
CHEVY CHASE RECREATION ASSOCIATION

The Chevy Chase Recreation Association, a private swim and tennis club with membership open to all residents of Chevy Chase, is west of Connecticut Avenue on a five acre piece of land near the Beltway.

The Association was founded in the late 1950s by a group of Chevy Chase residents led by John Thurston of Aspen Street who was with the Department of Agriculture. They wanted a swimming pool, and a potential site on Brookeville Road had to be abandoned. The present site was found by Thurston and Ray Jager of Meadow Lane, a realtor who served for a long time as Town Manager for Section Four. The recreation facility was organized and subscribed to by many residents of our town, whose task of raising money was small compared to that of clearing the area of strange bushes, trees, and vines.

It seems that in 1910 the world renowned botanist, Dr. David Fairchild, joined the Department of Agriculture and bought a number of acres north of Jones Bridge Road, including the CCRA site. There he built a Japanese-Victorian style house, after beginning to grow exotic trees and plants he had gathered from all over the globe. He is credited with arranging the importation of the Japanese cherry trees at the Tidal Basin in Washington and on Connecticut Avenue north of Chevy Chase

Circle. His one mistake was the introduction, from the Far East, of the now infamous kudzu vine to combat soil erosion. It rapidly covered nearly everything in the southeastern states, much to the chagrin of farmers, cattlemen, and homeowners. Mrs. Fairchild's father, Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, had a one-room workshop on the property.

In 1927, the CCRA site was sold to Dr. E.A. Merritt, a prominent local radiologist, who also had a great interest in plants. And after his death, when his widow moved into an apartment, she eventually began leasing the house and two acres to a good friend, Bertha Belt, so that Mrs. Belt could expand an outdoor nursery school she had founded in 1933 at her home on Meadow Lane.

Mrs. Merritt sold the property to CCRA and took back a hefty mortgage, after being assured by Thurston and Jager that the Association would continue to lease the house at a moderate rate to the nursery school—as it does today.

The house, called "In the Woods," is still in the woods. And surrounded by beautiful trees nearby are a big and a little pool designed by former Meadow Lane resident Stanley Arthur for CCRA, as well as a bath house, four tennis courts, and extensive parking.

Linscott Hall