

CHEVY CHASE CIRCLE

Even though the Chevy Chase Circle is similar to the many circles designed by Pierre L'Enfant in the early planning for the District, it was a much later development. Following the purchase of farmland by the Chevy Chase Land Company, it was planned at first that Connecticut Avenue in the District be continued in a straight line into Maryland, intersecting Wisconsin Avenue to the west. When it became apparent that the land could not be acquired, it was decided that Connecticut should go directly north. To ease expected traffic at the "gate" to the development, where several streets intersected, a traffic circle was constructed, half in the District and half in Maryland. After some negotiations, the Maryland half was ceded to the federal government and the circle became the responsibility of the D.C. Buildings and Parks Commission.

The first two houses constructed in the development were those of Senator Newlands on the northeast side of the circle and Mr. Stellwagen on the northwest, providing an impressive entry into the development. Both houses were probably designed by Leon Dessez, the Chevy Chase Land Company's architect for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Dessez lived in the Stellwagen house initially and the nearby grassy circle provided a convenient and pleasant pasture for their cow.

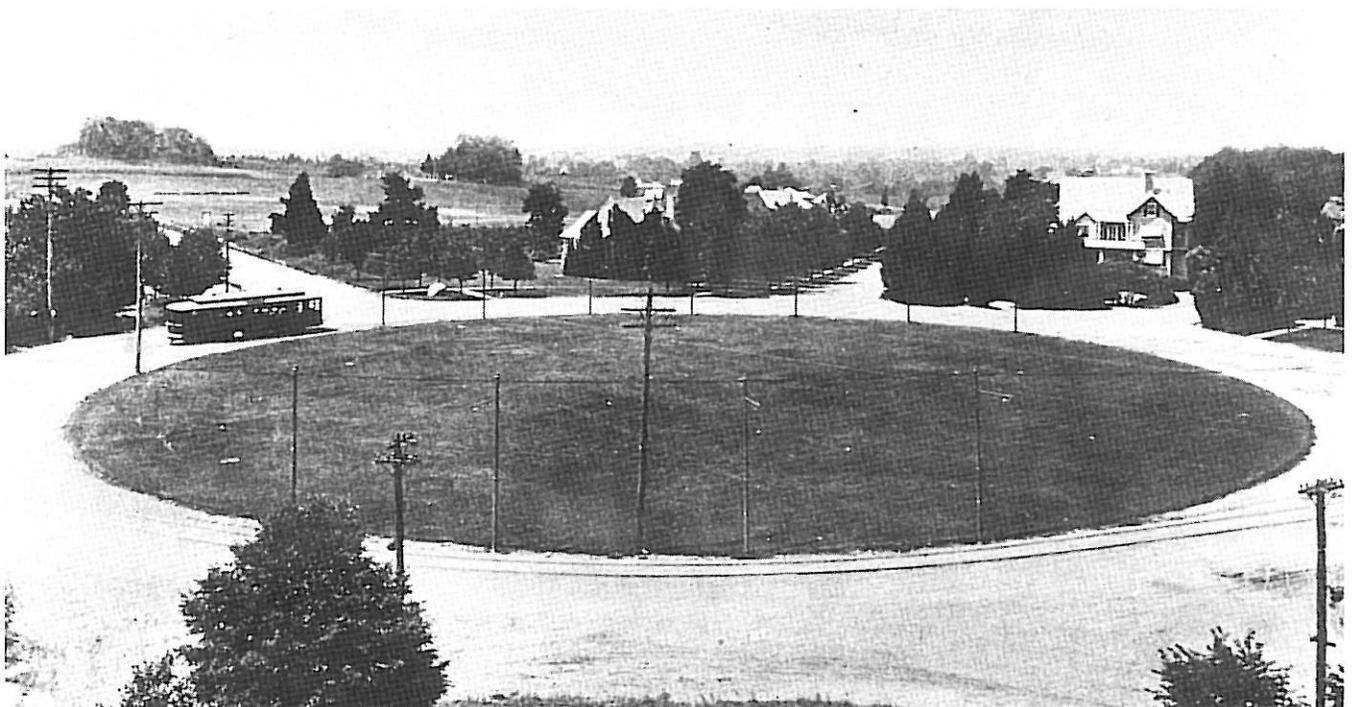
After the traffic circle was completed, with the road

and trolley line tracks circling the 200-foot diameter grassy area, it remained unchanged for several years. The first action of any note was a 1918 ceremony at which the Girl and Boy Scouts of the District raised a flag from a pole placed in the center.

Beginning in 1927, there were many suggestions about making the circle area more attractive. Thirty-two willow oaks were planted just inside the roadway. In 1932, the U.S. Congress, at the urging of the Garden Clubs of America, directed the D.C. Buildings and Parks Commission to build a memorial to Senator Newlands. The result was an ornamental basin approximately 75 feet in diameter, a stone balustrade around the basin, a fountain in the center, walks leading to and around the basin, benches, and flower beds. A large part of the \$11,000 cost was donated by Senator Newlands' widow.

The circle has changed little since then, although the trolley tracks have been removed and traffic around the circle has greatly increased. Even though the fountain, stone balustrade, benches, azalea gardens, and willow oaks have all suffered from neglect, it is still a pleasant place to sit on a sunny day, provided one has the courage to cross the speeding traffic to reach the benches within the circle.

Linscott Hall



Looking west at Chevy Chase Circle in 1910.

PHOTO BY MRS. MINNIE E. BROOKE; COURTESY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CONNECTICUT AVENUE

Looking south to Chevy Chase Circle, circa 1922

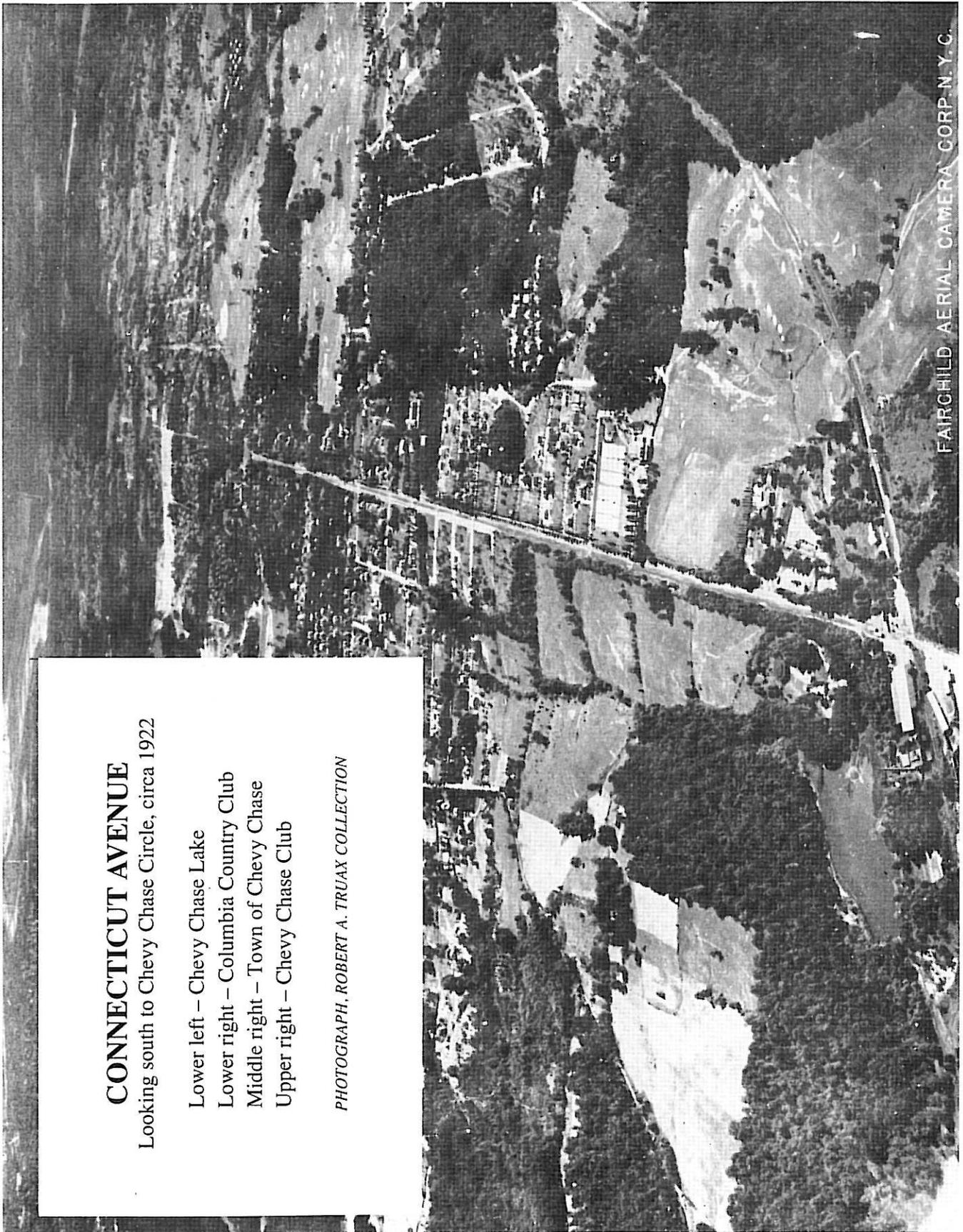
Lower left – Chevy Chase Lake

Lower right – Columbia Country Club

Middle right – Town of Chevy Chase

Upper right – Chevy Chase Club

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