



# Voices

## The Newsletter of the Cleveland Park Historical Society



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## A Century Ago in Cleveland Park

by Amit and Lila Ronen

A century ago, the Gichner family gathered on the front porch of their new home at 3220 Highland Place for a family portrait. The patriarch, Fred Gichner, sat in the middle surrounded by his wife Tina and four children Jacob, Henry, Hannah, and Bill. The fifth and youngest child, Joe, wouldn't be born until 1917 and just passed away last year at the age of 94. **(Continued on page 4)**



# Neighborhood News & Notes

## Renovated Macomb Playground Reopens

by Lois Orr

This summer's major renovation of Macomb Playground has been completed, and the Playground opened to rave reviews the week of August 20.

Changes to the Playground are many. It now has state-of-the-art playground equipment in spaces designed for ages two to five and six to twelve, including a clatter bridge, log stepper, roller table, and tree house. A major new attraction is the water splash area. Traditional equipment has been replaced with new versions. This includes a net climber, teeter-totter, swings, slides, and a sand box. The playground areas that house the equipment have been covered by a rubberized material rather than cement or wood chips, the grounds relandscaped, the softball diamond resodded, and the entire playground surrounded by an ornamental fence. In addition there are plenty of benches and tables.

Some things essentially are unchanged. The now-iconic gazebo designed by architect Dickson Carroll for the community-led Macomb renovation in the 1990s stands in its original location and is as handsome and whimsical as ever. The only change to the long standing small fieldhouse is a new coat of paint on its wood trim. The basketball court remains the same, but with a new entrance. Joe Howell, on-site manager for the Playground project's general contractor Broughton Construction, commented on the great outcome of all the work.

Macomb Playground is one of 24 city playgrounds funded by the D.C. City Council for improvement in 2013. The Council's funding was based upon information and data from the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), which developed the improvement plan for each playground – with substantial input from each community. Robert Menkes, president of the Friends of Macomb Playground, reports that he and folks from the community met several times with DPR staff in the planning process and that the discussions were very productive. He also indicates that they are very pleased with the outcome.

This 2013 renovation of the Macomb Playground is much different from the ones in the 1990s and in 2006-07, which were known as Rehabilitation of Macomb Playground (ROMP) I and II. In the first ROMP, the Cleveland Park Historical Society initiated the project, raised all the money, and developed and implemented the plan. The 2006-07 work, both funding and plan implementation, was a joint activity between CPHS and DPR.

## Cleveland Park Village Is Up and Running

by Elizabeth Fox

The Cleveland Park Village “opened for business” on May 1. This new non-profit aims to make Cleveland Park and Woodley Park even better neighborhoods in which to grow old, by increasing community ties and volunteer activities for all ages.

Led by Executive Director Susan Hester, a team of volunteers help with the phone, email and office work. The office, shared with ANC 3C, is located at The Broadmoor, 3601 Connecticut Ave., NW. Email: [info@clevelandparkvillage.org](mailto:info@clevelandparkvillage.org). Website: [www.clevelandparkvillage.org](http://www.clevelandparkvillage.org). Tel: 202-615-5853. Susan welcomes all inquiries.

As of September, our Village has 73 members, aged 52 to 97. Over 2/5 have lived in their current home 40+ years and one still lives in her childhood home. Members live throughout Cleveland Park and Woodley Park, as do the 103 volunteers, all of whom have been vetted and trained. Volunteers range in age from 12 to 78 and have many types of expertise and interests. One-third of the members also serve as volunteers.

Village members have received volunteer help with house, yard and personal matters. So far, transport to appointments and shopping is the most frequent request. Others include: hanging a picture, sorting art supplies, practicing Spanish, planting new azaleas and solving computer and phone problems. The system for members to request service and for volunteers to accept an invitation is finely tuned now. Members make their requests by phone or email.

Social activities are popular with many members and volunteers. Gatherings take place in houses, apartments, and neighborhood restaurants each month. Board members have arranged for docent led tours to National Gallery special exhibits. In October members and volunteers visited the Historical Society of Washington for a custom tour of the exhibit “Window to Washington.”

Cleveland Park Village is becoming a real asset to our community is becoming a real asset — for long-time and new residents. Now one of the newest in the Washington area, which has more villages than any other city, Cleveland Park Village hopes to one day be a leader in this exciting new way to “age in place.”



## Update on Engine Company 28

by Rhona Hartman

Fire Station #28 located at 3522 Connecticut Avenue is scheduled to reopen later this fall. Cleveland Park representatives from our Neighborhood Advisory Commission, Citizens Association, Business Association, and Historical Society (including Board members Judy Levin and Rhona Hartman) were invited to tour the renovation in May. Deputy Fire Chief David Faust and Project Manager Matt Floca fitted out the group with hard hats and showed us how the entire building had been gutted and is being refitted to meet current Emergency Response standards.



Community leaders tour the Firehouse renovations. From left to right: Phil Eagleburger (CPHS-Architectural Review Committee), Judy Levin (CPHS Board), Nancy MacWood (ANC3C), Susie Taylor (CPCA), Margie Siegel (ANC3C), Rhona Hartman (CPHS Board), Judy Hubbard (Council Member Cheh's Office), Helen Chamberlin (CPCA), Matt Floca (DCFEMS)

Those following this project will remember that controversy stalled the initial work. The station has been closed since November 2010 and equipment, firefighters and Emergency Medical Services were deployed to nearby stations. Some Historic Preservationists wanted the facade of the building to remain as is, but the doors were too small for the newest fire vehicles to enter or leave. In addition, initial plans called for a 2-story mechanical garage for the firefighters to use for their own cars while on duty. Neighbors felt that was unattractive and would be too noisy. Both issues have been resolved and work commenced last fall.

We visitors were shown one of the widened doorways from the inside. The outside was still covered with a blue tarp in May, but is now visible from the street, and indeed the new openings look quite similar to the original arched doorways. We also saw the imaginative solution to the parking issue: some firefighters' cars will enter from Connecticut Avenue, and others will enter from Ordway Street to a second level of spaces. Inside there are three floors for meetings, cooking and eating, showering and sleeping,

as well as a lower level for storing and maintaining firefighters' individual equipment. The latest in heating and air conditioning will be installed. Yes, there will be two poles for fire fighters to slide down to jump into the new fire engines!

## Wisconsin & Newark Construction News

by Lois Orr

Construction of the new Giant Food Store at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Newark Street, which replaces the decades-old Giant at the same location, is scheduled for completion in fall 2014. Erection of the new store's steel frames began at the end of October; the basic structure of the underground garage is now in place.

The new 56,000 square foot Giant will be the anchor of Cathedral Commons, the two block area bounded by Macomb Street, Wisconsin Avenue, and Idaho Avenue. The mixed use development includes additional retail, 137 apartment units, and 8 townhouses. Bozzuto Construction is the general contractor. To date several retail tenants have signed leases for Cathedral Commons' space: Raku, Barcelona Wine Club, Sun Trust Bank, and Starbucks. Others have signed letters of intent.

Information is available about construction progress and related matters in the form of minutes from the monthly Cathedral Commons Construction Liaison Committee meetings. The Committee, headed by ANC Commissioner Nancy MacWood, was established following a provision of the Cathedral Commons Partners/ANC 3C Construction Management Agreement, signed in summer 2012. The ANC website is [anc3c.org](http://anc3c.org) and includes all committee meeting minutes, the Management Agreement, and related information about the development.

## Rives Carroll Steps Down as Leader of Cleveland Park Club Camp

by Mary Anderson Cooper

As a child, Rives Carroll lived on a street with many large families and lots of young children. She was an avid summer camper who loved outdoors activities, playing and working on tasks with other children. In 1978, as a mother herself living in Cleveland Park, she saw an opportunity to create a nurturing, multi-age summer program. So she founded the Cleveland Park Camp.

She began with about 15 children, who gathered at the Cleveland Park Club for games and activities in the mornings for four weeks in that first summer. This summer over 100 children participated, with about 40 campers at any one time. Camp lasted for nine weeks. The day now runs through lunch, ending at 1 p.m.

Because Rives had directed the Cleveland Park After-School Program (no longer in operation), she knew people who could  
(Continued on page 6)

*(Continued from page 1)* Fred was not only a patriarch for his family but also became one of Washington's best-known industrialists and philanthropists. With little more than a few tools and a wheelbarrow, the Austrian immigrant took the skills he learned working as a blacksmith in Baltimore and started his own one-person ornamental iron shop in 1898. With skill and hard work, the Fred. S. Gichner Ironworks grew and prospered, eventually moving in 1929 from a tiny shop at 12th and E Streets NW to a new plant at 24th and M Streets NW that took up a quarter of a block and housed 70 employees.

Specializing in ornamental iron work, Gichner's created a large portion of the iron work that can still be seen in Georgetown today, as well as many of the curlicues, swoops, and sprays that grace embassies, the Smithsonian, the National Cathedral, and the White House gates. It was a family affair. Bill Gichner became recognized as one of the few master smiths in the United States, later opening up a shop called Iron Age Antiques in Ocean View, DE and mentoring new blacksmiths even in his 9th decade of life.



*The Gichner family on the steps of 3220 Highland Place, 1913*

Following Fred's death in 1956, Henry Gichner took over the company and also found time to call for desegregation of DC's recreation facilities as the Chair of the District Recreation Board in the mid 1950s. But the company was an industrial facility in a non-industrial city. Eventually the Gichner family transferred its operations to Beltsville, MD, in 1965 and sold the company in 1982.

One surviving example of the company's iron work would have been especially close to Fred Gichner's heart. The fence surrounding the original 1876 Adas Israel synagogue (moved to its current location at 701 3rd Street NW in 1969) was made by his Gichner Ironworks and patterned after hand-wrought iron railings that Henry Gichner had seen on a synagogue balcony while traveling in the Greek isles. At the turn of the century, when Adas Israel was at the corner of 6th and G Streets NW, it was at the center of the city's residential and commercial life and where many of its congregants, including the Gichners, lived and worked.

Moving to the then-suburb of Cleveland Park must have been quite a change for the family. It happened, according to a 1980 interview with Henry Gichner, because Fred put up a fence on Highland Place in 1909 and commented, "This must be a very nice



place to live.” So, despite restrictive covenants hindering Jews from living in Cleveland Park (as described in the Fall 2012 edition of *Voices*), the Gichners made Cleveland Park their home and kept up their religious traditions. Although they had a car and a chauffeur, on the Sabbath they used to walk from Highland Place down to 6th and I Streets NW, where the Adas Israel congregation moved in 1908 and Fred served as President in 1929. Tina was the most observant family member, but she let Henry attend the Boy Scouts on Friday nights at the Episcopal church because she thought they taught him good values. Henry also described in 1980 how, although they were amongst the first Jews in Cleveland Park that practiced Judaism, he “never felt any prejudice, and there were lovely, lovely people around.”



*The Ronen family on the steps of 3220 Highland Place, 2013*

World War II had a big impact on the family, and not just because the brother of the Queen of England lived on Highland Place during the war! Joe Gichner, who served in WWII along with his brothers Jacob and Bill, remembered how he had to move from his bedroom to the back of the house to make it available for refugees from Germany and Austria. Gichner Ironworks shifted from ornamental work to war materials, earning the company Washington DC’s first Army-Navy “E” pennant for excellence in production during the War.

The Gichners sold 3220 Highland Place in 1971 to Bob and Pam Pelletreau. Over the next 36 years, the Pelletreaus raised their family there, although some years they were abroad when Bob served as the U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain, Tunisia, and Egypt.

As the third owners of 3220 Highland Place, the Ronens enjoy living in a home that looks much the same as when the Gichners lived there and is still surrounded by lovely, lovely people. Their children attend John Eaton and Adas Israel, like the Gichners did.

*We would like to thank the Historical Society of Washington, DC and Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington for letting 8-year old Lila and her Dad spend a few hours in their archives researching this article.*

## Board Members for 2013-14

At the Annual Meeting in May, CPHS members elected two new members to the Board of Directors: Nicholas Netchvolodoff (Quebec Street) and Stefan Hurray (Tilden Street). Robert Jenkins (Newark Street), Tina Mead (34th Place), and Lois Orr (34th Street) were elected to a second term.

The CPHS Board of Directors and Officers for 2013-2014 are:

Dandridge Ince, Highland Place, President

Tina Mead, 34th Place, Treasurer

Robert Jenkins, Newark Street, Secretary

Gwen Wright, 34th Street, VP for Preservation

Winthrop Brown, Springland Lane

John Buchanan, Newark Street

Ana Evans, Ashley Terrace

Mike Goldstein, Lowell Street

Rhona Hartman, The Broadmoor, VOICES Editor

Stefan Hurray, Tilden Street

Judy Levin, The Broadmoor

PJ McCann, Macomb Street

Nicholas Netchvolodoff, Quebec Street

Lois Orr, 34th Street

Marylyn Paige, Lowell Street

Abby Porter, 35th Street

Margot Wilson, Macomb Street

## New ARC Member

In Fall 2013, the Architectural Review Committee welcomed a new member. Luis E. Boza, AIA, NCARB, is Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies at the Catholic University of America School of Architecture and Planning.

The members of the ARC are:

Gwen Wright, Co-Chair (2013-2016)

Christine Hobbs, Co-Chair (2011-2014)

Luis Boza (2013-2016)

Win Brown (2013-2016)

Phil Eagleburger (2013-2016)

Wendy Gray (2011-2014)

Tina Mead (2012-2015)

Ron Ngiam (2012-2015)

Lois Orr (2012-2015)

Anne Hatfield Weir (2011-2014)

## (Rives Carroll Steps Down, continued from page 3)

help as performers, instructors, and games leaders. The After-School Program sought to give children from Cleveland Park and other areas of the city an opportunity to have time together for fun and community-building. With the Cleveland Park Camp, the focus is on creating an environment where boys and girls play together in games that foster a climate of equality. There are both independent and group activities, so that children can find their own level and participate in ways that are comfortable for them.

An unanticipated consequence of the Camp is the development of a corps of counselors. Rives has always had a high school senior who worked with her in running the program, but over the years older campers began asking for responsibilities; so she developed a Counselor-in-Training role for children ages 11-16 who want to help. In 2013, 55 youngsters were in the CIT program, with about 15 working at any one time. This program makes an important contribution because it is a “first job” for the young people, which they obtain by experiencing their first job interview.

As Rives prepares to step down from running the Camp, she notes that the community now has more families in which both parents are employed, and many summer programs, some of which are full-day operations. Nonetheless, parents whose children have attended the Cleveland Park Camp want very much to keep it running, perhaps with the hours extended somewhat. The hope is that the Cleveland Park Club itself will take over management of the Camp.

## Planning work on your home in the Cleveland Park Historic District?

Owners of homes and other buildings in the Cleveland Park Historic District share responsibility for helping preserve the historic fabric of the neighborhood – the properties themselves and their relationship to the whole streetscape and natural environment.

Visit our website, [ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org](http://ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org), for guidance on the design review in Cleveland Park and the permitting process in D.C.



**Want to keep track of historic preservation news in Cleveland Park and all around D.C.?** We post news of preservation and D.C. history events on [Facebook.com/ClevelandParkHistory](https://www.facebook.com/ClevelandParkHistory).



# A Tale of Two Historical Societies

by Judy Hubbard

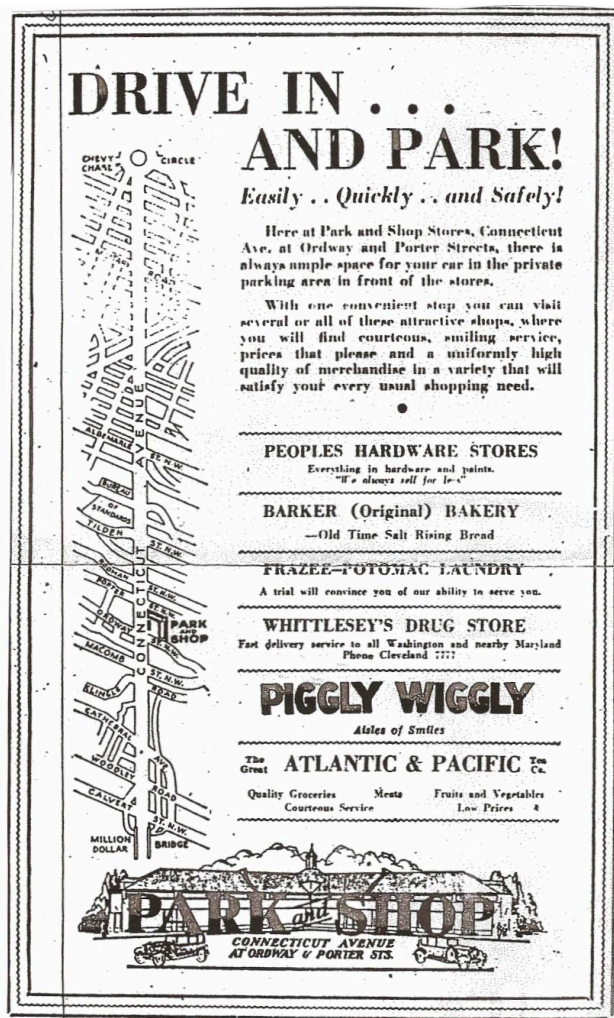
As some of you know, I was one of the founding members of the Cleveland Park Historical Society. I served on the Board of Directors for several terms and was hired as staff. During the early years in the mid 1980s, the task of the Board was to educate residents and merchants about Cleveland Park's unique history and to garner support for historic district designation. Later, during my ten years as staff member, I managed the daily administrative duties, planned programs, arranged and led tours, distributed welcome packets to new residents, and helped with the publication of books about the neighborhood. During that time I began appearing at neighborhood events dressed as Mrs. Grover Cleveland, something I continue to this day.

One program was the first Cleveland Park Appraisal Day. After the event I returned home and received a call from Dr. Steve Ackerman, a collector of political memorabilia with a particular interest in President and Mrs. Cleveland. He called to tell me that that very day, March 18, was Grover Cleveland's birthday. I had missed a great marketing tool for the event!

I moved to Cleveland Park in 1973 and remember hearing from old-time residents that the rundown Park and Shop was the oldest shopping center on the East Coast. After hours at the Washingtoniana Room at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Library looking at rolls of microfilm, I found a long article in *The Washington Post*, dating its opening to December 6, 1930. I called Dr. Richard Longstreth, an American Studies professor at George Washington University, and timidly asked if he knew anything about our Park and Shop. After a long pause on the phone, he invited me to his home to review what he had. Indeed, he had a slide presentation and had written articles about this new, innovative complex, where a group of stores joined together to market jointly and share a parking lot.

Copies of Dr. Longstreth's information on the Park and Shop, my files as board member and staff, and the books, photographs, and historic designation research belonging to Kathy Wood are now part of the Cleveland Park Historical Society Records collection at the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. (HSW). HSW started as the Columbia Historical Society in 1894 and for a long time the library and collections were in the Heurich Mansion in Dupont Circle. It was during her tenure as President of the Board of Trustees that Kathy Smith (another CPHS founding member, along with Kathy Wood) that the name was changed to the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

Thanks to Kathy Smith, I am now a member of the Board of Trustees of HSW as of 2009. Our headquarters are in the historic Carnegie Library, across the street from the Convention Center. HSW is a community-supported educational and research organization that collects, interprets, and shares the history of our nation's capital. We serve a diverse audience through out collections, public programs, exhibitions, and publications. The core of HSW is the Kiplinger Research Library with thousands of photographs, maps, artworks, books, and manuscripts. The Library and most of our programs are free to the public. Our current exhibition, *Window to Washington*, shows only a few of the 4,000 rare and priceless pieces donated to HSW in 2011 by the Kiplinger family. Recent programs for members included a house history workshop and an edit-a-thon, where volunteers corrected or added information about Washington for Wikipedia. The summer issue of our journal, *Washington History*, has a new look and includes articles on the March on Washington and Coxey's Army. The winter issue, including upcoming programs for 2014, will focus on the history of jazz in Washington. It is an exciting time to involved with HSW. Please check out our web site, [historydc.org](http://historydc.org), visit the library, view our exhibitions, and hopefully, augment your CPHS membership with an HSW membership to help us continue our good work for the city and its residents.



A 1931 ad for the Park and Shop, from *The Washington Post*

# Reflections on 30 Years as a Connecticut Avenue Resident

by Roz Beitler

I moved to the Broadmoor because of my new job with the Smithsonian Associates. My boss knew an art collector who lived in the Broadmoor and a few of my colleagues had eaten at Csikos Hungarian Restaurant in the Broadmoor. Many more of my colleagues associated Cleveland Park with Vace's, originally located in a tiny storefront on the West side of Connecticut.

My Mother was thrilled that I was living across the street from a 24 hour full-service gas station. As a children's librarian, I was more thrilled that a public library was so nearby. I instantly introduced myself to the children's librarians who ably assisted me with my national and international library committees. We had great fun "talking shop."

Since I've lived here, the commercial corridor of Connecticut Ave. has resembled a small village with its own post office, fire station, and Metro. Our community always had a drugstore, People's was the former, much much smaller CVS. There was a beauty salon in the same location as the much hipper Imaj. Transcendence was on the second floor in the same block. Many small stores, still thriving and in their original locations, offered neighborhood conveniences for dry cleaning, lamp and vacuum cleaner sales and repairs, and custom framing. The fabulous Uptown Theater still maintains a large screen and utilizes a unique balcony.

Yet, there was even more diversity of stores in the past. An independent bookstore on the West side of the Avenue was almost directly across the street from a chain bookseller. They seemed to exist in harmony and would refer customers to each other. A florist occupied what is now Medium Rare. Alero was formerly a women's boutique with interesting jewelry that I still own.

Closer to the Broadmoor was the mostly abandoned Park & Shop with an outdoor furniture store and an excellent tailor, but the remainder was really an eyesore. A developer wanted to transform the Park and Shop into a large office building, which would block the view of the Broadmoor. It spurred my interest in CPHS's mission to preserve the Park and Shop, and I represented the Broadmoor on the Board in its early days.

One of our first assignments was to meet with Jamal, the new owner of the Park and Shop. Since Cleveland Park was lacking a hardware store, we tried to get Strosnider's from Bethesda to occupy the lower level, but they were afraid that they wouldn't get enough foot traffic. In addition to preventing oversized development, CPHS was also responsible for bringing Brookville to our neighborhood. It replaced a small Safeway that was always out of everything and had mostly empty shelves.

One thing that Connecticut Ave. never lacked was an abundance of restaurants. The iconic Peking, now the Art Deco Walgreen's, was the first of the inundation of Asian restaurants. It was enclosed in blue glass and my nieces called it the "blue mirror Hot Shoppes," after the restaurant chain. It was large and cavernous and the perfect setting for high-level diplomatic secret meetings. We always thought the food was pretty good until a Japanese restaurant, complete with sushi bar, opened across the street in the slender first home of Spices before it expanded. There was also an Indian carry-out restaurant where I had my first vegetable biryani.

The gargantuan Roma Restaurant, now occupied by Firehook and several other stores, always had music to accompany your meals. Outside in the large garden, there was a strolling violinist. Opera singers launched the wine festival to harvest the grapes that hung from vines above outdoor booths. All were invited to participate in stomping on the grapes inside a barrel. The resulting wine should probably have been offered for free. Indoors was the contrast of sweet music played by a blind pianist who couldn't see the frightening taxidermic animals, including a huge bear on its hind legs just inside the entrance.

The proliferation of restaurants continues and has sometimes resulted in unusual and surprising architecture. McDonald's, now Pulpo, had very tasteful, tiny arches to respect our historic district. My favorite restaurant transformation so far is located in the architectural oddity, stand-alone building next door to the Exxon. This space that long ago housed Kenny Rogers fast food is now the formal dining room of Palena rated as one of the best restaurants in DC.





## 2 0 1 4 M E M B E R S H I P

Join or renew online at **ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org/Membership**

or complete the following form and send it with a check payable to C.P.H.S. to:

CLEVELAND PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 4862, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note!** Please be sure we have your current email address so that you do not miss important announcements. We will not spam you with too many emails, but we are now conducting most of our routine communication electronically, which saves us money and allows your membership dollars to go further.

Membership level:

☐ \$50 Household    ☐ \$100 Sponsor    ☐ \$250 Patron    ☐ \$500 Angel

☐ Please send me a copy of *Cleveland Park: A Guide to Architectural Styles and Building Types* at the \$8 member rate

Total enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would be interested in volunteering in the following areas:

☐ House and garden tours    ☐ Tree planting, beautification    ☐ Membership, mailings

☐ Event planning    ☐ Historic Preservation, Architectural Review Committee

☐ Oral histories, local history research    ☐ Writing for the newsletter or website

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*CPHS is a member-supported, 501c3 not-for-profit organization. Membership dues are fully tax deductible. Members receive priority registration for public events, invitations to member-only events, and discounts on event fees, house markers, note cards, and CPHS publications.*

CLEVELAND PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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VOICES

FALL 2013

## ANNUAL GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING PARTY

**December 8, 2013 – Info & tickets at [ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org](http://ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org)**

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## CHILDREN'S ARCHITECTURAL TOUR OF CLEVELAND PARK

**April 12, 2014**

This event for kids 6-12 years old will begin with a discussion of Cleveland Park's history and architecture, and an introduction to basic architectural vocabulary—the styles, shapes, and materials that form the buildings around us. Next, architect Mary Katherine Lanzillotta, FAIA, who has been teaching kids about architecture for 21 years, will lead a walking tour of the Cleveland Park neighborhood, including the Uptown Theater. After the walking tour, the children will have a second hands-on activity: designing and building their own favorite building. Each participant will receive an activities booklet on the Cleveland Park neighborhood. Watch your email for details and sign-up info.

**CPHS Members receive priority registration and discounts on tickets. Are you a member? Join or renew online at [ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org/Membership](http://ClevelandParkHistoricalSociety.org/Membership) or by sending in the form on the back of this page. Memberships received now are good through the end of 2014.**