During the three decades after World War II, Chestnut Hill's leaders had severed their once close ties to Germantown and Mount Airy, creating a set of purely local institutions that resulted in a quasi government for the Hill. Yet the activist Chestnut Hill Community Association had concerned itself with some issues, such as public education and race relations, that affected the entire city, albeit as these problems bore upon life in Chestnut Hill. For more than a decade following the defeat of the Greene party platform in early 1976, however, the Community Association would show a reluctance to confront metropolitan-wide issues, or even to take a forceful role with local problems. Part of this lower profile stemmed from the association's relatively conservative leadership, which paralleled a more conservative mood in the nation at large, although there is no direct evidence that this national trend affected the local
climate. At the same time, Chestnut Hill’s tendency to turn inward during this period was a reaction to rising crime rates and physical deterioration in those areas of the city closest to Chestnut Hill, namely Germantown and Mount Airy.

This less active and more isolated stance by Chestnut Hill’s quasi government was unfortunate for many reasons. In addition to mounting problems in nearby areas of the city, the Hill itself faced a multitude of forces that threatened the semirural atmosphere that had characterized it as a suburb in the city. One was the very success of Chestnut Hill’s “extraordinary shops.” In addition to generating increasing traffic along Germantown Avenue, the shops’ success led to rising land values and rents, which in turn were forcing local enterprises out of business. Taking their place were national and regional chain stores whose absentee owners, it was feared, would not always act in the local interest. In addition, the expansion of institutions such as Chestnut Hill Hospital put increasing pressure on open spaces. Because the hospital was well respected in the community, residents faced the dilemma of choosing between two positive ends: better health care and the preservation of open spaces. Chestnut Hillers wanted to preserve their way of life, but there were increasing debates over just what that way of life should be, or how local organizations could go about protecting and extending it.

In focusing on Chestnut Hill’s relations with the rest of Philadelphia, this debate had often ignored what was happening beyond the city limits. In the 1950s merchants in Chestnut Hill had awakened to the challenges of new shopping centers and had responded with a campaign to improve the Hill’s shopping district. Development in the suburbs of adjoining Montgomery County had continued over the years, and by the late 1970s most of the land immediately north and east of Chestnut Hill had been developed. In 1980, for example, the two nearby townships of Springfield and Whitemarsh had reached stable populations of around 20,000 and 15,000, respectively.¹ The 1990 census showed little change in these figures.² The shopping malls in these communities continued to attract Chestnut Hill residents, and some inhabitants of the newer suburbs in Montgomery County shopped in Chestnut Hill. Census figures also showed that 25 percent of Chestnut Hill residents were commuting to jobs in the
Chestnut Hill in relation to surrounding communities. ERG.
Despite a large decline in riders, the daily commute downtown by train remains a familiar part of Chestnut Hill life. *Local.*

surrounding counties — as many, in fact, as were commuting from the Hill to Philadelphia.

More than anything else, it was the ubiquitous automobile and the decline of the commuter railroad that had made these new patterns possible. With a car at their disposal, Hillers could now travel in any direction. Instead of the old identity with suburb and city, residents could just as easily attach themselves to the newer communities beyond the city limits as they could to downtown Philadelphia, or to the urban neighborhoods south and east of Chestnut Hill.

Chestnut Hill consequently found itself in the midst of a regional complex, partly residential and partly commercial, that was both in-
side and outside the city limits. Chestnut Hill thus became more and more difficult to classify demographically. As the twentieth century came to an end, residents of the Hill not only had to face the dual identity of being a suburb in the city, but also had to try to define their place in a demographic region that comprised the northwest section of Philadelphia and the newer suburban communities beyond the city limits. In struggling to find its place within this wider area, some Chestnut Hill residents urged secession from the city of Philadelphia in order to seek annexation by Montgomery County. Although the issue of secession had died down by the time of this writing, the question of where Chestnut Hill belonged in the regional complex would remain.

Exacerbating these doubts about Chestnut Hill's identity was a decline in Philadelphia's municipal government. The excitement over the reform administration of Joseph Clark and Richardson Dilworth that had inspired Chestnut Hillers in the 1950s was now dead. The Democrats had built and maintained a machine that seemed as implacable to some as the Republican organization that Clark and Dilworth had overthrown a generation earlier.

Meanwhile, the great shift of businesses and population from the northeastern United States to the sunbelt states of the South and Southwest had helped to erode Philadelphia's economy. So did greater competition from manufactured goods from abroad. As a consequence, Philadelphia's once mighty industries began to collapse. With fewer jobs available, the city's population declined further—from a high of about 2.1 million in 1950 to just under 1.6 million in 1990; and from the nation's third largest city to its fifth. Even the population of Philadelphia's Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) declined. Defined as the city and its suburbs, the SMSA included Philadelphia itself, the four surrounding counties in Pennsylvania (Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, and Chester), and the three counties across the Delaware River in New Jersey (Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester). This area declined in population by 3 percent between 1970 and 1980. Between 1980 and 1990 it grew by about 3 percent, leaving it at nearly 4,850,000, approximately the same number as in 1970.
As Philadelphia lost jobs and population, its problems grew. According to some accounts, the number of people on public assistance rose from 200,000 in 1970 to 340,000 in 1980. Streets, bridges, and other parts of the city’s infrastructure decayed for lack of funds to repair them. Public school buildings and their instructional programs likewise declined because of money shortages, and teachers struck every two or three years to protest what they considered to be low pay and bad working conditions. Public transportation also barely staggered along. In order to recoup its dwindling tax base, the city constantly raised wage taxes, property taxes, and other levies, making its overall tax rate the highest of any major city in the country by 1990. But in many cases all this did was encourage more businesses and residents to leave for the suburbs. In July 1990 the city’s fiscal crisis was so desperate that it received the lowest municipal bond rating of any large city in the nation, and there were some who feared that bankruptcy was not far away.⁵

During this period, Chestnut Hill underwent a series of demographic changes. In the 1960s its population was about 9,000, little more than what it had been thirty years before. By 1970 it had risen to a precise 10,617, according to the new census tracts, which now made it possible to calculate neighborhood populations with great accuracy. This was a growth of approximately 18 percent over a decade, nearly all of it resulting from the apartments that had been built on the Morgan Tract. This apartment development was officially named Chestnut Hill Village, and the shopping center next to it went by the name of Market Square. Sharing the tract was the high-rise Morgan House. There was a total of about 800 living units and over 2,000 residents in the new complex.

By 1980 the Hill’s population had fallen slightly to 10,186, with most of the decline taking place on the more prosperous West Side, in part because of its aging population and the concomitant disappearance of children and servants from their households. During these ten years, however, the nonwhite (i.e., non-European) population of Chestnut Hill rose from 97 in 1970 to 504 in 1980, for an increase of 407 (or 420 percent). Of these, 356 were black.⁶ The 1990 census showed a further slight decrease in Chestnut Hill’s total pop-
Census tracts, Chestnut Hill. ERG.
ulation, to 10,052. In 1990, however, the black population on the Hill increased to 1,188, about three times the number in 1980. Most of these black residents (951 of them) lived in the Market Square/Chestnut Hill Village area. The figures for 1990 thus revealed that 11.8 percent of Chestnut Hill's residents were black, roughly equivalent to the percentage of black citizens (12 percent) in the total U.S. population. However, the percentage of blacks in Chestnut Hill was far less than in Philadelphia as a whole, where about 40 percent of the inhabitants were black.

East and West Mount Airy, located just south of Chestnut Hill, lost considerable population between 1970 and 1980. In both the Mount Airys the numbers of black residents had risen, while the white population had dropped precipitously. In West Mount Airy, which bordered directly on Chestnut Hill's West Side and in many ways resembled it, the population had fallen from 16,540 to 14,864. Nonwhite residents of the area had risen by almost 500, and the number of white residents had dropped by nearly 3,000. In East Mount Airy, which, like the East Side of Chestnut Hill, contained many row houses and semidetached dwellings, "white flight" was far greater. There the total population decline was about 2,800: just under 5,000 whites had left, while some 1,900 nonwhites had arrived during the same period. It appears that many of the whites who left had settled in suburban Montgomery County.

Less evident was the fact that Chestnut Hill was home to fewer upper-class men and women than it had been a half century earlier, on the eve of the Great Depression. Although the Social Register was even less reliable as a guide to prominent families, it was still the only list of its kind that might be used for comparative purposes. There had been approximately 550 Hill residents in the Social Register in the late 1920s. By the late 1980s their number had dropped to around 330, for a decline of 220 persons (or 40 percent). Bryn Mawr and Haverford had experienced slightly smaller declines, from a total for the two of 360 or so in 1930 to about 236 in 1987, a drop of 114 individuals (or 32 percent). Chestnut Hill had thus held its own with these two prestigious Main Line suburban communities. It remained the most frequently listed Delaware Valley address in the Social Reg-
ister, which by the 1980s was published as a single directory for the entire United States.9

In the case of Chestnut Hill, this decline in listings would seem to result from two principal factors. One was the growth of the post-war suburbs to the north and east of the Hill. Thus the 1987 Social Register carried a significant number of entries from Lafayette Hill, Plymouth Meeting, Flourtown, Fort Washington, and Gwynedd Valley—communities that did not exist at all in the late 1920s or that were sparsely populated at the time. A cursory examination of recent editions of the Social Register shows that the descendants of some upper-class Chestnut Hill families had moved to these newer suburbs.10

The second factor was probably the increased geographic mobility of all Americans during the postwar period. In order to take advantage of better job opportunities, some upper-class Chestnut Hillers, particularly the younger ones, had left for other parts of the country (and the world). Furthermore, well-to-do sons could no longer count on automatic acceptance by their fathers' Ivy League colleges, and might find themselves on a campus hundreds or even thousands of miles away from Chestnut Hill, where there was a good chance of meeting and marrying a young woman who had no ties to the Hill and who had no intention of living there. Reinforcing this trend was the fact that young women in Chestnut Hill started going to college in large numbers after World War II. Like their brothers, some married out-of-towners and settled elsewhere.11

On the Hill itself, women's lives were beginning to reflect the nationwide drive for greater equality of the sexes. Although there were no figures on the number of women who worked outside the home, a decline in the amount of time that women had to devote to volunteer activities suggested that more and more of them were working at full-time jobs. St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church, for example, was forced to hold many women's meetings in the evening instead of during the day, as had been the custom. The Community Center, founded just after World War I and staffed by women ever since, also experienced a decline in volunteers. Yet in other areas of civic life women were taking on leadership roles that had been dominated
by men in the past. In 1990, for example, just over 50 percent of the board members of the Chestnut Hill Community Association who actually lived on the Hill were women. This compared to only 16 percent of board members who were women in 1961.\textsuperscript{12} The Community Association also elected its first woman president in 1974, and since 1980 four of the six presidents have been women.

Besides including more women in leadership positions, the Community Association also showed greater diversity in other demographic areas. Only one of its six presidents since 1980 was listed in the \textit{Social Register}. Two of its presidents were Roman Catholics. (Of the other four, two were Episcopalians, one was a Presbyterian, and one was a Lutheran.) The occupations of these recent presidents were also more varied than in the past, although all of them were in business or the professions. Among the four women there was a journalist, a certified public accountant, a teacher, and an insurance manager. The two men were a market consultant and a city planner. During this period, the association had more board members who resided on the East Side than ever before. Whereas only one board member (4 percent of the total) hailed from the East Side in 1961, there were eight (20 percent) from the East Side in 1990. There were no black board members as of 1990, despite the fact that nearly 12 percent of the local population was African-American.\textsuperscript{13}

In the school populations, however, there were few changes from sixty years earlier: prosperous Protestants still sent their children to one of the community's private schools, such as Springside for girls and Chestnut Hill Academy for boys. There were those who continued to prefer Quaker schools, such as Germantown Friends. A decision by the William Penn Charter School, located in nearby Germantown, to go coeducational in the early 1980s made it increasingly popular with the private school group in Chestnut Hill. Catholics continued to send their children to one of the private Catholic academies or to the parish school at OMC. Chestnut Hill's public Jenks School attracted fewer local students than ever by the early 1970s, in part because of continuing financial and personnel crises in the Philadelphia school system. Consequently, the majority of the students at Jenks were black children who were bused in from outlying
areas. Thus in spite of efforts by Lloyd Wells and his supporters in the Community Association, Chestnut Hill's youngsters continued to be divided by both school and neighborhood. Among East Side children, the old epithet "half-cut" continued to be alive and well as a disparaging term for their counterparts on the West Side and in North Chestnut Hill. As a result, there was almost as little likelihood of marrying across neighborhood and class lines on the Hill as there had been two or three generations earlier.

When it came to educational attainment and income level, there also remained considerable division on the Hill. The 1980 census tracts revealed that the most highly educated residents lived on the socially prestigious West Side (tract 229), where 96.5 percent had graduated from high school and 68.1 percent had finished at least four years of college. At the other end of the educational scale was the lower southeast quadrant of Chestnut Hill (tract 257), which included Market Square/Chestnut Hill Village. There 73.7 percent had finished high school and 30.7 percent had graduated from college. The local extremes of income likewise fell into these two tracts. In tract 229 (the West Side), median family income was $75,000, whereas in tract 257 (the lower southeast quadrant) it was $21,000. Although these local differences appear great, even the lower ranges of education and income in Chestnut Hill were higher than averages for Philadelphia. In Philadelphia only 11 percent had completed college in 1980, and the median household income was just over $13,000. Comparable figures for 1990 were not yet available at the time of this writing.

There appeared to be little change in Chestnut Hill from the religious patterns of the past. The Protestant denominations, especially the Episcopalians and Presbyterians, continued to represent 50 percent or more of local residents. But impressionistic evidence suggests that the Hill's Jewish population had been increasing modestly for about two decades. A large proportion of these Jewish residents appeared to be retired couples who lived in the various apartments next to Market Square/Chestnut Hill Village. Some Jewish families had also purchased houses on the West Side and in North Chestnut Hill, and several of them had joined the Philadelphia Cricket Club, for
decades a bastion of the WASP upper class. Both Chestnut Hill Academy and the Springside School also had significant numbers of Jewish students in 1990. It was difficult to know whether or not the greater presence of Jews on the Hill reflected a decline in local anti-Semitism. According to City Councilman Thacher Longstreth and other local residents, anti-Semitism had declined greatly on the Hill since the 1930s.¹⁶

Longstreth also believed that it was only a matter of time before prosperous black families began to move into North Chestnut Hill and the West Side. He believed that they would be generally well received, if only because their wealthy, successful, and socially secure white neighbors would not feel as threatened by blacks as would the less wealthy and less successful white residents of Chestnut Hill’s East Side.¹⁷
The census tracts for 1980 suggested that the ethnic distribution of Chestnut Hill residents had shifted somewhat over the past fifty years. Of those who answered questions about ancestry, 30 percent reported that they were Irish, 28 percent were British, 25 percent were German, 6 percent were Italian, 6 percent were French, 3 percent were Eastern European, and 3 percent were African-American. The German percentage was noticeably larger than the estimate for 1930, which may be accounted for by much intermarriage among this group. The larger number of Irish can be explained by their unavoidable undercount in the 1930 City Directory at a time when many were live-in servants.

The overwhelming number (83 percent) of Chestnut Hill’s residents in 1980 still traced their ancestors to northern and western Europe. Preliminary figures from the 1990 census suggest, however, that the percentage from northwestern Europe has declined over the past ten years as the black population, in particular, has increased.

Yet another reason for changes in ethnic composition since 1930 was the presence of many newcomers on the Hill. Virtually all of the 1,000 or more inhabitants of the Chestnut Hill Village/Morgan House complex were relatively new to the community. At the same time, Chestnut Hill was attracting better paid employees of Philadelphia’s city government, who were required by law to live within municipal boundaries. Others who wanted to vote in Philadelphia elections or to run for elective office in the city also found the Hill an attractive place to live. In the early 1970s, for instance, Mayor Frank Rizzo settled on Chestnut Hill’s West Side. His successor, Mayor William J. Green, likewise moved to Chestnut Hill for a time. Some bankers, lawyers, and businessmen moving to Philadelphia also settled in Chestnut Hill.

Such demographic changes appeared to have political ramifications for the community. Although even the Great Depression had not been enough to detach most Chestnut Hillers from their allegiance to the Republican party, the solid wall of Republicanism had begun to crack during the 1930s and 1940s, particularly among residents of the East Side of the Hill, who had suffered the most from unemployment. Some upper-class residents, disgusted with years of
Chestnut Hill resident and former mayor Frank Rizzo speaks at a local candidates' forum in October 1987. 

*Local.*

corrupt Republican rule, had become Democrats over the years, and most of the Jewish and black voters moving to Chestnut Hill were already Democrats.\(^{18}\) Yet there were still not enough Democrats to compensate for continued loyalty to the GOP. The result was that in the postwar period residents of Chestnut Hill still cast the majority of their votes for Republican presidential candidates. But Democrats seeking local office did start to make inroads on the Hill during the 1950s. Patrician Democrat Joseph S. Clark, Jr. (who, along with Richardson Dilworth, had been a Republican in his early years) carried Chestnut Hill in his victorious mayoral campaign in 1951. Shortly after that, Democrat Constance Dallas of Chestnut Hill won a seat in city council. By the 1980s it was not unusual for Chestnut Hillers to split their tickets in local elections.\(^{19}\)
Even more significant than a growing independence in local contests was the division in 1958 of the old 22nd Ward, after more than a half century of resistance to such a change by voters in the area. As late as 1937, community leaders had seen the proposal as just one more attempt by the corrupt city machine to dilute the power of Independent Republicans in the ward. Sentimental attachment to the old German Township, whose boundaries largely coincided with those of the 22nd Ward, also had been a powerful factor in local opposition to ward division. But by 1958, when the question was placed on the ballot as a local referendum, the ward had already been torn wide open by partisan politics, with the Democrats holding an increasing lead in Germantown proper, where serious unemployment and a growing black population had taken the community out of the Republican column. Meanwhile, a growing fear in Chestnut Hill that Germantown pointed the way to its own future did much to undermine emotional ties to the old township. As a result, the referendum passed easily, separating the old ward into two new ones that split Chestnut Hill along Germantown Avenue, with the 59th Ward to the west and the 22nd Ward to the east of the avenue. A further ward division in the 1970s placed the whole of Chestnut Hill and upper Mount Airy into a much smaller district, the 9th Ward.

Because of its makeup, the present 9th Ward was divided politically. The precincts in Mount Airy, for example, were largely Democratic. The precinct around Chestnut Hill Village and Market Square was also a stronghold for the Democrats, in part because of its Jewish and minority population. Thus in 1980 that precinct (then the 2nd) favored Democrat Jimmy Carter over Republican Ronald Reagan by a vote of 283 to 186. In the 11th precinct, which ran through the heart of Chestnut Hill's wealthy West Side, Reagan won 483 votes to Carter's 192. In this sense, Chestnut Hill Village seemed to belong to Philadelphia politically, while the Republican West Side was more in step with suburban Montgomery County, where the Republicans commanded large majorities.

Chestnut Hill thus remained a divided community in the 1980s. An initiative that sought to bridge one of these divisions was the opening of Jenks Academy in 1980. The aim of the Philadelphia public
school system was to make Jenks into a “magnet school,” with superior programs that would attract additional white students at a time when Jenks was 85 percent black. If successful, the plan would bring about voluntary integration at Jenks while creating something of a community school in Chestnut Hill that cut across social and residential divisions. Although a prolonged teachers strike in 1981 (the sixth in little more than a decade) threatened to kill the program before it really got started, Jenks Academy did meet with moderate success. The children of some prosperous and socially prominent families on the Hill were enrolled at Jenks, although most remained only until the fourth or fifth grade, at which time their parents transferred them to one of the private schools.  

The idea for such a community school, however limited, had been proposed in the early 1970s by the Community Association’s Education Committee, but there was little evidence that the association had much to do with the establishment of Jenks Academy a decade later. Nor did the association take any action on a case of racism on the Hill in 1980. According to articles in both the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin and the Chestnut Hill Local, an interracial couple who moved into the 8100 block of Ardleigh Street on the East Side had been harassed by neighbors into leaving. Their cars were vandalized repeatedly and neighbors refused to speak to their small child. The fact that the couple were well-educated did not seem to make any difference to the neighbors. Although the Local deplored this case of racism, not one word about it appeared in the Community Association’s board minutes, despite the fact that the association was supposed to concern itself with every question relating to the welfare of Chestnut Hill.  

In nonsocial areas, too, it appeared that the Community Association and allied organizations were less responsive than in the past. The most serious indication of this decline was the collapse of the Realty Trust. It had become less and less active after completing the Top of the Hill project, and finally dissolved in 1983, when several large investors wished to retrieve their money from it. In the process of liquidating its assets, the trust had to sell the old Joslin Hall (8434 Germantown Avenue), which it had purchased in 1969 for the offices
Chestnut Hill’s unofficial town hall, on the second floor of 8434 Germantown Ave. Built in 1899, the structure originally was a dance hall known as Joslin Hall. The lower story was “colonialized” in 1961. *Local.*

of both the Community Association and the *Chestnut Hill Local.* Faced with the prospect of losing its “town hall,” the association voted to use the Chestnut Hill Community Fund as a vehicle for raising the $250,000 to purchase the building. Several Realty Trust investors contributed their shares in the building to the campaign, and others in the community supplied the rest. Although the town hall had been saved, the Community Association remained concerned over the collapse of the Realty Trust and encouraged the formation of a successor group. Established in 1984, the replacement was called the Chestnut Hill Preservation and Development Fund. As of 1990 it had accomplished very little.23

Without any effective way to obtain control over properties as they came onto the market, the Community Association found itself seriously handicapped in controlling land development during the 1980s. A good example of this was the Chestnut Hill Plaza site at
7630 Germantown Avenue, near the boundary with Mount Airy. In 1980 the owner of an Exxon station on the property retired and put the parcel up for sale. The Realty Trust declined to purchase it, as did its successor, the Preservation and Development Fund. A developer from Denver, Colorado, bought the land and built a small strip shopping center. Although it is far more attractive than the abandoned gas station and weed-infested lot that it replaced, many residents found it ugly and inappropriate for Chestnut Hill.24

As the Community Association, Realty Trust, and Preservation and Development Fund remained relatively quiescent, the Local tried to renew interest in quasi government. An editorial in October 1980 complained that the Community Association just "shuffles along." Another editorial in April 1984 was far more explicit:

A review of the CHCA files has reminded us that at one time the Community Association considered every sphere of activity, every community institution within its purview, at least to some extent. Health, education, aging people, community relations, drug and alcohol abuse, recreation—all fell within the CHCA's bailiwick. Cooperation among and between the institutions and the CHCA, although far from perfect, was at least significant.25

Early in 1985, yet another editorial focused on the need to work for Chestnut Hill's future, noting that past planning had been central to the maintenance of the community's suburban atmosphere: "The ambience of a country village within a major metropolis area did not just happen."26

In an address before the Community Association in April 1983, a visiting Ellen (Mrs. Lloyd) Wells minced few words in expressing her disappointment over the organization's record during the past half dozen years:

It appears to me that the well-oiled machine that the Community Association is today fell into place and started rolling when it abandoned the concept of quasi-government, under which banner the Greene party marched for eight or so exhilarating years. . . . I detect a peace-at-any-price attitude. Don't rock the boat.

Then, quoting Thomas Jefferson, she added, "A little revolution, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as
storms in the physical.”27 This, of course, was the stance toward civic life in Chestnut Hill that her husband had taken and that had led to such animosity toward him by residents who preferred a less controversial approach to community affairs.

Although no revolution was forthcoming, a struggle to control the community's newspaper, the Chestnut Hill Local, brought about a dramatic change of leadership in 1989 that seemed to point to reinvigoration of the Hill's quasi government. This struggle became entangled with a larger debate over the communal identity of Chestnut Hill.

From the beginning (1958), the Local had belonged to the Community Association, but as it replaced the Herald and became an increasingly powerful voice in the community, some residents began to object to the thrust of certain editorials, as well as to its news coverage. The first big confrontation came in 1967, when a furor erupted over an editorial that criticized then Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo. In response, the president of the Community Association, Bernard V. Lentz, appointed a committee to make recommendations on editorial policy for the Local. Out of its meetings came the so-called Lentz policy, which directed that all letters and editorials be signed so “that the views expressed on the editorial page are clearly and immediately identifiable as the views of the individual writer. . . .”28 This Lentz policy was reviewed and reaffirmed by the Community Association on several occasions thereafter.

It was clear by the mid-1980s that some Chestnut Hillers continued to be displeased with the Local, as well as with the Lentz policy. Although it was often unclear what the critics disliked about the newspaper, it appears that more conservative residents thought that the newspaper was too “left-leaning” in its political opinions and was unfairly critical of President Ronald Reagan, even though the newspaper carefully lived up to its pledge to print articles and letters representing all points of view. It may also have been that critics of the Local simply objected to the philosophy of its editor, Marie Jones, who believed that it was better to disseminate all the facts about a given situation, even if they were unpleasant and might lead to further contention.29
Whatever the objections may have been, a movement to curb the Local began to emerge in about 1985 among some directors of the Community Association. Critical board members requested guidelines for the Local. Some of them wanted to forbid the newspaper from commenting on issues before the board until they had been resolved. Others wanted to force the newspaper to confine itself solely to local subjects and to refrain from commenting on national and international affairs.\textsuperscript{30}

In defense of the Local, a group of residents organized the Committee to Preserve a Free Press in early October 1988, with hundreds more joining them over the next several weeks. The committee's adoption of the name "Free Press" was a public relations coup, because it implied that those who wanted any restrictions on the Local opposed a sacred tenet of American democracy. The strategy worked well: letters to the Local's weekly "Forum" section ran overwhelmingly against the idea of restraining the newspaper in any way.\textsuperscript{31} At a packed meeting of the Community Association and its board on 27 October, the directors voted 33 to 14, with 3 abstentions, to uphold the Lentz policy. The board also ordered the president of the Community Association, its executive committee, and its committee on the Local to "take no further action with regard to this matter."\textsuperscript{32}

In order to consolidate its position, the Free Press Committee decided to choose its own slate of candidates for election to the Community Association's board in April 1989. The result was an overwhelming victory for all sixteen of the Free Press candidates. In addition to campaigning for an unencumbered Local, many of the Free Press candidates and their supporters had objected to other positions taken by the now defeated leaders of the Community Association. Among these were their stand on historic preservation, particularly as it related to the expansion of Chestnut Hill Hospital, and their proposal that Chestnut Hill secede from Philadelphia. Both of these matters, in turn, bore upon the question of change in the community, and of Chestnut Hill's dual identity as a suburb in the city.

On the matter of secession, some members of the Free Press Committee believed that secession members of the Community Association's board wanted to take over the Local in order to galvanize
support for leaving the city. Whether or not this charge was true, the question of secession exploded at the Community Association’s annual meeting in April 1988, when association president Willard S. Detweiler proposed that Chestnut Hill should consider seceding from Philadelphia. At the end of his “state of the community” report he asked, “What would be the benefits of leaving the City of Philadelphia and becoming part of Montgomery County? We keep paying higher taxes to Philadelphia and our services are going down. It’s time to take another look at the idea.”

As Detweiler alluded, the idea of Chestnut Hill’s seceding from the city was not new, having been proposed as early as the 1880s. At first there was much positive reaction to Detweiler’s speech. But as time passed, there was more and more opposition to the idea. Because separation would require assent by both city and state, many concluded that it would be legally and politically impossible. Others worried about the costs of having to buy valuable property on the Hill that belonged to the city, such as park land and the Jenks School. Still others pointed out that secession would not remove Chestnut Hill physically from more deteriorated parts of the city to the south and east. Some, like Lloyd Wells, writing from his home in Maine, suspected that the secession movement was really part of a scheme by local Republicans, who were frustrated by Democratic control of Philadelphia and who wanted to merge the Hill with heavily Republican Montgomery County. Then there were those who saw secession as a selfish denial by Chestnut Hillers of any responsibility for the rest of Philadelphia. The victory of the Free Press candidates, all of whom appeared to oppose secession, put an end to the question, at least for the time being.

The other issue of concern to the Free Press group, that of historic preservation, focused on expansion plans of Chestnut Hill Hospital and on the opposition to them by hospital neighbors and the Chestnut Hill Historical Society. In this instance, too, an indeterminate number of those on the Free Press Committee alleged that certain Community Association board members wanted to take control of the Local in order to use it as an instrument to support the hospital’s position in the dispute.
Since its founding in 1967, the Historical Society had been much involved in the preservation of historic buildings. In recent years it had repaired and restored the Gravers Lane railroad station, designed by the famous Philadelphia architect Frank Furness. In the mid-1980s it had also waged a successful campaign to have nearly all of Chestnut Hill designated as a National Historic District. The district lines were identical to those of Chestnut Hill, with the exception of the Market Square/Chestnut Hill Village development, which was deleted from the district because of its recent construction. This designation as a National Historic District did not make Chestnut Hill a local historic district, and thus it could not claim zoning protection of its historic buildings from Philadelphia authorities. At the time of this writing, the Chestnut Hill Historical Society was considering a campaign to secure such legislation from city council, which would make Chestnut Hill a local historic district.35

Complementing these efforts by the Historical Society were preservation projects begun in the 1980s by other institutions on the Hill. Two of them focused on the centenary, in 1984, of Henry Howard Houston’s first developments on Wissahickon Heights. In 1982 a neighborhood committee raised $100,000 to restore the St. Martin's railroad station (originally the Wissahickon Heights station). In 1984 Chestnut Hill Academy began a limited restoration of its building on West Willow Grove Avenue, which had once housed Houston’s Wissahickon Inn.36

None of these efforts proved controversial. However, a lengthy conflict between the Historical Society and Chestnut Hill Hospital began in 1980, when the hospital announced that it would soon demolish three mid-nineteenth-century houses that it owned on the west side of Norwood Avenue. These were known as Norwood (8810), Disston House (8840), and Stevens House (8860). Preservationists opposed the plan, maintaining that Norwood Avenue was of great importance to understanding the architectural and suburban development of Chestnut Hill. For along with Summit Street, Chestnut Hill Avenue, and several other nearby streets, Norwood Avenue was, they argued, an integral part of the community’s first railroad suburb in North Chestnut Hill.
Actually, Norwood Avenue had undergone serious destruction even before the hospital made its announcement; the houses on both corners of Norwood and Chestnut Hill avenues had already been torn down. The large dwelling on the northeast corner, which had once housed the Springside School, had been demolished and replaced by a parking lot for a medical office building. The house on the opposite corner had been razed by Our Mother of Consolation Church and likewise made into a parking lot.37 In the opinion of preservationists,
the hospital’s plan to tear down three more houses on Norwood Avenue would complete the destruction of a historic residential street.

In its own behalf, the hospital argued that the three houses cost thousands of dollars each year to maintain for their present usages—one as a private residence, one as a senior citizens center, and one as a convalescent home. Despite protests from the Historical Society, the hospital demolished Norwood (8810) in the summer of 1980. Then, bowing to intense community pressure, the hospital agreed in late 1980 to sell Stevens House (8860) to the Historical Society for one dollar, with the right to repurchase the property in ten years. In 1982 the hospital likewise agreed to sell Disston House (8840) to the society under identical terms.\textsuperscript{38}

The dispute between the hospital and preservationists cooled during the mid-1980s, only to reemerge in 1988, when the hospital announced that it planned to build a new parking garage for 210 cars, later reduced to 188 cars. The hospital explained that larger outpatient facilities, as well as service to a wider area that included much of northwest Philadelphia and eastern Montgomery County, made the garage imperative. In order to obtain the necessary zoning variances, the hospital needed to regain ownership of the “green spaces” around Stevens House and Disston House and would probably repurchase them when the agreements with the Historical Society expired in 1990 and 1992. Despite opposition from the Historical Society and the North Chestnut Hill Council, an outspoken neighborhood group, the Community Association endorsed the garage proposal. Philadelphia’s Zoning Board of Adjustment awarded the hospital its variance, provided that it worked with the Community Association, the Historical Society, and the North Chestnut Hill Council (which represented the hospital’s neighbors) to develop a mutually satisfactory long-range plan for the hospital campus.\textsuperscript{39} At the time of this writing, the fate of the two remaining Norwood Avenue houses and the question of hospital expansion had not been resolved. There was reason to believe that a mutually satisfactory agreement would be forged.

Although the dispute with the hospital was about historic preservation on one level, it, like the question of secession, also involved
community definition. The suggestion that Chestnut Hill should secede from Philadelphia demonstrated that the old identification with both suburb and city, perhaps best realized during the first decades of the twentieth century, had been eroded. As to the hospital issue, many of the arguments about its expansion centered on whether it should be primarily a community facility that catered to the 10,000 or so residents of Chestnut Hill, or should serve a wider region that included northwest Philadelphia and parts of Montgomery County.

As the 1990s began, several other issues reflected Chestnut Hill’s problem of self-identity. Among these were crime and land use. Facing these issues was a Community Association pledged to greater activism in the wake of the Free Press candidates’ victory in early 1989. The board elected a new president, Virginia Duke, long a community leader as well as a former protégé and continuing admirer of Lloyd Wells. Because some leaders of the Free Press Committee had opposed both the Greene party and Lloyd Wells in the past, it would not be correct to say that Duke’s election and subsequent reelection in 1990 represented a clear-cut vindication of Wells and his supporters. Yet it appeared that much of the energy and activism of the Greene party years had returned.40

The crime issue surfaced as incidents began to escalate in Chestnut Hill during the 1980s. In 1980 the daylight abduction and rape of a teenaged girl who had been walking along St. Martin’s Lane horrified the community and led residents of the West Side to organize Chestnut Hill’s first sustained town watch. A rash of crimes on the East Side also resulted in the creation of a town watch in that section, and in the spring of 1982 the two watches combined their activities.41

By 1988 local crime statistics had grown to new and alarming proportions. According to the Chestnut Hill Local, whose data were based on the police records, the crime rate on the Hill was three times higher in the summer of 1988 than it had been just a year before. These records also showed that the largest proportion of these crimes was occurring in the Chestnut Hill Village/Market Square area, the part of Chestnut Hill that was closest to East Mount Airy. At the end
of the year, the newspaper reported that in 1988 there had been 157 burglaries, 106 car thefts, 39 purse snatchings, 3 rapes, and 1 murder on the Hill. In early January of 1989 the Germantown Savings Bank at 8601 Germantown Avenue was held up. Yet the overburdened police responded very slowly and sometimes not at all to calls from Chestnut Hill. Short-staffed and located two to four miles from the Hill at Germantown and Haines streets, police from the 14th district were simply unable to respond to the increasing flood of crimes in the area, much of it related to Philadelphia's epidemic of illegal drugs. This lack of police protection infuriated local residents and doubtless gave fuel to those who wanted to secede from a city that did not seem able to protect them.⁴²

Although the crime figures for Chestnut Hill were low in comparison to most other parts of Philadelphia, the Community Association was determined to combat crime. With the cooperation of the Local, it campaigned successfully to have a foot patrolman assigned in early 1990 to the commercial district along Germantown Avenue. This action, in addition to increased activity by town watches and cooperation from the community in seeing that cases were prosecuted, led to one-third fewer crimes in the spring of 1990 than in the spring of 1989. Despite this success, Chestnut Hill was coming to seem more like a part of the city than ever before, and no longer was insulated from most urban problems by its distant location at the edge of Philadelphia.

Controversies over land use demonstrated that many residents of the Hill worried that their community would become so heavily developed and clogged with traffic that it would resemble the densely built-up city below. Most of the concern focused on Germantown Avenue, where rising property values led to more intense development of commercial lots. One such lot, occupied by a Gulf service station, stood in the forks of Germantown Avenue and Bethlehem Pike, where the old Maple Lawn Inn had once stood. The lot's owner sold the property to a developer who proposed to build a cluster of shops that would complement neighboring stores in the Top of the Hill development. Despite the fact that the developer agreed to leave an open area at the forks, in part because of intense community pres-
Officer Mike Hogan, Chestnut Hill’s new foot patrolman, is welcomed in April 1990 by Vivian White, administrative assistant to the Community Association’s board of directors. Local.

sure, many residents were outraged at the thought of more shops, traffic, and parking problems. Because of financial difficulties, the project has not yet been carried through.

The question of open land in residential areas also became a concern, as many residents believed that increasing land values would tempt institutions as well as private owners to make money by subdividing some of their property. There was also concern that one of the large institutions in the far northern part of Chestnut Hill might some day fail and sell its land to developers. In reaction, the Chestnut Hill Historical Society inaugurated a program that encouraged owners to limit the development of their property by ceding development rights, in perpetuity, to the society through a land easement. In return, owners would receive tax deductions for the value of their easement donation to the society. The Historical Society’s program also provided for facade easements, which would restrict alterations to the exteriors of local buildings placed into the program.

Although actions to combat crime, limit overbuilding in the commercial area, and thwart the development of open land were all pos-

itive, some residents detected an unrealistic and unhealthy desire in Chestnut Hill to arrest any kind of change. Such an attitude had led some inhabitants to oppose any new building, even if it meant the replacement of an ugly or bland-looking gasoline station with an attractive and well-landscaped group of new shops. The same mentality had caused residents to complain about the many unfamiliar faces that they see on Germantown Avenue—shoppers from other communities who have come to patronize the “extraordinary shops” of Chestnut Hill. Still others objected to the fact that the regional transit system, SEPTA, uses Chestnut Hill as a transfer point for buses, trains, and trolleys, bringing still more strangers into the community, if only for a few minutes at a time. For the residents of truly deprived parts of Philadelphia, such complaints have seemed both trivial and selfish. News that Chestnut Hill had also obtained a new railroad bridge, at a cost of $7.5 million, for its West Side line also angered residents in less wealthy sections of the city, who concluded that Chestnut Hillers had once more used their social and political power
to obtain funds that might be put to better use elsewhere in the city. Outsiders might also be angered, if they were not amused, at the energy and columns of newsprint that residents of Chestnut Hill spent on such inconsequential issues as whether a boxwood hedge, described in several letters to the *Local* as a "modesty screen" for female musicians, should be removed from the outdoor amphitheater in Pastorius Park. Several years earlier, a *cause célèbre* on the Hill had involved demands to remove foul-smelling female ginkgo trees from the shopping district along Germantown Avenue.

Beyond such petty issues, Chestnut Hill would have to work hard to survive as an attractive suburb in the city. Its various civic organizations would have to make more of an effort to represent all segments of the community. Although progress had been made among women and East Side residents, it was essential to include the Hill's growing nonwhite population in the local quasi government. At the same time, these organizations would have to realize that a policy of isolation would not assist Chestnut Hill as the twentieth century came to an end. Nor would an automatic opposition to change help the community to prosper. Surrounded as it was by tens of thousands of people living in dozens of different communities, Chestnut Hill could not hold back the tides of change or chart its own independent course. For the Hill was no longer an isolated village, surrounded by thousands of acres of farmland, at the end of a commuter train line, a fact that local residents would have to accept whether they wanted to or not. Under the circumstances, only close cooperation with other communities, including the city of Philadelphia, would allow Chestnut Hill to face and solve its most outstanding problems. In the process, Chestnut Hill residents would have to redefine who they were and where they lived. Beginning as a gateway village outside the city, Chestnut Hill had become a suburb in the city, and finally a regional community. Contrary to the beliefs of some in the community, Chestnut Hill had never been a "timeless village," in which the forces of change were arrested.

One solution to Chestnut Hill's identity problem might be municipal mergers or annexations that would provide Philadelphia and its four surrounding counties in Pennsylvania with some sort of re-
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gional government. Given the anti-urban bias of the outlying suburbs, there was virtually no chance that this would occur. The only alternative was for Chestnut Hill to cooperate as closely as possible with its neighbors in finding common solutions for common problems. Here the Community Association and the other elements of quasi government could play a constructive role.

At the same time, Chestnut Hillers would have to face the painful realization that it was no longer possible to enjoy all the advantages of city life without having to take greater responsibility for its negative aspects. At the beginning of the twentieth century, some writers on cities and suburbs had envisioned an ambitious decentralization of the city, in which nearly all residents would live in suburbs of some kind, no matter how modest. Instead, suburban living became a reality for the middle and upper classes, who for decades were able to ignore the worst deprivations of urban life.

Obviously, Chestnut Hill’s quasi government could not even begin to address all of Philadelphia’s problems, and in many cases it had no choice but to concentrate on local difficulties that could be managed at the local level. Nor was it likely that Chestnut Hillers and their neighbors in suburbs outside the city would desert their homes and move into the decaying portions of Philadelphia. The bulk of the region’s newer housing stock had already been built in suburbs. It was also understandable that many families, from the middle of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth, had decided that leaving deteriorating areas of the city was the best alternative for themselves and their families, concluding that their lonely determination to remain behind in the city would do nothing to arrest the forces of decay.

Because Philadelphia’s municipal government was likely to face limited funds for the foreseeable future, Chestnut Hill’s quasi government would also have to provide many services and amenities that independent suburbs had long provided for themselves. Chestnut Hill’s habit of persistence would be an asset only if it could modify the elitist leadership patterns, which had been followed by Progressive reformers early in the twentieth century and in the decades since. If the Hill’s civic organizations could become more representative of
A summer evening band concert in Pastorius Park, a tradition for more than fifty years. Photo by Carl McGuire. Local.

the local population and make every effort to cooperate with other communities, both in and outside Philadelphia, the suburb in the city stood a fair chance of succeeding. In approaching these tasks, residents would need to understand the forces that had shaped their community over the past century and a half, and that gave them some indication of what the future might bring.