



# Mountain Brook

A Historic  
American Landscape

Birmingham Historical Society





# Mountain Brook

## A Historic American Landscape

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Drawings and Photographs  
Prepared for the Historic American Landscapes Survey  
A Program of the National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

*Published by*  
**Birmingham Historical Society**

*Financial Support Provided by*  
**Porter, White & Company**  
*and*  
Protective Life Foundation



#### **Documentation Team**

Richard Anderson, Jr., Columbia, South Carolina, HABS/HAER Documentation Specialist  
Birgit Kibelka, Birmingham, Alabama, Landscape Architect  
Jet Lowe, Washington D.C., HABS/HAER/HALS Photographer  
John Wathen, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Photographer  
Marjorie White, Birmingham, Alabama, Historian and Project Director  
Paul Dolinsky, Chief, Historic American Landscapes Survey, Consulting

#### **Publication Team**

Julius Linn, Jr., Editor  
Katherine Tipton, Editor  
Scott Fuller, Graphic Design

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#### **Birmingham Historical Society**

One Sloss Quarters, Birmingham, AL 35222  
Website: [www.bhistorical.org](http://www.bhistorical.org)

Birmingham Historical Society is a private, not-for-profit organization whose mission is to contribute to the quality of life in Birmingham by preserving, learning from, and celebrating the city's past while helping to shape its future.

ISBN: 0-943994-39-X

**ABOVE: View looking into Shades Valley along Mountain Brook Parkway. Shades Mountain rises, to the right, with residences at mid-slope below Cherokee Road and atop the crest. On the left, Guilford Road leads from Mountain Brook Parkway to the Southwood Road residences.** Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

**COVER: Mountain Brook Parkway as it extends along Shades Creek into the dense wilderness that is the residential community of Mountain Brook, Alabama.** Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

**The Old Mill.** Drawing, 1928. *The Jemison Magazine*, June 1928.

PRINTED IN CHINA.



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## FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to share with you a little information about the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS), historical landscape documentation in general, and the Mountain Brook HALS Project in particular. HALS, a program of the National Park Service, is a sister program to the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), all three forming our national archive of the built environment.

The onset of the Great Depression in 1932 necessitated relief for the struggling architectural profession and resulted in the establishment of HABS. It was a Roosevelt Administration New Deal program to temporarily employ architects to produce drawings, written history, and photographs of significant historic structures across the nation. The necessity of such documentation in the burgeoning historic preservation movement resulted in the permanent establishment of the program, still thriving after 80 years. The unique nature of industrial and engineering structures and sites, as well as landscapes, across the American continent supported the subsequent creation of HAER in 1969 and HALS in 2000.

Landscape documentation, though, had routinely been included in HABS and HAER work prior to the creation of HALS. It mostly took the form of simple site plans upon which great historic houses were built. Sometimes, industrial processes were heavily integrated into the landscape, such as at a mine or mill complex, and the documentation would include illustrations of the engineering of the land. Birmingham Historical Society oversaw such documentation for the Sloss Furnaces, Red Mountain ore mines, Vulcan and his park, and many other industrial sites across the Birmingham region during the 1990s.

Growing awareness of the significance of historic landscape architecture and the cultural landscape movement of the 1980s served as the impetus to pursue the creation of HALS as a unique program. The National Park Service was defining its role in the movement, and HABS in particular was tasked with defining new guidelines for producing measured drawings, written history, and photography for landscape architectural documentation. Ultimately, it took almost a generation for documentation of landscape architecture to stand by itself before the establishment of HALS.

Historic landscapes range from several-thousand-acre rural farms and ranch complexes, to multi-acre urban plazas and parks, to residences with yards less than an acre. In fact, almost every historic property has a landscape component. Imagine a historic residential district without lawns and trees; an agricultural complex

with buildings but no fields, garden plots, or hedgerows; a densely populated city with no park system or plazas; or a Native American settlement with no gathering place, irrigation systems, or animal corrals. Sometimes such resources may pass unnoticed. Identification of them through the documentation process increases awareness and respect for their significance and makes the important landscapes visible for planning and preservation purposes.

Driving on Mountain Brook Parkway or Cherokee Road, enjoying the view across Shades Valley to Shades Mountain, and passing through the Canterbury Road entrance are but a few of the subtle experiences that characterize the cultural landscape that is Mountain Brook. The deft hand of a landscape architect and planner guides you masterly through the challenging topography, revealing and sculpting views and experiences, as well as concealing and masking considerable engineering and technical feats. Bridle paths are cleverly woven through forests, and necessary intrusions such as access roads are submerged within the landscape to heighten the natural experience.

The HALS documentation of Mountain Brook is precedent-setting and will establish a high standard for documenting similar suburbs in the United States. The detailed measured drawings are not simply a set of plans; the beautiful photographs are not random; and the well-crafted written history is not just a chronology of Mountain Brook's creation and existing conditions. Capturing the unique and extraordinary nature of the landscape and engineering design of Mountain Brook required countless hours of research into archives as well as personal and professional experience of historical landscape architects, architects, photographers, and historians applied to the study of the archival documentation and the landscape itself. The results are an excellent record that thoroughly integrates all three forms of documentation—drawings, photographs, and history—to beautifully communicate in two-dimensional form the vibrancy and the artistic and scientific accomplishment that is Mountain Brook.

Page through this publication with great pride as you view Mountain Brook through a new filter, one of a fine cultural landscape accomplishment with high integrity to its original design, worthy of being included in the Historic American Landscapes Survey, our national archive of significant landscape architectural accomplishments.

*Paul D. Dolinsky*  
*Chief, Historic American Landscapes Survey*



## PREFACE

Those who know of Mountain Brook, Alabama, know it is a special place. To drive its winding, forested roads is to experience great beauty and surprise. At each gentle turn of the road, new features appear—as if one were traversing a stage set within the grand, park-like setting.

Few realize that Mountain Brook was designed to be the special place that it is today. From 1926 to 1929, developer Jemison & Co. worked with landscape architect Warren H. Manning to create the residential district that today is the heart of Mountain Brook.

Documenting the planning of Mountain Brook from 1926 to 1929 for the Historic American Landscapes Survey became the object of a Birmingham Historical Society (BHS) study that began in 2005. During the HALS study, BHS also participated in a national survey of Mountain Brook planner Warren H. Manning's legacy, under the auspices of the Library of American Landscape History in Amherst, Massachusetts (Robin Karson, director; Jane Roy Brown, project coordinator).

This book presents a compilation of the completed HALS documentation along with additional aerial photographs and historic photographs, drawings, and maps. The amount and variety of material we gathered and reviewed over the course of our research seemed to cry out to be made accessible to a larger audience. We invite you to journey with us into the beginnings of Mountain Brook as you peruse this volume.

Our study began with a detailed reading of the principal archival resource: the Robert Jemison, Jr. Papers held at the Birmingham Public Library Department of Archives and Manuscripts. These papers provide copious information about the many real estate firms organized and managed by Jemison & Co. in the early twentieth century. The Jemison organization was considered the finest real estate firm in the region and among the finest in the nation. In the 1920s, the 100-man office provided real estate, insurance, and underwriting services. Its principal, Robert Jemison, Jr. (1878–1973), was president of the National Board of Realtors in 1929. That body met in Birmingham during that year and toured Jemison developments just as the infrastructure for Mountain Brook, Jemison's final major project, was taking shape.

The Jemison Papers contain correspondence between the Birmingham developer and landscape architect Warren Manning (1868–1938) of Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as photographs, promotional documents, daily work ledgers, tentative plans, tentative general plans, the final general plan, subdivision plats, financial reports, and interoffice correspondence. Like Jemison, Manning was a well-seasoned professional at the height of his career. Having supervised more than 100 projects for landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and nearly 1,700 for his own firm, his experience included nationwide projects ranging from city planning, large private estates, and subdivisions to small village improvements and private gardens. Manning had developed a *City Plan for Birmingham* in 1916 and

worked for private and corporate clients here. He knew the area and its players. Over the four-year period from 1926 to 1929, Manning kept his Birmingham patrons up-to-date with the ideas he was exploring in developing Jemison's and other patrons' lands south of the city limits in the future city of Mountain Brook, established 1942.

To help understand the Jemison–Manning planning for Mountain Brook and to prepare documentation for HALS, Richard K. Anderson, Jr., an architect and documentation specialist and former chief of the Historic American Engineering Record, was recruited to correlate archival data with data from today's Geographic Information System (GIS). Anderson's successful efforts established the high integrity of the 1920s plans in 2009, particularly for Mountain Brook's road and lot system. In lay terms, what the Jemison–Manning team planned and built in the 1920s remains to this day.

From the beginning, Anderson and I sought to show, in the two-dimensional drawings that we were producing for HALS, the three-dimensional experience of driving Mountain Brook's roads. When landscape architect Birgit Kibelka joined the project in 2010, she and I hit those roads—driving, walking, photographing, and analyzing the myriad historic maps and plans and the historic features still found in the field. Kibelka's studies of several neighborhood settings provide readers of this book with our understanding of the exceptional efforts put forth to plan the magnificent place that is Mountain Brook.

On March 20, 2013, Tuscaloosa photographer John Wathen flew with Kibelka and me on an aerial mission over Mountain Brook. Wathen used a Canon EOS 5D digital camera to document the landscape. We attempted to follow Manning's advice to Jemison on how to make aerial photographs “at right angles with the slope of Shades Mountain” so as to be “about the right height to show the intervening ridges in the Valley between Red Mountain and Shades Mountain”—resulting in remarkable views of this gorgeous landscape!

Jet Lowe, veteran photographer with HAER and HALS, next brought his old-time view camera to make fifty-five 5- x 7-inch, large-format negatives from which his photographs are produced. During the week that Lowe photographed (April 9–13, 2013), Mountain Brook appeared as described in the early promotional literature: a forested cathedral.

All drawings, photographs, and historical analysis associated with this project will become part of the HALS collection at the U.S. Library of Congress. The planning for Mountain Brook is thus documented so that current and future generations might understand and appreciate how skilled professionals found beauty in the natural setting and made it into a livable, and enduringly beautiful, residential area.

*Marjorie L. White*  
Director, Birmingham Historical Society

# JEMISON & COMPANY

# MOUNTAIN BROOK

## BIRMINGHAM VICINITY, ALABAMA 1926-1929



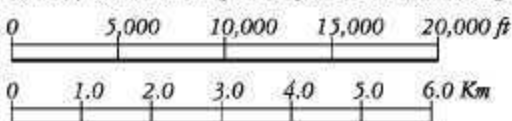
Southeastern United States



Shaded relief images. Courtesy U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).  
0 30 60 Miles  
0 50 100 Km  
Project location  
Project boundary



Based on USGS 7.5 min. quadrangles Birmingham North (1997), Irondale (1998), Cahaba Heights (1998), and Birmingham South (1997). Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) grid displayed is in meters for map zone 16. UTM coordinates for Mountain Brook boundary vertices 'a' through 'r' are given in the table to the right.



## PROJECT LOCATION

From 1926 to 1929, the Jemison & Company real estate firm of Birmingham, Alabama, retained Warren H. Manning Associates of Boston, Massachusetts, to design a residential district in the then remote Shades Valley wilderness to the south of the Birmingham city limits. The well-seasoned and well-financed Jemison-Manning venture integrated new roads and residences into the park-like setting, retaining and intensifying its natural beauty.

Regional planner and landscape architect, Warren Manning had trained in the office of Frederick Law Olmsted. By the late 1920s, he headed a national firm whose clients included the National Park Service, cities, and corporations such as U.S. Steel. He had completed a city plan for Birmingham in 1916 and was familiar with the region.

Birmingham developer Robert Jemison, Jr. headed Jemison & Company, a large and experienced real estate firm founded in 1903. He had developed communities in Birmingham and for the military during World War I.

Warren Manning was responsible for the March 1929 *General Plan for Mountain Brook*, pictured in drawings that follow. The plan included the siting of roads and bridges, lot lines for residences, reservation of and deed restrictions to preserve open space, and the inclusion and location of community features such as a village commercial area, school, riding academy and trails, a clubhouse and golf course, a Mt. Vernon replica, a mill, and several architect-designed model houses. Manning's plan covered 2,500 acres of Jemison-owned lands and more than 2,000 acres of adjoining lands, then in ownership friendly to Jemison interests. The real estate development was the largest, and finest, undertaken in the region.

The market crash of 1929 came before Jemison's investors built the grandest estates planned for the development, indeed before much of Mountain Brook was built. The road and recreational system provided the framework for future development of the community when prosperity returned in the late 1950s. The original system of roads, bridges, and open spaces remains intact to this day, as do the deed restrictions that protect them. The roads and parks shape the Mountain Brook environment.

### UTM COORDINATES for BOUNDARY of JEMISON & COMPANY MOUNTAIN BROOK PROJECT

vertex: zone.easting.northing

a: 16.524610.3707230	g: 16.524560.3704400	m: 16.521040.3705230
b: 16.525420.3707210	h: 16.523740.3704010	n: 16.521980.3705820
c: 16.526220.3706780	i: 16.522940.3704030	o: 16.522050.3705280
d: 16.527030.3706350	j: 16.521960.3703990	p: 16.522800.3705260
e: 16.527040.3705540	k: 16.520850.3704540	q: 16.523000.3705680
f: 16.525370.3704780	l: 16.520880.3704910	r: 16.523800.3706740

The Mountain Brook Recording Project was sponsored by the Birmingham Historical Society of Birmingham, Alabama, Marjorie L. White, director. The documentation team consisted of Marjorie L. White, historian and project director; Richard K. Anderson, Jr., HABS/HAER/HALS specialist; Birgit Kibelka, landscape architect and photographer; and Jet Lowe, HABS/HAER/HALS photographer, with the advisory assistance of Paul Dolinsky, chief, Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS), National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. The Historic American Landscapes Survey is a long-range program to document significant landscape sites and designs throughout the United States and to make such records accessible to the public through the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress.

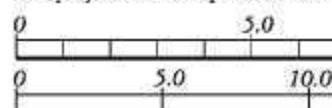
## SHEET IND

1. Introduction and She
2. Site Conditions, 1920
3. Land Use Guidelines
4. Studies for Access Ro
5. Siting the Roads
6. General Plan for Mo
7. What Jemison & Co
8. Integrity of the Gene
9. Mountain Brook Par
10. Overbrook and Beech
11. Dell Road
12. Cherokee Road
13. Village Center, Cant

## BIRMINGHAM



"Outline Plan of Proposed Park System" Brothers, File No. 3540, Plan No. 7, 1929. The boundary of Jemison & Company documents deposited at the E





EX

et Index

ads and Lot Placement

ountain Brook, March 1929

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eral Plan for Mountain Brook, 2009

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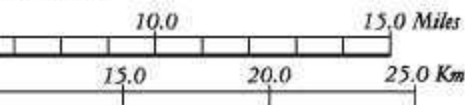
nwood Roads

erbury and Surrey Roads, Guilford and Southwood Roads

## AM AREA, 1925



for Birmingham," *A Park System for Birmingham*, Olmsted  
1925. Courtesy Birmingham Public Library Archives (BPL).  
Company's Mountain Brook project is based on Jemison &  
BPL Archives.



Mountain Brook is located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. These mountains, together with their supplementary ridges and valleys, run in a northeast to southwest direction and terminate several miles to the south of Birmingham, as shown on the shaded relief images to the far left. Elevations above sea level in the Mountain Brook area range from 640 feet along Shades Creek to over 1,100 feet atop Shades Mountain.

The Mountain Brook property was considered undevelopable at the time. It was difficult to get "over" Red Mountain from the city of Birmingham and difficult to get into and about Mountain Brook once there.

Jemison & Company's 4,500-acre Mountain Brook development of the late 1920s was incorporated, with additional lands, into the new City of Mountain Brook in 1942.

### LEGEND

- Jemison & Company Mountain Brook 1929 boundary
- Olmsted Brothers' proposed parks, 1925
- Existing park area, 1925



"Cherokee Road Entrance Gates," *General Location Map of Mountain Brook, Redmont Park, Mountain Terrace, Altamont, Designed and Offered by the Jemison Companies, 1929*. Courtesy Jemison Papers, Birmingham Public Library Archives (BPL Archives).

Richard K. Anderson, Jr., Birgit Köbelke, 2012.

MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CANAWBA ROAD  
CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK

MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929  
JEFFERSON COUNTY

ALABAMA

SHEET 1 OF 13

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
AL-2

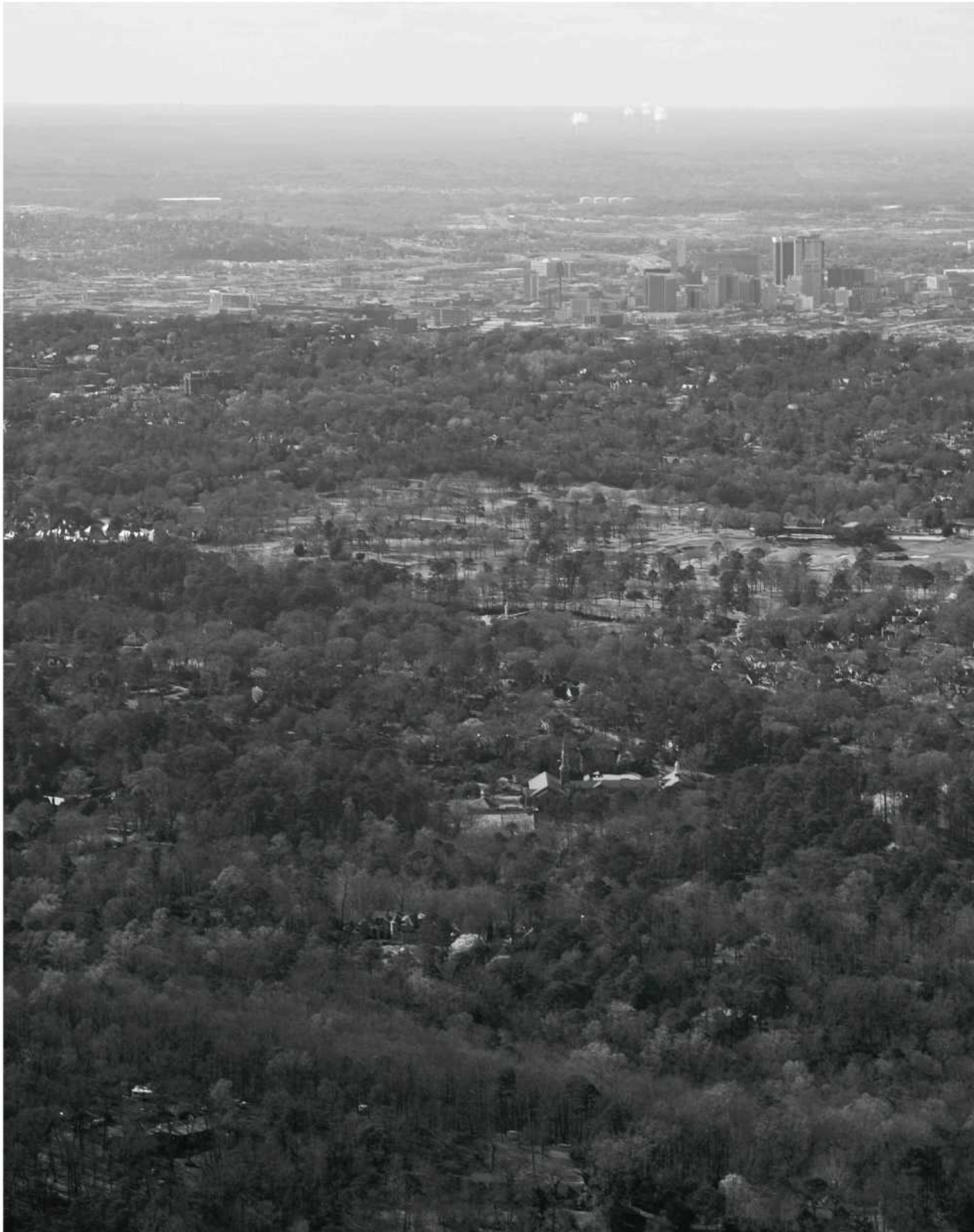
**Introduction, Mountain Brook, Alabama, Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Project.** With project location map and sheet index, HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 1.

In 1926, Jemison & Co., headed by Robert Jemison, Jr., bought land, gathered investors, and undertook a major new subdivision in the Appalachian foothills south of Birmingham. Industry was growing in Alabama, and economic times were still sufficiently prosperous for the company to undertake their culminating achievement. Olmsted Brothers, in their park plan for Birmingham of the previous year, had noted the scenic character of the area. The well-experienced Jemison firm hired the seasoned landscape architect Warren H. Manning of Boston to design what became a community of country homes and amenities set amidst the challenging topography and intense natural beauty, made accessible via skillfully laid roads, trails, and bridges. Manning's work concluded in March of 1929.

Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Sheet 1, to the left, together with the following sheets, explores the Jemison-Manning undertaking that forms the core of today's Mountain Brook. Photographs and commentary highlight many of the features reviewed in the drawings and help visualize the exceptionally well-planned residential area.

*"The valley of Shades Creek and the precipitous northwesterly face of Shades Mountain offer perhaps the best opportunity for enclosed natural landscape and inspiring broad outlook in the Birmingham district. . . . Its wild character must be faithfully guarded against all encroachments."*

—Olmsted Brothers, *A Park System for Birmingham*, 1925



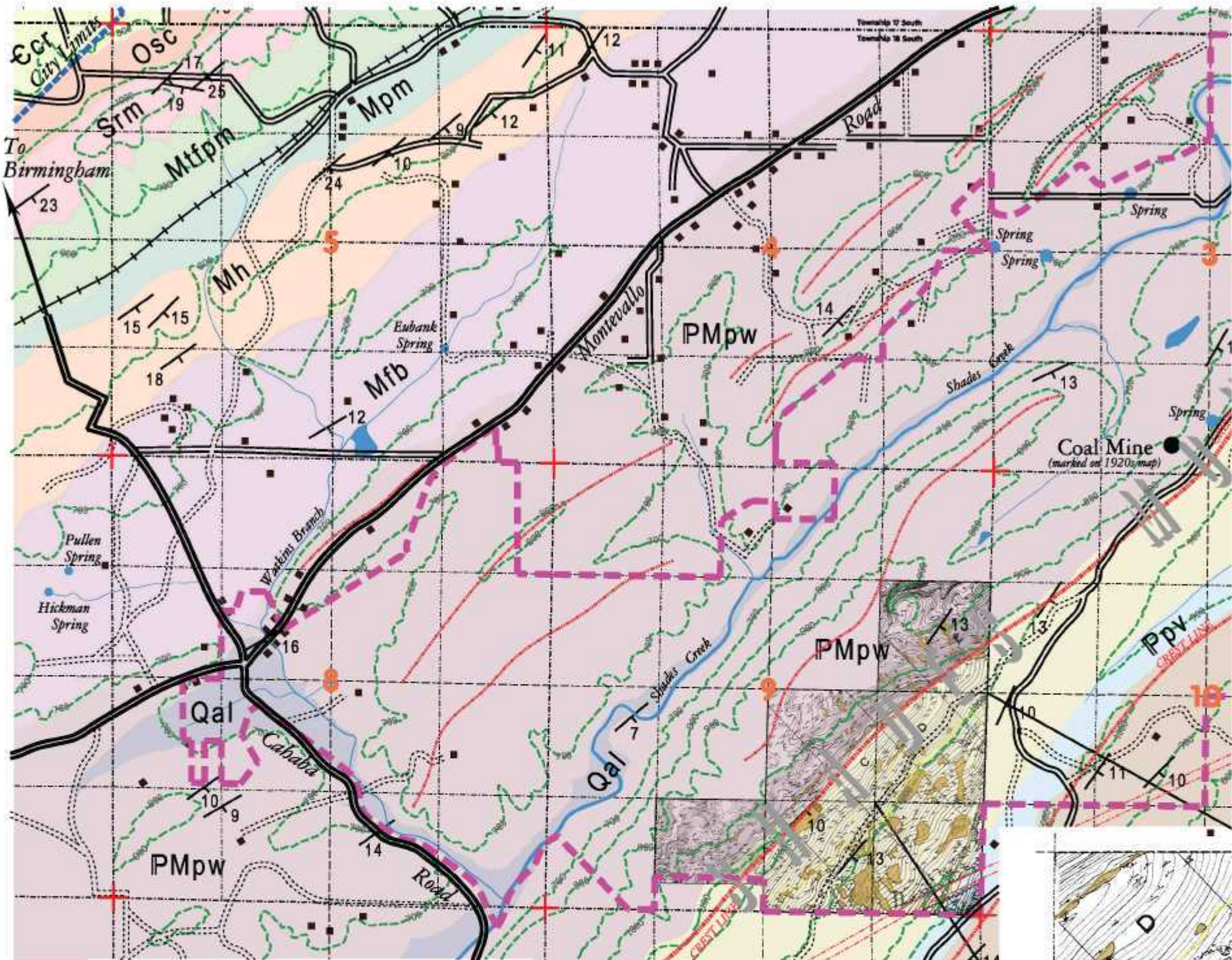


**View to the City of Birmingham.**

Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

Mountain Brook lies in Shades Valley amidst heavily forested ridges and knolls. Breaking the tree line are the spires of Canterbury United Methodist Church, *center*, and Mountain Brook Baptist Church, *center right*. Run-off water from Red Mountain collects in springs on the Birmingham Country Club golf course, *center*, and flows via Watkins Branch to Shades Creek. The land area of the suburban community is 98 percent residential.

# SITE CONDITIONS, 1926



## KEY TO GEOLOGICAL STRATA

- Qal** Alluvium. Unconsolidated quartz silt, sand, and gravel.
- Ppv** Pottsville Formation undifferentiated. Dark-gray silty shale with intervals of lithic sandstone and minor interbeds of coal and underclay.
- Ppvc** Chestnut Sandstone Member. Light-gray quartzose sandstone.
- Ppvs** Shades Sandstone Member. Very light-gray quartzose sandstone with scattered quartz pebbles and conglomerate.
- PMpw** Parkwood Formation. Medium- to light-gray shale with intervals of lithic sandstone.
- Mfb** Floyd Shale and Bangor Limestone undifferentiated.
- Mh** Hartselle Sandstone. Quartzose sandstone.
- Mpm** Pride Mountain Formation. Dark-gray shale with limonite stringers and nodules.
- Mtspm** Tuscumbia Limestone, Fort Payne Chert, and Maury Formation undifferentiated.
- Srm** Red Mountain Formation.
- Osc** Sequatchie Formation and Chickamauga Limestone undifferentiated.
- Scr** Copper Ridge Dolomite.
- 12** Strike and dip angle of strata
- 18** Strike and dip of overturned strata



Geological map data based on Geological Survey of Alabama, 7.5 Min Quadrangle Series: Map 26 Plate 1, Irondale (2003); Map 42 Plate 1, Cahaba Heights (2006); Map 45 Plate 1, Birmingham North (2006); Map 47 Plate 1, Birmingham South (2007). Geological strata abbreviations and descriptions from Plate 2 of Maps 26, 42, and 47. Data for infrastructure and houses based on U.S. Department of Agriculture Bureau of Soils, Soil Map, Alabama, Jefferson County Sheet, Field operations and mapping, 1908. Location of springs, oven, furnace, and coal mine according to "Mountain Brook Land Co., Birmingham, Ala.: Tentative General Plan No. 2 - No. 1536-402-24, Warren H. Manning Offices, Inc., Aug. 6, 1928." Courtesy Jimeson Papers, BPL Archives.



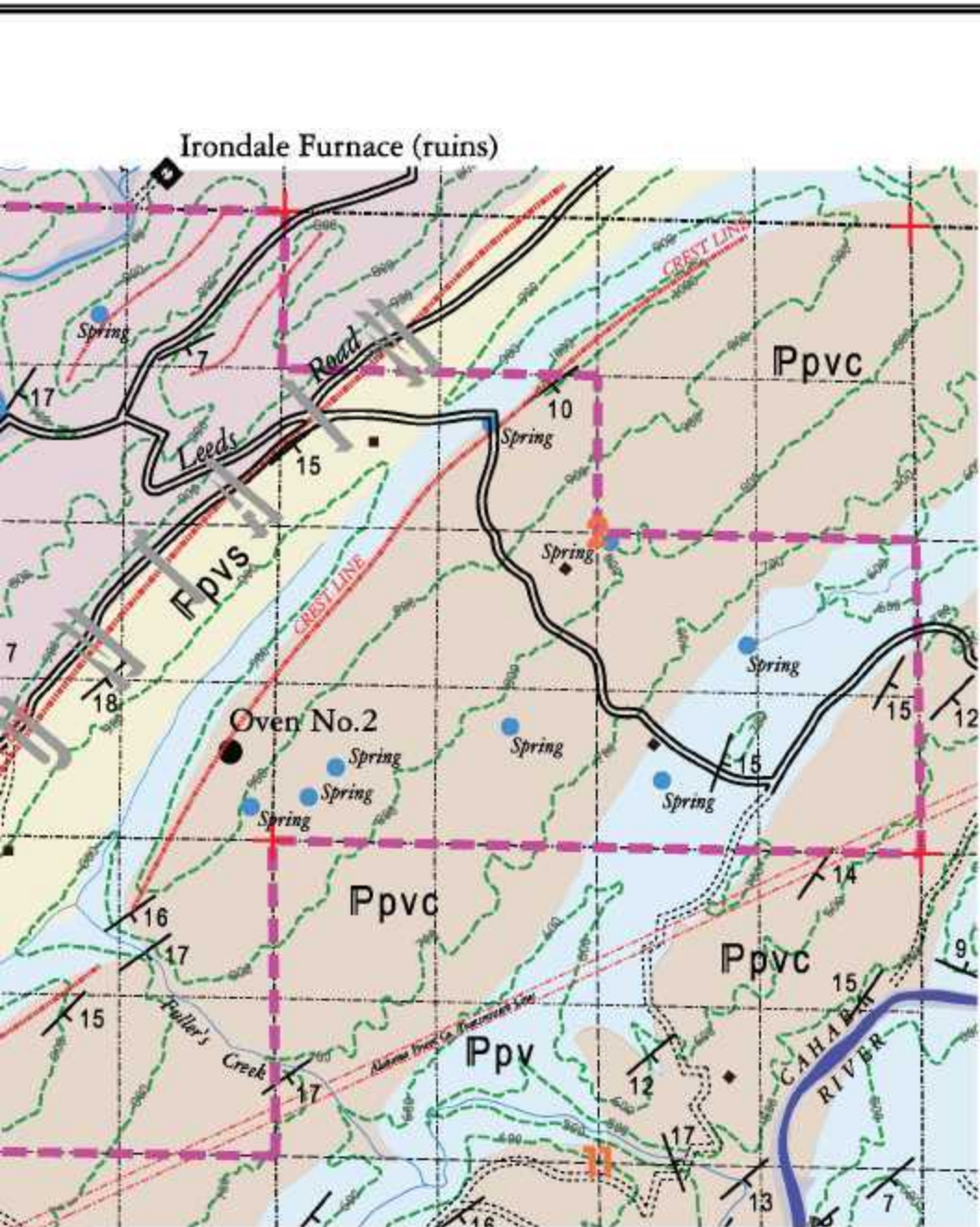
1/16<sup>th</sup> Section enlargement

Portion of field survey enlarged to show individual tree species and diameters as noted on topographic plan by J.H. Gilman. Color added to rock outcrops and diagrams to improve legibility. Drawing scanned from "Topographic Mountain Land Corporation, Section 17 So. - Range 2W" June, 1926. Courtesy Jimeson Papers, BPL Archives.

## LEGEND

- Jimeson & Company 1929 boundary
- Birmingham city limit
- +16** Section corners and

Scale: 1" = 600 Feet

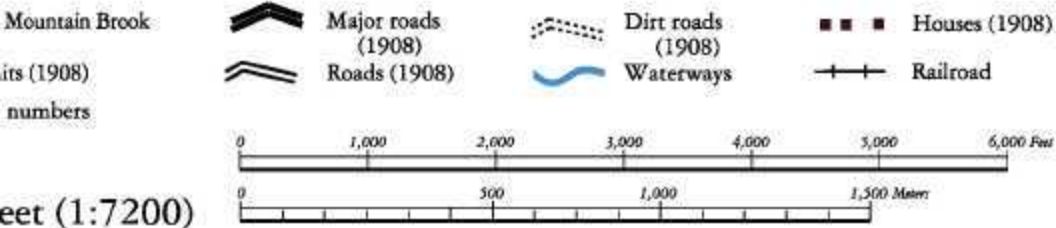


This map of Jemison & Company's Mountain Brook and adjoining property shows mining and other roads extant in 1926 and the underlying geological strata as mapped in 1908. In the 1920s, the basic topography and natural features of the area were unchanged despite industrial, agricultural, and residential use. Both Warren Manning's *Birmingham District Plan* of 1916 and Olmsted Brothers' park plan of 1925 recognized the scenic potential of the area's distinctive series of narrow ridges, steep cliffs, gulleys, streams, rocky outcrops, and forests that owed their existence to the underlying sandstone and shale strata, shown on this map, and the age-old soils.

Inclined strata of varying degrees of hardness, indicated by dip angles, had eroded at different rates to form the region's narrow ridges and valleys. Along the crests, rock outcrops abounded. At other surfaces, erosion and vegetation had broken strata down to form a variety of soils that supported diverse plant species. Along the creeks, soft shales and coal were found. Photographs from the 1920s reveal that large areas of the property were covered by a relatively young forest, not the "virgin" forest advertised in Jemison & Company promotional literature.

The charcoal-fired Irondale Furnace, constructed in 1863-1864, drew its wood supplies from these surrounding forests. The furnace closed in 1873, allowing tree cover to regrow. Land surveys carried out by the project team in 1926 portray the diverse plant communities of the Ridge and Valley province of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Civil engineer J.H. Glander, Jr. mapped hickory, oak, poplar, pine, dogwood, and sweetgum from 8" to 42" caliper. Sycamore, redbud, and many shrub and vine species are also mentioned by planner Warren Manning and developer Robert Jemison, Jr. in letters now held in the Jemison Papers at Birmingham Public Library Archives. Manning's planning studies show individual trees as well as creeks and springs, and furnace, coal mine, and charcoal oven sites. An excerpt of one of the detailed surveys is shown to the left.

Two major roads border the Mountain Brook property: the Montevallo and Cahaba Roads. These important routes connected Birmingham to Selma and Montevallo and gave access to the main source of drinking water, the Cahaba River. Other extant roads ran to an industrial center at Leeds, accessed coal deposits at Overton, and led to a mine and charcoal oven along Shades Mountain. To the north of the Jemison property, dairy farms provided food for the urban population living over the mountain (Red Mountain) in Birmingham.

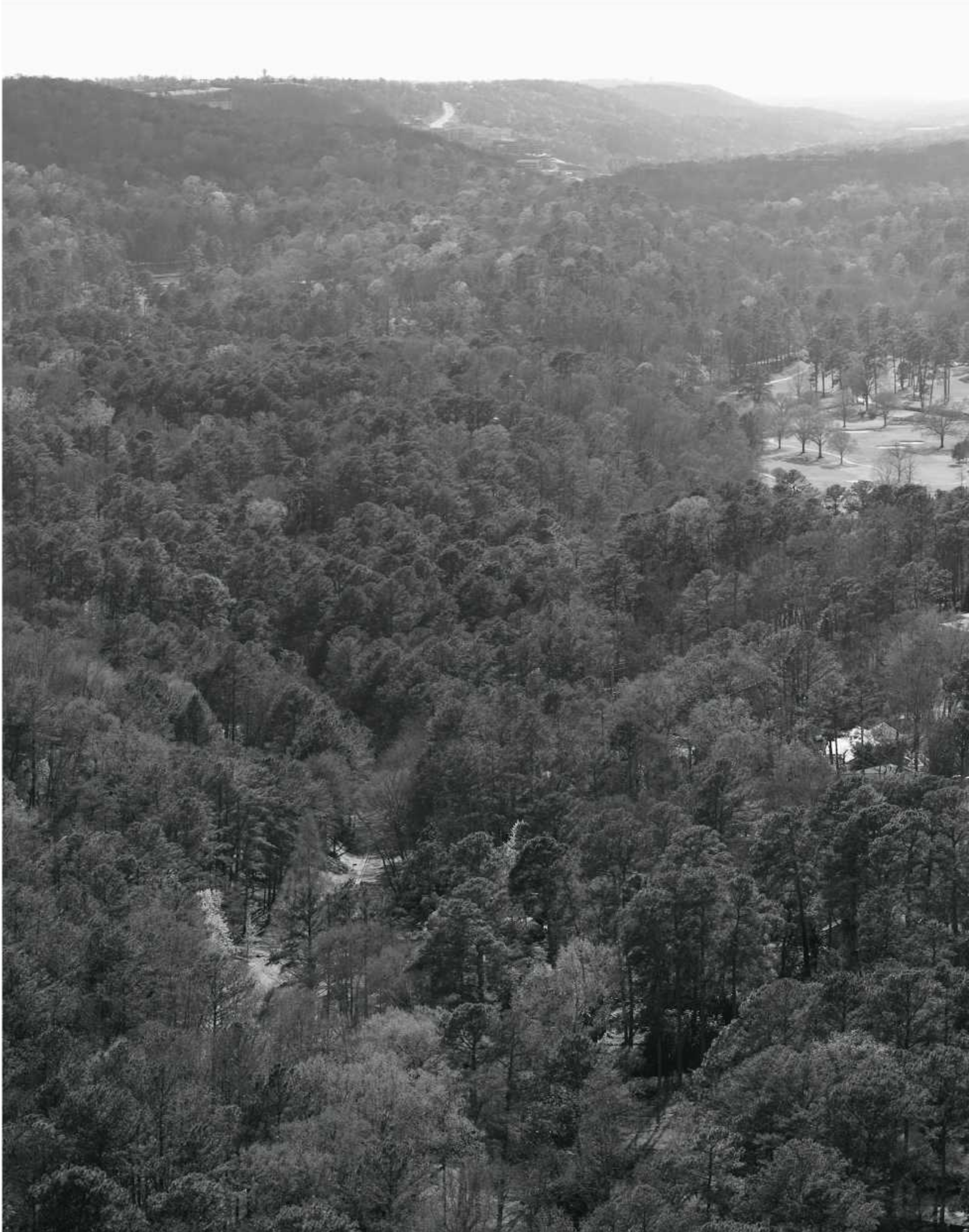


HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY AL-2  
 SHEET 2 OF 13  
 ALABAMA  
 JEFFERSON COUNTY  
**MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929**  
 CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CAHABA ROAD  
 RICHARD K. ANDERSON, JR., BIRGIT KÖBELKA, 2012.  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM

**Site Conditions, 1926.** HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 2.

When Warren Manning began his design for Mountain Brook in 1926, he found a remote wilderness with steep mountain slopes, ridges, streams, forests, and rock outcrops. The site for the new residential district was barely accessible then. Just two major roads bordered the area, connecting it to Birmingham, Selma, and Montevallo and to the Cahaba River. Dairy farms and previous mining activity for the operation of a furnace were the main uses.

Manning's design team carefully studied the area prior to developing a design. In addition to the topography, they mapped creeks, springs, tree species, and rock outcroppings, as well as furnace, coal mine, and charcoal oven sites. The careful reconnaissance of the project site was essential to integrate roads and residences into the challenging topography while preserving natural features and views.





**View into Shades Valley.**

Aerial photograph by John Wethen, 2013. BHS.

The heavily wooded, remote character of the site remains today. This view looks across the site of Mountain Brook Club into Shades Valley, with Shades Mountain, *to the left*, and many smaller ridges, *to the right*.

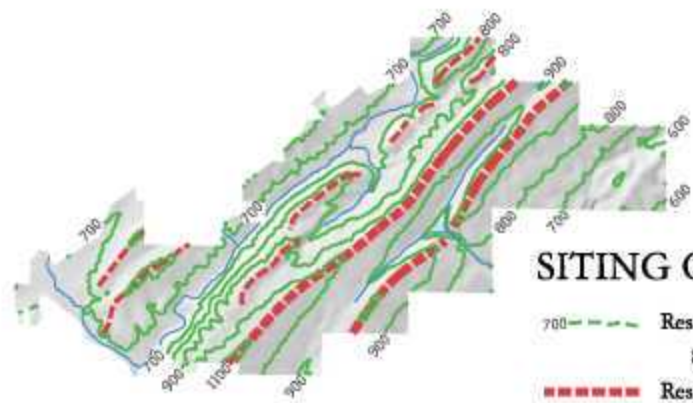
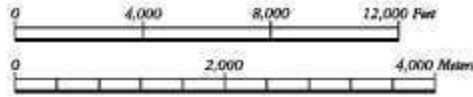
Shades Creek flows, *center right*, from the Irondale Furnace ruins through the Mountain Brook Club golf course and along Overbrook Road and Mountain Brook Parkway to the gap in the ridges at Cahaba Road—U.S. 280. The bluffs of Shades Mountain overlook the creek, *top left to center*, as it traverses the suburban Birmingham communities of Mountain Brook, Homewood, and Hoover.

# LAND USE GUIDELINES



## PROPOSED USES

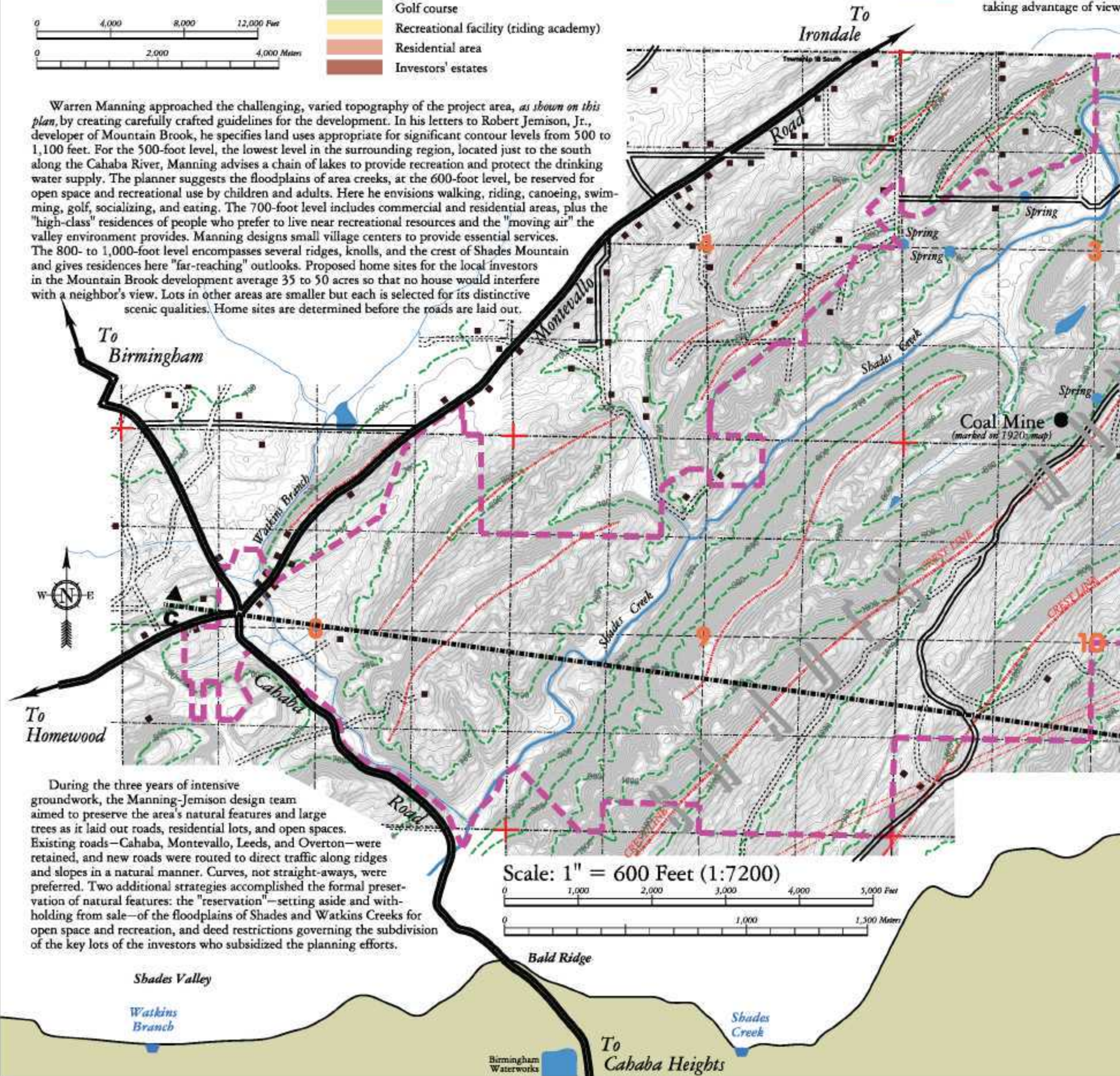
- Lakes and streams
- Village center/community center
- Reservation of flood plains
- Golf course
- Recreational facility (riding academy)
- Residential area
- Investors' estates



## SITING OF RESIDENCES

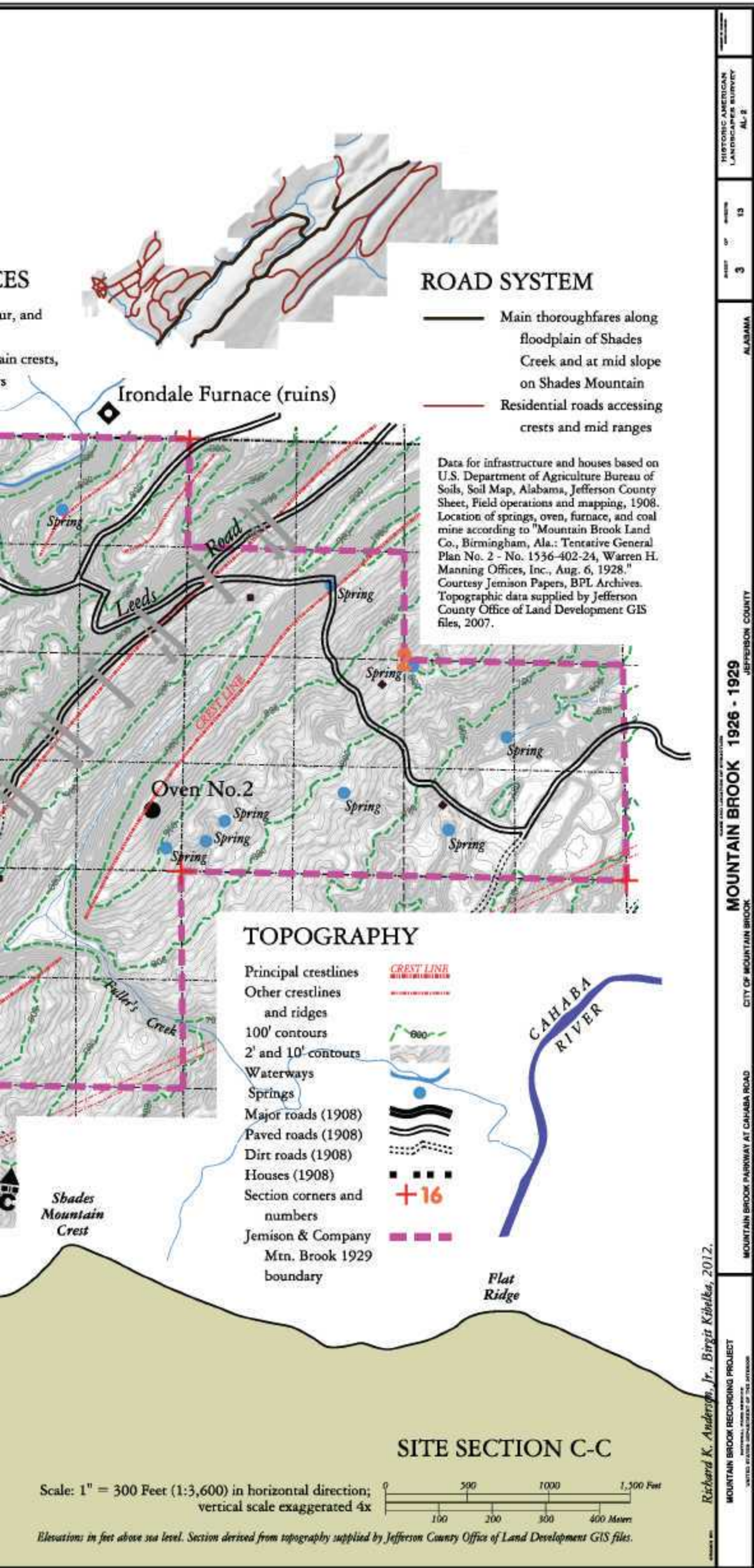
- Residences along 700' contour
- Residences along the mountain ridge taking advantage of view

Warren Manning approached the challenging, varied topography of the project area, as shown on this plan, by creating carefully crafted guidelines for the development. In his letters to Robert Jemison, Jr., developer of Mountain Brook, he specifies land uses appropriate for significant contour levels from 500 to 1,100 feet. For the 500-foot level, the lowest level in the surrounding region, located just to the south along the Cahaba River, Manning advises a chain of lakes to provide recreation and protect the drinking water supply. The planner suggests the floodplains of area creeks, at the 600-foot level, be reserved for open space and recreational use by children and adults. Here he envisions walking, riding, canoeing, swimming, golf, socializing, and eating. The 700-foot level includes commercial and residential areas, plus the "high-class" residences of people who prefer to live near recreational resources and the "moving air" the valley environment provides. Manning designs small village centers to provide essential services. The 800- to 1,000-foot level encompasses several ridges, knolls, and the crest of Shades Mountain and gives residences here "far-reaching" outlooks. Proposed home sites for the local investors in the Mountain Brook development average 35 to 50 acres so that no house would interfere with a neighbor's view. Lots in other areas are smaller but each is selected for its distinctive scenic qualities. Home sites are determined before the roads are laid out.



During the three years of intensive groundwork, the Manning-Jemison design team aimed to preserve the area's natural features and large trees as it laid out roads, residential lots, and open spaces. Existing roads—Cahaba, Montevallo, Leeds, and Overton—were retained, and new roads were routed to direct traffic along ridges and slopes in a natural manner. Curves, not straight-aways, were preferred. Two additional strategies accomplished the formal preservation of natural features: the "reservation"—setting aside and withholding from sale—of the floodplains of Shades and Watkins Creeks for open space and recreation, and deed restrictions governing the subdivision of the key lots of the investors who subsidized the planning efforts.





Richard K. Anderson, Jr., Brigit Kibelka, 2012.

MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT

MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CAHABA ROAD

CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK

MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929

JEFFERSON COUNTY

ALABAMA

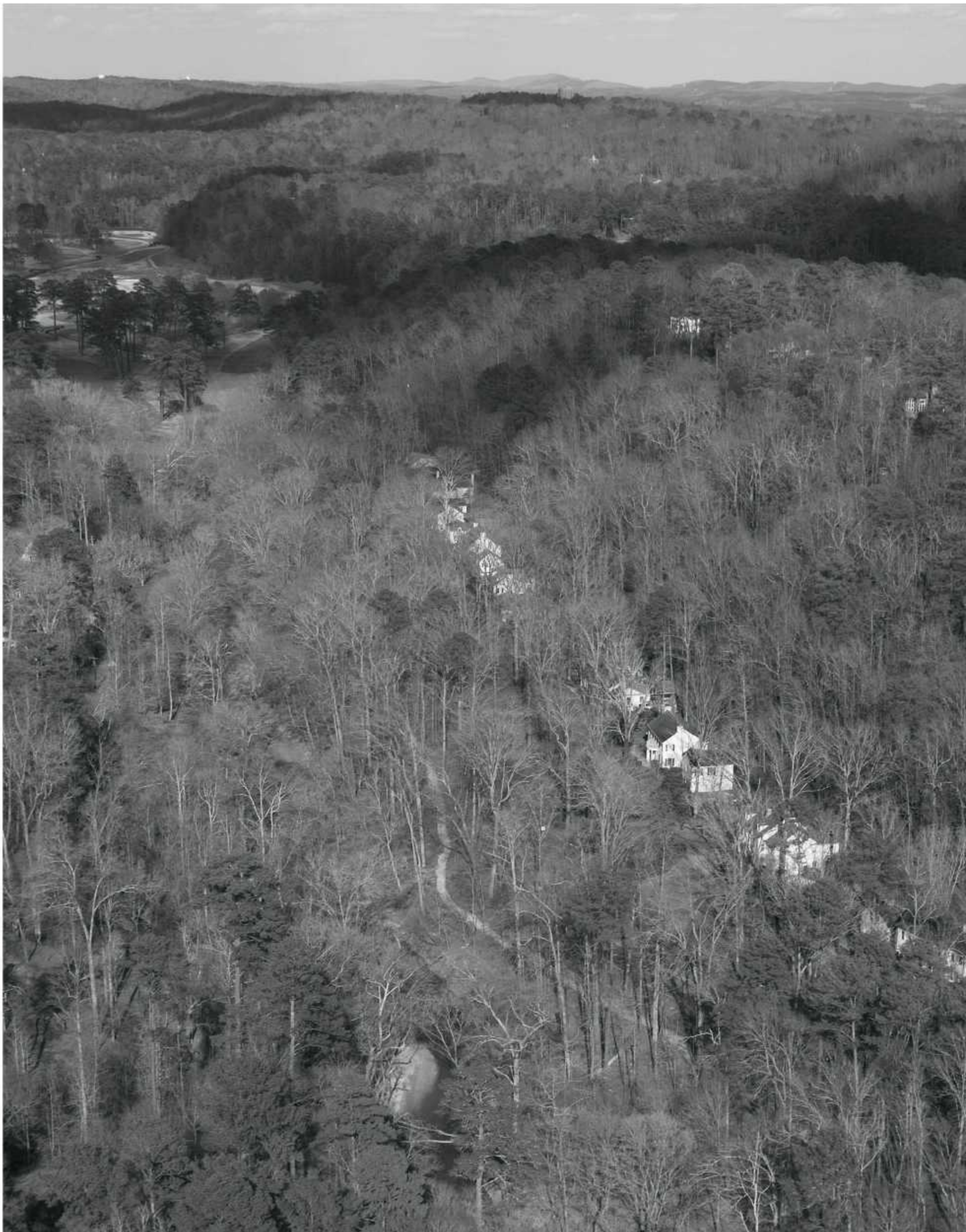
SHEET 3 OF 13

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY AL-2

**Land Use Guidelines.** HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 3.

True to his naturalistic, resource-based approach to planning, Warren Manning crafted guidelines to integrate the residential community into the natural environment in the most sustainable way while highlighting outstanding natural features. Floodplains were to be reserved for recreational uses, and village and community centers were to be built in strategic, accessible locations, while the hills, ridges, and mountains would be residential areas. The 700-foot to 1,000-foot contours and the crests of ridges and mountain tops were designated for residences to best adapt to the climate and to offer the most beautiful views.

The studies, *to the left*, highlight the planning guidelines Manning developed in 1926, while the aerial photograph, *next page*, shows how the concept appears today from above.





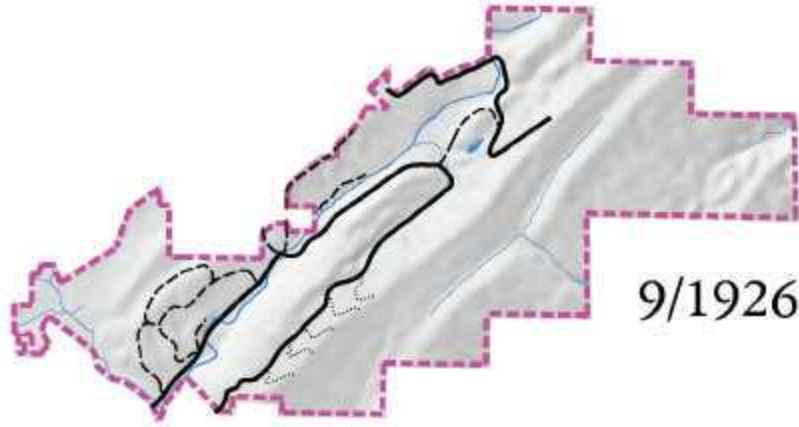
**View Along Shades Creek.**

*Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.*

Warren Manning established that floodplains were to be reserved for recreational uses, while residences would be located atop crest lines and along the 700-foot to 1,000-foot contours. *In the center of this photograph*, a historic trail winds along the Shades Creek floodplain below Overbrook Road. The trail leads to the widening of the floodplain at the Mountain Brook Club golf course, *top left*.

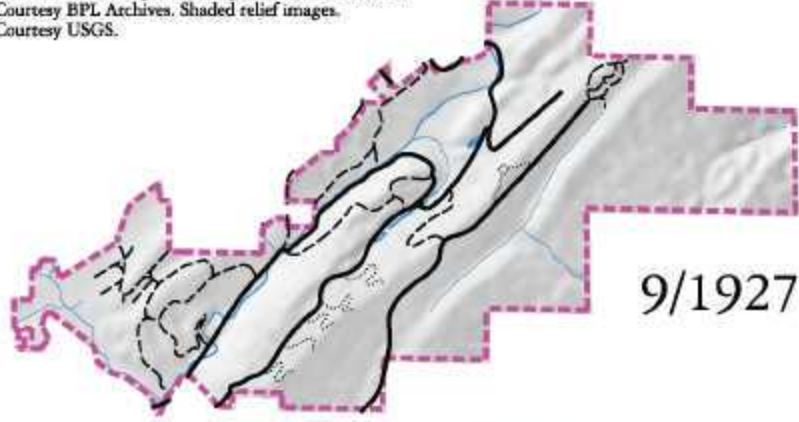
Residences are set into the adjoining ridges at 700 feet along Overbrook Road, *center*; at 900 feet along Dell and Cherokee Roads, *center right*; and at the 1,000-foot-level Shades Mountain crest along Briarcliff and East Briarcliff Roads, *top right*. The home sites were selected and boundaries determined; then the roads to them were laid without disturbing natural features.

# STUDIES FOR ACCESS ROADS AND LOT P



This early layout of access roads to the development shows the main route—the future Mountain Brook Parkway—running right through the floodplain that is today's Jemison Park and Mountain Brook Club golf course.

Roads traced from: Jemison Papers, File # 6.1.18.14. Courtesy BPL Archives. Shaded relief images. Courtesy USGS.



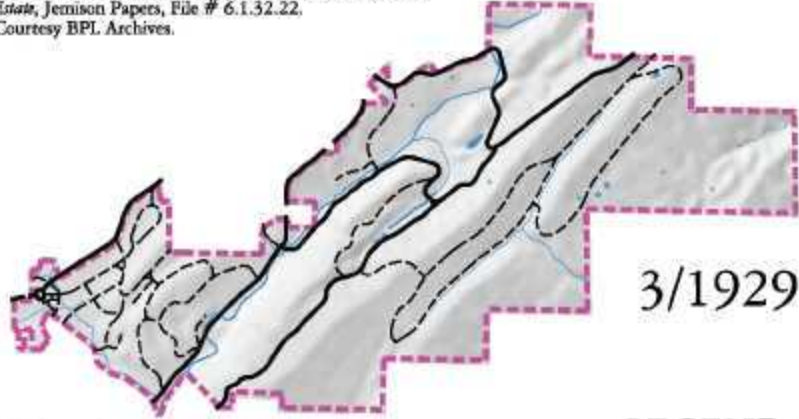
Here a direct access route to the future Cherokee Road from Mountain Brook Parkway runs to the lower Shades Mountain ridge through today's Jemison Park. Cherokee circumvents the golf course and a first version of Overcrest Road crosses Shades Mountain.

Roads traced from: Jefferson County Estates, A Summary of the studies made Sept. 15-16-17-18 on the ground with Messrs Frankie-Kessler-Glander and Warren Manning, Sept. 18, 1927. Courtesy BPL Archives.



Manning explores the possibility of accessing the lots on both sides of Shades Creek and creating connections to Cherokee Road from these Mountain Brook Parkway lots.

Roads traced from: Alternatives Study for Lots Back of Model Estate, Jemison Papers, File # 6.1.32.22. Courtesy BPL Archives.

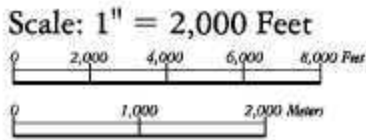


In the final layout, the roads follow contours and cut across the crest line at a single location: at today's Overcrest Road. The intersection of Overcrest with Cherokee was moved to avoid cutting a large tree and give room for a large lot. The crest of Shades Mountain was cut down 10 feet to permit Overcrest to pass below grade, hiding automobile traffic. Only one side of Mountain Brook Parkway is subdivided, and a new route—the future Beechwood Road and rerouted Leeds Road is projected around the newly created golf course.

Roads as per General Plan (sheet 6). Courtesy BPL Archives.

## LEGEND

- Planned thoroughfare ———
- Planned residential road - - - - -
- Planned estate driveway ·····
- Jemison & Company boundary - - - - -
- Mountain Brook 1929 boundary - - - - -
- Lakes and streams ~~~~~



## ACCESS ROAD LAYOUTS

The development of Jemison & Company's Mountain Brook began with the purchase of a 420-acre tract of land that became "Mountain Brook Estates," the first sector to be subdivided in what grew to become a 2,400-acre development. Here Warren Manning planned two loop roads to access home sites along a 700- to 800-foot high ridge just north of Shades Mountain. Beginning in late 1926, these estate lots sold briskly. Then planning began to access the future estates of Jemison's investors atop Shades Mountain and a proposed golf resort that was to be built to the east of the crest estates.

How to get the roads into the area and what kind of development and how much of it to build

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Orig  
golf resor  
that bec  
country

Highland Sector,  
proposed home sites  
on Shades Mountain  
for investors



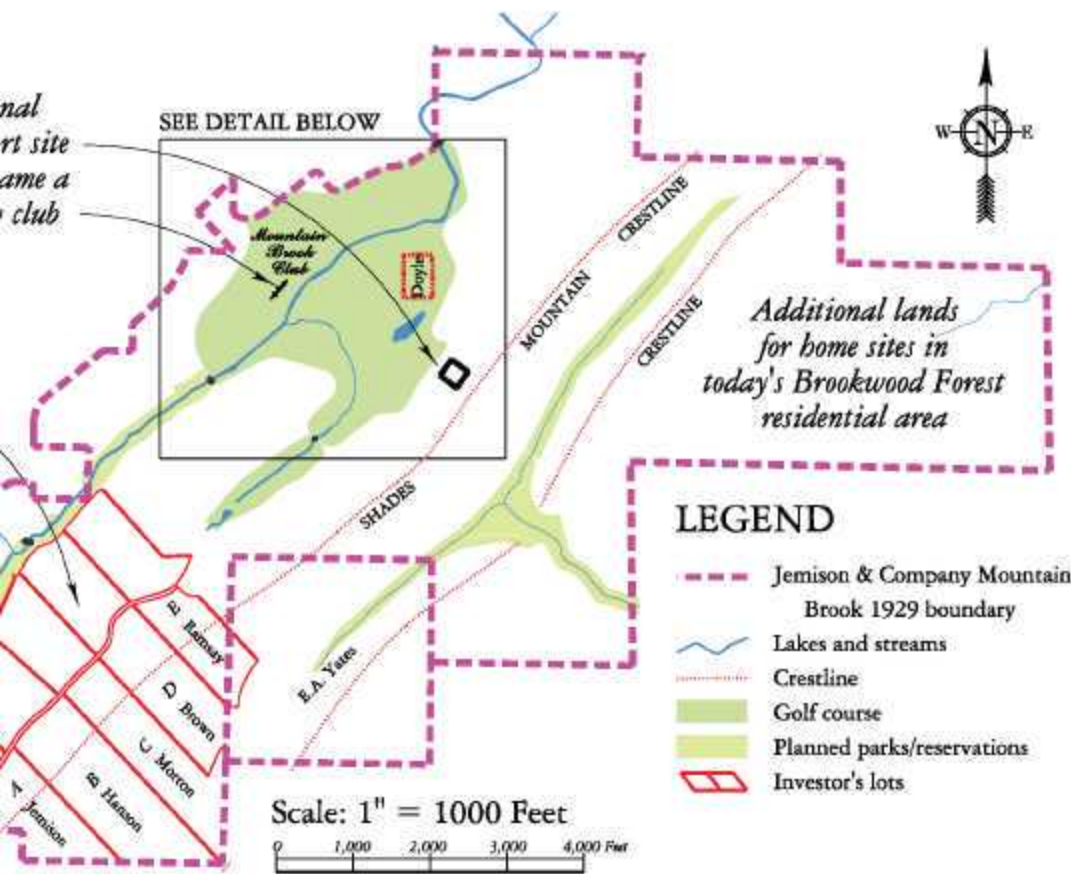
"Rough Study for New Golf Club and Region Adjacent Thereto," Warren Manning Inc., Cambridge, MA, March 19, 1928, scale of 1" = 100 ft. Courtesy Jemison Papers. BPL Archives.

## SUBDIVISION VARIATIO

# PLACEMENT

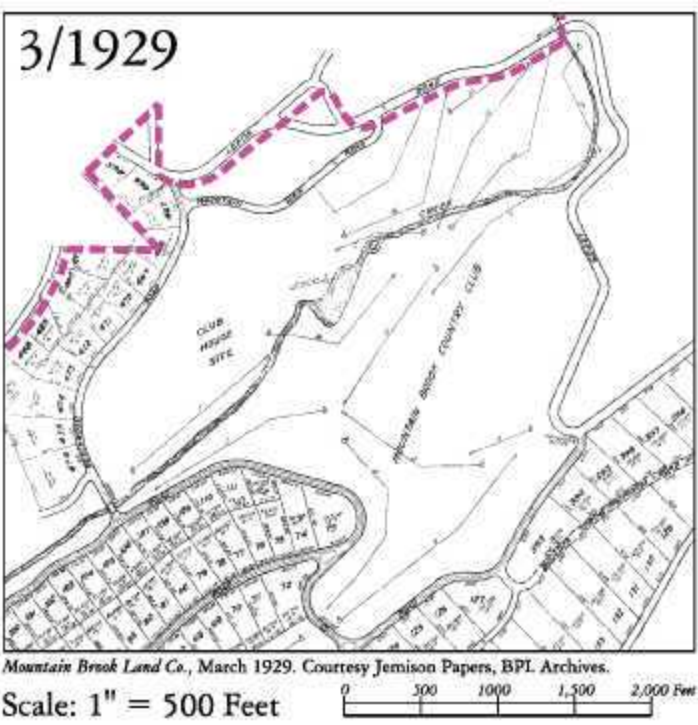
received intense review, as detailed studies and correspondence between Manning and his client Robert Jemison, Jr. reveal. Roads and lots were staked numerous times as lot layouts were revised. Additional acreage was purchased to make real layouts work. In every instance, Jemison did what he believed was best to develop the property. In the final plan, Jemison and his investors did not build an income-producing golf resort as earlier planned. They built a golf course and a clubhouse, trying to reorient and redesign the golf course following this programmatic change. No lots were subdivided on the club property. Instead they bought more land to enhance the golf links. They did not permit an access road, similar to today's

Shades Crest Road, along the crest of Shades Mountain (it would interfere with the privacy of home sites, according to Jemison). Thus, Cherokee Road became a mid slope road with driveways accessing the estates above and below. The investors permitted generous open space throughout the development by subdividing only one side of access roads—Mountain Brook Parkway and Overhill, Overcrest, and Beechwood Roads, as well as portions of Cherokee Road as it passes the golf course. The restricted subdivision preserved bluffs, increased park land, provided views for motorists, and gave future home owners exceptional views. A succession of layouts for roads and lots are shown on this drawing.



This study shows a golf resort with a hotel located on the Shades Mountain ridge overlooking the golf course (south-east corner), a portion of which is subdivided for residential development. A small clubhouse (center-east), a circle of homes for members, and a riding academy are also proposed. The coal mine site is reserved from sale (bottom-center).

In the final plan at the future Mountain Brook Club site, there is no hotel and no subdivision of the club property from Leeds Road. Leeds Road was relocated to give more room to the golf course (center-east).



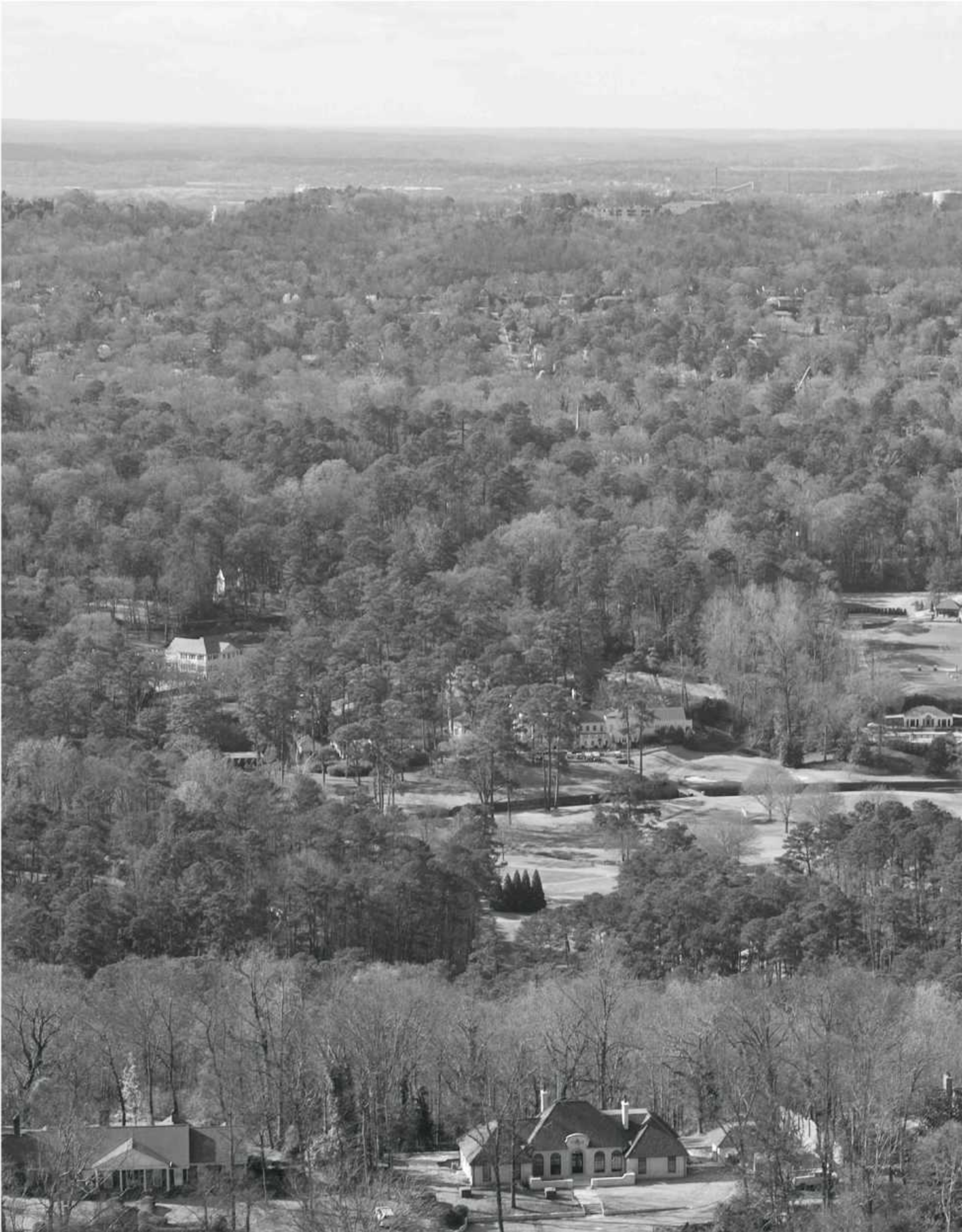
## ROADS AT MOUNTAIN BROOK CLUB SITE

**Studies for Access Roads and Lot Placement.** HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 4.

The placement of roads and lots received intense review throughout the development of Mountain Brook. Many road layouts were drafted, as shown on the far left, discussing how to access the future residential lots. In the final plan, the road layout is simplified, maximizing continuous open space along Shades Creek and on the north face of Shades Mountain. More room was given to the golf course by opting against subdividing it and thereby opening wide views into the valley.

The new thoroughfares of Mountain Brook Parkway and Overbrook and Cherokee Roads connected the central portion of the new district to Cahaba Road (now U.S. 280), with Old Leeds Road serving as the through route to the northeast. However, a through route for the subdivision's eastern portion could never be built due to unavailability of adjoining lands.

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY AL-2  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929 JEFFERSON COUNTY  
 CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CAHABA ROAD  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT  
 NATIONAL LAND SERVICE  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 Birgit Kibelka, 2012.





**View from Estate Lots Along Shades Crest.**

Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

To preserve the privacy of residences along the crest, developer Robert Jemison, Jr. insisted on Cherokee Road being routed at mid-slope instead of along the crest of Shades Mountain as Manning first suggested. This aerial photograph shows that views from the crest estates toward Shades Valley are as spectacular as envisioned at their inception.

Careful subdivision and road placement preserved open space and the bluffs below the residences along East Briarcliff, *bottom, left to right.* This view looks across the Mountain Brook Club golf course to Red Mountain and the city of Birmingham beyond.

# SITING THE ROADS

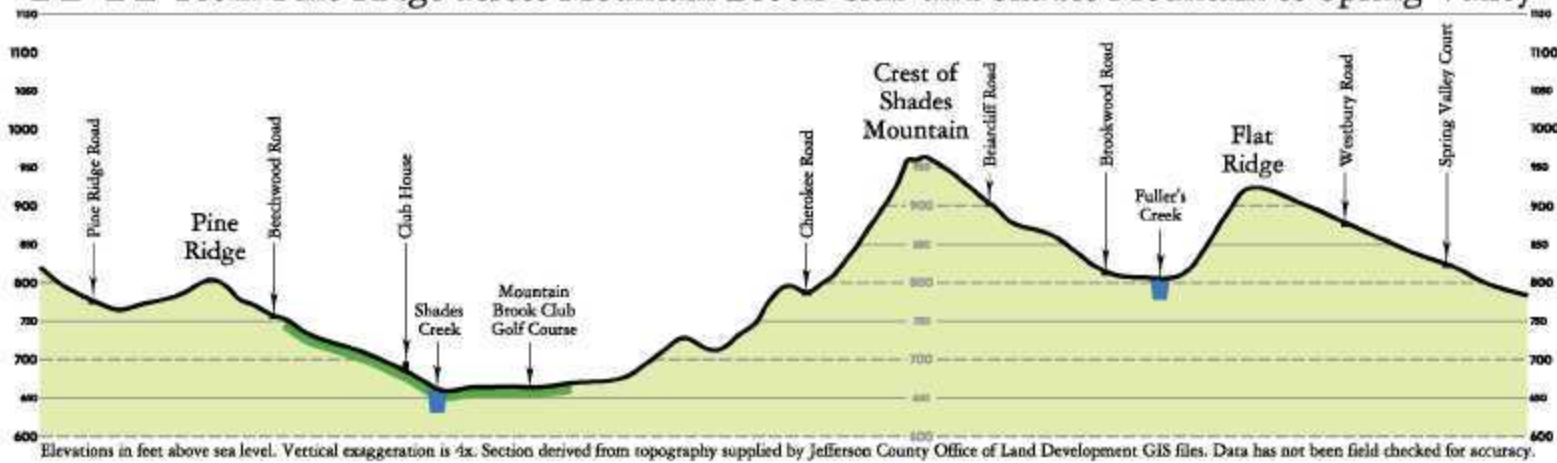
Manning's most significant contribution to the design of Mountain Brook was the siting of new roads, especially the through roads: Mountain Brook Parkway, Cherokee Road, and Brookwood Road, which set the bones of the development. Study plans for these and other roads were drawn and redrawn many times as possible routes and data were explored. Better routes for roads were determined and better opportunities for siting residences, protecting view sheds, and making each lot distinctive were worked out incrementally in the field after "tramping in the woods," as Manning described his preferred routing method. And investors also reviewed proposed layouts, especially the sites for their houses and for Mountain Brook Club and its golf course.

The Mountain Brook planning team consisted of Manning, who set the framework, closely participated in detailed drawings and analyses of alternatives, and reviewed and monitored the ongoing field work; Manning's on-site representative, landscape architect Carl Lutender; Birmingham landscape architect and horticulturalist William Kessler; civil engineer J.H. Glander, Jr.; and Jemison staffer Will Franke. The then leading national golf course designer Donald Ross laid out the golf links. A forester and other representatives of Jemison & Company's 100-person real estate firm also assisted.

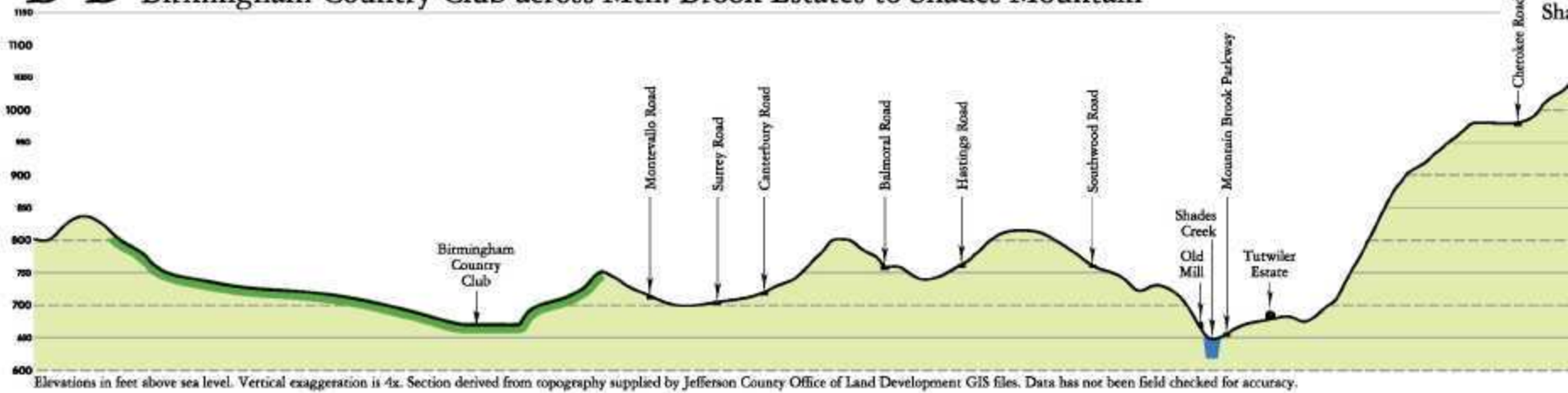
Roads were sited at varying heights to access lots atop the ridges, along mid slopes and knolls, and in the valleys above the creek beds, providing a variety of scenic and climatic conditions for future residents. Road grades were restricted to a maximum of 9 percent with a 200-foot radius for curves. The design team specified that roads would have a graded surface 30 feet wide with an 18-foot wide pavement (then state and county standard width), flanked by 3-foot shoulders of chert. Curves were properly banked. Lot lines were to be 20 feet from the bottoms of valleys so valleys could be controlled by a single owner. Houses were to be set back a minimum of 50 feet from the roads and 25 feet from side lines. Jemison's civil engineer J.H. Glander, Jr. supervised road construction, which included the grading, paving, drainage, and bridge building.



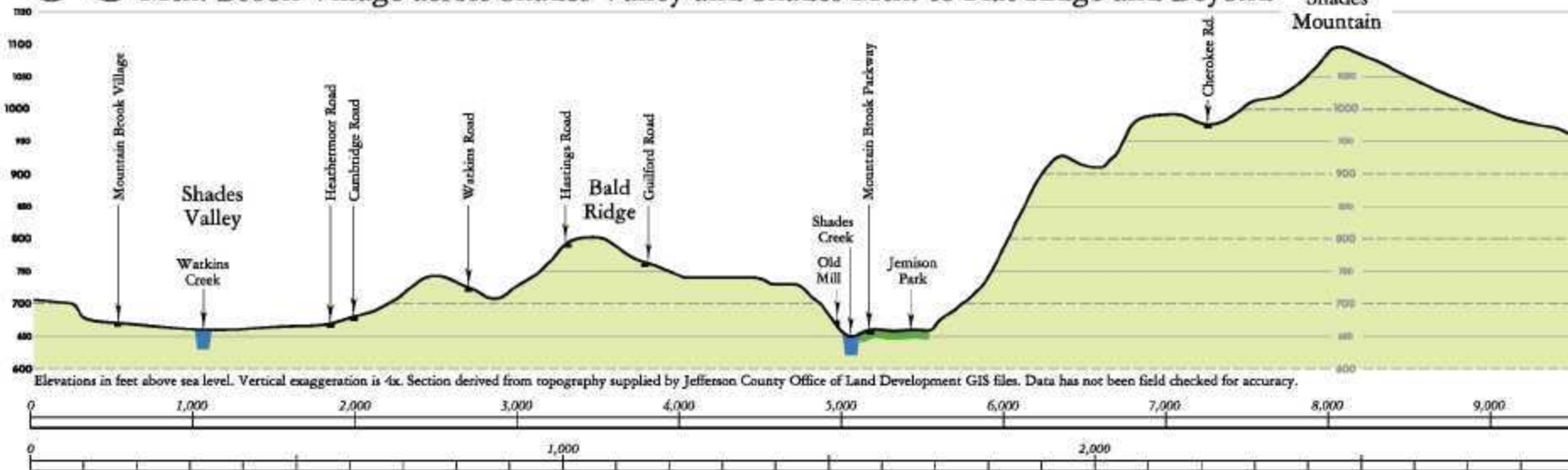
## A-A From Pine Ridge across Mountain Brook Club and Shades Mountain to Spring Valley



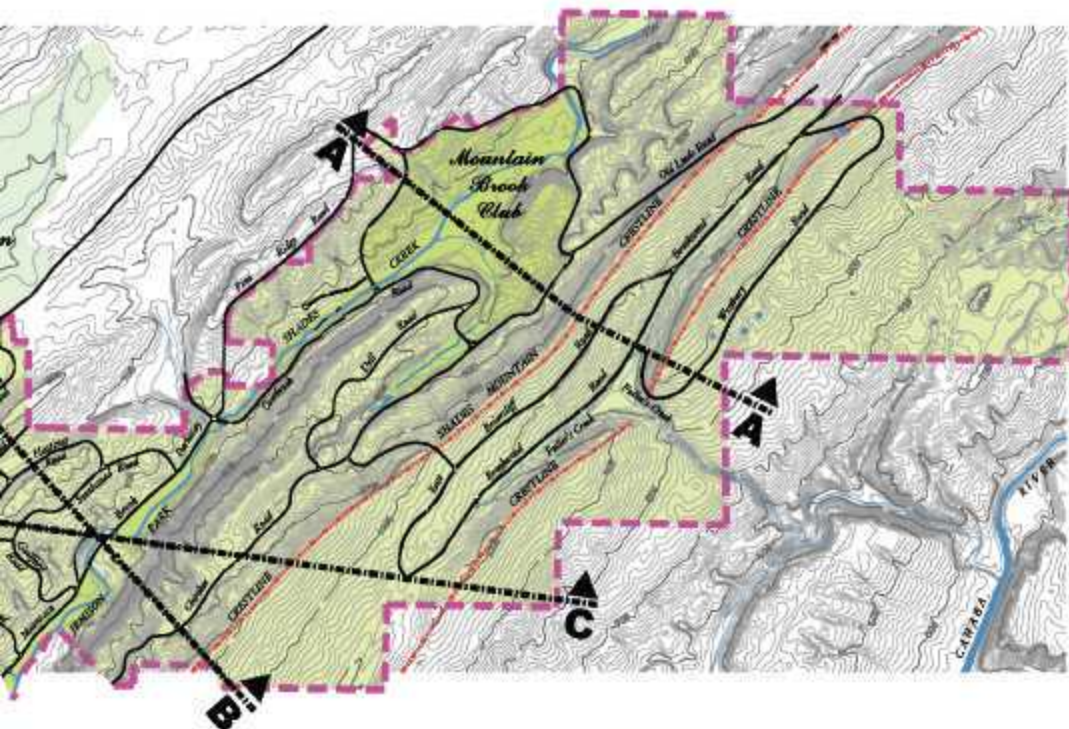
## B-B Birmingham Country Club across Mtn. Brook Estates to Shades Mountain



## C-C Mtn. Brook Village across Shades Valley and Shades Mtn. to Flat Ridge and Beyond







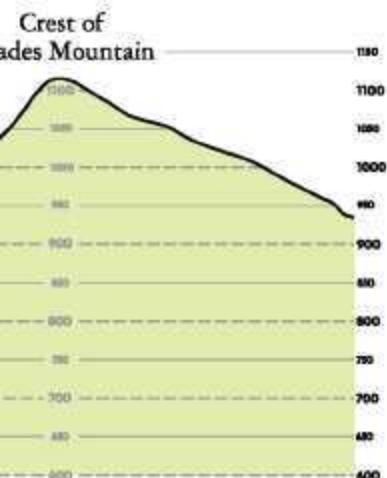
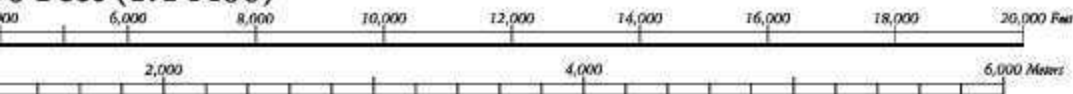
Company Mountain Brook 1929 boundary and project area  
 location lines  
 Company sited roads

Parks and golf course  
 Creeks and streams  
 Crestline

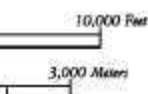
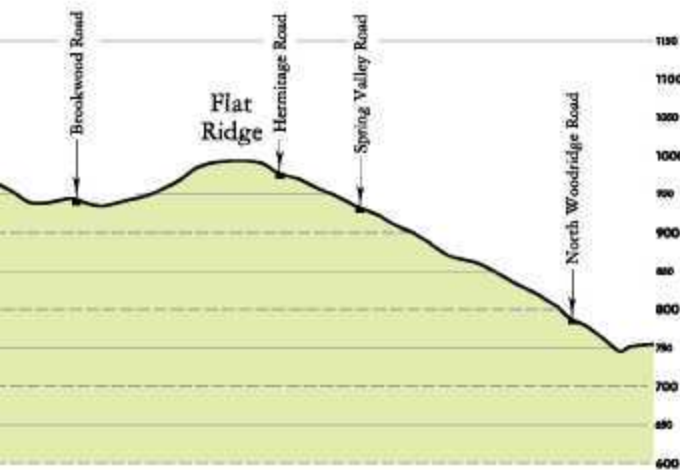


Quadrangles Birmingham North (1997), Irondale (1998), Cahaba Heights (1998), and

0 Feet (1:14400)



These cross-sections of Mountain Brook property taken at various angles to the mountain ridges show the range of elevations for road routes, residences, open space, and amenities. The sections look north-east and stretch from Red Mountain to Shades Mountain. The vertical scale has been exaggerated to 4x the horizontal to emphasize the topography and the scenic relationships between natural landscape and built features. Elevations in feet above sea level are shown by horizontal lines. The data in the cross sections was derived from GIS topographic data provided by the Jefferson County Office of Land Development. It was not field checked.



Scale: 1" = 400 Feet (1:4800) in horizontal direction; vertical scale exaggerated 4x

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY AL-2  
 SHEET 5 OF 13  
 ALABAMA  
 JEFFERSON COUNTY  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929  
 CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CAHABA ROAD  
 RICHARD K. ANDERSON, JR., BIRGIT KIBELKA, 2012.  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 CENTER FOR HISTORIC LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

**Siting the Roads.** HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 5.

In the 1920s, Jemison & Co. built 28 miles of roads into the Mountain Brook landscape. Through roads accessed the valley floor and ran along Shades Mountain. Westbury and Overcrest Roads were planned to cross the crest, accessing lots at the crest and along the mountain's southern flank.

Manning worked through many designs before arriving at the final plan for the road system. Despite the challenges of the existing topography, shown in the cross sections to the left, the planner and his on-site team managed to create a system of roads that winds smoothly through the mountains. Maximum slopes of 9 percent and a minimum curve radius of 200 feet were used. The team created an exceptional driving experience that takes full advantage of the scenic qualities of the area while preserving the privacy of the residences.

Warren Manning's letter of August 6, 1928, to Robert Jemison discusses the arrangements between his consulting firm and Jemison's Birmingham staff and describes the process for laying down the roads: "The roads of this study are laid down by Mr. Lutender [Carl Lutender, Manning's on-site representative] and myself on the ground, surveyed in by Mr. Glander Jr. [Jemison's civil engineer] and reviewed by you and your associates on foot and on horseback, and by Mr. Kessler [Jemison's Birmingham landscape architect] and me from crest outlook points."





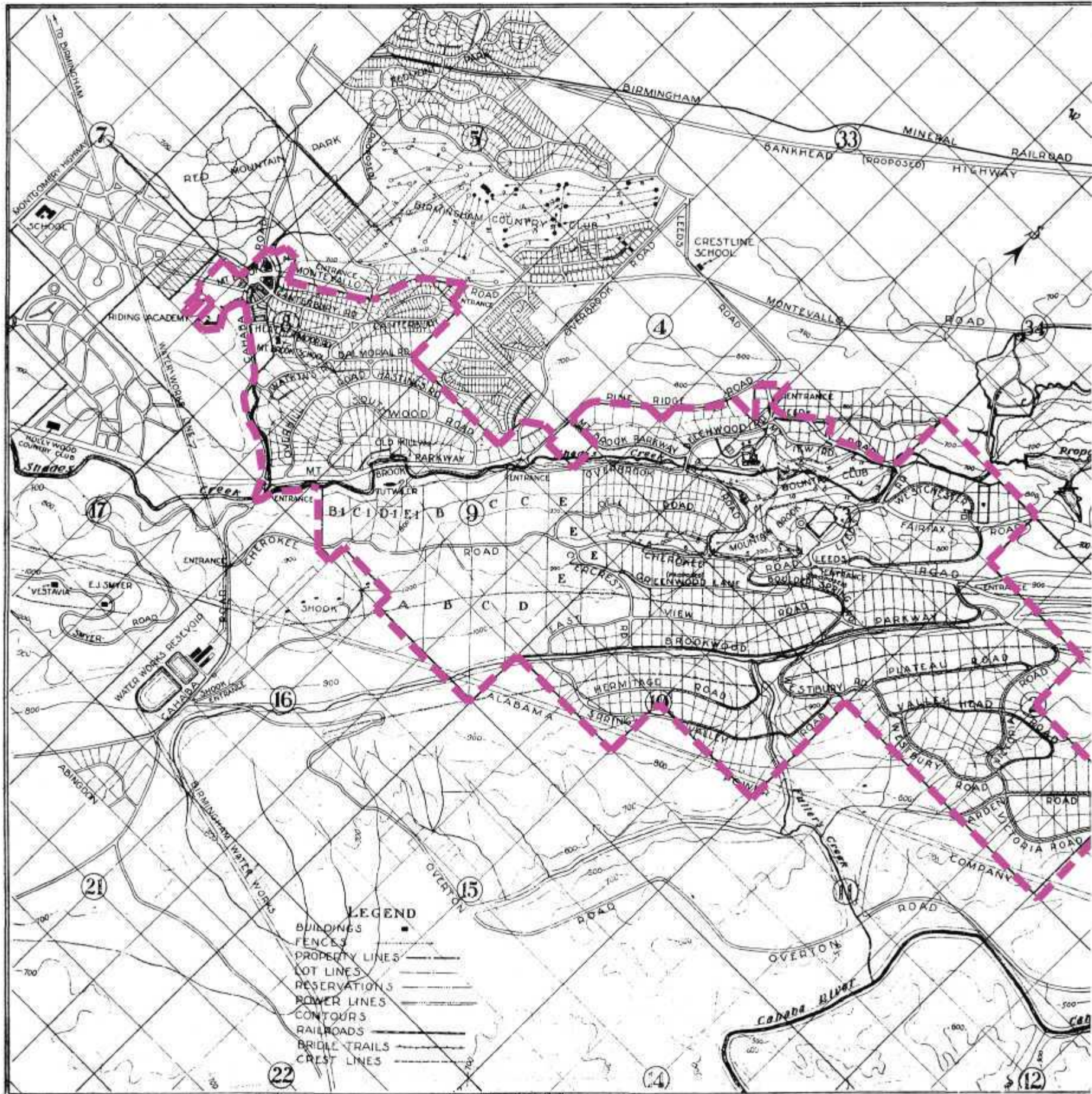
**View of Cherokee and Overcrest Roads  
Climbing to the Shades Mountain Crest.**

*Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.*

This aerial photograph illustrates the careful siting of the roads in Mountain Brook. In this view, Cherokee and Overcrest Roads hug the mountainside as they gracefully climb to estate lots along today's Briarcliff and East Briarcliff Roads. With its expertly routed wide S-shape, Overcrest is the only road that in the 1920s cut across the crest of Shades Mountain and divided the green space on this mountain slope. (Westbury Road and its crest lots were planned, but were accessed only by a bridle trail in the 1920s.)

Also shown are the "Mountain Nine" of the Mountain Brook Club golf course, set into the floodplain, with Cherokee Road running along its border and offering wide views into the course. *Bottom left*, residences along both sides of Dell Road are shown. *At the top*, Oak Mountain and Double Oak Mountain appear in the far distance.

# GENERAL PLAN FOR MOUNTAIN BROOK, MA



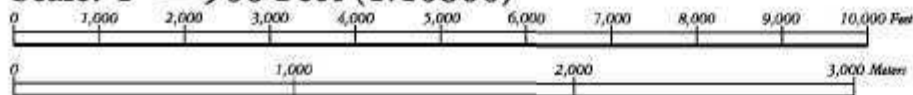
Tentative District Map Showing Property of Mountain Brook Land Co. and Associates, Birmingham, Alabama - General Plan, March 11, 1929. Courtesy Birmingham Public Library Archives, Birmingham, Alabama.

## LEGEND

Jemison & Company Mountain Brook 1929 boundary: ---

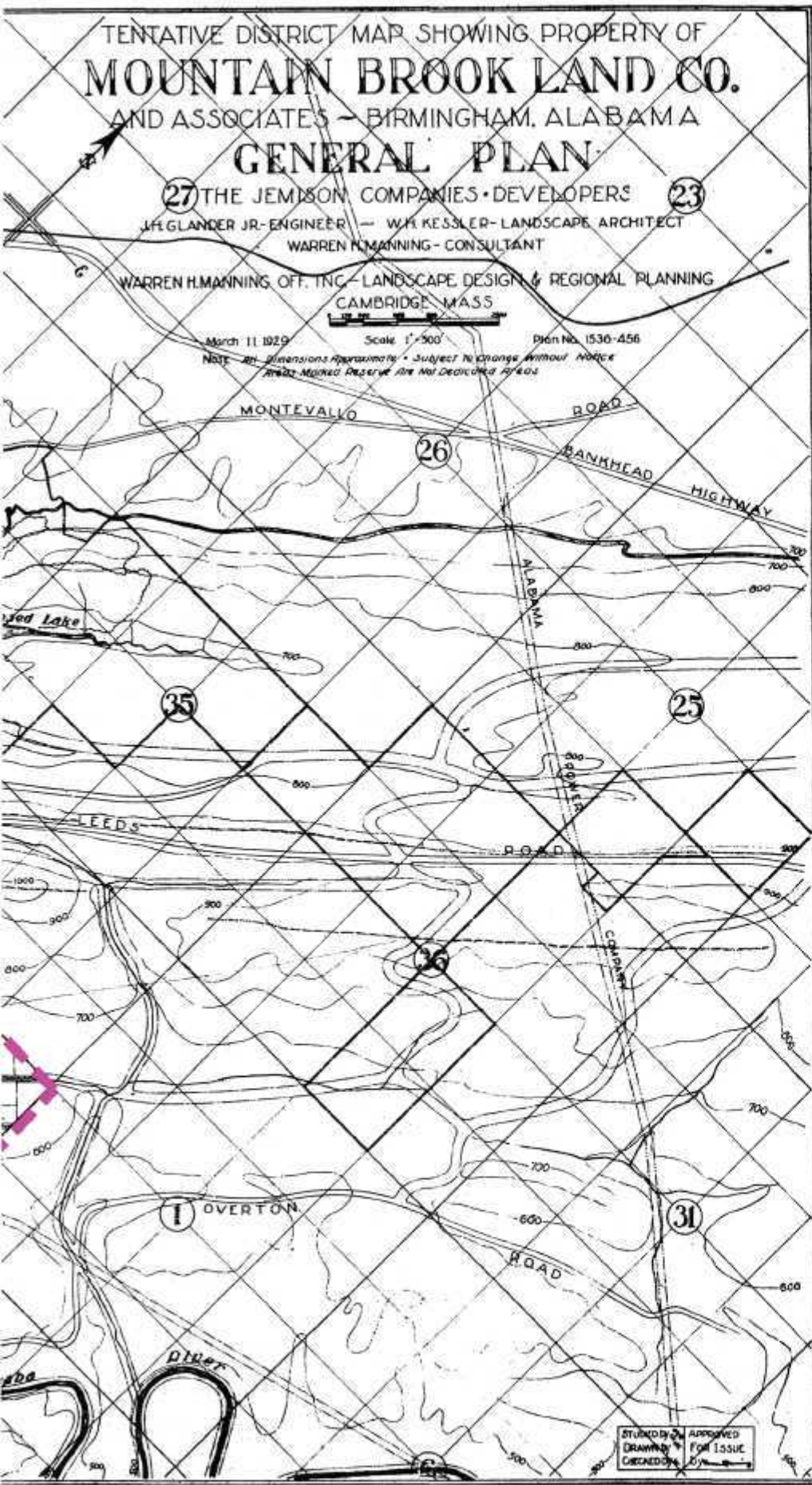


Scale: 1" = 900 Feet (1:10800)



Warren Manning's planning for Mountain Brook, begun in September 1926, culminated in this final plan of March 1929. The *General Plan* included the siting of roads and bridges, lot lines for residences, reservation of and deed restrictions to preserve open space, and the inclusion and location of other community features such as the commercial village, school, riding academy and trails, country club and golf course, showcase houses, and an old mill. Manning's firm also produced promotional materials for Jemison & Company. The plan covered 2,500 acres of Jemison lands and more than 2,000 acres of adjoining lands, then in ownership friendly to Jemison interests. The real estate development was the largest, as well as the finest, undertaken in the region. By

comparison, the well-planned Hollywood and Redmont in the 1920s, together comprising 1,500 acres. To set the tone for the development, Manning suggested building a country club. He designed the setting, gave the country club and George Washington's Mill along Shades Creek. Manning suggested reconstructing the mill along Rock Creek in Valley Head. The mill on Rock Creek in Valley Head was then highly popular gathering place. The plans for the "Old Mill."



anned adjacent communities of  
t Park, also developed in the late  
se 320 acres.  
e new residential district, Warren  
lding a Mt. Vernon replica. Manning  
rds, and planting plans. Because  
t. Vernon estate included a mill,  
onstruction of the former Perryman  
e. Manning had recently redeveloped  
Washington, D.C., into tea houses,  
hering spots. William Kessler drew the  
' It opened in 1927 to serve meals

and encourage lot sales. Together "Mt. Vernon," the "Old Mill,"  
the Tudor-style school and commercial area at Mountain Brook  
Village, and the Regency-style Mountain Brook Club clubhouse  
formed dramatic focal points, envisioned and sited by Manning,  
in the wooded residential landscape.  
Whether the residential lots were large or small, special  
distinction and value were considered to the end that hardly  
two lots were alike. The designers stated that thought was  
given to each house site so that the house and the lot might be  
"worthy of each other." They further stated that topographic  
and unusual landscape features—springs, rock formations, trees,  
shrubs, and views—determined lot boundaries, not geometric  
forms.

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY AL-2  
 SHEET 6 OF 13  
 ALABAMA  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929  
 JEFFERSON COUNTY  
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 MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CAHABA ROAD  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT  
 NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE ARCHIVE  
 BIRGÛ KÜBELER, 2012.

**General Plan for Mountain Brook, March 11, 1929.**  
 HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 6.

This general plan prepared for Jemison & Co. of Birmingham, Alabama, represents the final statement—"studied, drawn, checked, approved for issue, and signed by Warren Manning"—for the development of its Mountain Brook property. Jemison's firm began buying this property in 1925. Warren Manning was retained in the fall of 1926. From 1926 to 1929, Manning, together with Jemison's team of local professionals, worked on this plan and also prepared plans for the several thousand acres of adjoining lands: Forney Johnston's Lockerbie, George Gordon Crawford's Irondale Furnace property, and E. A. Yates' property.

The plan shows the alignment of Mountain Brook's roads and lots, entrance ways, and community amenities. Within the dashed boundary lie these major parcels: Mountain Brook Estates, top left, above Mountain Brook Parkway; the Highland Sector on Shades Mountain, where Jemison's investors were to build their home sites, designated as lots A, B, C, D, and E and B-1, C-1, D-1, and E-1 on this plan; and lands held by Jefferson Country Estates, center. The Mountain Land Co. and the Mountain Brook Land Co. also held company lands; the latter company issued this final plan of March 11, 1929.

The existing communities of Redmont Park, Rockridge Park, Country Club Estates, Hollywood, and Abingdon, all also subdivided in the 1920s, are shown, as well as the Smyer and Shook estates along the Shades Mountain crest. The Birmingham and Hollywood Country Clubs and the county schools at Hollywood and Crestline are also noted. Brookwood Parkway extends from Cahaba Road along Little Shades Creek, despite the fact Jemison & Co. does not own this right-of-way.

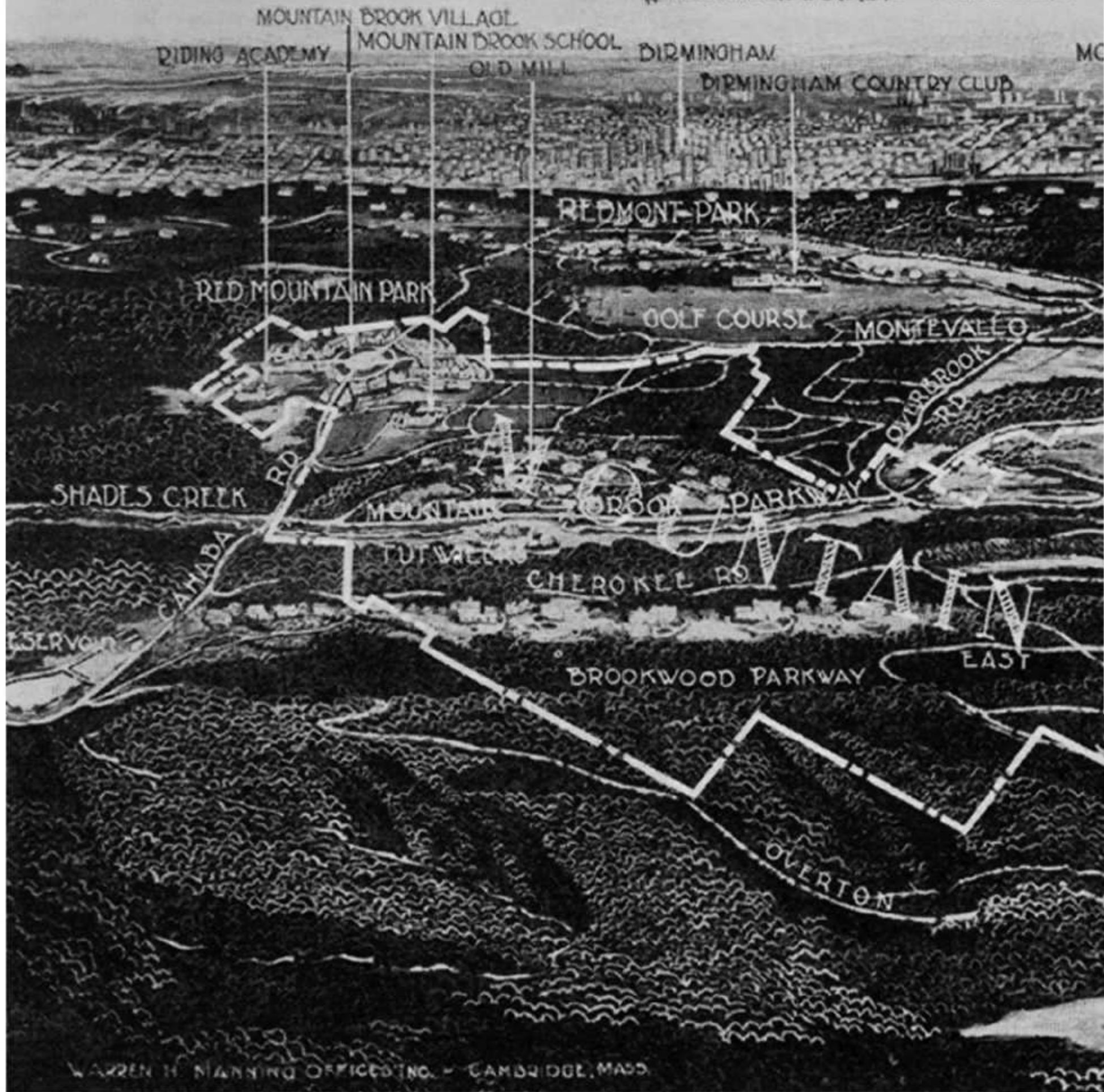
In addition to careful placement of lots and routing of roads, Jemison and his planners put much effort into setting the tone for the new development. The types of residences and the area's rustic character were defined through thoughtful design and siting of model homes and other features, such as bridges, entrance gates, and street signs. The following pages highlight the large number of structures designed and built by 1929 that define Mountain Brook today. Many of the historic renderings were produced for promotional materials used by Jemison & Co.

# PROPERTIES of MOUNTAIN BROOK LAND COMPANY

THE JEMISON COMPANIES - DEVELOPERS

J.H. GLANDER - CIVIL ENGINEER

WARREN H. MANNING - PLANNING



WARREN H. MANNING OFFICE INC. - CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

ANNY & ASSOCIATES

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

W.H. KESSLER - LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
CONSULTANT

MOUNTAIN BROOK COUNTRY CLUB COMMUNITY CENTER



**Properties of Mountain Brook Land  
Company & Associates.**

Photographic print of a  
Blackline Bird's-Eye Drawing, by Egbert Hans, Warren H.  
Manning Offices, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., January 1929.  
Courtesy Birmingham Public Library Department of Archives  
and Manuscripts (BPL Archives).

Robert Jemison often commissioned renderings to help prospective purchasers imagine his visionary undertakings. This bird's-eye drawing illustrates what the Manning firm thought would be in the final general plan for the Mountain Brook properties. The view is from the Cahaba River, looking across Shades and Red Mountains to the City of Birmingham. The artist took license in rendering this perspective. It is derived from aerial photographs and Warren Manning's mind, which could, as he stated to Robert Jemison, visualize the entire development.

The bird's-eye drawing emphasizes the mountainous terrain with its creeks descending into the Cahaba River. It also delineates the planned east-west access routes—the Shades Creek–Mountain Brook Parkway, Cherokee Road, Brookwood Parkway–East View Road, and Spring Valley Road—as elegant arteries passing through and looping back across the challenging terrain.

Words and arrows identify the amenities of the development: Mountain Brook Village, Mountain Brook School, the Old Mill, the Mountain Brook Club, and a Community Center on Leeds Road (which does not make it into the final plan approved two months later). The investors' estates atop Shades Mountain above Cherokee Road are prominently featured. A Westchester Road is shown extending into the Irondale Furnace property along the creek and the proposed lake just upstream of Mountain Brook Club.

# BRIDGES, ENTRANCES, AND AMENITIES PLANNED

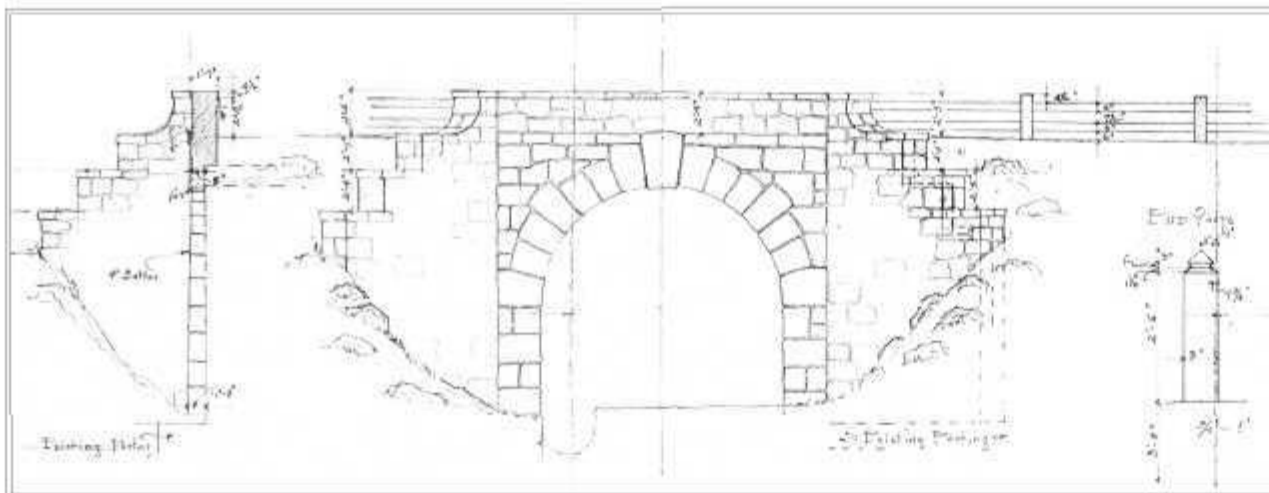
As general planner, Warren Manning was responsible for the planning guidelines and placement of residences, amenities, roads, and trails. Jemison & Co.'s local landscape architect, William H. Kessler, designed "drive ways," "entrance ways," signage, and, with Jemison's civil engineer, J. H. Glander, Jr., several bridges. Kessler also executed planting plans. Trained as a horticulturalist at Berckmans' Fruitland Nurseries in Augusta, Georgia, Kessler first worked with Jemison & Co. in 1909 during the massive landscape work that accompanied Jemison's Fairfield, Alabama, development.

In the 1920s, William Kessler became a certified "Landscape Architect." He worked with Birmingham landscape architect J. A. Myers at this time. While Kessler played only a supporting role on the Mountain Brook project, by the 1950s and 1960s, when homebuilding flourished, his experience provided the continuity for realizing Manning's earlier plans. Kessler sited houses and drives and designed planting schemes and gardens for the new homeowners of the mid-century era. He inked so many drawings that those in Birmingham came to believe he designed Mountain Brook.

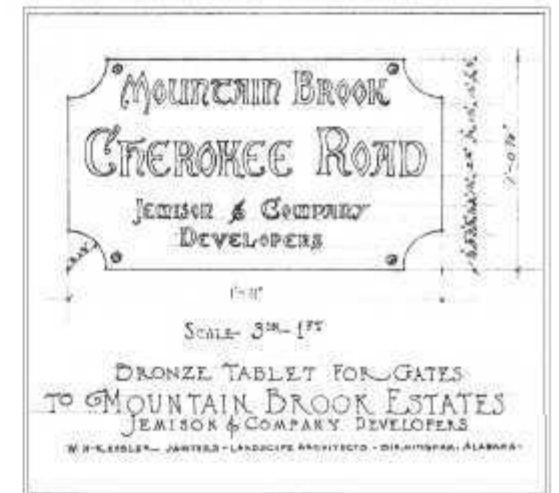


*Cahaba Road Entrance Way To  
MOUNTAIN BROOK ESTATES  
W.H. KESSLER Landscape Architect.*

**Cahaba Road Entrance Way.** Drawing by J. A. Myers, December 28, 1926, William H. Kessler, Landscape Architect. Published in *Mountain Brook Estates*, 1927. BPL Archives.



**Golf Links Bridge.** Elevation by William H. Kessler, Landscape Architect, and J. A. Myers, 1928. BPL Archives.

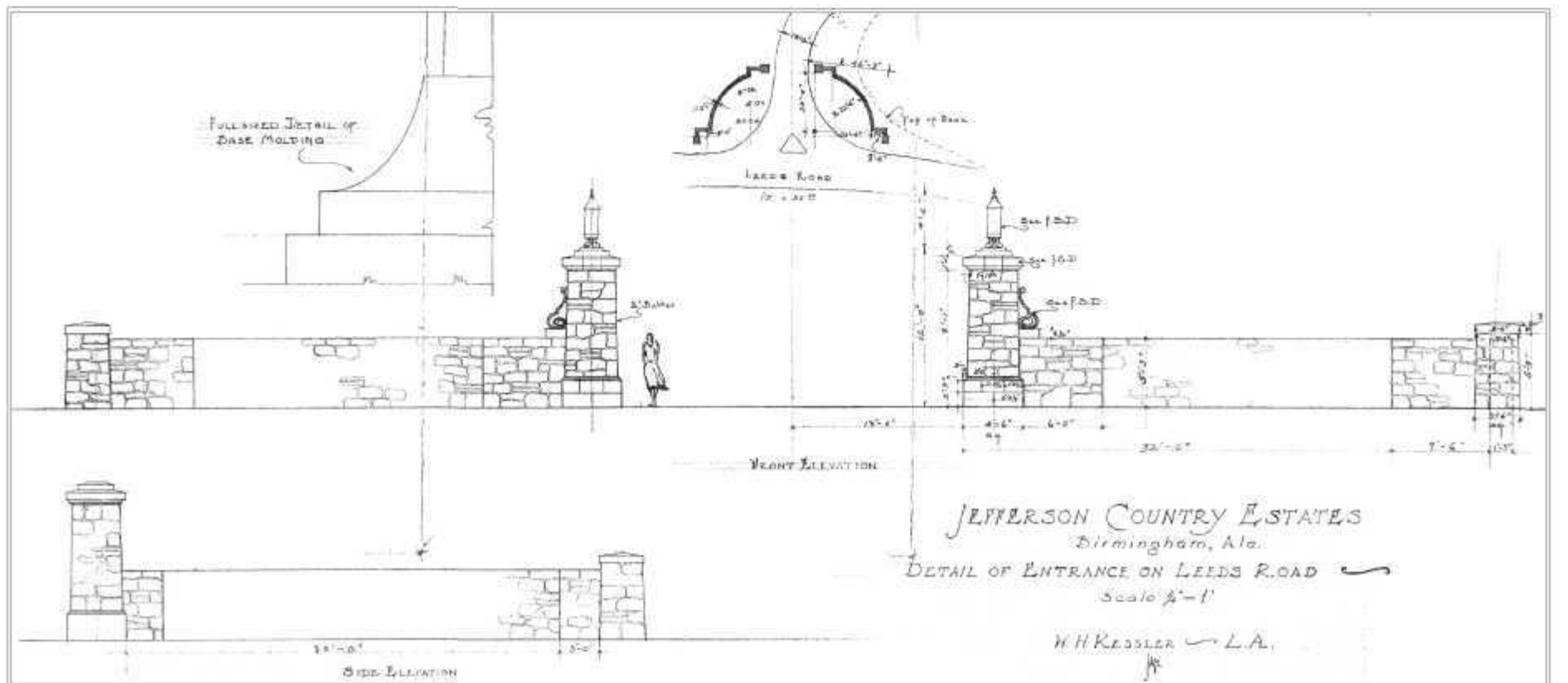


**Bronze Tablet for Gates.** Elevation, W. H. Kessler-J. A. Myers, Landscape Architects, BPL Archives.

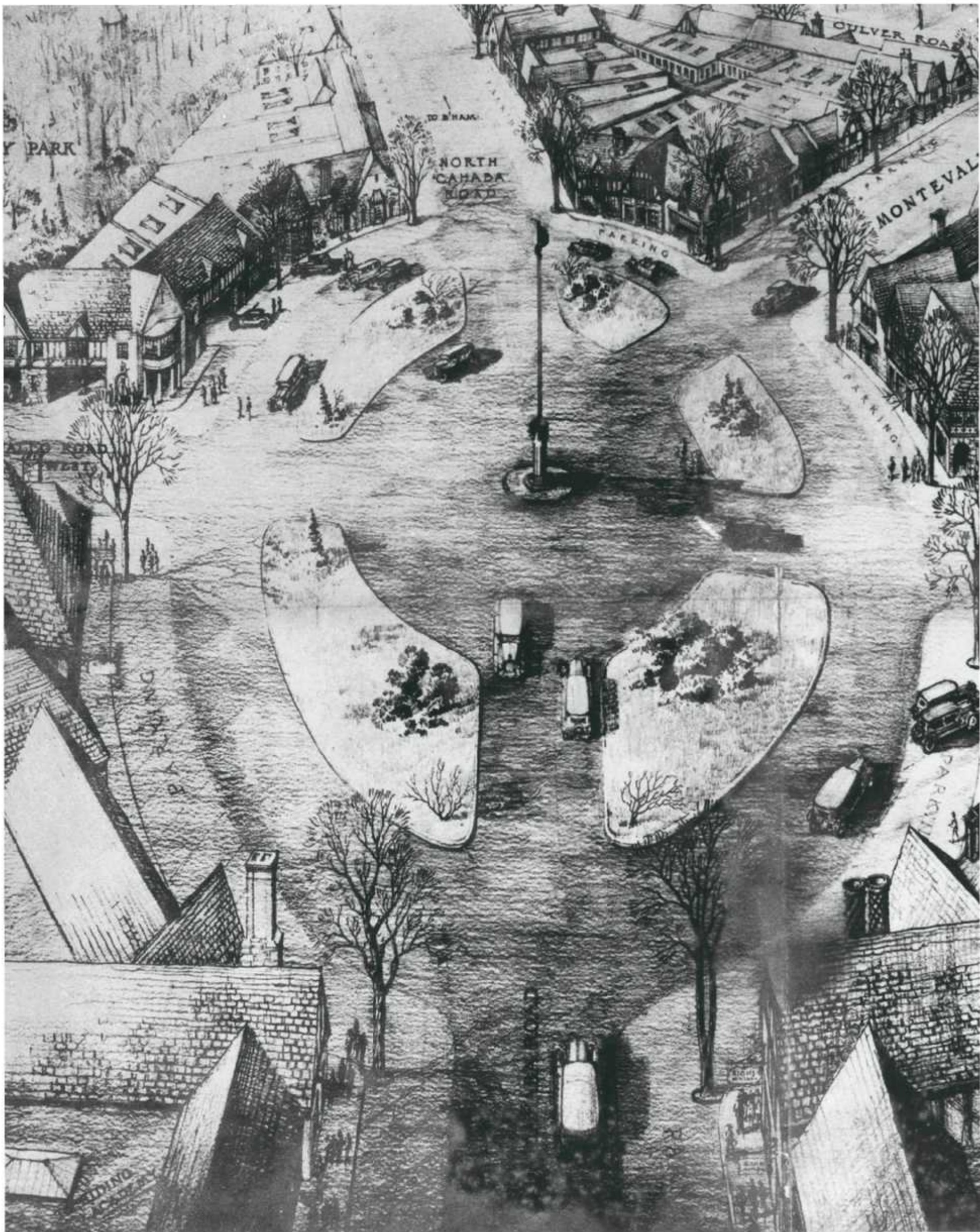




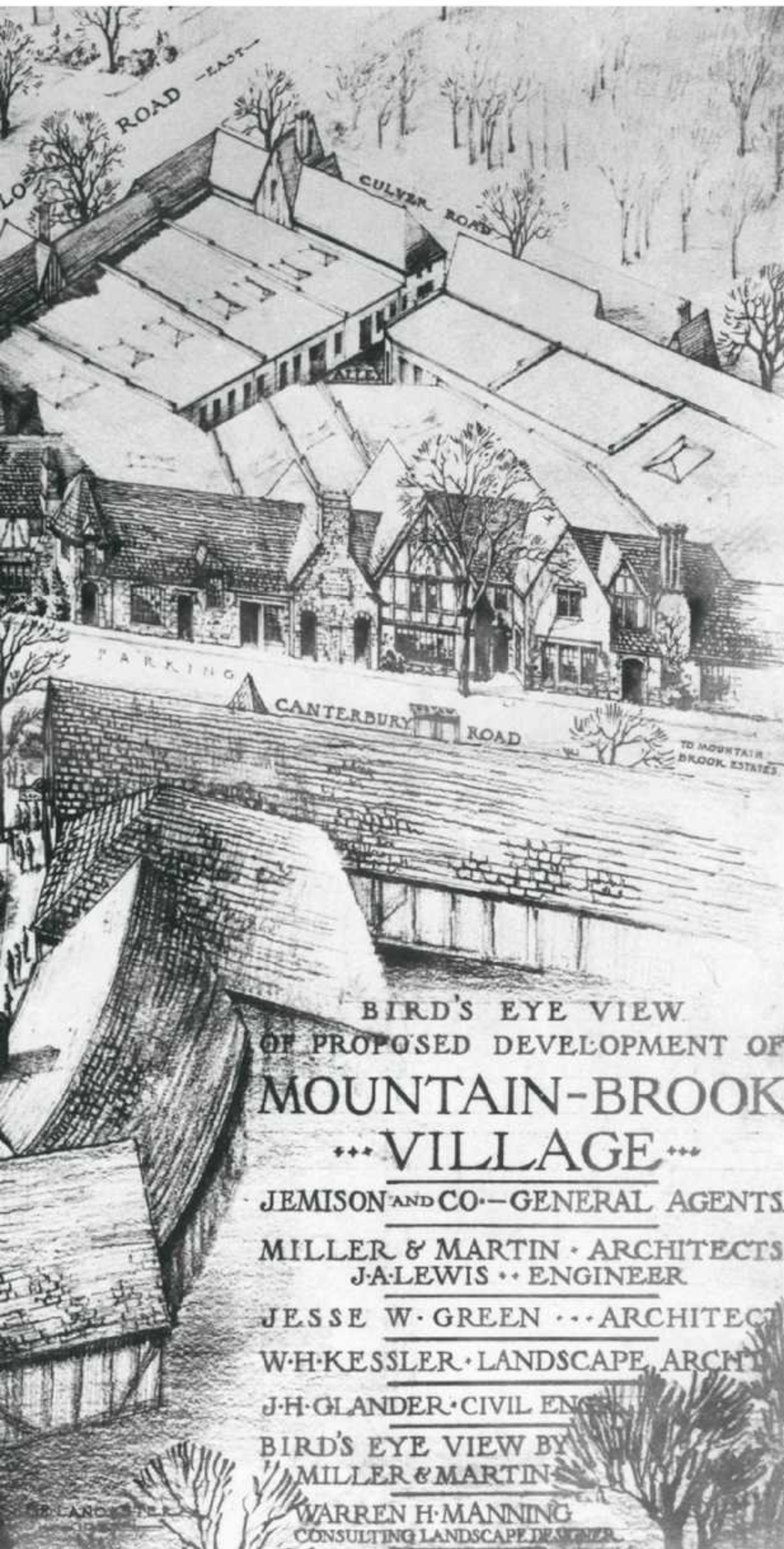
The Old Mill. Drawing by William H. Kessler, Landscape Architect, 1926. Published in Mountain Brook Estates, 1927. BPL Archives.



Detail of Entrance on Leeds Road. Blueprint by J. A. Myers, William H. Kessler, Landscape Architect, 1928. BPL Archives.



32 Bird's Eye View of Proposed Development of Mountain Brook Village. Drawing by Edwin B. Lancaster, draftsman, Miller & Martin, Architects, 1927. BPL Archives.



## PLAN FOR MOUNTAIN BROOK VILLAGE

Several farms and stores existed near the crossing of the Cahaba and Montevallo Roads when Manning began planning Mountain Brook. In a letter of November 29, 1926, to Robert Jemison, the planner noted: "I want to again emphasize the need of a more far-reaching study for the intersection of Montevallo and Cahaba Roads. . . . There is no doubt in my mind and I believe there will be no doubt in your mind that this is going to be a very important business center. . . ." Jemison instructed Manning to work with the Jemison staff on a plan for the village.

Although *The Birmingham News* of April 24, 1927, announced that the "intersection will be transformed into an English shopping village, with attractive stores of antique design," Jemison associate Hill Ferguson reported to his boss, several months later on August 8, 1927, that "We are still more or less at sea about the type of building and the details of plans to go at the Village but hope to have something definite by the time you get back." The Bird's Eye View and rendering for the Mountain Brook Estates Building, shown left and below, were produced in the fall of 1927.

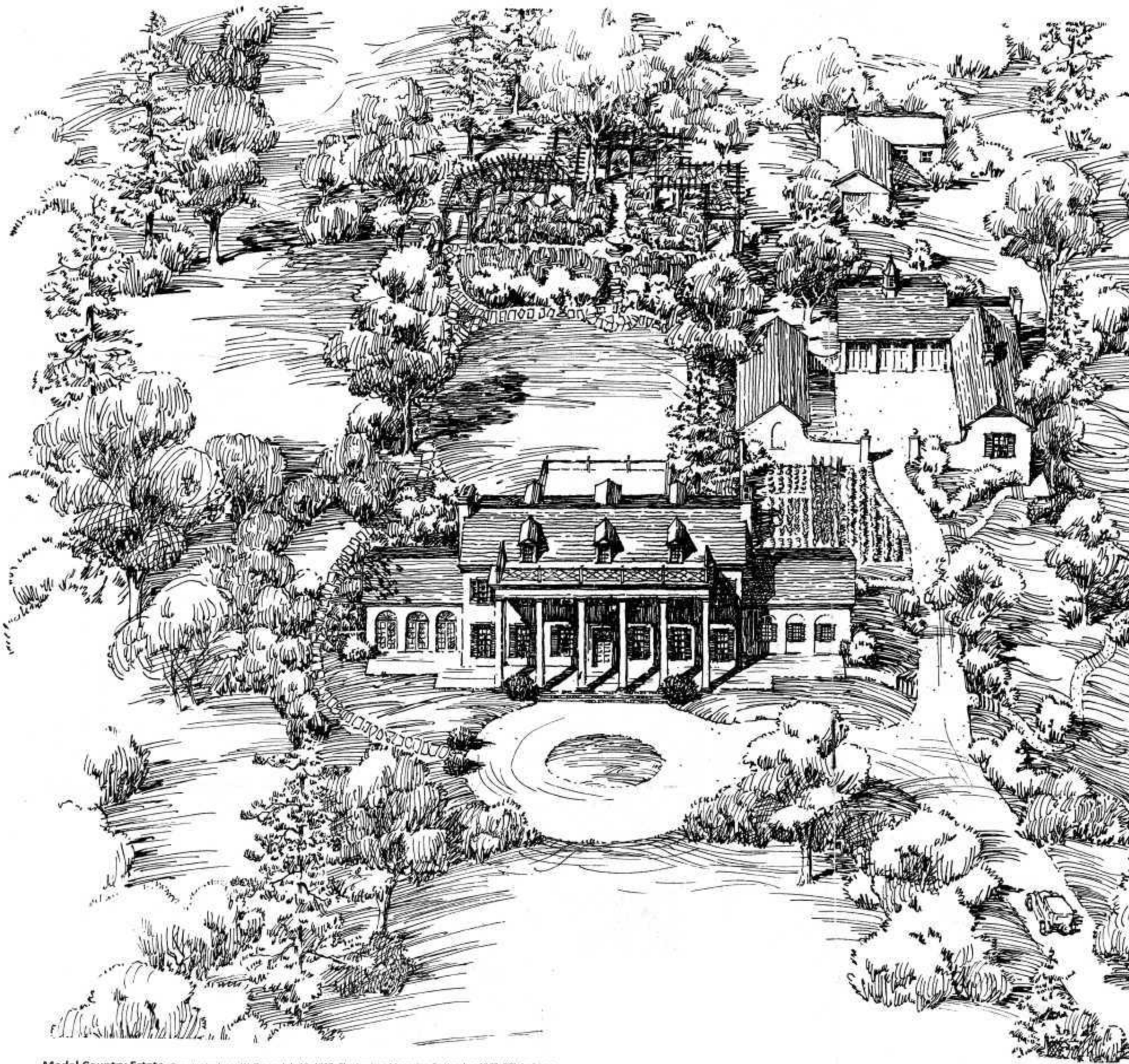


Proposed Shops for Mountain Brook Village. Rendering, 1927. Courtesy Walter School, Jr.



Proposed School for Mountain Brook. Rendering, 1928. *The Jemison Magazine*, August 1928. BPL Archives.

# MODEL ESTATE, MODEL HOMES, AND A CLUB HOUSE PLANNED



**Model Country Estate.** Drawing by Jesse W. Green, July 18, 1927, *The Jemison Magazine*, September 1927. BPL Archives.

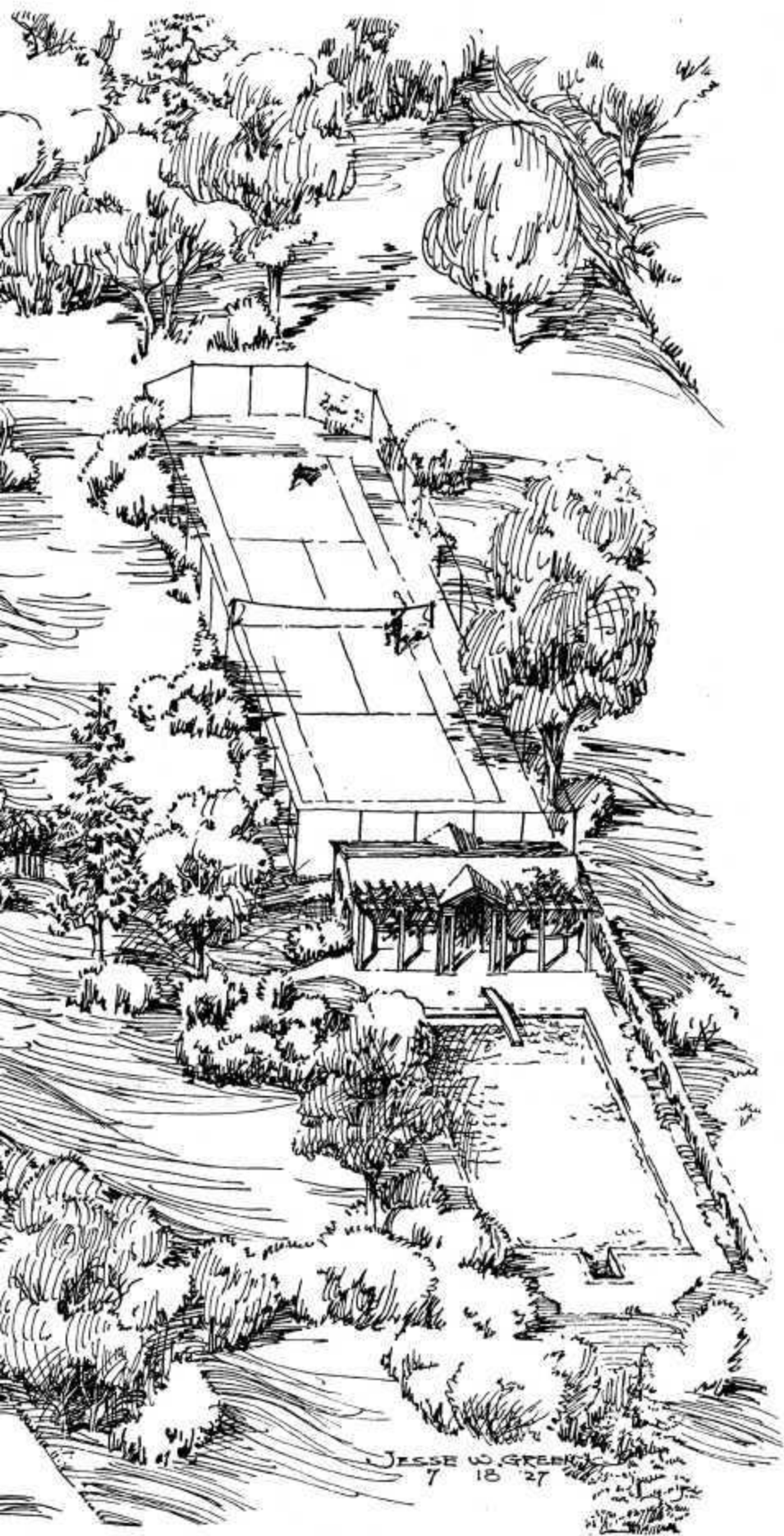
## MODEL ESTATE

Warren Manning originated the idea to design the “model” country estate in the manner of George Washington’s Mt. Vernon. Manning traveled to Washington’s Virginia estate to study its setting, gardens, and gristmill, detailing his thoughts in a four-page letter to Robert Jemison on November 2, 1926.

Principals in Jemison’s firm challenged the marketability of such a large estate. However, by September 1927, Jemison’s local landscape architect was claiming the design for the grounds, and the Birmingham firm of Warren, Knight & Davis had designed the Mt. Vernon replica, *pictured in this drawing*. When the 10-acre property was sold, Jemison & Co. rejoiced! Country estate living, 1920s-style, was launched in Birmingham. Purchased by Herbert Tutwiler, the estate became known as “The Tutwiler Estate.”

## MODEL HOMES AND GROUNDS

Not all homes in Mountain Brook were “estates”; however, planners ensured that each home was given an individualized setting, with boundaries determined, not by geometric lines, but by topographic features and unusual landscape. Warren Manning, writing in *Mountain Brook Estates*, a promotional booklet prepared by his firm in late 1926, suggests that, in the grand tradition of country estates, certain architectural types—the Southern Colonial, English country seat, Italian villa, and French manoir—were appropriate for the varied topographic conditions of the development. Beginning in early 1927, Jemison & Co. began commissioning, from distinguished Birmingham architects, appropriate “model” homes on sites specified by Manning. The renderings for and 1920s captions describing several of these residences are shown, *on the opposite page*.



**Residence in Mountain Brook Estates [2916 Mountain Brook Parkway].** Drawing by Jackson C. Halstead, Architect, 1926. *Mountain Brook Estates*, 1927. BPL Archives.

*"Here is the plan for a charming Country House in Mountain Brook, which illustrates how much more room for originality is permitted architects where homes adorn acre grounds."*—*Mountain Brook Estates* booklet, 1927.



**Residence for Mountain Brook Estates [2632 Mountain Brook Parkway].** Drawing by Sigmund Nesselroth, Architect, 1926. *Mountain Brook Estates*, 1927. BPL Archives.

*"There is an air of ample hospitality about this stately Colonial home which is reminiscent of the antebellum South. It will occupy a large estate in Mountain Brook."*—*Mountain Brook Estates* booklet, 1927.



**Old English Home, Estates 79–80 [now 3333] Dell Road.** Rendering by Warren, Knight & Davis, Architects, March 25, 1929. *The Jemison Magazine*, November 1929. BPL Archives.

*"This rambling country home is situated on a well-elevated site, beautifully wooded with hardwood and pine. It is wide along the ridge, leaving ample room for gardens on both sides. . . . From the terraces of this lovely home, wonderful vistas may be had across beautiful Mountain Brook. . . . A sparkling mountain stream winds its way in the valley below."*—*The Jemison Magazine*, 1929.

**LEFT: Mountain Brook Club, North Façade.** Rendering by Aymar Embury II, Architect, photographed by A. C. Keiley, July 1929. *Mountain Brook Club*, July 1929. BPL Archives.

*"From Beechwood Road you approach the North Façade of the Club House. Its harmony with the surrounding terrain is particularly pleasing, being well back from the highway, and screened with trees and shrubbery to give the sense of seclusion and repose."*—*Mountain Brook Club* booklet, 1929.



# WHAT JEMISON & COMPANY BUILT BY

The Jemison firm, backed by its big-pocket local investors, acquired 2,500 acres of scenic lands and completed the March 29, 1929 *General Plan* for development of this tract. As with the company's planning for the model industrial city of Fairfield, Alabama, by Manning associate George Miller of Boston from 1909 to 1911, the firm completed all planned infrastructure improvements and amenities for the future community at the highest standards of the era. For Mountain Brook the company built commercial buildings in the village, a school, a riding academy with rink and stables, a clubhouse and golf course, several show houses, and the Old Mill-tea room. Jemison & Company also built 28 miles of concrete roads, 7 stone-veneered bridges to carry the roads over area creeks, and 29 miles of bridle trails along ridges and in floodplain parklands. Continuing the naturalistic aesthetic, brown wooden signs designated road names. In the 1929 plan, 13 percent of the proposed community was reserved for open space and recreation. Lots in the Mountain Brook Estates, New Country Club, Fairway, Watkins Brook, and Canterbury sectors (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 on the *Subdivision of Jemison & Company Lands* plat shown to the right),

as well as those along Dell Road, were subdivided from 1926 to 1928 and sold briskly during that time. Jemison & Company commissioned architects to design appropriate model house types to set the tone for the development. As mapped in March 1929, 68 residences had been built in the Mountain Brook Estates and other sectors adjoining the village. In these sectors, nearly all lots had been sold.

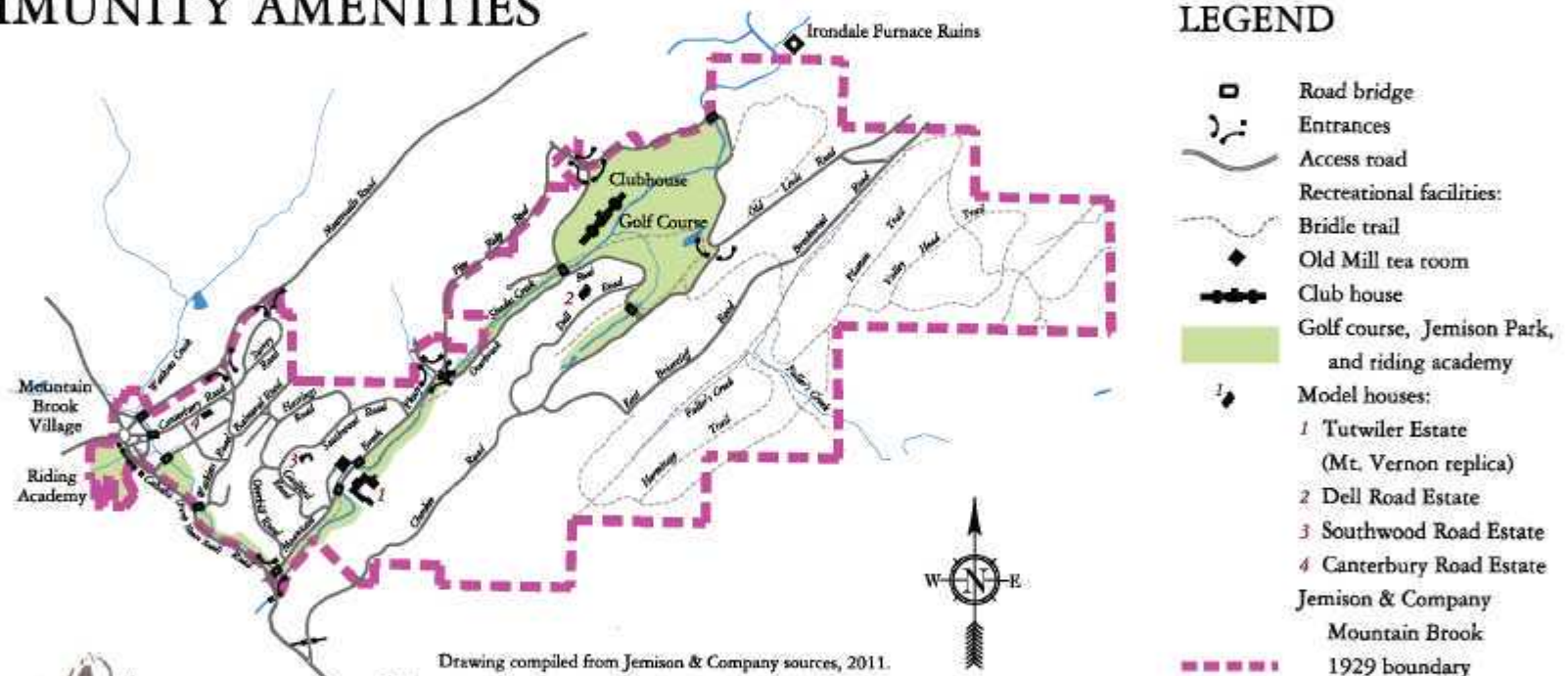
Access could not be obtained from Cahaba and Overton Roads across Shook Hill or along a proposed Brookwood Road to provide a through route into today's Brookwood Forest area, *sector 11 on the subdivision map*. Thus, the Jemison firm extended bridle trails only, and not concrete roads, to the proposed lots along the crest and southern face of Shades Mountain. (This area and today's Cherokee Bend area that encompasses the Irondale Furnace ruins would not be developed until the 1950s and 1960s. The road and lot system of the Manning *General Plan* of 1929 was not always closely followed in these sectors. Through routes into the areas have never been built! However, Manning's suggestion that the furnace ruins become a public park became reality.) A decision not to immediately

build roads into those areas of the development was made in late 1927 although lots were planned and laid out during 1928. Here future roads were blazed and graded with bridle trails only (*see sheet 8: northeast quarter of Section 3 and portions of Sections 2 and 10*).

Although architectural and landscape plans for the grand residences of the investors atop Shades Mountain and on adjoining property were drawn, none were built. When the Birmingham firms which these individuals managed were acquired by outside interests, two investors moved to New York and Pittsburgh. By 1930, only two homes were built on the lower slopes of Shades Mountain. Coal baron Herbert Tutwiler purchased the Mount Vernon replica, which became known as the Tutwiler Estate.

Robert Jemison, Jr. was prepared to wait out the hard times that came with the crash of the stock and real estate markets in 1929. He had weathered the Financial Panic of 1907 and waited a decade for his planned community at Fairfield to flower. Jemison was fortunate that his group of investors shared his vision for Mountain Brook and had the resources that permitted his firm to avoid compromising the quality of the development as originally conceived.

## COMMUNITY AMENITIES



Drawing compiled from Jemison & Company sources, 2011.



Illustration from *Mountain Brook Estates*, Jemison & Company, Birmingham Developers, a promotional booklet produced by the Manning firm, 1927. Robert Jemison, Jr. Papers, BPL Archives.

### Roads Designed in the 1920s

Balmoral, Beechwood, Brookwood, Cambridge, Canterbury, Cherokee, Culver, Dell, Eastview (now Briarcliff), Hastings, Heathermoor, Mountain Brook Parkway, Overbrook, Overhill, Pine Ridge, Southwood, and Watkins.

### Roads Realigned, Widened, and Paved in the 1920s

Cahaba-Pumphouse (now U.S. 280), Leeds (now Old Leeds), and Montevallo Roads.

### Stone-Veneer Bridges Designed and Built, 1927-1929

J.H. Glander, Jr. and William Kessler engineered and detailed these bridges, specifying locally quarried stone laid in random masonry patterns. Bridges were constructed at Canterbury Road (1927, stonework by W.D. Rainey); Montevallo Road (1927, concrete structure by Jefferson County, reconstructed 2011); Overbrook Road (1928); Beechwood Road (1928); Cherokee Road (Golf Links Bridge, c. 1928); Watkins Road (1928, stonework by Henry Garner); Mountain Brook Parkway (three bridges, 1928, with stonework by Henry Garner); and Heathermoor Road (1929).

### Entrances Designed, Built, and Planted

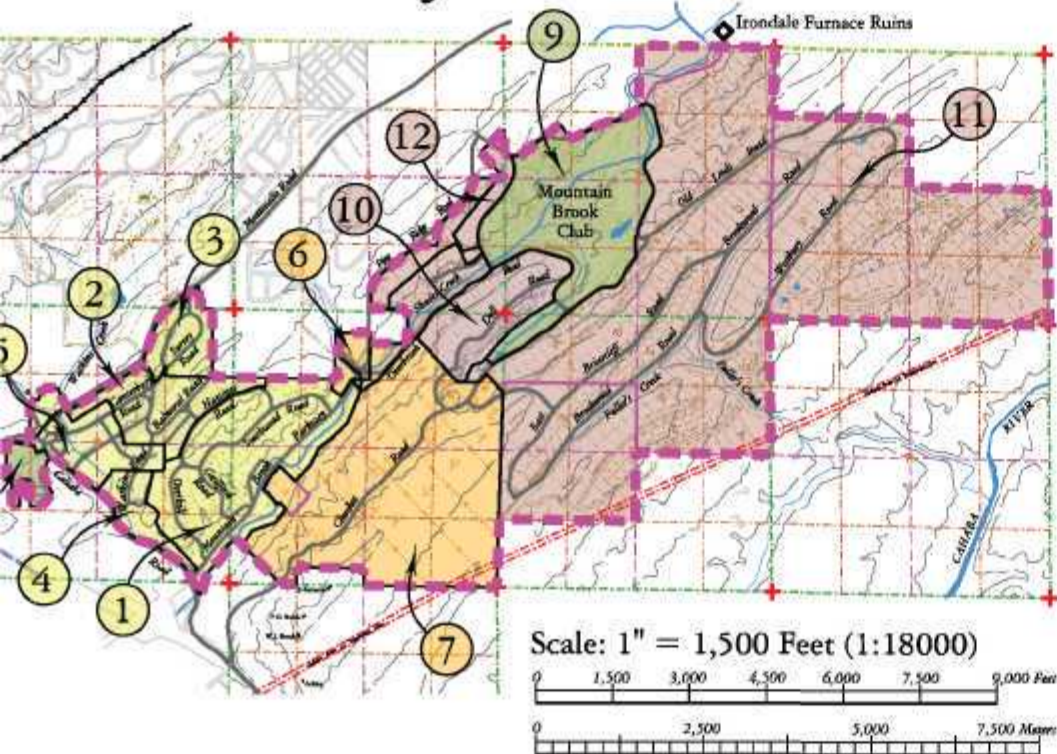
William Kessler designed and provided planting plans for the masonry entrances that delineate the boundaries of and provide a welcome to Jemison & Company's Mountain Brook. Primary entrances were designated from: Cahaba Road at Mountain Brook Parkway and at Cherokee Road; Leeds Road at Cherokee Road; Montevallo Road at Overbrook and Canterbury Roads; and Overbrook and Pine Ridge Roads at Mountain Brook Parkway. Entrances were also built leading to the Riding Academy Rink and to the Stable at today's Chester and Brook Manor Roads, respectively.

# 1929



General Location Map of Mountain Brook, Redmont Park, Mountain Terrace, Altamont, Developed and Offered by the Jemison Companies, 1929. Courtesy Birmingham Public Library Archives. This map shows existing and new roads planned in 1927 for construction, as well as proposed trails. Proposed roads and bridle trails were constructed as shown on this map drawn by the Manning firm.

## SUBDIVISION OF JEMISON & CO. LANDS



This map compilation shows chronological release of property for subdivision. The historic sector maps were drawn by J.H. Glander, Jr. at a scale of 1"=100' with the exception of the Beechwood Road map that is by F.M. Shepard. Warren Manning sited and drew the general plans for the riding academy and the club property. All plans are held in the Jemison Papers at the BPL Archives. Section geometry, topography, and other features from GIS data supplied by the Jefferson County Office of Land Development, 2009. Contours every 100 feet.

**Mountain Brook Estates**, 420 acres, the Overbrook Parcel that was purchased from a single owner, and additional lands acquired to make the Manning plan work.

Mountain Brook Estates, November 1926

New Country Club Sector, May 1927

Fairway Sector, February 1928

Watkins Brook Sector, No. 2, May 1928

Canterbury Sector and Blocks 2 & 4, Mountain Brook Village, September 1928

Kilby Sector, January 1929

**Shades Hill Sector**, May 1928, 338 acres including the proposed home sites of the investors on Shades Mountain and the site of the golf club.

**Jefferson County Estates**, a land holding company that also developed recreational facilities

⑧ Riding Academy, 22 acres, 1928

⑨ Mountain Brook [Country] Club, golf courses, 1928

**Mountain Brook Land Co.**, lands purchased after the planning process began and the vision expanded.

⑩ Dell Road Sector, October 1928

⑪ Proposed General Plan, March 1929

⑫ Beechwood Road Sector, November 1936

Richard K. Anderson, Jr., Birgit Kabeika, 2012.

MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT  
ALABAMA PUBLIC RECORDS  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF REVENUE

MOUNTAIN BROOK PARWAY AT CAHABA ROAD

CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK

MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929

JEFFERSON COUNTY

ALABAMA

SHEET 7 OF 13

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
LANDSCAPE SURVEY  
AL-2

**What Jemison & Company Built by 1929.** With drawings showing community amenities and subdivision sequence. HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 7.

By the time stock and real estate markets crashed in late 1929, Jemison & Co. had implemented much of the General Plan for Mountain Brook, shown on page 26. The "Community Amenities" drawing, to the center far left, shows that most roads and amenities in the western portion of the new district had already been built. Planned roads in the eastern section had been extended as bridle trails only, and not concrete roads.

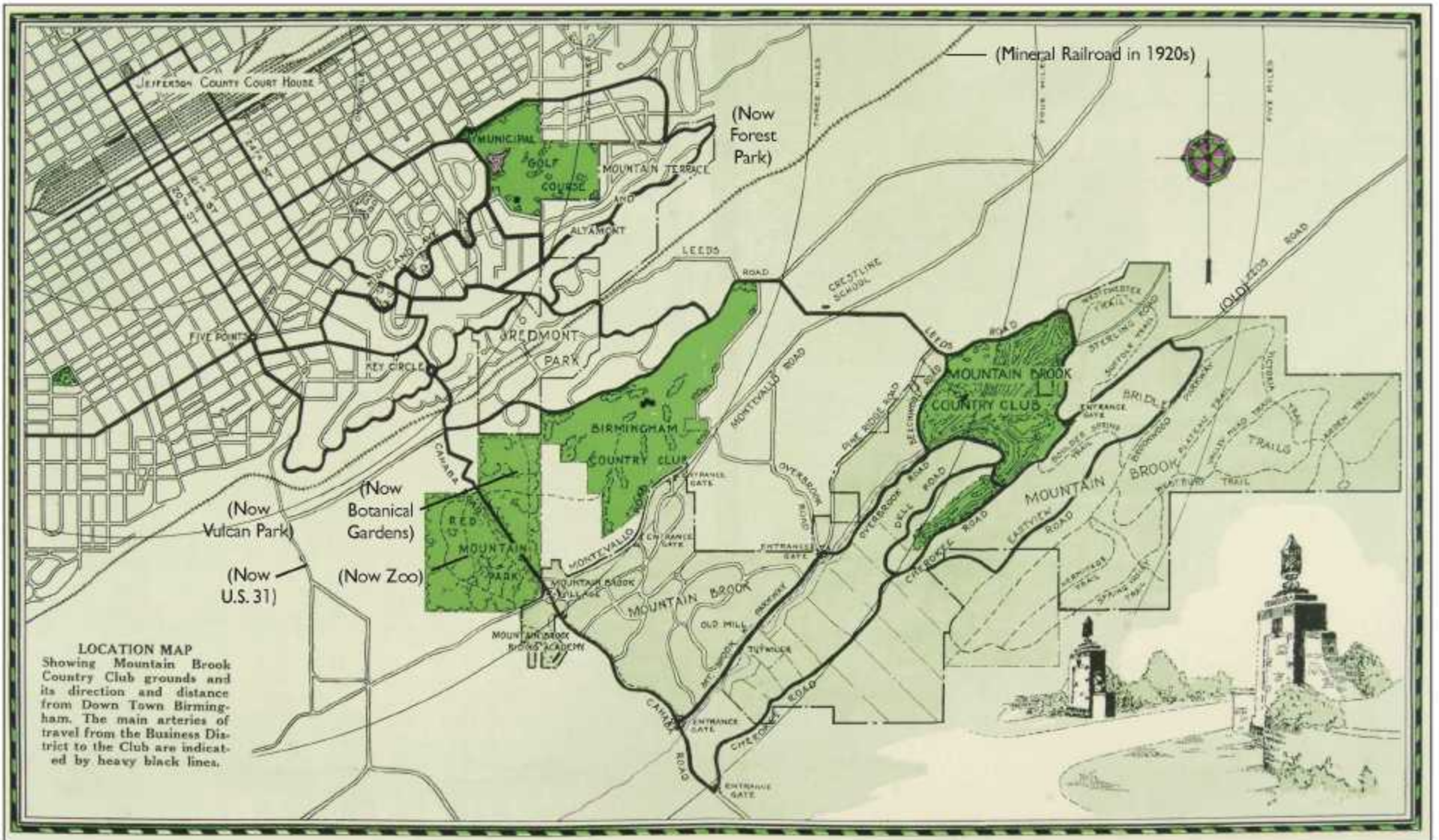
The map "Subdivision of Jemison & Co. Lands," right, lists the chronological release of subdivision plats until 1936. Construction in the area resumed decades later in the 1950s and 1960s.

The historic photographs and maps on the following pages give an impression of what the newly built community and its amenities looked like in the 1920s and 1930s.

# ROADS, BRIDGES, AND ENTRANCE WAYS BUILT BY 1929

Mountain Brook's intricate system of roads, bridges, trails, and entrances was planned by a highly skilled team of professionals—landscape architects, engineers, and real estate experts. Their design strategies ensured smoothly paved, sensitively planned, scenic roads;

rustic stone-veneer bridges and entrance ways of locally quarried stone; and brown wooden signs—improvements that stood in harmony with the natural environment. New roads were surfaced with concrete, and drive ways with crushed slag.



**General Location Map for Mountain Brook, Redmont Park, Mountain Terrace, and Altamont.**  
Colored wash by Egbert Hans, Warren H. Manning Offices, Inc., Mountain Brook Club. BPL Archives.



**ABOVE: View Along Mountain Brook Parkway.** Photograph 1926, Mountain Brook Estates, 1927. BPL Archives.

**ABOVE, LEFT: Entrance Way to Mountain Brook.** Photograph 1928, *The Jemison Magazine*, January 1928. BPL Archives.



**LEFT: Bridge at Entrance to Watkins Brook Sector.** Photograph 1928, *The Jemison Magazine*, June 1928. BPL Archives.



# RIDING ACADEMY AND TRAILS BUILT BY 1929

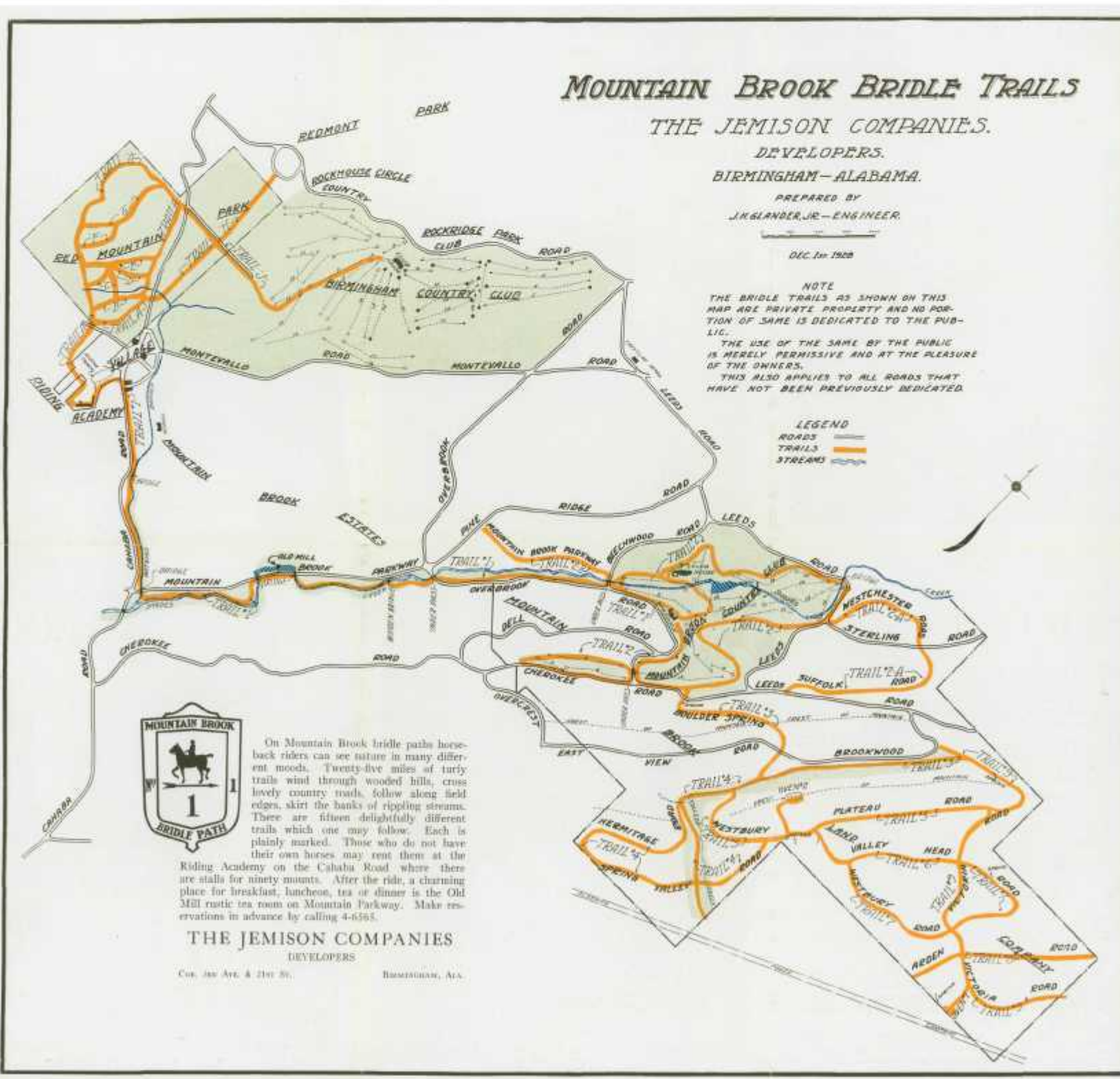
Bridle trails were not a common feature of Manning subdivisions. However, Jemison wanted horseback riding included in the program as it was a popular sport among prospective lot purchasers. Manning responded by designing a Riding Academy to stable more than 100 horses, a show rink, and miles of "wonderful woodland parks," gorgeously set into the land. The stables were operating by late 1927 and the bridle trails marked and functioning by fall 1928 when the Manning firm produced the trail map, below.



ABOVE, RIGHT: Trail Riders at Golf Links Bridge. Photograph 1929, *The Jemison Magazine*, January 1929. BPL Archives.

Aerial View, Mountain Brook Riding Academy. Photograph November 1927, *The Jemison Magazine*, April 1929. BPL Archives.

RIGHT: On the Bridle Paths. Photograph 1928, *The Jemison Magazine*, August 1928. BPL Archives.





**Aerial View from Red Mountain to Shades Mountain Across the Construction Site at Mountain Brook Village.** Photograph 1927. BPL Archives.

Red Mountain Park, the site of today's zoo and botanical gardens, appears at the edge of the village, *in the foreground*. *In the center*, Montevallo and Canterbury Roads are being paved from the village circle into the adjoining residential area. *Center to right*, Cahaba Road travels at the edge of the village, passing the Rushton Ice House and the Riding Academy, *at the far right*, before heading to Mountain Brook Parkway, *not shown*. A farmhouse occupies the future site of Mountain Brook Elementary School.

Note the deep channel leading to Watkins Creek at the left edge of today's Culver Road, *lower center of the photograph*. Jemison's engineers channelized the creek to form the eastern edge of the village. The open space, *at the bottom left*, is the Sanguinetti farm, site of the Lane Parke project in 2013.

**LEFT: Mountain Brook Estates Building, Under Construction.**

Photograph November 22, 1928. BPL Archives. Built by Jemison & Co.

## COMMUNITY AMENITIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND BUILT BY 1929



**Mountain Brook Court [Apartments].** Photograph 1929.

**40** *The Jemison Magazine*, November 1929. BPL Archives. Built by Jemison & Co.



**First Unit, Mountain Brook [Elementary] School.** Photograph 1929.

*The Jemison Magazine*, November 1929. BPL Archives. Built by Jemison & Co.



**Opening Day, Martha Washington Candy Shop.**

Photograph August 1928. *The Jemison Magazine*, August 1928. BPL Archives.



**Aerial View from Pine Ridge to Shades Mountain Across the Future Site of the Mountain Brook Club Golf Course.** Photograph 1927. BPL Archives.

From right to center left, then right and left, Leeds Road snakes up Shades Mountain. Manning had first suggested a resort and hotel adjacent to Leeds Road, at the crest of Shades Mountain high above the floodplain. The resort and associated golf course were in the design stage when this aerial photograph was made. Both a hotel and a clubhouse are shown on a March 1928 plan (see page 19). Only the clubhouse and golf course would be built, forming today's Mountain Brook Club, which was completed by 1929.

At center left, a small road extends, left, through the ridge to the site of the Irondale Furnace ruins. In a letter of July 5, 1927, Manning recommended to the owner, George Gordon Crawford, that he build a lake here to slow the flood waters and later donate the furnace ruins as a public park—a suggestion realized in today's Irondale Furnace Park. In this photograph, Shades Creek wriggles across its floodplain without benefit of the proposed holding pond and before its reconfiguration as part of the golf course development of the 1920s.

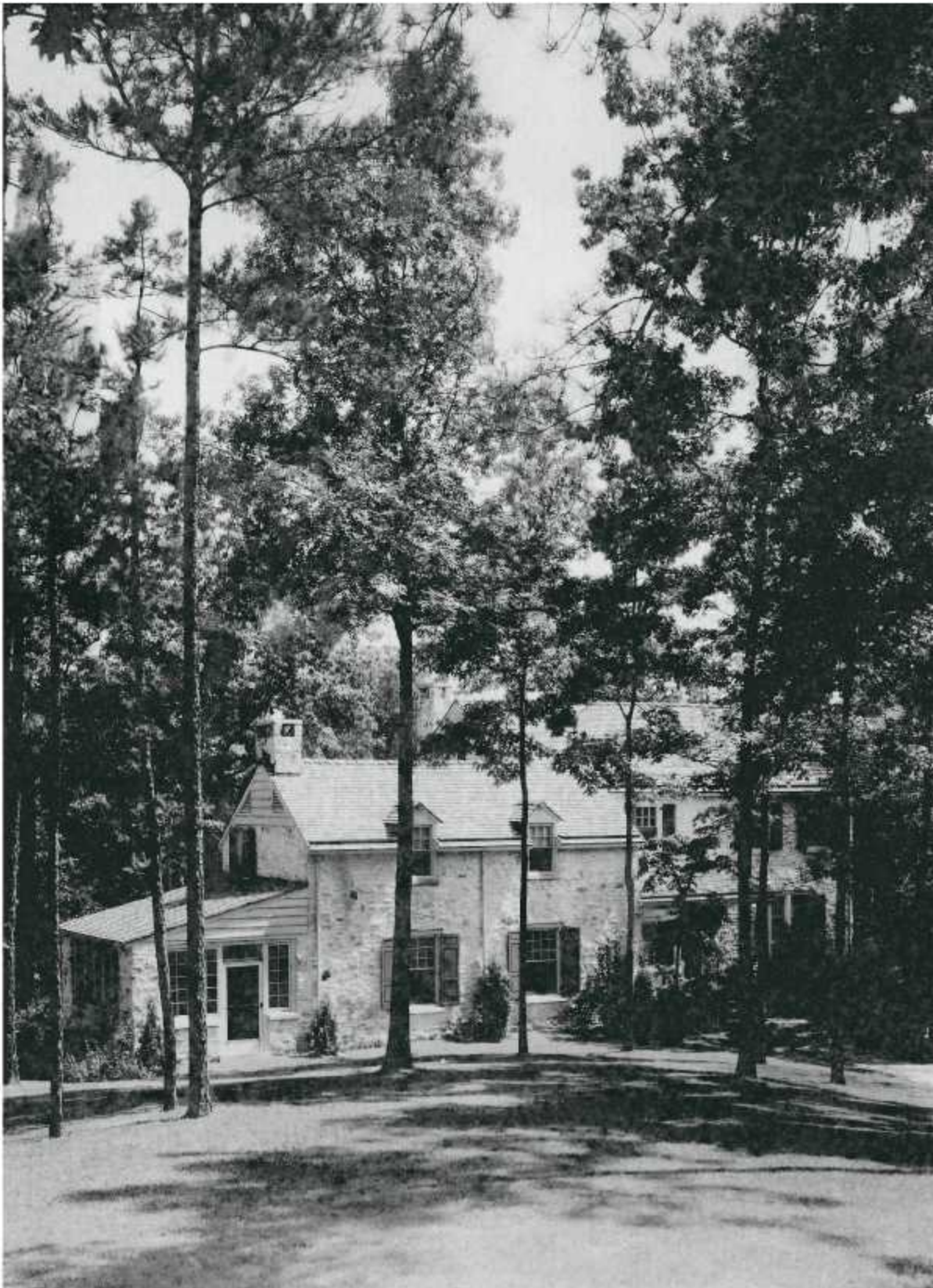


**ABOVE: "The Old Mill—Tea Room and Club House."**

Photograph by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, 1930. BPL Archives. Built by Jemison & Co.



**LEFT: Mountain Brook Club, South Façade.** Photograph by Richard Averill Smith, *Southern Architect and Building News*, April 1931. BPL Archives. Built by Jemison & Co.



**Model House and Grounds, Home of James S. Larkin, 2737 Southwood Road.** Photograph by Tebbs-Knell, Inc., New York, New York, November 1927, *The Jemison Magazine*, January 1928. BPL Archives. Built by Jemison & Co.

The photograph was also exhibited by its architect, Jesse W. Green, in the Southern Architectural and Industrial Arts Exposition in Memphis, Tennessee.

## HOMES BUILT BY 1929

To encourage development of the country homes district, Jemison & Co. ran extensive local and national advertising, revived its sales magazine, *The Jemison Magazine*, and sited, constructed, and sold at least ten residences.

The firm hired the distinguished photographers Tebbs-Knell of New York, New York, to make the photograph, pictured left, of the Larkin House, one of the first of the "model" homes completed and gorgeously sited amidst a grove of towering trees. This photograph was submitted in an architectural competition. More important to the Jemison & Co. sales team than the architectural acclaim, the exquisitely planned setting, or the beautification of the property with shrubbery was the fact that the residence sold quickly, within a month of its offering in 1927!



**Model House and Grounds, 2633 Canterbury Road.** Photograph 1927, *The Jemison Magazine*, January 1928. BPL Archives. Built by Jemison & Co.



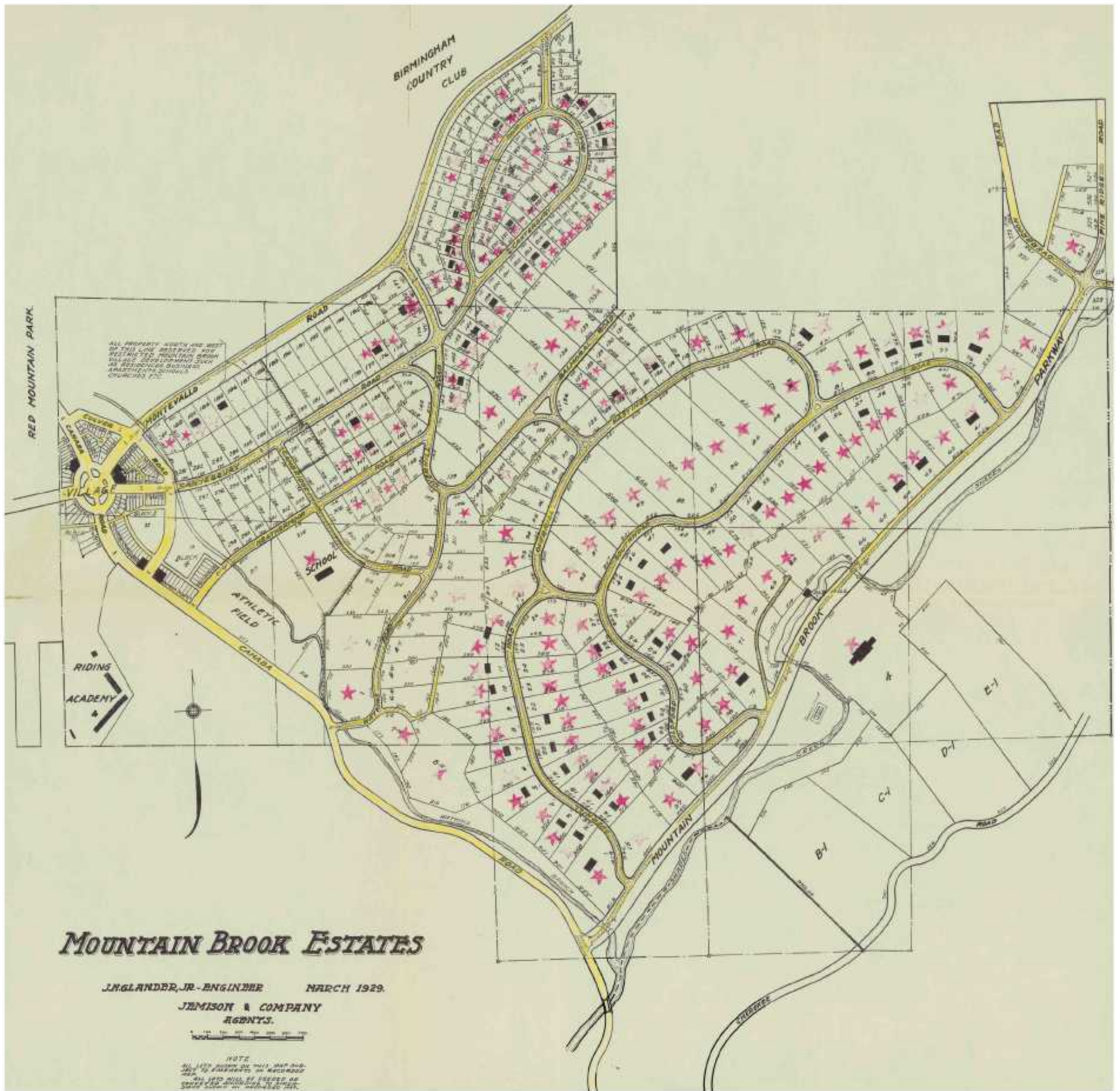
**Home of R. J. Stockham, 2864 Balmoral Road.** Photograph 1930, *The Jemison Magazine*, January 1930. BPL Archives.



**Home of Mrs. G. B. McCormack, 2948 Mountain Brook Parkway.** Photograph 1928, *The Jemison Magazine*, August 1928. BPL Archives.



**Home of W. G. Patterson House, 2924 Southwood Road.** Photograph 1930, *The Jemison Magazine*, January 1930. BPL Archives.

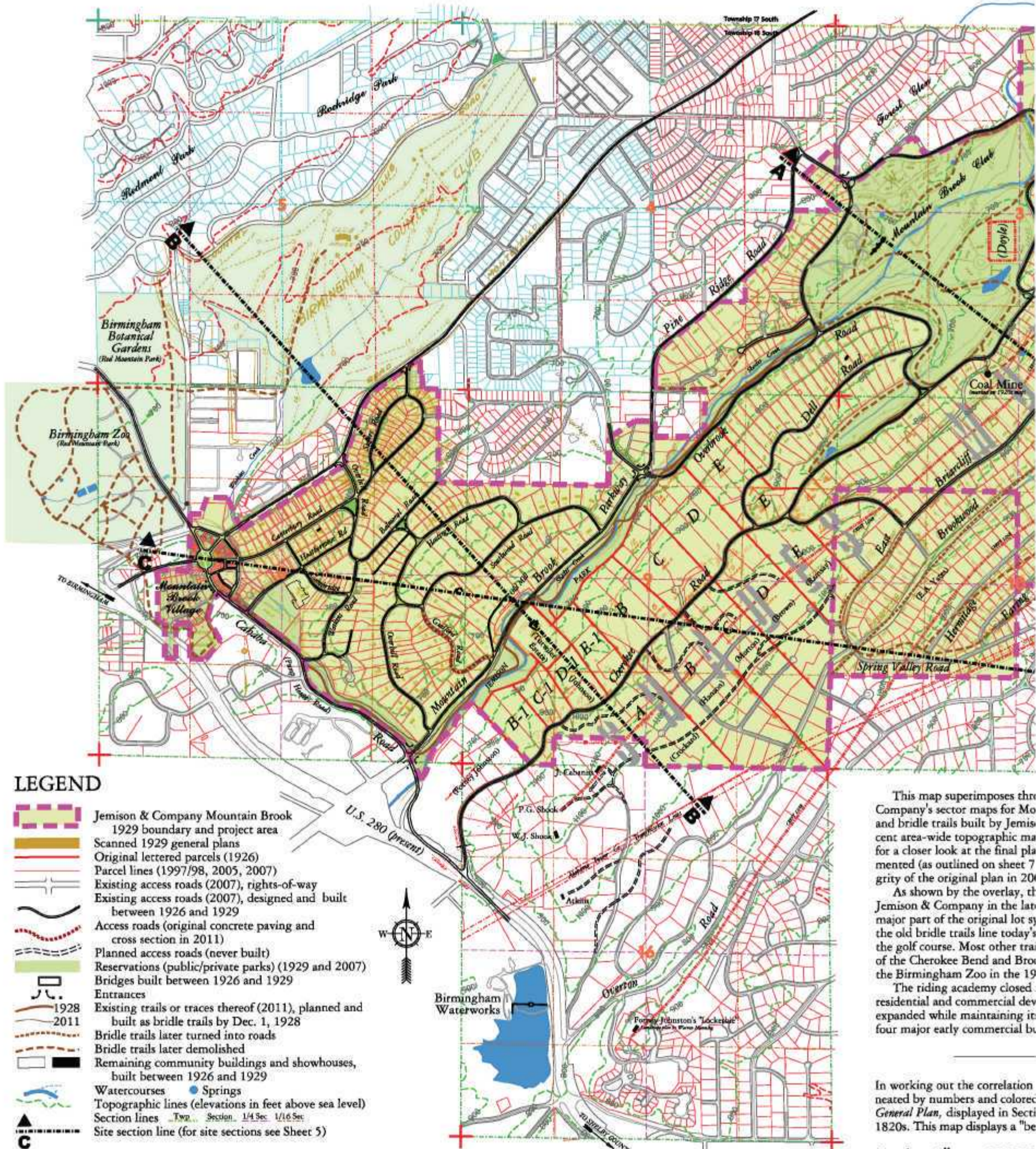


**Model House and Grounds, Home of W. L. Sturdivant, Estate 61, 3266 Dell Road.**  
Photograph 1928, *The Jemison Magazine*, March 1928. BPL Archives. Built by Jemison & Co.

**Mountain Brook Estates.** Surveyor's Plat by J. H. Glander, Jr., Engineer, March 1929. BPL Archives.

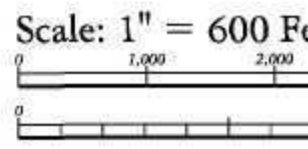
Jemison & Co. officials started J. H. Glander's 1929 engineering survey to indicate lots sold and used other markings to show completed construction of houses, commercial buildings, bridges, the riding academy, the school, and the Mt. Vernon replica, *estate 4*, with its old mill. Mountain Brook Estates includes six sectors subdivided from November 1926 to January 1929 on the original 420 acres that Jemison & Co. purchased in 1925, together with the Bearden, Watkins, and Kilby lands purchased after lot sales for the initial sector began. (For a delineation of the sectors, see page 37.) Not shown on the plat, above, are those lands being developed as home sites for Jemison's investors along Cherokee Road, the Dell Road Sector, and the lands assembled as Jefferson Country Estates (portions of the future Cherokee Bend and Brookwood Forest areas of Mountain Brook).

# INTEGRITY OF THE PLAN FOR MOUNTAIN BROOK



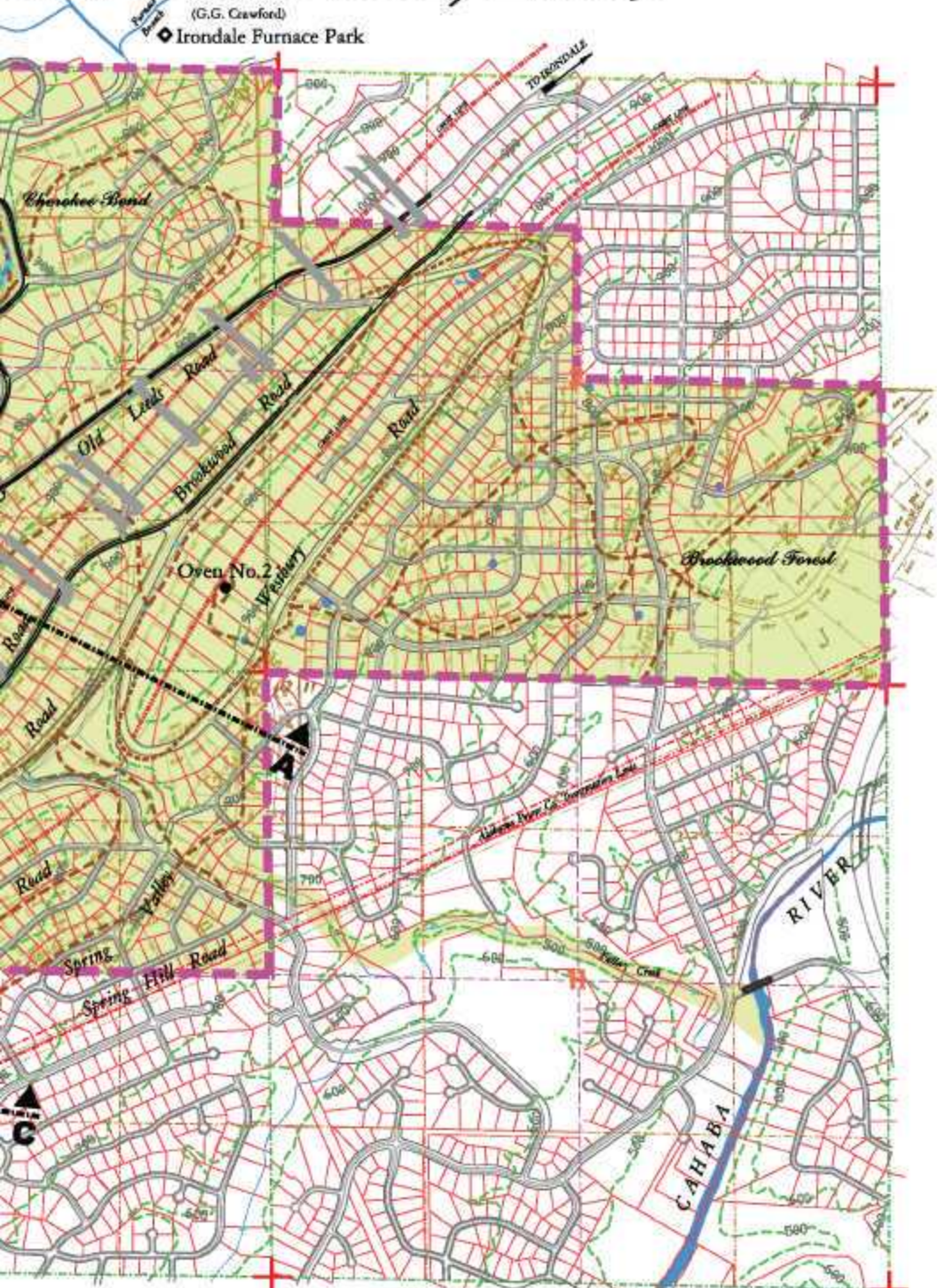
This map superimposes three Company's sector maps for Mountain Brook and bridle trails built by Jemison & Company on a recent area-wide topographic map for a closer look at the final plan implemented (as outlined on sheet 7 of the original plan in 2007). As shown by the overlay, the Jemison & Company in the late 1920s major part of the original lot system, the old bridle trails line today's golf course. Most other trails of the Cherokee Bend and Brookwood the Birmingham Zoo in the 1920s. The riding academy closed, residential and commercial development expanded while maintaining its four major early commercial buildings.

In working out the correlation between the numbers and colored overlays, the General Plan, displayed in Section 1820s. This map displays a "be



Section geometry, streets, lots, and topographic data for Sections 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 16 are derived from Geographic Information System files of the Jefferson County Office of Land Development, Birmingham, Alabama (2007). Section geometry, streets, lots, and topographic data for Sections 4 and 5 are derived from USGS 7.5 minute topographic quadrangles Birmingham North (1997), Irondale (1998), Cahaba Heights (1998), and Birmingham South (1997). Details of Birmingham Country Club (in Section 5) are derived from "District Map Showing (Birmingham) Country Club, Mountain Brook Country Club, Red Mountain Park, Redmont Park, Rockhouse Circle, Rockridge Park, Mountain Brook Estates, Mountain Brook Village, Mountain Brook Land Co. and the Riding Academy" prepared for the Jemison Companies by J.H. Glander, Jr. Civil Engineer [1927]. Details of Mountain Brook Estates, Mountain Brook Country Club, and areas to the northeast (in Sections 2, 3, 4, and 10) are derived from "Mountain Brook Land Company, March 1929, J.H. Glander, Jr. Engineer, Jemison & Company, Agents." Parcel lines in Sections 4 and 5 from "Mountain Brook Zoning Districts" prepared by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPC), January 2005.

# PLAN IN BROOK, 2009

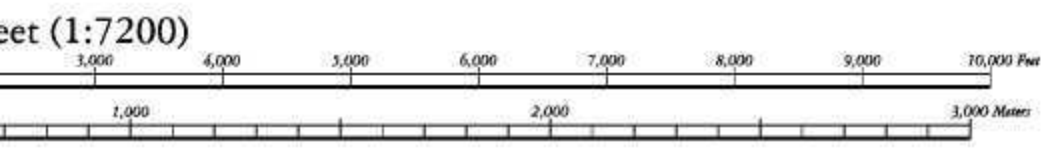


See historic layers: scans of Jemison & Mountain Brook (1926-1929), the roads of Jemison & Company by 1929, and a re-plan (1997-2007). The overlay allows comparison of 1929, and how it was implemented, as well as an overview of the intent in 2009.

The road system planned and built by Jemison & Co. in the 1920s still exists today, as does the original green space system. Trails following the routes of the original plan, Jemison Park and other recreational areas, have disappeared with the development of Brookwood Forest residential areas and other areas in the 1950s and 1960s. The original plan was replaced by a new development. Mountain Brook Village is the original small-scale character. The buildings remain, the oldest being the

Mountain Brook Estates building at 2801-2805 Cahaba Road. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. While Warren Manning's carefully designed framework of roads and green spaces remains today, amenities have been adjusted to match modern requirements for traffic flow, stormwater management, and recreation. The main thoroughfares Mountain Brook Parkway and Cherokee Road were widened, and except for the few instances, *shown on the map*, the original concrete pavement was replaced or covered with asphalt. Consequently, most bridges were widened and veneered with sandstone to match the original bridges. The original grid of roads and green spaces along with views of the landscape, the stone bridges, and entrances still shape the Mountain Brook experience. The designed landscape sets the stage for the eclectic mix of homes built in distinct architectural styles from the development's inception in 1926 to this day. The following plans take a photographic inventory of a selection of these roads and highlight Warren Manning's masterly design.

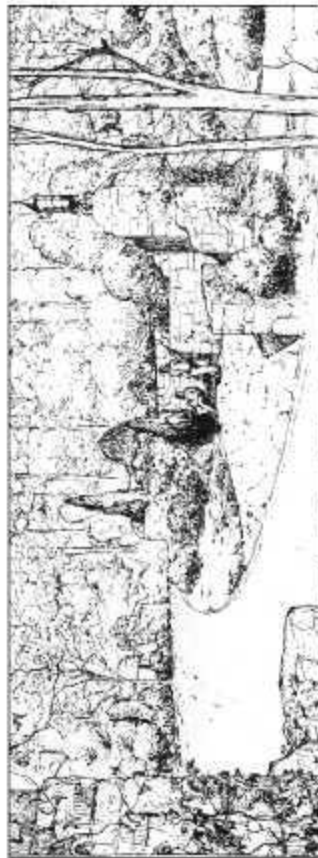
of historic and current maps, historic map titles and borders were removed. The individual sectors are not delineated by lines. Due to the distortion of the original ink on linen drawings (introduced by aging and moisture), the sheets 2, 3, 4, 9, and 10, does not fit evenly the Public Land Survey System section geometry established in the "best fit." Historic roads not within the Jemison & Company project area are not shown.



DRAWN BY: **Richard K. Anderson, Jr., Birgit Kibelka, 2012.**  
 PROJECT: **MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT**  
 OFFICE: **OFFICE OF THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE SURVEY**  
 CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK  
 MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CAHABA ROAD  
 JEFFERSON COUNTY  
**MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929**  
 ALABAMA  
 SHEET 8 OF 13  
 HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY  
 AL-2

**Integrity of the Plan for Mountain Brook, 2009.** HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 8. The map, *at left*, demonstrates that Mountain Brook's original road and green space system, as planned by Warren Manning and built for Jemison & Co. in the 1920s, still exists today. The high integrity to the original plan is revealed through the overlay of historic maps and current GIS data. The five HALS sheets that follow, together with associated aerial and large-format photographs, reveal Mountain Brook as it exists today, including the roads, amenities, and other features that were part of the 1920s plan. These pages show the individualized treatment of neighborhoods within the Mountain Brook landscape as developed by Jemison & Co. They provide an overview of the careful routing of roads and of the thoughtfully planned views and vistas.

# MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY



Cahaba Road Entrance. Drawing by William Kessler, 1927. Jemison Papers, BPL Archives.

## PARKWAY

"The roads of this study are laid down by Mr. Lutwiler (Manning associate) and myself on the ground, surveyed in by Mr. Glanville (Jemison's engineer) and reviewed by you and your associates on foot and on horseback, and by Mr. Kessler (Jemison's local landscape architect) and me from crest outlook points."

Warren Manning to Robert Jemison, Jr., August 6, 1928.



Viewing of the view at 2600 Mountain Brook Parkway.

1: William Kessler designed and provided planting plans for the masonry entrances that delineate the boundaries of Mountain Brook.

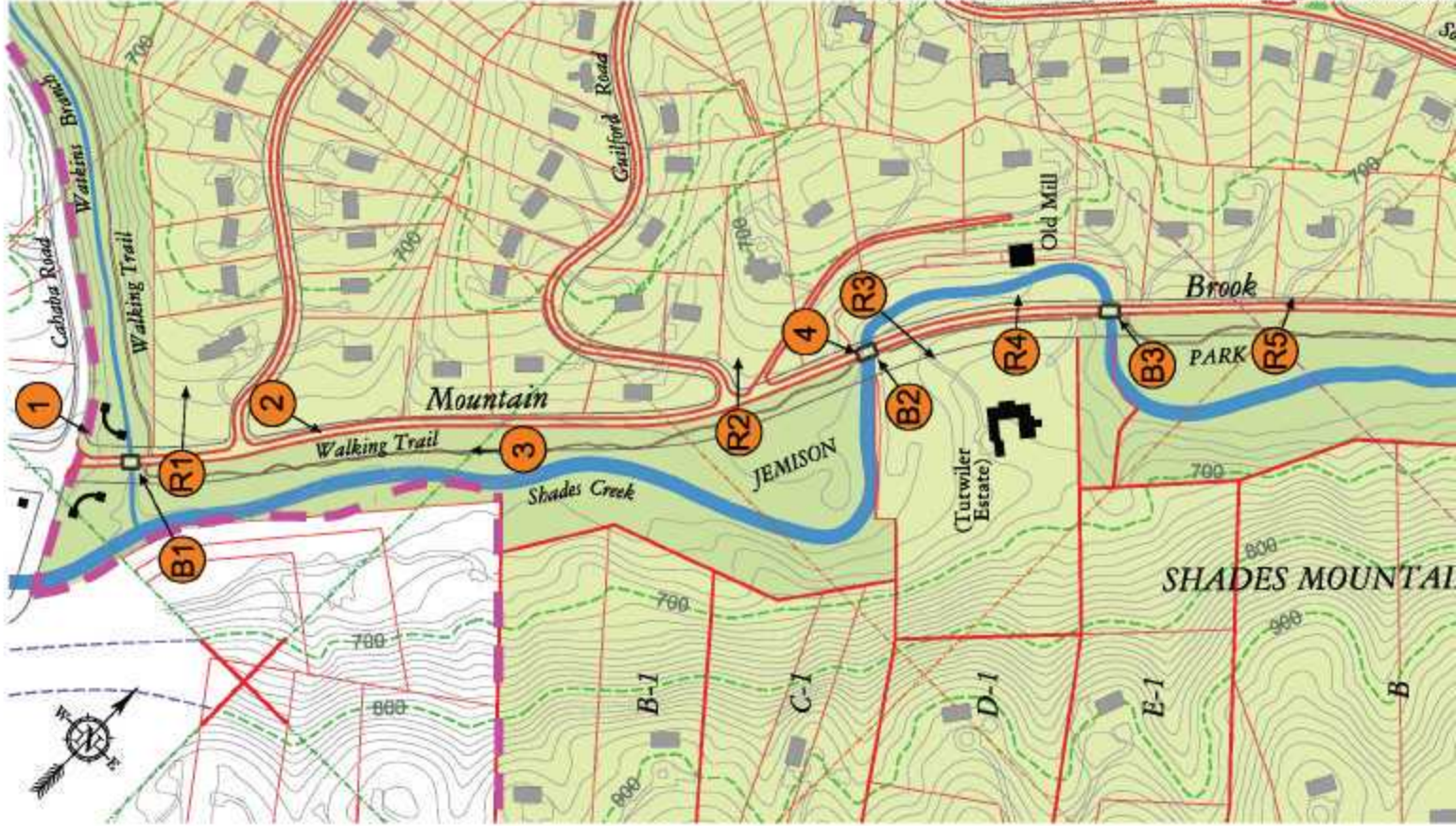
2: After crossing the creek, the motorist's view widens to encompass residences, the open forest canopy, the floodplains of the creek, and the steep cliffs of Shades Mountain, left to right.

3: The reservation of the floodplain creates not only beautiful scenery for the motorist, the home owner, and the trail user but also stormwater management and a safe place for children to play. By 1928, 29 miles of bridle trails wound along the creek, its floodplain, and mountain slopes. Today a network of pedestrian paths traverses the open wooded floodplain, linking the Mountain Brook community. It is called Jemison Park.

4: Proceeding along the parkway, the Turwiler Estate emerges around the bend, as if setting the stage for surprise. Manning suggested and sited the Mt. Vernon replica and mill (in imitation of George Washington's Virginia estate) on a flood-prone bend within the reserve. To set the tone for the new community, Jemison & Co. built the house and the Old Mill, the latter in the style of a 19th century Alabama grist mill. The model estate sold to Herbert Turwiler, the mill tea room operated until 1930.

5: Along the parkway there are no prolonged straight-aways. The road subtly

Entering from Cahaba Road, motorists along Mountain Brook Parkway proceed across the Shades Creek valley floor into its park-like setting. The open forest character allows deep views throughout the valley as the one-mile parkway meanders along the creek, crossing it thrice on stone bridges. The parkway is routed away from the steep cliffs on the northern face of Shades Mountain, creating a large reservation and wide floodplain. On the upper side of the parkway, set back at least 200 feet, residences dot the gently sloping ledge. On the other side, the floodplain and steep cliffs of Shades Mountain are preserved in a dedicated park and by restrictions placed in the deeds of the adjoining estate lots fronting Cherokee Road, marked by large letters on the map below. These restrictions protect the parkland.



Map is a detail clipped from Sheet 8. See Sheet 8 for detailed legend and sources. Location



LOCATION MAP, 1929

## RESIDENCES

"The placement of the parkway within the valley floor and the placement of the houses on the upper side of the road permits the houses to face the parkway and the lot lines to run as far up the side of the mountain, back of the homes as may be considered desirable."

Warren Manning, September 19, 1927.

"Estate boundaries are determined not by geometric lines, but by topographic features or unusual landscape, and estates are planned large enough that each home site has special distinction and value."

Egbert Haas, "The Naturalistic Development of Mountain Brook Estates," American Landscape Architect, January 1930.



R1 2600 Mountain Brook Parkway.



R2 2700 Mountain Brook Parkway.



R3 2801 Mountain Brook Parkway.





prints to showcase the residences in an engaging and attractive manner.

6: Near the Pine Ridge Road intersection, suitable rock to make a steep rocky bank instead of a vertical wall is found on the upper side of the parkway. It was to be filled with "barry flowering plants and vines and evergreen trailers."

Warren Manning, May 4, 1927.

7: The estate lots along Pine Ridge were not part of the original Jemison development to which these four stone gates indicate entrance along the parkway and its Overbrook Road continuation. Per Manning, the Overbrook Road bridge, built in 1928, was moved downstream to "a favorable turn in the stream on the Pine Ridge Estate."

Warren Manning, May 6, 1927.



5 The road curves to present 3000 Mountain Brook Parkway.



6 Roadway, 3016 Mountain Brook Parkway.



7 Pine Ridge & Overbrook Road Entrances; view toward Pine Ridge Road (left) and Overbrook Road Bridge (right).



LEGEND Residence: [grey square] Bridge: [square with arch] Entrances: [square with arch] Photo Location: [circle with number]

SCALE 1" = 200 FEET

0 200 400ft 0 100 200m

Locations for residences are based on Jefferson County aerial photographs taken in 2007.



R4 The Old Mill, 2780 Mountain Brook Parkway.



R5 2000 Mountain Brook Parkway.



R6 3000 Mountain Brook Parkway.



B1 Parkway Across Watkins Creek.



B2 Parkway Across Shades Creek, West of Mill.



B3 Parkway Across Shades Creek, East of Mill.



B4 Overbrook Road.

## BRIDGES

Designed by civil engineer J.H. Glander, Jr. and landscape architect William Kessler and veneered with locally quarried stone laid in random style, the four bridges shown carry the motorist over Shades Creek and its tributaries.

Birgit Kibelka, 2012.

MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT

MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CANABA ROAD

CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK

MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929

JEFFERSON COUNTY

ALABAMA

All photographs on this sheet were made by Birgit Kibelka except as otherwise noted.

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SURVEY

AL-2

9

13

### Mountain Brook Parkway. HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 9.

Mountain Brook Parkway, the main through route of the residential district, is characterized by its location on the valley floor. Separating the residences at the base of the ridge from Jemison Park, the parkway meanders along the creek with views of the floodplain opening and retracting.

Floodplain and road set the stage for the residences set back generously along the parkway and elevated on gently sloping lawns. Two elaborate entrance gates, stone-veneered bridges, and the prominent estate and scenic buildings—the Tutwiler Estate and the Old Mill—are located on the parkway.





## MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY

Mountain Brook Parkway was planned to be the main thoroughfare of the development. Leaving Cahaba Road—the main artery to Birmingham at the time of subdivision—the parkway proceeds along Shades Creek to Mountain Brook Club and Leeds Road, then circles back via Cherokee Road.

**OPPOSITE: Mountain Brook Parkway.** Aerial photograph by John Wotnen, 2013. BHS. At the base of Shades Mountain sits the Mt. Vernon replica, *bottom right in the photograph*. The open space in the distance, *top left*, is the golf course of Mountain Brook Club. Above and behind this space is the crest of Shades Mountain, elevation 1,100 feet.

**TOP: 2801 Mountain Brook Parkway.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-8. Other than the Mt. Vernon replica, *pictured here*, Manning located residences on one side only of the parkway. This placement allowed for superb home sites with lot lines running up the ridge. Both homeowners and motorists have excellent views.

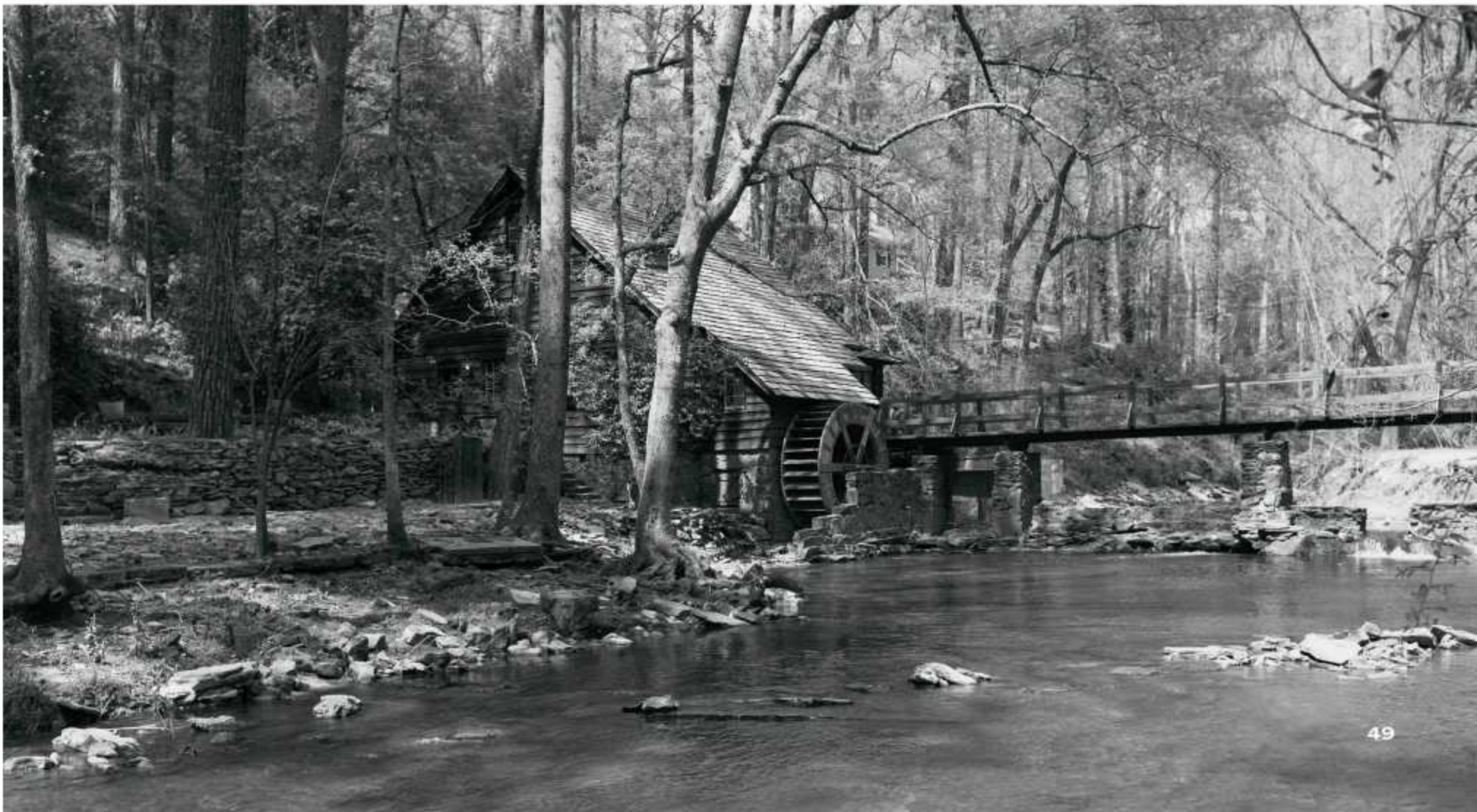


**CENTER: Mountain Brook Parkway, Pedestrian Path, and Shades Creek.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-6.

The parkway hugs the base of Bald Ridge, *to the left*, providing maximum open space for recreation in the floodplain.

**BOTTOM: The Old Mill, 2780 Mountain Brook Parkway.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-9.

In October 1926, Manning sent Jemison measurements and a photograph of George Washington's Mt. Vernon mill, with the suggestion that such a mill could become the first unit of Mountain Brook's Mt. Vernon replica. Designed in the style of an antebellum gristmill and placed on the foundations of the Perryman Mill, the new structure's intended use was as a tea room. It quickly also became a community center and sales office for the subdivision. Manning pioneered the new use for old mills, converting his 1640 Massachusetts residence as well as a mill on Rock Creek Parkway in Washington, D.C., into tea rooms—a popular and income-producing amenity of the 1920s.







## DISAPPEARING DRIVE WAYS

While Warren Manning sited residences, roads, and amenities, Birmingham landscape architect William Kessler sited the “drive ways,” as they were called in the 1920s, and local civil engineer J. H. Glander, Jr. laid them carefully into the terrain, without use of large earth-moving equipment. The house site and drive locations were often written into the deeds to the property. These photographs, made along the parkway, showcase gorgeously designed, and beautifully maintained, “disappearing” drives. A brick edge often defines these magnificent drives.

**OPPOSITE: 2700 Mountain Brook Parkway.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-7.

**ABOVE: 3000 Mountain Brook Parkway.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-12.

**BELOW, LEFT AND RIGHT: 2900 Mountain Brook Parkway.** Photographs by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-11 and AL-2-10.



# OVERBROOK & BEECHWOOD ROADS



"The Parkway Road... we have carried it up to the end of the ridge, we carried this down the slope to the southward then looped across the valley and carried the road northward part way up the slope out to the Leeds Road (today's Old Leeds Road). In this way we can give all the valley land through which the bridge trail passes to the golf course and club house grounds and give better access to slope house lots."

Warren Manning, September 18, 1927.

Overbrook and Beechwood Roads extend the parkway from Cahaba Road to today's Old Leeds Road. Known in 1927 as the Leeds Highway, it was considered, and thankfully rejected, as a possible route for the Bankhead Highway, a national thoroughway. Overbrook Road follows Shades Creek and its floodplain reservation (Jemison Park) until the road reaches the intersection with Beechwood. Proceeding further along the slope, the road intersects Cherokee Road, forming a loop back to Cahaba Road, today's U.S. 280. Beechwood Road accesses Mountain Brook Club and completes the link from Cahaba to Old Leeds Road. Home sites are set at a 700-foot elevation along the steep slope.

## BEECHWOOD ROAD

Residences along Beechwood are set along the steep adjoining slope at elevations of 700 to 780 feet. Per Manning, the ridge-top and over-the-ridge road "will enable us to divide this ridge end land into suitable lots, of which a considerable portion will have views of the golf course and club house."

Warren Manning, September 18, 1927.



Shades Creek's wooded floodplain with the pedestrian trail and the road above.



Road meandering along Shades Creek.



Residences at 3345 and 3325 Overbrook overlooking the park.



Winding up the slope with a view to the Mountain Brook Club golf course.



Road and trail curving the Beechwood Road Bridge.



Beechwood Road Bridge.



Beechwood Road.



Map is a detail clipped from Sheet 8. See Sheet 8 for detailed legend and so



5 View of the Mountain Brook Club house across golf course.



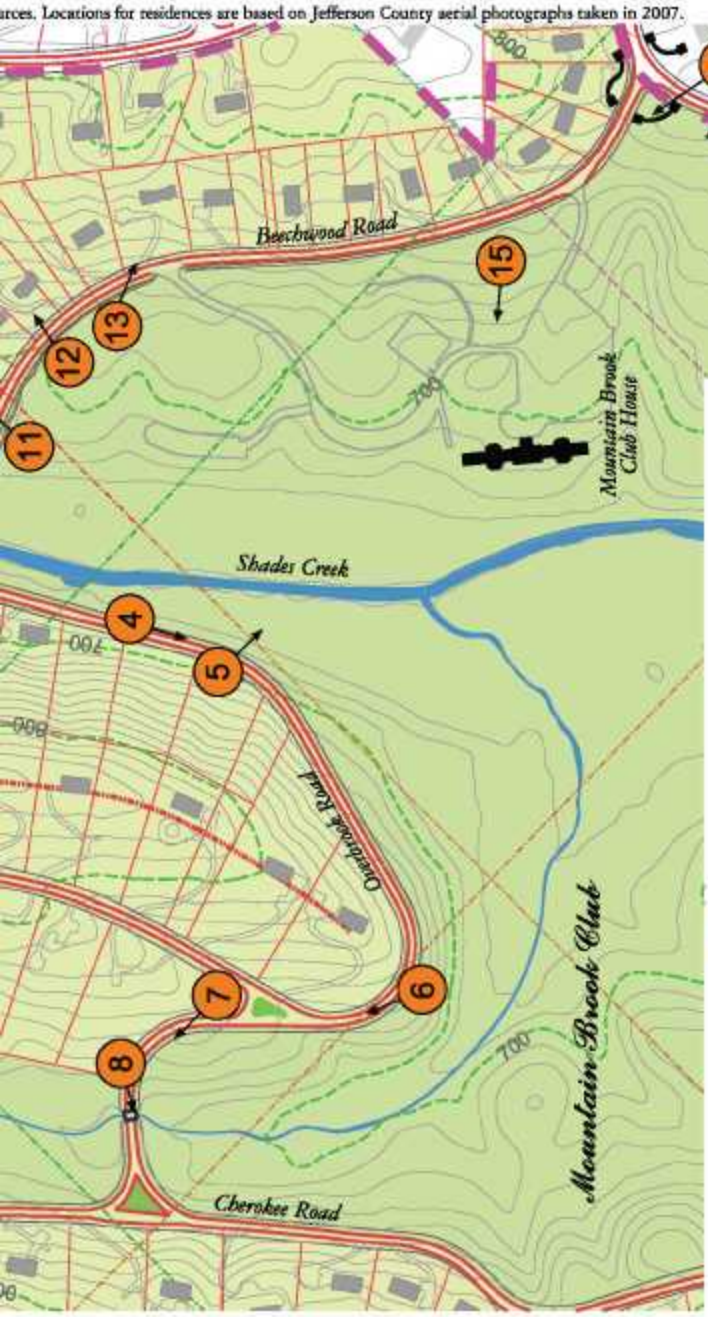
6 Winding down between steep slopes and the golf course.



7 Approaching the bridge at Cherokee Road.



8 Golf Links Bridge, crossing the golf course to Cherokee Road.



**LEGEND** Photo Location: Residence: Bridge: Entrance:   
**SCALE** 1" = 200 FEET

## MOUNTAIN BROOK CLUB

Sited by Warren Manning on a ledge overlooking the floodplain, elevation 600 feet, and crest of Shades Mountain, elevation 1,100 feet, and designed by Aymar Embury II in the Regency style, the clubhouse is intended to appear as a large, decidedly Southern residence. The meandering of the creek across the low-lying floodplain passed through a retention pond for floodwater collection. Cool springs were channeled into the creek and a swimming pool. A large pond upstream planned for the property of George Gordon Crawford was intended to withhold upstream floodwaters headed through the golf course site.

*"We were all agreed that the road outlook would be notably fine—that the road should have a uniform sweeping curve down the slope. . . . The fill across the valley would give a better turn for a road to the high level lots above the road."*  
 Warren Manning, May 4, 1927.



12 Beechwood Road.

13 Beechwood Road.

14 Old Leads Road Entrance.



15 Mountain Brook Club, 19 Beechwood Road.

Mountain Brook Recording Project  
 Mountain Brook, Alabama  
 1926 - 1929

City of Mountain Brook  
 Mountain Brook Parkway at Canaba Road

Jefferson County  
 Mountain Brook 1926 - 1929

Historic American Landscapes Survey  
 AL-2  
 All photographs on this sheet were made by Birgit Kübelka except as otherwise noted.

### Overbrook and Beechwood Roads. HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 10.

In contrast to Mountain Brook Parkway, which travels creekside along the valley floor, Overbrook and Beechwood Roads rise gently along the adjoining ridges.

Overbrook Road meanders above Shades Creek at the edge of the steep face of Shades Mountain. It then hugs the ridge where it meets the Mountain Brook Club golf course, affording the driver beautiful views throughout the valley. Beechwood Road skillfully accesses a challenging ridge, providing irregular lots and many home sites with views across the club property.







**Overbrook Road Bridge and Entrance at Mountain Brook Parkway and Pine Ridge Road.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-17.

## OVERBROOK ROAD

Overbrook Road leads from Mountain Brook Parkway to Beechwood and Cherokee Roads, passing the open space that is Mountain Brook Club. Along Overbrook, *bottom left to center in the photograph on the opposite page*, residences are set along the 700-foot contour. Dell Road residences are visible, *to the right*, atop the ridges. Manning considered Shades Creek's low-lying floodplain unfit for residences but perfect for recreation and golf, a game that, as played in the 1920s, tolerated occasional overflows of the creek.

**OPPOSITE: Overbrook Road Leading to Mountain Brook Club.** Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.



**ABOVE: Overbrook Road Bridge.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-18. Built in the style of early twentieth-century bridges that carried horse-drawn vehicles, the Overbrook Road Bridge is veneered with rough-cut, native stone. The bridge appears as if it belongs to the place. It does; its stone was quarried nearby. The archway, *on the right*, served horseback riders and pedestrians exploring the woodland trail.

**LEFT: Historic Bridle Trail Along Overbrook Road and Shades Creek.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-19.

Obscured by the early spring foliage, residences are set into the adjoining ridge, *to the left of the road and trail*. One side only of the road is subdivided for residences, giving their owners, motorists, and pedestrians gorgeous views along Shades Creek. Planners maintained that valley lots such as these at the 700-foot level enjoyed the air movement advantages of the crest lots while being sheltered from the cold winter winds.



**ABOVE: Mountain Brook Club with Shades Creek Flowing Across the "Brook Nine."**

Aerial Photograph by John Watnen, 2013. BHS.

**TOP, LEFT: Overbrook Road Ascending the Ridge and Giving Views of the "Brook Nine" of the Golf Course.**

Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-25.

**CENTER, LEFT: View Across the "Brook Nine" to Overbrook Road As It Climbs the Adjacent Hillside.**

Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-26.

**BOTTOM, LEFT: View from Beechwood Road Bridge Across Shades Creek into Jemison Park.**

Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-21.

**RIGHT: Approach to the Club House from Beechwood Road.**

Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-23.



## MOUNTAIN BROOK CLUB

As general planner for Mountain Brook, Warren Manning selected the spectacular site of Mountain Brook Club, routing the roads—Beechwood, Cherokee, Leeds (which was actually re-routed), and Overbrook—to form the club property. He also used the topography of the setting to shape the surrounding residential areas.

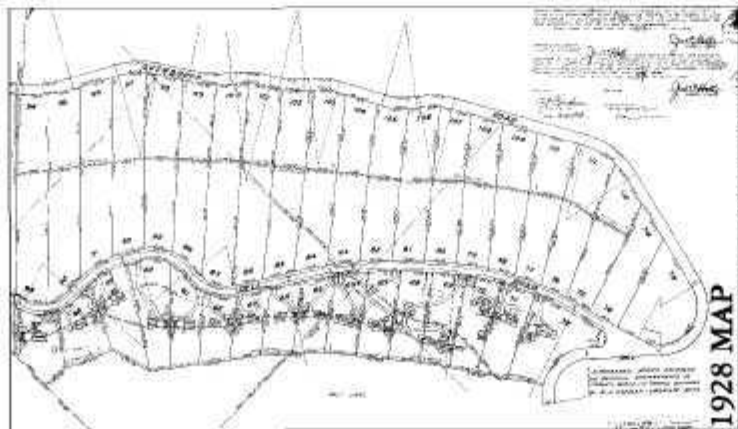
The original plan called for a golf resort and hotel to be located on the Shades Mountain crest. However, in April 1928, Leeds Road was not selected as the route for the Bankhead Highway—U.S. 78, and Jemison and his investors opted for a private club and golf course. Manning chose a new site for the club house, and investors paid to redesign the course to make the new plan work. The noted golf course designer, Donald Ross, planned the course.

To design the club house, Jemison commissioned Aymar Embury II, a leading national architect then specializing in country clubs. Embury designed it to appear as a “big Country House.” Its builders called the style “Early American Colonial.”

# DELL ROAD

*"Dell Road located and staked, cleared for draining, grading to be started with two steam shovels as soon as the cross-drains base been laid. As soon as vistas are cut on Dell Road the property can be priced, placed on the market and sold from a preliminary map."*

Rudfin Smith to Robert Jemison, Jr., May 31, 1928.



1928 MAP

Dell Road Sector, October 1928, Jemison Papers, BPL Archives.

## RESIDENCES

Along Dell, most residences are set back 200 feet from the road along the adjoining hog-back ridges at elevations of 870 to 900 feet. Jemison & Co. selected several local architectural firms to design model houses, resulting in an eclectic stylistic mix. Colonial Revival styles predominate. The planners ensured each house site, whether large or small, was given special siting. Foresters cut views before selling the lots.

*"Each estate has distinctive features...Nature has already designed and built the owner's wild garden... One needs only to assist Nature to retain and intensify its beauty."*

Egbert Haas, January 1930.



While rising 200 feet to the dramatic view at its summit, Dell Road accesses residences set along the ridges on both sides of the road. The dell—a secluded hollow or small valley—is created by a sharp drop off in elevation at the high point of the road. The road follows the natural drainage channels which flow into the golf course below. To combine both road and drainage, bridges over and tunnels under, together with ditches and gutters, direct the water running off the southern slope of Shades Mountain into the golf course below. Residences have views toward adjacent ridges or of the golf course.



Map is a detail clipped from Sheet 8. See Sheet 8 for detailed legend and sources.



LOCATION MAP, 1929



1 View across the dell, at the summit of the road, elevation 945 feet, looking toward a narrow gap at Cherokee Road.



2 At Dell Road's high point, view toward Pine Ridge and Red Mountain.



3

Curves as the road approaches its high point.



4

View to residences, both sides of the road, at 1255, and 3238 Dell Road.



5



6 Road rising and following the natural drainage channel at 3305, 3300, and 3266 Dell Road.



6 Stone bridge facilitating driveway across the drainage basin at 3320 Dell Road.



7 Entering Dell Road from Overbrook Road, elevation 740 feet.



3333 Dell Road. The Jemison Magazine, July 1929, Jemison Papers, BFL Archives.

Locations for residences are based on Jefferson County aerial photographs taken in 2007.



**LEGEND** Photo Location: 7  
 Residence: [grey square] Bridge: [square with X] Entrance: [hook symbol]  
 SCALE 1" = 200 FEET  
 0 100 200 400ft 0 100 200m

Jemison & Company promotional literature described the model house on Dell Road as "one of the finest examples of the true Old English country home ever built in Birmingham... situated on a well-elevated site, beautifully wooded with hardwood and pine... From the terraces of this lovely home, wonderful vistas may be had across beautiful Mountain Brook, towards the Shades Valley Country Club on the west and the new Mountain Brook Country Club on the east. A sparkling mountain stream winds its way in the valley below, on the north side of the property."  
 The Jemison Magazine, July 1929.



R1 3249 Dell Road, with Red Mountain in the background.



R2 3251 Dell Road, with a dry creek passing through the front yard.



R3 3266 Dell Road.



R4 3333 Dell Road, a model estate designed for Jemison & Co. by Warren, Knight & Davis, architects of Birmingham.

All photographs on this sheet were made by Birgit Kibelka except as otherwise noted.

PROJECT	MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT	STATE	ALABAMA
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE		COUNTY	JEFFERSON COUNTY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR		CITY	MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CANABA ROAD
			MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929
			JEFFERSON COUNTY
			ALABAMA
		SHEET NO.	11
		TOTAL SHEETS	13
		PROJECT	AL-2
			AL-2

**Dell Road.** HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 11.

The Dell Road residential area lies on a series of ridges, elevation 870 feet to 900 feet. The road gracefully rises 200 feet from its intersection at Overbrook Road before descending to Cherokee Road. It is set into a natural drainage channel, with residences generously set back onto the adjoining ridges, giving homeowners views of the golf course and of distant ridges in Shades Valley. Placement of residences along the ridges and orientation of views is noted on the October 1928 plat, on the facing page.



**ABOVE: Aerial View of "The Mountain Nine" of the Mountain Brook Club Golf Course.** Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

The Mountain Brook Club golf course lies at the base of Dell and Cherokee Roads, *to the right and left, in this photograph*. This view looks into "the Dell," *top*. In the distance, at the base of Shades Mountain, lies the city of Homewood.



**LEFT: Golf Links Bridge.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HAIS No. AI-2-27.

Overbrook Road crosses this bridge, which is also seen, *center right*, in the photograph above and on pages 30 and 39.



## DELL ROAD

Road and residences are beautifully integrated into the complex combination of natural features along Dell Road. To set the tone for the unique home sites in this neighborhood, Jemison & Co. built two model homes along Dell Road (at 3266 and 3333 Dell Road). The firm also hired a forester to clear desirable views for prospective homeowners of the 1920s.

**LEFT: Dell Road Rising Following the Natural Drainage Channels.**  
Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-34.

From its intersection at Overbrook Road, Dell Road rises through what Jemison publicists described, accurately, as “a forested cathedral.”

**BOTTOM, LEFT: View from Cherokee Road As Dell Road Rises to Its High Point, Passing the Dell, on the right.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-35.

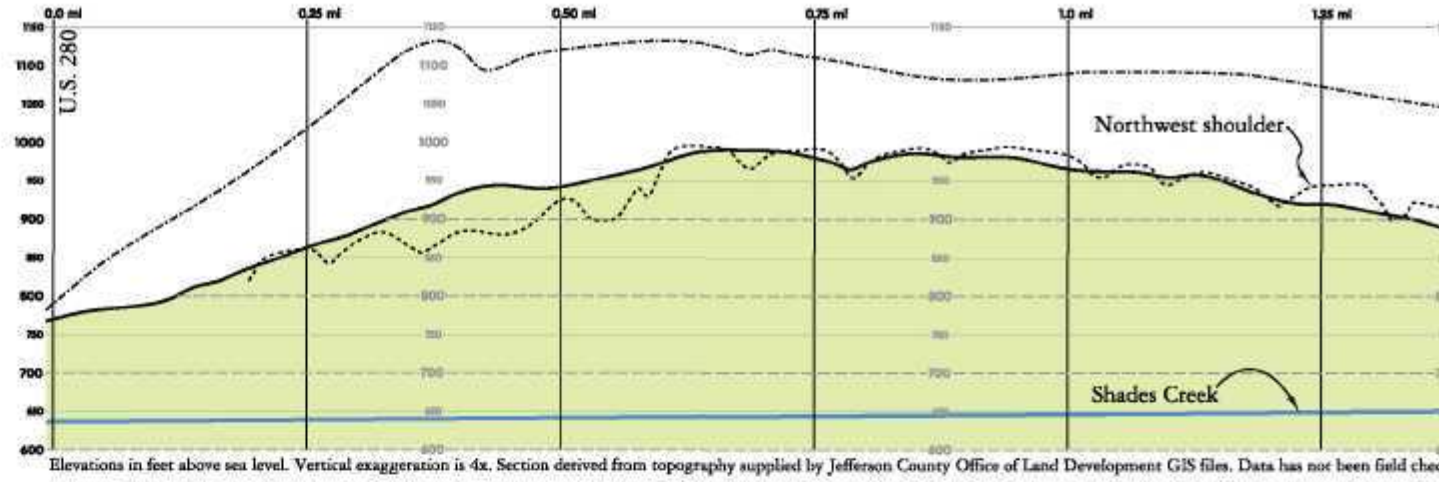
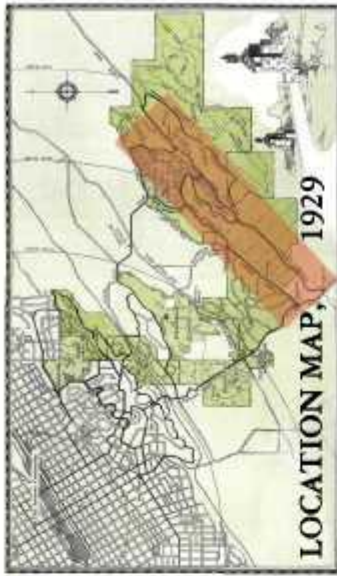
*To the left in this view, the model residence built by Jemison & Co. at 3266 Dell is barely visible through the luxuriant spring foliage.*

**BOTTOM, RIGHT: Dell Road As It Descends from Its High Point to Cherokee Road, Passing the Dell, on the left.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-36.

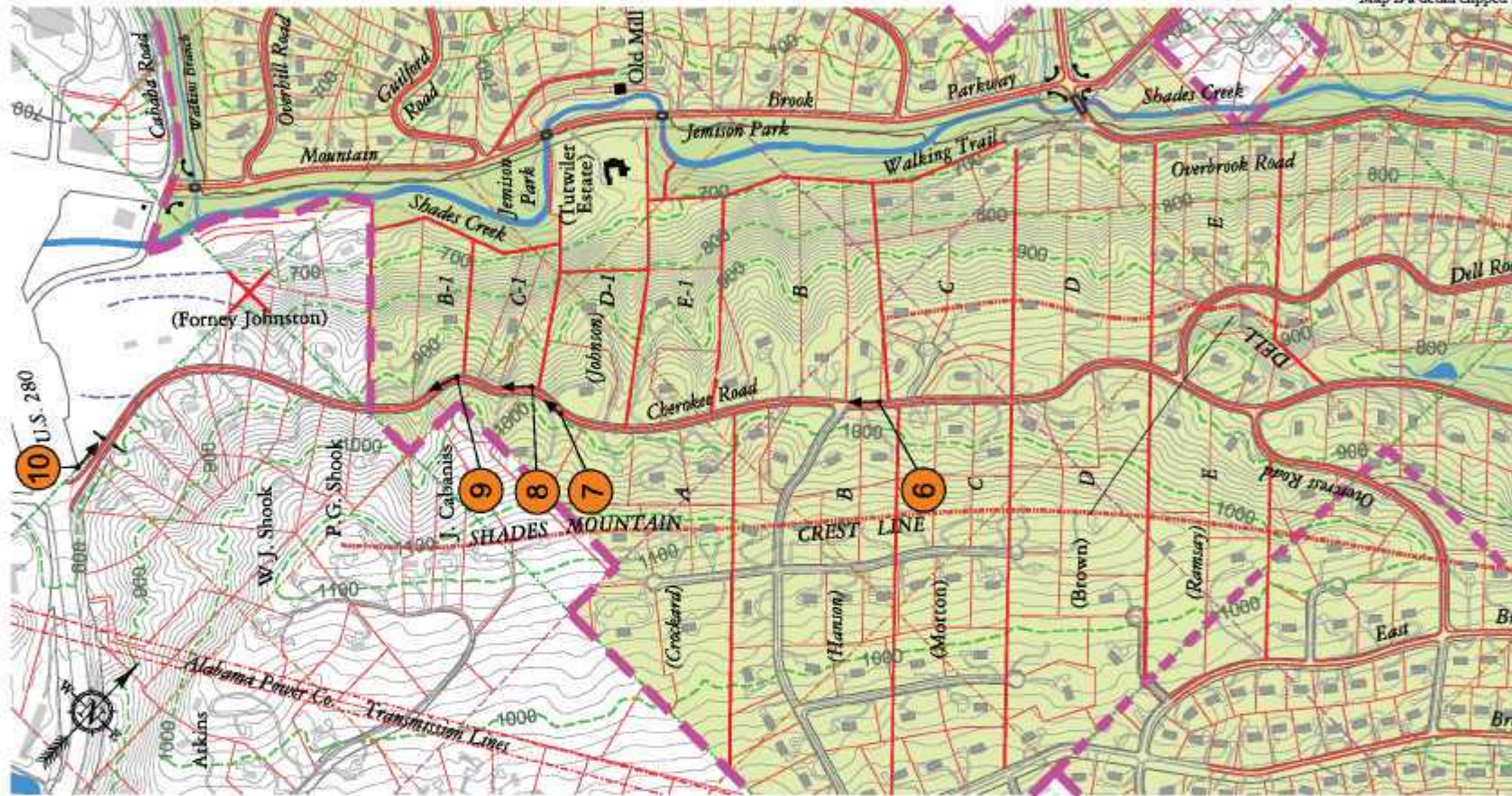


# CHEROKEE ROAD

## A MID SLOPE ROAD



Elevations in feet above sea level. Vertical exaggeration is 4x. Section derived from topography supplied by Jefferson County Office of Land Development GIS files. Data has not been field checked.



The grandest of the estates in the future Mountain Brook were those intended for the investors in the venture. These were to be set on the rocky crest of Shades Mountain, elevation 1,100 feet, high above Cherokee Road. The 55- to 60-acre lots ran from the crest to Shades Creek, 500 feet below in today's Jemison Park.

The investors included Murray Brown, President, Goodall-Brown Dry Goods Co.; Victor Hanson, publisher, *The Birmingham News*; Lindsey Morton, President, Phoenix Portland Cement; Erskine Ramsay, engineer-inventor-real estate investor and Jemison's longtime business and civic associate; Eugene A. Yates, general manager, Alabama Power Co.; and Robert Jemison, Jr. In 1928 or 1929, Coca-Cola franchisees Crawford and Allen Johnson purchased key estates and built the only residences completed on Cherokee Road until the 1950s.



Cherokee Road Entrance at Cahaba Road now U.S. 280.



Snaking down the mountain slope.



Just around the curve, dramatic views of Red Mountain.



1942 Cherokee, the road begins its descent.



Following the topography at 2980 Cherokee.



The road begins to climb at 3337 Cherokee Road.

8: Large curves seem to make the road disappear as the motorist stares across the steep cliffs to views of Red Mountain and Shades Valley below.

"I have already referred to the distinction that your whole development will gain by having a very large portion of its lots running from a road (Cherokee) to a reversion system (Jemison Park), through which the people can pass on foot and on bridle paths and in which children can play without the danger of automobiles doing them injury."

Warren Manning to Robert Jemison, Jr., July 3, 1927

A mid slope, not a crest road: "In regard to the highway along the ridge of the crest, it is all right for you to make a tentative plan on that basis, though I do not believe that our people will be interested in this boulevard unless it was a considerable distance south of the crest, so as not to interfere with the privacy, particularly of the large estates A to E, and any other large estates that might be established east of E. In other words, these main arteries of traffic should of course be planned and arranged in



4: Cherokee Road links today's U.S. 280 and Old Leeds Road. Manning originally suggested building a boulevard atop the crest of Shades Mountain. However, Jemison would not permit the proposed boulevard to disturb the privacy of the investor's estates. Hence, Manning designed Cherokee Road at mid slope, accessing the grandest of the proposed estates with drives, both below and above the road.



4: View through the gap to Mountain Brook Club at 3145 Cherokee.



3: View along the golf course at 3435, 3455, 3475 Cherokee.



2: Rock outcrops along the road at 3475 Cherokee.



1: Leeds Road Entrance.

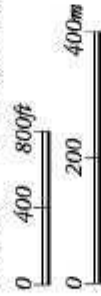
3: Cherokee Road clings to the north face of Shades Mountain as it presents broad views of distant mountains and valleys through the clearings in the trees.

Robert Jemison, Jr. to Warren Manning, November 14, 1927

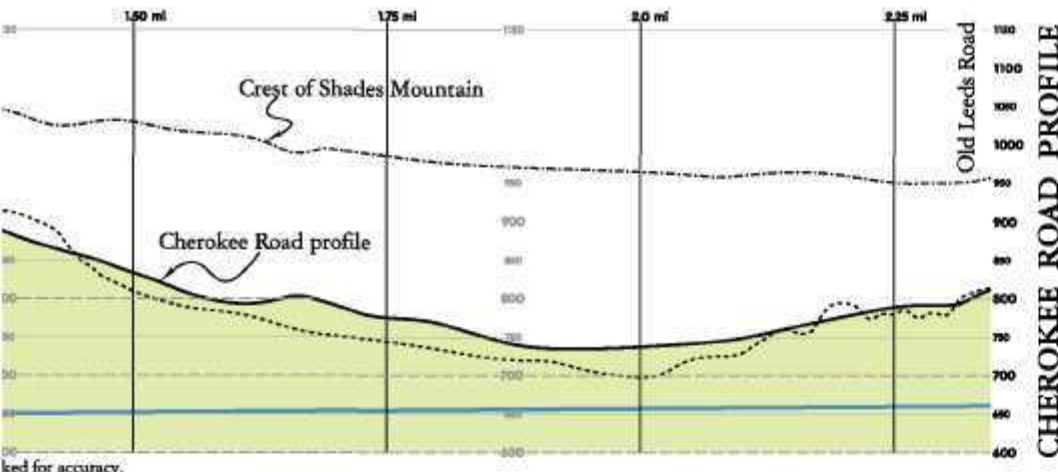
**LEGEND**

- Photo Location: 3
- Residence:
- Bridge:
- Entrance:

SCALE 1" = 400 FEET



from Sheet 8. See Sheet 8 for detailed legend and sources. Locations for residences are based on Jefferson County aerial photographs taken in 2007.



ked for accuracy.

RECORDS BY: **Richard K. Anderson, Jr., Birgit Kibelka, 2012.**

**MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT**  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 SERVICE CENTER, 1000 PARKWAY DRIVE, SEVEN ROCKS, ALABAMA

**MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CAMBERA ROAD**

**CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK**

**MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929**

**JEFFERSON COUNTY**

**ALABAMA**

**12 13**

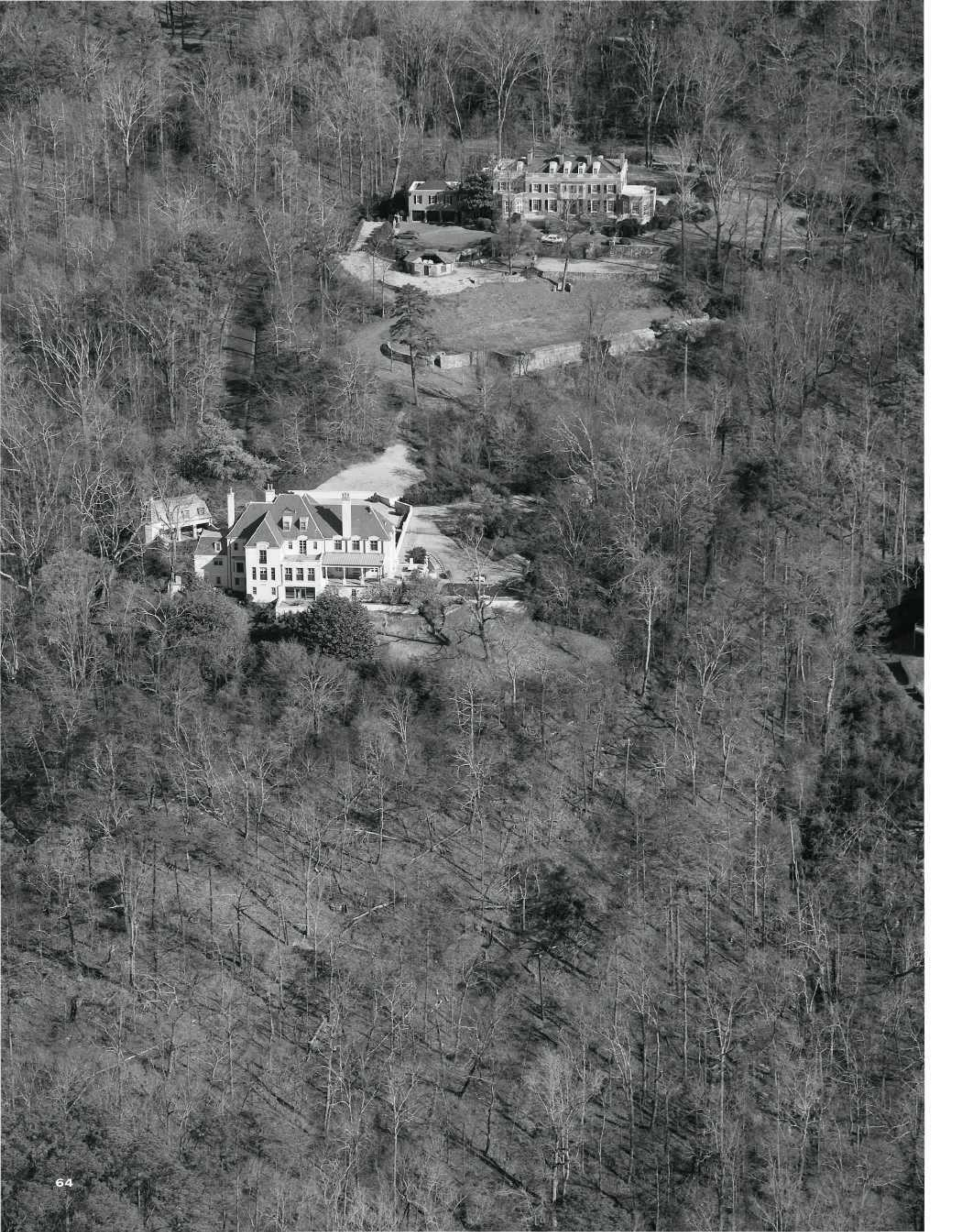
*All photographs on this sheet were made by Birgit Kibelka except as otherwise noted.*

**HISTORIC AMERICAN  
 LANDSCAPE SURVEY  
 AL-2**

**Cherokee Road.** HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 12.

Cherokee Road links today's U.S. 280 and Old Leeds Road. Manning originally suggested building a boulevard atop the crest of Shades Mountain. However, Jemison would not permit the proposed boulevard to disturb the privacy of the investor's estates. Hence, Manning designed Cherokee Road at mid slope, accessing the grandest of the proposed estates with drives, both below and above the road.

The location of Cherokee Road at mid slope and the aim for privacy of the largest estates characterize this through route of Mountain Brook. After leaving the wide views into the golf course near Old Leeds Road, the road rises, and residences are far removed from view while the road curves amid the numerous knolls along the northwestern face of Shades Mountain. A meandering journey takes the motorist through a mountainous forest landscape.



# CHEROKEE ROAD

Cherokee Road hugs the middle reaches of Shades Mountain as it ascends and descends, gently twisting and curving and creating spectacular views of residences and distant ridges. Warren Manning planned this road to access the estates of the investors in the Mountain Brook development, none of whom built residences here in the 1920s. Deed restrictions on these estates restrict subdivision of the plats and also protect the lands along Shades Creek in Jemison Park, several hundred feet below.

**OPPOSITE: Aerial View of 2942 and 2964 Cherokee Road.** Photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

This photograph shows Cherokee Road at its high point, where it winds around the Allen Johnson residence, *top right*, and elegantly curves down the slope, *further to the right*, toward U.S. 280. In 1928 or 1929, brothers Crawford and Allen Johnson purchased the 11-acre Lot D-1 and built the only Shades Mountain estates completed on Jemison lands before the Great Depression. The two estate residences are set onto separate ledges along the mountainside at the 1,000- and 900-foot elevations. The view from the terrace of the Crawford Johnson residence, *center in this photograph*, is seen, *below*. From this point, Shades Mountain's bluffs drop 230 feet to Shades Creek in Jemison Park.



**ABOVE: Views from 3032 [top] and 2964 [bottom] Cherokee Road, Elevation 900 Feet, Across Shades Valley to Red Mountain.** Photographs by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-38 and 40.

**ABOVE, RIGHT: Cherokee Road Rising to Its High Point, Elevation 1,000 Feet at 2942 Cherokee Road.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-38.

**CENTER, RIGHT: Cherokee Road Curving Down Shades Mountain.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-39.

**BOTTOM, RIGHT: Cherokee Road Entrance Way at Cahaba Road—U.S. 280, Elevation 800 Feet.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-37.



# VILLAGE CENTER CANTERBURY & SURREY ROADS

Born and bred in New England, where his family had lived since 1634, Mountain Brook designer Warren Manning firmly believed in village centers—small areas to provide services to residents. He designed preliminary plans for two: today's Mountain Brook Village and a proposed civic center at Brookwood and

Leeds Roads. The former made it into the March 1929 *General Plan*. Set at the intersection of the existing roads, the Montevallo and Cahaba Roads, Mountain Brook Village took on an old-world-appearance. By 1928, Jernison & Co. had built the Tudor styled Mountain Brook Estates and Martha Washington Candy Co. Buildings as well as a 20-acre

riding academy and a rink. Canterbury Road formed the fifth spoke of the village road system and provided entry into a section of relatively small, 200,000 square foot, valley lots located between two adjoining ridges, close to village shopping and the elementary school.



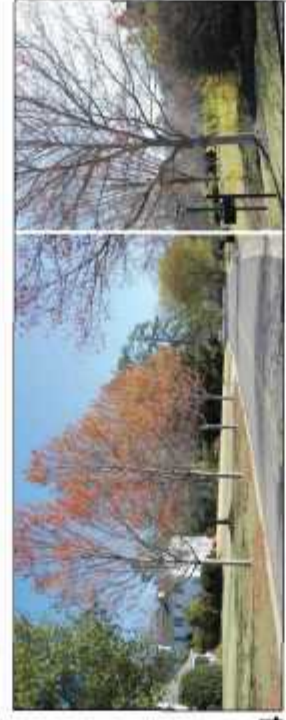
1 Martha Washington Candy Co. Building, 2726 Cahaba Road.



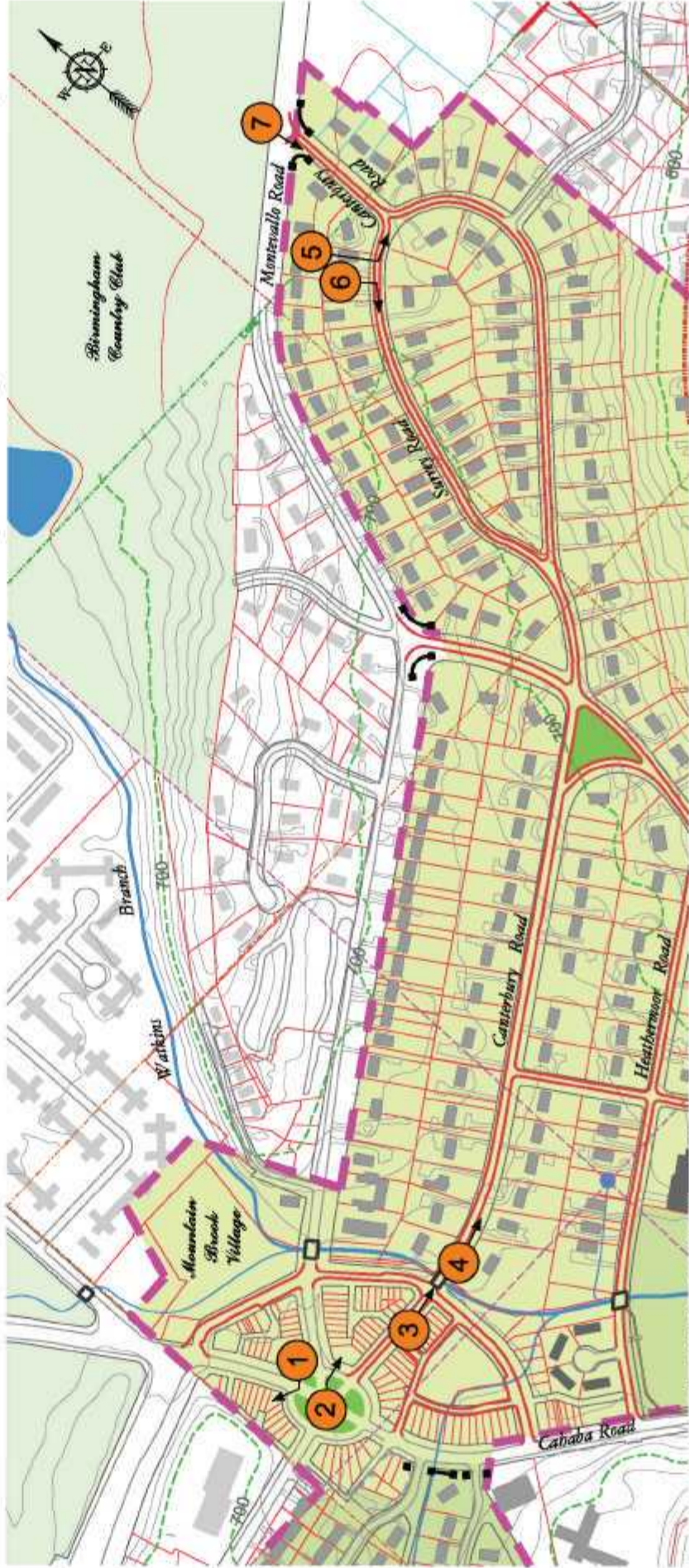
2 Mountain Brook Estate Building and Hill Greenery, 2801-5 and 2807 Cahaba Road South.



3 Canterbury Road Entrances and Bridge over Watkins Brook.



4 2600 Canterbury Road.



Map is a detail clipped from Sheet 8. See Sheet 8 for detailed legend and sources. Locations for residences are based on Jefferson County aerial photographs taken in 2007.

LEGEND Photo Location: **3** Residence: **■** Bridge: **□** Entrances: **↪**

SCALE 1" = 200 FEET

0 200 400ft 0 100 200m



5 Surrey Road, looking toward 3025-3013 Canterbury Road.



6 2910-2906 Surrey Road, with original concrete gutters.



7 Montevallo Road Entrance at Canterbury Road.

# GUILFORD & SOUTHWOOD ROADS





8 Original concrete paving and gutter, 3116 Guilford Road.



9 2716 Southwood Road.



10 2737 Southwood Road, a model house.



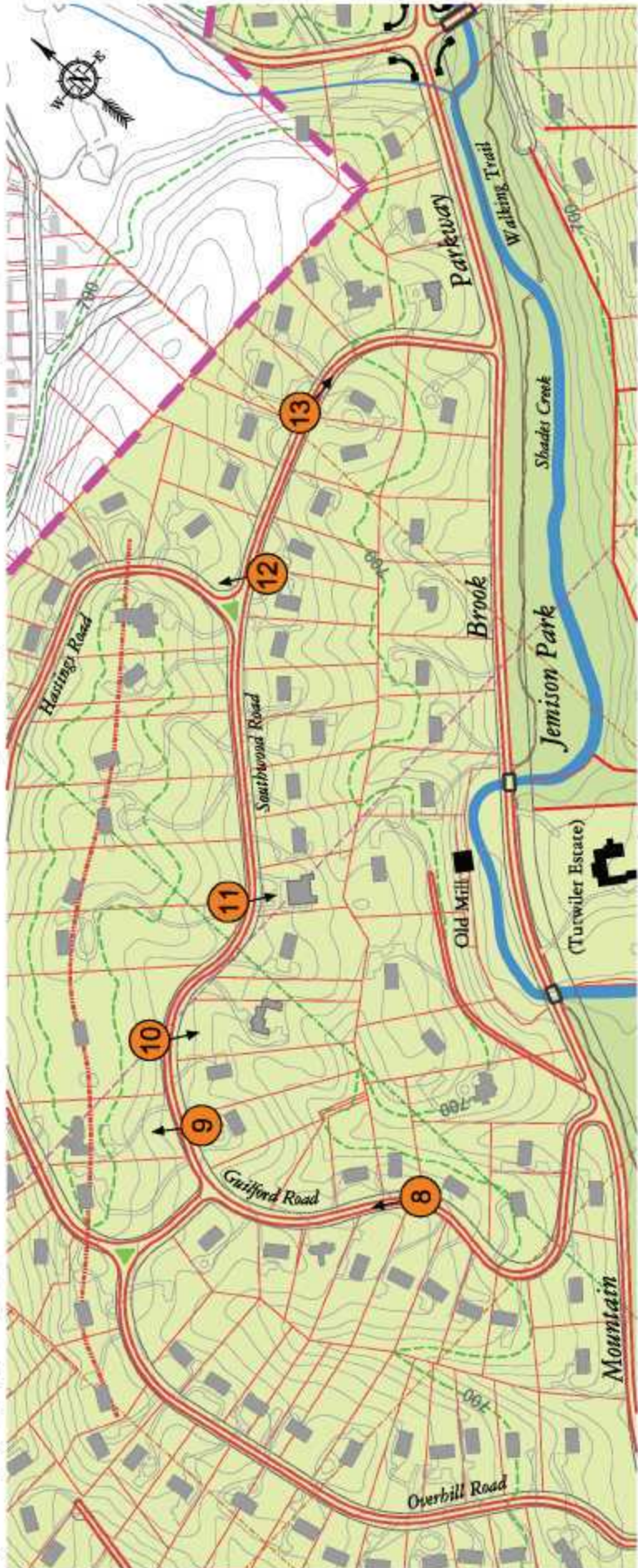
11 2749 Southwood Road.



12 2856 Southwood Road at its intersection with Hartings Road.



13 3012 Southwood Road, arriving to Mountain Brook Parkway.



Map is a detail clipped from Sheet 8. See Sheet 8 for detailed legend and sources. Locations for residences are based on Jefferson County aerial photographs taken in 2007.

**LEGEND** Photo Location: 3 Residence: Bridge: Entrance:

**SCALE** 1" = 200 FEET



Birgit Kibelka, 2012.

MOUNTAIN BROOK RECORDING PROJECT  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

MOUNTAIN BROOK PARKWAY AT CAHABA ROAD  
CITY OF MOUNTAIN BROOK

MOUNTAIN BROOK 1926 - 1929  
JEFFERSON COUNTY

ALABAMA

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
LANDSCAPE SURVEY  
AL-2

All photographs on this sheet were made by Birgit Kibelka except as otherwise noted.

**Village Center, Canterbury and Surrey Roads, Guilford and Southwood Roads.** HALS No. AL-2 Sheet 13.

For the General Plan, Manning suggested that a village and a civic center be built in central locations at opposite ends of the residential district to provide residents with services. Only today's Mountain Brook Village made it into the final version of the General Plan. Four of its English Tudor style buildings were built by 1929, defining the character of the village.

The adjoining portion of this relatively flat area was subdivided into smaller lots, giving young families the possibility to live close to the elementary school, also built at the time.

The neighborhood along Guilford and Southwood Roads provides an example of Manning's residential design for the lower ridges of the new residential subdivision. Numerous knolls and gullies along these ridges determined the routing of roads and the siting of the residences. Each home finds its unique and suitable spot within the topography, the largest lots being the ones for residences atop the ridge lines.





## THE VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD

Topography dictated the character of Mountain Brook's neighborhoods. At the 700-foot level in the relatively flat area, Jemison's team platted a commercial village and close-by neighborhood featuring small lots with easy access to services and the school. Watkins Creek was channelized to form the eastern edge of the village. Four bridges extend roads into the adjoining neighborhood—subdivided in 1927 and 1928 as the *New Country Club*, *Fairway*, *Watkins Brook*, and *Canterbury Sectors*. Each sector included loop or circuit roads, a planning feature favored by Manning.

**TOP, LEFT: Canterbury Road Extending from the Village to Cambridge Road.** Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

**BOTTOM, LEFT: The Canterbury–Surrey Road Loop.** Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.



**Mountain Brook School, Left Two-Story Wing (1929).** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-56.



**Canterbury Road Entrance at Montevallo Road.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-47.



## THE VILLAGE CENTER

A New Englander, Warren Manning proposed for Mountain Brook the concept of small village centers to provide services for residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, just as English villages had done for English manors for centuries. Jemison's architects specified the English Tudor style of architecture for the village buildings. The half-timbered, multi-gabled structures built about the village circle in the 1920s set the tone for this distinctive shopping area.

**ABOVE: Aerial View of the Village Center, Looking Across Shades Valley and the Village Neighborhoods.**

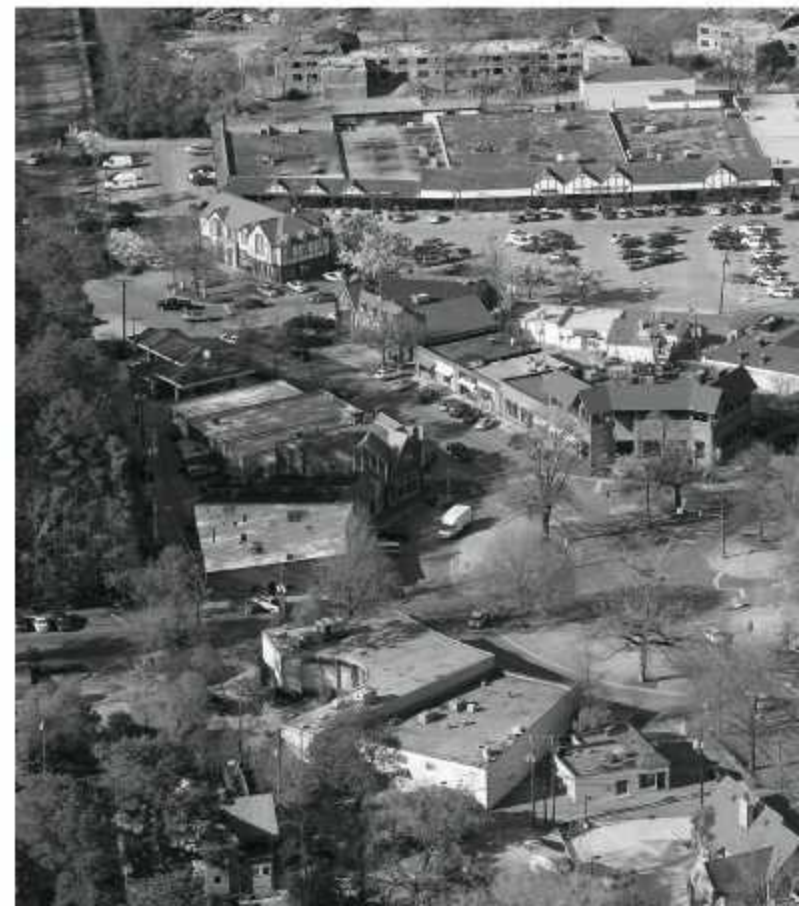
Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

Watkins Branch drains Red Mountain's southern flank, *top left*. The creek flows across the Birmingham Country Club golf course, around the village, to Shades Creek at Mountain Brook Parkway. Pictured here are the residential neighborhoods extending eastward along Montevallo, Canterbury, and Heathermoor Roads. Mountain Brook Elementary School is seen, *bottom right*. Breaking the tree line, *in the distance*, are the spires of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, *center*, and Canterbury United Methodist Church, *right*.

**RIGHT: View of the Village Circle at the Intersection of Cahaba, Montevallo, and Canterbury Roads.**

Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

Cahaba Road runs, *top left to bottom right*. Montevallo Road intersects, *center left to top right*. Mountain Brook Shopping Center, *along the top*, was built in the 1950s.







**Mountain Brook Estates Building (1928–1929), 2801–2805 Cahaba Road.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-53. Built by Jemison & Co.



**Bearden General Store (1929), 2843 Cahaba Road.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-55.

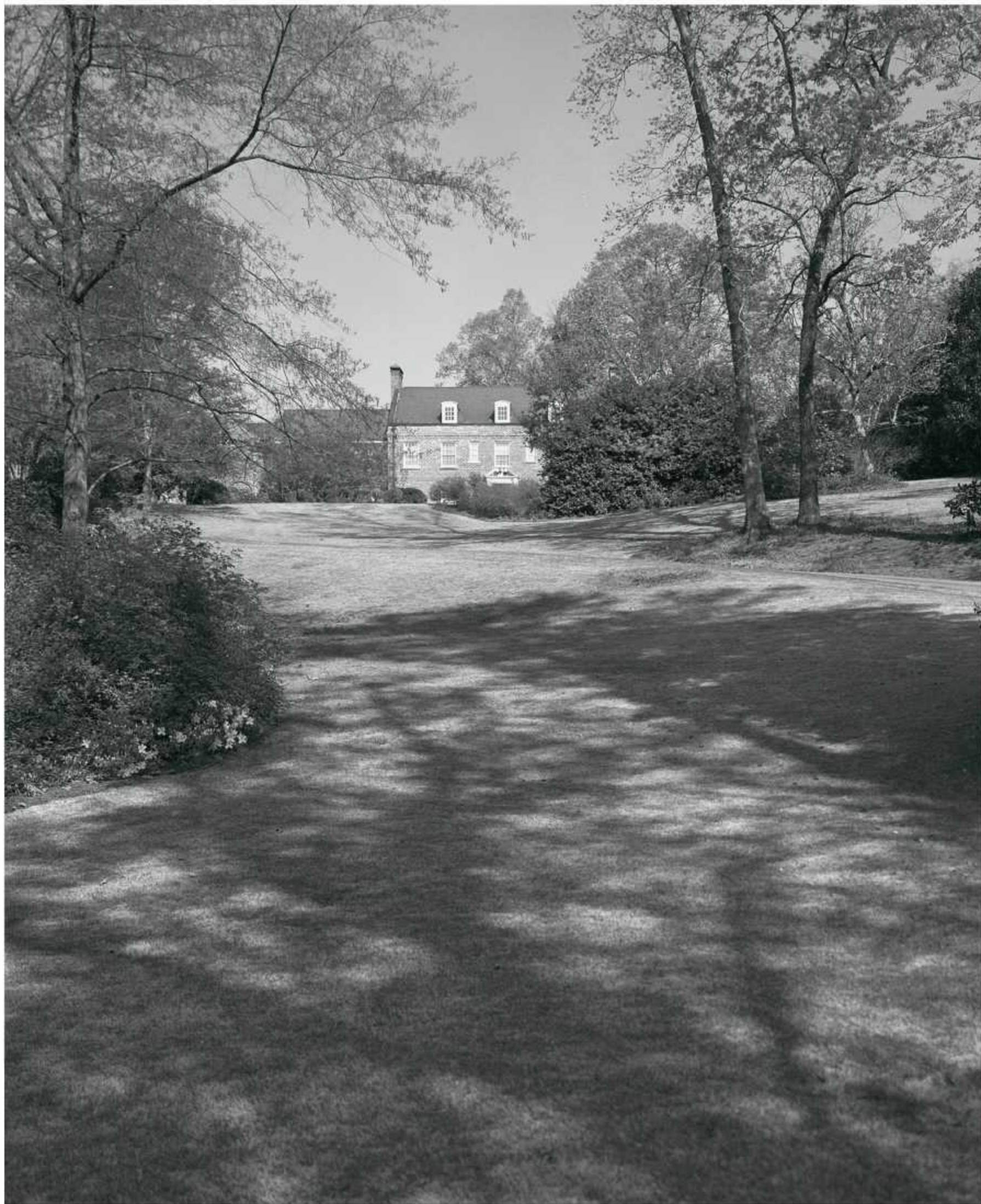


**Martha Washington Candy Shop (1928), 2726 Cahaba Road.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-52.

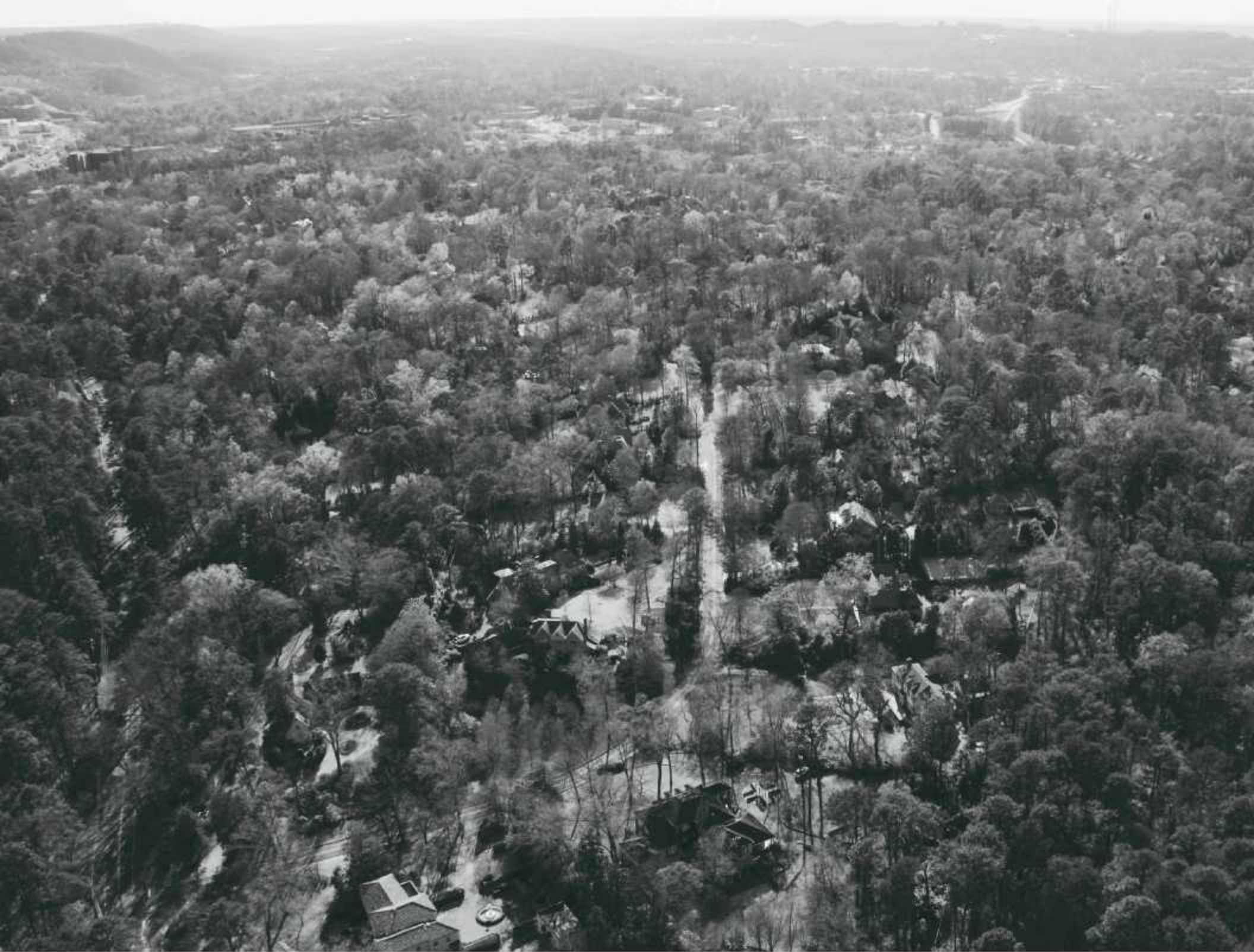
# SOUTHWOOD ROAD

*Mountain Brook Estates*, the initial sector platted in November 1926, sited residences onto Bald Ridge at 800-foot levels. Homes were sited on both sides of the road, with irregular lot lines providing individualized home sites such that hardly two lots are

alike. Each estate has distinctive natural features and views. Expertly designed drives and berms conceal parking pads and automobiles. Because the road is sunken, it is not visible from the residences.



2716 Southwood Road and Its Disappearing Drive Way. Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HAIS No. AL-2-15.



**Southwood Road Climbing Bald Ridge from Its Eastern Terminus at Mountain Brook Parkway.** Aerial Photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.



**2737 Southwood Road, the Larkin House, a "Model Home" Sited on Its On Knoll.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-13.



**2749 Southwood Road, with Berm Hiding the Parking Area.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-1.

## LEGEND

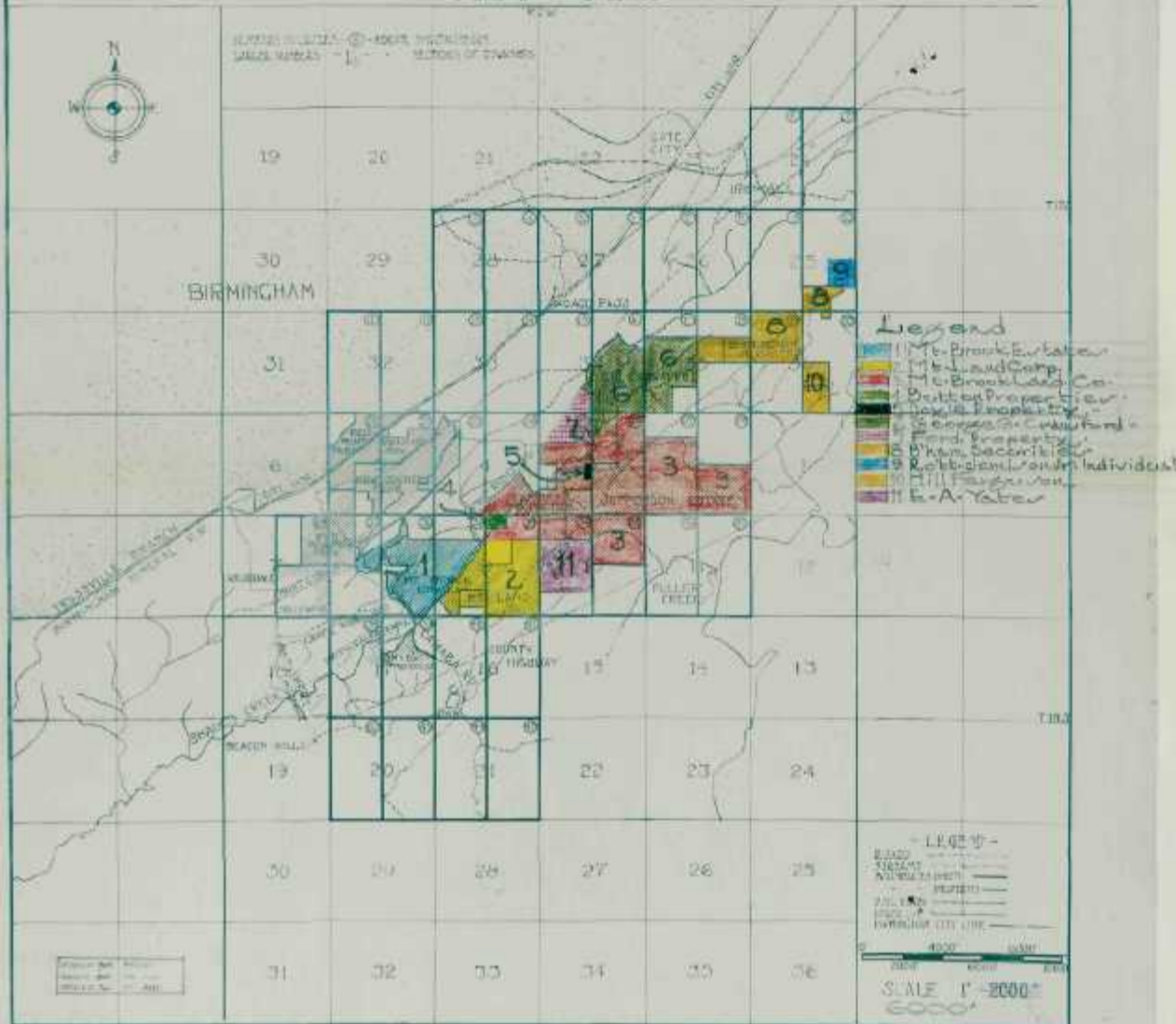
TOWNSHIP LINES	=====
SECTION LINES	=====
FORTY LINES	=====
ROADS-GOOD MOTOR	===== WIDTH OF ROAD
POOR OR WOOD	===== WIDTH OF ROAD
FOOT TRAILS	-----
STREAMS	~~~~~
CONTOURS 10 FT. INTERVALS	----- 100
100 FT. INTERVALS	----- 900
ROCKS	☉
SWAMPS	☁
LAKES & PONDS	☪
WOODLAND OR THICKET LINES	☁
TREES	•
RAILROADS	-----
POWER TRANSMISSION LINES	-----
FENCES	-----
BUILDINGS	□

## REFERENCES

SOURCE OF DATA  
Abbreviations appear in local title and congressional acts.

J.M.C. Appropriation for	J.H. GARDNER JR.
T.C.T.	T.P.M. COAL, IRON & R.R. CO.
U.S.G.S.	U.S. GOVERNMENT SURVEY
B.W.W.	BETHEL W. WHITSON
W.S.	WALTER SCHOELGE

## KEY MAP



## JEFFERSON COUNTY ESTATES INC.

### LEGEND & KEY SHEET

SURVEY OF PORTION OF TOWNSHIPS T-17-S, R-2W & T-18-S, R-2W  
ALABAMA

WARREN H. MANNING OFFICES INC.  
LANDSCAPE DESIGN & RESIDENTIAL PLANNING  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.  
PLAN NO. 1536-102-25

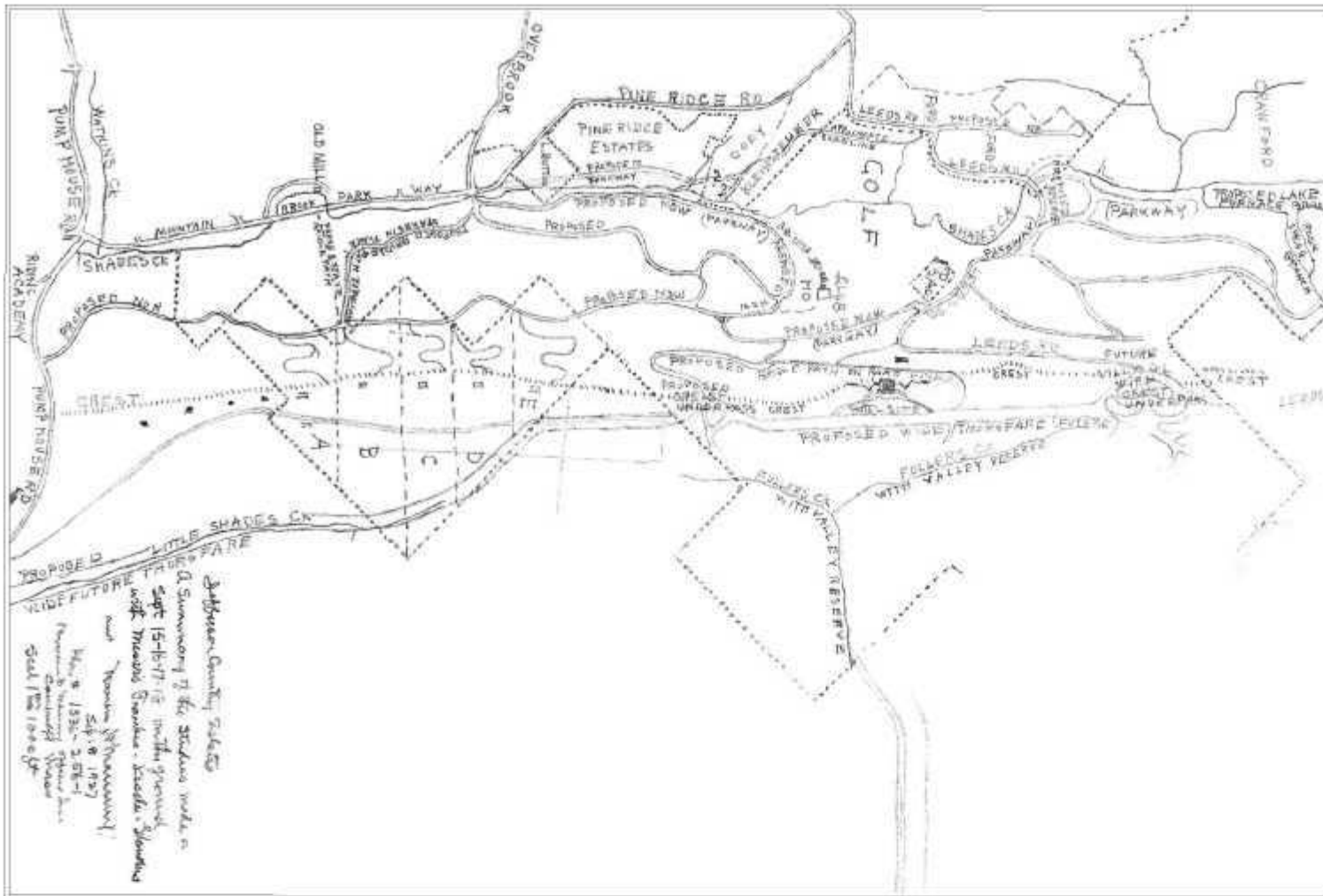
## APPENDIX OF PLANS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

This selection of drawings and photographs shows the care with which the Jemison firm and its planners approached the natural environment. Manning associate Egbert Hans, writing in "The Naturalistic Development of Mountain Brook Estates" in *American Landscape Architect* magazine of 1930, described the Mountain Brook development as an "experiment" in designing a residential community in a park-like setting.

### Jefferson County Estates Inc. Legend and Key Sheet.

Survey of Portion of Townships T-17-S, R-2W, and T-18-S, R-2W, Warren H. Manning Offices, Inc., Plan No. 1536-102-25, BPL Archives.

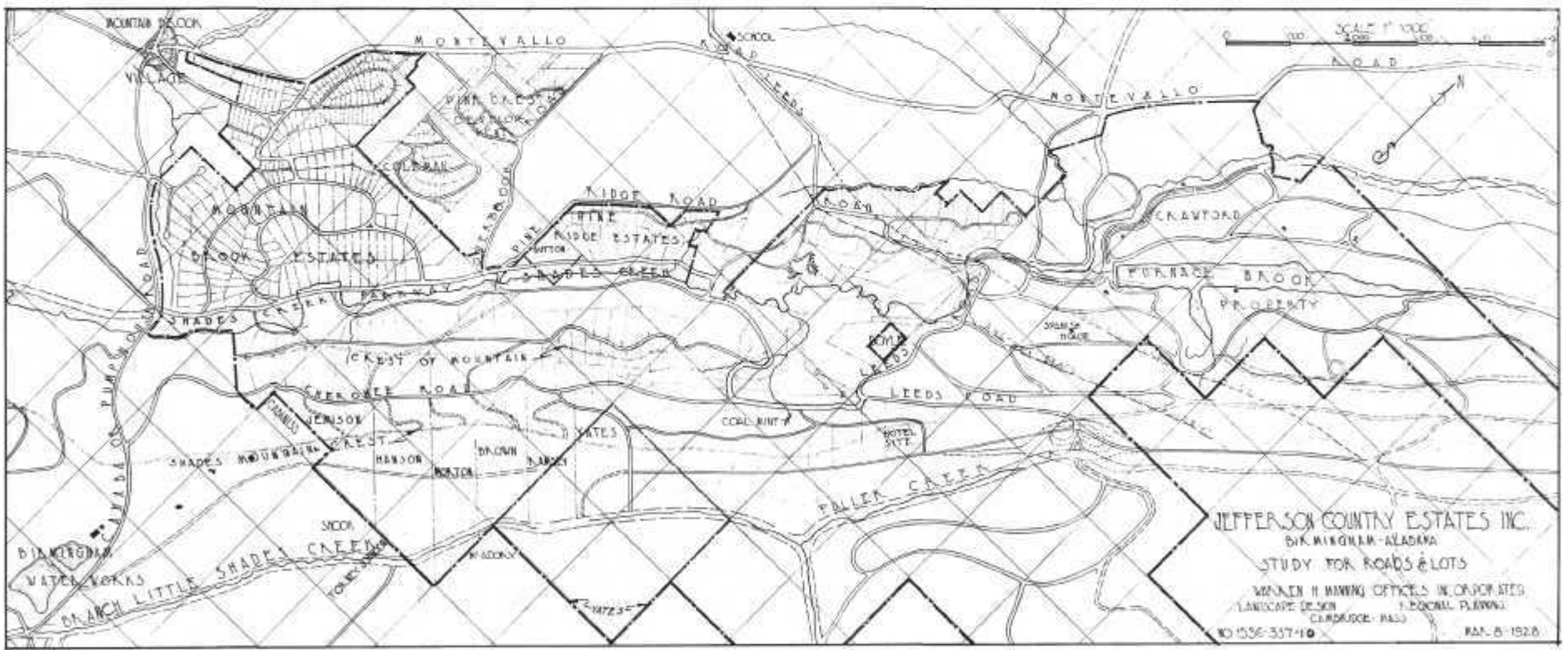
This color map shows the many landowners in the area under study for subdivision in the 1920s. Natural features—rocks, swamps, lakes and ponds, woods or thickets—were also routinely inventoried in preparation for subdivision. Manning was a "resource-based" planner; that is, natural features informed, underpinned, and guided his planning decisions.



**Jefferson Country Estates, A Summary of the Studies Made on Sept 15-16-17-18 on the Ground with Messrs Franke-Kessler-Glander and Warren H. Manning.** Warren H. Manning Offices, Inc., Plan No. 1536-256-1, Sept. 18, 1927. BPL Archives.

This hand-drawn sketch shows possible parkways accessing lands in today's Brookwood Forest and Cherokee Bend neighborhoods of Mountain Brook. The study is presented as a statement of four persons: Jemison & Co.'s real estate man, landscape architect, and civil engineer and Manning, the out-of-town-consultant.

The estates of Jemison & Co.'s investors, lots A, B, C, D, and E on this map, a resort hotel site, and a village are proposed for the Shades Mountain crest. Manning suggests that the neighborhood commercial center be accessed by Leeds and Brookwood Roads. A lake and a golf course appear in the Shades Creek floodplain.



**ABOVE: Jefferson Country Estates Inc. Birmingham, Alabama, Study for Roads and Lots.** Warren H. Manning Offices, Inc., Plan No. 1536-337-10, March 8, 1928. BPL Archives.

Made six months later, this study of the Jemison, Crawford, and Yates properties eliminates several of the roads suggested in the plan above, as well as the "village" on the Shades Mountain crest.



**LEFT: Fuller's Creek and 3429 and 3432 Brookwood Parkway [Road].** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-46.

Planned to be a wide parkway linking the proposed village area to Cahaba-Pumphouse Road [today's U.S. 280], Brookwood was built as a bridle trail in the 1920s.

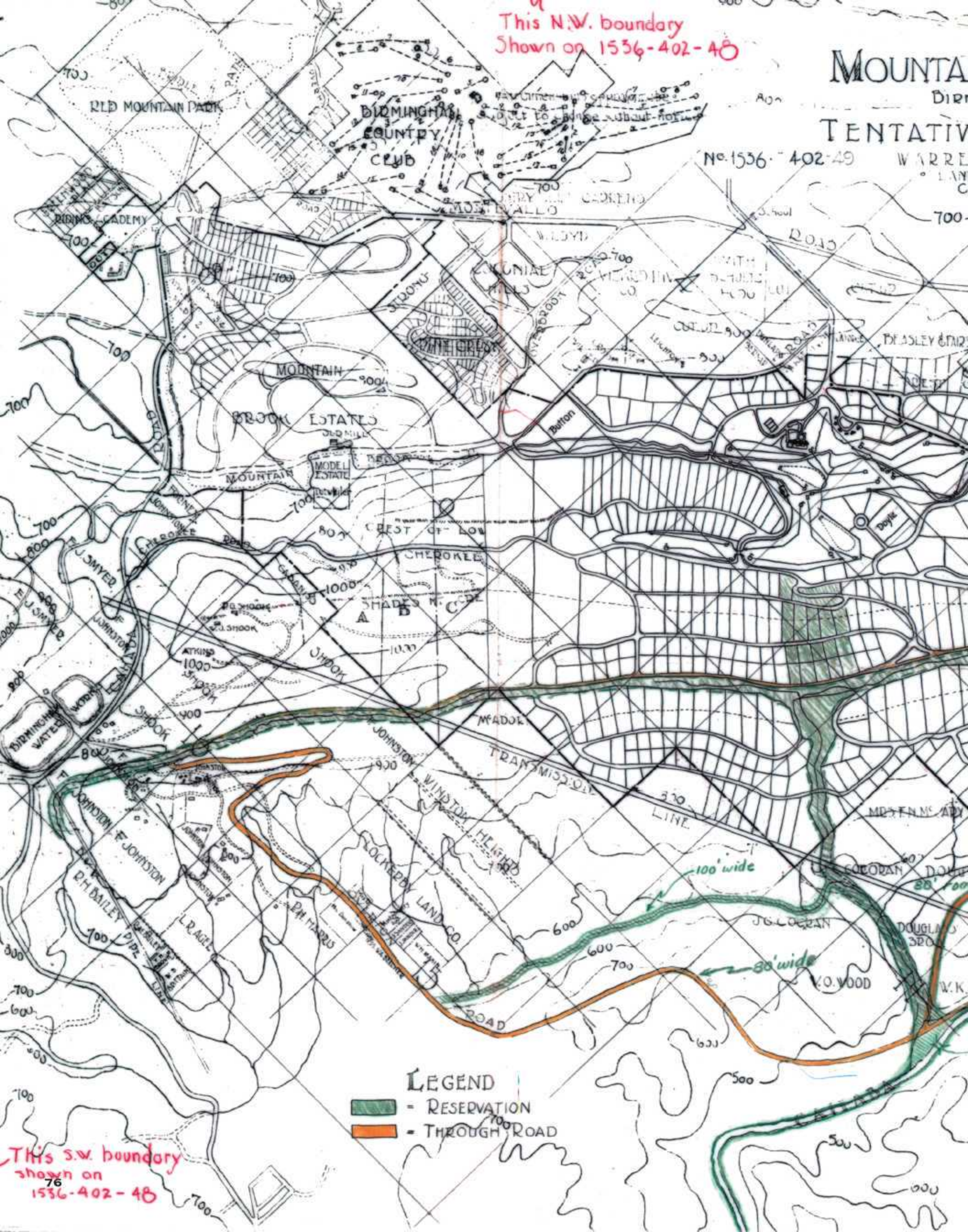
**FOLLOWING PAGES: Mountain Brook Land Co. Tentative General Plan No. 2.** Warren H. Manning Offices, Inc., Plan No. 1536-402-49, August 6, 1928. BPL Archives.

This plan was colored in 1928 to highlight proposed reservations of scenic land along all creeks in the subdivision. At the time, Manning was working with Jemison's lawyer to create legislation that would enable a public body to own and manage these reservations without incurring ad valorem taxes. This new legislation was to be a national model for encouraging developers to donate private lands to conservation trusts.

This N.W. boundary  
Shown on 1536-402-48

MOUNTAIN  
DIRE  
TENTATIV

No. 1536-402-49



LEGEND

- RESERVATION
- THROUGH ROAD

This S.W. boundary  
shown on  
1536-402-48

# IN BROOK LAND CO.

MININGHAM ALA.

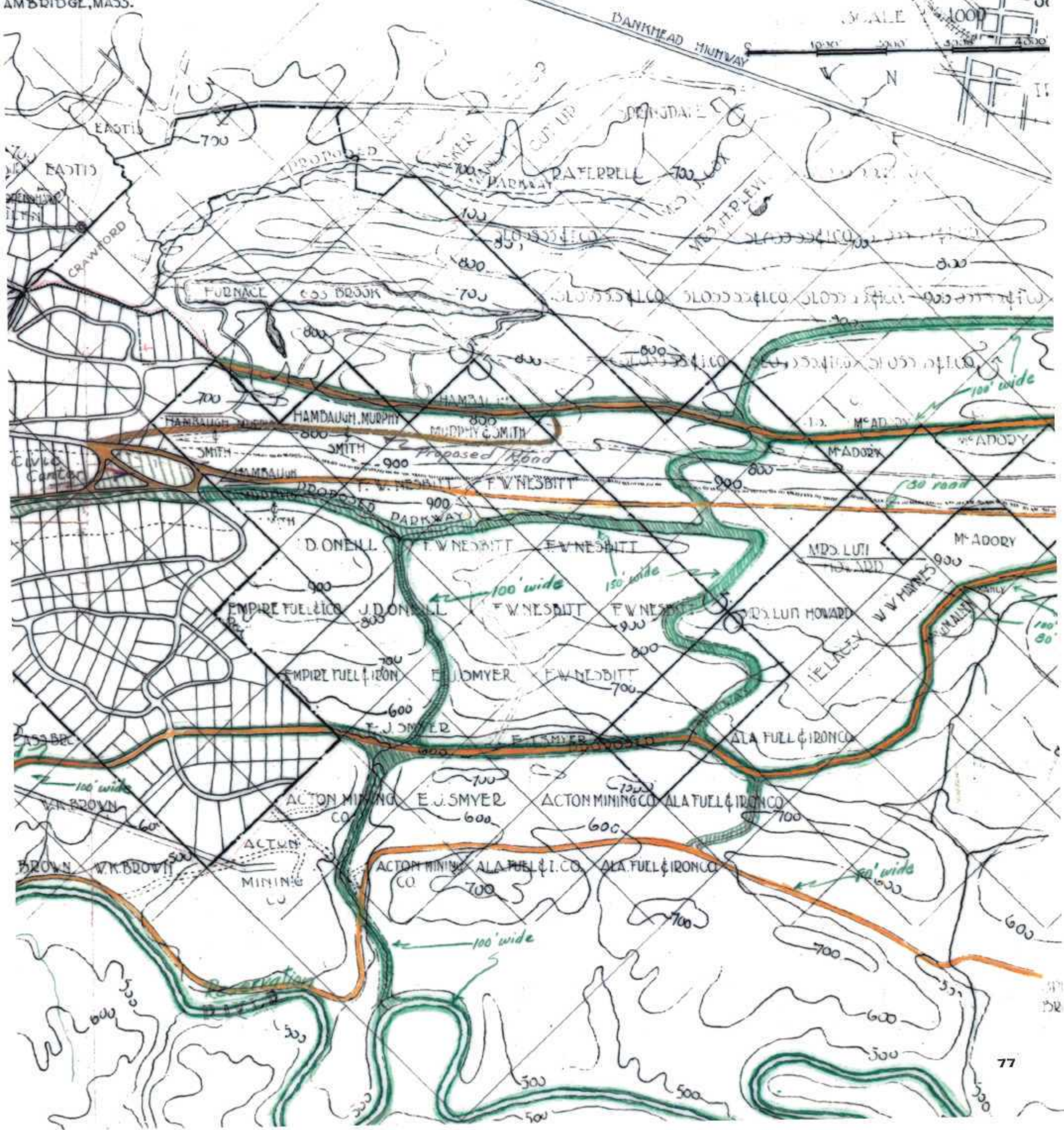
## GENERAL PLAN No. 2

N. H. MANNING OFFICES INC.

DESIGN - REGIONAL PLANNING  
AMBRIDGE, MASS.

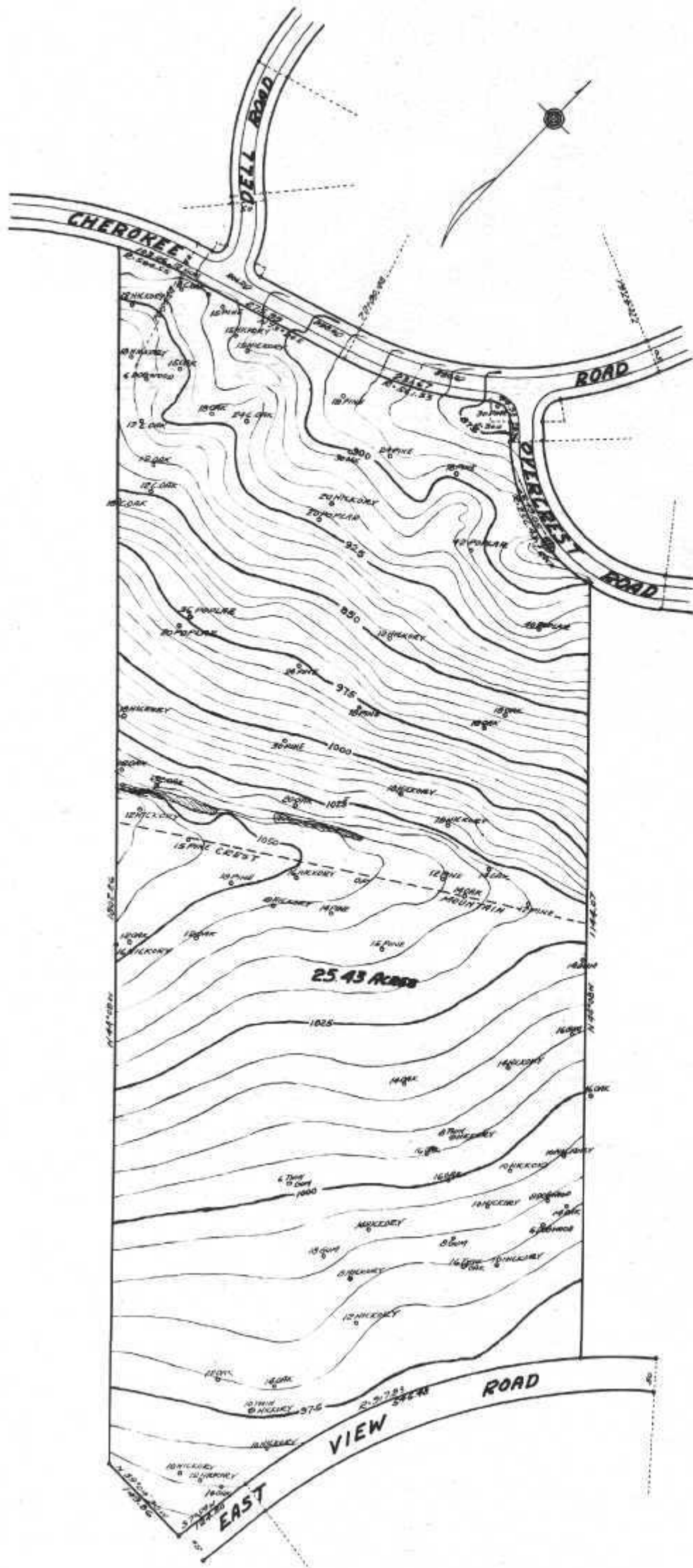
\*Areas marked "reserve"  
Are not dedicated areas

AUG. 6, 1928



# MOUNTAIN LAND CORP. TOPOGRAPHY ESTATE "E."

SCALE - 1"=100' AUGUST 1928.  
J. H. GLANDER, JR. - ENGINEER.



LEFT: Mountain Land Corp., Topography Estate "E."

Survey by J. H. Glander, Jr., Engineer, August 1928. BPL Archives.

Jemison's civil engineer made this study of one of the investors' 25.43-acre home sites on Shades Mountain. Such mapping of the lay of the land, trees, and rocks preceded the location of roads and home sites. The map shows 25-foot contour lines with elevations ranging from 875 feet along Cherokee Road to 1,050 feet at the Shades Mountain crest. It also shows oak, hickory, pine, poplar, and gum trees ranging in diameter from 8 to 42 inches as well as the rock photographed in 2013 by Jet Lowe, the National Park Service photographer, *below right*.

ROBERT JEMISON JR.

DIXONHAM, ALA.

LOT "A"

STUDY FOR HOUSE LOCATION

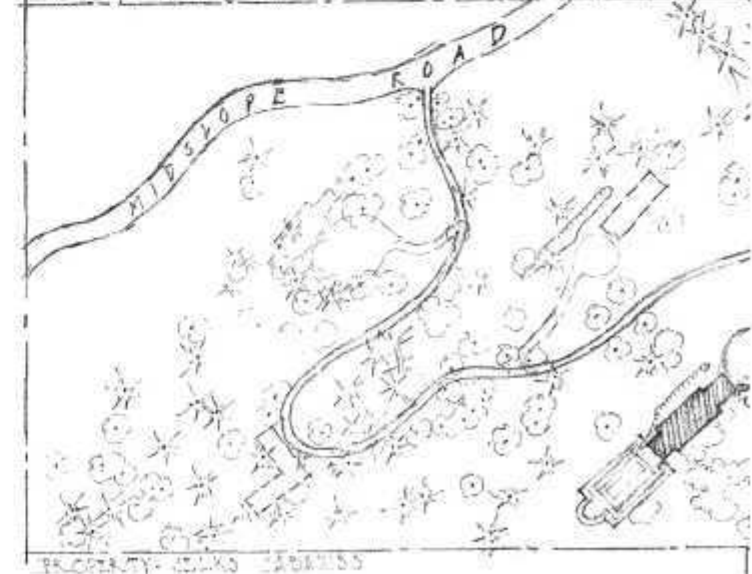
WALTER W. MANNING OFFICES INC.  
LANDSCAPE DESIGN REGIONAL PLANNING  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.  
V. H. KESSLER CONSULTANT

No. 15581

AUG. 25, 1927



PROPERTY - NE BRADCOCK 2 STATES



SCALE 1"=100'



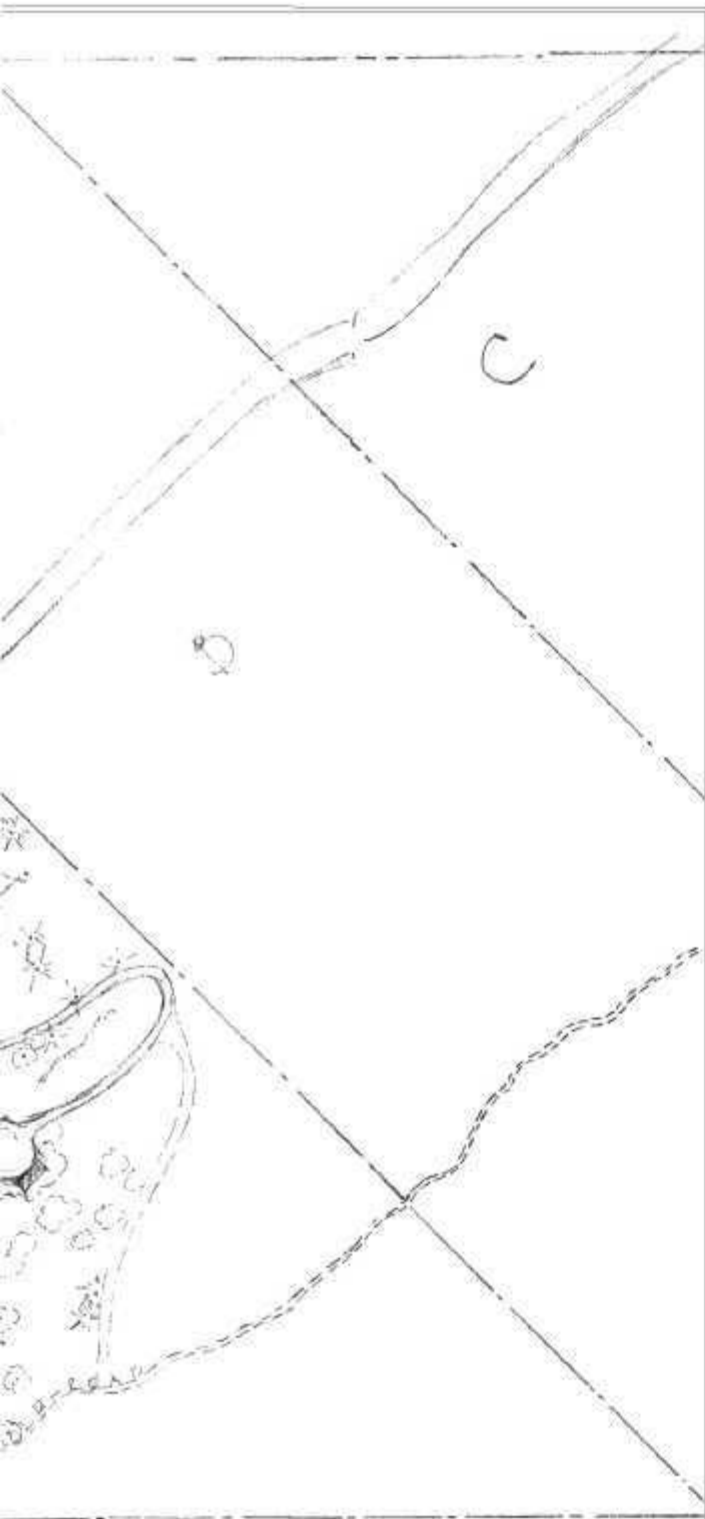




**View Across Shades Valley from 3016 Briarcliff Road on the Shades Mountain Crest, Elevation 1,100 Feet.**

Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-42.

Briarcliff Road was built in the 1950s to access the crest lots and views planned for Jemison's investors in the Mountain Brook development.



**LEFT: Robert Jemison Jr., Birmingham, Ala. Lot "A," Study for House Location.** Warren H. Manning Offices, Inc., Plan No. 1558-1, Aug. 25, 1927. BPL Archives.

Manning sent this sketch of a crest lot to Jemison. An accompanying letter discusses the siting of two residences at "an escarpment ledge" on the crest and "on a ridge down the slope. . . in such a way as not to interfere with the views from either house in an unfavorable way." Approach drives are shown from a "Midslope Road" [the future Cherokee Road] and from the "old road" leading from the adjacent Cabaniss property on Shook Hill.

**BOTTOM: Overcrest Road Heading to the Crest of Shades Mountain, Showing the Rocks at Entrance to 3049 Cherokee Road, on the right.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-45.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Don Veasey, Curator of Photographs, and James Baggett, Archivist, Birmingham Public Library Department of Archives and Manuscripts

Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief, Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS)

Robin Karson, Director, and Jane Roy Brown, Project Coordinator, Warren H. Manning Research Project, Library of American Landscape History, Amherst, Massachusetts

*For assistance with photography:*

Jim D. “Dandy” Cooley; Lyndra Daniel; Patrick Dent, Rotor Wing, Inc.; Dana DiChiara; Sam Gaston; Jane Goings; Susan Haskell; Becky Keyes; Lucy Tutwiler; Gage Woods; Beth Maynor Young



**Overbrook Road Leading to Mountain Brook Club.**

Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.



**Cherokee Road Descending Shades Mountain.** Photograph by Jet Lowe, 2013. HALS No. AL-2-39.



**The Canterbury-Surrey Road Loop.** Aerial photograph by John Wathen, 2013. BHS.

# Mountain Brook

## A Historic American Landscape

From 1926 to 1929, the Jemison & Co. real estate firm of Birmingham, Alabama, assembled a team of talented professionals to design a residential district in a rugged wilderness south of the city. The ambitious venture integrated homes, recreation, and community amenities into a park-like setting, retaining and intensifying the area's natural beauty. Led by celebrated landscape architect and planner Warren H. Manning of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Jemison's team sited individual homes along the ridges and knolls and designed the winding roads that led to them.

The 4,500-acre Mountain Brook development was the largest, and finest, undertaken in the region. By the 1950s, it would become one of the highest per capita income communities in America. The original system of roads, bridges, entrances, and open spaces remains intact to this day and helps shape the Mountain Brook experience.

This book details the process by which the Mountain Brook planners worked out their vision for today's historic landscape. In an era before computers, geographic information systems, and modern construction equipment, they painstakingly documented the terrain and its features, revising and adjusting their plans to suit the complicated topography and enhance the beauty of the place.

The volume is centered around documentation prepared by Birmingham Historical Society for the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS), a program of the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. It includes more than 200 historic and contemporary photographs and drawings.

*Page through this publication with great pride as you view Mountain Brook through a new filter, one of a fine cultural landscape accomplishment with high integrity to its original design, worthy of being included in the Historic American Landscapes Survey, our national archive of significant landscape architectural accomplishments.*

—Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief, Historic American Landscapes Survey

Birmingham Historical Society is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to contribute to the quality of life in Birmingham by preserving, learning from, and celebrating the city's past while helping to shape its future.

Birmingham Historical Society  
One Sloss Quarters  
Birmingham, Alabama 35222  
[www.bhistorical.org](http://www.bhistorical.org)



PRINTED IN CHINA