



## CHEVY CHASE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2014

### **“Melodies and Memories: Peggy Seeger in Conversation with Mary Cliff”**

*Spring Program on Saturday, March 15*

The Chevy Chase Historical Society is delighted to welcome folksinger Peggy Seeger back to her Chevy Chase roots for our 2014 Spring Program. From 1944 to 1953, the Seeger family lived in a spacious, music filled Queen Anne house in Chevy Chase Village. Seeger will return to the Chevy Chase Village Hall, across the street from her childhood



home, to talk about growing up in Chevy Chase, her prodigious music career, and her illustrious family. Between the memories, Seeger will sing several of her favorite songs.

The program will be held on Saturday, March 15, at 4:00 p.m. at the Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Ave. It is free and open to the public. Space is limited so it will be a first come, first seated event.

Seeger will reminisce with another folk music notable and family friend, Mary Cliff, longtime radio host of the “Traditions” folk music program, now on WAMU’s BluegrassCountry on Saturdays from 9:00 p.m. to midnight and on BluegrassCountry.org. Cliff has been a fixture on local radio since 1968, producing and presenting not only folk but classical music, news, public affairs, and arts interviews. “Traditions” is known for its breadth of material and strong emphasis on artists and performances in the Washington area.

Seeger is the elder daughter in one of America’s foremost folk music families. Her father was folklorist and musicologist Charles Seeger; her mother was modernist composer Ruth Crawford Seeger; and her brother, Mike Seeger, and her half-brother, Pete Seeger, helped spark the folksong revival in mid-20th century America. Pete’s impact was manifest in the

outpouring of tributes following his death on January 27.

Seeger has lived much of her adult life in England. She worked with, and married, British singer and songwriter Ewan MacColl, who wrote the classic *First Time Ever I Saw Your Face* for her.

In addition to playing six instruments, Seeger is known for her excellent renditions of Anglo-American folksongs and for her activist songwriting, especially in the fields of feminism and ecology. She has made 23 solo recordings and has taken part in more than 100 recordings with other performers. She tours as a solo artist chiefly in the U.K. and occasionally in the U.S. and Australia, giving concerts and workshops.

Before the program, CCHS will hold a brief annual meeting at which four directors will be elected to the board. Light refreshments will be served. Please direct questions to Mary Sheehan at (301) 652-5726.

*Celebrating One of America’s First Streetcar Suburbs*



**CHEVY CHASE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 15145  
CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20825

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Gail Sansbury, Ph.D., Director

Chevy Chase Library  
8005 Connecticut Avenue  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
Tel: 301.656.6141 • Fax: 301.656.5114  
www.chevychasehistory.org  
chevychasehistory@msn.com  
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Open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesday  
and by appointment

The Chevy Chase Historical Society collects, records, interprets and shares materials relating to the history of Chevy Chase, Maryland, one of America's first streetcar suburbs. The organization provides resources for historical research and sponsors a variety of programs and activities to foster knowledge and appreciation of the community's history.



**Alice Wells Kinter**

**May 20, 1928 to December 23, 2013**

**In Memorium**

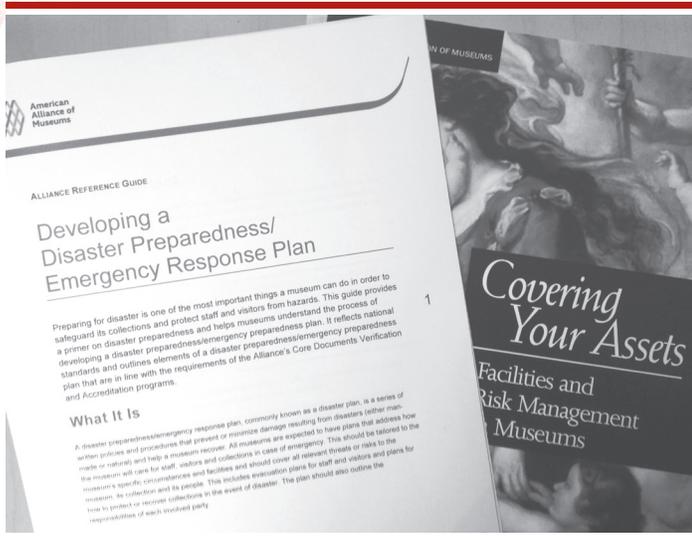
CCHS lost one of its greatest boosters, hardest workers and most beloved board members with the death of Alice Kinter on December 23, 2013. Alice was a member of the board from the society's early days, and served as its conscientious Recording Secretary for more than 20 years. She conceived CCHS' House History Program and managed it for many years. She was responsible for researching the histories of some of the earliest houses in Chevy Chase, and her fingerprints are on all 50-plus histories in the society's files. In recent years she served with enthusiasm as our liaison to the Friends of the Library.

Alice actively participated in the annual CCHS Spring Gala for the last quarter century, and was instrumental in purchasing and cooking the signature asparagus spears that we traditionally serve. Only in the last five years did she cede that task to the caterers. She often staffed the gala check-in table, her infectious smile warmly greeting our guests. She also discovered a local source for the beautiful "Chevy Chase Rose," a climbing rose that was propagated on East Kirke Street in the early 1900s. She bought multiple Chevy Chase Rose bushes and sold them to eager buyers at the CCHS Heritage Fair in 2006. We will think fondly of her each spring when the prolific rose blooms and covers the vine.

Alice's many friends and admirers knew that she was as feisty as she was fun loving. Her creativity and charm were matched by her grit and perseverance. The society and the entire Chevy Chase community will greatly miss her enduring strength, her jovial manner, her keen mind, and her warm friendship. We will not see her like again.

## Follow Up Meeting with Our Museum Assessment Program Peer Reviewer

In the Spring 2013 Newsletter, CCHS announced its participation in the Museum Assessment Program (MAP). Through guided self study and on-site consultation with a museum and archive professional, participation enables the society to better serve members and the broader community by helping us meet and exceed the highest professional standards of the museum and local historical society archive field. We chose to use the recommendations of our peer reviewer to update our Collections Management Policy.



This February 4, CCHS Board Members Angela Lancaster, Susan Bollendorf, and Mary Sheehan, and Center Director Gail Sansbury, had a follow up meeting with Linda Eppich, our MAP peer reviewer. We were offered this additional consultation by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which fund the MAP.

Ms. Eppich was curator of the Rhode Island Historical Society for 22 years, as well as archivist and grant writer for the Preservation Society of Newport County. She is a member of AAM, AASLH (American Association for State and Local History), past chair of the AAM Curators Committee, and a reviewer for the National Endowment for the Humanities and for IMLS. She has taught at universities in Michigan and Rhode Island, as well as at the Campbell Center for Historic Preservation Studies. We learned much in meetings with her last summer, and are delighted that she was able to make a follow-up visit focused on two areas: collections conservation and emergency preparedness.

**Collections Conservation:** CCHS already has worked with a conservator to repair and stabilize the historic plans and renderings by Nathan Barrett, the landscape architect

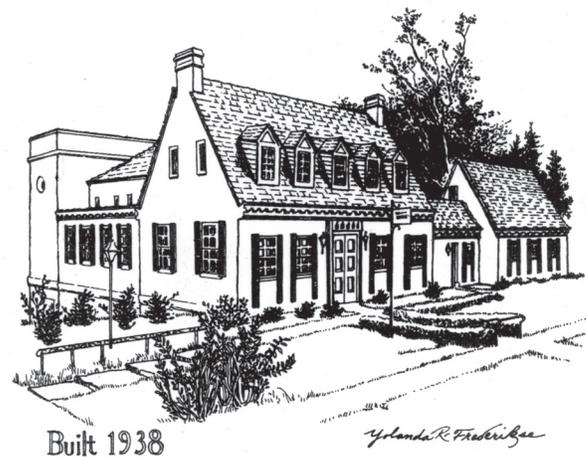
for the Chevy Chase Land Company. And, we have an ongoing program to repair and to rebind several historic atlases. We want to extend such efforts to include other items in our collections, and to enhance our ability to care for and store fragile items. We will be working to identify potential conservators who might consult with CCHS as we develop a more detailed plan and pursue funding sources.

**Emergency Preparedness:** Archives, museums and other cultural institutions are being encouraged by organizations such as AAM and AASLH to revisit their emergency preparedness policies and plans and to expand them to meet national standards. Ms. Eppich provided a number of resources that will help CCHS to develop a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan. An important element of our risk management, the plan will address prevention of damage and recovery of our collections, and safety of staff and visitors, in the event of a flood, fire, or other emergency.

Our thanks to Ms. Eppich, who generously donated her time for the follow up visit, and to the MAP program, for funding her travel and accommodations.

## CCHS Congratulates The Woman's Club of Chevy Chase On Its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

THE WOMAN'S CLUB OF CHEVY CHASE, MD., INC.



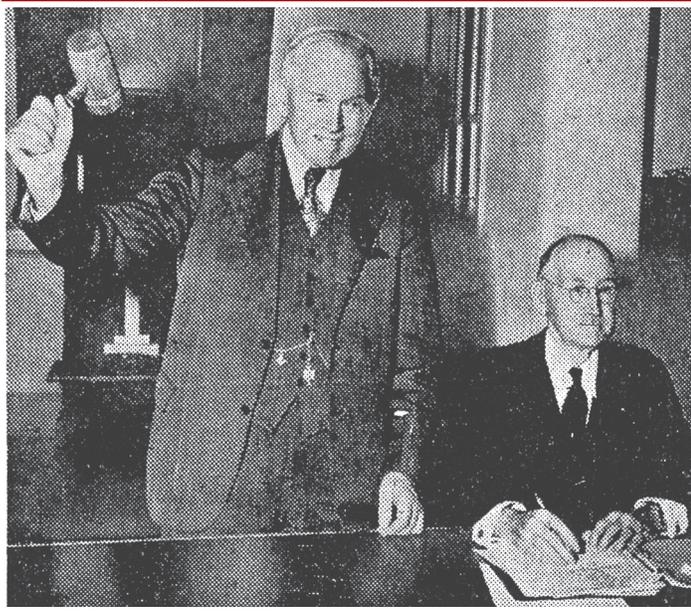
The society has a small collection of Woman's Club material, including this hand painted tile showing the newly completed club house in 1938. The club also is a frequent topic in our Oral History Program interviews – local residents remember its important programs and social service efforts, especially during World War II. We salute this enduring community organization.

## What Men's Club? Meet The Fossils!

By John E. Murtagh

Most residents of our community are aware of the Woman's Club of Chevy Chase, housed in its white brick club house on Connecticut Avenue across from Columbia Country Club. Fewer know that the Woman's Club property is home to a special assemblage of fossils as well.

These are not buried in the soil, at least not yet, but can be found above ground, in plain sight, at the gatherings of a local men's organization, The Fossils, that meets at the club house.



**Photo of The Fossils founder and first president Dr. Harvey L. Curtis, with secretary Alexander M. Ashley, opening a 1948 club meeting. It accompanied an article by Mary McGrory in *The Evening Star***

The members, who have numbered more than 1,400 in the aggregate since the The Fossils' founding in 1947, describe themselves as a group of distinguished retired men with the slogan of "A Place For The Curious Senior." Approximately one half of them are Chevy Chase residents; the others live in surrounding communities.

The idea for the club was conceived when Dr. Harvey L. Curtis, a retired physicist, was attending the Chevy Chase First Methodist Church one Sunday, and pondering enjoyment of life after retirement. It occurred to him that, "A man who had spent an active lifetime should have many experiences that he would enjoy sharing with other men." Dr. Curtis talked with other men and the club was formed.

Initially it met at the Methodist church. It consisted of five Methodists, a Presbyterian, and an Episcopalian, and continues to be religiously diverse.

One of the new club's first challenges was to select a name. As news of the club spread *The Evening Star* sent a reporter to cover a meeting. She may have been the young Mary McGrory, who wrote an article about the club in August 1948. Discussion of possible names stalled, and the members asked the reporter to suggest a name. She sized up the group, noted the gray hairs, and suggested, "Why not call yourselves 'The Fossils?'" As it often does, womanly inspiration fostered man's achievement.



**Dr. Curtis and three of the other four founding members, William E. Springer, Alexander M. Ashley, and William D. Nichols, in a 1954 portrait by The Fossils club photographer Osmand Verele**

Membership has grown steadily: by November 1960, there had been 310 Fossils, and by December 2013, there had been 1,465. The club even has a coat of arms for The Order of the Fossil Gems, members who have been active for 25 years or more.

A potential member is sponsored by a current member and invited to a meeting. The sponsor gives a short personal history of the prospective member before the membership votes on admission.

Members have represented every occupation from accounting to zoology. This impressive background imparts many layers of insight to The Fossils' topical discussions. As president Waldemar "Wally" Stack puts it, "The Fossils' meetings provide a cross fertilization of ideas based on different experiences, that turns what may start out as 'all Greek' into a stimulating experience."

In recent years the club has moved its operations from the Methodist Church to the Woman's Club. It meets each Thursday at 1:30 p.m., holds additional events at other times, and publishes the monthly newsletter *Fossil News*. Its activities are guided by the motto "Sociability and Service." Members volunteer in many different service endeavors, such as the national consumer assistance initiative Call for Action. Wives and guests are welcome to attend meetings and events.



**Coat of Arms of The Order of the Fossil Gems,  
men who have been members for at least 25 years**

The Fossils' archive is a treasure trove of Chevy Chase history: old family names, member biographies, past brochures and newsletters, and membership bookkeeping records.

Club brochures reveal that The Fossils once had committees on Music on Records, Motion Pictures, Science, Excursions, and Reading. Today's Fossils are interested in international affairs. One Thursday of each month, the weekly meeting follows the Foreign Service Association's "Great Decisions" program model, watching a half hour FSA video, then engaging in topical discussion. At the other meetings the Fossils continue to nurture their abiding interest in science,

medicine, music, and literature with guest speakers, reading groups, and performances.

Vibrant spots in the club's historical records include notes on The Fossils' preparation for a day of panning for gold on a Great Falls area estate, information about the club's presentation in the 1950s of a thrice-weekly radio program on retirement matters, and the announcement of saxophonist Fossil Harry David "Woody" Seybert's 2013 presentation, "Big Bands Swing the Classics." Seybert played with the Glenn Miller Orchestra during World War II, is a popular D.J. at Woman's Club dances, and gives talks to other groups on the big band experience.



**Woody Seybert (L) and other members  
of the Glen Miller Orchestra reed section in 1945,  
when they played with an Army band in Italy**

On a personal note, I originally was told that there was "a box" of The Fossils records in the basement of the Woman's Club. The "box" turned out to be two tall filing cabinets jammed with information containing club history – in short, The Fossils archive. The message that came through as I went through the records is that this has been a group of vital, interesting men who did not simply want to rust away in retirement.

I noted that one of the charter members, C.L. Wolcott, Fossil Number 32, retired from the United States Patent Office. So the club has come full circle since I, Fossil Number 1,464, also am retired from the Patent Office.

There are many interesting stories about The Fossils. You can call me for more information at (301) 652-9038.



CHEVY CHASE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 15145  
CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20825

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## **Introducing Beth Meyer, New CCHS Archive And Research Center Assistant**



Beth Meyer, a certificate student in library science at the School Library Media Program at The Catholic University of America, has begun working part time at our Archive and Research Center. She has a Masters in Library Information Systems from Catholic University, and extensive experience with public programming in the D.C. Public Library system. She also has writing and editing experience, and an interest in working with children.

Beth grew up in the Woodley neighborhood of D.C. and now lives in nearby Kensington, so she knows our area well. She already is learning our PastPerfect software program and will be available at the Center most Tuesdays to assist visitors during the hours it is open to the public, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We welcome you to visit the Center and meet this new member of our CCHS team.