BUILDING A NEIGHBORHOOD:
YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW

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Introduction

Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors is an interracial non-profit organization dedicated to improving relations among neighbors and making the neighborhood a good place to live. In June, 1975 work was begun on the project, "Building a Neighborhood: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," made possible by a grant from the Tennessee Committee for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The purpose of such grants is to encourage discussion of public policy issues so that citizens will be in a better position to make decisions of their own. Several recent developments have shown that policy issues will certainly be debated in the coming months, and that decisions affecting residents will be made, with or without their participation.

First, there is the Community Development Plan formulated by the Metropolitan Government. The Belmont area is one of four designated for concentrated attention, with the general aim of conserving the area for medium-density residential use. But even without the threat of major clearance, many policy questions are still to be decided.

In addition, Nashville has been designated as one of twenty cities in the nation which will receive demonstration grants under the Urban Reinvestment Task Force, funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and sponsored by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. Local lending institutions will agree to pool their resources for the conservation and upgrading of areas whose housing is basically sound and whose residents show an interest in improving their neighborhood. The first target area is to be around Belmont Boulevard and 12th Avenue South, and local residents are to play a major role on the board of directors.

Finally, there is the proposed construction of I-440, the "outer loop" in the interstate system planned for Nashville. As final plans are drawn and the Tennessee Department of Transportation prepares an environmental impact statement, the interest of nearby residents is increasing; many of them have expressed apprehension about the construction of the interstate and have asked that alternatives be explored.

The project has been designed to address issues like the following:

(1) *Architectural heritage.* What do we have? What is its historic and architectural value? What are the possibilities for its preservation and future use? How can remodeling, additions to existing buildings, and new construction be made to harmonize with what is already here? To what extent should public policy take account of considerations like these?

(2) *Land use and zoning.* What are the characteristics of a neighborhood laid out and built sixty to eighty years ago? What features should be preserved and even enhanced? Should changes in density and land use be made, and if so, how?

(3) *Streetscape.* What is the visual appearance of the neighborhood? How can street design enhance the life of the neighborhood and make diverse styles of architecture more harmonious? How can private tastes be reconciled with broad-scale planning?

(4) *Use of public rights of way.* How can streets and sidewalks be made more pleasing and more useful to the residents? How could small parcels of publicly owned land be developed as mini-parks or focal points? What alternatives might be feasible for the land acquired for I-440?

Helen Baldwin, art historian, and Berle Pilsk, architect, have made their expertise available for the study. Photography was done by Dennis Wile; art work and layout by Bill Myers; maps and plans by David Lyda. Archival research and interviewing of residents was carried out by Gene TeSelle. Background information on legal questions was offered by Ashley Wiltshire, and on energy use by Francis Wells. Many residents have helped with setting up the exhibits and taking care of other details.

The neighborhood has been repeatedly examined with an expert eye. Varied though the houses are, there are some prevalent styles. The bungalow, with its many adaptations, was clearly as popular in Nashville as it was all over the United States after the first one was built in 1880. Frequently built, too, was a type of two-story house characterized by a square plan and featuring a front porch and a centrally placed dormer. Also very popular are "picturesque" houses, featuring various Tudor and "cottage" motifs, freely and even fancifully used. Perhaps the most prevalent feature is the porch. Few houses are without one, usually placed at the front since most lots are narrow. But not all houses can be fit into some known "style." There is an almost infinite variety of motifs, and they are often combined in imaginative ways.

There are many values to living in an older house, and they are being increasingly recognized today. Older houses have both a settled appearance and an individual "personality." They tend to be of familiar styles, so that they are comfortable to live with. They were designed on the basis of much practical experience and are apt to be spacious and conveniently arranged. They tend, too, to have individual qualities, since building materials earlier in the century were less expensive and it was easier to introduce variations of material and style into each home. There are more houses built of a combination of materials than there are houses built of one single material.

Architecturally the neighborhood is eclectic: the styles of its houses are drawn from many sources. This eclecticism is very much in tune with today's climate of opinion, when there is new appreciation for the best qualities of many different styles and periods of architecture and a desire to preserve and reuse what other generations might have been inclined to write off as "outdated" or "monstrosities." Despite its variety, the neighborhood has a generally harmonious feeling. The construction of motel-like apartments and office buildings has not made a large dent in the settled residential character of the neighborhood as a whole. There is topographical variety thanks to the Montgomery hills, enabling houses of similar style to become individualized through variations of site.

New homeowners are rediscovering the values of a past generation, for they are attracted to the spacious dimensions of older homes, enabling members of the family either to seek privacy for their separate activities or to gather in one place for companionship in work or relaxation. There is a comfortable informality about these houses, and their large rooms lend themselves to almost any style of furnishing.

Residents will always be asking what is to be "the future of the past," to borrow a phrase from Daniel D. Reiff. All the buildings together make up the character of the neighborhood and the replacement of any house will in some measure diminish the special quality of the whole. This is not to say that no change should be made; but it may be useful, in considering any change, to remember that every building is irreplaceable, and any new structure will give a new aspect to all the others. It is important, then, for neighbors to cultivate "visual awareness" so that the attractions and potentialities of homes will not be overlooked.

Special attention, of course, should be given to the few homes from the nineteenth century, for they, by their very existence, give architectural and historic continuity to the neighborhood, putting it directly in touch with Nashville's past. But even more generally it must be remembered that the visual character of the neighborhood has played a part in many people's decisions to live here, and it should not be thoughtlessly tampered with. No matter how ordinary a group of houses may be, their particular composition in the neighborhood is unique, and they have been "lived in"—and in turn have shaped the lives of many people—in a special way. From all of this comes the individuality of a neighborhood and its attractiveness as a place to live.

Beginnings

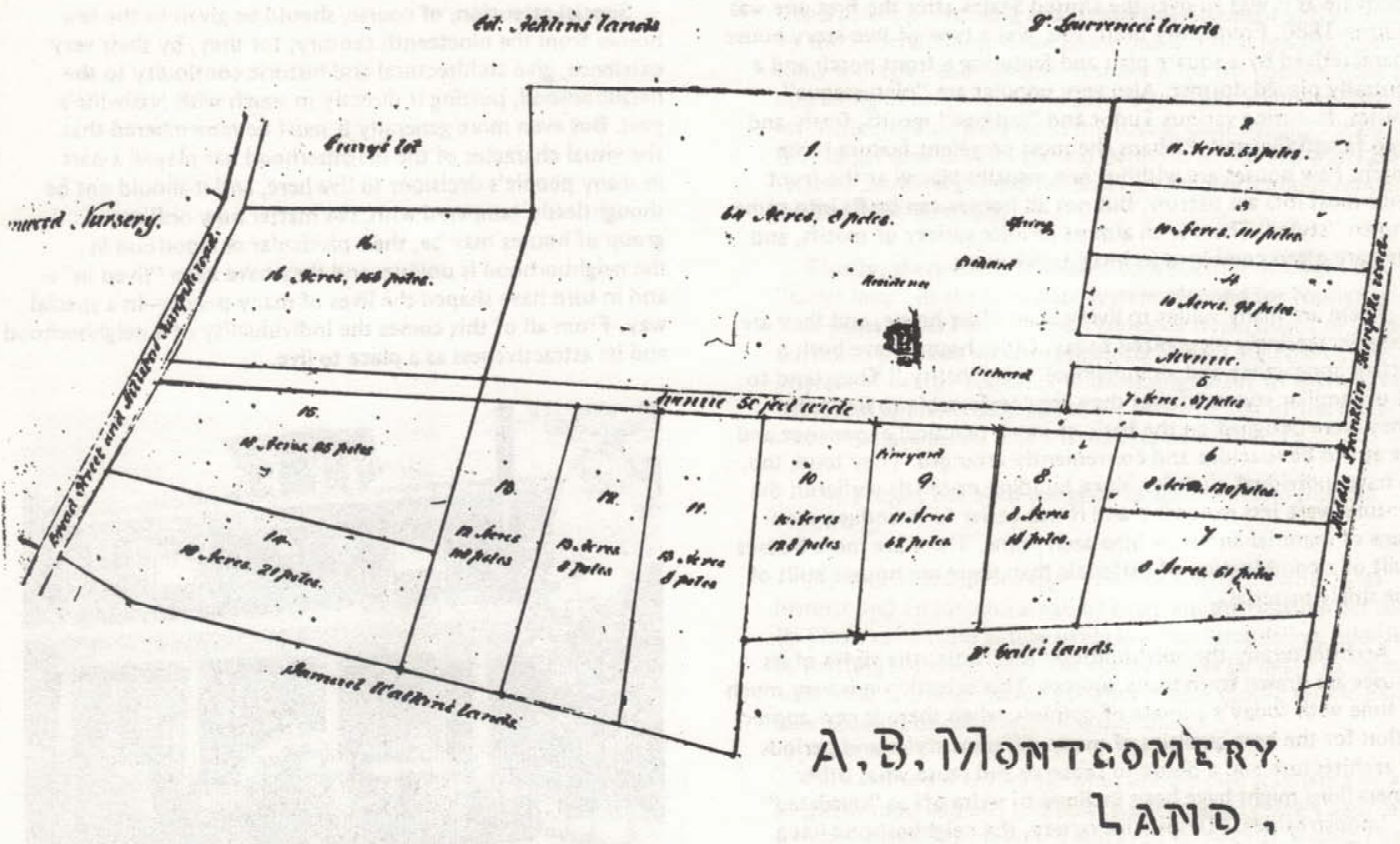
In the nineteenth century the area south of Nashville, between Hillsboro Pike and Granny White Pike, was farmland. North of a line about where Beechwood or Sweetbriar Avenues now are, there was the estate of Col. Joseph Acklen and his wife, Adelicia Hayes Acklen. After their wedding trip to Europe they built the famous Belmont mansion, designed after the houses they had seen in Italy. There has been dispute about the architect: William Strickland has usually been named, but recent evidence seems to suggest Adolphus Heiman. In any case the mansion has always been nationally famous, not only for its design but also for its grounds.

Farther south was the Montgomery estate, with a mansion at the hilltop where Cedar Lane and Brightwood Avenue now intersect. The main entrance to the plantation was a long driveway lined with cedars, stretching all the way to Granny White Pike. On the old maps there is also an "Avenue 50 feet wide" running east to west between the two turnpikes. This is now totally obliterated, but it probably ran a bit south of the present Primrose Avenue.

There were no railroad tracks at that time. The Tennessee Central was not built until 1902. The Hillsboro Pike was a toll road until 1901, and the old tollhouse is still standing behind the Hillsboro Fire Hall.

The initial skirmishes of the Battle of Nashville were fought in this area. The advance Confederate lines ran east and west along the crest of the hill between what are now Cedar Lane and Wildwood Avenue; the Union lines, following the base of the hill to the north, made an arc curving toward the Confederate positions, with the closest point at about the intersection of Beechwood and Hawthorne, only 1500 feet away. Residents often find in their yards the remains of trenches reinforced with stone blocks, as well as minie balls and other mementoes of the battle.

As the Union forces advanced, the thin Confederate line retreated from Montgomery Hill, and Col. A.B. Montgomery set fire to his mansion in order to keep it from being used by the invaders.



Today there are two surviving buildings from the Montgomery plantation. One is this house at 1806 Cedar Lane. Narrow and two-storied, it is a house of great simplicity, deriving its handsome effect from its fine proportions, beautiful pinkish brick, and dignified aspect. The walls are of solid handmade brick; the mortar has held up since well before the Civil War. It is a simple, self-contained structure, with the roof projecting only slightly, and with a few broadly-spaced windows on three sides. The room to the east is a later addition. Robert and Mary Alice Green, the present residents, say that it originally had an outside staircase on the back of the building, where a door has been bricked up, and this may have been because there were additional taxes on an inside staircase.

This house is literally an irreplaceable asset to the neighborhood. Nothing else could do what it does just by standing here. In a neighborhood of diverse architecture built largely since 1900, this single structure extends its heritage back to the early years of Nashville. A house need not be especially splendid or the scene of great events to become a historic monument. This house tangibly puts us in touch with the continuity of our historic and architectural heritage. It is of just such ordinary structures that the fabric of architectural history is made.

Immediately behind the First Church of Christ Scientist on Hillsboro Road is another house, probably for the overseer of the Montgomery plantation. This single-story brick house is considerably more spacious than it first appears, for there is a long addition to the rear which appears to be part of the original building. Another asymmetrical addition to the left rear is likely of later date. A reduced version of the large, columned plantation houses, the facade of the overseer's house features a small Greek-style porch with six columns of generally Doric style, a small cornice with dentils, and a pediment. The facade is symmetrical, with a window on each side of the porch. Chimneys are built within the house on each side and in what was probably the kitchen extension to the rear. The generously proportioned sash windows with wood lintels are of twelve lights. The main entrance also has a wood lintel with lights to each side and above.

Another survival from the rural past is this dignified house at 2000 Sweetbriar Avenue, built later in the 19th century. It is one story, of dark brick, with a hipped roof and a single chimney. The facade is given character by the polygonal bay on the right, balancing the porch on the left. All five windows and the door of the facade are arched, and the porch roof is supported by five Ionic columns. The interior has the spacious dimensions of many Victorian buildings, with large rooms and 12-foot ceilings.

For many years the surrounding land was a commercial nursery. Urbanization stopped visibly at the corner of Sweetbriar and Hawthorne, where curbs and sidewalks still end. The land to the west of that point was not subdivided until the 1920's.

ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

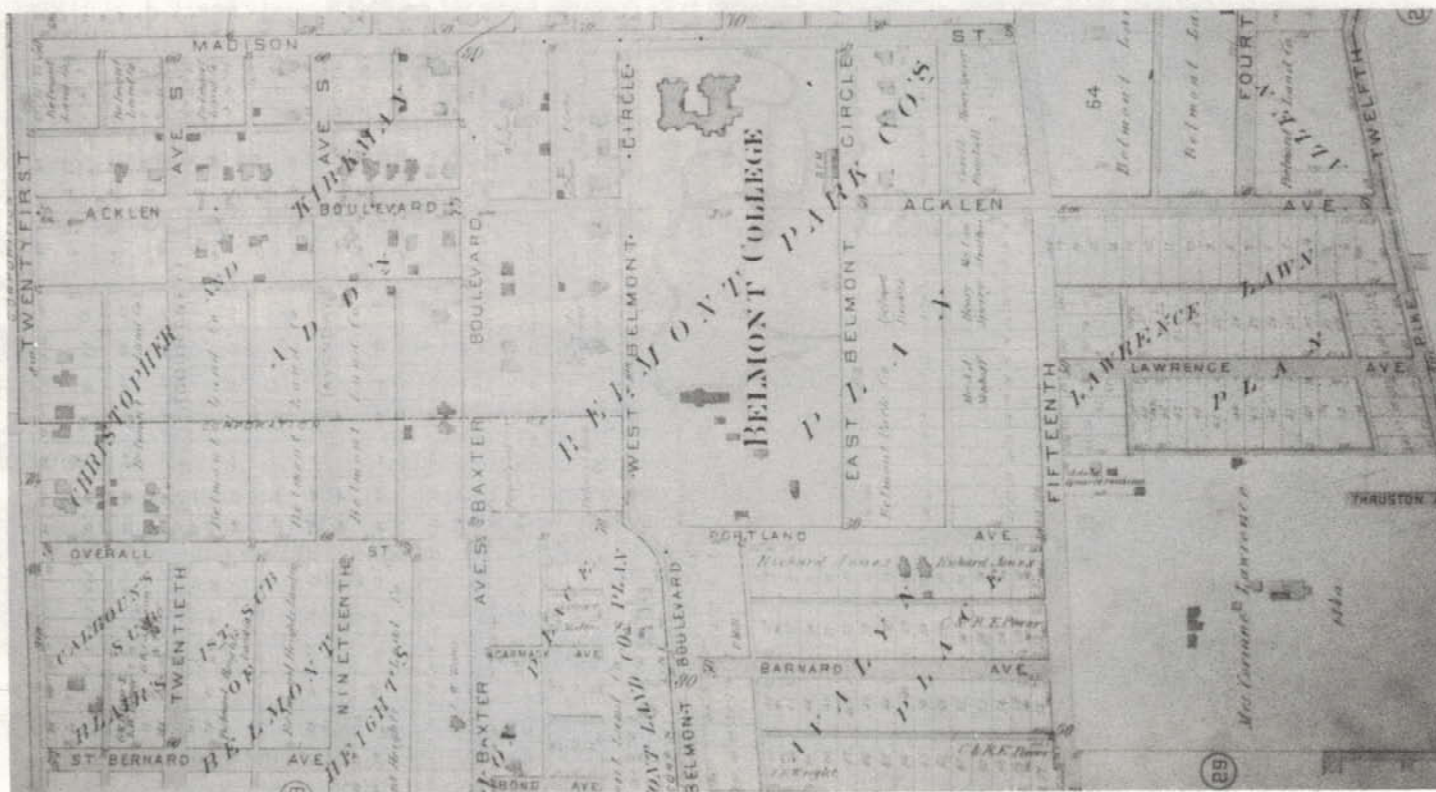
Most people are surprised to learn that a Black institution, Roger Williams University, once occupied the land where Peabody College is now. Its main building stood on the site of the Social-Religious Building, with the large dome that can be seen down 20th Avenue South.

Roger Williams University was founded by local Black leaders in 1865 and was supported by the American Baptist Home Mission Society in New York. In 1874 the Board purchased the William H. Gordon Homestead just across Hillsboro Pike from the newly founded Vanderbilt University. The Gordon home, built in the 1850's with the new mansard roof design, was used as a girls' dormitory. Two impressive new buildings, also with mansard design, were built through a gift of Dr. Nathan Bishop of New York. The school had about 300 students in both the secondary and college levels; many of them worked for their support at various jobs in the community, including Vanderbilt University.

In 1890 the historic Belmont mansion became the center of Belmont Junior College. Two Philadelphia ladies, Miss Ida E. Hood and Miss Susan L. Heron, were its joint founders, owners, and principals. The large wings facing Wedgewood Avenue, which almost completely hide the old mansion, were built after 1900. In 1912 Belmont College and Ward Seminary were combined in the Ward-Belmont Junior College and Preparatory School, and in 1913 the residential buildings on the quadrangle were constructed. The barn, where the students could stable their own horses, was also built about this time. In 1951 Ward-Belmont's preparatory school became Harpeth Hall Academy, and the college was combined with Cumberland University in Lebanon to become Belmont College. In 1971 the Historic Belmont Association was organized to restore the mansion to its former glory and preserve historical information.

The City of Nashville, Illustrated (1890)

The oldest portions of the neighborhood were subdivided in 1890 and 1891, after the death of Adelicia Acklen. Lots were laid out as far south as "Overall Street" (Portland Avenue). A number of the houses in this area have the characteristic architectural features of the 1890's.



At 1909 18th Avenue South there is a house featuring a porch whose roof is supported by paired and tripled columns, somewhat Doric in design. Another Greek feature is the row of dentils above the columns. Like the house at 2000 Sweetbriar this facade has a three-sided bay; the four facade windows are slightly arched, a feature which is entirely non-Greek. The very large central dormer contains a charmingly designed group of windows.

This old one-story wood house at 1919 18th Avenue South presents a large gable to the street, the lines of which are echoed in the shape of the roof behind and to the right of it. The facade has a large window and decorative vent on the left side and an L-shaped porch with Doric columns on the right. The porch has a cornice with a row of dentils and the dentil motif is picked up over the two doors leading off the porch and over the main section of the facade window. The two-part window is similar in design to the doors with their transom windows above, though the proportions are entirely different. The porch doors and facade window are enlivened by wood framing which is decoratively treated in simple motifs of circles and straight lines. There are two chimneys and the house has a number of asymmetrical sections to the rear.

Similarly at 1933 20th Avenue South there is an old house, larger than others of its general type, such as the one next door at 1931. It has attractive groupings of diamond and lozenge-shaped window panes, and the transom window over one doorway has a colored glass design of grapes, a flower, and vines. This window is one of the few examples of decorative glass in the neighborhood.

This old white house at 1931 20th Avenue South has an L-shaped front porch. The gable end is presented to the street, and in it is a wheel-like window. Below is a large window with diamond panes in the upper part. These two windows provide a decorative touch to an otherwise severely designed structure. Notice the attic dormer and the two good-sized chimneys.

In addition to these houses which look to the past, there are others which are "modern" by the standards of their time. For a number of years in the first decade of the century houses were being built with the aid of a new technological breakthrough—concrete building blocks, which had a rough surface like hewn stone yet could be manufactured locally and were much cheaper to purchase. The houses at 1912 and 1914 18th Avenue South were built of these rusticated concrete blocks. (Notice also the first stories of the houses at 2414 Oakland and 2201 Belmont.) Designs for such houses were widely available; Sears, Roebuck and Co. provided plans free on the usually well-founded assumption that the materials would also be bought from Sears.

Growth

The development of the neighborhood was accelerated with the forming of the Belmont Land Company, which subdivided lots along the newly created Belmont Boulevard and as far east as Granny White Pike.

BELMONT LAND COMPANY.

Nashville is very prominent as a real estate town and claims a larger percentage of home-owners than any other Southern city, and the real estate of the city is as staple as government bonds and always offers an attractive investment either for occupancy or speculation. One of the strongest firms operating in the city is the Belmont Land Company, with offices in the Noel Block. This company was organized in 1882, and has been instrumental in placing some of the most desirable properties in the highest state of improvement and placing same on the market within reach of the man of moderate income. The Belmont Land Company was capitalized at $200,000.00, and the officers are composed of the best-known business men of the city. They are as follows: James C. Bradford, president; A. H. Robinson, vice-president, and Thomas Taylor, secretary and treasurer. Mr. Bradford is a well-known attorney of the city, and is counsel for this company; Mr. Robinson is also vice-president of the Union Bank & Trust Company and the American National Bank, while Mr. Taylor is secretary of the Murphy Land Company. The principal activities of this company is the development and sale of the subdivision known as Belmont Heights and the adjoining property. Belmont Heights is strictly a high-class residential section, and will be the home of some of the most refined people in the city. Paul M. Davis, manager of this company, is also engaged in a general real estate and loan business.

Pen and Sunlight Sketches of Nashville (1911)

With much less fanfare the "Belmont Heights" area, between Hillsboro Pike and 18th Avenue South, was subdivided in 1907 and 1910. During that time about 40 or 50 houses were being built each year in the general area, but it is difficult to know when any particular house was built. All the building permits from the old City of Nashville (they required them in those days, too!) were thrown away many years ago. Deeds apply only to the land—buildings are considered "improvements and appurtenances," and there is no record of them on the deeds. The best source of information is the City Directory, published each year; when an address appears there for the first time it's a reliable indication of when the house was built.

In the Tennessee State Archive there is a scrap book kept fo many years by Katherine P. Wright of 1806 18th Avenue Sout who was active as a gardener, a silversmith, and a participant in many causes.

She was secretary of the Belmont Civic Federation, organize in 1907. It met at Belmont College and received much newspap coverage for several years. There was even a Children's Club, with minutes kept in an authentic grammar-school hand. The Federation encouraged the beautification of the neighborhood urging the planting of trees and flowers on the many vacant lots that were still here. The undeveloped character of the area is indicated by the fact that residents raised $50 a month to pay for a deputy sheriff to watch for loose livestock, and there are constant complaints of herdsmen "asleep on the job." There was much exhortation to tear down back fences, coal sheds, and chicken coops and to plant hedges instead to give a "park-like effect" and make the alleys into attractive avenues. Richland Avenue was held up as an example to follow in 1909. There was also a suggestion that each street be planted with a different kind of tree—something that has been heard in recent months in our neighborhood meetings.

Long after the livestock disappeared, there were large open spaces here and there. Mr. Joe T. McCary, 1900 Beechwood Avenue, recalls playing baseball in the empty fields on the other side of Belmont Boulevard. Ferguson Avenue is named for George Ferguson, the foreman of a stone quarry operated in that location by Foster-Creighton. It was the source of muc of the stone used for building up the area, and later was filled

One feature of the deeds from those years is the use of "restrictive covenants" which "ran with the land," as the sayir goes. The restrictions listed by the Belmont Land Company ar typical of those in the neighborhood. They not only required a 35-foot setback from the street, forbade the sale of "spirituc and intoxicating liquors," and required residential use of the property; they also specified:

> The premises and no part thereof shall be sold, alienated, conveyed, or devised to any person or persons of African blood or descent; no person or persons of African blood or descent shall ever own or acquire title thereto, either in fee simple or otherwise, or as tenants or lessees; but this covenant does not preclude any person or persons of African blood or descent from living on the premises in the capacity of servants.

Racially restrictive covenants of this sort were declared to unconstitutional in a Supreme Court decision, *Shelley v. Krae* in 1948. But over a period of years they had been used not or to exclude Blacks from most newly developed areas; through these and other mechanisms, according to a 1933 study, Negr had been moved away from biracial areas and concentrated, f more than before, in the central sections of the city.

On January 24, 1905, the large main building of Roger Williams University was gutted by fire, and on May 22 in the same year the old Gordon home burned. There was suspicion of arson in both fires, especially the second, when those living in the building heard the noise of furniture being overturned shortly before the fire was discovered. A neighboring resident, E.W. Thompson, took many students into his home (the Thompson home, which was at 21st and Edgehill, was moved in 1911 to 211 Bowling Avenue, where it still stands).

The NASHVILLE AMERICAN on January 26 expressed the hope that the school would be rebuilt, "if not at the present location, at some other, and one possibly more favored for such a college." The treasurer of the school said, "Some time ago we were offered $300,000 for the property as it stood then, but the offer was refused. The society did agree to take that amount if the company making the offer would provide ground near Nashville where the school could be rebuilt, but the company declined to do it and the matter was dropped." The reporter adds, "For a long time people near the University have been trying to buy the property."

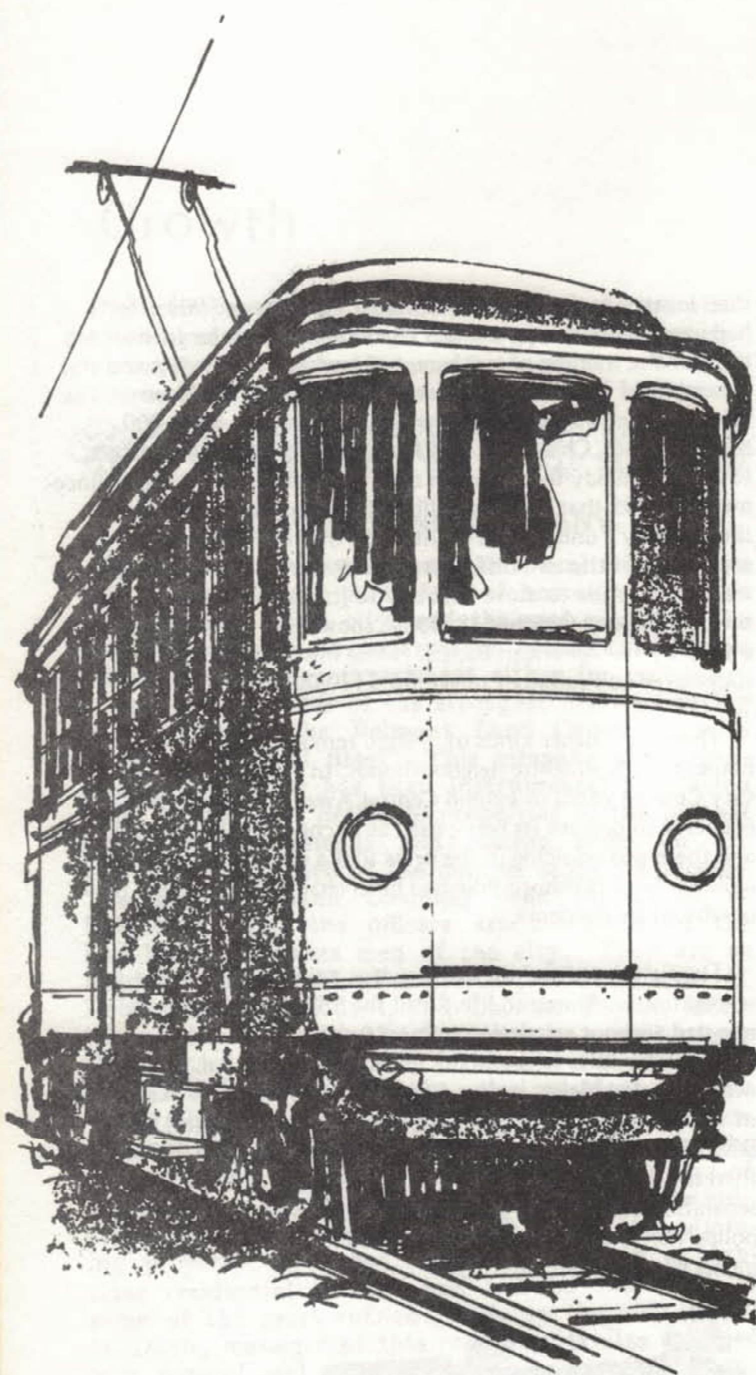
After the first fire H.L. Morehouse of the Baptist Society in New York had wired, "Announce our purpose to have buildings ready for school next fall." But the second fire led to a long period of uncertainty, and the Society finally decided to subdivide the property and sell residential lots. The NASHVILLE GLOBE, an outspoken and militant Black newspaper, complained editorially in 1907 that much money had been raised for the school by Blacks and then turned over to "a society dominated by white men." The $50,000 insurance from the fires had been collected by the Society, and the proceeds from the sale of lots would go in the same direction. The GLOBE had the distinct impression that the Society decided not to rebuild because some white people in Nashville had objected.

The pastor of the Sylvan Street Baptist Church organized a committee to raise money and keep the school under Black control, and in October, 1907 an agreement was finally worked out. The school was to be relocated at a new site on White's Creek Pike near Lock No. 1 on the Cumberland River. A new building was dedicated on January 3, 1908 and control was given for the first time to the local Board of Trustees. But the school never prospered in its new location, and eventually it was merged with the Howe Institute in Memphis. The American Baptist Theological Seminary, located next door to the site, is a different institution, founded in 1924 by the Southern Baptist and National Baptist conventions.

The former Roger Williams University campus was not destined to become a subdivision. On January 24, 1905, just before the first fire, the trustees of the Peabody Education Fund in New York had dissolved its assets and appropriated a million dollars to the George Peabody School for Teachers, then located in the Howard Park area. As early as 1903 efforts had been under way to expand Peabody into a major institution for the training of teachers, and in that year the General Assembly of Tennessee promised $250,000, the Davidson County Court $50,000, and the City of Nashville $200,000 for the school. Chancellor Kirkland had been making an effort to bring Peabody to a location near Vanderbilt, and the announcement in 1905 that another million dollars had been given by the Peabody Fund helped to intensify the rivalry between supporters of the two different locations. In 1909 the decision was finally made to move Peabody to its present location, and the deed, signed October 18, 1910, shows that the land, still owned by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, was transferred to Peabody College for $170,000.

There were other kinds of "Negro removal" to ensure homogeneous all-white neighborhoods. In 1905 the Nashville City Council voted to extend Central Avenue through the Keith property to prevent its being used as a school for Negro girls, and there was rejoicing in the press that a school for "colored children" out Hillsboro Pike had been changed to a school for nearby white residents.

The first decade of the century was a time of increasing segregation in American life. Until the 1890's the races had mingled without restriction in most public activities and used the same facilities without any question being raised. There was even a Black official, Joshua Compton, who served as magistrate of the County Court and Deputy Tax Assessor for the 11th District (which included our area) between 1883 and 1895. But then the mood of the country changed, and a period of forced separation ensued. It was in reaction to these shifts of public policy that the N.A.A.C.P. was formed in a series of developments between 1905 and 1910.



Patterns of urban growth have always been determined by the modes of transportation that are available. In the nineteenth century cities had to be compact because most people walked. The invention of the streetcar in 1887 changed the situation drastically, and within a few decades a new style of urban life was established. Electric "interurban" cars ran from Nashville to Gallatin and Columbia. The "street railway" companies even met the need for recreation before Nashville had any public parks. Cherokee Park was located at the end of a streetcar line that ran out West End Avenue, and Glendale Park was at the end of a line out what is now Lealand Lane. Since the land was private property, it was later subdivided into lots and the parks disappeared.

In 1901 the Belmont Land Company secured a franchise from the county to run a "street railway" line out Belmont Boulevard, but it does not seem to have been constructed all the way to Cedar Lane until 1909, under the auspices of the Nashville Railway and Light Company. In 1910 a franchise was given for a streetcar line out Hillsboro Pike to the corner of Blair Boulevard.

By 1913 there was streetcar service every six minutes along Belmont Boulevard, moving large numbers of commuters who today would be riding in cars with one or two passengers. Transit use peaked in 1946, with about 60 million passengers per year. Then there was a steady decline, to a low of 6.4 million in 1973. Since that time it has picked up again.

Thus the neighborhood developed as a "streetcar suburb," with physical features shaped by the chief mode of transportation at the time. The lots are relatively compact, 50 to 75 feet in width, because "density" was still desirable to support public transportation. Construction followed the streetcar lines, and areas between them (such as that between 21st and West End) developed only later. The older streets tend to run north and south, parallel with the streetcar routes on Belmont Boulevard and Hillsboro Pike, so that a large number of houses can be no more than one or two blocks from transportation. The compact layout of the neighborhood, planned for an earlier way of life, has attracted fresh interest today when there is renewed talk about public transportation, enhancement of street life, and shopping within pedestrian range.

Streets were gravel until after 1910, when they began to be "macadamized" (blacktopped). Automobiles were rare before 1910, almost playthings, and few families had cars until the 1920's. Shopping was not done with the family car—housewives would either make a personal trip to the downtown area to select their purchases, or place orders over the telephone; then groceries, dry goods, or home supplies would be delivered by wagon or truck. There were also various mobile services—milk, farm produce, bread, and the many products handled by the Jewel Tea Company were all made available where people lived, with door-to-door delivery. This substitute for the suburban shopping center may be explored again as gasoline becomes more expensive.

When Tennessee passed a Jim Crow law in 1905 requiring separate seating of the races on streetcars, with sections labeled "for white people" and "for the colored race," there was a maj protest in the Black community. In an anticipation of the Mon gomery bus boycott, President Merrill of Fisk, Black lawyer and financier J.C. Napier, National Baptist leader R.H. Boyd, and others organized the Union Transportation Company to ca members of their race on electric-powered 20-passenger coache The company did not prosper and the coaches were sold in 1907, but the NASHVILLE GLOBE stated with pride that the were still many in the Black community who had "never bowe the knee to Baal."

From about 1905 on, the NASHVILLE AMERICAN (later the TENNESSEAN) regularly carried a Sunday feature on "Real Estate and Building News"; this is the best source of information for those years. There was a photograph of a new house almost every week, and from 1909 to 1912 there were sketches and plans for new homes by two local architects, first Thomas S. Marr and then R.E. Turbeville. Their designs are quite varied, showing in the numerous influences on architecture in that period. Some look back to 19th-century designs; others are in the newer bungalow and cottage styles, often with half-timbering or "stick style" roof supports.

This was part of a nation-wide trend. Edward Bok's LADIES' HOME JOURNAL waged a campaign to improve "taste" in homebuilding and offered complete plans, by major architects, for only $5. Frank Lloyd Wright had two "prairie house" design in the JOURNAL in 1901.

There was much use of varied textures and materials—terra cotta, metal, rough brick, roof tiles, glass, and so on. Classical columns could be secured ready-made from building supply companies, and even the ornate capitals with scroll work, seen on many houses in the neighborhood, were mass produced from a wood composition material.

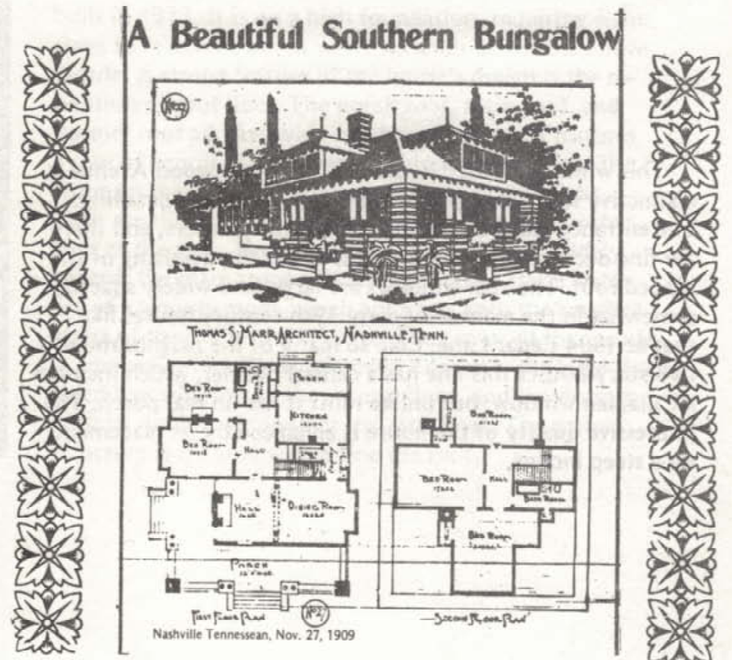
Manufacturers published magazines and booklets encouraging the use of their own products. The popularity of decorative roof ridges of terra cotta on many Nashville bungalows, for instance, may be the result of the promotional efforts of the BRICKBUILDER magazine, which encouraged the use of a whole range of baked earth materials.

New building materials were widely publicized. The first to be featured was concrete, especially "granitoid" building blocks and sidewalks, which had crushed granite instead of gravel. After 1910 stucco became popular, and the "Kellastone" brand was widely advertised by a local firm. It was guaranteed not to crack or chip, and the many stuccoed houses in our neighborhood which have stood up well for sixty years are a good endorsement for their formula.

The use of local materials—in our case, limestone—was also encouraged by many architects, as one kind of "honesty" in building and a way of reducing the degree of standardization across the country, already bothering some people back in that era.

Houses were still built individually. A person would buy a lot, then hire a contractor to build according to specification. The Nashville Trust Company was advertising that it would finance a new home for 10% down, with the balance to be paid in ten years. The cost of building seems to have been generally between $2500 and $5000.

There were problems with building materials back in the good old days, too. The Nashville city regulations called for sidewalks to be constructed with a 2" layer of cinders, then 4" of concrete (1 part Portland cement, 3 of sand, and 4 of stone or gravel),



Nashville Tennessean, Nov. 27, 1909

and a top dressing of 1" (equal parts cement and crushed granite). But the NASHVILLE AMERICAN was calling for city inspection to ensure that standards were met; contractors claimed that they had to do inferior work because their competitors were underbidding them.

There is probably a difference between houses built for the owner's *own* use and those built for the use of *others* or for a particular "market." Most of the houses in our neighborhood were built by people who intended to live in them. In fact, a number of builders and real estate people designed and constructed houses for themselves, and probably the real test is whether someone is willing to live in one's own handiwork.

Many of the houses in the area were built by E.C. Scruggs, who had been blinded in a childhood accident but began a housebuilding business about 1900; it is still being carried on by a fourth generation of descendants. Many of the sidewalks have the E.C. Scruggs imprint. He himself lived at 2909 Belmont Boulevard, in a house built between 1910 and 1915.

Another developer was W.L. ("Will") Horn, who lived at 1906 Linden Avenue until about 1925, then built the house at 1804 Linden Avenue for himself.

During the period after the First World War many houses were built by R.R. Ogilvie. Mrs. Julian W. Walker, 2602 Oakland Avenue, says that the entire east side of that block was built by him in 1919, and he himself lived at 2612 Oakland. Probably he bought the lots when the Belmont Realty Company (which took over from the Belmont Land Company in 1913), auctioned all the remaining lots in the spring of 1919.

This white clapboard house at 1706 Beechwood Avenue is distinctive for its fine proportions and handsome detailing. The entrance features a cornice and Ionic pilasters, and there are fine decorative volute brackets under the overhang of the hipped roof. The sash windows are large and widely spaced, somewhat in the manner of early 19th-century houses like that at 1804 Cedar Lane. Like so many of the neighborhood's two-story houses this one has a central dormer, which includes a Palladian window; but unlike most it has no real porch. The impressive quality of the house is enhanced by its placement on a steep incline.

This large house at 1725 Linden Avenue presents a very big gable to the street, with a nice oval window near the peak. A broad porch extends the full width of the first story and a two-story portico rises from the center of the house. The house appears to be a very large cottage with huge columns added, similar to those associated with plantation houses. The whole effect is impressive and spacious. It is unusual in the neighborhood for so large a house to be constructed of wood.

An impressive job of renovation has been done on this brick house at 2807 Oakland Avenue, built early in the century. The house is an imposing one, and that quality is enhanced by its placement high above the street. One must always look up to it—one cannot be too familiar with it. The house has a handsomely patterned slate roof visible from the alley, and attractive groupings of windows making a good effect from both the exterior and the interior. The second story is marked by a row of bricks set on end in a band of roughened brick, giving a rusticated effect. Such details show the design care put into the house so that its whole effect will be both attractive and distinctive.

This large stone house at 2509 Belmont Boulevard was built in 1913. It is on a high foundation, requiring eight steps to reach the porch which extends across the entire facade. A strong feature of the house's design is the repetition of roof lines. The porch roof, main roof, and dormer roof all have wide overhangs, and each features a row of dentils. There are two chimneys, one near the front on the left side, one near the rear on the right. Both are slightly expressed on the exterior by a protrusion of the wall. The house has large windows, widely spaced; the plain stone sills and decorative stone lintels are of a smooth stone which contrasts with the rougher stone of the body of the house. The center of the facade is emphasized by the ample main doorway, the large three-sided bay window on the second floor, and the dormer with its double windows at the attic level. The entire structure is covered with a fine tile roof.

The house at 1712 Beechwood Avenue is large, and it appears even larger because it is prominently set on a strong slope and its design features make it appear to reach out into the space around it. It has the symmetrical design of a formal house but not the containment. The main roof and porch overhangs are extremely wide and spreading, and in addition the porch, which covers the whole facade, has double stairways which reach out in great walled curves. The whole effect is of an exuberance not often found during the period when most of the houses in the neighborhood were built.

This really imposing house at 1800 Cedar Lane has a cornerstone dated 1909. It was planned by W. Smith Criddle, a real estate developer; he died before it was constructed, but Mrs. Leonora Criddle continued to live in it for many years. The architect was T.S. Marr. It was built with speaking tubes, complete gas and electric outlets, and many other conveniences. At the top there is a flat space 22 by 30 feet, designed to be fitted out with tables, chairs, and settees.

The center of the facade features a pair of colossal Ionic columns rising a full two stories, supporting a balcony for the second floor and a parapet at the roof level in front of the dormer. A pair of pilasters frames the entrance. A band of smooth stone marks the second floor, and the upstairs windows are designed as three-sided triple bays. The facade is symmetrically designed except for the small window on the left side of the first floor.

This formal house at 1819 Wildwood Avenue is reminiscent of French country houses in its symmetrical dignity. Windows are evenly spaced across the facade, the chimneys are paired, and the side porch with its arch balances a room with an arch over the window on the other side. The house appears to be built of cut stone with large corner quoins, but the material is Breeko Block, a type of cinder block developed in Nashville during the 1920's by Charles Akers and Harold Hopton. Mr. Akers had this house built for himself, and he lived here until 1948, when it was purchased by Dr. and Mrs. Dayton Phillips. Breeko Block is still being produced by Breeko Industries on Jefferson Street, along with prestressed concrete and other building components.

This log house at 2002 Cedar Lane was designed by E. Melvin Tisdale in 1937 for Mr. and Mrs. Paul Jarratt, who lived there until 1964, when Robert Hobson became the owner. The central section is finished with boards and battens. Projecting forward on each side are log wings, and the ensemble is completed by the log garage. The whole effect is low and snug, and reminiscent of earlier times.

A number of houses of this sort have been built since the 1930's. While this one was built of new-cut logs, builders like F.E. Henley and E.H. Jones purchased cabins around Kentucky and Tennessee with old hand-hewn logs from before the Civil War, literally preserving the past and the human labor that went into it.

Despite the extravagant claims made by the Belmont Land Company, the neighborhood was never a place of great wealth. The path of affluence moved out West End Avenue, where elegant homes were still being built opposite Vanderbilt University, and on to Belle Meade, which was laid out as early as 1909. But people of wealth did build some impressive homes along Belmont Boulevard, on Cedar Lane (then called Belmont Terrace), and elsewhere.

Dr. Mary Dean Clement has many reminiscences of the neighborhood from the time her family moved to 1711 Ashwood Avenue in 1917. She recalls that the block was socially diverse even then. Her father, the Rev. A.E. Clement, was a prominent Methodist minister involved chiefly in administrative work. Dr. J.P. Keller lived in the impressive house at 1703 Ashwood. Simon Ghertner, a Jewish immigrant who had begun to prosper as a partner in the Cullom & Ghertner printing firm, lived at 1702. The corner house at 1701 already had the large veranda around two sides. It was owned by Arch M. Cochran, who operated the Columbia Produce Company downtown. His wife was an Italian-American lady of great cultivation, who did much organizational work and wrote many published stories. She had a white banquet tablecloth on which guests' signatures were embroidered in white, and Dr. Clement remembers putting her name on it at about the age of six. The Cochrans had two cars, one of them an electric, which was rare in those days—few families owned cars until the 1920's.

The neighborhood has always had considerable diversity, then, not only in the people who lived here but in the kinds of houses that were built. It has never become frozen at a particular period of architecture, for there was a continual process of "filling in" the vacant lots with newer, and usually smaller, homes, and the process has gone on until the present, when a duplex will occasionally be built by an investor in one of the few remaining lots.

The last areas of the neighborhood to be developed were Wildwood Avenue, Primrose Avenue, and Primrose Circle. All were subdivided in 1941, on land owned by Walter Stokes, who grew up in this area around the turn of the century.

These were "developments" or "subdivisions" in the current sense, for lots were not sold separately but all houses were designed by the same developer. Buildings harmonize more readily with each other, and this need not be at the cost of individuality. Houses are designed to be different from their neighbors even when they are of the same materials, and as years go on the individuality of the owners is expressed more and more.

The smaller size and more compact internal design reflect a trend begun in the late 1920's and continued, with F.H.A. encouragement, in the 1930's. Greater efficiency in the use of space was secured by combining several functions in the same room and designing kitchens and bathrooms with "built-in" facilities.

Because of its compact layout, Primrose Circle has a distinct character within the neighborhood. There is a fine sense of enclosure, and it is free from through traffic.

1922 Street Map

If there is something valuable about the neighborhood it is not its exclusiveness, but rather its normality and its continued livability. This makes everyone's job a little harder. It would be easy to admire and publicize and preserve a neighborhood filled with especially old or expensive or elegant architecture. But what do you do with a neighborhood built only after the turn of the century, and with few architectural "masterpieces"? What we suggest is that it be appreciated for its flavor as a whole, the special "townscape" that it presents, the style of life that it symbolizes, the stimulation that it gives precisely through its variety. We do know that there are many people who have chosen to live in this neighborhood because of the character it has; and although we do not always know why, we suspect that it is usually because they like its diversity and vitality.

Styles

Most of the homes in the neighborhood were built during a period with rich choices among architectural styles—and with accompanying debates among rival architects. Few houses were built in a "pure" style. More often there was a mixture of motifs drawn from varied sources. Perhaps we can identify some of them here.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY SURVIVALS

Two late 19th century styles are considered to be of definitely American invention. One is the shingle style, which is exactly what its name implies, and the other is the stick style which is exemplified by the house at 1713 Blair Boulevard. Stick style houses are so named by Vincent Scully of Yale University who first identified them as a specific design type. Stick style houses are built entirely of wood and have tall proportions. Steep roofs with wide overhangs supported by brackets are typical.

Stick Style