CLEVELAND PARK BRANCH LIBRARY

A HISTORY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

In the Beginning
Raising the Money
Building Begins
Community Support
What the Future May Hold
Appendix
The Cleveland Park Library occupies the busy corner of Connecticut Avenue and Macomb Street in northwest Washington D. C. It stands there as a testament to the community spirit of the neighborhood for which it is named.

In the Beginning

Getting the branch established was a long and arduous process, taking the better part of 40 years, as well as the tireless efforts on the part of many Cleveland Park citizens. A few dates will help to illustrate the community’s painstaking progress towards building their library.

In 1911, the Cleveland Park School and Community Association established a temporary library in the John Eaton School. Miss Clara Herbert was the first librarian.

In May of 1913, a plan to try and get a branch library built was discussed at a meeting of the Cleveland Park School and Community Association. The association formed a committee to petition Congress for appropriations to build the library. However, nothing came of this plan. During this time period, the association continued to raise funds in order to keep the temporary branch open.

Unfortunately, in 1916, the temporary branch was closed. According to the Head Librarian of the system, "the work of the main library has so increased during the past year" that providing personnel to run the temporary branch had become impossible. After this, the efforts to establish the library were put on hold for many years.

Then in 1935, the Connecticut Avenue Citizens Association was revived. Mr. Harry Grove was elected president of the association in 1936. He was to hold this office for 13 years. Mr. Grove quickly appointed a committee to investigate possibilities for erecting a library in Cleveland Park. In 1937, the Association adopted a resolution requesting the District of Columbia Commissioners to include in their budget an amount to purchase a site for the library. The Evening Star of October 24, 1937, printed an interview with Mr. Grove, in which he proposed plans for the building of the library.

The site recommended for the branch was Connecticut Avenue and Macomb Street. For many years this wooded lot had been referred to by the people in the neighborhood as "the library lot". At this time Mrs. Catherine Cate Coblents was active in the association and was the chairman of its Zoning Committee. She discovered that real estate developers were planning to erect an apartment building on this land. Mrs. Coblents was a noted children’s author and a lover of libraries. She was determined to see that the library was built on "the library lot". It was largely through her efforts that this
real estate plan was defeated, as well as later efforts to place a parking lot on the eventual site of the library.

At this point the Library Committee of the association developed a plan to buy the lot in order to present it as a gift to the District government, specifically for the purpose of building the Cleveland Park Library.

In April of 1944, the Association unanimously adopted a proposition to raise $30,000 to spark the library project. However, even if this money were raised successfully, other obstacles, both financial and bureaucratic, needed to be overcome. The financial consideration consisted of whether the "library lot" was even available for purchase and, if so, for how much? The bureaucratic concerns involved getting the approval of the Library Trustees to build at this location, which was dependent upon getting a recommendation for the site from the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The bureaucratic questions were dealt with quickly and easily. The financial problem proved far more difficult.

Raising the Money

The community quickly mobilized in trying to meet the $30,000 goal. Once again, Mrs. Coblentz was very active in these efforts. She organized several book fairs at the Cleveland Park Congregation Church, which brought in sizable amounts of money. The book fair project was later expanded into a citywide annual event sponsored by the Washington Post. Other fund raising events included charity softball games. One of these was held at Griffith Stadium and garnered more than $1,000. Children ran lemonade stands and put on plays in garages, and the nickles, dimes and quarters that they earned went to the library fund. There were door to door collections and people were asked to give whatever they could. In time, the entire $30,000 was collected and the money was presented to the city.

After successfully raising and presenting this money, the campaign to build the library suffered another disappointment. The owners of the "library lot" raised the price from $60,000 to $75,000. This latest emergency was solved by one of the D.C. Commissioners, Guy Mason. By using the legal device of condemnation and a contingency fund available for such purposes, the land was bought in July 1945 for $74,459.

Finally, after much work, many hearings and considerable community participation, the Appropriations Committee included in the 1947 District budget $250,000 for a plan to build a library at Connecticut Avenue and Macomb Street, N.W.
Building Begins

Unfortunately, the ordeal of getting the library built was not yet over. Because of a shortage of building materials as a result of the second World War, the construction could not begin. The community once again mobilized and decided that they would raise the needed iron, steel and copper themselves by conducting a scrap metal drive. The J.C.’s offered to insure the project. The District quickly granted a permit and school children participated in contests to draw posters to advertise the drive. The community scrap drive was held on April 19, 1952. Scrap metal was collected from area farmers, plumbers and private homeowners. Businessmen helped by supplying trucks. Those with heavy material were urged to put a pillowcase on a stick or umbrella and place it on their front lawn so that trucks could pick it up. By the end of the day, nearly 9 tons of scrap had been collected. It was purchased by Joseph Smith & Sons and all proceeds went to the special Library Fund, which was turned over to the Board of Library Trustees.

A ground-breaking ceremony was held on June 27, 1952, attended by about 500 people. Construction proceeded smoothly over the next 16 months and on October 14, 1953 the Library was formally dedicated. The dedication ceremony was attended by over 700 people, including the President’s wife, Mamie Eisenhower. More important, however, than any of the dignitaries in attendance or the speeches which they may have given, was the fact that after more than 40 years of almost continuous effort, the Cleveland Park community had its own neighborhood library.

Community Support

The history of Cleveland Park Library has had its ups and downs since its opening in 1953. Down all the years, however, one factor has been constant: the unfailing support of the community for its local branch library.

In the 50’s this support took the form of the Citizens’ Association campaign to build a "Meeting Rooms" addition to the building. In order to accomplish this, the association contributed money and helped procure appropriations. The result is that today the Cleveland Park Branch has two of the more spacious community meeting rooms in the library system. Likewise in the 50’s, the community donated a set of glass picture panels to be placed at the entrance to the Children’s Room. These are quite beautiful designs etched in glass and represent illustrations from the children’s books of Mrs. Coblents, who was so instrumental in the creation of the library.

In the 60’s, this support came in the form of additional funds for book buying, the donation of shrubbery and trees for landscaping the exterior of the library and the creation of the sculpture "The Blue Cat". This sculpture, located in the center of the Children’s Room, was also inspired by one of Mrs. Coblents’
children's books. The cat is quite striking to look at and generations of Cleveland Park children have found it irresistible to touch and climb upon.

In later years the library's most important and obvious form of support has come through the creation and ongoing activities of the Friends of the Cleveland Park Library. This organization, incorporated in 1981, has been instrumental in raising thousands and thousands of dollars through donations, membership dues and semi-annual book sales. Just as important as their financial support has been their lobbying efforts on behalf of the library. These efforts were never more crucial than in the spring of 1995 when, because of D.C. budget constraints, it was proposed that the Cleveland Park Library might have to be closed permanently. In part because of the strenuous efforts of the Friends in expressing the outrage of the community at this prospect, the crisis was averted.

Another indication of the support by the neighborhood has been the level of use at the branch. Cleveland Park has always been the busiest local branch library and the busiest library period, with the exception of the Chevy Chase Regional and the Martin Luther King Central libraries. This fact may seem obvious, but it is indicative of the special relationship which the Cleveland Park neighborhood has with its Library.

What the Future May Hold

All the librarians and all of the library staff members have contributed to one extent or another to the organization and the quality of the library collection, as well as the overall efficiency of the library. However, it cannot be overstated that the primary reason for the library's success has been the community spirit of the neighborhood. It was this community spirit which sustained the long and arduous efforts to establish the library and it is this same spirit which accounts for the continuing strong public support which the library has enjoyed over the years. If this feeling of community can be sustained in the future, the Cleveland Park Library will continue to thrive and prosper for many years to come.
APPENDIX

There have been six branch librarians at the Cleveland Park Library:

Mr. Herbert Car, 1953-1957
Mr. Darwood Campbell, 1957-1968
Mrs. Jane Beidatsch, 1968-1976
Mrs. Yema Tucker, 1977-1985
Mrs. Helen Delaney, 1986-1991
Mr. Brian Brown, 1991-present
THE EATON SCHOOL TEMPORARY BRANCH
Events of Note in October 1953

Oct.  1  Ike invokes Taft-Hartley Act in move to stop dock strike on north Atlantic coast.


Oct.  9  Miami: new anti-polio vaccine ready to try on children.


Oct. 15  New Cleveland Park Library opens its doors.

Oct. 16  Mamie Eisenhower helps dedicate new Cleveland Park Library's Children's Room.

Oct. 20  New York Giants Manager Leo Durocher gets key to city during 14 game Japan tour.


Oct. 31  First color television broadcast when NBC presents Bizet's opera "Carmen".
DEDICATION

CLEVELAND

PARK

BRANCH

LIBRARY

CONNECTICUT AVENUE and MACOMB STREET, N. W
OCTOBER 15, 1953 — 8:15 p.m.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SNIP, WENT THE RIBBON, and Mrs. Eisenhower officially opened the Catherine Cate Coblentz Room for children’s books yesterday at the new Cleveland Park Branch of the Washington Public Library. (Left to right) Mrs. Cazenove Lee, chairman of the Cleveland Park Library Committee, Dr. Albert W. Atwood, president of the library’s board of trustees, Mrs. Eisenhower and Mrs. Joseph L. Miller, chairman of the library committee of the Connecticut Avenue Citizens Association, all participated in the ceremony. The room was named after a prominent Cleveland Park resident and well-known writer of children’s books.
New Cleveland Park Library May Be Ready by Next Spring

Cleveland Park won't have to wait much longer for its new branch library.

District Librarian Harry N. Peterson said today the new Cleveland Park branch should be ready to open next spring—provided a requested appropriation goes through.

The Commissioners yesterday announced they will advertise for bids Monday on the new building. Construction will start this summer.

$30,000 Contributed.

Citizens contributed $30,000 to help the city buy the site at Connecticut Avenue and Macomb Street N.W. They have been putting up with a cramped temporary branch manned by only one librarian in the nearby John Eaton School.

The new branch will be one of the city's largest. It also will be the District's first new public library since 1941.

The building will be partly two stories, with a capacity of 45,000 books and both children's and adults' departments. It will take a staff of 15 to man it. And it will be possible to enlarge the second floor if use demands.

There also is provision for adding a community meeting room on the main floor, but this isn't included in the $335,000 now available for construction, Mr. Peterson said.

Up to Congress.

The $335,000 doesn't cover furniture and other equipment. Nor does it provide for the new staff. These are both question marks now in the hands of Congress. If Congress doesn't provide the added funds promptly, the opening might be delayed, Mr. Peterson pointed out.

For equipment, the librarian is hoping for about $30,000. For books he is counting on about $25,000. The latter amount will stock the library with less than half the books it needs, but that's still a lot better than John Eaton, which has only about 2,000.

Two or three present library staff members are under consideration for branch librarian, but no one has been selected yet, Mr. Peterson said.

Schools and Library For Cleveland Park Get Federal Priority

Early construction of the Cleveland Park branch library and additions to two elementary schools here was indicated today, after the Federal Security Agency authorized use of critical materials during the last half of the year.

These materials have been held up for several months, due to the shortage, incident to the national defense buildup.

Harry N. Peterson, librarian of the District Public Library, explained the new library is to be built at Macomb and Newark streets and Connecticut Avenue.

Seven years ago, citizens in that area, aided by the citizens association, raised $30,000 to help purchase the site. Congress has appropriated $335,000 for construction and now the Office of Education of the FSA has authorized the use of the critical materials.

Mr. Peterson expects that bids will be called for on this project in the near future. Archie Hutson, District director of construction, will have the work directly in charge.
$14,000 Gifts Pledged By Citizens Toward New Library Site
OCT. 6, 1944

Approximately $14,000 has been pledged toward the purchase of the Cleveland Park Library site between Macomb and Newark streets N.W., the Library Committee reported last night at the Connecticut Avenue Citizens' Association meeting.

The site, which will cost $80,000, will be paid half by the District government and the other $30,000 by the citizens.

On October 21 at 10:30 a.m., a benefit showing of the motion picture "Bambi" will be given at the Warner Theater on Connecticut Avenue. Excepting tax, the money will go toward the $30,000 goal.

According to Julian Holstein, chairman of the Library Committee, a $187,500 building, including a library and auditorium, will be erected on the site after the war.

On the benefit softball game played last Sunday at Griffith Stadium, the association netted $1,000.

Citizens who are interested in giving a few hours of service on the House-to-House Canvas Committee are asked to telephone Mrs. Glen McLaughlin, chairman of the committee. The limited number of workers had prevented the comprehensive covering of many areas, Mrs. McLaughlin said.

The association appropriated $10 to aid in the support of the Metropolitan Police Club Band and $10 for the purchase of "buddy bags" to be sent to servicemen overseas via the Red Cross.

Senate confirmation of the reappointment of Commissioner Guy Mason was urged by the group. They also approved the resolution of Senator McCarran, Democrat of Nevada urging the passage of a bill prohibiting non-residents of the District from holding office here.

Officers for the association were re-elected last night. They are: Harry C. Grove, president; Leon Pretzfelder, first vice president; C. H. Neal, second vice president; Miss Elizabeth R. Groves, treasurer; Miss Elizabeth S. Frasier, secretary, and delegates to the Federation, David Baop and M. Douglas Clarke.

Marriage License Applications
Under D. C. law, couple apply for a marriage license one day, wait three days to receive their license next Sunday, as counted the saw

Paul Kane, 33, of 123 West 12th Ward.
Kate "K" Kerndt, 18, St. Ag. Arlidge
Curtis Jones, 21, 2420 Connecticut N.W.

Cleveland Park Library Drive Nears $15,000, Half of Goal
OCT. 9, 1944

Funds for the site where a Cleveland Park Library will be built after the war as a project of the Connecticut Avenue Citizens' Association are expected to reach the halfway mark of $15,000 by the end of this week, Mrs. Catherine Cobleitz, secretary of the Library Committee, said today.

Several hundred persons have contributed a total or more than $1,000 to the fund. $1,000 was raised by a benefit softball game. Louise Mechle's mother, Mrs. John Meikle, and the committee expects to clear is one of the fund solicitors, and the several hundred dollars from the week Louise asked her mother to benefit performance of the Walt Disney movie, "Bambi," which will be shown tomorrow morning at the Uptown, 433 Connecticut Avenue N.W.

Children from the Cleveland Park, "I want to help," she told her mother.

The $30,000 to be raised by the Sandwick committee chairman, committee will be matched by $30,000 estimated today that they had sold in Federal funds. The library site was estimated at $1,900. The tickets will be $50 for children and $60 for adults. The 35 children who sell the most will be given a vacation trip to the district.
Earth Turned to Start
First Cleveland Park
Unit of Library

Cleveland Park’s new Branch Library and Community Building moved a step nearer reality last night when prominent citizens of the area broke ground for the construction of the library wing.

Harry N. Peterson, chief librarian of the District, was principal speaker at the ceremony at the site on Connecticut avenue and Macon street, N.W.

The first shovelful of dirt was chased simultaneously by Harry C. Grove, president emeritus of the Connecticut Avenue Citizens’ Association; Lovett Toone, chairman of the Library Committee, and Miss Elizabeth Groves, former treasurer for 33 years of the citizens’ group.

In this way, the association and residents of the area honored three persons for their long efforts to make the library possible and for their other civic activities.

Others Participate.

The next three spades full of dirt were unearthed by Cecil Nodnet, president of the Uptown Connecticut Avenue Businessmen’s Association; Lyman Keefe, president of the Uptown Lions’ Club, and Mrs. Joseph L. Miller, president of the Connecticut Avenue Citizens’ Association.

From then on, most of those present, including children, had the opportunity to turn the first sod. Others present included Charles A. Burmeister, president of the Forest Hills Citizens’ Association; J. David Brit, vice president of the Uptown Connecticut Avenue Businessmen’s Association; Lyman Toone, president of the Citizens’ Association; and Merrol A. Coe, driven architect.

The new Cleveland Park branch should be ready for dedication in April, 1953. Construction involving $282,800 is expected to start in three weeks, Mrs. Miller said. The $282,800 is for the library wing only and does not include books and equipment. The work can be done with a small staff, or the possibility of later adding a community meeting room.

$30,000 Contributed.

The citizens of Cleveland Park have contributed $30,000 over a period of several years to help the

PELL, Inc., whose bid was the $282,800.

In his address, Mr. Peterson paid tribute to the Board of Library Trustees for working closely with the project, and also to the citizens of the area for their work.

He stressed the great need for suitable library facilities in the Cleveland Park section. The citizens have been putting up with a cramped temporary branch manned only by one librarian in the nearby John Eaton School. Mr. Peterson said the recent population growth in the section has made the need for better library facilities greater than ever, particularly for young people.

He pictured the facilities the library will offer, as one of the city’s largest branches. The building will be partly two stories, with a capacity of 45,000 books and both children’s and adults’ departments. It will take a staff of 15 persons to man the library, first new one for the District since 1941. If it uses demand, it will be possible to enlarge the second floor.

Greetings From D. C. Heads.

The Commissioners were unable to attend the ground-breaking ceremony because of previously-made commitments to be at a veterans’ dinner. However, they sent written greetings. Commissioner Donohue wrote, of the citizens:

"Your example of making a voluntary contribution of $30,000 to the end that this project might be completed is an outstanding example of community interest which others might well follow.

"More than that, may I say that it certainly should be persuasive on the members of the Board of Commissioners, as it surely will be with me, when you present your request for the additional $80,000 necessary to complete this outstanding community project."

The library and community building has been designated as a living memorial to the service men and women of the area, Mrs. Miller said. She related how school children, who now are in college, spent their Saturdays for months gathering, bundling and selling newspapers for the project. Of the $30,000, nearly $10,000 was raised by the children in small donations. She said this form of community spirit was worthy of pride, as well as being unusual in a large city.

West Virginian Killed

BARRE, Ont., (AP) — Guy Fint, 24, of W. Va., was killed in the accident.
LIBRARY COMMITTEE
CONNECTICUT AVENUE CITIZENS ASSOCIATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

August 1, 1944

Dear Neighbor:

Inclosed are two tickets for the benefit Soft Ball game at Griffith Stadium Tuesday, August 8, at 8:00 P. M. More are available. Come yourself and bring your friends.

The teams that will play are the best in this vicinity, thus assuring a tip-top event, and the occasion merits the support of every resident in this area. The proceeds should put our Library Site Fund well beyond the half way point. It is now over $12,000.

If you cannot use the tickets, please return them. Otherwise we would be held responsible for the tax.

Make your returns to:

Miss Elizabeth R. Groves, Treasurer
2712 - 27th Street, N. W.
Washington 8, D. C.
Library Land Sought
By Condemnation

A petition for condemnation was filed in District Court yesterday by the District Commissioners to obtain possession of two lots at the intersection of Macomb St. and Connecticut Ave. N.W., for construction of a public library.

The petition listed the Connecticut and Macomb Investment Corporation, 800 block P St. N.W., as owner, and stated that the District has been unable to purchase the property at a satisfactory price. It asks that a five-man condemnation jury be selected to set a value on the land, which is unimproved.

Great Books Will Be Library Topic

The Cleveland Park Branch Library, Connecticut Avenue and Macomb Streets, is sponsoring a first year Great Books discussion group. This group meets every two weeks for two hours to discuss the great classics of literature. The groups are free and open to the public. This group will meet on October 17 at 7:45 p.m. to discuss Plato's Apology and Crito.

The Mt. Pleasant Library is also sponsoring a first year group. It will start on October 11 at 7:45 p.m. to discuss the Declaration of Independence.

Cleveland Park Drive
For Fund for Library Site to End in March

The campaign to raise $30,000 for the purchase of a site for a branch library at Macomb and Newberry streets N.W. will close next month at a dinner at the Cleveland Park Congregational Church.

Pledges and cash now amount to $26,000, it was announced last night at a meeting of the Library Committee of the Connecticut Avenue, Cathedral Heights, Cleveland Park and Eastlawn Road Citizens' Associations. A gift of $500 from the Riggs National Bank was announced at the meeting.

Miss Clara Herbert, public librarian, told the meeting she must prepare material on the proposed branch library for a hearing before the District Committee in April, and in her opinion the funds which had been promised by the Cleveland Park community should be in hand by that time. The exact date of the dinner which will close the campaign will be announced later.

All citizens of the area are urged to send contributions to Miss Elizabeth R. Groves, treasurer, 2712 Twenty-seventh street N.W.

The proposed $150,000 branch library will be a memorial to service men and women. The District government is to add $30,000 to the $30,000 collected by the Cleveland Park community to purchase the site.

Citizens Vote to Cash War Bond to Meet Library Site Pledge

The Connecticut Avenue Citizens Association last night authorized the officers to cash in their $500 War Bond in order to meet the association's $10,000 pledge toward the $30,000 goal for purchase of a library site in the Cleveland Park area.

During the debate on the War Bond motion, Mrs. Catherine Coombs, who last night resigned as secretary of the Library Committee, suggested a "21,000 Club" and while on the floor received $150 in pledges.

So far, it was reported, the Library Committee has raised $21,187 toward the $30,000 goal. The District Government has pledged the remaining $9,813 needed for the project.

W. C. Riediger will succeed Mrs. Coombs as chairman of the Zoning Committee, from which she also resigned.

A $25 check was given to the Library Committee by the Uptown Junior War Workers Club.

A committee will be appointed to investigate the power of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission as it relates to our Commissioners, Harry C. Grove, president, said.

The citizens also went on record as backing Senator Bilbo's suggestion to investigate the District gasoline shortage.

The proposed subway postwar plans were endorsed by the group and also Senator McCarran's bill to secure the pay of the District school teachers.

The association agreed in back of Senator Tydings' bill to establish a hospital center in the District.

Mrs. Elena Kohler, Red Cross hospitem club director who started the first Red Cross Service Club overseas in this war, spoke to the citizens on her experiences and told of the need for daytime nurses aides.

Persons interested are asked to call Republican 3300, Extension 281.
SCRAP METAL DRIVE

Saturday, April 19- 10:00 A.M. to Sunset

Rain or Shine

"LIBRARY LOT"

Connecticut Avenue, Macomb and Newark Streets

HELP

1. Uncle Sam's scrap metal shortage...
2. Special library fund...

BRING

iron, steel, cast iron, zinc, brass, copper and aluminum—any metal except tin cans. BRING it in any quantity to Macomb Street side of Library Lot where there will be police direction.

Extra large, heavy items within area bounded by

Manassas, Wisconsin, Connecticut Avenue and Albemarle Street will be picked up by truck; if homeowners fly a white pillow cane in front yard. Mem to ride pick-up trucka volunteer to Rona Brothers Jewelers, 3317 Connecticut Avenue, N. W.

Appropriation and material for vitally needed Community facility of building are yet to come. The plans are drawn. The Federal Security Agency has just allocated material for library part of building only. A successful drive may put it over.

All proceeds from sale of scrap to be deposited in Special Library Fund of Citizens which will be turned over to Library Board for special equipment when the building is completed.

Drive sponsored by

CONNECTICUT AVENUE CITIZEN'S ASSOCIATION
CONNECTICUT AVENUE UPTOWN BUSINESSMEN'S ASSN.
NORTH WEST UPTOWN CONNECTICUT AVENUE SHOPPER
UPTOWN LIONS CLUB
Cherished Cleveland Park Library Could Close

By Jean van der Tak

With the city’s worsening budget crisis, Cleveland Park’s cherished public library on Connecticut Avenue at Macomb and Newark was again threatened with closure as this issue of Voices went to press. Last fall, in response to a D.C. Council cost-cutting mandate, the Library Board announced the possible closing of one branch library in each of six wards. In Ward 3, the choice was between Cleveland Park Library and Tenley-Friendship on Wisconsin. (As a “regional” library, Chevy Chase—also in Ward 3—is closed.) That threat was averted in December. Instead, 34 positions in the library work force were cut by reducing hours at 17 branch libraries, including Cleveland Park, from 55 to 40 (five days) a week as of April 3—eliminating Fridays and all but one evening a week. Library staff also began 10 days of furlough in February.

Late in February, the D.C. Council mandated a cut of 42 more positions (10 percent of the work force) by September—34 in branch libraries. This meant six branches were now “likely” to be closed, the Library Board warned, with the choice the same as last fall.

Friends of Cleveland Park president Jill Bogart is “cautiously optimistic” that this will not happen—for now. The library budget—a 0.6 percent of the total city budget—remains intact (averting the latest layoff threat) in Mayor Barry’s revised FY 1995 and FY 1996 budgets of mid-March. Although those “dream” budgets of some $5 billion will not stand and Congress is likely to assume control of D.C.’s finances, Bogart points out that a key player, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, is on record as supporting D.C. libraries.

So are myriad others. At recent packed hearings before the Library Board and the Council’s library committee, the cry was: “Keep all our crucial community libraries open, even if hours have to be cut still more.”

Cleveland Park is in the forefront of that battle. In a February interview, Brian Brown, head librarian at the branch, concurred that all D.C. public libraries are important, but for community support, “this is the model.” Last fall’s closure threat was averted in part by a storm of protest galvanized by the Friends of Cleveland Park Library. Founded in 1981, the Friends is “one of the most successful” library-support groups in the city, Brown said. It raises some $2,500 at each of its spring and fall book sales, which goes into extra books, journal subscriptions, CDs, and off-budget items like the 40-inch TV Brown wants so videos can replace the outdated 16-mm films he has been borrowing from the main Martin Luther King Library for film programs. In 1993, Jill Bogart recalls, the Friends matched a $3000 grant from the ANC 3C and paid for new shelving and display racks.

Opened in 1953, the Cleveland Park Library has the second largest circulation of the city’s 24 branches—just behind Chevy Chase and ahead of Tenley-Friendship. These three, plus Palisades (in Ward 2), together rival the circulation of Martin Luther King. “Which isn’t surprising,” Brown said. “That’s where the well-educated middle class is in this town,” and “they want their books, magazines, CDs, books on tape—everything we can give them.” Cleveland Park patrons include nearby “wealthy” homeowners, but also young Connecticut Avenue apartment dwellers “just starting their careers” and likely to be most affected by the cutback to one evening (Thursday) a week.

Children’s librarian Hilary Fennell presides at during summer school vacation.)

Cleveland Park’s large population of seniors also “use us heavily,” Brown said, “probably more than any other branch in the city.” Then there are street people “looking for a warm place to spend the day.” And the children. Hilary Fennell, the branch’s children’s librarian since 1970, says now that the closest school, John Eaton Elementary and Washington International, have their own libraries, “they don’t use us as much” during school hours. But her program for preschoolers—storytelling twice a week and films on Wednesdays—plus homework assignments and “some latchkey situations” after school hours bring in “about as many children” as the building’s space and staff can handle. Recently, Fennell has noted a resurgence in mothers bringing toddlers to Monday-morning storytime, not just nannies.

This neighborhood’s battle for a public library goes back to 1911, when a Cleveland Park School and Community Association got a temporary branch opened in one room of John Eaton; it lasted till 1916. (The school housed another makeshift branch from 1948 to 1953.) The Connecticut Avenue (now Cleveland Park) Citizens Association got into the act in the late 1930s, badgering D.C. Commissioners to include in their budget an appropriation to buy what had long been known as “the library lot.” This was the present site, vacant since the 1912 burning of the community clubhouse erected in 1898 by the Cleveland Park Company. The Association’s zoning chairperson, Catherine Cate Coblenz—a children’s book author—was commemorated with the name of the present children’s room and ten etched-glass panels leading to it—fought off successive plans to use the lot for an apartment building, used cars, and parking. Meanwhile, the Citizens Association and newly formed Cleveland Park Community and Library Committee raised $30,000—through book fairs, ballgames, children’s lemonade-stand sales, and contributions—presented it to the city and the lot was bought, for $74,459, in 1945.

It took till 1952 to get city monies to pay for the building—$282,000. Neighbors also contributed to that, with the sale of nearly 9 tons of metal collected in a scrap drive in April 1952. The library was dedicated on October 15, 1952, Mayor William H. Beecher waving the first ribbon...
Bon to the children's room at the next day's open house. Mrs. Merriweather Post (then Mrs. Joseph Davies) blanket the site with flowers from her gardens at Tregaron. Missing from the new structure were the meeting rooms the community had counted on. The two-story addition on Newark St., with auditoriums above and below, took another four years.

The brick-and-limestone building (designed by the Municipal Architect) is "government-issue," Brown said, in stark contrast to the "beautiful" Northeast D.C. library he came from in 1986. "But it does its job." It opened with 15,000 books—gifts and hand-me-downs—and tables borrowed from the main library. The tables are unchanged, but books are now up to nearly 70,000, not counting CDs, tapes, and film strips.

"We have to get rid of as many books as we add," Brown said. (The D.C. library book budget is officially uncuttable.) That is only a small part of the offerings. With the two-year-old on-line computer catalog, patrons have access to the "tremendous" collection of the Martin Luther King Library and all 24 branches.

Brown, who got into library work "through serendipity" after majoring in history at the University of Maryland and clerking at the Library of Congress (he now has an M.A. in library science from Maryland), noted that the library also offers meeting space to "all sorts of groups." The Citizens Association, who did so much to get and furnish the library, sign language classes, career workshops, poets, writers, even "semi-religious New Age groups" are all welcome, providing meetings are free and open to the public. And we all know that here's where we can pick up free city papers and notices of much that's going on around town.

"If we were to close, there'd be a tremendous hole in the neighborhood," Brown said. Being Cleveland Parkers, we'll fight to avoid that. (See Brown if you'd like to help out in the library. Volunteers are "extremely welcome," he said.)

Jean van der Tak is editor of Voices.

Budget Cuts Affect Neighborhood
Continued from page 1

CPHS Board member and chair of the Architectural Review Committee judged in 1993 that a roofer could fix the leakage in a day, by cleaning the gutters, caulking, and resealing joints. But the D.C. fire department lacks funds for even such minimal maintenance work.

Police Services
While D.C. police made headlines in early March for storming a Council meeting and staging a sick-out in protest of cutbacks, police spokespersons claim services will not be much reduced. Larry Soulsby, Assistant Chief of the Patrol Services Bureau, indicated that essential police services will be maintained through fiscal year 1995, ending September 30. The chief cutback will be in overtime pay for courtroom appearances. Most such appearances by police officers relate to violent crimes and homicides. There were 399 homicides in D.C. in 1994 but only one or two in the 2nd District Police Precinct where Cleveland Park is located. This district spends much less in overtime pay for court appearances than all others in the city, Soulsby said, and will be least affected by the cutback.

Macomb Street Playground
The Macomb Street Playground, profiled in the fall 1994 Voices, remains staffed but maintenance is questionable. Neil Rogers, Assistant to the Administrator, D.C. Department of Recreation and Parks, told us operations at the playground are proposed to be the same in FY 1996 (beginning October 1) as in FY 1994. In FY 1995, 23 of the department's 47 maintenance workers took advantage of the easy-out program. To fill the gap, the department is negotiating with the Department of Corrections to use prisoners to maintain its larger properties, which do not include the Macomb Playground. The department is authorized to hire temporary workers in FY 1995, and Rogers predicted that the playground's maintenance would improve markedly from June through August, while remaining the same as now from September to May 1996.

We asked why neighbors have been told in the past that they cannot personally cut the grass in the playground or hire someone to do it. This is because the D.C. government will not assume liability for any related injury. The only mechanism that enables an individual or neighborhood to supplement maintenance at a D.C. park or public space is the "Adopt-a-Park" program. Under this agreement and partnership, the District acknowledges the partner as an entity covered by its liability insurance. Please call us if you are interested in leading an effort to adopt the playground under the auspices of CPHS.

We urge all neighbors, whoever you may be, to get involved, as leader or supporter, in one of Cleveland Park's many activities. CPHS often receives good suggestions of issues to be addressed, events to be planned, problems to be corrected, that go unattended for lack of human and financial resources. There is already a list of community projects seeking the attention of CPHS's Board, committees, and part-time staff person. If you would like to learn how you can participate, please call our office (363-6358) and leave a message for staff person Sam Friedman. Your call will be returned!

Also, to learn more about CPHS activities and meet your neighbors, come to our annual meeting and reception on Wednesday, May 3rd (see box, page 1).
The Catherine Cate Coblentz Panels

CLEVELAND PARK BRANCH
PUBLIC LIBRARY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

As a lasting tribute to the work of Catherine Cate Coblentz, the Children's Room which bears her name is set off from the Lobby of the Cleveland Park Branch of the Public Library, Washington, D.C., by a series of ten story-telling panels. The designs for the panels are adapted from illustrations in favorite books by Catherine Coblentz and executed in intaglio relief on glass.

These panels are the joint gift of the Cleveland Park Community Library Committee and the Connecticut Avenue Citizens' Association. Under the wise and generous leadership of Mrs. Casenove Lee, glass was selected as the most fitting medium to perpetuate the shining memory of Catherine Cate Coblentz, distinguished author of children's books and friend of children. The interests and well-being of children were a driving force in her life, and this Library is one of the many community services she was eager to realize for youth. She worked for it unceasingly and inspired others to understand the need for a Library in this neighborhood.
THE LIBRARY'S BLUE CAT