

SPEEDWAY TERRACE

Offers you just this opportunity. It is only 12 minutes from Main Street with a 6 minute car service and lies on both sides of the broad Speedway on which the Park Commission has spent so many thousands of dollars. It has extra wide paved streets parked in the center and at the side, and finished with granolithic curbs and gutters, wide granolithic sidewalks, terraced and sodded lawns, rows of shade trees and every modern convenience. Lots on the Speedway itself for only \$30. Lots on other streets for only \$15 a foot. F. W. Faxon Co., Inc. Sole Agents
71 Madison Avenue²⁵

Mr. and Mrs. William G. Cavett bought property in the Speedway Subdivision ca. 1914. Their home at 1630 North Parkway was "a very joyous house in which to grow up . . . large rooms and very high ceilings . . . about ten feet," said their daughter, Mina Cavett Chase.²⁶ Her father had fine bird dogs and horses. Consequently the deep lots and the bridle trails on North Parkway attracted him to the location. As a girl, Mina rode horseback with good friends, Dell Guthrie (now Mrs. Dell Guthrie Henson) and Walter Pistole. The Guthrie family lived next door to the east, and the spacious Pistole home was just to the west.²⁷ (See picture) The Cavetts occupied their home until 1965 when it was sold to the Robert Fogelmans, who later sold it to the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry E. Jones.²⁸ The Pistole home was torn down, and the property is now the setting for the Woodmont Towers Apartments. Mrs. Stovall Jeter owns and occupies the former Guthrie home.

The street names, Snowden, Faxon, Crump and Dickinson begin to have meaning as one recalls the families who owned the land and/or developed the early subdivisions.

McNeil was named for Malcolm McNeill (two "l's") who owned a large tract of land on the northeast corner of what is now McNeil and Madison before the Civil War. Once again the spelling is not the same as the original.²⁹ Maury was named for Dr. R. B. Maury, prominent physician, who came to Memphis at the close of the Civil War.³⁰ Barksdale was

named for the Reverend William H. Barksdale whose home was on the northeast corner of Peabody and McLean, the present site of the Memphis and Shelby County Public Library and Information Center.³¹

Willett was named for Dr. E. Miles Willett, a hero of the Yellow Fever epidemics of the 1870s. A native of Kentucky, he came to Memphis in 1857 from Philadelphia and became one of the city's leading physicians.³² Paul Coppock, Memphis historian, writes that the name should be pronounced WILL-ett as the family pronounced it. "The other pronunciation seems to have originated with newcomers who never heard of the good doctor."³³

Tutwiler was named for Thomas H. Tutwiler, one-time president of Memphis Power and Light Company. He was very active in raising the \$500,000 needed to bring Southwestern to Memphis. He later became treasurer of Southwestern.³⁴

Major building took place between 1920 and 1930. The anticipation of Southwestern's move to Memphis provided strong incentive to subdivision planners. Support within the Presbyterian Church for moving the college to Memphis from Clarksville, Tennessee, had begun as early as 1922. General knowledge of this encouraged builders.

In 1923 plats for two area subdivisions were filed; these were Malkin's Addition to Speedway Terrace and H. M. Hall's Faxon Avenue Addition to Speedway Terrace. H. M. Hall became one of the major developers in this area. He subsequently opened Jackson Heights Subdivision, Stone-wall Heights Subdivision and Hall-wood Crest Subdivision.

The thirty acres which would be developed into the 160-lot Jackson Heights Subdivision was purchased from the Overton family in 1923 for \$33,000. A later story in the real estate section of the Commercial Appeal reported that the lots on both sides of Willett just north of Jackson were "said to be the choicest of lots in the subdivision."³⁵ The recent widening of Jackson Avenue was described "as having a great enhancing effect" on the subdivision.³⁶

Describing the Hall-wood Subdivision, a fellow builder said of Hall:

He was the first one . . . to take advantage of the contour of the land. He was ahead of his time . . .

This was a rolling piece of land with beautiful trees on it. He actually saved money in the developing, because he didn't have to fill any land or cut down any hills. He let the streets follow the contour of the land . . . it was a beautiful subdivision.³⁷

In 1925 J. W. Falls developed two subdivisions: Avalon Terrace and Belvedere Heights. Belvedere Street is believed to have been named for the Italian Belvedere Palace, though no one is sure why one would choose that name for a Memphis Street. Belvedere is the Italian word signifying "beautiful view."³⁸

Twelve acres at the southeast corner of Trezevant and Jackson became Louis Burchart's subdivision which the newspaper described as being "located in one of the best parts of the city."³⁹ The article is interesting because it predicts the steady growth of the vast northeast section of the city.

Conservative real estate men are of the opinion that within the next five years the land between East Parkway and Binghampton will be fully built up in homes of all kinds.⁴⁰

Among the major developers in the VECA neighborhood were the Dlugach (Delugach) families. Though the families are related, there were two separate home building companies. To facilitate spelling and pronunciation one branch of the family inserted an "e" in Delugach; another retained the original spelling.

Harry Dlugach migrated to Memphis from Poland in 1891. In 1908 he bought his first piece of land from Brinkley and Bayard Snowden and built his first house near the present site of St. Jude Hospital.⁴¹ This began a long and successful home building business; in 1970 it was "the oldest active homebuilding firm in the city."⁴² He was joined in the company by his sons, Manny, Gilbert, and Ben J. The firm was particularly active in the area north of Jackson and east of Crosstown where it built more than 2,000 homes.⁴³ These homes were built almost entirely for the market. Gilbert Delugach says his father, Harry, "started in this area particularly because Snowden still owned a bit of land there," and they bought "a great many pieces of land from the Snowden family."⁴⁴ Other good business reasons existed.

It was just a very fine upper middle class area in the 1920s and the early 1930s and 1940s. Klondike was just to the west of Watkins Street which was inhabited entirely by blacks . . . in very small houses - the old shotgun houses and things of that kind. But the land was there and when the Jackson Avenue streetcar finally came out as far as Watkins this land began to develop and later the streetcar was developed to McLean and on further out Jackson.⁴⁵

The streets in the neighborhood needed revisions before expansion could begin. Virtually no changes had been made since the early 1900s in the area between McLean and Trezevant bounded on the north by Jackson and on the south by North Parkway. (See Map III) Vollintine ended at May (now University). Avalon, which was originally named Lumpkin, stopped at Faxon. The 1924 Bartholomew Plan proposed the extension of Tutwiler to May, the extension of Vollintine to Springdale, and the extension of Avalon to Chelsea. Both Springdale and May (University) were already open north of Jackson; the plan proposed the extension of both streets south to North Parkway.⁴⁶ While not all of these

recommendations were followed, enough were that the area had many reasons to grow.

. . . it was an excellent location near Overton Park, near the University and it was real upper-middle class. There were very few homes built to compare with the homes on Overton Park Avenue and Autumn, big two-story houses, and some on Galloway. But there were bungalows, small business people and executives and some of the large companies, and Memphis was growing and factories were coming in and big distribution points coming in. . . . the location was excellent, and the beautiful thing about University View Subdivision was that it was just north of Snowden School.⁴⁷

It seems probable that many of the Jewish residents were attracted to the neighborhood by the presence of the Dlugach (Delugach) family and by the fact that Snowden was one of the city's outstanding schools.

. . . in 1921 things began to hum again because there was a small depression in 1920 but it got over very quickly . . . it was a recession more than a depression, and in 1921 my father and other builders like Foster and Stevenson and Marx and Bensdorf and lots of builders they financed and the Faxons . . . began to build, and the market was excellent.⁴⁸

"Once the development started and the transportation came there it went like wild-fire," said Gilbert Delugach.⁴⁹ Subdivision development and transportation were integral to one another. By 1921 the Faxon Avenue carline went as far as McLean;⁵⁰ the Speedway car went to Jackson and McLean. The Raleigh Springs and Binghampton cars were the only ones that went as far east as the future college (Southwestern) site.⁵¹

The extension of the Crosstown carline to Chelsea Avenue was one of the conditions made by Sears in its decision to build in Memphis on Watkins.⁵² Up to that time Watkins had been a dirt road on which cars were always getting stuck in rainy weather.⁵³ The city kept its part of the bargain by laying the final sections of the car track on Sears' opening day.⁵⁴ (See picture) On August 26, 1927, with the building completed and the final paving finished on Watkins, the Crosstown streetcar made its first trip. At the throttle was Mayor Rowlett Paine. Aboard the motor car were other city officials, businessmen, and executives of Sears who had made the trip from downtown.⁵⁵

Not only was the extension of the carline into the area an impetus for development, it was also the cause for celebration on the part of residents already in the area. When the Jackson line was extended into the neighborhood on November 19, 1928, it was heralded by neighborhood festivities with songs, ukelele selections, a reading, and refreshments. It was an important event for the neighborhood residents.⁵⁶ In 1929 the Jackson Avenue car, Route 15, ran on Jackson from Breedlove to its terminus at University. Route 16 followed Breedlove from Jackson to Faxon, thence on Faxon to University Boulevard.⁵⁷

The extension of the carlines to University enhanced the desirability of several areas that had been developed by Harry Dlugach in the 1920s. In cooperation with Foster and Stevenson, he began development of University View in 1924. One of the houses in this subdivision, 705 University, was called the "House of Happiness" when it was built as a showcase promotion, which was organized by the Merrill Kremer Advertising Agency ca. 1935. The house was subsequently bought by Mr. and Mrs. Merrill Kremer, Jr. who lived there with their sons, Richard and Robert.⁵⁸