



December 4, 2014

Gary Thompson, Commissioner
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3G
PO Box 6252 Northwest Station
Washington, DC 20015

Dear Mr. Thompson:

Your listserv post of November 30 concerning the proposal to rename the fountain at Chevy Chase Circle has come to the attention of the Chevy Chase Historical Society. We take no position either in support of or in opposition to the renaming of the fountain. Nor do we seek to defend Senator Newlands' views on race or other political and cultural issues of his time. Our sole interest in this matter is to help ensure that public discussion on matters of local history be informed by the most authoritative historical facts available. It is in that spirit that we offer these comments on your proposal.

Senator Newlands' views on race are a matter of public record and have been well-documented over the years. And while today we, and most Americans, find those views repugnant, they were widely-held both in our area and throughout the nation during Senator Newlands' lifetime. As your proposal recognizes, "we long ago progressed beyond" the biases held by Senator Newlands and many of his contemporaries. CCHS welcomes discussion about Senator Newlands' role in the development of neighborhoods in Chevy Chase, Maryland and DC, and his well-known views on race.

A few comments on certain aspects of your proposal:

A. Paragraph 1 of the proposed Resolution includes the statement that Senator Newlands "included in most property deeds in Chevy Chase a racist covenant precluding land from ever being owned by African-Americans or Jews..."

In fact, Senator Newlands never included racial covenants in the deeds for land in Chevy Chase. In the CCHS documentary, *Chevy Chase, Maryland: A Streetcar to Home*, Elizabeth Jo Lampl, architectural historian and co-author of *Chevy Chase: A Home Suburb for the Nation's Capital*, stated that the original covenants in these deeds did not mention race:

Although many upscale suburban developments of the late 19th century routinely imposed racial and religious restrictions in the deeds, our research shows that the Chevy Chase Land Company never included such restrictions in the early years of Chevy Chase.

Nonetheless, Lampl and her co-author Kimberly Prothro Williams report in their book that early deeds from the Land Company to individual purchasers did include covenants providing that “houses fronting upon Connecticut Avenue could not cost less than \$5,000 each; houses on the side streets could not cost less than \$3,000...” (p. 56) These covenants certainly had the effect of limiting the people who could live in Chevy Chase. Given the economic realities of the time, they undoubtedly prevented many minority groups from purchasing homes in Chevy Chase.

Lampl further states in the documentary that by the early 1930s, deeds in some sections of Chevy Chase did include restrictions based on race and religion. But these were not the work of Sen. Newlands, who died in 1917. Ultimately all racial covenants were struck down and rendered unenforceable by the Supreme Court in 1948.

B. Paragraph 1 of your proposed Resolution also states that Newlands’ “...*vision was for Chevy Chase to be forever racially segregated.*”

We are aware of no historical evidence for this rather sweeping statement. Your description of Newlands’ vision may or may not be accurate, but in our own work as an historical society we require evidence for such statements. We would be interested in knowing the basis for your statement, and we ask that you furnish it to us so that we may add it to our archives.

C. Paragraph 1 of your proposed Resolution also states that Senator Newlands “...*used the formation of Rock Creek Park as a segregationist barrier in DC generally.*”

Again, we are aware of no historical evidence supporting this statement.

A plan for Rock Creek Park was originally laid out in 1867, long before Senator Newlands formed the Chevy Chase Land Company in 1890. This plan was revived in 1888, championed by Charles Glover, a Washington banker, civic activist, and a shareholder in the Chevy Chase Land Company. Legislation establishing the Park was finally adopted by Congress in 1890 with the support of Senator Newlands and another Land Company shareholder, Senator William Stewart of Nevada. What historical sources do document is that Senators Newlands and Stewart were very much aware of the economic benefits of the Park for their real estate development business in Chevy Chase. As many scholars have pointed out, the creation of the Park enhanced the value of nearby properties, and Senator Stewart candidly noted that the establishment of the Park would take “2,000 acres out of the market.” (See William Lilley, *The Early Career of Francis G. Newlands, 1846-1897*, p. 209).

D. Paragraph 2 of your proposed Resolution states that “...*in his 1912 campaign for U.S. President...*” Senator Newlands sought to amend the Constitution to prohibit African-Americans from voting.

Newlands was never a Presidential candidate; he supported Woodrow Wilson in 1912.

While the CCHS Archive is a repository of primary materials about the history of Chevy Chase and its residents, and does not include Newlands’ legislative papers, we do have a number of books, theses and articles about his legislative career which detail his views on race. William D. Rowley, in his chapter on “Racism and Reform” in *Reclaiming the Arid West: The Career of*

Francis G. Newlands, explores Newlands' seemingly contradictory mix of Progressive ideas with anti-immigration and pro-racial segregation positions. Rowley, like other scholars, writes about Newlands' proposed "white plank" for the 1912 Democratic Convention – a plank that would have restricted immigration and disfranchised African American men. Newlands was not a voting delegate at the convention, but his proposed plank was discussed by the Resolutions Committee of the convention. (New York Times, June 17, 1912, p. 7)

E. Paragraph 3 of the proposed Resolution states that Newlands "*fought to limit education for African-Americans to domestic and menial work only....*"

It is true that Newlands believed that education for African-American children should develop manual rather than intellectual skills; he advocated industrial training for children he considered to be of "an inferior race." Although a Progressive, his racial beliefs promoted the "popular social theories that saw the American Future in terms of whites only." (Rowley, pp. 139-141)

F. Paragraph 4 of the proposed Resolution states that Newlands "*...opposed women's suffrage.*"

According to William Rowley (p. 162), in 1913 Newlands supported equal suffrage for women in Nevada. As a Progressive, Newlands saw women voters as allies for reform legislation.

None of the foregoing comments contradicts the fact that Senator Newlands was a man whose beliefs about race we find abhorrent today. These comments do, however, correct certain factual errors in your Resolution and place Newlands in the context of his time. The overall tone of the Resolution presents Senator Newlands in only one dimension, and it overlooks his many achievements, as well as the large company of elected officials, business leaders, and civic elites who shared his racist views in the Progressive era.

We are not, and do not want to be perceived as, apologists for Newlands, but we ask that you consider the available historical research on the development of Chevy Chase and on Newlands' career as a legislator. Attached is a list of sources available at the CCHS Archive and Research Center. We invite the ANC 3G Commissioners and members of the public to visit the Archive at 8005 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD.

Sincerely,

Angela Lancaster, President

Mary Sheehan, Board Member

Gail Sansbury, Ph.D., Director, Archive and Research Center

A Selected Bibliography of Historical Research on the Early Development of Chevy Chase and the role of Francis G. Newlands

Books and Dissertations

- Atwood, Albert W., *Francis G. Newlands: A Builder of the Nation*. Commemorative Edition, 100th Anniversary of the Chevy Chase Land Company. The Newlands Company, 1969. CCHS 1987.27.01. / 921 ATW
- Darling, Arthur B., editor. *The Public Papers of Francis G. Newlands, Volumes I and II*. Washington, DC: W. F. Roberts Company, Inc., 1937. CCHS 1997.03.01 / 921 DAR. *An index of the Newlands papers is also available at the Yale University Archives.*
- Lampl, Elizabeth Jo and Kimberly Prothro Williams. *Chevy Chase: A Home Suburb for the Nation's Capital*. Crownsville, MD: Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and Maryland Historical Trust Press 1998. CCHS 1998.05.01 / 975.2 LAM *This is one of the best sources of information about the development of Connecticut Avenue and Chevy Chase.*
- Lilley III, William. "The Early Career of Francis G. Newlands, 1848-1897," PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1965. CCHS 1996.05.01 / 975.2 LIL
- Rowley, William D. *Reclaiming the Arid West: The Career of Francis G. Newlands*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. CCHS 2002.11.01 / 921 ROW *This book, as its title suggests, does not cover the development of Chevy Chase, but it does provide detailed information about Newlands' professional life as member of the Progressive movement and it includes a chapter on his ideas about race.*

Journal Articles and Chapters in Books about Chevy Chase

- Atwood, Albert W., "The Romance of Francis G. Newlands and Chevy Chase," in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, 1966-68*, edited with an introduction by Francis Coleman Rosenberger. Columbia Historical Society, 1969. Pages 294-310. CCHS 1987.39.02 / 975.3 ROS
- French, Roderick S., "Chevy Chase Village in the Context of the National Suburban Movement, 1870-1900," in the *Records of the Columbia Historical Society of Washington DC, 1973-1974*, edited with an introduction by Francis Coleman Rosenberger. Distributed by the University Press of Virginia, 1976. Pages 300-320. CCHS 1987.39.06 / 975.3 ROS
- Robinson, Judith Helm, "Chevy Chase: A Bold Idea, A Comprehensive Plan," in *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital*, Second Edition, edited by Kathryn Schneider Smith. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. Pages 193-311. CCHS 2010.1039.01 / 973 SMI

On Suburbanization

Jackson, Kenneth. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. CCHS 2008.20.12 / 720 JAC *This classic book about suburbanization includes a chapter on streetcar suburbs, including several pages about Chevy Chase. It also contains one of the best descriptions of the way the Federal Housing Administration's mortgage insurance programs reinforced segregated neighborhoods from the late 1930s to the 1960s.*

On Rock Creek Park

Einberger, Scott. *A History of Rock Creek Park: Wilderness and Washington, DC*. The History Press, 2014. *Although this book does not discuss the development of Chevy Chase, MD or Chevy Chase, DC in relation to the park, it does provide a detailed historical narrative about the earliest plans for a park along Rock Creek, from Nathaniel Michler's report in 1867 to the efforts of Charles Glover in 1890.*

In addition, historical research on race and planning in Washington, DC can be found in an excellent list of books about DC History on the home page of the Humanities-Net listserv H-DC:

Fifty Essential Washington DC History Books (2011) Compiled by DC Public Library Washingtoniana Division and the DC Center for the Book.

<https://networks.h-net.org/node/28441/pages/37556/fifty-essential-washington-dc-history-books-2011>