

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

New Designation X
Amendment of a previous designation _____
Please summarize any amendment(s) _____

Property name Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.

Address 5500 41st Street, NW

Square and lot number(s) Lot 0001 in Square 1744 and Lot 0001 in Square 1745 (Res. 431)

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission ANC 3E04

Date of construction ca. 1932 Date of major alteration(s) 2011

Architect(s) Albert Harris
Architectural style(s) Colonial Revival

Original use recreation Present use recreation

Property owner District of Columbia

Legal address of property owner 2000 14th Street, NW; Washington DC 20009-4487

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) Historic Washington Architecture

If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) 608 Rock Creek Church Rd, NW, Washington DC 20010/
202-904-8111

Name and title of authorized representative Kent C. Boese, President

Signature of representative  Date 11/17/2017

Name and telephone of author of application Kent C. Boese, 202-904-8111

#18-08 Date received 12/1/17
H.P.O. staff JHO

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

Other names/site number: Chevy Chase Recreation Center

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 5500 41st Street, NW

City or town: Washington State: DC County: N/A

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:	_____ Date
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE

OUTDOOR RECREATION

SPORTS FACILITY

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OUTDOOR RECREATION

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH-20TH CENTURY REVIVAL/Colonial Revival

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Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK (foundation and walls), METAL (roof)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Chevy Chase Playground and Field House occupies a 208,145.4 sq. ft. site located at the intersection of 41st and Livingston streets. In addition to containing a baseball diamond, spray park, basketball courts, tennis courts, and dedicated playground areas, Chevy Chase contains a 1-1/2 story field house built ca. 1931-34 and located on the southeastern portion of the property. A non-contributing storage building is located to the immediate north of the field house. The property's 1-1/2 story field house was built ca. 1931-34, adapted from plans developed by Municipal Architect Albert Harris in 1931. The field house's overall design is that of a Colonial Revival dwelling. The field house building is constructed of red brick on the first level with wood siding construction for the second floor gables and dormers. In 2011, a 1-1/2 story, gable roofed, brick ell was constructed on the northwest elevation of the field house. The site includes a concrete water fountain centrally located adjacent to the basketball courts.

Narrative Description

General Description:

Site:

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The Chevy Chase playground is located north of Livingston Street, west of 41st Street, and southeast of Western Avenue, NW (Lot 0001 in Square 1744 and Lot 0001 in Square 1745). The property is surrounded on all sides by detached residential single-family dwellings.

General Description:

The Chevy Chase playground is located on a triangular parcel that is approximately 4.91 acres. Its boundaries are formed by Livingston Street, NW to the south; 41st Street, NW to the east; and Western Avenue (the Maryland/D.C. border) to its northwest.

A chain link fence runs along the perimeter of the property, which is replaced by an iron fence at the eastern most section of Livingston and southernmost section of 41st Street where the fencing surrounds the tot lot. Entrances lead into the playground from each direction. A sidewalk enters the playground from Livingston and is located approximately 160 ft. west of 41st Street. This sidewalk generally runs parallel to 41st Street and bisects the property into an eastern half and a western half. The western half contains a large baseball diamond and outfield. The section of the property to the east contains the field house and dedicated recreation spaces.

The playground field house is centrally located in the southeastern corner of the property. It faces the southeast corner of the property. A splash pad is located to the south of the field house. Tot lots are located to the southeast and northwest of the field house. Directly north of the field house are two basketball courts and a racquet ball court (originally used as a volley ball court). A concrete water fountain is located in the midst of these courts. To the north of the basketball courts are two tennis courts. A small picnic area is located in the northeast corner of the property. A dog park is currently located to the west of the tennis courts (in an area that once supported a badminton court and two horseshow pits. The overall layout of the playground dates to 1947. The 2 tennis courts, 2 basketball courts, concrete drinking fountain, sidewalks, field house, and locations of the splash pad and baseball diamond should all be considered contributing features of the playground.

Chevy Chase Field House

The Chevy Chase Playground Field House is a 1 ½-story brick building that is rectangular in plan. In 2011, a 1 ½-story, gable roofed, brick ell was constructed on the northwest elevation. The building is set upon a low brick foundation. The building is covered with a steeply pitched gable roof featuring two gabled dormers on the southeast elevation, a substantial exterior end brick chimney is on the northeast end wall, and a single-story porch spanning the southeast elevation. The porch is covered by a pent roof that is integrated into the main roof and extends from it as a catslide. Single paned 1/1 (originally 6/6) replacement double-hung sash windows are located in the northeast, southeast, northwest, and southwest side walls and dormers. The addition contains single pane fixed windows with double-hung sash windows in the dormers and in the gable on the northeast elevation.

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The Chevy Chase Playground Field House is characterized by its 1 ½-story Colonial-Revival-style building form.

Exterior Description

The entire building is a solidly constructed brick structure which employs wood clapboarding in its gables and dormers. The southeastern elevation is four-bays wide and features three, one-over-one, double-hung windows. The fourth bay contains a metal door with a one-light transom which is located in the bay off-center to the southwest. A full-width, four-bay porch dominates the elevation, spanning the length of the building. Two gabled dormers are located on the steeply pitched roof directly above. The dormers are clad with vertically laid wood siding. The dormer windows consist of one-over-one double-hung sash replacement windows.

The northerneastern elevation consists of a substantial single-story constructed of brick laid in American bond fashion and a gable consisting of wood frame construction clad in wood clapboarding. A brick chimney is located in the center of the elevation. The porch is to the southeast and is similarly clad in wood clapboarding. An entrance door is located to the northwest of the chimney and a window is to the southeast. Both are located within the brick first-story and placed symmetrically. A three bay wide addition extends from the southwest end of the building toward the northwest and is constructed in brick laid in American bond fashion matching that of the original structure and beneath a steeply pitched half-story roof. The three bays consist of single pane fixed windows. A small dormer is located above the addition's central bay and contains a one-over-one casement window.

The northwest elevation consists of a single-story constructed of brick laid in American bond fashion beneath a steeply pitched half-story roof. The northeastern half of the structure contains two evenly placed bays containing one-over-one casement windows. An addition extends out from the building from the southwestern half of the elevation. The addition is constructed in brick laid in the American bond fashion matching that of the original structure beneath a gable consisting of wood frame construction clad in wood clapboarding. The southwestern third of the elevation is recessed, forming a covered porch and containing an entrance door. A single one-over-one casement window is centered in the northeastern section of the elevation. The gable is pierced by a centrally located one-over-one casement window.

The southwest elevation continues the American bond brick first-story capped by the half-story gable clad in wood clapboarding. To the southeast the porch roof area continues with wood clapboarding. The elevation is divided symmetrically into thirds, with rectangular one-over-one casement windows in the central and northwest bay and a door in the southeast bay. The gable is similarly pierced by a one-over-one casement window. A three bay wide addition extends from the original structure to the northwest. The addition is constructed in brick laid in the American bond fashion matching that of the original structure and below a steeply pitched half-story roof. The central and southeastern bays consist of single pane fixed windows. The northwestern bay is recessed forming a porch, and contains an entrance door. A small dormer is located above the addition's central bay and contains a one-over-one casement window.

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Interior Description

The interior floor plan generally resembles that of a Colonial-era Hall-Parlor plan house. In the case of the field house, the large northeastern room rises to the full height of the structure. It contains a four-log fireplace in the center of the northeastern wall (currently sealed) and an open staircase in the southwest corner ascending to the second level loft on the southwestern end of the building. Both elements remain intact. A smaller single-story room occupies the southwestern end of the interior. The southwestern room extend northwest into the 2011 addition. This area is currently configured to include a small kitchen.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1923-1947

Significant Dates

1923, 1925, 1927, 1929,
1931, 1947,

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

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Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Harris, Albert L.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Chevy Chase Playground and field house qualifies for listing in the National Register under Criterion C as a good example of the city's playgrounds designed under the direction and guidance of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The field house building, designed according to an established building type during the tenure of Municipal Architect Albert Harris (1921-1933), is designed in the Colonial Revival style and followed a standard plan for field houses from that period. The Chevy Chase Playground field house remains a notable example of its type with its design being adapted from that established by Municipal Architect Albert L. Harris, whose work is closely identified with civic architecture in Washington, D.C.

The Chevy Chase Playground field house retains its integrity of location, setting, design, craftsmanship, materials, feeling and association. The field house is a purpose-built recreational structure of the District of Columbia; it was constructed according to an established design model and embodies characteristics illustrating the evolution of recreational architecture in the District; it stands on its original site; and it largely retains its original building massing and materials. The later addition extending from the building to the northwest is in keeping with the original structure and retains the original massing and materials.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Summary Paragraph:

The Chevy Chase Playground was created on land originally owned by the Chevy Chase Land Company. It was formally organized in 1923 to better support the recreational needs of the Chevy Chase neighborhood located at the northwestern edge of the city. The playground was opened on May 26, 1923. At the time it was established, the playground consisted primarily of a large playing field supporting activities including baseball and tennis. The property was purchased by the National Capital Park Commission in November 1925 and further developed as a formal playground in the District's growing network of municipal playgrounds. The playground was enlarged by the closing of 42nd Street in 1927. By 1934, amenities included clay tennis courts, a softball diamond, a volley ball court, a basketball court, a picnic grove, a wading pool, and a 1-½ story field house. The Chevy Chase Playground's 1-½ story field house's design follows the Colonial Revival design developed by municipal architect Albert L. Harris after the vernacular Hall-and-Parlor houses of the Tidewater region. This type was regionally appropriate to the Mid-Atlantic States, less formal, and appropriate for recreation areas. The playground was improved in 1947 resulting in the general lay out of the recreation areas and uses that largely remain in place today.

Establishment of Chevy Chase Playground

During the early Twentieth Century, there was growing support for dedicated playground space in the District of Columbia. Often times, parks, school grounds, and empty lots provided opportunities for unofficial recreation areas throughout the city. However, many of these areas proved to be temporary solutions with those not owned by the District of Columbia unable to support improvements such as buildings or equipment. Acknowledging the need for a much improved system of dedicated playgrounds, the United Citizens Playground Committee studied the issue and in August 1921 recommended that the District Commissioners adopt a system of equitable distribution of playgrounds throughout Washington. Their report urgently advocated that three new white and two new "colored" playground sites be created – in addition to the purchase of two playgrounds already in use but unowned by the District. To accomplish this plan, the United Citizens' Playground Committee requested \$330,000 be dedicated for the purchase of seven playground sites as part of a total request of \$455,000 that also funded playground improvements, maintenance, and staffing.¹

Efforts to establish a playground in the Chevy Chase community began in earnest in June 1922 with the establishment of the Chevy Chase Recreation Club. One of the club's early goals was to

¹ "Playground Plans Cover Entire City." *The Washington Post*, Aug. 14, 1921, p. 2; "Adopt \$455,000 Playground Plan." *The Evening Star*, Aug. 12, 1921, p. 2.

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establish a community playground which would be supported by the residents of that section of Washington. At this time, it was noted that no playground existed in the section of Washington from the Connecticut Avenue bridge to Chevy Chase.²

In pursuit of a playground, Mrs. Frank P. Wilcox and a committee of women met with Edward J. Stellwagen, president of the Chevy Chase Land Company, and inquired about a tract of land at the old Kirkside golf course. Mr. Stellwagen referred the committee to Harold E. Doyle, vice president of Fisher Real Estate Company, and they were shown the grounds. To illustrate how it would look, 4.7 acres of the golf course were staked off in November 1922. Apparently unaware of the exact location chosen by the committee, Mr. Stellwagen gave the women a verbal promise that they could have the ground for five years at an annual rental of \$1, and the option of buying it within that time at one-half its appraised value. However, in response to angry golfers who approached Mr. Stellwagen upon noticing a number of stakes planted with accuracy almost in the center of the golf course – which would eliminate the entrance to the course and separate the seventh and eighth holes – Mr. Stellwagen announced that the golf course would not be disrupted and no part of the course would be sold in the near future.³

The Chevy Chase Recreation Club continued to work with the Chevy Chase Land Company, and by March 1923 their efforts were rewarded. The Chevy Chase Land Company agreed to permit the establishment of a playground on their property bordered by Livingston Street (south), 41st Street (east), 42nd Street (west), and Western Avenue (north) for a period of three years, after which time the property could be purchased by arbitration or condemnation. The Chevy Chase Recreation club immediately set to work to stake out the athletic fields for a baseball diamond, soccer field, football field, tennis and basketball courts, and a track.⁴

The Chevy Chase playground was officially dedicated on May 26, 1923. The ceremonies included a flag raising, a parade of 1,000 children from the Elizabeth V. Brown school, and an address by Secretary of Labor James J. Davis who focused on childhood problems of the day. As part of Davis' speech, he stated that the residents of Chevy Chase were "taking a step in the right direction ... [as the] provision for healthy, supervised play is one of the first moves toward improving the child."⁵

The following year, Chevy Chase Recreation club organized a pageant on the playground that occurred on June 17, 1924. More than 1,000 children reportedly participated. The program included various dances – including a musette, a scarf dance, and a May pole dance – and a

² "'Playground' Drive Slices Kirkside as Golfers Yell 'Fore!'" *The Evening Star*, November 16, 1922, p. 1; "Ask Playground Equipment." *The Washington Post*, Mar. 31, 1922, p. 2.

³ *Ibid*, p. 1.

⁴ "Chevy Chase Play Center is Assured." *The Evening Star*, March 12, 1933, p. 3.

⁵ "Chevy Chase Move Wins Davis' Praise." *The Washington Post*, May 27, 1923, p. 5.

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demonstration of first-aid given by Girl Scouts of troops 41 and 42. The program ended with mass singing of patriotic songs.⁶

The future of the Chevy Chase playground was uncertain by August 1925. The Chevy Chase Recreation Club was notified that the property would need to be purchased by March 1, 1926 – when the three year agreement with the Chevy Chase Land Company terminated. Failure to purchase the playground from the Chevy Chase Land Company would result in the three-acre property being divided into building lots and developed. The Chevy Chase Recreation Club had hoped to purchase the property and had undertaken a fundraising campaign in 1923 to raise \$125,000 to purchase not only the playground property but also a lot across from it in Maryland for the construction of a recreation building. The Club's attempts to raise sufficient funds to purchase the tract by popular subscription were not successful in raising enough funds to buy the land. Adding to the difficulty of purchasing the parcel was the advancing real estate prices in the neighborhood. Furthermore, the Club spent the money it had raised to make improvements to the playground – including four tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a basketball court, a football field, and a frame pavilion structure.⁷

As the Chevy Chase Recreation Club was unable to raise money by private subscription, they requested an appropriation for the purchase of the site in the 1924 District budget, but the item was not allowed and subsequently, the matter was placed before the National Capital Parks Commission. Efforts were renewed in earnest in August 1925 with the playground's future threatened. These efforts were successful when the community learned on November 21, 1925, that the National Capital Park Commission had received authorization to purchase the 2.78 acres of land at Forty-first and Livingston streets for a reported amount of \$70,000.⁸

While the purchase of the playground by the National Capital Park Commission ensured that the playground would become one of a growing number of permanent playground facilities in the District of Columbia, it did not lead to immediate improvement of the property. The National Capital Park Commission, however, was interested in developing the playground and took actions to improve the site. One of the earliest efforts was to enlarge the Chevy Chase Playground by closing the section of Forty-Second Street between Livingston and Western Avenue. This effort was approved by the coordinating committees of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission on April 12, 1927, and forwarded to the District Commissioners for their approval. It was determined that the section of Forty-Second Street in question had no practical use in the highway plan and its closing not only provided for a considerable enlargement of the playground, but the cost of paving it would be saved to the District. Upon approval of this closing, the playground was not only enlarged by the area from the closed street, but also by the inclusion of the small triangle which was separated from the playground by the street.⁹

⁶ "1,000 Children Take Part In Chevy Chase Pageant." *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1924, p. 9.

⁷ "Children Facing Playground Loss." *The Evening Star*, Aug. 27, 1925, p. 17.

⁸ "Park Site Purchase O.K.'D By Commission." *The Evening Star*, Nov. 21, 1925, p. 2.

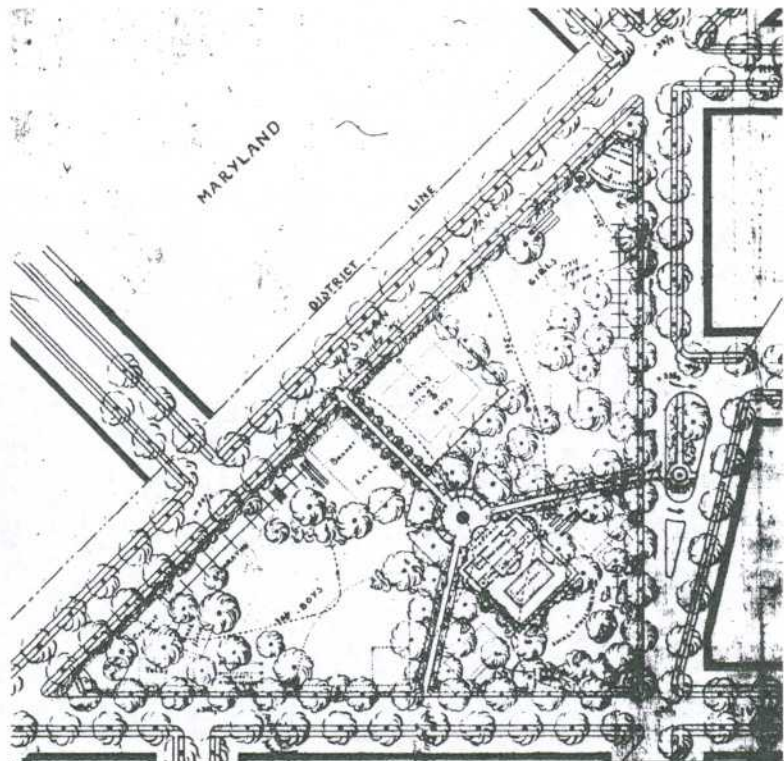
⁹ "Street Closing Plan Approved." *The Evening Star*, April 12, 1927, p. 3.

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With the enlargement of the Chevy Chase Playground, it became one of three playgrounds consisting of more than four acres – the other two being Takoma and Rosedale. Observing the success of these large playgrounds, and how they served adults and often entire families, Municipal Playground Department director Susie Root Rhodes recommend a policy in 1928 that all District playgrounds of the future be established on tracts of at least five acres. Rhodes stated that within a few minutes after returning home from work, adults living near Takoma, Chevy Chase, and Rosedale could be found heading to these playgrounds to enjoy baseball, quoits and/or horseshoes, tennis, and running tracks. Adult women were observed playing tennis, croquet, attending basketry classes, or participating as spectators in other organized events.¹⁰

An unrealized plan for Chevy Chase Playground dated August 7, 1928, shows an early attempt to fully develop and organize the enlarged play space. At that time playgrounds improvements largely consisted of a baseball diamond situated on the southwestern half of the property, clay tennis courts centrally located on Western Avenue, a clay basketball court to the northeast of the tennis courts, and a grove of trees at the northern end of the property. A frame pavilion was located at the intersection of Livingston and Forty-First streets. Taking inspiration from the playground's shape which formed a 45°-45°-90° isosceles right triangle, the 1928 National Capital Park and Planning Commission plan placed a circular central plaza at the centroid of the property, with sidewalks emanating out to the three sides of the property. The sidewalk from the centroid to the hypotenuse bisects the property and would have designated activities for boys to the southwest and girls to the northeast. The sidewalks to the east and south of the centroid intersect the triangle's legs creating a trapezoid containing a large field house, a swimming pool, dedicated playground spaces, and a small children's area. The plan also incorporates a small triangular parcel created by the intersection of Forty-first Street, Morrison Street, and Belt Road. Over time, this area would be incorporated



Chevy Chase Playground, proposed plan showing early locations of field house, swimming pool, sidewalks, and playing fields dated August 7, 1928.

the three sides of the property. The sidewalk from the centroid to the hypotenuse bisects the property and would have designated activities for boys to the southwest and girls to the northeast. The sidewalks to the east and south of the centroid intersect the triangle's legs creating a trapezoid containing a large field house, a swimming pool, dedicated playground spaces, and a small children's area. The plan also incorporates a small triangular parcel created by the intersection of Forty-first Street, Morrison Street, and Belt Road. Over time, this area would be incorporated

¹⁰ "Playgrounds Head Wants Every Tract to Be 5 Acres." *The Washington Post*, July 19, 1928, p. 2.

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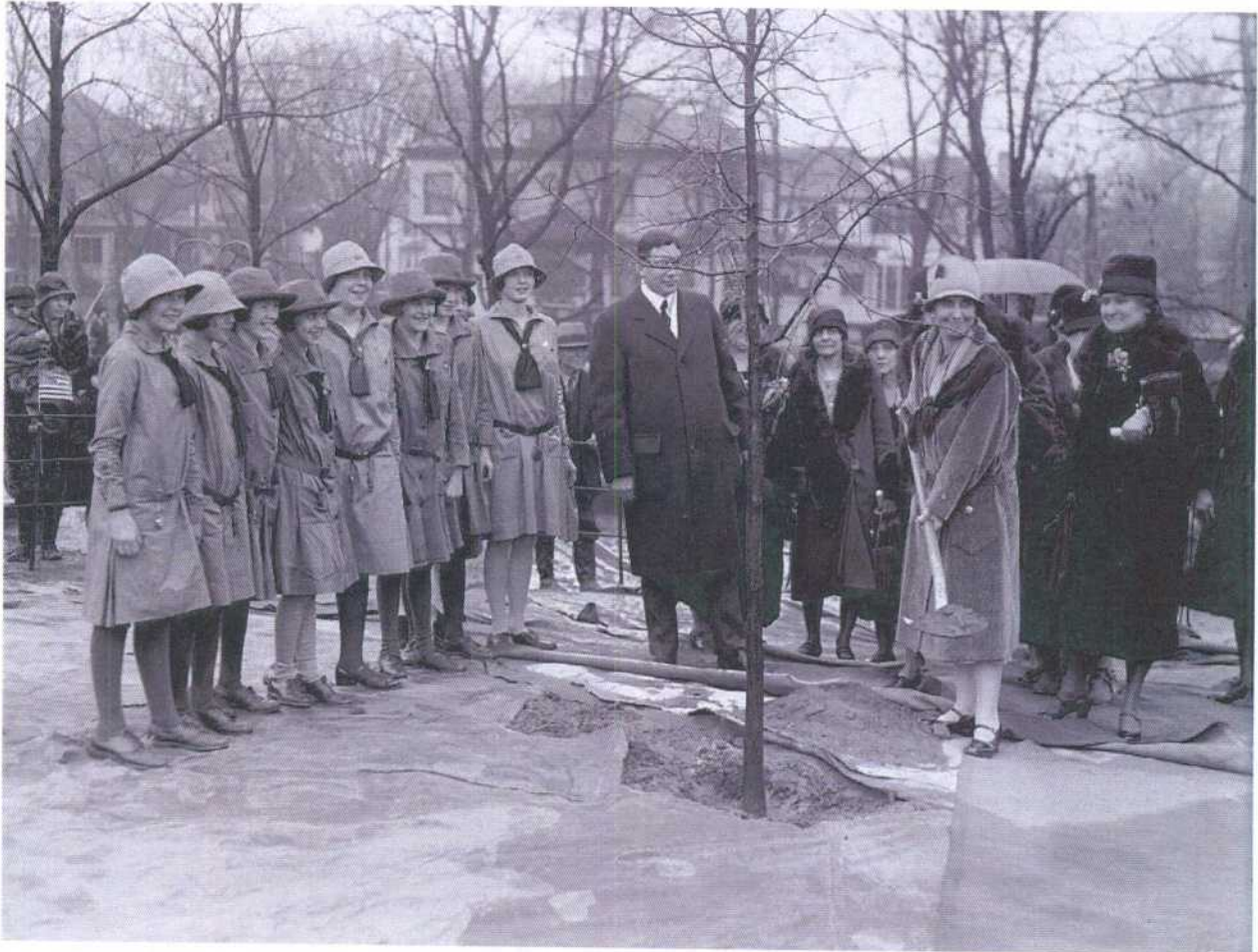
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into the neighboring square and developed, eliminating the public space. While this 1928 plan did not come to fruition – largely due to lack of funding – it does illustrate at an early date amenities that were important to the neighborhood and which would be reworked and included in later plans. Specifically, the plan shows an early commitment to attaining a field house, a pool (and later a spray area), and dedicated playing courts and fields.

Early efforts to improve the playground often included tree plantings, with the most notable event occurring on February 28, 1929. Continuing a tradition begun the previous year with Mrs. William Howard Taft at the Park View Playground, Grace Coolidge planted a tree at the Chevy Chase Playground as one of her final acts as First Lady. The tree planting was under the auspices of the Woman's City Club. Upon her arrival at the playground, Mrs. Coolidge was escorted by eight Girl Scouts and drew a crowd of approximately 1,000 persons. The ceremony included District Commissioner Sidney F. Taliaferro, who thanked Mrs. Coolidge, and playground director Susie Root Rhodes. Following the tree planting, the remainder of the exercises were held in the auditorium of the E. V Brown school.¹¹



¹¹ "First Lady Plants Playgrounds Tree." *The Washington Post*, March 1, 1929, p. 24.

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(First Lady Grace Coolidge planting a tree at Chevy Chase Playground, February 28, 1929.
Photo courtesy of Library of Congress LC-F8- 42156 [P&P])

During the 1930s the Chevy Chase Playground achieved two of its long-standing objectives – a field house and a wading pool. While it has been difficult to determine the exact date for these improvements, they may have been constructed as early as 1931-1932 when Miss Sibyl Baker, supervisor of playgrounds, reported that progress of improvements at the Chevy Chase Playground were advancing well, with additional work to include a garden, shrubbery planted along the borders of the grounds, and improvements to include “a playhouse of the Colonial manor type.”¹² Determining exact dates for these improvements is uncertain as attempts to find building permits have been unsuccessful, no extant plans of the playground exist between February 2, 1931, and May 24, 1940, and newspaper accounts do not record their construction or dedication events. Furthermore, references to a Chevy Chase Recreation Center between 1936-1939 refer to different Chevy Chase facilities – examples include a Chevy Chase Recreation Center located at Broad Branch Road, Daniels Road, and Rock Creek Park (1936)¹³, a Chevy Chase Recreation Center co-located with the Lafayette Elementary School and later renamed Lafayette Recreation Center (1938)¹⁴, and a facility in Maryland, i.e. the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Recreation Center (1939). Prior to 1934, newspaper accounts of playground improvements tend to be more general in their descriptions of work, whereas accounts from 1934 to 1939 contain more details. This may be due to depression era playgrounds being closely watched as public works projects coupled with an interest by the government to inform the community of public improvements and their success of putting the unemployed back to work. There are multiple examples of D.C. neighborhood groups advocating for improved playgrounds facilities and field houses during this period, yet advocacy for a Chevy Chase field house is absent from the record, further suggesting that such a structure had already been completed. What is certain is that in August 1934 the Chevy Chase playground – which did have a wading pool at this time – was considered to be the best developed of “Washington’s inadequate [playground] system”¹⁵ with other playgrounds having far less than Chevy Chase. It was noted that the Chevy Chase playground was located in a well-to-do neighborhood, and that even it needed \$10,000 for equipment and development to reach its full potential. In light of these facts, it seems highly probable that the field house at Chevy Chase was constructed between 1931 and 1934.

¹² “Citizens Oppose D.C. Tax Boost.” *The Evening Star*, Dec. 17, 1931, p. A-4.

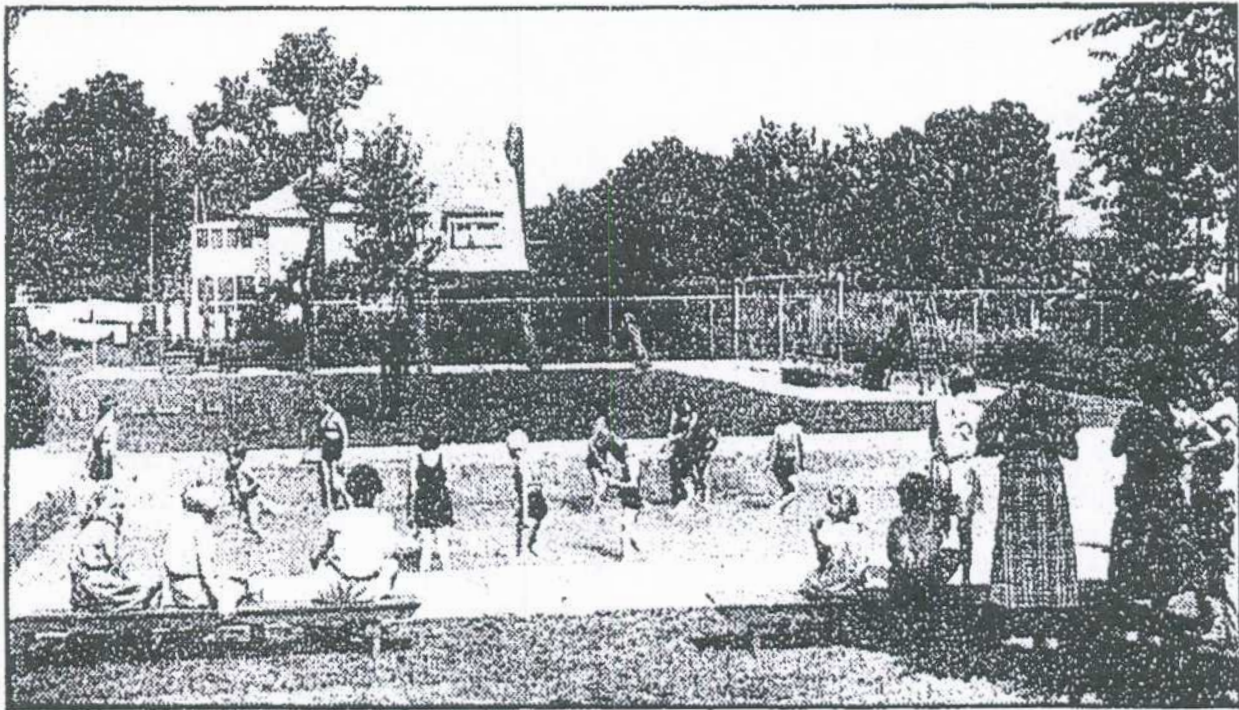
¹³ “Wyeth Explains New Center Plans to Commission.” *The Evening Star*, March 38, 1936, p. 22.

¹⁴ “Planners Order Fort Drive Road Details Rushed.” *The Evening Star*, July 30, 1938, p. A-18.

¹⁵ Secrest, James D. “Agency Reaches but 40 Per Cent of 100,000 Children in City.” *The Washington Post*, Aug. 4, 1934, p. 3.

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(Wading pool at the Chevy Chase Playground. From *The Washington Post*, Aug. 4, 1934, p. 3.)

The last significant phase of development for the Chevy Chase Playground began in 1946 and was completed by the end of 1947. This involved a reworking of the grounds into the configuration still largely intact today. Land improvements for Chevy Chase estimated at \$9,000 were part of a \$256,000 1947 budget request submitted by District Recreation Department superintendent Milo F. Christiansen on January 21, 1946, as part of a plan to improve 31 play centers.¹⁶ Ultimately, Christiansen was only successful in securing \$194,000 for playground improvements in 1947, including a large appropriation for construction at Chevy Chase including a multiple-use area, tennis courts, and replacing the wading pool with a spray area. The overall plan for the Chevy Chase Playground was drawn in November 1946 and approved by Milo F. Christiansen in January 1947. Its primary defining feature consists of a sidewalk located 148.6 ft. west of Forty-first Street that begins at the Livingston Street border of the property and runs due north for 328.2 ft. parallel with Forty-first Street, nearly the entire length of the playground. After running due north for 328.2 ft., the sidewalk forks, with one sidewalk leading to the northwest for 84.5 ft. and perpendicularly intersecting the Western Avenue border of the property. The other sidewalk runs to the northeast for 50.5 ft. leading to the athletic courts area. This central walkway divides the property roughly into two halves, with the western half being approximately 2.13 acres and the eastern half being approximately 2.01 acres.

The western half of the playground consists solely of a softball diamond and playing field. This field is located in the same area as the diamond it replaced, however the orientation moved the home plate away from Western Avenue and relocated it along Livingston Street next to the entry

¹⁶ "\$256,000 Slated For Playground Improvements." *The Evening Star*, Jan 21, 1946, p. B-1.

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sidewalk. The eastern half of the playground is highly programmed with a progression of dedicated spaces and uses. Beginning at the southern edge of the property along Livingston Street, a small children's play area is located in the southeast corner of the playground. To the west of this play area is a spray area and to the north is an outdoor craft area. Completing the northwest corner of this square is the 1930s Colonial Revival field house. The field house faces the intersection of Livingston and Forty-first streets, and is symmetrically sited on the line that bisects the triangular lot into two equally sized right triangles. The field house is surrounded by a brick terrace of herringbone design.

Directly north of the field house, the 1947 plan includes an apparatus area containing seesaws, swings, a slide, and other equipment. To the east and north of the apparatus area the playground contains two basketball courts and a volley ball court organized around a small grass field. Two tennis courts are sited north of the basketball court area. A small picnic area is located at the extreme north end of the playground. To the west of the ball courts are two badminton areas, one to the north and one to the south of the sidewalk leading to the courts from the center of the property. To the north of where the central sidewalk splits the 1947 plan sites two horseshoe pits.

The plan developed and implemented in 1947 remains largely intact to the present with the following alterations. The field house was renovated in 1951 to include a second restroom, and in 2011 a one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed, brick ell was construction on the northwest elevation of the building, encroaching upon the northern terrace. Other minor changes to the 1947 plan include a 2010/2011 renovation resulting in new equipment on the apparatus area and small children's play area, an updated spray area, and a change in use for the northern badminton and horseshoe area to a fenced in dog park.

History of the Chevy Chase Neighborhood

The suburb of Chevy Chase was the creation of Francis G. Newlands (1848-1917), one of Washington's most important real estate developers. Newlands, who had begun planning Chevy Chase in the late 1880s with the purpose of developing an exclusive suburb serving the nation's capital, formed the Chevy Chase Land Company (CCLC) in 1890. Through intermediaries, Newlands secretly amassed more than 1,700 acres of farmland between present-day Calvert Street in the District to Chevy Chase Lake in Montgomery County, Maryland. The CCLC spent over \$1.5 billion buying the land and then spent an almost equal sum grading the roadbed, building bridges along Connecticut Avenue and installing an electric streetcar line to connect the suburb with the city. Newlands planned the Chevy Chase suburb with five sections, including four in Montgomery County, just across the District line, and one in the District, just south of the District line.

Chevy Chase was intended to be a model of suburban elegance and planning. No commercial ventures, apartment buildings or rowhouses were allowed in the exclusively residential subdivision, and minimum lot sizes and housing costs were established. The streets of the subdivision were laid out in an Olmsted-inspired picturesque fashion and were given English or Scottish names, and planted with trees and shrubs. Several years after its founding, the

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community became the home of the capital area's first country club. The high standards for the community were ensured by the Chevy Chase Land Company retaining complete ownership and control over the development. The first part of the suburb to be developed was known as Section 2 (present-day Chevy Chase Village), which opened in 1892. The subdivision grew slowly, with additional tracts opening up in the following decades.

In May of 1907, the CCLC opened its first Chevy Chase subdivision on the District side of the border. Although the CCLC owned the five-block tract of land on the east side of Connecticut Avenue that it developed as Chevy Chase, D.C., along with a section on the west side of Connecticut Avenue, the company did not own all of the surrounding land in present-day Chevy Chase, D.C. and thus did not control all of its growth.

The CCLC had always planned for a commercial zone to accommodate its residential subdivisions, but no commercial area was established in its initial years. In fact, just as it had done in its Maryland subdivisions, the Chevy Chase Land Company prohibited all commercial enterprises in its District subdivisions in the belief that commerce would detract from the desirability and exclusivity of the neighborhood. However, the lack of commercial services forced residents to either order food from downtown and have it delivered via the freight car to the streetcar stop, or journey three miles south themselves to Tenleytown to shop.

Other developers, who sought to capitalize on the success of the Chevy Chase suburb, had begun to purchase land adjacent to CCLC-owned land and craft their own subdivisions, using Chevy Chase as a model. Recognizing the need for more convenient shopping, one developer, Fulton Gordon, opened his subdivision on the west side of Connecticut Avenue (from present-day Military Road to Northampton Street) free of the commercial restrictions that defined the CCLC subdivisions. In 1910, shortly after Gordon's Connecticut Avenue Terrace opened, the area's first store opened. Soon other businesses followed.

Commerce in Chevy Chase, D.C. was restricted to the stretch of land owned by Fulton Gordon on the west side of the avenue. By the early 1920s, about a dozen businesses had located in the four-block area between Livingston and Northampton Streets, including a barber, cobbler, tailor shops, and a grocery store. The success of Chevy Chase's small neighborhood-oriented commercial zone may have influenced the creation of similar commercial areas elsewhere along Connecticut Avenue. A plan creating four such commercial zones along the Avenue at Cleveland Park, Van Ness, Nebraska Avenue and Chevy Chase was codified in the city's first zoning plan in 1920. As the commercial development in Chevy Chase proved successful in the Fulton Gordon-owned subdivisions of Chevy Chase, the CCLC tried to overturn its commercial ban on its own Chevy Chase, D.C. lands. Despite these efforts and due to neighborhood objections, the CCLC-owned lands in Chevy Chase, D.C. remained commerce-free until 1952.

The Chevy Chase Citizens' Association, established in 1909, was concerned with the appearance of the business district, which they felt should be of an architectural quality equal to the residential area. However, no architectural guidelines or minimum investment costs for commercial buildings were established, as they had been in the residential areas. The result was noted in a 1922 issue of the *Chevy Chase News* which stated: "With but few exceptions the

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buildings erected in the business zone have been constructed with little regard for architecture in keeping with the neighborhood." Indeed, Chevy Chase's earliest commercial buildings were stylistically non-descript buildings. Some businesses located in converted houses, while the purpose-built commercial buildings were generally two-story brick or stucco-clad structures with little architectural character.

Albert Harris-designed Field Houses

The Chevy Chase Playground Field House, built ca. 1931-1934, was built according to plans drawn up by Municipal Architect Albert L. Harris¹⁷ originally in 1931 to replace the storage shacks then found on most municipal playgrounds. The first structure of this type was constructed at Mitchell Park (1931). Other examples include those built at Park View (1932), Happy Hollow (1933 – since razed), Lincoln Playground (1934), and Twin Oaks (1934), for a total of six. The field house at Palisades (1936) incorporates the 1-½ story Colonial-Revival-style structure as a wing of the much larger structure.

Harris' development of the 1-½ story Colonial-Style field house was an extension of his attempt to find appropriate Colonial-style types for the District's municipal buildings. More formal Colonial types were well established for public schools and firehouses when Harris turned his attention to playground structures. Rather than embrace a formal Colonial style, Harris drew inspiration from Colonial domestic architecture which, presumably, he considered more appropriate for the less formal activities of play, rest, and recreation.

While Harris's development of a vernacular field house type to support the informal activity of recreation may seem to be an obvious development, there was likely more behind this choice than is apparent. Some of the city's larger contemporaneous recreation facilities were designed in the more formal Colonial Revival architecture akin to public schools – examples include the buildings at Anacostia (1925) and Banneker (1934). Harris's decision to design a small vernacular Colonial structure likely had more to do with the small size of the playgrounds where they were built and a strong association between Mitchell Park – site of the first field house of this type -- and President Herbert Hoover. By extension, the association with President Hoover also would have called to mind the strong association between Hoover and outdoor recreation; the Presidential Rapidan Camp in the Blue Ridge Mountains; and the creation of Shenandoah National Park – all of which were frequently in the news while Harris designed the 1-½ story field house for Mitchell Park in 1931. While the general form of the Mitchell Park field house type is in keeping with many examples of Appalachian cabins, Harris's design is more in keeping with Colonial Hall-and-Parlor house types from the 18th century.

Most early Hall-and-Parlor Houses were timber frame and clad in weatherboards. The field house type developed for Mitchell Park and subsequently built at Happy Hollow and Twin Oaks conformed to this aesthetic. However, most surviving examples of Hall-and-Parlor Houses were the less typical but more durable brick houses. The Chevy Chase Playground Field House

¹⁷ "New Type House for Playgrounds." *The Evening Star*, Oct. 4, 1930, p. A-16.

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adapted Harris' design by constructing a brick variant. This house type is closely associated with the mid-Atlantic Tidewater region and is also known as the Virginia house.

Architect of the Field House

Albert Lewis Harris (1869-1933) Municipal Architect (1921-1933)

Albert L. Harris was born in Abergynolwyn Wales in 1869 and emigrated to America with his father Job Harris in 1873. He was in the Washington area by 1890 when he began attending the Arlington Academy for three years. He left without graduating to work for Henry Ives Cobb in Chicago for five years on residential buildings. In 1898 Harris moved to Baltimore where he worked for Wyatt & Nolting until 1900 when he relocated to Washington. He was employed by Hornblower & Marshall from 1900 until 1917, noting that he worked on the firm's two most important public commissions, the Baltimore Custom House (1908) and the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum (1901-1911) while in that office. While employed by Hornblower & Marshall Harris began receiving his formal education at George Washington University, earning a B.S. in architecture in 1912. The same year Harris was appointed assistant professor of architecture at the university; by 1915 he was a full professor, a part-time position he held until 1930. In 1924 he prepared a quadrangular plan for the university's campus and with Arthur B. Heaton also designed Stockton and Corcoran Halls.

From 1917 to 1920 Harris worked for the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks where he was principally employed writing specifications. He began working for the Municipal Architect's office in 1920 and was named Snowdon Ashford's successor the following year; as members of the Washington chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the two had served on a 1911 committee with Waddy B. Wood condemning bay windows as not being "in accord with the dignity of architecture which the Capital should maintain." In 1914 he served with the same men, as well as Glenn Brown, on the local AIA chapter's committee that first proposed licensing architects. Harris submitted the first application for architectural registration in the District and was the first to be registered on April 6, 1925.

As was true with his predecessors, Washington's schools occupied a major part of the municipal architect's design output during Harris's tenure which ended with his sudden death in February 1933. Harris responded to suggestions made by the Commission of Fine Arts about the appropriateness of the Colonial Revival style for Washington's neighborhood municipal buildings with the majority of his school designs and public buildings. His 1931 Gothic Revival additions to the Park View School were a notable exception. In the case of Park View School, Harris closely adhered to the style of the 1916 building designed by his predecessor, Snowdon Ashford.

Not surprisingly, Harris not only developed types for Colonial Revival-style schools, firehouses, and municipal buildings, but also adapted the style in developing a field house type for Washington playgrounds. In the case of the field house, however, Harris modeled his building type after the vernacular Hall-and-Parlor houses of the Tidewater region. This type was regionally appropriate to the Mid-Atlantic States, less formal, and appropriate for recreation

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areas. The open interior plan made them adaptable to multiple activities and their small scale made them better suited to smaller playground lot sizes. Lastly, as playgrounds' primary functions were to support outdoor recreation activities, the small scale field house complemented the primary outdoor playground functions appropriately.

While Snowdon Ashford predicted greater sophistication of the District's buildings to keep apace with developments in the city's federal architecture, Harris balanced fine-quality Colonial Revival buildings scaled and styled for Washington's neighborhoods with appropriately urban-scaled ones for the city's governing center adjacent to the heart of Washington's monumental core.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 4.91 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.963440

Longitude: -77.080711

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
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- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or
UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Square 1744, Lot 0001 and Square 1745, Lot 0001 in the District of Columbia

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Original extent of playground.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kent C. Boese

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

organization: Historic Washington Architecture, Inc.
street & number: 608 Rock Creek Church Road, NW
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20010
e-mail kchoese@hotmail.com
telephone: 202-904-8111
date: November 17, 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

City or Vicinity: Washington

County: N/A

State: DC

Photographer: Kent Boese

Date Photographed: March 20, 2016; November 11, 2017; November 16, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1) General view northwest from intersection of 41st and Livingston streets, NW
1 of 15
- 2) General view east towards field house from Livingston Street and Western Avenue
2 of 15
- 3) General view south towards field house from Western Avenue and 41st Street
3 of 15
- 4) View north of basketball courts and tennis courts from field house
4 of 15
- 5) View of tennis courts from southwest
5 of 15
- 6) Water fountain in area of basketball courts
6 of 15
- 7) Chevy Chase Field House, Southeast elevation
7 of 15
- 8) Chevy Chase Field House, view north from Livingston Street
8 of 15
- 9) Chevy Chase Field House, Southwest elevation
9 of 15
- 10) Chevy Chase Field House, Northwest elevation

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11) Chevy Chase Field House, Northeast elevation

11 of 15

12) Chevy Chase Field House, view South from basketball courts area

12 of 15

13) Chevy Chase Field House, Interior view from entrance on northeast elevation

13 of 15

14) Chevy Chase Field House, Interior view of southwestern room from entrance on southeastern elevation

14 of 15

15) Chevy Chase Field House, Interior view from entrance on southwest elevation

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

Washington, DC

March 20, 2016

Kent Boese

General view northwest from intersection of 41st and Livingston streets, NW

1/15

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

Washington, DC

March 20, 2016

Kent Boese

General View East Towards Field House from Livingston Street and Western Avenue

2/15

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

Washington, DC

November 11, 2017

Kent Boese

General View South Towards Field House from Western Avenue and 41st Street

3/15

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

Washington, DC

March 20, 2016

Kent Boese

View North of Basketball Courts and Tennis Courts from Field House

4/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Washington, DC
March 20, 2016
Kent Boese
View of Tennis Courts from Southwest
5/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Washington, DC
March 20, 2016
Kent Boese
Water fountain in area of basketball courts
6/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
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March 20, 2016
Kent Boese
Chevy Chase Field House, Southeast Elevation
7/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

Washington, DC

March 20, 2016

Kent Boese

Chevy Chase Field House, View North from Livingston Street

8/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Name of Property

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Washington, DC
March 20, 2016
Kent Boese
Chevy Chase Field House, Southwest Elevation
9/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Name of Property

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Washington, DC
March 20, 2016
Kent Boese
Chevy Chase Field House, Northwest Elevation
10/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Name of Property

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Washington, DC
March 20, 2016
Kent Boese
Chevy Chase Field House, Northeast Elevation
11/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

Name of Property

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

Washington, DC

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Kent Boese

Chevy Chase Field House, View South from Basketball Courts Area

12/15

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Kent Boese

Chevy Chase Field House, Interior view from entrance on northeast elevation

13/15

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

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Kent Boese

Chevy Chase Field House, Interior view of southwestern room from entrance on southeastern elevation

14/15

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Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

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Kent Boese

Chevy Chase Field House, Interior view from entrance on southwest elevation

15/15

Site Plan:

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House

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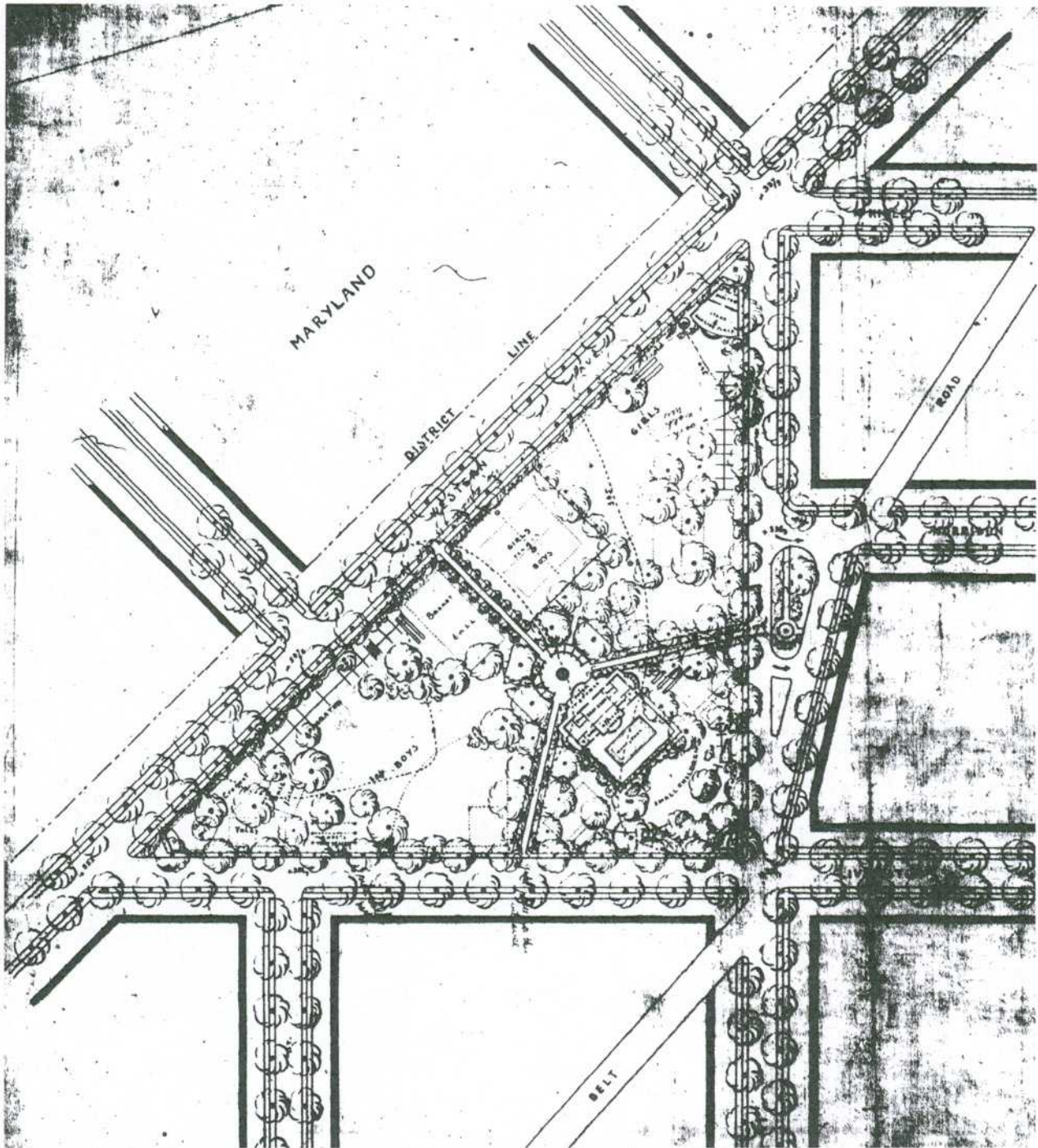


Site Plan from ArcGIS (viewed March 6, 2016)

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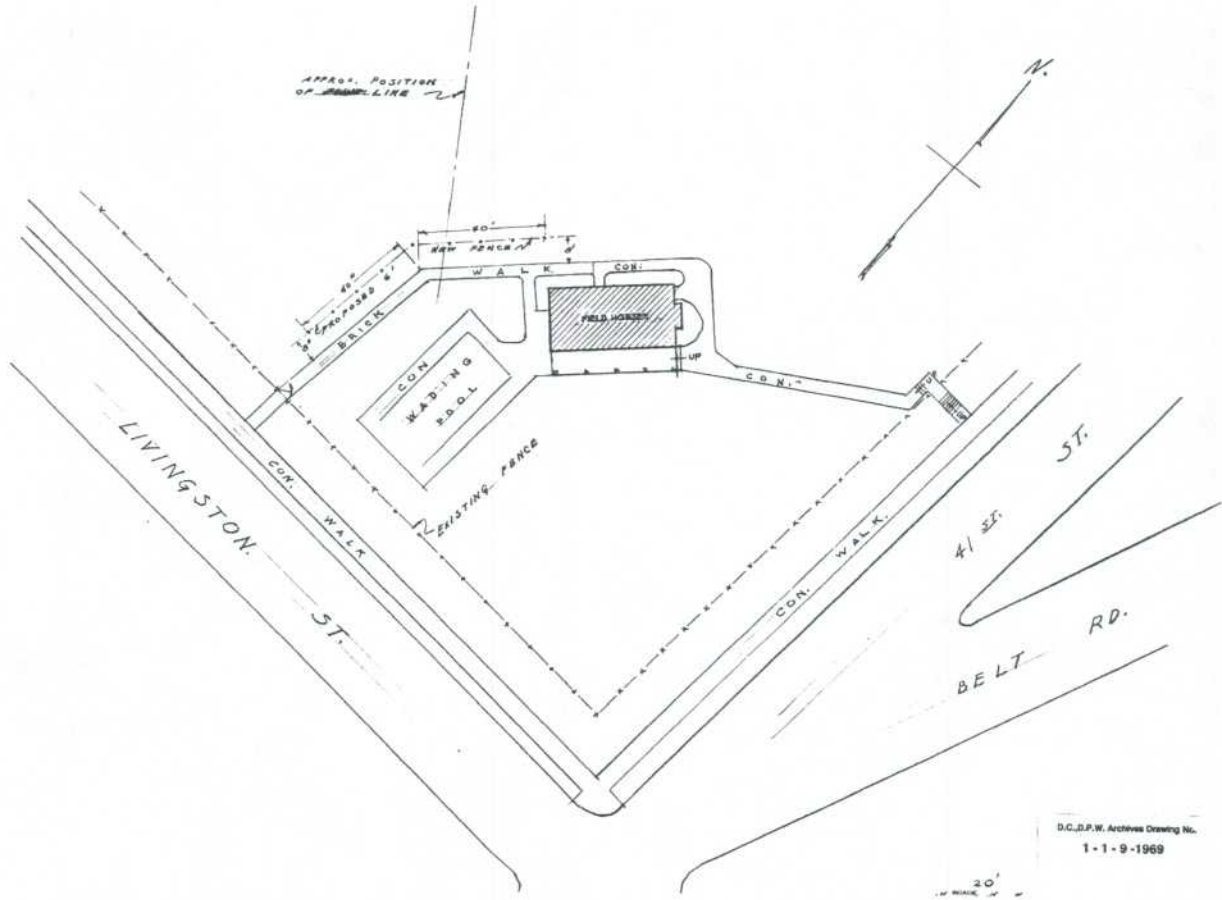
Historic Photographs



Chevy Chase Playground, proposed plan showing location of field house, sidewalks, and playing fields dated August 7, 1928.

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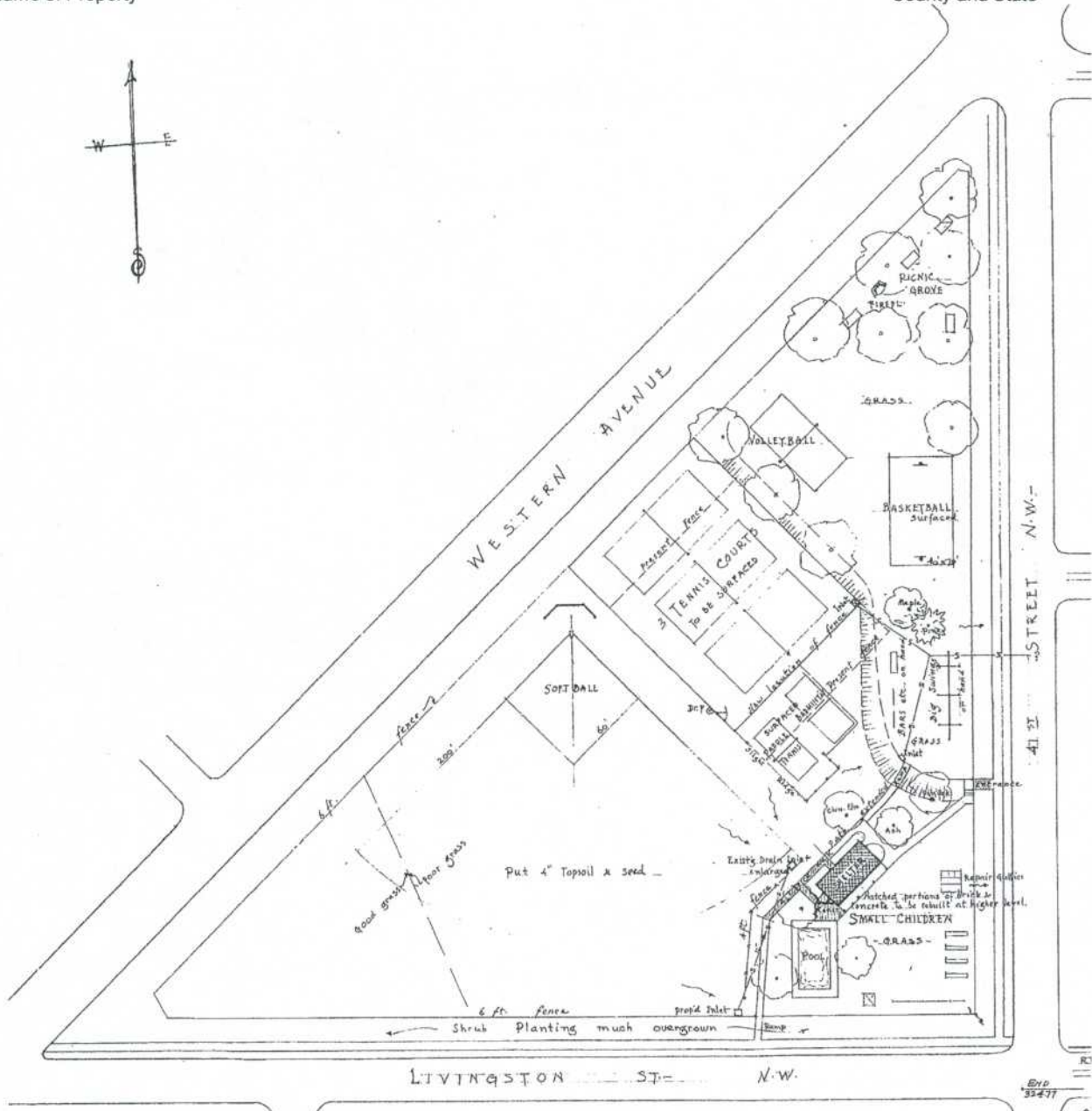
Washington, D.C.
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Chevy Chase Playground, plan detail of field house and wading pool area dated May 24, 1940.

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Name of Property

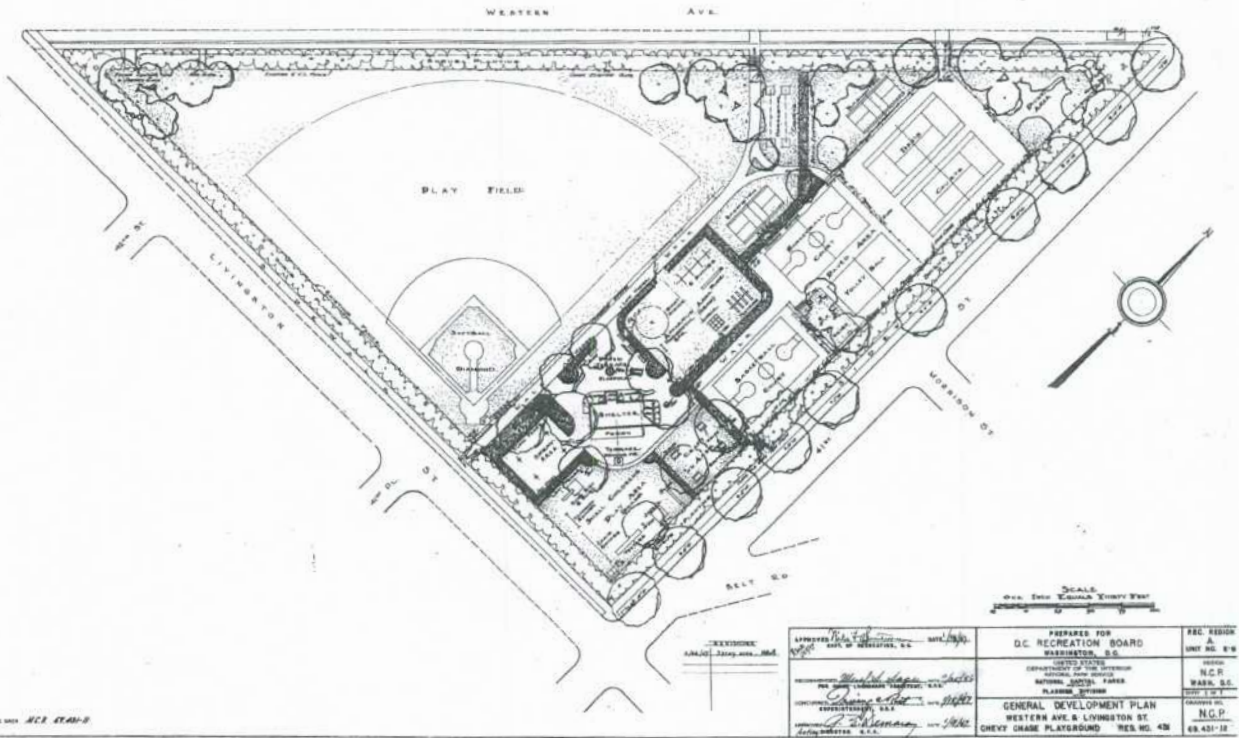
Washington, D.C.
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Detail of plan for Chevy Chase Playground, dated December 6, 1944.

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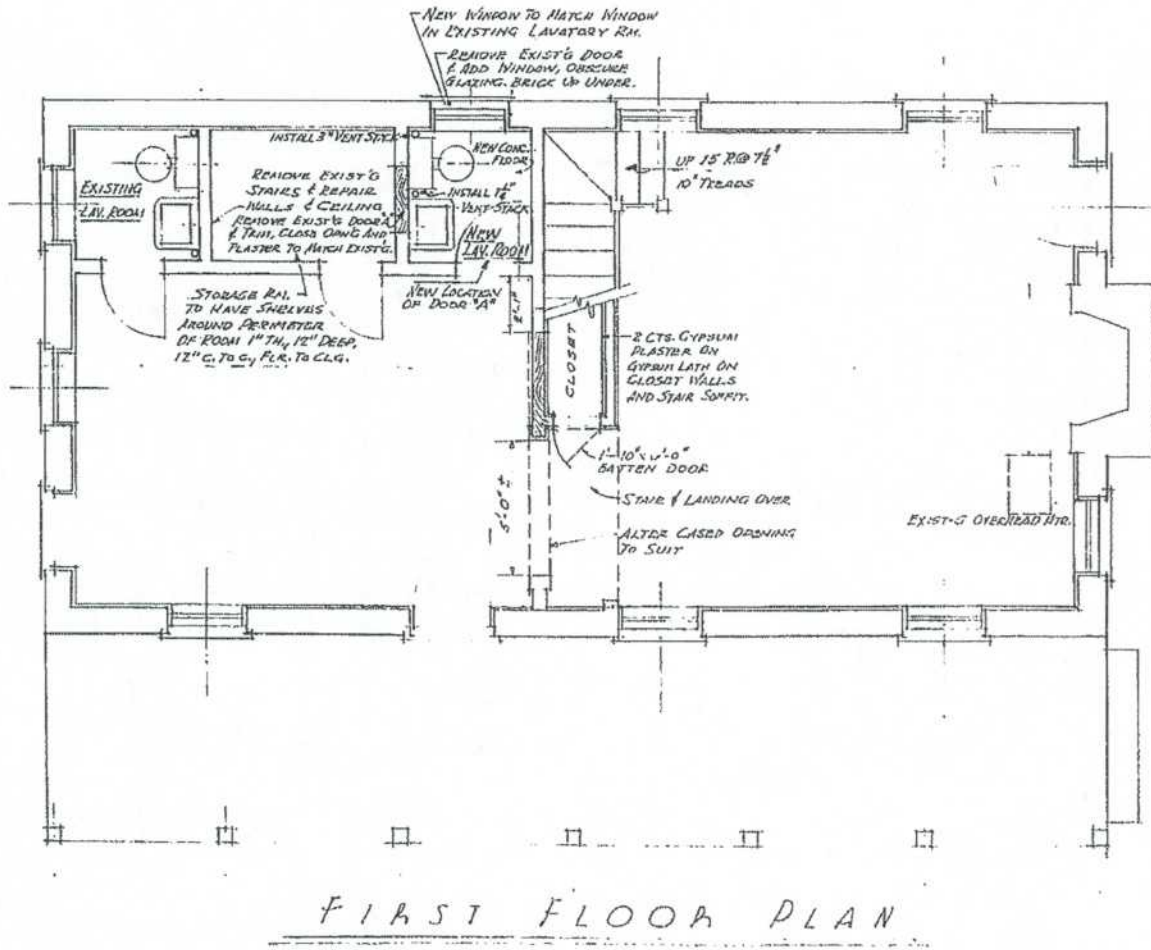
Washington, D.C.
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Plan for Chevy Chase Playground, dated January 15, 1947.

Chevy Chase Playground and Field House
Name of Property

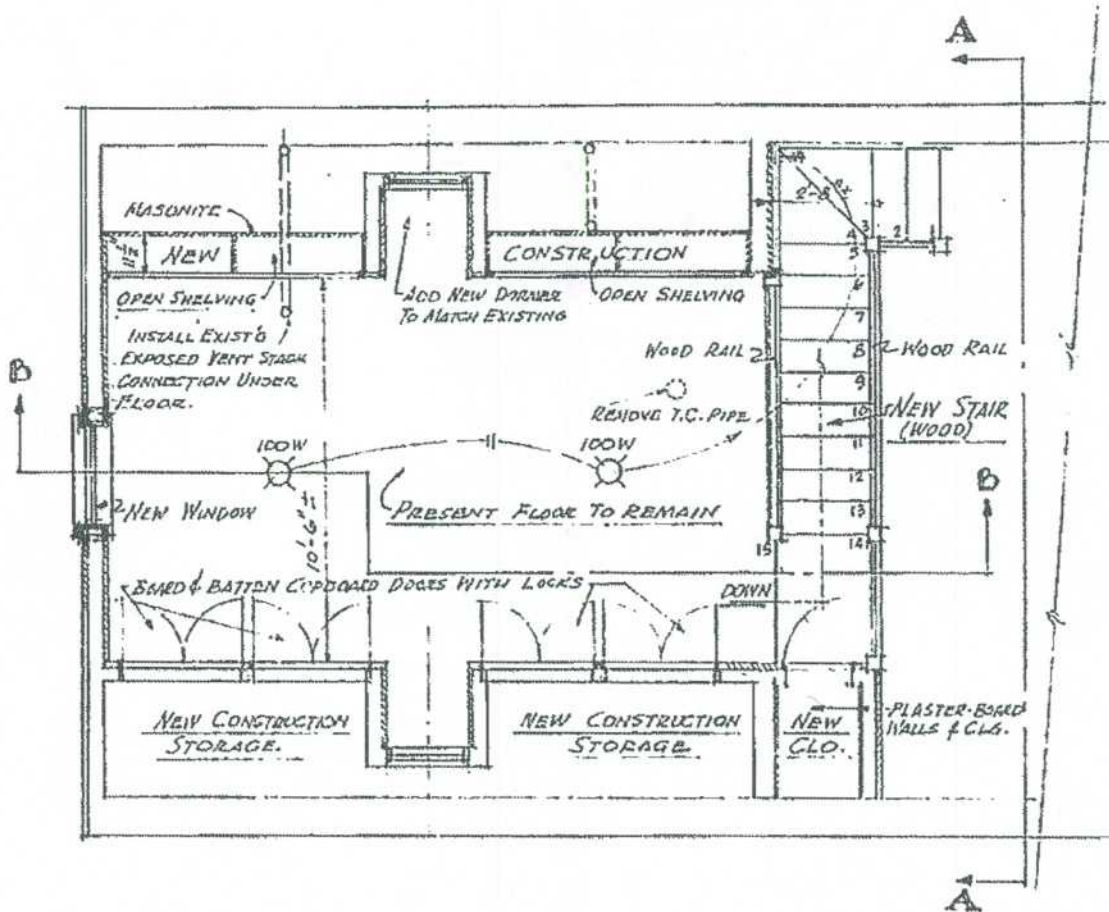
Washington, D.C.
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Chevy Chase Field House, first floor plan from renovations dated February 1951.

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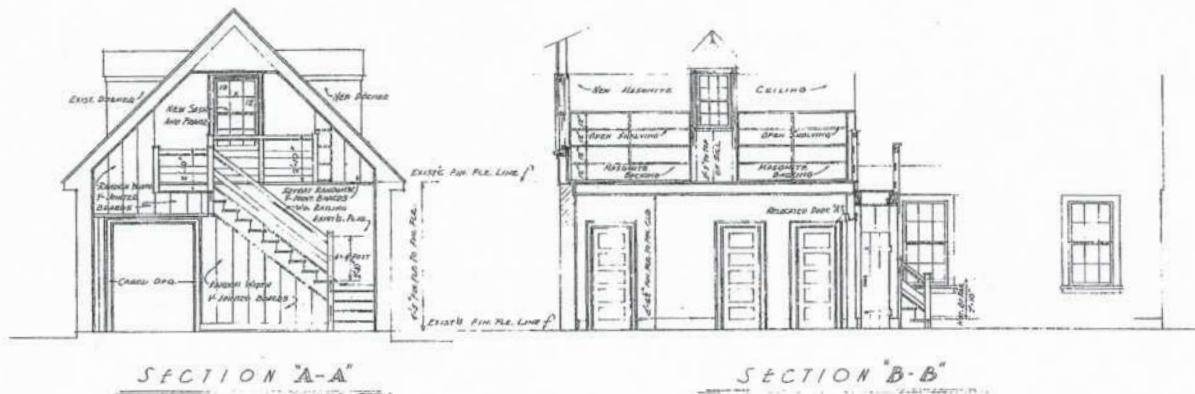


SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Chevy Chase Field House, second floor plan from renovations dated February 1951.

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Chevy Chase Field House, interior sections from renovations dated February 1951.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

