WE MAY THINK WE KNOW BEARDEN, A FAMILIAR PLACE TO SHOP AND LIVE. HOWEVER, ITS TWO-CENTURY HISTORY IS COMPLICATED, THE STORIES OF SEVERAL DYNAMICS IN AMERICAN HISTORY MIGHT SEEM UNRELATED EXCEPT THAT THEY ALL PLAYED A PART IN THIS PATCH OF PERHAPS FIVE SQUARE MILES OF SUBURBAN TENNESSEE.

In its time, Bearden has seen a motley assortment of pioneers, some of them immigrants, some of them rare African American landowners, spread alongside the toll road into the western wilderness; the first railroad ever built through East Tennessee; Knoxville's first eighteen-hole golf course; the dawn of aviation in East Tennessee, and Knoxville's first municipal airport; a major brick factory, a landmark hat factory, and the biggest rose-production plant in the South; the junction of two of America's first national automobile routes, spawning half a century of tourist camps, motor courts, and motels; jazz nightclubs and slot-machine speakeasies; drive-in restaurants, movie theaters, and bootlegging joints; Knoxville's first cinema multiplex; and too many interesting residents to count, including some cutting-edge musicians, a Pulitzer-winning novelist, and a groundbreaking inventor. This narrative attempts to tell it all as one story, the story of Bearden.

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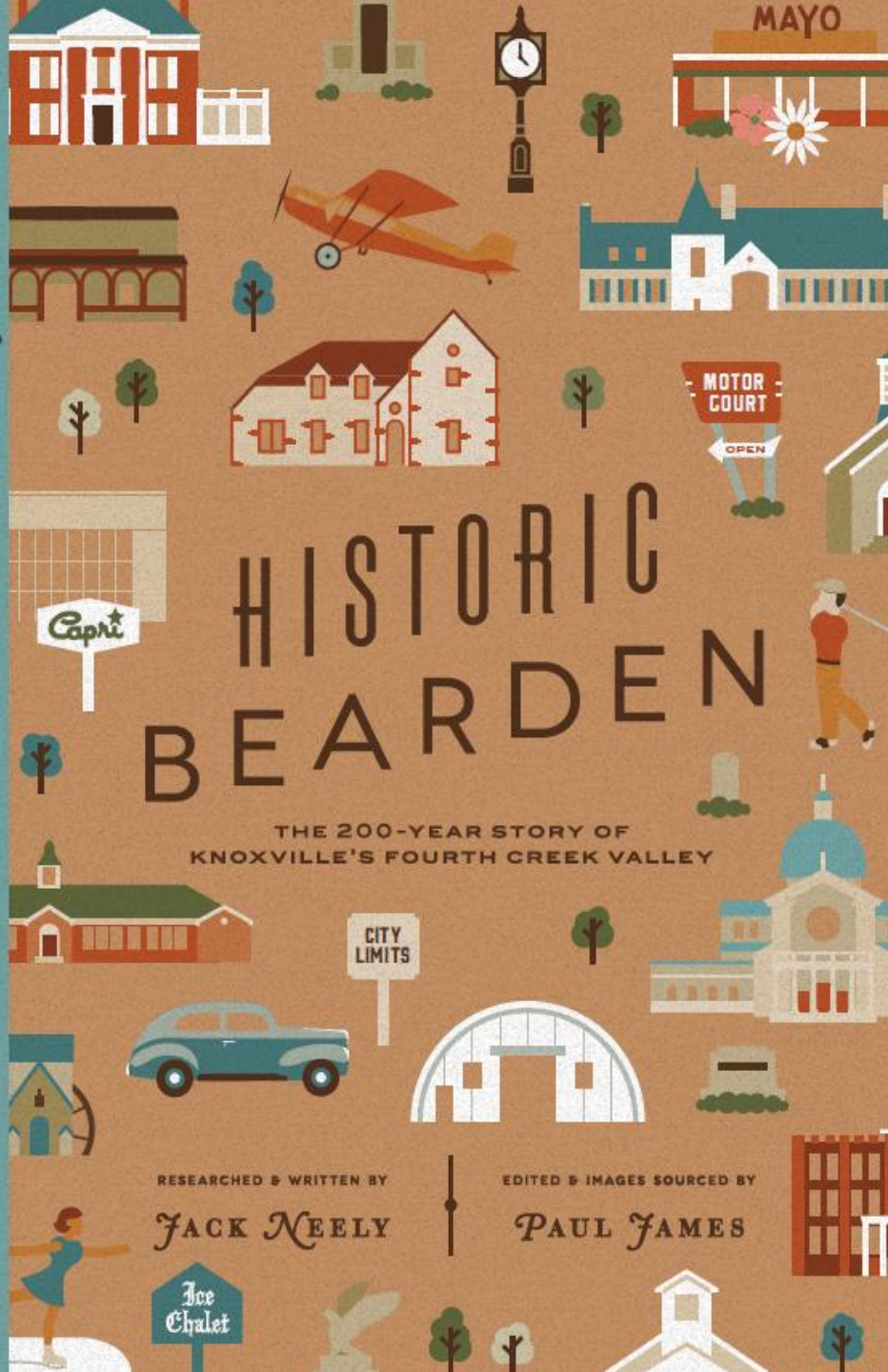
HISTORIC BEARDEN ♦ JACK NEELY



HISTORIC BEARDEN

THE 200-YEAR STORY OF KNOXVILLE'S FOURTH CREEK VALLEY

RESEARCHED & WRITTEN BY
JACK NEELY

EDITED & IMAGES SOURCED BY
PAUL JAMES

LOOKING EAST ON KINGSTON PIKE FROM BEARDEN HILL

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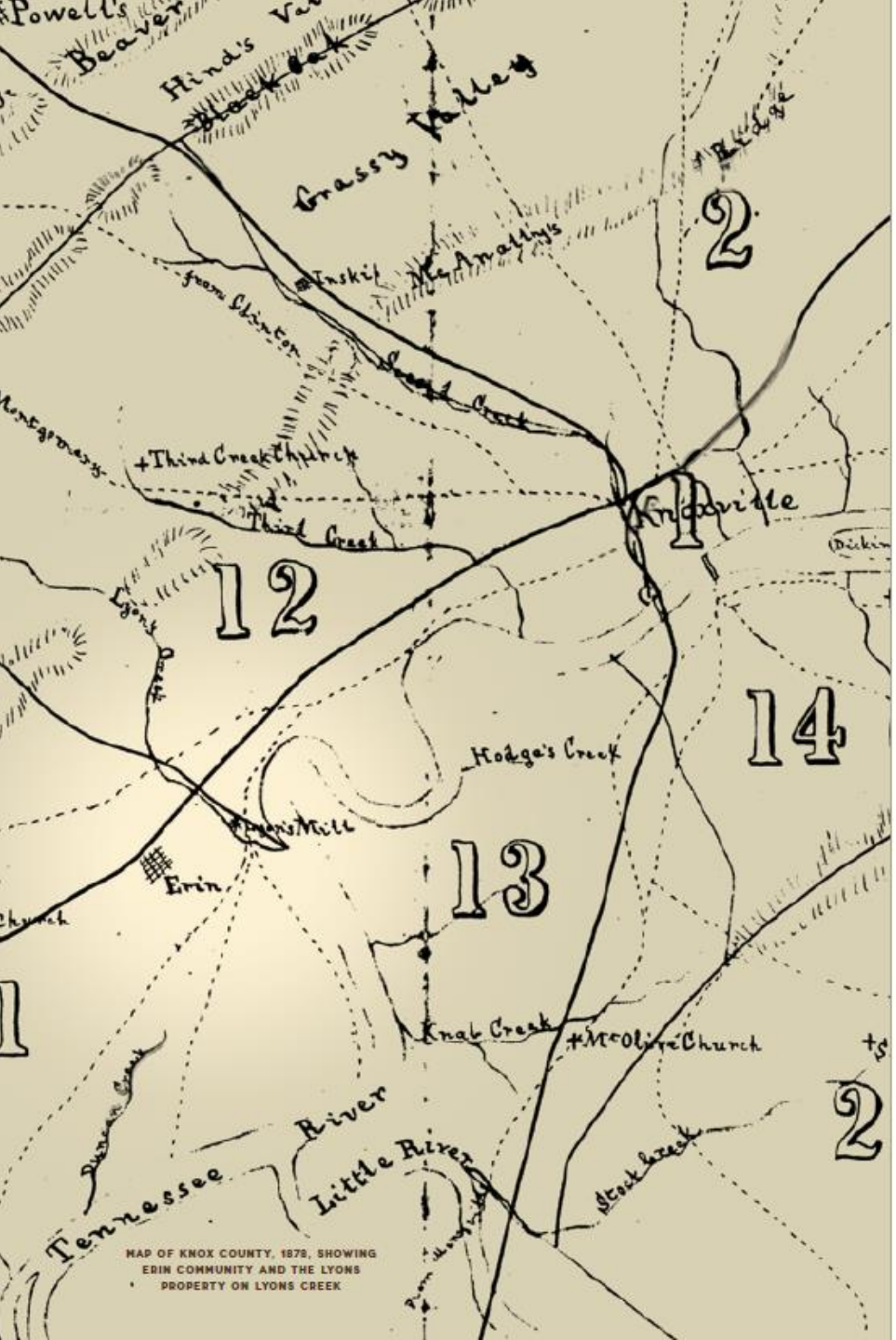


MAP OF KNOX COUNTY, 1878, SHOWING ERIN COMMUNITY AND THE LYONS PROPERTY ON LYONS CREEK

CHAPTER ONE

THE BEGINNING

By 1791, when Knoxville was becoming the capital of the Southwestern Territory, later to be the new state of Tennessee, what we know as Bearden was green countryside downstream, past the second big turn in what was then called the Holston River. The bluffs got steeper before the river took another hard right, and then another hard left. Young men piloting flatboats, some of them bound for points as far away as New Orleans, came to know it as Lyons Bend.

It was a small part of the broad hunting ground of the Cherokee, though near none of their villages, which were a few days' journey by foot to the southwest. It was closer to the homes of some prehistoric tribes, the mostly mysterious mound-builders who were here centuries before the Cherokee, and left a ruin in the next bend of the river to the east.

Kingston Pike, known in its earlier days as the Kingston Road, was commenced by Knox County in 1792, with Charles McClung in charge. Originally from the Philadelphia area, McClung married a daughter of influential landowner James White, and through his vigorous surveying of roads, many of which he named for familiar streets in Philadelphia, he had as great an influence on the founding of Knoxville as anyone.

To the west of the capital McClung laid out a road, originally thirty feet wide—not especially broad, but substantial and wider than some downtown streets—from downtown Knoxville to Campbell's Station, roughly following an Indian path that was used by some white horseback riders. Soon it connected to Kingston, the next county seat to the west.

Much of 1790s Bearden was owned by a small number of non-resident land speculators, some of whom had been buying up land when it was still considered part of North Carolina. One of the most powerful was surveyor and real-estate gambler Stockley Donelson (1752–1805), who was at one time surveyor-general for the Tarheel State. His sister Rachel married an ambitious young soldier-attorney named Andrew Jackson. Donelson may never have boasted of his relationship to his much-younger brother-in-law. For most of his relatively short life, Donelson was the better known of the two.

Donelson bought up much of West Knox County, the region between the Tennessee and Clinch Rivers, when the new republic was still using pounds and shillings, and judiciously sold it off, making a fortune in the process.

On the eastern edge of Bearden, occupying a peninsula in the river, was the Looney family's home and farm. Raised in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, Moses Looney fought in the Revolutionary War before moving to Knox County in 1790, when he was already in his late 40s. He settled just west of the territorial capital, in a riverside paradise that became known as Looney's Bend.

French botanist André Michaux—son of Louis XV's arborist, he had grown up at Versailles, and traveled the world, collecting seeds—is remembered not just as a major botanist of his era, but also, for a time during the period of Citizen Genet, a spy for the French Revolutionary government. He's also credited, or blamed, for introducing multiple exotic Persian species to the South, from crape myrtles to mimosas. In March, 1796, he stayed with Looney, describing him in his diary as "Captain Louné." While lodging with him, Michaux canoed to the opposite side of the

THE ORIGINAL ERIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (THE FIRST OF THREE BUILDINGS), BUILT IN 1874

In 1877 it became, more officially the 1 ERIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. It was affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of the United States, one of area's many "Southern" churches vaguely associated with Southern conservative theology, if not the memory of the Confederacy itself—though its effective co-founder was a former Union general. Murky contradictions were becoming familiar in those perplexing times.

If it had been founded a decade later, it would perhaps have been the "Bearden Presbyterian Church." It was one of the last things to be labeled with the original community name. We can only guess whether the Irish association had special meaning to its parishioners; many Irish immigrants who weren't Catholic were Presbyterians. Moving twice within its tight neighborhood before landing at its present location, Erin Presbyterian would be Bearden's most durable congregation. The churchyard of 2 CENTRAL BAPTIST includes several graves that date to the era when Erin Presbyterian was the adjacent church. (It was sometimes referred to as Erin and later Bearden Cemetery.)

By 1880, Erin was said to have two churches, "one Presbyterian, one Campbellite." The latter is a way to describe a back-to-basics denomination generally compared with the Christian Church today. They built the wooden church with the stout steeple still standing on Kingston Pike today. The 3 BEARDEN CHRISTIAN CHURCH used that building for more than a century.

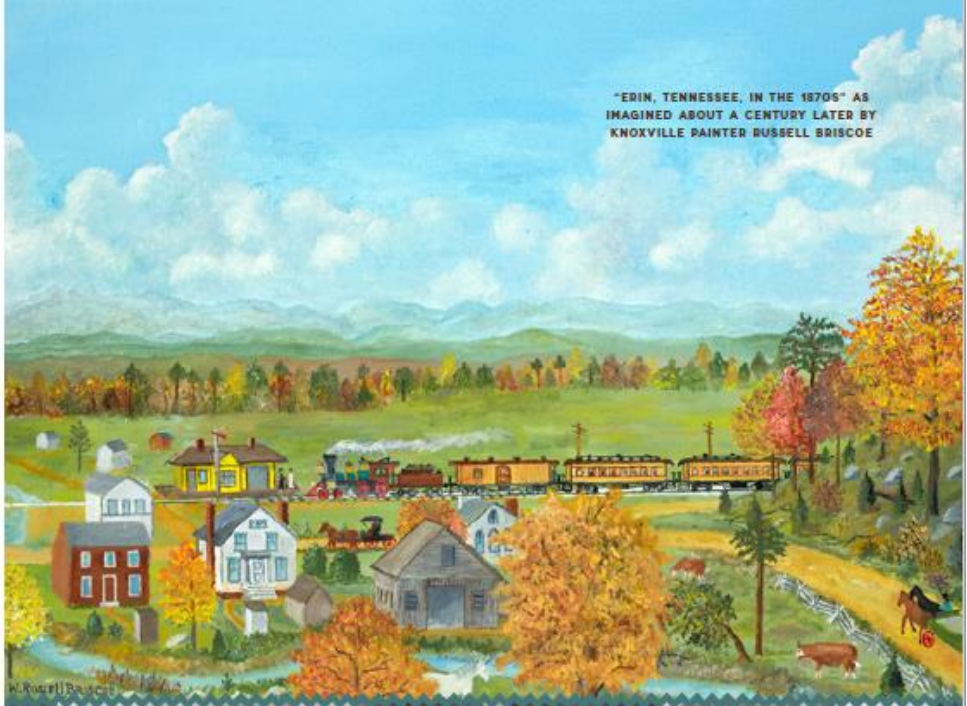
It's a bit unusual that unlike almost all rural communities in East Tennessee, Erin existed for most of the 19th century with neither a Baptist nor Methodist church.

The Baptist Church finally established a foothold in Bearden in 1894, after a few members had been meeting in the home of R.H. Edington, then a member of Knoxville's First Baptist who soon after he left Knollwood still lived on Kingston Pike. They built a simple wooden chapel on Kingston Pike west of Fourth Creek, on the crest of the hill. The one-room structure was only twenty-four feet by forty feet, and constructed from lumber from a demolished building. It would serve the small church for thirty years, until it was replaced by a brick one.

It had a reputation for treating sinfulness severely with the practice known as "churching," that is, publicly disciplining miscreants, even private miscreants, for sins like drunkenness, blasphemy, breaking sabbath, and "worldliness." There you might expect an emotional service. One early pastor, Reverend J.M. Anderson, was known as "the crying preacher." He's likely the honoree of modern-day Anderson Drive—previously known as "Pig Alley," because of its reputation for roaming livestock.

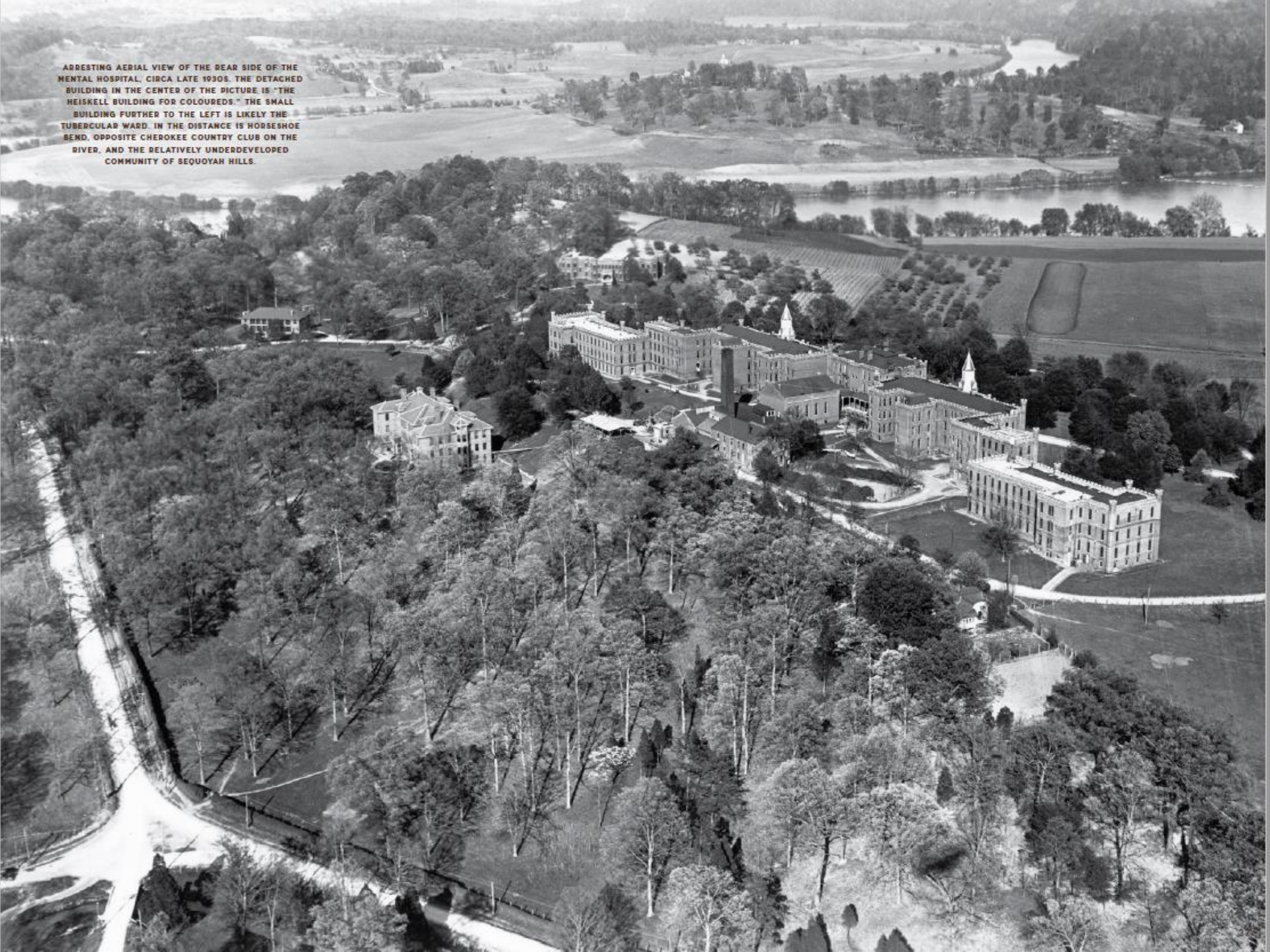
Knoxville grew rapidly in the postwar years, from a town of about 5,000 around 1865 to a bona-fide modern industrial city of about 20,000, all concentrated east of Second Creek, around 1885—with another 35,000 in the county outside city limits, including the couple hundred who lived in Bearden then.

Before 1885, almost all the factories and wholesale houses—the big employers—were clustered around the center of the city. The area once known as Erin was still rural, composed of mostly small farms that happened to have easier railroad and river access than most.



"ERIN, TENNESSEE, IN THE 1870S" AS IMAGINED ABOUT A CENTURY LATER BY KNOXVILLE PAINTER RUSSELL BRISCOE

ERIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GROUP, 1910



ARRESTING AERIAL VIEW OF THE REAR SIDE OF THE MENTAL HOSPITAL, CIRCA LATE 1930S. THE DETACHED BUILDING IN THE CENTER OF THE PICTURE IS "THE HEISKELL BUILDING FOR COLOUREDS." THE SMALL BUILDING FURTHER TO THE LEFT IS LIKELY THE TUBERCULAR WARD. IN THE DISTANCE IS HORSESHOE BEND, OPPOSITE CHEROKEE COUNTRY CLUB ON THE RIVER, AND THE RELATIVELY UNDERDEVELOPED COMMUNITY OF SEQUOYAH HILLS.

LYONS VIEW STREETCAR, AFTER IT CONVERTED TO A RUBBER-TIRE LINE IN 1930

Beginning in 1913, Lyons View was suddenly less remote. After several years of work on the project, the Lyons View Streetcar was complete, the thirteenth line in Knoxville's impressive system of electric streetcars, and one of the few that actually ran to the city limits, and a bit beyond. It originated right at the middle of things at Gay and Main, in front of the courthouse. It turned down Clinch Avenue by the modern-day post office to modern-day sixteenth in Fort Sanders. There it turned left to Cumberland, then west to Kingston Pike, splitting from the Pike at Lyons View. Although it connected the exclusive Cumberland Club on Clinch Avenue with Cherokee Country Club, its final stop was what was then called the Eastern Hospital for the Insane.

It became well-known for its unpredictable variety of travelers. Human-interest anecdotes about the "Lyons View Car" regularly appeared in the papers.

Implicit in some of the jokes was an assumption that some people on every car were headed for the mental institution, but equally to credit was the fact that people of the time acknowledged that Bearden was just a little different.

A driver confronted one man with a pipe. "No smoking on the car," the driver said. "I'm not smoking," the man responded. "You have a pipe in your mouth," said the no-nonsense driver. "I have a bed in my house, too," replied the man. "But I'm not sleeping, am I?"

Bearden farmers were known to take produce on the streetcar to sell it downtown at Market Square. Some of that was tolerated, and there were stories that a tolerant driver might even allow a goat or two on the ride.

One time a man got on the streetcar with about eight chickens in a crate. He was permitted aboard; there was room for them. But later in the trip, a police car stopped the streetcar, boarded, and arrested the man. He was a chicken thief using modern public transportation.

Electric streetcars and chicken thieves were common across America, one known only in the city, the other known mainly in the country. Perhaps only in Bearden could they be part of the same story.

Of course, the Lyons View streetcar was segregated, as they were in most of the Jim Crow South. Black riders sat in the back. Drivers were in charge of enforcing the color line, and some happily ignored it. Once a white passenger complained about black passengers sitting in front, and claimed to the police that the driver responded, "Let them sit wherever they want to."

The Lyons View streetcar had its own Rosa Parks story. Fannie Lane was a black cook who worked for Dan Chambliss, the businessman who was also a pilot. She lived downtown, in the old South Central Bowery. She got on the car, and when she was tired, she sat where she wanted to. Usually people didn't bother her.

But in February, 1926, she caught the streetcar home and sat in the third seat, near the front. One white passenger, outraged, complained to the driver, whose name was Simpson. He asked Fannie Lane—politely, he said—to move to the back. She refused, and said she would die first. Following protocol, Simpson stopped the streetcar at a phone on Cumberland Avenue at Seventeenth Street and called the police. An Officer Grady appeared, and attempted to arrest Lane. She bit him. But he took her to jail, and gave the judge something to ponder.

In those early days, several events at the private country club drew public attention. Knoxville has never seen a golf tournament like the Cherokee Invitational of 1916. A total of 170 hopefuls signed up for the days-long summer event, more than half of them from out of town. Among them was wealthy Scott Probasco of Chattanooga. One was Knoxville's most eligible bachelor, McGhee Tyson, handsome son of wealthy industrialist and Army Brigadier General Lawrence D. Tyson. The son was best known in Knoxville as a champion golfer.

GOLF LEGEND BOBBY JONES, WHO HAD ONE OF HIS FIRST TRIUMPHS AT CHEROKEE COUNTRY CLUB'S COURSE IN 1916

The competition's most famous participant was not famous for golf, but for writing novels. Then in his 50s, Kentucky author John Fox, Jr., was best known for *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, which had already inspired a Broadway play, a major feature film by Cecil B. DeMille, and a pop song. But that week in July at Cherokee, Fox was just another duffer trying to keep his score low.

Perhaps to the chagrin of the experienced golfers, the winner of this tournament was an astonishing 14-year-old from Atlanta. His name was Bobby Jones, and he was just at the beginning of one of the most famous careers in golf. He later cited the Cherokee win, along with four other regional tournaments that year, with encouraging him to stick with the game. He never went pro, though he often played against pros, favoring his career as an attorney.

Research discloses one surprise of that era: Cherokee's golf course was sometimes open to the public, and for some very un-golfish activities. On at least one occasion around 1912, it hosted an outdoor production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed by Coburn Players—the theatrical troupe led by Charles Coburn, later a recognizable comic actor in major Hollywood films like *The More the Merrier*.

Another is that the golf course occasionally hosted aeroplane landings. In late 1918, a squadron of mail-service biplanes landed at Cherokee, on a mission to scout out the first Air Mail routes.

Just as Fulton was finishing his exotic spectacle on the hill above Lyons View, the country club was finishing its almost as exotic building, the new, permanent clubhouse building, designed by A.B. Baumann, Jr., of the prominent firm Baumann and Baumann, and a club member, himself. He chose a French Provencal style, with a large turret, roofed with American stone, reportedly the nation's first building with a roof like that.

Overseeing the project was the neighbor who had been in charge of the original building project twenty years earlier, William Cary Ross.

THE SECOND, AND CURRENT, CHEROKEE COUNTRY CLUB, DESIGNED BY A.B. BAUMANN

As Lyons View grew residentially, one business appeared about the same time Cherokee built its grander new building. It was a little grocery located near the entrance to Eastern State, at the streetcar turnaround. Lyons View's first grocery store was probably J. E. Foster, which was in business by 1924.

Lum Herbert Dalton was a former Park City businessman who had run a grocery on Washington Avenue, but observing the new development on the west side of town, made a radical shift. In 1926, he opened a place at "the end of Lyons View car line," as his ads went.

J.E. FOSTER GROCERIES ON LYONS VIEW PIKE SERVED THE LOCAL COMMUNITY BEFORE THE DALTON GROCERY ON THE SAME SPOT.

He presumably carried a full line of groceries, and was known to sell local produce, especially tomatoes. But what he advertised in the paper was the fun stuff. "Christmas fireworks, complete line," went his first known ad. For a period roughly between the Civil War and World War II, fireworks were an elemental part of a Tennessee Christmas. 12 DALTON'S STORE was often open all day on the 25th, just to meet the demand.

The next summer, he touted "Fireworks for the Fourth." Barely outside of city limits (where fireworks sales had been banned since the fireworks-fueled "Saturnalia" Christmas riots of 1893), Dalton's was a perfect place for fireworks sales.

Dalton's also advertised ice cream and soft drinks and, by 1938, beer. Dalton's was an early Knoxville distributor of two Cincinnati-era brewers, Wiedemann and Hudepohl.

It sounds like a jolly place. In 1938, Dalton admitted to authorities that he had sometimes kept a slot machine to keep his customers entertained.

During the war, Dalton's son, L.H. Jr., an Army private in combat in Europe, was officially "missing" for several months, causing some anxiety on Lyons View until he turned up in June, 1945, having been liberated from a Nazi prison camp.

The Daltons' daughter, Georgia Mae, became a features editor for the *Knoxville Journal*, a paper known for its society coverage. Her familiarity with members of Cherokee Country Club may have helped.

In the early 1950s, Dalton attempted to open a second store less than a mile to the southwest, at Northshore and Craig, where some postwar development was afoot. It apparently didn't work out. He retired to Florida.

Today, the painted signage for L.H. Dalton, perhaps dating back to the 1920s, still advertises his once-popular store.

FORMER L.H. DALTON'S STORE, NOW PROMPT PHYSICAL THERAPY ON LYONS VIEW PIKE. THE STREETCAR TURNAROUND LOOP WENT AROUND THE BUILDING

FRANK ANDRE AND WALTER SELF (RIGHT) POSE WITH A CURTISS ROBIN AIRPLANE AT SUTHERLAND AVENUE'S AIRFIELD, 1928

CHAPTER FIVE

BEARDEN TAKES OFF

It was probably soon after World War I that some daredevils began landing airplanes along one of the Knoxville area's very few strips of flattish land, the Third Creek floodplain.

Walter Self was a mechanical expert who had started the electronics shop known as Tennessee Armature, which at the time was specializing in radio supplies, mainly for hobbyists, but anticipating Knoxville's first radio station, which went on the air in 1922. One of Knoxville's first licensed pilots, Self was soon employing a regular field off Kingston Pike.

"The Airplane Field," as it was first called, could be reached by taking "the right fork of the Pike at the pig stand," a roadside barbecue shop near what's now Kingston Center. "The field is on the right." Sometimes referred to as the Kingston Pike Field, sometimes as 14 BEARDEN FIELD, sometimes as Aviation Field, it lay to the east of Forest Park Boulevard.

"It may be reached by the Lyons View streetcar," offered one tip. Just get off at the intersection of Lyons View in front of George Mellen's house, advised the *Sentinel*. "It is but a short distance from that junction to the aviation field." The beekeeper-professor, barely old enough to remember the Civil War, lived to witness aviation out his back windows.

Dan M. Chambliss, a pharmacist, and his son, George Chambliss—they lived on Kingston Pike, within walking distance from the airfield—were among Knoxville's first owners of airplanes, purchasing their first as early as 1919. (Nearby Chambliss Avenue may be named for one or both of them.) Dan Chambliss was also a leading promoter of the automobile, and president of the city's new automobile association.

Certain events drew more attention than others. August, 1921, witnessed the landing of the *Airship Knoxville*, which had been built in New Jersey and flown all the way from Garden City, Long Island, sometimes at speeds of 90 m.p.h.—taking 46 hours, including a couple of overnight stops. The flight was partly sponsored by Dan Chambliss; his son, George, was one of the big plane's pilots. The other was noted aviator Billy Brock, later known for his global exploits. The city airplane, "the prettiest and most graceful aircraft that ever visited Knoxville" was christened by local beauty Margaret Lockett, who in those days of prohibition, "crashed a bottle of pure carbonated water, the sparkle of which was brilliant in the glistening sunlight. As the bottle crumbled in contact with the propeller shaft, the crowd cheered lustily."

It was at least briefly famous, put into use for promotional and commercial flights. Rides were $10 for a single, $15 for a double; adjusted for inflation, that's in the low hundreds. Some pilots came to Knoxville from other cities just to give it a try. The Chamblisses reportedly flew it to the Smokies, and buzzed Elkmont in it. But in an era when each year brought bigger and better airplanes, the *Airship Knoxville* was quickly forgotten.

From its earliest days, "the Airplane Field" was the setting of spectacular stunts. Local prizefighter Tiger Toro made a habit of walking out onto the wings of flying biplanes. The City of Knoxville frowned upon such shows, and in 1924 banned aerobatic stunts in the city—while winking at the goings-on at Bearden Field, where Knox Aero promised no stunts but rather "aerial events." And Bearden Field was just outside city limits, anyway.

THE BLAIR HOUSE, FORMER HOME TO THE WHITE DOT CAFE ON FOREST PARK BLVD. DATING TO THE LATE 1920S, REMEMBERED BY MANY AS THE LONGTIME HOME OF VESTER'S FLORIST SHOP, IT'S ONE OF THE OLDEST SURVIVING COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS IN THE BEARDEN AREA.

The 19 **WHITE DOT** opened at the corner of Forest Park Boulevard in early 1934. Travelers might not have guessed by the name, or by their specialty of "Fried Virginia Ham," but it was, at first at least, promoted as a Mexican-style barbecue cafe. Proprietor John Wiegand, who had lived in Mexico for a decade, put himself forward as a bit of an expert on the subject. They also served beer, one of the first Bearden-area establishments to do so openly, and soon opened a filling station, creating something of a little tourist village, "modernistic in design." It would be, they said, the nucleus of a motor court.

It appears that never happened as dreamed, and in fact John and Myrtle Wiegand had been running the place together for hardly more than a year until she sued him for divorce, first protesting that she was the real owner of the property. What's worse, she later claimed in court, was that he never bathed. She got her divorce.

An outspoken woman, Myrtle also accused a police officer of verbal abuse, though her formal charge was dismissed by a judge.

Myrtle Wiegand and Bill Lane were in charge of the place when they opened a grand new version of what had been a "barbecue stand." In early 1939, the "New White Dot" welcomed the public into a handsome two-story brick building. Although it was called the White Dot Coffee Shop, it aspired to be much more than that, with dining and dancing and "Excellent Foods" in a "Cosmopolitan Atmosphere," along with a selection of offbeat beers. "You couldn't ask for anything more," they promised.

"Dine and Dance Tonight," they suggested on the evening of their grand opening, February 8, 1939, with an image of a formally dressed couple, the man in a tuxedo.

The White Dot may have hit an elegant high in 1939 and for a couple of years after that, but then Myrtle Wiegand and Bill Lane had some problems. He joined the police force, only to be dismissed without explanation a few months later. He joined the armed forces, only to receive a medical discharge after a few months. This time he was accepted as a patrolman. Wartime frugality didn't help business; they gave up on the New White Dot about five years after the grand opening.

Today, that relatively urbane brick building, unlike any other in Bearden, is the home of Blair Antiques.

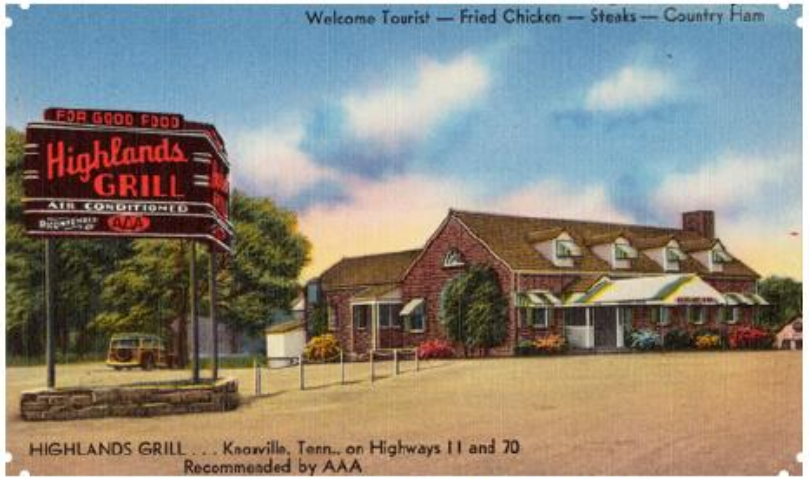
Knoxville's love-hate relationship with alcohol was most at home in Bearden. It's safe to say alcoholic beverages were always available in the area, all the way back to Grandfather Hudiburg's time—regardless of local, state, and national attempts to ban one category of drink or another. During national prohibition, Bearden might have seemed a little more free and easy in terms of pocket flasks or a jug in a backroom than in Knoxville simply because it lacked Knoxville's prickly city codes, and also had fewer law-enforcement officers per square mile patrolling it.

To a couple of generations in the middle part of the Twentieth Century, Bearden's single most familiar businessman may have been a fellow whose business was well outside of the law. His name was Dick Vance.

Vance had gotten in trouble with the law even as a minor. He came from a rough-edged family; his older brother Joe had been a bootlegger, shot several times in his long career. In 1936 Dick Vance was involved in a gang convicted of a payroll-robbery case downtown, and did time for it, first in the reformatory, then in the penitentiary.

In 1940, he was implicated in a case involving 126 gallons of moonshine stored in his house on Sutherland Avenue. A later generation would remember him fondly.

The 20 **HIGHLANDS GRILL** opened in the spring of 1937, in a building built to look antique, with bricks reportedly made decades earlier. It became an eye-catching landmark on the Dixie Highway, with faux dormer windows and an English-style interior. Specializing in meats, it



"WELCOME TOURIST": A CA. 1950 POSTCARD FROM THE HIGHLANDS GRILL, JUST BEFORE IT WAS STRANDED BY KINGSTON PIKE'S THIRD AND FINAL ROUTE.

AT MOUNT PLEASANT BAPTIST'S CHURCHYARD, THE GOVERNMENT-ISSUE GRAVE OF UNION VETERAN SERGEANT GRUNDY CRUMP AND, NEARBY, THAT OF HIS WIFE, TEXANNA. FORMERLY ENSLAVED IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE, CRUMP WAS WOUNDED IN COMBAT DURING THE CIVIL WAR, AND SETTLED IN KNOXVILLE, EVENTUALLY BECOMING KNOWN AS A BRICKMAKER. HE DELIVERED THOUSANDS OF BRICKS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF EASTERN STATE HOSPITAL IN THE 1870S AND '80S.

SON OF GRUNDY CRUMP, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN CRUMP—SEEN HERE AS A YOUNG MAN, IN BAKING HAT, AND LATER, HOLDING A ROLLING PIN—WAS HEAD BAKER AT THE INSTITUTION. HIS SON, ALVIN CRUMP, WAS ALSO BAKER AT EASTERN STATE. THE FAMILY WAS ASSOCIATED WITH BUILDING AND SERVING THE MENTAL HOSPITAL FOR SEVERAL GENERATIONS.

hill, across the golf course, and some of them were hiring cooks and housekeepers. And by the 1920s, Kingston Pike was suddenly an avenue with hundreds of cars rolling through daily, carrying people who were ready to spend money. Most of the tourist business along Kingston Pike was run by whites, for whites. But there were exceptions.

Several black families lived right on Kingston Pike, mostly in the area on either side of Mohican. Among the best known was the large family of housepainter Edward Curry, who lived in an appropriately large house at Mohican. Nearby was J.T. Griffin's Eating House, established by 1927. The Griffin family, who had been around Bearden since slave days, ran a restaurant there for several years, eventually known as the Wonder Lunch Room.

That restaurant, listed in city directories with a (c) for "colored" was, presumably, aimed at a black clientele of motorists who would have been unwelcome at most white-owned restaurants. (The famous *Green Book*, launched in 1936 as a guide for "Negro Travelers" emphasized mainly cities; it eventually included Knoxville attractions, mostly hotels and restaurants downtown along East Vine. By the time it included the Knoxville area, in the early Forties, the Griffins seem to have gotten out of the restaurant business. In any case, the *Green Book* never mentioned any Bearden establishment.)

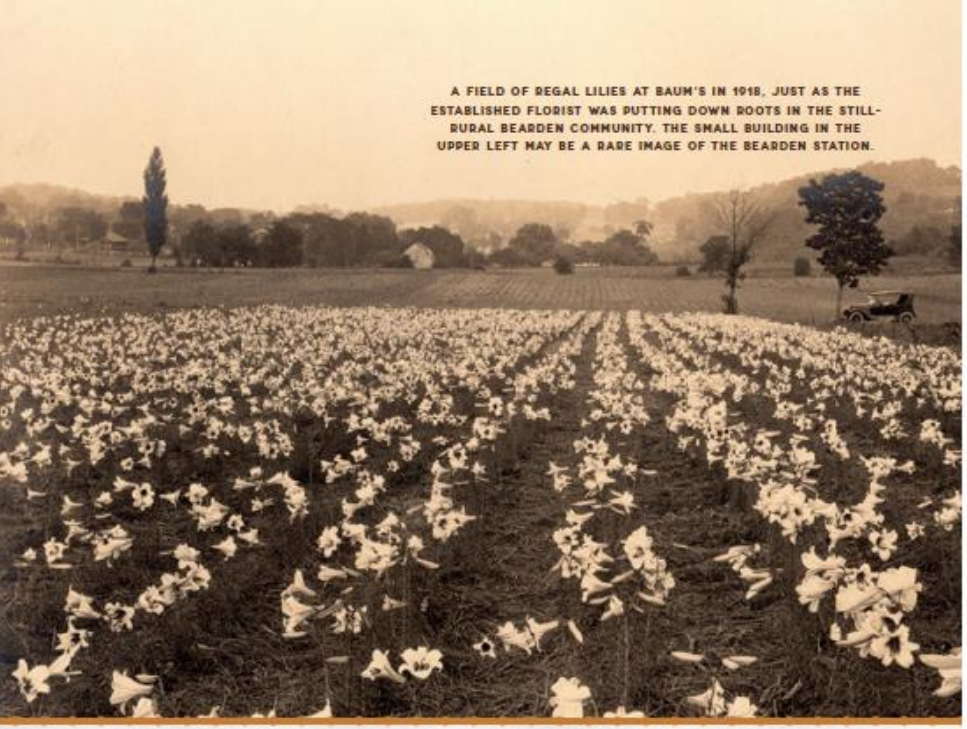
THE CHOIR OF WALLACE CHAPEL, THE BRICKYARD'S AME ZION CHURCH, IN 1960. AT THE TIME, THE EASTERN HALF OF WHAT'S NOW KNOWN AS HOMBERG PLACE WAS A PREDOMINANTLY BLACK RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD, AND THE CHURCH, ESTABLISHED THERE EARLY IN THE CENTURY, SERVED AS A COMMUNITY CENTER.

Behind all that, well off the noisy highway, were the community's churches. Probably the first was an African Methodist Episcopal Zion church that first organized in a dancehall on what had been, before 1924, Kingston Pike. Originally a "circuit church," it was so small that it was served by a series of temporary pastors. It grew as the community grew, as more moved in who preferred an A.M.E. Zion church to the older Mount Pleasant Baptist Church up on the hill. Wallace Chapel became a "station church" with a dedicated pastor.

Their old dancehall home burned down, and the A.M.E. Zion church under the supervision of Reverend O.C. Armstrong built a handsome new church of tan stone blocks in 1930. They named it 5 WALLACE CHAPEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH, in honor of the much-admired P.A. Wallace, a former Maryvillian who had risen in the organization to become pastor of a church in Brooklyn, New York, and an A.M.E. bishop. Between 1927 and 1931, Bishop Wallace returned to his home state to preside over Tennessee Methodist conventions. (He remained a prominent bishop into the 1950s, when he signed his name in a plea to the U.S. Senate for pro-labor revisions to the Taft-Hartley Act.)

Just east of Wallace Chapel, near where the Pike used to cross the train tracks, was a rare black Presbyterian church. Named for a gathering place on the Jordan River mentioned in the Book of Joshua, 6 GILGAL CHURCH was located on the corner of Carr and Yearwood Street, the latter a tiny and long-forgotten lane located along the railroad tracks between modern-day Homberg Drive and Old Kingston Pike.

It was a good-sized building with crude benches, one wicker chair, and a pulpit. Music was supplied by "a harpsichord, a relic of Civil War vintage, with broken hammers and out-of-tune strings and missing keys."



A FIELD OF REGAL LILIES AT BAUM'S IN 1918, JUST AS THE ESTABLISHED FLORIST WAS PUTTING DOWN ROOTS IN THE STILL-RURAL BEARDEN COMMUNITY. THE SMALL BUILDING IN THE UPPER LEFT MAY BE A RARE IMAGE OF THE BEARDEN STATION.

BAUM'S BEARDEN GREENHOUSES SEEN HERE IN 1950 OPERATED ON AN INDUSTRIAL SCALE, PRODUCING MILLIONS OF ROSES ANNUALLY.

CHAPTER EIGHT

INDUSTRY AND WARTIME

Just away from the summer traffic of the Pike, just as tourist camps and motor courts were popping up, a quiet industry was growing, one very different from the old brickyard, but in a way aligned with Bearden's agricultural heritage. Knoxvillians of several generations became familiar with Baum's flower shops downtown, perhaps not always aware that they were just the public nodes of a factory-sized operation based in Bearden.

The Baum family arrived as part of an international story concerning the German Revolutions of 1848. These idealistic revolutions, at first optimistic, met with overwhelming force on the part of the Hapsburgs and their dynastic allies. Many were killed, and hundreds of thousands of German refugees left Europe forever for a new life in America.

One Johannes Baum was killed in those revolutions, and his widow, Katherine, with their teenaged son Karl, fled overseas as refugees, intending to settle in the German-speaking community of Wartburg, Tennessee. The family arrived in Knoxville in the summer of 1855—on the very first train into town, according to family tradition, which stopped for a moment in Erin.

Karl married a local woman, and they had a child during the Civil War, and gave him an English name, Charles L. Baum. In the 1880s, Charles worked for an iron foundry, perhaps the booming Knoxville Iron Company, which employed hundreds. But standing before the furnace, he kept thinking of flowers. In 1889, he founded a flower shop. He sold flowers at the old Central Market (now Emory Place), loved the work, and had a knack for it. Baum's main store finally settled on Gay Street at Church, and was for many years one of downtown's retail attractions.

He first established a greenhouse in Smithwood, at Fountain City, where his growing family seemed to be settling. Baum's became part of the new national cooperative Florists Telegraph Delivery—F.T.D.—almost as soon as it was founded.

But around 1912 the German refugee's son found sixty-five acres not far from the Bearden train station, where over a period of years, he established the biggest flower production facility in regional history.

Construction was delayed by World War I. But by the mid-1920s, an industrial-scale complex of greenhouses was up and running. The Bearden facility specialized in roses, and from over 118,000 plants, 23 BAUM'S HOME OF FLOWERS produced an incredible 3.5 million roses a year. Among its 100-plus employees were specialists, teams of women, mostly, who ran the Grading Department and the Wrapping Department. But Baum's also produced hundreds of thousands of carnations and a good many chrysanthemums. Baum claimed to have introduced gladiolas to the region. But their main subject was roses, and Baum's eventually produced a new flower named for the founder's granddaughter, the Betty Baum Rose. It was a white rose, edged with pink.

It was repeatedly claimed to be the largest floral greenhouse facility in the southeastern United States. At Bearden, along what became known as Baum Drive, were thirty-four greenhouses on the property, with over 300,000 square feet of flower-growing space. A 425-foot well supplied the thousands of gallons of water needed weekly. Baum's developed a reservoir there—a small lake—adjacent to the facility.

BUILT IN 1946, AT 5308 KINGSTON PIKE, THE PIKE THEATRE WAS WEST KNOXVILLE'S FIRST CINEMA.

THIS CA. 1960 SHOT OF THE PIKE'S TICKET BOOTH SHOWS PROMOTIONS FOR THE TEEN MELODRAMA *A SUMMER PLACE* AND *WOMAN BAIT*, THE PROVOCATIVE NEW TITLE OF A FRENCH MOVIE ORIGINALLY CALLED *INSPECTOR MAIGRET*.

CHAPTER NINE

POSTWAR BEARDEN, AND THE DRIVE-IN AMERICAN DREAM

Bearden was often out of step with the rest of the world, but sometimes in a positive way.

31 THE PIKE THEATRE opened in June, 1946. Seasoned cinema operator Walter Morris was in charge. By then, several neighborhoods had their own small theaters, from Burlington to Lonsdale to Happy Holler—and some were already losing them. But the Pike was Knoxville's first to open west of Cumberland Avenue's Booth Theatre. A single-screen theater, as all were at that time, the Pike offered a few unusual amenities: a party room, a "crying room" for mothers with unruly baby-boom babies, and, most extraordinarily, free parking.

WALTER MORRIS, BUILDER OF CINEMAS

The hundreds who lived within easy walking distance may have regarded the Pike as their long-awaited neighborhood cinema. It wasn't exactly that. Built on a major thoroughfare with almost 900 seats, the Pike opened ready for mobile crowds from all over the city. The Pike was more like the big new regionally automobile-oriented cinemas that were putting the little neighborhood theaters out of business.

It was claimed to be America's first theater built with an insulating material called vermaculite, the stuff made just down the street at Knox Blox. If not extravagant, it had a stylish, moderne design that made it eye-catching from the road. The Pike was one of Knoxville's last new movie theaters to be declared "beautiful."

Although the Pike promised first-run movies, its first film was one that had opened at the Tennessee six months earlier: the family drama *Our Vines Have Tender Grapes*, with Edward G. Robinson and Margaret O'Brien (and written by the later-to-be-blacklisted Dalton Trumbo).

Bearden's timing with show-biz is unusual. In most American towns, the first drive-in movie theater followed the first conventional movie theater decades later. But Knoxville's very first permanent drive-in theater arrived just two summers after the Pike opened, and a quarter mile away. The long-distance effort of an Alabama company, the 32 KNOXVILLE DRIVE-IN opened in August, 1948. Located in what had been a clay "borrow pit" for Scott's brick company, half a century earlier, and later the site of a few biplane crashes, it became suddenly a place to see a movie on a summer evening.

Drive-in theaters were new, nationally; East Tennessee had seen a few others, mainly in rural areas and smaller towns. Oak Ridge had one. This one would be the first one in Knoxville, with 511 parking spaces. It would be an icon of its era. Like most drive-ins, it didn't necessarily specialize in the latest releases. Its first movie was Jimmy Stewart's seven-year-old romantic comedy *Pot O' Gold*—retitled *Jimmy Steps Out*.

JULIUS C. LEHARDY RAN A WELL-KNOWN DRUGSTORE ON KINGSTON PIKE, CA. 1940. HE LATER MOVED IT AROUND THE CORNER TO NORTHSHORE.

Another White Store was the anchor in the middle of the new strip center, and over at the left corner was another Long's Drugstore, with a soda fountain and a pharmacist in back, just like at the first. For several years, the now-famous and very busy Clarence Long ran both, and they were both called "Long's." (On the Bearden end, Long's competed with long-established 42 LEHARDY'S, run by Julius C. LeHardy, who was beloved by some, who cited his racially progressive attitudes, but often a subject of the rumor mill. He did eventually get in trouble for prescription irregularities.)

The Bearden Center was a bigger and more complex project than Kingston Pike Center, though, with a big ell on one end, to accommodate Wade's Bakery, specializing in birthday cakes; and the area S&H Green Stamps depot, the place to go to redeem all your carefully filled Green Stamp books for valuable merchandise. A freestanding building faced it on the other end, holding a bank and a jewelry store.

This White Store was even bigger, along with an adjacent new Whiteway, a non-grocery variety store with everything from hardware to housewares to toys.

In May, 1966, Clarence Long, who lived in Concord, was driving home in a spring rain at Cedar Bluff, when he suddenly veered his car into a tractor-trailer truck. Upon his death, his partner, Charles Henderson, took over the Bearden Long's and soon renamed it Henderson's. The original Long's kept its owner's name until well into the 21st century.

Meanwhile, as Bearden Shopping Center opened, a third shopping center, bigger than the first two, was well underway. It would be known as 43 WESTERN PLAZA. Unusual in design, it had entrances in the front and the rear, offering access to a lower level. Though modern in appearance, it accommodated an existing retail strip where Sonner's Drugstore and Ray's Market had already been well-established institutions, as well as the more recent Joy Young restaurant, run by the Wong family, who lived upstairs.

The development took the place of what had been a rural paradise for the Mellen family, and called for the demolition of the storied old Lonas-Mellen house, still home of Mellen family members for the three decades since Professor Mellen had died. His widow, Mary, had lived there until her death in 1946. The house had drawn artist Eleanor McAdoo Wiley, who painted an oil portrait of it, and prompted newspaper woman Sarah Booth Conroy, not yet famous as the architecture critic of the *Washington Post*, to write a column about it for the *News-Sentinel* in 1956. Antebellum houses were not perceived to be very unusual at the time, and there was no public effort to save it. The developers in fact, had the family's blessing—leading the project was Wallace McClure, Professor Mellen's grandson.

In an era when no fewer than twenty westerns, including a new one called *Gunsmoke*, were commanding prime-time television, it shouldn't be surprising that the new shopping center advertised with a Western theme; its original big sign on Kingston Pike was spelled out with big saloon-style lettering, and some early ads used a lariat motif.

It would accommodate a few companies that were already present in the neighborhood, including A&P grocery, plus several surprises—major stores that had previously been associated only with downtown, like Woolworth's and Hall's Clothing.

Following Mayo's and Parker Brothers, Western Plaza proved that retail was moving to the suburbs, especially to Kingston Pike—and in some cases not just duplicating what was available in the city center, but moving it, leaving empty buildings downtown.

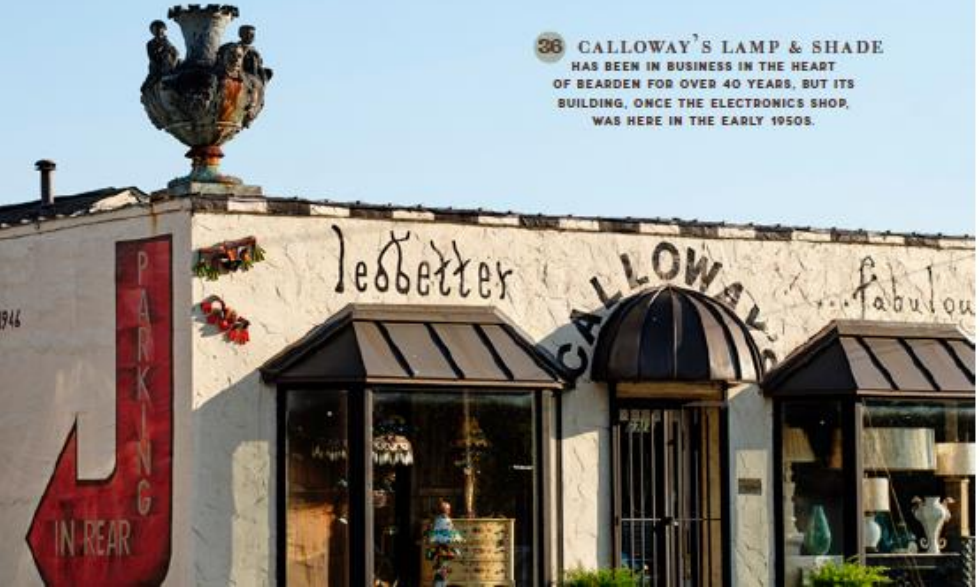
One newcomer to Bearden's mix was Knoxville's third-ever Kroger store. Known to stock investors since the 1920s, the Cincinnati-based grocery giant was late arriving to the Knoxville market. It first opened at the Broadway Shopping Center in 1956. The second was on Chapman Highway. A store to serve West Knoxville was originally aimed for Clinton Highway; planners became convinced Kingston Pike would be a better bet.

Western Plaza also brought one of the city's biggest bowling alleys, a twenty-four-lane attraction, on the lower level accessible from the back, down where there were other tenants, notably the fancyish, faintly-German themed Rathskeller.

Advertising didn't mention the fact that the sport of bowling had been introduced to Knoxville a century earlier by Peter R. Knott, a member of the Lones family who had once lived on the property.

FINISHED IN 1958, WESTERN PLAZA WAS UNUSUAL IN THAT IT HAD A BASEMENT LEVEL ACCESSED FROM THE REAR, HOSTING SEVERAL ATTRACTIONS, INCLUDING WEST KNOXVILLE'S FIRST BOWLING ALLEY.

NEW RETAIL CONSTRUCTION ALONG KINGSTON PIKE INCORPORATES THE BARREL-ROOF DESIGN POPULAR IN BEARDEN IN THE 1940S.



36 CALLOWAY'S LAMP & SHADE HAS BEEN IN BUSINESS IN THE HEART OF BEARDEN FOR OVER 40 YEARS, BUT ITS BUILDING, ONCE THE ELECTRONICS SHOP, WAS HERE IN THE EARLY 1950S.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BEARDEN RE-IMAGINED

Bearden was changing. There was no question about that. Old Beardens had died. The old farming community no longer had farms. The unincorporated town once known as Bearden Station no longer had a train station. Now the tourist strip no longer had tourists.

Those tourists exiting from I-40 near Bearden in the 1960s might find little indication of the original Dixie Highway, and its cluster of motels and restaurants. Old Bearden was connected to the Interstate by narrow Bearden Drive and winding, hilly Weisgarber. In between was private property, a substantial creek, and a thick woods.

Tourists favored those parts of Kingston Pike that were near interstate exits. Stretches to the west of Bearden fared better; due to its flatter topography, the interstate lay closer to the old Pike. Tourist accommodations were visible from the exits. The new Interstate economy supercharged the old Pike from West Hills to Cedar Bluff with new motel and fast-food clusters, dominated by national chains. It mostly ignored Bearden. One by one, over the next few years, old Bearden's motels and motor courts closed.

Still, in the early Sixties, big positive changes were afoot. Bearden was annexed into the city in 1962. Suddenly taxes got higher for both residents and businesses, but city amenities, from plumbing to police, were handier than they had ever been before.

And Knoxville had just passed a referendum legalizing, for the first time since 1907, package stores. Suddenly liquor and wine were available for legal sale. The move was probably cheered by most Beardenites, with the possible exception of career bootlegger Dick Vance. Several package stores opened in Bearden right away, and a few, like Ashe's survive to the present day.

At the same time came a bigger change. By degrees, Knoxville was desegregating. Most of the civil-rights demonstrations were downtown, while Bearden's seemed to give in quietly to the new ways.

Some affluent whites favored the new era. In July, 1963, after a series of demonstrations against some stubborn all-white movie theaters, Lillie Powell Lindsay, granddaughter of White Lily Flour magnate J. Allen Smith, wrote a letter to the *News-Sentinel*. The black citizen, she wrote, "pays taxes and serves in the armed forces, yet he cannot enjoy a cup of coffee at some lunch counters. We unhesitatingly trust our children to the care of Negro women, yet we resist their children going to school with our children… Instead of deploring and decrying the Negro demonstrations, it seems to me we should be extremely thankful that Dr. Martin Luther King has been able to inculcate the doctrine of nonviolence into his marchers and demonstrators. Our debt to Dr. King has not been realized or appreciated. That so little blood has been shed is due primarily to him… Having wrestled with delays and disappointments, with prejudice and intelligence, the Negro is at last determined to gain equality."

COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE COLORS AND CLUTTERS THE SOUTH SIDE OF KINGSTON PIKE IN THE HEART OF 1970S BEARDEN

Nearby, the Capri Cinema—many of its regulars didn't know it hid the skeleton of the old 1946 Pike Theatre—kept drawing hundreds of moviegoers a day. To meet demand they eventually added a third theater in the non-adjacent Capri complex, the Capri Terrace, a less-formal theater that eventually offered dinner and, as the Terrace Tap House, even beer options. Although it faced a different direction, the Bahou Container was actually in the same building as the new theater.

All theaters later began to struggle with their original models. Already two theaters, the Capri later twinned again, offering four small theaters. Although the Capri arguably gave birth to the Knoxville cineplex, it was the cineplex era that did it in, as other larger multiplexes around the city—mostly farther out, and near interstate exits—were offering six and eight screens. The Capri tried showing foreign and art films, those unlikely to be shown at giant cineplexes, perhaps overestimating the intellectual interests of its mostly college-educated neighborhood. Their last shows in 1992 included a French production of *Madame Bovary* and the Chinese Oscar nominee *Raise the Red Lantern*.

As it turned out, no plan was sustainable. Forty-six years after opening as The Pike, the Capri closed. Bearden's first theater was auctioned off. The first developer wanted to convert it into a mini-storage facility. In 1999, however, Rick Bennett, who had already been operating a small gallery in Bearden for years, bought it for his grand art gallery, a home furnishings and art store so impressive it earned national attention in arts magazines.

Homberg had its ups and downs, and probably never arrived at the state of upscale grace its planners dreamed of, with customers who got out of their cars and spent the day there, from cafe to shop to restaurant to movie theater. Only a couple of its original tenants survived the years. But over almost half a century, Homberg has introduced many to Cuban cuisine (Alex's Havana Cafe), to Hungarian cuisine (Side Street Cafe), zoologically daring cuisine (Richard's), Spanish Tapas (Cha Cha), innovative fusion fare (the original Bistro By the Tracks).

Along with Homberg's menu of culinary adventures came some innovative drama. In 2000 the independent-spirited Actor's Co-op opened their Black Box Theatre there, presenting dozens of plays rarely seen elsewhere. The Co-op notably presented an extremely controversial 1998 Off-Broadway play, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, the sexually explicit transexual-themed musical sensation; it played at the Black Box in 2006 to sellout crowds.

The Black Box lasted there for eight years, leaving some indelible memories.

Businesses that now thrive elsewhere, from Holly's Gourmet Market to Bistro by the Tracks (now at Brookview Center off Northshore, the "tracks" in the title were the ones at Homberg Place) have roots in that idealistic development. In Knoxville retail history, especially in terms of restaurants, Homberg may be best known as a start-up incubator with an especial reputation for the culinary.

Bearden's transformation to a lightly sophisticated, tasteful bohemia would have startled those who once knew the same acreage as a place for farm folks, economy-minded tourists, brick makers, bootleggers, and slot-machine gamblers. And of course, not all of Bearden was going upscale. In 1972, Carcel and LaMuriel Smothers announced plans that would have suited Bearden's old days.

Historic
BEARDEN
KNOXVILLE TENNESSEE
BEARDEN HILL
WESTMORELAND HEIGHTS
FOURTH CREEK
WESTWOOD
HIGHLAND MEMORIAL CEMETERY
HIGHLAND HILLS
CHEROKEE COUNTRY CLUB
LAKESHORE PARK
LYONS BEND