

# Chews Give Up Cliveden

The average New York socialite moves just about every seven years — if you can trust statistics based on change of addresses in the Social Register. They wouldn't understand that in Philadelphia. Especially the Chew family. The Chews have just moved — but it's for the first time in 209 years.

Home for the Chews, who contributed a chief justice of Pennsylvania and other such worthies to public life, has been Cliveden, a stone mansion built in then rural Germantown in 1763 by Benjamin Chew, who found the summer flies pesky at his downtown Philadelphia house.

One of the country's glories of Georgian architecture. Cliveden is filled with fine American furniture, examples of 18th-Century Philadelphia cabinetwork, historic mementos and 100,000 manuscript pages of family papers.

**THE CHEWS** — Sam Jr., John, Elizabeth Chew Bennett, Anne Chew Barringer, Lowry Chew Stephenson and David Chew Stephenson —



## SUZY SAYS

have given Cliveden and everything in it to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The trust already owns 10 architecturally important buildings around the nation, but Cliveden is older than any of them and the only one in the Middle Atlantic States.

National Trust president James Biddie — Jimmy to his friends — calls it "one of the most important properties to be acquired by the Trust" — but then he probably doesn't want to hurt anyone's feelings. Certainly Cliveden is the most historically significant of the trust properties, having been the very eye of the Revolutionary War Battle of Germantown. A garrison of British soldiers barricaded themselves in the house, and when George Washington's

troops came marching by, the British ambushed and killed 46 of them. George lost that round.

**SKELETONS** have been turning up in flowerbeds for years and one, apparently that of a soldier who had sought refuge in a cleft tree, was found in the hollow of the trunk years later — ugh.

Most of the classic statuary scattered about the six-acre estate are missing heads and arms as a result of the battle, and American cannonballs are still lodged in the walls of the house. It seemed rather silly to dig them out.

When there's a heap of livin' in a house like that, a family is apt to forget where things are stored. Sam Chew likes to tell how several barrels were found in a base-

ment a few years ago. Filled with superb 18th century china, they had never been opened apparently because the lady of the house already had dinnerware to burn. Then — only two years ago — Sam found 44 file cases in the barn. (And not a moment too soon because the barn burned down shortly thereafter.)

**THE FILES** contained several generations of Chew family papers, plus the original architectural drawings of Cliveden, the only such plans in existence of an 18th Century Philadelphia house. It is said the papers will "revolutionize" many theories and alter much information about the Revolution. Now that's good news.

A few historical facts: Washington dined, but did not sleep, at Cliveden in 1774, and so did John Adams. The Marquis de Lafayette was given a reception there on his last visit to the United States in 1825. And Peggy Shippen, the Philadelphia belle, met her future husband, Benedict Arnold, at a Cliveden party. For all the good it did her.

*Elaine M. ...*