

## **THE HISTORY OF KNOLLWOOD SUBDIVISION: FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO PRESENT**

**KNOLLWOOD HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 241641  
Montgomery, AL 36124-1641  
Website: [www.knollwoodhomeownersassociation.org](http://www.knollwoodhomeownersassociation.org)**

**July 2013; Revised January 2021**

## **The Beginning**

The site on which the Knollwood Subdivision currently sits was in the heart of an old plantation between the cities of Montgomery and Tuskegee; specifically, off Highway 80, East Montgomery County, Alabama. The land was a woodland setting of mature pine, oak, and hickory trees, flowing springs with a big house on a hill. Mr. Charlie Paul (C.P.) Robbins, a white developer, purchased this land from a man known as Judge Scott. The land was called Knollwood and named after the big house on the hill.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the word “knoll” is synonymous to hill.

## **The Vision**

Knollwood was developed from the vision of Mr. C.P. Robbins, who was fondly called “CP” by many. Mr. Robbins wanted to solve a problem that no developer in Montgomery would address in the 1960s, and that is, build “fancy” homes for Blacks to purchase. Although 35% of the population of Montgomery was Black, only 3% of the homes were built for them. Grocery stores sold them groceries, car dealers sold them cars, clothing stores sold them clothes, yet no developer offered them nice homes for sale. In Mr. Robbins’ view, what was wrong with selling Blacks nice homes?” Mr. Robbins’ stance on building homes for Blacks was, therefore, forward-looking.<sup>2</sup>

Moving ahead with his vision, Mr. Robbins advertised the Knollwood development for black families. There was a great response to the advertisement. Blacks on caravans made trips to see the proposed development. Among them were Carrie Robinson and Callie Warren, who were residents of Mobile Heights, Montgomery. They wanted to leave Mobile Heights, because railway lines were to be laid through there, and the obvious noise to come from the trains was an impetus to move out of the neighborhood. All those who made the trip to see the proposed development site loved the area. Therefore, Mr. Robbins broke ground to build the Knollwood Subdivision in 1964. Developing Knollwood came with obstacles: He was shunned at social functions and homebuilders’ meetings. Also, the banks cut off his line of credit; however, the Crescent Credit Corporation approved a loan for him but at an inflated rate. Mr. Robbins even sought help from a well-known black businessman, Mr. A.G. Gaston, of Birmingham to finance his project.<sup>3</sup>

Battling the banks was not the only challenge for Mr. Robbins; there were also fights with federal government officials in Birmingham. The Veterans Administration and the Federal Housing Administration refused to approve loans for blacks to purchase homes in Knollwood. Consequently, Mr. Robbins went to Washington to seek help on this matter. After the Washington trip, a representative from the Federal Housing Administration came to Montgomery and held meetings in Carrie Robinson’s Mobile Heights home to assist in getting loans directly from Washington. Time and money were spent in court against the city and federal governments for discrimination. In some cases, even building inspectors tried to bribe Mr. Robbins in order to receive a favorable report. Despite all the obstacles and opposition, the first home builders of Knollwood remained optimistic and committed to the vision of Robbins.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Robbins also made provisions for Covenants and Restrictions in the original Plats that would assist the Association in maintaining a beautiful Knollwood.

## **The Development**

Knollwood offered luxurious home sites amid the natural beauty of cedars, pine and other hardwoods, beautiful green lawns, and wide avenues. Homes were spacious on larger-than-usual 100-by-200-foot lots. Distinctive is the word for the plans of Knollwood, including Modern, Traditional, Ranch or French Provincial with patios and court yards as well as many other features to admire, such as distinguished entranceways, lovely living areas, and spacious kitchens.<sup>5</sup> The streets were named based on the woodland setting of the area: Pinetree Drive, Maple Drive, Elm Drive, Cottonwood Drive, and Knollwood Boulevard. The Association Logo was also designed in 2012 based on the woodland setting.

## **The First Families**

The first families moved to Knollwood in 1965. Mrs. Carrie Robinson and her husband, Thomas, whose address was 155 Pinetree Drive were the first residents. They were lifelong residents. Mr. Ernest Warren and his wife, Callie, built the second home at 154 Pinetree Drive. Miss Maxine Robinson and her sister, Ruth, built the third home at 124 Pinetree Drive. The Robinson sisters were lifelong residents. The only telephone in the Subdivision was at Carrie Robinson's home, and this was shared by the other two families.<sup>6</sup> These family lots are on Plat Map 1.

## **The Subdivision**

Plat Map 1 was the first of six plat maps which was recorded in 1964. Corrected Plat 1 was recorded in 1968. Plat 1 consists of 25 residential lots and 1 non-residential lot. The lots are located on Pinetree Drive, Old Elm Drive, Knollwood Boulevard, and Maple Drive. Three (3) Metes-and-Bound lots (un-platted lots) border Plat 1.

Plat Map 2 was recorded in 1969. Plat Map 2 consist of 10 residential lots located on portions of Cottonwood Drive and Old Elm Drive.

Plat Map 3 was recorded in 1972. Plat Map 3 consists of 21 residential lots located on Ash Drive, portions of New Elm Drive, and portions of Knollwood Blvd. Five (5) Metes-and-Bound lots (un-platted lots) border Plat Map 3.

Plat Map 4 was recorded in 1985. Plat Map 4 consists of 5 residential lots and an area designated for Montgomery Water Company on portions of Cottonwood Drive.

Plat Map 5 was recorded in 1987. Plat Map 5 consists of 8 residential lots and 2 non-residential lots located on portions of Cottonwood Drive and portions of New Elm Drive. Two (2) Metes-and-Bound lots (un-platted lots) border Plat Map 5. One of the non-residential lots is also a metes-and-bound lot.

Plat Map 6 was recorded in 1992. Plat Map 6 consists or 14 residential lots and 2 non-residential lots located on New Elm Drive.

### **Description of Location: From 1965 to the Present**

The early reference points to Knollwood's location were 25 minutes to Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) and 15 minutes to Alabama State College (now Alabama State University). I-85 could not be travelled to downtown Montgomery, because it had not been constructed. The only things surrounding the Subdivision were a few mom and pop stores.

Now, location is everything. Knollwood is about 16 minutes from downtown Montgomery; about 5-7 minutes from Eastchase Shopping Mall; less than 5 minutes from the police jurisdiction of the City of Montgomery; conveniently located at I-85 Exit 16; about 1 mile from the new Outer Loop.

The Knollwood Subdivision remains a desirable place to live. Residents rarely move away. There are 92 homes and 5 vacant lots. Knollwood started as a place where black families could have "fancy" homes, but now is home to all families.

### **Highlights**

**March 1974:** The non-profit corporation Knollwood Community Organization, Inc. was formed. The Knollwood Community Organization, Inc. served as the neighborhood association whose primary purpose was to enhance the welfare of the community and its residents.

**October 1995:** Knollwood was hit hard by the damaging effects of Hurricane Opal. For more than a week there was no electric power, up-rooted and broken trees blocked streets, homes were damaged, power lines were down, and there was no water supply.

The image of the large 25-year plus old pine tree (about 60 to 75 feet) that fell through the roof of Reverend Willie and Mrs. Mamie Muse's home on Maple Drive and landed above Rev. Muses' head while sitting in his recliner will not be forgotten. Four large pine trees fell on the Muses' home. Rev. Muse said, "the cost of the damage done to the home was more than the cost to purchase it."<sup>7</sup> The woodland setting of Knollwood had been disturbed; yet, residents were undaunted. They subsequently removed many of the stately pine trees which had fallen from their properties.

**April 1998:** Residents united to block a 65-unit rental Mobile Home development from proximity to the Subdivision. The location of the proposed development was the 14.2 acres adjacent to Knollwood.

**June 1998:** There was concern that the drinking water distribution system in the community was constructed using asbestos-cement pipes. Residents were concerned that increased exposure to asbestos and other possible contaminants in their drinking water was occurring and may be related to perceived adverse health of residents in the Subdivision. The Exposure Investigation conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Atlanta, Georgia, concluded that: (1) asbestos was not detected in the drinking water system of the Knollwood Subdivision at levels of health concern; (2) Other substances such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and

selected pesticides as well as metals were not detected in the drinking water or were not at levels of health concern; and (3) No contaminants of health concern were identified in the “dirty water” sample.<sup>8</sup> During this time, the East Montgomery Water Company was the water provider for the Subdivision.

**2004-2005:** There was concern over the potential for migration of petroleum residues into the Subdivision from a local gas station. An independent assessment was done by the International Corps on the Environment, and found there was no credible potential that petroleum residues had migrated into the Subdivision.<sup>9</sup>

**March 2006:** The Knollwood Community Organization became an active participant of the Building Our Neighborhoods for Development and Success (BONDS) (now Neighborhood Services) program of the City of Montgomery. BONDS is a neighborhood association which focuses on providing training, networking opportunities, and financial assistance (grants) in an effort to improve the overall quality of life throughout the City and County of Montgomery.

**December 2006:** A majority of the lots in Knollwood were annexed into the Town of Pike Road. These lots were supposedly to be no longer in Montgomery County, but would be a part of the municipality of Pike Road.

**November 2007:** The process of amending the original covenants began.

**May 2008:** Mrs. Carrie Robinson, a member of the first family of the Knollwood Subdivision passed away at the age of 102.

**May 2010:** The name of the organization changed from Knollwood Community Organization, Inc. to Knollwood Homeowners Association. This change represents a move from a voluntary neighborhood organization to a **mandatory homeowners association**. The Homeowners Association was established to (1) prevent neighborhood deterioration, (2) represent the interests of the lot owners, (3) assess and collect association dues, (4) enforce the Covenants and Restrictions, and (5) maintain and improve the common areas.

**August 2010:** The Amended Covenants and Restrictions were filed in the Montgomery County Probate Office.

**February 2011:** By a settlement agreement with the Town of Pike Road, overseen by Montgomery County Circuit Court, the first group of lots was de-annexed from the Town of Pike Road.

**February 2012:** The second group of lots was de-annexed from the Town of Pike Road.

**November 2012:** Streets were re-paved; establishment of a permanent mailing address

**February 2013:** Adopted Association logo

**February 2013:** Created Association letterhead

**March 2013:** Developed a Strategic Plan. The purpose of the strategic plan is to create a roadmap to charter the direction of the Association for three years, 2013-2015.

**March 2013:** Knollwood Homeowners Association joined the East Montgomery Neighborhood Alliance. The Alliance consists of various neighborhood associations located in East Montgomery. The main purpose of the Alliance is to provide a unified voice to the City Council, City Planning Commission, County Commission, etc., on issues that impact communities in the local area.

**April 2013:** The new website, [www.knollwoodhomeownersassociation.org](http://www.knollwoodhomeownersassociation.org), was launched.

**July 2013:** First edition of Newsletter, The Knollwood Voice, was issued as: Volume 1, Issue 1.

**July 2013:** Acquired a self-managed insurance status, covering its officers and the common areas.

**August 2015:** Diversified Alarm Services installed cameras at its entrance to monitor vehicular movement in and out of the Subdivision.

**November 2016:** The Association developed and issued/released its mailing envelopes; that is, with the logo on it.

**June 2017:** The Association acquired the services of Attorney Amanda B. Cook as General Counselor.

**March 2018:** A schematic showing numbering of the Subdivision was developed.

**March 2020:** The Newsletter was recognized by the City of Montgomery, Neighborhood Services, as a 2020 Neighborhood Publication Award recipient.

**April 2020:** The Executive Council moved its quarterly meetings from face-to-face to virtual meetings due to the pandemic, COVID19.

**July 2020:** The Association acquired the services of the Darby Law Firm to handle its legal affairs.

**September 2020:** The sign at the entrance to the Subdivision was replaced.

**October 2020:** The Association reached the thirty Newsletter Issues milestone.

**October 2020:** The Association issued its 2020 (latest) telephone directory.

## **Other**

The Association also hosts speakers to provide opportunities to work with non-governmental and governmental entities for the betterment of residents and the Greater Montgomery Area; for instance, from May 2015 to March 2016, it had several guest speakers such as Henry J. Findlay, Professor, Tuskegee University, May 2015; Steven L. Reed, Probate Judge, Montgomery County (now Mayor, City of Montgomery), September 2015; Andrew Hall, Commissioner, Montgomery County, October 2015; Derrick Cunningham, Sheriff, Montgomery County, November 2015; Doug Singleton, Candidate, Montgomery County Commission, District 5 (now District 5 Commissioner), January 2016; David Bohannon, Engineer, Alabama Department of Transportation, November 2015; Tison Singleton, Pre-treatment Operations Coordinator, Montgomery Water Works, January 2016; and Karen Wright, Executive Director, Council on Substance Abuse, March 2016.

## **Recognition of Leadership\*\*\***

Knollwood Homeowners Association is a self-managed association. Volunteer service from residents keeps the Association actively involved within the Subdivision and the Greater Montgomery Area. The list of those who are known to have served as President or Interim President is: Dr. Moses Clark, Dr. Joe Boyer, Mr. Robert Richardson, Mr. John Crayton, Dr. Nora Lawson, Mr. Kenneth Walker, Dr. Patricia Patterson, Mr. John Summers, and Interim Mr. John Ivery, Sr. The current president, Dr. Nii O. Tackie, was President from September 2012 to January 2017; and was elected again as President January 2020.

## **Recognition of Community**

Mr. Pete Motisi referred to the Knollwood Subdivision as a beautiful piece of land in the early 1960s. Today, Knollwood Subdivision is a beautiful place to live. Through the years, it has maintained its integrity. The integrity of the Subdivision can be attributed to: pride of community, neighbors who give financial and moral support, and volunteers who serve by hard work and commitment.

## **A Community on the Move!**

With its slogan: gem of Montgomery; its motto: service; and its mission: to promote Knollwood Subdivision as a pleasant community for residents and a vital contributor to the Greater Montgomery Area, the Knollwood Homeowners Association looks to a bright and constructive future.

## **Sources Consulted**

1. Motisi, Pete. (2013) Personal Communication through telephone Interview, March.
2. Sclater, Anne. (1995). "Developer Broke Ground Building Homes for Blacks." Montgomery Advertiser, January 3, p. 1A, Montgomery, AL.
3. Sclater, Anne. (1995). "Developer Broke Ground Building Homes for Blacks." Montgomery Advertiser, January 3, p. 1A, Montgomery, AL.

4. Sclater, Anne. (1995). "Developer Broke Ground Building Homes for Blacks." Montgomery Advertiser, January 3, p. 1A, Montgomery, AL.
5. C.P. Robbins and Associates. (nd). Brochure, C.P. Robbins and Associates, Montgomery, AL.
6. Muse, Willie. (2013). Personal Communication, June.
7. Muse, Willie. (2013). Personal Communication, June.
8. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Division of Health Assessment and Consultation. (1999). *Exposure Investigation*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Atlanta, GA.
9. Broadway, Jon A. (2005). *Knollwood Community Quality Assurance Overview*. International Corps on the Environment, Montgomery, AL.

**\*\*\*Appendix**

**Executive Council, 2020-2022**

**Officers**

David Nii O. Tackie	President
John Ivery	Vice President
Glenda Horton	Secretary
Katie Daniel	Treasurer
Annie Harris	Chaplain

**Block Captains**

Ollie Robinson	Maple Drive and Knollwood Boulevard
Vacant	Ash Drive
Annie Harris	Pinetree Drive
Maxine Wheeler	Cottonwood Drive
Denise Milledge	Elm Drive
Khalilah Hasan	Elm Drive

**Executive Council, 2013-2015**

**Officers**

Nii O. Tackie	President
John Ivery	Vice President
Glenda Horton	Secretary
Brenda Savage	Treasurer
Ollie Robinson	Chaplain

**Block Captains**

Ollie Robinson	Maple Drive
Brenda Savage	Ash Drive

Annie Harris	Pinetree Drive
Glenda Horton	Cottonwood Drive
Denise Milledge	Elm Drive
William Harrison	Knollwood Boulevard

**Developed by: Brenda M. Savage; June 2013, Finalized July 2013**

**Edited by: Nii O. Tackie; Revised by David Nii O. Tackie, Brenda Savage, and Denise Milledge, January 2021**