prove very successful in the years ahead. In 1988 Bird in Hand contributed $55,000 to the Community Fund.58

With so many new activities, it became apparent that the Community Association needed a full-time manager. The board began to discuss the idea early in 1970 but did not create such a position until 1977, when the board chose Jeanne Scott to be its first community manager. Her duties included the administration of all employees and properties of the Community Association. She was also to act as a liaison between the association and such other community organs as the *Chestnut Hill Local*, the Realty Trust, the Development Group, and the Parking Foundation (the former Parking Company). In addition, she would administer the Chestnut Hill Community Fund, help to develop projects and long-range plans for the community, and assist
in attracting volunteer support for the association’s various activities. If Chestnut Hill had been an independent political entity, she might have been called a city or town manager, and in many respects that is the role that she and her successors would play.59

During this period, the Community Association continued to try to monitor real estate development on the Hill. In 1972 it began a battle with Bell Telephone, which wanted to demolish the neighboring Hill Theater at 8324 Germantown Avenue in order to expand its regional office. Although the association failed to keep Bell from removing the movie house, it did force the company to scale down its new building from five stories to three and to adopt a neoclassical facade that was more in keeping with its original building next door and with the architectural flavor of Germantown Avenue.60

Far more successful was the Community Association’s cooperative venture with the Realty Trust in developing the Top of the Hill site, a property that was situated just above the intersection of Ger-
mangtown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike. It was here that the number 23 trolley ended its long run up from South Philadelphia and made its turn around on a circular track that local residents had long called "the loop." The plot also contained an unattractive trolley station with snack bar, the Grove Diner, and a modest-sized Acme Supermarket. The Realty Trust acquired the properties in 1973 for $360,000 and chose the firm of LETR Associates to develop the site. Initial plans called for a multiuse facility that included apartments and commercial establishments. After long and often heated debates between the community and developers, an L-shaped arcade of shops was built to frame the trolley loop. A green space between the shops and the trolley tracks was landscaped with trees, shrubs, and a wood-rail fence.61

The Greene party and the Community Association worked to maintain and enhance Chestnut Hill's appearance as a "Greene Country Towne." In 1974 the Parks Committee drew up an ambitious scheme that included the replanting and restoration of Pastorius Park, relandscaping of the Water Tower Recreation Center, improving the Jenks School playground, and repairing and beautifying the Hill's railroad stations. It also supported the creation of Buckley Park at the intersection of Germantown Avenue and Hartwell Lane, named for a young local man who had been killed in the Vietnam War. Yet another proposal was to link Pastorius Park and the Water Tower Recreation Center with a green walkway along Hartwell Lane. The last project had not been realized at the time of this writing, but the others were carried out over a period of years.

In 1975 the Community Association purchased a maintenance truck in order to plow snow, haul leaves and debris, and perform other jobs around the Hill that the city of Philadelphia or other constituted authorities declined to do. Although no one seemed to realize it, this action echoed the efforts of the Chestnut Hill Improvement Association back in the 1880s, when it had undertaken to pave and maintain local streets.

Finally, the association created the position of ombudsman in 1970. As was true for Jacob Bockius of the former G&CH Improvement Association, it was the ombudsman's job to receive complaints and to refer them to the proper person or agency. After 1977 the ombudsman's job was taken over by the community manager.62
Community volunteers clean up Pastorius Park in the spring of 1986. Local.

Although the Community Association was active in a number of areas during the Greene party years, many area residents then and later contended that the credit for community accomplishments cannot be claimed by the Greenes alone, but must be shared with the entire association and its many volunteers. Others have charged that the Greene party was destructive in that it created a spirit of divisiveness. This charge of divisiveness would be used many times in the future in a community that professed to value a professional, non-partisan stance toward local problems, a stance that echoed the reformist ideas of George Woodward and other Progressive Era leaders on the Hill two generations earlier.

Still other critics have charged that the Greene party took on far more issues than it could ever hope to resolve, and that under Well’s leadership it tended to move from one problem to another without dealing thoroughly with any one of them. Then there were those who asserted that the Greene party was merely an organization created by Wells for his own aggrandizement. It is clear that Chestnut Hill’s quasi government reached a new level of activity during the early and mid-1970s. It is also clear that there was a mounting opposition to this activism, particularly to social activism.
Beyond the specific criticisms aimed at Wells and the Greene party, Chestnut Hill's quasi government suffered from serious limitations. Despite attempts to create a well-integrated and effective system, it remained unofficial and diffuse. There was no one charter or constitution that defined and empowered the various institutions that were involved with quasi government. Because the interlocking directorates were purely voluntary, there was nothing to keep the Historical Society, the Parking Foundation, or the Development Group from abandoning them, or from making decisions independently of and even at cross-purposes to the Community Association. Because the Community Association itself was not an official government institution, no legal or constitutional machinery could require it to continue functioning on a high level year after year. The effectiveness of the Community Association and its various committees, as well as of such independent institutions as the Historical Society, depended largely upon the energy, resourcefulness, and commitment of a handful of volunteer leaders. Thus Chestnut Hill's quasi government had an ad hoc quality that could never be overcome entirely. Finally, the lack of clear lines of authority and the need to work through legally constituted municipal agencies, such as Philadelphia's Zoning Board, led to quarreling and confusion—without any umpires, such as a superior court or a constitutional balance of powers.

Reflecting on many of these problems and reeling from constant criticism, the Greene party decided to disband in May 1975, with most of its members concluding that the intense controversy surrounding its existence had made it "counterproductive." Yet Wells was not willing to give up, and during the Community Association elections in early 1976 he made a strenuous effort to salvage the Greene party platform, if not the party itself. He took out full-page advertisements in the Local in which he insisted that there were two diametrically opposed philosophies from which to choose in selecting candidates. His group believed in "open[,] broad based participation of all citizens, regardless of rank, race, religion, class, or ethnic background." The opposition, he contended, stood for "a comparatively closed policy[-]making procedure conducted by 'experts' or by the 'influential' at the executive level[,] . . . conforming basically to the
pattern of a corporation's board of directors." When it came to discussing controversial issues in the community, his group believed in "telling it like it is," whereas the opposition, in Wells's opinion, favored "supervised speech and press." Opponents charged that Wells himself had not lived up to this philosophy and had actually tried to run the Community Association as if it were a closed corporation, with little tolerance for dissent.

Despite his strenuous campaign efforts, Wells's candidates were defeated by a narrow margin in the Community Association elections in late March of 1976, which saw a record turnout of 1,891 members. Disappointed and angry at the defeat and at the mounting criticism against him, Wells left civic life on the Hill for a third time. Moving to Maine with his wife, Wells has never returned to live in Chestnut Hill, although he has made frequent visits to friends and old supporters. A less activist Community Association would now be in charge of quasi government for the suburb in the city.

With or without Wells, Chestnut Hill's quasi government would devote itself primarily to preserving and extending a pleasant and privileged way of life in their suburb in the city. Like local civic groups in the past, the Community Association and its ancillary organizations were run for the most part by wealthy and prominent members of the community, who drew upon their professional skills, private finances, social connections, and personal self-confidence to achieve their goals. Believing that they did not have to settle for any less than the best, they persisted in their civic efforts year after year despite some disagreements on ends and means and some variations in their level of activity. In this sense, they were not too much different from their Progressive counterparts at the beginning of the century.