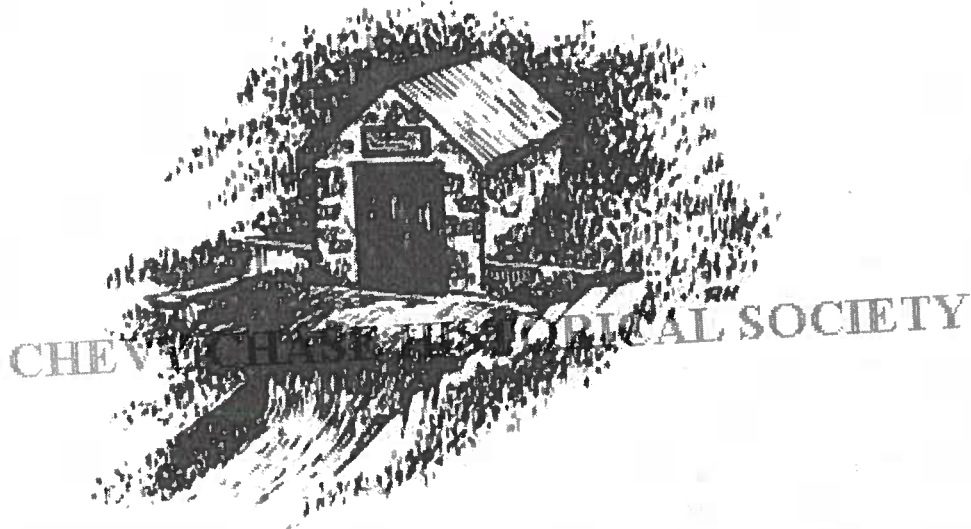


2009.1076.05 Montgomery Co. History -
Chevy Chase

CLEAN DRINKING SPRING

1698 - 1978

Chevy Chase Library
8005 Connecticut Avenue
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20015



"He broke his bottle
At the Spring with a will, ✓
And the name 'Clean Drinking'
Clings to it still."

OCT 6 1978

Clean Drinking Manor

On July 9th 1755, a British army led by General Edward Braddock was routed by a combined force of French soldiers and Indians near Ft Duquesne at the fork of the Ohio River near what is present day Pittsburgh. Despite the rout, George Washington, who was a young volunteer officer with the Virginia militia at the time, would distinguish himself on the field of battle by rescuing what was left of the force (including General Braddock himself) and shepherding them to safety. Braddock would die from his wounds four days later, but before he expired, he handed over to Washington his ceremonial battle sash. Legend has it that the future President of the United States would keep it with him for the rest of his life.¹ His public life was just beginning but the crucible of Ft. Duquesne would stay with him throughout his life. After the battle, Washington would begin a month long journey back to Alexandria, Virginia. During the last leg of his trip home, he and his party stopped in what is known today as Chevy Chase, Maryland in Montgomery Country to refresh themselves at a place known as "Clean Drinking Manor," a site well known for the clear refreshing water that emanated from a natural spring on the grounds of the estate.²

During his life Washington spent time at countless sites in what is now known as Montgomery County, however a majority of the places he frequented are forever lost in the mists of time. The area surrounding the city that now bears his name is a mass of endless suburban housing tracts, shopping centers, big box stores and chain restaurants. However, the site where he stopped to refresh himself on the way back from one of the most seminal moments in his life is still there today. Sadly, the manor house that once sat on the property is gone, but the spring and the area around somehow managed to escape the ravages of suburban sprawl.] ✓

Unlike so many other historical sites and attractions in the Washington area, the spring and its environs does not have a visitor center, gift shop or cafeteria. In fact if one is on the running path that crosses over the busy Jones Bridge Road and the adjoining residential neighborhood one might not even notice the tiny spring house in a small grove of trees that marks that spot. But therein lies the point, mainly that a small piece of our nation's history has managed to survive the incredible growth that has laid waste to so many other historical entities in the region. The spring was there in 1755 and it remains there today.

*But how
Do you evaluate
the public value
History of the
Site is there's
no interpretation?*

When one stands at the spot where Washington and other 18th century historical figures refreshed themselves two questions come to mind. The first is, how did this spot manage to escape the suburban explosion? The second is, why has there not been more of an effort by local groups to use the site to educate future generations not only on the history of Montgomery County but of our nation?

Washington's visit was but one of the many significant events that transpired at the spot.

However, in order to understand the significance of the place and its potential to impart history to future generations it is necessary to explore its beginnings.

Clean Drinking Manor like so many estates came to fruition due largely to the propensity of the Lords Baltimore to hand out land grants to selected individuals to encourage the settlement of the new colony that would come to be known as Maryland. In 1680, Colonel John Coates, of Sproxton, Yorkshire, received a Royal manorial grant of 1,400 acres from the English Crown. On October 1, 1699, the land was surveyed and patented. An original structure was built on the property in 1697, however Clean Drinking Manor would not be built until 1750 when Charles Jones, the grandson of Colonel Coates would begin to develop the area in earnest. Jones was an important figure in Maryland. He built the mill bearing his name in the area, was a judge in

Frederick County in 1765 and his name heads the list of justices in Montgomery County after it was severed from Frederick County in 1776.³ Even today, his legacy dominates the area. The road that adjoins the site where the manor house stood is dubbed "Jones Mill Road."

The true origins of the name are lost ^{over used phrase} in the mists of time, however legend has it that the original surveyor of the property, one Admiral Hill, in the course of his duties came upon a clear spring of cold water. The Admiral for most of the day had been quenching his thirst with liquor, but when it ran out, he was forced to resort to filling up his bottle with the waters of the spring. It is alleged that:

*"He broke his bottle
At the spring with a will,
And the name of Clean Drinking Clings to it still."*⁴

The story concerning Admiral Hill and his naming of the site is as noted, perhaps more legend than fact, however, one point that is beyond dispute is that during in 17th and 18th century in Montgomery County, the water that ran from the spring had a reputation for being the cleanest around. Even as late as the 1950's the water was tested by state authorities and found to be pristine. A sign today by the spring declares that it is "unfit for human consumption; however, the local neighbors still apparently use the water "with no ill effects."⁵

George Washington was not the only historical luminary to spend time at the manor. Due to its reputation and to the Jones' hospitality, prominent American statesmen such as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and John C. Calhoun also stopped there on occasion.⁶ And, in 1814 when government officials were forced to flee Washington after the debacle at Bladensburg and the burning of the capital city Postmaster Monroe and his wife ran the national post office for a brief time from the manor house.

Through the years, the estate was handed down from generation to generation in the family and for a long while, it appeared that the Clean Drinking Manor and the surrounding grounds would stand the test of time. But Chevy Chase was less than ten miles away from the center of the Federal City. Even as late as the 1920's most of the land that would become one of America's first suburbs was woods and farmland. The area known today as Chevy Chase had its beginnings in 1725 when Colonel Joseph Belt received a patent for 560 acres of land in colonial Maryland, just northwest of the future Washington, DC. He named it "Cheivy Chace." The moniker was taken from a line in the English ballad *The Battle of Ottenbourne* which concerned the Scottish and English border wars of the late 14th Century.⁷ The area remained largely rural for decades; however, the many fields and farms that lay on the outskirts of Washington would soon become fertile ground for real estate developers.

We are accustomed to believing that the suburban life as we know it began in earnest in the late 40s and early 50s. However, as early as 1894, at least in Washington, many believed that the areas on the outskirts of major cities or suburbs as they would soon be called, were destined to be the wave of the future in housing.

Organization
Example should
be part of the
previous
paragraph

A 5 March Washington post article from that year entitled "*Out of Town Homes, People Are Looking for Homes in the Suburbs*" notes that "one of the few sections where there is any building being done is in Chevy Chase where 6 houses are now in the course of construction. Henry Earle the builder of the homes is quoted as noting that "There is no use in denying that...that the handsome comfortable suburban home is one of the coming features of American life."⁸

In time Earle would be proven to be more than right. Greater Washington as it would one day be called would eventually envelop most if not all of the rural areas of Montgomery County. In time farms and fields would give rise to communities such as Bethesda, the aforementioned Chevy

Chase, Silver Spring and Wheaton to name but a few. As time passed and the suburbs grew Clean Drinking Manor became more and more vulnerable to the suburban sprawl that was replacing the farms and fields that had been part of the area for generations.

By 1932, the walls were closing in. A 12 January Washington Post article from that year (Old Manor in Chevy Chase Gains in Beauty with Age) notes that a Captain and Mrs. Chester Wells owned the manor and grounds. The estate, known at the time as Woodend, "consisted of 110 acres of lawn and trees, shrubbery and flower beds, including the 32 acres on which the historic Clean Drinking Manor site is located." All that was left of the site by the early 1930's were four brick chimneys which the article noted were "associated with memories of colonial and revolutionary times and stand in this country today to remind onlookers of the time when the famous old manor was erected two centuries ago."⁹

So was it a tourist site in the late 19th & early 20th Century?

From a public history perspective, the Post article brings out several important points. One is that the site in the year of 1932 was considered "famous" and historic. The other is that there was a sense in the community that the site should be designated a historical monument and be preserved for future generations. Unfortunately, the article also notes that efforts to save the site failed, "The old frame mansion which once sheltered generations of men and women who have rendered loyal service to their country and around are entwined memories of colonial times dear to the heart of every American, is in ruins... Here is slowly but surely passing away one of the quaintest of the relics of the past. Modest and unobtrusive, its voice of silent appeal still vainly pleads, until too late; we shall regret its final loss. It is understood that the Maryland Historical Society was interested in the restoration of the manor, but the price of the land on which it is located was regarded as excessive."¹⁰ And indeed, the land on which Clean Drinking Manor sat was worth a great deal, particularly to developers. Fortunately part of the White's estate would be bequeathed to the

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connect to Glassberg's sense of history or west on origins of these museums

Block of single space quotes over 5 paragraphs

Is this similar or different from other preservation plans?

Audubon Society who still maintains a large tract of the original property (still referred to even today as Woodend). Fate would not be so kind to area surrounding Clean Drinking Manor.

The developers ax finally fell in 1960. Again, the Washington Post told the story best in a 23 July article of that year "Manor Site Developed for Homes." What is striking is the difference between the desperate prose of the reporter who penned the 1932 story on the need to preserve the manor and the almost cavalier attitude the 1960 journalist had toward the fact that a famous place was being destroyed so that suburban homes could be constructed. The lead of the article is very straight forward, "*Clean Drinking Manor, where surveyor George Washington stopped to refresh his crew en route home from Ft. Duquesne was built in 1750 by Charles Jones on a 1400 acre tract that is now PART OF SUBURBAN MONTGOMERY COUNTY.*" In short, the article seemed to

make the point that progress is here, and nothing, not even a venerable historic site is going to stand in its way. ¹¹

Really?
Not sure
I see that
in the
article -
Another example?

The only redeeming factor was that the Maryland National Park and Planning Commission acquired the portion of the estate that contained the spring for inclusion in Rock Creek Park. In time, the National Society of Colonial Dames and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission rebuilt a springhouse in 1978. As a nice historical touch, the lilacs from the house's garden were planted around the tiny but impressive site. ¹²

I'm leashing up
How?
Explain

What was their reasoning?

Connect to
Kaplan Tyler
on preservation
or Page 7
manor?

So what lessons can public historians learn from the unassuming but nonetheless historically significant spring at Clean Drinking Manor? First off, the site answers in part the questions posed by the scholar and historian Eric Foner, who owns history? Foner's answer of course was "everyone and no one."¹³ However, the existence of Clean Drinking Manor makes the point that before we can determine who owns history there must be an historical record to debate. Before we can discuss the past, we need to have some sense of what the past was like.

Not sure
This is the
best
reading to
connect to -
What about
the history of
Historic
preservation?

Scholarly papers and books are and will always be an immutable party of recounting the past. At the same time, enduring places and structures also serve an indispensable role. One cannot necessarily learn a great deal about Egyptian culture by gazing at the Great Pyramid at Giza. But, the fact remains that physical entities such as enduring artifacts, sites and places not only have the capacity to inform about the past, but also the potential to inspire those who might initially not care about history to take a more active role or interest.

- Aren't they revised?

What does Glasberg say?

Public historians, appropriately, are in the business of deciding how the past should be presented to the world. Some questions never seem to go away. When is an historic site worth saving? What is the proper balance between commercialism and the need to present legitimate historic related information? Whose story or stories should be told and who should tell them? Clean Drinking Manor does not provide complete answers to any of these questions but it does make the case for ensuring that significant portions of the past both written and otherwise should be preserved for future generations.

✓ page 2
manor,
Tyler or
west?

When one considers the amount of growth in Montgomery County since the time of George Washington, it is a miracle that the spring still exists. As noted, the manor house fell prey to apathy and urban sprawl, but thankfully, an indelible part of the early days of our nation has managed to survive. It may be trite, but this author still finds it incredibly exciting to be able to stand in a spot frequented by individuals such as Washington, Clay and Monroe. If Washington were to come back today he would not recognize the region we refer to today as Chevy Chase, Maryland. However it is likely he would still be familiar with the cool refreshing waters of the spring. Thus, in the end, ultimately the site validates the important principle that before you can have a discussion about public, academic or any kind of history for that matter you have ensure that historical records and places and sites, survive.

was it missing?

To quote Eric Foner, "history should never just "a collection of facts, not just a politically sanctioned listing of undisputable truths, but an ongoing means of collective self discovery about the nature of our society."¹⁴ One can only do this by ensuring that parts of the past are preserved. How we do this is critical. There are no easy answers, but the critical point is that debate about the need to save and preserve places like Clean Drinking Manor has been and will continue to be an important and vital part of the work of the public historians of the present day.

NOTES

¹ Fred Anderson, *George Washington remembers: reflections on the French and Indian War*. Lanham, MD, (Philander D. Chase Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2004), 55

² Doree Germaine Holman, *Old Bethesda*, (Gaithersburg, MD, Board of Trustees of the Bethesda Public Library Association, 1956) Chapter 4

³ Kathy Gagarin, *Clean Drinking Manor* (Chevy Chase, MD, Chevy Chase Historical Society, 1969

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ From the *Learn About Chevy Chase* portion of the Chevy Chase Historical Society website <http://www.chevychasehistory.org/content/view/3/67/>

⁸ *The Washington Post*, 1894. Out of Town Homes; City People Are Looking for Suburban Residences, March 5.

⁹ *The Washington Post*, 1932. Old Manor in Chevy Chase Gains Beauty with Age; Restoration of Clean Drinking House as Historical Manor is Advocated, June 12

¹⁰ Ibid

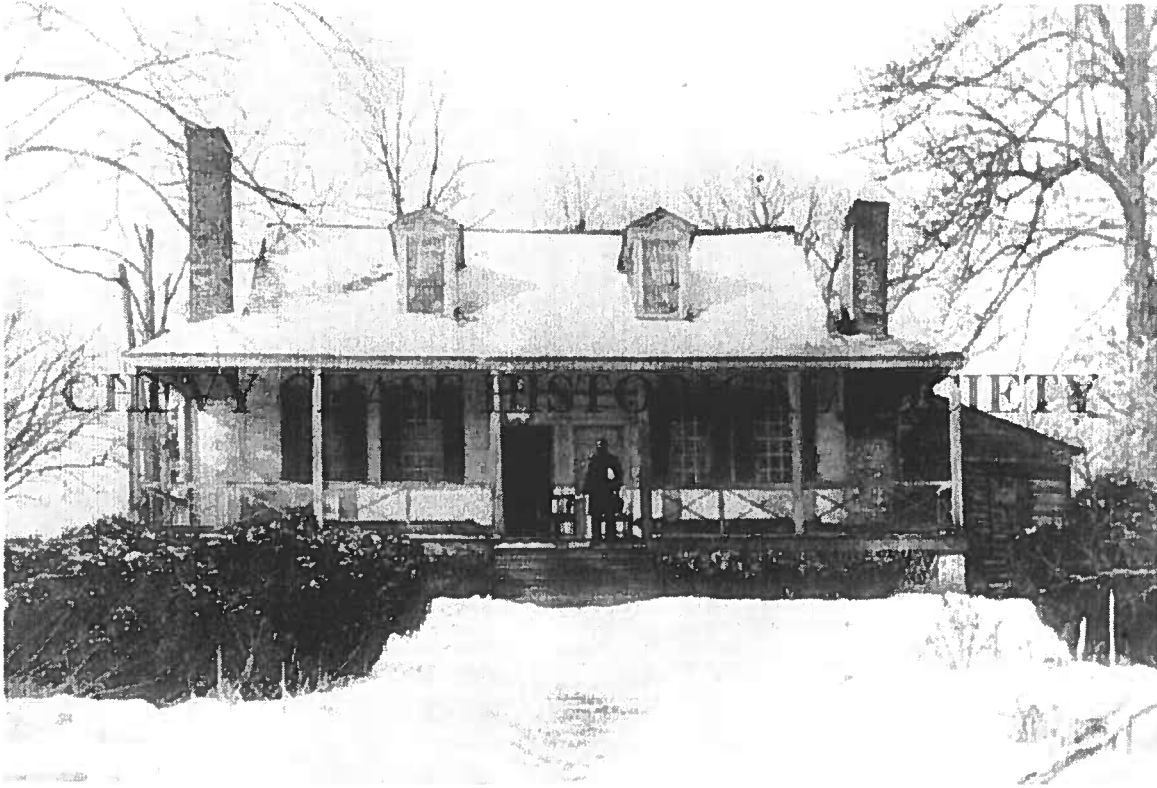
¹¹ *The Washington Post*, 1960. Manor Site Developed for Homes; Where Good Water Bubbled, July 23

¹² Susan Elwell and Eleanor Ford, *Once Upon a Time: The Story of Clean Drinking* (Chevy Chase MD, Chevy Chase Historical Society, 2005) 3) 2008.228.07

✓ ¹³ Eric Foner, *Who Owns History?* (New York, N. Y., Hill and Wang, 2002) xix

¹⁴ Ibid, 188

PHOTOS



The Clean Drinking manor house (date of photo unknown) front faced east, looking across Rock Creek. The house measured 34 by 28 feet and may have originally had a full second story. The left front door, it is said, led to the room used for farm business, the other to the family parlor. The house was built by Charles Jones about 1750. His wife Elizabeth Courts was the granddaughter of the original patentee Col. John Courts (1655-1702).

What's the source?



This view, taken in 1931 northwest from the corner of Jones Bridge Road (foreground) and Jones Mill Road (to the right) shows the derelict remains of Clean Drinking and its fields.

*Source? Chevy Chase Hist. Soc. ? need to
list the file & collection as well as
the Organization*



Clean Drinking's spring head, source of the patent's name, as it looked about 1910. It is below and east of the house, across Jones Mill Road. On the left is Nicholas Jones, last inhabitant of the house. *Source?*



Cleaning Drinking spring today. The spring house was installed by the National Society of Colonial Dames and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1978, and the lilacs from the house's garden were planted around it.

Paper 2: Site Review

Grade: B

Patrick,

This is an intriguing twist on the traditional site review because you've chosen to examine a site that was partially saved and then partially reconstructed. It's a fascinating story that is mirrored in much of the literature on preservation, except that only the spring house was rebuilt. You've proven the point about the site's importance to local memory at two very specific moments in American history – in the early twentieth century and then again around the Bicentennial. Despite the interesting topic and good primary source research, there are a lot of missed opportunities here in terms of analysis and making connections to the readings in the course. Foner is a good choice to discuss the ambiguity of historical ownership, but he's not the most appropriate here to discuss the power of place and its role in nurturing local and national memory. What about David Glassberg on the sense of history and popular efforts to commemorate through place? Also, I wondered about all of the readings on historic preservation and house museums. How do they provide a context for the public history of this site? How do they help explain through comparison what failed?