The President's Perch

By Tesh Boasberg
President
Cleveland Park Historical Society

We can all be proud that on November 19, 1986, the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board designated Cleveland Park an historic district under D.C. Law 2-144. The district stretches north from Klingel Bridge, including both sides of Connecticut Avenue and the Broadmoor, up the west side of Connecticut to Tilden, west to 34th Street, then up Rodman, skirting Hearst playground and Sidwell Friends, to Wisconsin; down the east side of Wisconsin to Woodley and then eastward along Klingel back to the bridge. This is exactly the area detailed in our original application, submitted jointly by the Cleveland Park Historical Society and our Advisory Neighborhood Commission.

Gaining the historic district took 15 months, an enormous organizing effort, and a coming together of neighbors from both sides of 34th Street and the apartments houses on Connecticut and Wisconsin. Thanks to all of you who helped us, and a special salute to Kathy Wood, Cleveland Park’s own architectural historian, who put the whole thing together.

And another salute to Kathy, recently appointed Executive Director of the Cleveland Park Historical Society, who also put together in record time the lengthy and intricate National Register nomination form which enables the D.C. Historic Preservation Office to forward our application to the Department of the Interior. Under the terms of D.C. Law 2-144, we do not become a formal D.C. historic district until this form has been completed, submitted, and then signed. At press time (early March), this signature was expected momentarily (see Kathy’s report, page 6).

What Next?

Since the criteria under the District’s law and the National Register are the same, we will also become an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. Such a listing and 80 cents will get you a ride on METRO. In other words, the additional listing on the National Register does not give us greater legal protection against private development, but it does protect us against certain potential federal actions. Moreover, listing also gives commercial (not residential) property owners important federal tax rehabilitation credits. Therefore, we plan to be listed on the National Register as well as a D.C. historic district.

Assuming we formally become an historic district, what does it mean? Well, it means that we have an important new legal tool to fight incompatible development anywhere within the district’s boundaries, whether at Tregaron or on Wisconsin or Connecticut. Now in order to demolish an historic building, the owner must prove either economic hardship (virtually impossible in today’s Cleveland Park) or that the new structure will be both “compatible” in height and appearance with its surroundings and will be one of “special merit.” The latter term calls for a sort of legal balancing act between the city’s need for new development (increased revenues, services versus increased traffic congestion and pollution) and the advantages of preservation (retaining neighborhood qualities, sense of place, etc.).

The point is, however, that there can be no further “matter of right” new construction like the developments or Wisconsin, e.g., at the former Johnson Flower Shop site. Regardless of current zoning regulations, in an historic district there is the additional legal requirement that any new building must be both “compatible” and of “special merit.”

Threats Still Facing Us

Now don’t celebrate quite yet. There are certain factors working against us. Continued on next page
The President’s Perch

Continued from preceding page

First, the Connecticut Avenue sites of the proposed Park & Shop and Mazza developments are at a METRO stop and that encourages D.C. officials to think in terms of development. Second, the city has a PUD (Planned Unit Development) zoning process which developers have often manipulated in the past to get larger projects than would be allowable under existing zoning. (Connecticut and Van Ness is a PUD.)

With specific regard to the Park & Shop site, our new historic district will give us an important additional tool to fight the developer’s proposed plans to build a massive, 60-foot-high, 180,000-square-foot commercial office building, with no setback. That’s almost four times the size of the new office building at the northeast corner of Wisconsin and Van Ness! (And take a look at the Donahoe structure going up on the former Johnson’s site at 4000 Wisconsin if you want to see how commercial office development can really wreak a residential neighborhood.)

We believe that any development at the Park & Shop site should be largely residential (no movie theaters), with retail space on the ground floor, hopefully with room for something like a senior services center; no more than three or four stories in height and 75,000-100,000 square feet in volume; and must seek to adaptively use as much as possible of the old Park & Shop building and site. These are reasonable goals for that site, which allow ample new development—up to seven times the existing square footage—and more than enough profit for any developer.

We will need your continued support in the months ahead. We must be prepared to fight if the developer goes ahead with current plans. We would especially appreciate any volunteer time you might have for our organizing, newsletter, tree planting, special events, design review, fund-raising, etc. Let’s keep working together for Cleveland Park.

From the Editor

This is the first issue of Cleveland Park Voices, the newsletter of the Cleveland Park Historical Society.

The newsletter’s name has been adopted, with permission, from the splendid 72-page history of our neighborhood, Cleveland Park Voices: A Social History, published in 1984 by the Cleveland Park Neighborhood History Project, under the direction of Rives Carroll. (Copies of this history of Cleveland Park from 1890 to 1984, related in the words of residents and shopkeepers, are available from Rives Carroll, John Eaton School, 34th & Lowell Streets N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, for $5 per copy. Checks payable to CPHS. Proceeds benefit the Cleveland Park Historical Society.)

Like its predecessor, the Cleveland Park Voices newsletter aims to record in the words of residents and shopkeepers the on-going story—past, present, and future—of our “small-town” community tucked into the cosmopolitan city of Washington, D.C.

In this first issue, CPHS President Tersh Boasberg and Executive Director Kathy Wood describe what has happened since Cleveland Park’s designation as a D.C. Historic District on November 19, 1986, and what remains to be done to achieve the goals of preserving and enhancing Cleveland Park’s special qualities. We also present the first of what are planned as regular newsletter features: “Architectural Corner” by Kathy Wood and interviews with “Our Neighborhood Shopkeepers” and “Cleveland Park Personalities” by Rives Carroll, assisted by Kathy Wood, as well as “The President’s Perch.” Also note the details on the important upcoming CPHS annual meeting, April 21, and House Tour, April 26.

In launching Cleveland Park Voices, we thank Eleanor Oliver for the masthead design, Lee Carty for help with layout and design, Sally Halvorson for photos, Susan Hombostel for sketches, and D.A.P. for typesetting and printing. The newsletter, which will appear periodically, is distributed free to CPHS members. We hope other Cleveland Park neighbors will also enjoy it and be stimulated to join the Cleveland Park Historical Society (see details on page 4).

Your comments and contributions to future issues are invited (to Jean van der Tak, 3035 Rodman Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, 966-4441).

—Jean van der Tak
Editor

Cleveland Park House Tour

Sunday, April 20
1 to 5 p.m.

Save this date for this outstanding annual neighborhood event, long organized by the National Child Research Center and this year cosponsored by the Cleveland Park Historical Society. Everyone is invited to both the Center and our Society.

This year’s tour features six unusual and unique houses.

Twin Oaks—Summer house of 1888
3100 Newark Street, 1897—Shingle Style
3315 Highland Place, 1897—Queen Anne Style
3311 Rose Place, 1906—Cleveland Park Cottage
3224 Highland Place, 1910—NCRC’s architects
3503 35th Street, 1896—Shingle Style reinterpreted

Tickets are $8 if ordered in advance (phone the National Child Research Center, 363-8777; $10 on the day of the tour at NCRC, 3209 Highland Place).

A craft show at the home of Nancy Harter, 3208 Newark, and a yard sale (place to be announced) will add to the afternoon’s festivities. Phone Nancy Harter (905-3286) if you have crafts for the show (10 percent of any sales proceeds to go to the Cleveland Park Historical Society), goods to offer for the yard sale, and/or can volunteer to show houses on the tour or help with the craft show and yard sale.

Join your neighbors and bring your friends to raise our architectural conscience and increase the coffers of the Cleveland Park Historical Society.
Our Neighborhood Shopkeepers

Hajna and Tomas deKun

By Rives Carroll

The bell on the door signals the arrival of yet another customer at deKun Photo, the small shop with a large smile. In the narrow space, neighbors gather and exchange news while waiting patiently for Hajna deKun's personal attention. Cluttered shelves and walls contribute to the charm of this informal meeting place. The deKuns' excellent photographic quality draws customers from as far as Galveston, North Carolina, and Palm Beach, but their efficient and friendly service is equally effective in attracting loyal customers.

Both Hajna and Tomas deKun left their native Hungary before the 1956 revolution. DeKun, as Hajna affectionately calls her husband, took his first darkroom job in Washington for a dollar an hour in 1959. In establishing his own business, he began developing photos in a walk-in closet downtown, graduated to Silver Spring where he slept under his enlarger for two years, equipped a studio in his former Bethesda house, and finally, in 1970, opened the shop on Macomb Street in the poorly renovated space formerly rented by his barber. In two years the shop was out of the black, the deKuns were married and new owners of their present Garfield Street home.

Customers are greeted by a "Beware of Dogs" sign, which announces the presence of Juliska and Suket who babysit for the deKuns' daughter, guard the safe, and generally look like business. It is appropriate that the dogs are an integral part of the shop, since it was dogs who introduced the deKuns. When Hajna, who attended Belair's Western High School and Ellington School for the Arts, was working as a veterinarian technician in Rockville, she treated deKun's ailing dogs. From vet to receptionist at the beauty shops of Garfield's and Jean- Paul, Hajna finally joined the family business where she began from scratch, learning the difference between Kodakolor and Kodachrome.

She graciously suffered old customers who requested service from "the boss." But deKun began to spend more time in his basement darkroom, where he is still kept busy with a great deal of embassy work—particularly from the British Embassy. And Hajna won the hearts of his clients. She says: "I take an interest in them. I've always felt that everyone deserves my attention as best as I can give it." And give it she does—in English, Hungarian, French, German, and greetings in a variety of other languages. "I consider most of my customers as friends." The feeling is mutual. The deKuns have been patronized by steady clients for over 15 years—by embassies, schools, the Cathedral, congressmen, newspapers, writers, publishers, artists, historians, and many a Cleveland Park resident.

Their customers count on them. During the recent snowstorms, it was business as usual at deKun Photo. Business is not disrupted even when the sewage and heating systems break down, which is frequently. In fact, the rickety pipes shared by the little shops at Macomb and Wisconsin reinforce their sense of togetherness.

However, Hajna laments that the commercial area does not cooperate more. "There are so many things that the little shop owners could do together, because we are a community and also a dying race. We should get together at least every two months and discuss how we could make the streets a little prettier—put out plants and give more atmosphere to make people want to come and shop here."

She is pessimistic when discussing the threat of development and expansion along the Wisconsin Avenue corridor and realistic about the difficulty of the little people combatting the big bucks and big enterprises. "The only reason we're alive is because of the individual service. Basically our price is still reasonable."

Customers are attracted by more than the price. They like the convenience and spirit of this small-town shopping area, where shopkeepers still share snow shovels. They stream into deKun Photo for the winning combination of quality photography and personalized service. They feel at home.

Come to the Second Annual Meeting of the Cleveland Park Historical Society Tuesday, April 21
8 to 10 p.m.
John Eaton School
34th and Lowell Streets
Featuring NELLIE LONSWORTH
speaking on:
"Historic Preservation in the Neighborhoods:
A National Perspective"

Nellie Lonsworth, President of Preservation Action, will tell us about neighborhood preservation as it is occurring across the country. Nellie is a national figure. Preservation Action, of which she is the first president, is the only national citizens group lobbying for historic preservation. It has a national board of 300 people representing all 50 states and over 1,000 local preservation organizations. Nellie's accomplishments have been recognized by the numerous federal and National Trust awards she has received. This year she is a Loeb fellow at Harvard, a prestigious award which enables her to take advantage of the Harvard community as a student, colleague, and teacher.

Nellie is an energetic and vivacious speaker who is probably more familiar than anyone else with current preservation efforts across the United States.
Architectural Corner

By Kathy Wood

Palladian Windows in Cleveland Park

Palladian windows come in many shapes and sizes and occupy a variety of locations on Cleveland Park houses. Their use transcends stylistic labels since they appear in houses of Queen Ann, Shingle, and Colonial Revival styles. The origin of the window shape dates back to Roman times when an arch was set in the middle of a colonnade providing a wider, grander entrance and marking a central axis. This motif was used at Diocletian’s Palace at Spalato (300 A.D.).

Italian Renaissance architects revived and refined the motif during the 15th and 16th centuries. Serlio was the first to illustrate it in his 1537 book. Palladio, a 16th century Venetian architect, used it, illustrated it, and popularized it to such an extent that it is often identified by his name. It is also known as a Venetian window or a Serlian motif.

Inigo Jones visited Italy in the early 17th century, returned to England with Palladio’s books, and featured a Palladian window in the Queen’s Chapel. These windows quickly became popular during the Georgian period, primarily to flood church altars and stair landings in Georgian mansions with light, while at the same time providing a central decorative feature on the exterior facade. James Gibbs, an 18th century English architect, illustrated it in his books, which were consulted extensively in this country during the last half of the 18th century. George Washington installed a splendid example at Mount Vernon to light his ballroom addition of the 1770s.

In Cleveland Park, the earliest Palladian windows were used in Twin Oaks, a Georgian Revival Summer House of 1888. (Twin Oaks—built by Gardiner Greene Hubbard, who founded the National Geographic Society, and formerly the Chinese Embassy—will be featured in the Cleveland Park House Tour on Sunday, April 26.) Subsequently, the architects who designed houses for the Cleveland Park Company from 1895 to 1901 frequently used Palladian windows. Sometimes their placement was determined by the exterior appearance of those houses and sometimes by the desire to create an interior effect. Look for them up in the gables lighting the attic, on the side or back of the house lighting the staircase, or over the front door marking the central axis of the house and lighting the central room above. Ella Bennett Sherman embellished them with decoration, often rope dipped in plaster, and made them the primary decorative feature on the exterior facade.

On the April 26 house tour, you will visit the house at 3100 Newark, which was designed by Waddy Wood in 1897. This Shingle Style house features the first use of rope dipped in plaster documented in Cleveland Park. Be sure to notice it in the arch on the right-hand side. Watch for more information on this unique Cleveland Park decorative feature, rope dipped in plaster, in the next newsletter.

Join the Cleveland Park Historical Society!

Founded in early 1985, the Cleveland Park Historical Society has won its initial battle to have our neighborhood designated an historic district. But much remains to be done to meet the Society’s goals of promoting public interest in the history of Cleveland Park and encouraging the preservation of its architectural heritage and its character as a friendly urban residential neighborhood with a strong sense of community.

With the support of your $25, tax-deductible annual membership dues, the Society can pay for architects, lawyers, traffic experts, printing, etc. to continue our fight against inappropriate commercial development along Wisconsin and Connecticut. Your support also makes possible lectures, tours, exhibits, oral history projects, publications, and a record collection to increase awareness of our neighborhood history.

And when you send in your 1987 membership, you will receive a handsome decal of a neighborhood landmark, designed by Cleveland Park artist Di Stovall, to display on your outside door or window.

Send checks for $25, payable to Cleveland Park Historical Society, to:

Danny Ince
Membership Chair
Cleveland Park Historical Society
3224 Highland Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

We also need your volunteer help on our house tours, administration and organization, oral history project, tree planting, and other activities. Phone Danny Ince (966-4622) if you can help, and for further information on the Society.
Cleveland Park Personalities

Tilford Dudley

By Rives Carroll

"I was willing to work for nothing. The work I was going to do was important. Did I get paid for it? It didn't really make any difference, as long as I had food to eat, and I could get a room at the YMCA."

This idealistic attitude inspired Tilford Dudley, a young lawyer, to join the New Deal Administration as a "collaborator without compensation" and move to Washington, D.C., in 1934. A bachelor at the time, Dudley worked day and night on "new ideas, new programs, and reforming society."

An activist even as a teenager in the 1920s, Dudley first tackled New Deal relief and land-buying programs at the Resettlement Administration, where he became the Director of Land Acquisition. Taking a cut in pay, he became a trial judge for the National Labor Relations Board, worked for the labor unions, and eventually directed the Washington Office of the United Church of Christ and participated actively in the National Council of Churches.

This elderly gentleman has been at home in Cleveland Park for over half a century. Well over six feet tall, Dudley is a towering figure in both height and spirit. With a face as craggy as a New England mountain, he might easily be mistaken for a well-seasoned Mainer. However, his home state is Illinois. In fact, he still remembers the day he was taking leaves in the front yard of his large childhood home in Charleston, Illinois, a town of 8,000 people, when he decided to devote his life to three goals: achieving peace, eliminating poverty, and improving race relations. Consequently, he chose to study law and "to work on the problems: educating, agitating, pushing, and organizing." Sooner than expected, the New Deal offered him the opportunity to work on the problems of poverty. He moved to Washington, to find "about half of my Harvard Law School class already here."

After marrying a Washingtonian and having his first child, Dudley moved in 1941 from an apartment on Kalorama Road to 2739 Macomb Street. Unlike many Cleveland Park homeowners today, Dudley said, "We were buying a house. We weren't buying a neighborhood." He fondly described that short stretch of Macomb east of Connecticut Avenue (then a dead end) as "almost out of heaven, in that it was back to nature. In effect, we were like a house in the country. We were living out in the woods. Everything in back [on the north side of Macomb] was virgin timber—big trees, mostly beeches and oaks." Across Macomb, only one house had been built on the wooded hillside which afforded welcome summer breezes.

The Dudleys had barely moved into their house when they were confronted with the threat of development at both their front and back doors. Catherine Coblenz, a vigilant neighbor and instigator of Cleveland Park's branch library construction, challenged the Dudleys' reason for purchasing the house; she suspected ulterior motives—use of the land for a necessary access to the wooded area behind, which was ripe for construction (now Ordway Gardens). The fighting spirit against unwanted development preceded the Cleveland Park Historical Society by over 40 years!

Of the Connecticut Avenue shopping area, Dudley says: "It is like a small town in the middle west where I am from. And in my mind, that is the ideal place to live. People know each other. They know what's in the stores. It's easily accessible. You need to be close to the business section. You walk to the post office. You chat with the firemen. It's all right there. I would oppose all changes. I like it the way it is."

Dudley reminisced about the old shops—the Kresge's, the hardware store in the Park & Shop, Rose Brothers Jewelers, and a small Giant where the Four Provinces is now. He emphasized the continuity of good personal service and friendly people in the shops. Connecticut Avenue is "essentially the business section that would go with any small town."

"I was so anxious that we keep Connecticut Avenue tied in with the historic district because that's the village part. There are the businesses and houses right near them. In fact, I think right here we have the best place in town. We've got this park [Dudley's present house backs onto Tregaron], its birds, rabbits, and raccoons. I always feed the birds during the winter. I feed the raccoon every night."

Just as Cleveland Park belongs to Dudley, Dudley belongs to Cleveland Park. He is as informal as our unclipped front yards. He is the grandfather of activists in a neighborhood that is a magnet for them. His wisdom and clear focus have helped save the neighborhood from more than one developer.

Of the three programs which Dudley chose for himself, at an age when most adolescents are still finding themselves, Dudley is pleased with the progress in race relations and the war against poverty, and now puts "peace forever" at the top of his list. While Dudley lives modestly, he gives generously to candidates for Congress who work for peace.

Dudley commented that it is a "habit of mine to get to places late." But late or not, it is clear that Tilford Dudley arrived in time. He was in the right place at the right time—and not by chance.
From the Executive Director

We Made It!

We made it! We are now officially an historic district. One last step remains for us to come under the protection of D.C. Law 2-144. Carol Thompson, the State Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia, has to sign the National Register nomination form. This is expected to happen early in March. Of the four recently designated D.C. historic districts, we were the first to get our nomination form completed and submitted. This is a tribute to the dedication of this neighborhood and our ability to organize ourselves and get things done. The nomination form, which is 138 pages including 45 photos, states the significance of Cleveland Park, relates the history of its development, and describes its physical assets. This document is a significant historical resource, and photocopies of it are available on loan or for purchase from the Cleveland Park Historical Society.

Review Committee Being Formed

We are now forming a Preservation Review Committee of the CPHS Board to work with the staff of the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board. This committee will meet monthly to review and comment on all proposals for additions, alterations, demolitions, new construction, and subdivisions located within the boundaries of the Cleveland Park Historic District which require building permits. This committee is purely an advisory one, presenting the views of the neighborhood to the staff of the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board in an attempt to resolve conflicts and work out compromises at the staff level in order to expedite the granting of building permits by the D.C. Historic Preservation Board. This committee will be composed of: two co-chairs, the Executive Director of the Cleveland Park Historical Society, and members of the Society, one third of whom will be from the Board of Directors. The monthly meetings will be open to all members of the Society and invited guests. We are looking for volunteers to serve on this committee. We especially need architects and persons with preservation experience who are willing to donate one evening a month to the review of these plans. Please call me (Kathy Wood, 244-1276) if you are willing to serve for a one-year term. The committee will begin meeting in March or April.

We would like this review process to be as open and democratic as possible and we want it to encourage rather than discourage innovative architectural design. Our nomination form stresses that Cleveland Park historically has been a place where new and experimental architecture is and has been compatible with the older eclectic mix of buildings. We are proud of the variety of styles in the neighborhood. I.M. Pei, the architect of the East Wing of the National Gallery, designed a house on Ordway Street in 1959. When he first saw the site, he said: "This neighborhood interests me. I don't feel the heavy hand of conformity." Historically, it is also true that some of our most interesting houses have resulted from innovative renovations and additions: Grover Cleveland's romantic summer house was the first of a long line of creative, architect-designed renovations.

— Kathy Wood
Executive Director

Layout by Carlos Alexandre
Designs by Eleanor Oliver