The Forgotten Hill

Presented to the Sphex Club
by Carolyn Wilkerson Bell
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On two Thursday nights during the past few years, I have travelled between places only minutes apart that represent the antipodes of wealth, power, and status in our city. My destination on those Thursday nights was the building in which we are now enjoying each other's company as members of the Sphex Club. The starting point of those Thursday night journeys was the Yoder Community Center in Tinbridge Hill, a mile from here. Earlier on those evenings, before coming here to Sphex, I had walked from the Yoder Center up and down Tinbridge streets with a group of children, teens, and other adults, led by Aubrey Barbour, known as "Chub." In front of Chub was a police car, driving slowly, protecting us. Following Chub, who carried a bullhorn, we walked along, holding hands and shouting in a sort of call and response pattern, "Drug dealers! Drug users! God loves you! We love you! You're hurting our children! You're hurting our neighborhood! Get out! Get out! Get out! " As we walked, lights came on in two or three upstairs rooms. People peered through their front curtains. Some came out on their porches and waved; others only stared as we passed. Most houses stayed dark.

Tinbridge Hill is not one of Lynchburg's fabled seven hills. On old maps of the city, Tinbridge Hill does not exist. Its boundaries were determined only fifteen years ago (in 1996) when neighbors organized and incorporated as a 501.c.3 non-profit organization called the Tinbridge Hill Neighborhood Council. These boundaries are officially reflected in a 2004 City Conservation Plan. Here is the land-use map from that plan.

2004 LAND USE MAP

Driving from Rivermont, where I live, TH starts with the land on the left side of the road just after you cross the bridge over Blackwater Creek at Hollins Mill. Go up Hollins Mill Road, once known as the Lexington Turnpike. At the top of the hill, where Hollins Mill Road becomes Federal Street, there's a bit of TH over your left shoulder, and just behind the stairs to nowhere. On your right is a building now called Tinbridge Manor, once the City Hospital. If you keep travelling down Federal Street toward the much discussed traffic circle, you will cross Hollins, Garland, First, Second, Third, and Fourth Streets; TH will be on your right. At the traffic circle, go a quarter of the way around and turn onto Fifth Street/ MLK Boulevard, crossing the presidents' streets: Jackson, Polk, Monroe, and Taylor, then Wise, Floyd and Fillmore. TH is still on your right. At the overpass over the railroad tracks, where Fifth Street becomes Memorial Avenue, you leave TH and cross into Dearington.

Railroad tracks, Blackwater Creek, Federal Street, Fifth Street—roughly speaking, these are the boundaries of present-day Tinbridge Hill. Inside these boundaries are two places, the homes of two non-profit organizations, where I have been privileged to serve as a board member: the Legacy Museum of African American History at Fourth and Monroe, and the 26-acre Old City

Cemetery, with its entrance at Fourth and Taylor and its exit at Fourth and Wise. A few years ago, when I found myself at a vigil at a murder scene in front of Hutcherson's Funeral Home, I realized that I might live in Rivermont, but Tinbridge Hill is also my neighborhood, and Tinbridge residents, almost all of whom are African American, are my neighbors.

It was at a neighborhood watch meeting at the Yoder Center a couple of years ago that two of these neighbors said they wanted to put together a history of their hill. Let me tell you about these two. Mary Cardwell Patrick is 85 years old. She has lived all her life in Tinbridge and refers to it as "our beautiful hill." Her friend, Evelyn Dennis Thompson, is five years younger; she, too, has spent her entire life in Tinbridge, and the phrase she uses for the neighborhood is "this great hill." These are ladies—and I use the term with a full sense of its connotations—whom you would be likely to encounter at a Court Street Baptist Church Bible Study or at a meeting to discuss the City's budget priorities. Like their old friend and neighbor Chub Barbour, whom they always call "Aubrey Lee," they are good citizens, and they love their neighborhood. Mary Patrick and Evelyn Thompson are part of the tiny Tinbridge Hill remnant, in contrast to the Tinbridge diaspora, the much larger group of people who once lived in the neighborhood but have moved out of it. One of these former neighbors, Les Camm, was the only person who responded when Ms. Patrick and Ms. Thompson asked people to write something for their neighborhood history. They didn't know what to do next, but I had some ideas.

And so it was that the Southern Memorial Association, which operates the Old City Cemetery, applied for and received two grants, one from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (before I was a board member) and one from the Greater Lynchburg Community Trust, to put together a booklet of text and images about the history of Tinbridge Hill. Since the booklet is very much a work-in-progress—we plan to launch it at a great celebration on June12—what you will hear tonight is not a polished paper of the sort I prefer to present, nor is it all my own work. Rather, it represents a collaboration among Tinbridge neighbors and several important others, three of whom, Ted Delaney, Nancy Marion, and Jane White, are here tonight as my guests. Ted, whose degree is in anthropology, is archivist, curator, and assistant director at the Old City Cemetery. Nancy is a graphic designer who is also the principal of The Design Group, the Blackwell Press, and lynchburghistory.com, as well as publisher of *Lynch's Ferry* magazine and a member of the Cemetery board. No acknowledgement, however effusive, could ever be adequate thanks for the work these two talented colleagues have done and will do for Tinbridge Hill. The same and much more can certainly be said for Jane White, whose work at the Old City Cemetery and elsewhere in Tinbridge has led to and inspired so many of the positive developments in the neighborhood since the early 1990s. And while I'm thanking people and acknowledging contributions, I have to mention Tom Ledford, who did all he could to fish me out of the railroad alphabet soup.

Tonight I'm going to tell you a little about the process of putting this history together. Then I'm going to read some passages from the opening sections, and after that I'm going to summarize—briefly, I promise—the last three sections and the epilogue.

Process, sources, methodology

Between August of 2010 and January of 2011, a group of Tinbridge Hill residents and former residents born between 1923 and 1957 met at the Yoder Community Center to record fourteen oral history interviews. More than half of the interviews were conducted by neighbors, the rest by OCC researchers. All but one of the interviews took place in small groups of neighbors who knew each other well, so they did not hesitate to chime in when someone else was talking. The oral history interviews generated the information, ideas, and interpretation that are being turned into text for the booklet. In addition to Les Camm's memoir, we ended up with two other written documents to work with, one by Richard Harvey and a much longer one produced by DuBois Miller.

Material quoted from the interviews is being edited only to eliminate repetition and the conversational fillers, such as "um" and "you know," that are part of ordinary speech but that would be distracting in print; otherwise, vernacular language will be preserved. I may as well say right now that I cannot possibly do justice to the richness and beauty of the vernacular, so as I read tonight I will not even try to do so.

Here are the main ideas that the neighbors have agreed they want the history to present.

The African Americans who lived in Tinbridge Hill between 1920 and 1970 saw it as "close-knit,"[1] "a nice neighborhood,"[2] "a family place."[3] They felt connected to its hills and valleys, its paths and gathering spots. They drew on this sense of place, and on their inherited customs of kinship, to create a vibrant economic and social network and a secure environment for children. Neighbors and teachers alike were committed to their school, Yoder Elementary. As a result, Tinbridge residents forged a clear identity for themselves, a soul-sustaining solidarity with each other, and a long-lasting affection for their "beautiful hill."[4]

The neighbors decided that the history would cover in detail the fifty years between 1920 and 1970 ; the years before 1920 and after 1970 would be dealt with more briefly.

Here is part of the "Before 1920" section—and I need to tell you that in this section, especially, the debt to Ted Delaney is huge.

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[1] Marvin Stevens interview, 3 Dec. 2010.

[2] Minnie Lewis interview, 19 Nov. 2010.

[3] Marie White interview, 19 Nov. 2010.

[4] Mary Patrick, qtd. in grant proposal to Greater Lynchburg Community Trust, 15 Mar. 2010.

Before 1920

1864 HOTCHKISS MAP

In the 19th century, long before Tinbridge Hill as we know it took shape, the acreage on the outskirts of Lynchburg that is now roughly bounded by present-day Federal Street, present-day Fifth Street, the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks, and Blackwater Creek was the scene of essential but somewhat distasteful City activities. The area's sites included a gallows for public hangings, a female orphan asylum, a poorhouse for citizens with no other shelter, a "pest house" where those ill with contagious diseases could be quarantined, and a public burying ground for paupers and "strangers"—those just passing through—as well as for the City's most prominent citizens. At the end of the 19th century, prostitutes began moving their thriving business to the area; bootlegging and gambling establishments sprang up there, as well. Unsavory activities and hilly terrain made it easy for the City to neglect this marginal area. By the beginning of Prohibition in 1920, its informal designation as "the forgotten hill"[5] seemed well deserved, at least from the outside.

Viewed from the inside, the area was beginning to take on its 20th-century shape and color, as African Americans moved into Lynchburg from outlying rural areas to find work and make new lives for themselves. **1877 GRAY MAP** Lynchburg's pattern was typical of the rest of the state: in 1900, one in six black Virginians lived in cities; by 1930, one in three did.[6] In 1887,only a decade after this map was made, there were 357 households in the area; three-quarters of them were African American. **1891 BAIST MAP** In 1920 (actually 1921-22), thirty years after this map was made, there were 508 households, and 80% were African American.[7] Some white tradespeople and factory workers lived along Fifth and Federal Streets, and the neighborhood's white residents included the prostitutes and madams who had moved into houses along or adjacent to Fourth Street. With those exceptions, before the end of the 19th century the neighborhood was predominantly black, and it has remained predominantly black.

A few residents before 1920

JULIA WHITELEY BRANCH

PHILLIP PLEASANT WHITELEY

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[5] Vivian Henderson Williams, who grew up in College Hill, reported that her father (Edward Taylor Henderson, 1908-1990) heard his father (William Taylor Henderson, d. 1920) refer to the area as "the forgotten hill." The elder Henderson had reason to know: as manager of the City stables, he would have been more than familiar with local place names.

[6] *The Negro in Virginia,* p. 362.

[7] In 1940, 83% of the 449 households were African American. Counts were based on city directories.

Julia Whiteley Branch (c.1850-1937) was a midwife and baby nurse who lived at 1406 Fourth Street. Her brother, **Pleasant Whiteley**, also known as "Phillip Pleasant," (c.1850-1937) was a Civil War veteran, Company B, 43rd U.S. Colored Infantry, organized at Philadelphia in 1864. After the war he worked as a coachman, butler, and gardener for the Garland and Almond families. He lived around the corner from his sister at 407 Floyd Street.

THOMAS JEFFERSON ANDERSON

Jefferson Anderson (1853-1921), seen here in the regalia of his fraternal order, served two terms on the Lynchburg Common (City) Council beginning in 1885, running as a Republican. A resident of 400 Taylor Street, he was the Old City Cemetery caretaker in the late 1880s.

The African American residents of what became Tinbridge Hill migrated from small Virginia towns (Staunton, Danville, Halifax) and from rural places like Boonsboro, New London, Big Island, and Clay's Crossing in Bedford County, and Concord, Pilot Mountain, and Long Mountain in Campbell County. These rural families brought with them customs of extended kinship that had originated in West African village life. Over time these customs had been adapted to the harsh circumstances confronted by the enslaved and then by the newly emancipated. For decades, the practices and customs of extended kinship, adapted to Lynchburg's urban environment and passed down through the generations, gave everyday life in working-class Tinbridge its distinctive flavor. As a result, 20th-century Tinbridge Hill, despite its poverty, developed a rich, vibrant culture that displayed many marks of neighborhood health.

One of those marks of health was a keen sense of place, the subject of the next section of the history and the topic of my talk tonight.

A Sense of Place

> **"For me, it was like living in the best of both worlds. If I wanted to be alone and commune with nature, I would go out my back door to do that. To be with friends, I would go out my front door."** DuBois Miller [8]

VIEW OF YODER FROM OCC

Neighborhood identity came from a powerful sense of place created by a dramatic landscape; by definite yet porous boundaries; by local names, landmarks, and footpaths; and by similar houses built close together.

[8] DuBois Miller interview, 19 Nov. 2010.

“All over the hills”

1877 GRAY MAP AGAIN

The 1877 map reveals the neighborhood’s striking contours. The map shows a nameless creek originating near the Lexington Turnpike (present-day Federal Street) a block northeast of the Salem Turnpike (present-day Fifth Street). The creek flowed in two gentle curves toward Meeting House Branch, which in turn flowed into Blackwater Creek. On the way to Meeting House Branch, the nameless creek crossed what later became three Tinbridge intersections: Third and Jackson, Second and Polk, and First and Monroe, the last now known outside the neighborhood as “Thrill Hill” or “Thrill Hollow” and inside Tinbridge simply as “Monroe Street Hill.” On either side of the creek bed, hills rose sharply. To the north and east was a steep elevation that on its far side dropped abruptly to the Norfolk & Western Railroad tracks paralleling Blackwater Creek. To the south was “Grave Yard Hill” or “West Hill,” the site of the Old City Cemetery’s “first acre” and one of the highest points in Lynchburg. Thus Tinbridge “Hill” is actually two prominent hills, each marked by several slightly lower rises, the two main hills divided by a gently curving stream valley without a name.

As the neighborhood grew, its topography created four small residential areas in addition to the business district along Fifth Street and the red light district along Fourth. The African Americans and whites who lived between Fifth Street and the Old City Cemetery on Taylor, Wise, Floyd, and Fillmore streets would have said they were part of College Hill. [9] The African Americans who lived across Federal Street on McKinley and McIvor Streets, where there were also some white residents, came to think of themselves as part of Tinbridge even though the older maps clearly label that area “Garland Hill.” Those whose houses were at the bottom of Jackson Street, or in the diagonal alley between Third and Fourth—the low place where the nameless creek originated—lived in the “Black Bottom,” also part of Tinbridge Hill despite its location in a stream valley. In its earliest use, the nickname “Tin Bridge Hill” may have referred only to the hilltop neighborhood north and east of the nameless creek, including Second, First, Garland, and Hollins Streets and the northernmost ends of Taylor, Monroe, Polk, and Jackson.

2010 AERIAL MAP

“I have heard there was a tin bridge somewhere”

About the origin of the neighborhood’s name there are two views. Some believe that the name came from one of two trestles over Blackwater Creek, since the decks of 19th century railroad bridges were covered with sheet metal (called tin but actually iron or steel) in order to keep cinders falling from the locomotives from setting the wooden timbers on fire. [Thank you, Tom] Others think that the original tin bridge crossed the nameless creek at First and Monroe; a sign

[9] Gloria Franklin interview, 27 Aug. 2010.

erected in the 1990s reflects this second view. Whatever its origin, the name's first known appearance in print was in 1936, so it was firmly in place by then, if not earlier. [10]

Boundaries and landmarks

SANBORN WHOLE

Tinbridge's **Federal** and **Fifth Street** boundaries gave the neighborhood two urban edges and some important landmarks; I'll mention only a couple.

Federal Street: The Hospital and the Old Folks Home

In 1912 Lynchburg Hospital opened at the end of Federal Street on the hill above Blackwater Creek. The hospital, operated by City Council and the Health Department, stood beside the old almshouse, or poorhouse, built on Hollins Street in 1855.

SANBORN DETAIL

The older building was known in mid-20th-century Tinbridge as the city home, the nursing home, or the old folks home. "That was for the blacks," Marie Shelton remembered, "and sometimes when you were walking through there, people would call you to bring something back from the restaurant."[11] Phillips' Restaurant, across Federal Street from the hospital, was open seven days a week; "they served mostly… the white nurses and the nursing staff." [12] Shelton recalled that "we could go in there, but we had to stand up at the counter. Couldn't sit down. Sundays we went there for ice cream or for a snack to take to church on Sunday night."

Neighborhood children sang Christmas carols at the old folks home.[13] Nearby was a field where a single sheep grazed, and children repeated to each other the "rumor" that "sheep's blood was similar to human blood, so if the hospital needed blood, they could get it from that sheep."[14]

1936 HOSPITAL

The hospital building was renovated in the 1930s, with separate sections for whites and Negroes. Shelton remembered the separate wing, and the nurses made a vivid impression on

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[10] "Reminiscences of Tom Jefferson," *The News*, 13 Sept. 1936, p. 5.

[11] Marie Shelton Interview, 1 Oct. 2010.

[12] Miller interview.

[13] Shelton interview.

[14] Shelton interview.

her, too, with their white, stiffly starched uniforms, white shoes and stockings, white caps, and capes; "We thought they looked so elegant," she said.

NEWER HOSPITAL

Some years after the renovation, the hospital became independent of City control. In 1956, after 44 years at Federal and Hollins Streets, a new and expanded hospital facility opened on Tate Springs Road.

HOSPITAL WORKERS

The hospital was important to the Tinbridge economy. Many residents worked there, in food service or housekeeping, and some followed the hospital to its new location. Elaine Smith Johnson (b. c. 1922) worked at Lynchburg Hospital for 50 years. According to a 2001 newspaper story, she started out as a maid, "cleaning trainee nurses' quarters." "Sometimes you just have a thirst for knowledge and you want to keep on learning," she told the reporter who interviewed her. "They started hiring nurses aides; I put in an application, and they hired me.'" Eventually Johnson went to nursing school; she received her degree in 1966. While she was working at the old hospital, the staff "helped her through, letting Johnson, who lived across the street [on McKinley]...check on her two children through the night."[15]

A McKinley Street neighbor of Johnson's, Frances Bolling Miller, worked in food service at the hospital. Her son recalled that his "mother, because she worked in the kitchen, some Friday nights when they had excess food, we would go late at night and pick up any food that they were going to throw out. We would take some of that food and distribute [it] to other people on our street and in the neighborhood, so we made sure people didn't starve."[16] That sense of responsibility for neighbors—the idea that neighbors were all part of an extended family defined by more than blood or marriage—was fundamental to Tinbridge culture and would remain so for many decades.

Federal Street: The Hoyle-Halsey-Harper House

OFFICE, 2D & FEDERAL

Harper house and office, Second and Federal, early 19th century
Owned by the Halsey family, then by Mayor Harper, the early 19th-century house and the 2-story slave quarter behind it were demolished in 1966. The little office, which was built later than the house, has been used by several non-profits and remains a neighborhood landmark. This was one of the few brick buildings in all of Tinbridge.

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[15] *News & Advance,* 11 Sept. 2001.

[16] Miller interview.

Fifth Street

FIFTH STREET PANEL

Fifth Street could, of course, be the subject of a paper all by itself. Tinbridge neighbors remember some places in the old black business district especially vividly: the dentists' and doctors' offices, the Harrison Theatre, and the New Era Hall.

The Harrison Theatre (between Jackson and Polk on the College Hill side) opened in 1935 in a building originally constructed by the True Reformers, a black fraternal organization. **New Era Hall**, at Fifth and Polk, had a variety store, a drug store, a pool hall, and a doctor's office [Dr. Fred Lander's]...on the first floor.[17] Upstairs was a big auditorium. "They used to have all kinds of shows over there," Gloria Franklin remembered. "We used to go in there, never paid, just walked on in there, plenty of them did."[18] The upstairs space eventually became the Sportsman's Club. Downstairs, Haskins' and Green's barbershops were favorite gathering spots. Both of these historically important buildings have been demolished.

HARRY REID IMAGE

Most of the business and professional people who worked on Fifth Street did not live in Tinbridge Hill, but a few did. In 1919 **Harry Reid** (1892-1969), who lived at 54 Polk Street until he was thirty, opened his pharmacy on Fifth Street. His drugstore was one of the most successful in the state. "Dr." Reid mixed and labeled many of his own medicines, and the sight of him on his motorcycle making deliveries was familiar in many Lynchburg neighborhoods. Tinbridge children and teenagers enjoyed eating ice cream sundaes at his drugstore's marble-topped tables.

John Franklin, Jr., was another businessman who lived in the neighborhood. In 1894, his father opened a coal and wood yard in "a little shack"[19] at 1013 Fifth, in a lot that now belongs to the Fifth Street Baptist church; the business also sold ice. **John Franklin, Jr.,** continued to operate the business; his daughter Gloria closed it in 1971. The Franklins' house was just around the corner at 404 Taylor.

The Railroad Tracks

Following the valley created by Meeting House Branch, the Southern (present-day Norfolk Southern) Railroad tracks created the western boundary of Tinbridge Hill, eventually crossing Blackwater Creek on what neighbors called the High Trestle. Norfolk & Western tracks ran beside Blackwater Creek and crossed it on the so-called Low Trestle.

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[17] Franklin interview.

[18] Franklin interview.

[19] Franklin interview.

Les Camm remembered that "There was one neighbor that we had by the name of Mrs. Bethel who on a regular basis would go on the railroad tracks to pick up coal and wood ties which fell from the trains. She would carry three five-gallon buckets filled with coal. Then place one bucket on her head, pick up the other two buckets and walk at least a fourth of a mile to her home. She would also cut up discarded railroad ties 5 feet or more long and carry it on her head."[20]

Mrs. Bethel was not the only one who helped herself to fuel from the railroad tracks. Camm and his friends would often "pick up coal on the railroad...and sell it to the neighbors."[21] Evelyn Thompson gave the coal she gathered to her parents: "During the wintertime we would go and get coal, pick coal up, and it meant your parents didn't have to buy no coal because you could get enough coal to last you during the winter." [22]

GLORIA FRANKLIN ON TRACKS

"Somebody took my picture in my Shirley Temple coat."

HIGH TRESTLE & LOW TRESTLE

Alice Scott Dennis "used to go across that trestle to work," her daughter remembered. Like many Tinbridge women, Alice Dennis "did day work...she worked for the Holts' mother, I believe on Wednesdays, and other days she would work for people in Rivermont, and she would go across that high trestle."[23]

"Inside of the boundaries"

Again, this is only a selection from the possible topics.

Monroe Street Hill/Thrill Hollow

Some neighbors remembered cars going too fast—one recalled a fatal accident—but most had fond memories of sledding on Monroe Street Hill after a big snowstorm, when school would be closed and the older boys would build fires with railroad ties in oil drums, one at the top of Fourth Street and another at the top of Garland. Sometimes kids went sleigh-riding on the sleds they got for Christmas. Other times, they borrowed car hoods from Dickerson Buick (corner of Fourth & Federal) to use as sleds. [24] DuBois Miller said that although he had once

[20] Leslie Morgan Camm, "Selected Memories of Growing Up on Garland Hill/Tinbridge Hill During the 1940's," 2009, p. 3.

[21] Camm, pp. 3-4.

[22] Thompson on Wilson interview.

[23] Evelyn Thompson on Patrick interview 2.

[24] Stevens interview.

had a memorable sledding accident on Monroe Street Hill, he had never heard of "Thrill Hollow" until he got to Richmond and heard the name used by a white man from Lynchburg.[25]

Fourth Street

Fourth Street was also inside the boundaries.

817 FOURTH
1006 FOURTH
312 MONROE
322 MONROE
403 MONROE

Jim Elson and Nancy Weiland have written at some length about the prostitutes of Fourth Street. Gloria Franklin and a Taylor Street friend, Adelaide Stewart, liked to watch the sporting houses. In the 1930s and during World War II, "We'd sit on the [Cemetery] wall and watch the people go in there [to the sporting houses]…. during the war the soldiers, they would line up out there. And the businessmen would come up in the big Packards….It was very exciting…. If I walked through there," Franklin said, "which I wasn't supposed to do, [the prostitutes would] be sitting out with the prettiest negligees on, and birds [in cages]. All of them had birds. I thought that was just wonderful. I probably wanted to be a prostitute at one time. [laughter]…And sometimes Daddy would be open on Sunday, he was probably selling ice, so we had to take him food. And I [they?] always said, 'Don't go through Monroe Street.' Of course that's where we went [laughter] to carry the food down there. And we'd come back up there too and sit on the wall a little while." [26]

Other neighbors also remembered their childhood impressions of Fourth Street: "Lattice porches. Yellow cab pulled up in front of house. Sometimes you'd see a white lady open the door. We wondered why she would be living over here in this neighborhood."[27]

Marvin Stevens's house was—and still is—on the corner of Fourth and Jackson. Every Christmas "This woman would call my mother and tell me to go out to the back of the lot and take some holly off the holly tree and take it over to the lady. She would send one of the girls to open the door….She would hand me the money, and I would hand her the holly and would go on back and give the money back to my mother. That was the only contact I had with those type of women. Every Christmas. I always called her Miss Toots." [28]

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[25] Miller interview.

[26] Franklin interview.

[27] Shelton interview.

[28] Stevens interview.

CORNER 4TH & JACKSON

Another place "inside the boundaries" had two names,

Black Bottom and The Alley

SANBORN DETAIL

300 FEDERAL

Marvin Stevens's contemporary, Richard Harvey, remembered the Black Bottom well; he lived there as a child. "Every other house was either a Bootlegging Joint or a Good Time House," he wrote. "In fact, Mrs. Doris Mays' house was a House-of-Ill-Repute. These families were white people living in a predominantly black neighborhood."[29] "Down in the Bottom, we didn't have television. On Friday evenings, the red carpet was rolled out. The partying and the good times were about to begin. All we had to do, was sit on our front porches and see all the action galore, all weekend long....On Sunday evenings around 6 p.m., the red carpet was rolled back in. Most of the action stopped. Our neighborhood had a bad reputation...." [30]

302 JACKSON

Texas Tanner, who is six years younger than Stevens and Harvey, said that "It's much more violent today than it was back then. Cause the people back then, if they got drunk, they would just lay out on the sidewalk. They never did bother nobody.... You never heard of a kid killing, shooting nobody back then. If it was somebody that got shot, it was older people doing the shooting. It wasn't no children doing violence. They did a lot of cutting. It's really bad now. Cause there was times when I would walk the streets by myself. I wouldn't do that no more."[31]

For decades, neighbors who lived in other parts of Tinbridge walked through the Black Bottom without stopping. Grace Wilson remembered "walking through these streets going downtown, seeing people on their porches.... Enjoyed seeing the people, spoke to them, but that was about all."[32]

That the Black Bottom had been problematic for decades is clear from correspondence between Virginia Cabell Randolph (1872-1962), who managed two rental properties there, and the properties' out-of-town owner, Fannie Rosser (1884-1973). Rosser's father, Edmond B. Rosser, Sr. (d. 1929?) had built the two houses on Jackson Street in the 1910s. Fannie Rosser well remembered "the sacrafice [sic] my father had made to give us a home," but she had left Lynchburg and was working in Durham for the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company. For

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[29] Harvey, p. 3.

[30] Harvey, p. 3.

[31] Texas Tanner interview, 1 Oct. 2010.

[32] Wilson interview.

more than 30 years, Randolph's letters to Rosser referred to leaking roofs, porches in need of repair, tenants on relief and unable to pay their rent, evictions, condemnations, and bootlegging and police raids at one or the other of the properties. In a 1960 letter, Randolph told Rosser that "Everything up that way has the name of being underworld."[33]

The Black Bottom bootleggers were carrying on illegal activities, but on the whole they were "very quiet, under cover," said Marie Shelton. "If you were a kid, you might not know what they were doing...We'd be in church [at the First Church of Jesus at Third and Jackson] and they'd be carrying on over there."[34]

"We walked everywhere"

Footpaths and shortcuts criss-crossed the grid of streets laid down by the City at the end of the 19th century. In places, the streets, especially the numbered ones, are not much wider than paths;[35] even today, many parts of Tinbridge have no sidewalks. As they walked, neighborhood residents, and especially Tinbridge children, established a deep connection to their place. With their feet, they claimed Tinbridge Hill as their own.

"Everybody walked. That was the thing, walking to and from school—that was part of your social life. We walked everywhere we wanted to go, basically. Very few people had cars," said Marie Shelton[36] (she was born in 1939).

Routes varied. "Sometimes when I came from the Harrison Theater, I had choices of whether to go down Jackson Street or to go Federal Street, so I just explored all the neighborhoods," DuBois Miller remembered.[37] There was more than one shortcut to and from downtown. Evelyn Thompson recalled crossing the bridge between downtown and Rivermont; then "you'd come down some path and come down the railroad tracks" to Tinbridge.[38] Another shortcut to downtown passed Holy Cross Church on Clay Street. "Walking—that's what we all did," Grace Wilson said. "Didn't have no cars. Save that 7 cents [for the bus] and walk downtown and back."[39]

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[33] Virginia Cabell Randolph to Fannie Rosser, 30 Nov. 1960. The Randolph-Rosser correspondence is archived at Duke University in the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library.

[34] Shelton interview.

[35] Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps designate several Tinbridge streets and intersections as "impassable," at least for fire trucks.

[36] Shelton interview.

[37] Miller interview.

[38] Thompson interview.

[39] Wilson interview.

BAIST MAP DETAIL

One well-worn path was called Pecan Alley, pronounced "Pee Can." Pecan Alley followed the nameless stream valley diagonally across the block between Third and Jackson and Second and Polk. The block itself was known as the Pecan Lot, and yes, there were pecan trees growing there. Tinbridge children helped themselves to the nuts.

Another path took children back and forth from Tinbridge to the swimming pool at Jefferson Park in Dearington. Like Pecan Alley, this path followed the nameless stream valley that ran from First and Monroe along the bottom of the Cemetery to Meeting House Branch, which had a vulgar local name referring to the sewage that flowed there. At that point children would cross the railroad tracks and go "up the dump"[40] to Dearington and the pool.

Walking kept neighbors of all ages out of doors and in touch with each other. Once bus service was available, neighbors walked to the bus stop and gathered there, waiting for the bus to take them to work or downtown. "People were put together on account of the way they was living," Evelyn Thompson pointed out. "You had to walk,… and you just was meeting each other at all times." [41]

Because so few Tinbridge neighbors had cars, those who did stood out. Les Camm remembered that "In the late 1940s Howard Hayes bought an International Truck, Levi Miller bought a brand new Chevrolet; Royal Smith owned a Buick, Buford Douglas also bought a brand new two-door Ford Coup."[42] A decade earlier, according to Evelyn Thompson, "There were only two cars in the block that I lived in, that was Mr. Sandidge and Bernice Hayes. So everybody was catching the bus. You'd meet at the bus stop, you were talking. But as you begin to move up, progress more, people got in cars. And so naturally, when you're in your car, you don't meet people like you used to."[43]

"Outside of the boundaries"

Tinbridge boundaries—Federal Street, Fifth Street, the railroad tracks, the creek—were definite but were often crossed, especially into Garland Hill.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Rufus Edward Cardwell, who lived at the top of the hill on Polk Street, fired coal furnaces for half a dozen families on Harrison and Madison Streets, about half a mile away. During the winter he went to each house three times a day—morning, afternoon, and evening—to keep the furnaces going. The Cardwell children carried clean and dirty laundry the hilly half-mile back and forth between the Cucullus' house on Madison and their own house on

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[40] Harvey, p. 3.

[41] Thompson interview.

[42] Camm, p.3.

[43] Thompson interview.

Polk, where their mother, Reva Augusta Thornhill Cardwell did the Cucullu family's weekly washing. As children in the 1930s, Grace Wilson and Shirley Bell Gordon walked to Ms. Edith Cox's house on Federal Street to get slop—table scraps—for Tinbridge chickens.[44] Marvin Stevens also sometimes went to Ms. Cox's house with a friend whose mother cleaned there.[45] (Cox, who was white, was a copyreader at *The Daily Advance*.) More than one Tinbridge lady walked to a place on Fourth between Madison and Clay inexplicably called "Chinch Harbor." There Ms. Equilla Saunders would do their hair; all the while, "Equilla be dipping that snuff." Ms. Equilla would also come to Tinbridge houses to do hair. She charged 50 cents. [46]

Outside the boundaries, Tinbridge residents could not avoid confronting Jim Crow.

In the interviews, neighbors, especially younger ones—those in their 60s—told stories about the daily humiliations and indignities of Jim Crow—about the back of the bus, about the lunch counters at Woolworth's and Kresge's, closed to them no matter how much money they spent in the stores. They told about having to stand outside at the Texas Tavern, having to order a hotdog through the little carry-out window and wait for it out on the sidewalk, no matter what the weather was like. They told about going in separate entrances and then upstairs to the balcony at the downtown movie theatres. DuBois Miller described the situation this way: ""we knew that there was a different social structure for us. We knew at one time that going to the Trailways or Greyhound bus station, there was a 'colored' area for us. We knew that if we went to the Paramount Theater or the Warner Theater or the Isis Theater, there was a 'colored' section for us. Or the Academy—there was a 'colored' section for us. So we had to sit in the balcony. So we'd sit in the balcony and throw hard candy down on the white folks. Or we would make little staple guns with rubber bands and make our own little staples and shoot them up at the ceiling. So they would bounce down, and people would think things were biting them and they wouldn't know where they came from…."[47]

The "Outside of the boundaries" section also includes material about rivalries between boys from black neighborhoods—especially Dearington and Daniels Hill—who saw themselves as protecting the girls from their own neighborhood.

The last part of the "Sense of Place" section is called

"You'd mingle more together"

In the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, neighbors drew their sense of place and their solidarity with each other not only from their neighborhood's striking landscape, its boundaries and landmarks, and its shortcuts and walking routes, but also from the similarity of the houses. Built of wood on

[44] Conversation, 3 Dec. 2010.

[45] Stevens interview.

[46] Thompson interview.

[47] Miller interview.

narrow lots, Tinbridge houses were close together. Their open windows, unlocked doors, and busy front porches constantly brought neighbors into contact with each other.

SANBORN DETAIL OF COLLEGE HILL, 404 TAYLOR (FRANKLIN, 2 VIEWS)

One of the older houses in the neighborhood was the Franklin family's place at 404 Taylor, in the area formerly considered part of College Hill. Built in 1880, the two-story frame house had almost 1600 square feet and about ten rooms, so it was large by Tinbridge standards. In the 1930s, the house had electricity and running water. "We had indoor plumbing," Franklin said. "It was right tacky—it wasn't done well—but we didn't have to go outdoors."[48]

In the decades between 1890 and 1910, dozens of houses sprang up at the very top of the hill on narrow lots above Blackwater Creek. In some blocks the houses were only three feet apart.[49]

SANBORN DETAIL

The average size was about 1100 square feet. As late as the 1950s, these houses were heated with various combinations of coal and wood stoves, and sometimes oil stoves; many families had some sort of shed on their property to store fuel. Most had some version of indoor plumbing, and a few had electricity. Those that did not relied on kerosene lamps for light and, in the summertime, on deliveries from the ice man.

When Marie Shelton moved with her parents, seven older brothers, and two older sisters from 76 Polk to 61 Polk in the 1940s, it was "a step up, because we did have electricity, and no more lamps and no more going to the store buying kerosene and washing lamp [chimneys]." A used electric refrigerator replaced the ice box. On one side of this double tenement there was an indoor toilet; on the other side, where Shelton's aunt lived, the toilet was outside the back door.[50] EVELYN THOMPSON (B. 1931) AT 64 POLK The plumbing was similar in the three-room house across the street at 64 Polk, where Evelyn Dennis Thompson was born in 1931: water outside, toilet on the back porch. [51]

Here are some more images of hilltop people and their houses.

WILLIE ANN NEWCOMB REID HAYES (1865-1962) & HER SON BERNARD W. "BERNICE" HAYES (1901-1947) at 54 Polk. "Miss Willie" was Harry Reid's mother.

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[48] Franklin interview.

[49] "Fire Damages Homes," *News & Advance*, 29 May 2003.

[50] Shelton interview.

[51] Thompson interview.

THOMAS (1863-1940) & MINNIE JONES JEFFERSON (1866-1948) LIVED at 56 Polk . He was caretaker at Dearington's Jefferson Park, where the swimming pool was; the park was named for him.

SYLVESTER CAMM at 1210 Garland was an ancestor of Les Camm's

WILLIE ANN HAYES & FRED HAYES at 65 Taylor a younger generation of Hayeses

WILLIE ANN HAYES (MAJORETTE, INCUBATOR BABY) ON TAYLOR Here is Willie Ann Hayes (Horseley) again.

The two-story house at 73 Monroe where Mary Cardwell Patrick lived as a child in the 1920s and 30s had both electricity and running water. Downstairs were a living room, dining room, kitchen, and bedroom. Upstairs was "one large room. And with our two brothers, my mother put a curtain across the room, and they stayed behind that curtain and we [my three sisters and I] stayed on this side. That's how we slept upstairs."[52]

After seventeen-year-old Mary married Clarence Patrick in 1943, they rented a two-room house at 71 Taylor. Clarence had just gotten out of the Army. "When we moved there, we didn't have anything," Mary recalled, "so we went down to Schewel's Furniture Store, and we bought a table." Their landlord, Rev. Holmes, "told us we could use his stove that was in the house. So we bought a kitchen set, and we bought a bedroom set, and that's what we had. We had [an] icebox at that time. You'd buy a block of ice and put it in there, and that's what we used for quite a while. Each time we would get something new, we would just rejoice over it because we'd get one piece at a time and pay for it. Then we'd go and get something else. The big thing was when we were able to get a radio and record-player. That was the highlight of Taylor Street."[53]

Between 1944 and 1974, DuBois Miller lived at four different Tinbridge addresses, all on the hilltop above Blackwater Creek. His earliest memory is of 76 Polk, where there was indoor plumbing but no electricity. When the family moved to 10 McKinley Street in 1950, they had electricity but outdoor plumbing, "so we traded one for the other. When we moved back on Jackson Street, we had both."[54]

SANBORN DETAIL OF MCKINLEY/FEDERAL/HOLLINS MILL

HOUSE & BILLBOARD AT HOLLINS & FEDERAL (2 VIEWS)

MCKINLEY STREET: *Billie & DuBois Miller*, cherry tree in their yard, train tunnel below

***Drac* in front of the McDaniel house, with Jones Library in the distance**

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[52] Patrick interview 1, 25 Sept. 2010.

[53] Patrick interview 2.

[54] Miller interview.

***Lafayette Miller* in front of the DeLoatch house, now demolished**

According to the 1930 federal census, most of the families who lived on Polk and McKinley on the hilltop above the creek owned their homes outright, though a few were paying mortgages. The same could not be said about the 300 block of Jackson Street in the Black Bottom. There, almost everyone rented. In 1931 the tenant at 311 Jackson "had electric lights put in," wrote Virginia Randolph to Fannie Rosser; "What do you say to that?"[55] Many Black Bottom houses continued to lack basic utilities long after other Tinbridge homes got them. On Federal Street in 1950, "we had an out-house in back of the house," Richard Harvey wrote. "We had no electricity. We used kerosene lamps. And we even had a bucket with a lid on it to be used at night, cause nobody wanted to venture out after dark to go to that outside toilet."[56] When Texas Oglesby Tanner, along with her widowed mother and five younger brothers and sisters, moved into 302 Jackson in 1962, "we had running water and all, but we didn't have no heat. We had to get wood."[57]

Black Bottom houses may have lacked some comforts, but neighbors there, like neighbors all over Tinbridge, enjoyed their front porches. "We had one television in the neighborhood, and everybody would go to this one house and sit on the porch and look at the television," Texas Tanner remembered.[58] Decades earlier, Rufus Cardwell would come home from one of his many jobs to sit on the porch at his house on Polk Street "He always loved that porch," his daughter, Mary Patrick, remembered, "cause he could holler at people as they pass by." [59] She and her husband had "a nice big porch," too, "so all the menfolk around, they would come sit on that porch."[60] "That's where they met all the time." [61] Marie Shelton remembered adults and children gathering on porches to socialize. "We used to go down by Zeke's [i.e., Zeke Hughes's] and sit on the porch and sing. And about 10 o'clock every night the sky would light up real red over that way and the older kids would say, 'Oh, the world's coming to an end!' They would do things to scare the other ones. But they were opening the furnace over in Reusens, and when they opened that furnace over there, the sky would light up real red. We would sit there sometimes and wait for that to happen."[62]

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[55] Virginia Cabell Randolph to Fannie Rosser, 10 May 1931.

[56] Harvey, p. 3.

[57] Tanner interview.

[58] Tanner interview.

[59] Patrick interview 1.

[60] Patrick interview 1.

[61] Patrick interview 2.

[62] Shelton interview.

Older neighbors kept watch from their porches. Mr. Billy Cardwell shook so badly from an injury in the mine where he had worked that he got Marie Shelton to help him smoke his cigarettes. "I would have to get his cigarettes out of his pocket, put that cigarette in that holder, put it in his mouth, and light it for him," she said. "And then he'd tell you to take it out. And you'd have to stand there and help him smoke his cigarette. But he'd go in that pocket and get that little change purse out and give you a nickel, so you really didn't mind doing that." [63]

Another porch sitter was **Frankie Ball Johnson**, who lived at Garland and Jackson; Les Camm said he was "one of the meanest men I ever saw." Marie Shelton didn't like him either. "We used to go there and play ball in that vacant lot," she explained. "Now if his wife was at home or on the porch, everything was all right. But when he was there, you might have a problem: if you hit a ball and it went over in his yard, you didn't get it back...."[64]

Front porches were integral to neighborhood social life. So were shared telephones and unlocked doors.

On Polk Street in the 1930s, the Hughes family was the only one with a telephone. "They had a little stand out in their hall as you enter into their door," Mary Patrick said, "so they'd come to the door and call you....you would come to the phone and use it, and they never charged us anything...."[65] In the 1940s, "The first telephones in the neighborhood were owned by John H. Hughes and Charles Ross," Les Camm wrote. "These were three-digit number party lines. One had to be very careful about what was said on the telephone and also could not talk forever, or others on the line would not be able to talk." The phone was a shared resource that brought neighbors into close contact and that required consideration for others.

As for unlocked doors, "When we were growing up," Mary Patrick said—this would have been in the late 1920s and the 1930s--"we didn't lock doors or anything. We just went to neighbors' homes, [but]....I never entered anyone's home unless they knew I was coming in."[66] "The door was open. All you'd do is just say 'Yoo hoo,' and you could go in."[67] Even in Richard Harvey's house in the Black Bottom a couple of decades later, "my parents didn't lock our doors at night. Nobody bothered us."[68]

The physical openness of the neighborhood meant that neighbors of all ages spent time together—easily and spontaneously. They met outdoors on the paths, in the streets, and at the bus stop; they greeted each other from their front porches. Together they laughed, grieved,

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[63] Shelton interview.

[64] Shelton interview.

[65] Patrick interview 2.

[66] Patrick interview 2.

[67] Patrick interview 1.

[68] Harvey, p. 3.

complained, told secrets, told stories, sang songs, waited for the sky to turn red over Reusens. Neighbors knew each other and cared for each other. Evelyn Thompson saw clearly how changes in Tinbridge houses, along with increasing numbers of automobiles, affected relationships. "People didn't have air conditioning," she said, "so you'd have to have your windows up, your doors open, and naturally, you'd see people going, and you'd mingle more together. But as you continued to progress, with air conditioning, cars, your windows close, your doors close. You don't see nobody. If you do, you hop in your car. If you go, you don't meet nobody anymore." [69]

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That's the end of **"A Sense of Place."** I'm just going to summarize the next three sections.

The next section is called **"The Extended Family."** It deals with the way inherited patterns of extended kinship created a vibrant, self-sufficient network of mutual support within the neighborhood. The section deals with men's and women's paid and unpaid employment outside and inside of TH. It describes the tiny neighborhood stores that sold neighbors small amounts of food and wood on credit. It deals with gardens, animals, canning, sewing, and dandelion wine. It describes the ways children's chorescontributed to the neighborhood's internal network of mutual support.

After that comes a section called **"A Good Place to Raise Children."** **MAGGIE DENNIS AND KIDS ON FIFTH STREET** This section discusses ways the neighborhood's customs of kinship and shared responsibility created a secure, stable environment for children. It covers parents' teachings about race, children's mischief and ways they were disciplined, their relationships with adults who were not their parents, and their play and entertainment.

The last section is called **"Our Own Neighborhood School."** It deals with the way Yoder Elementary, which opened in 1911, contributed to neighborhood solidarity by giving Tinbridge children common experiences as well as an education they valued for the rest of their lives—despite being underfunded simply because it was a black school. Favorite teachers and their disciplinary methods are part of this chapter, as is an account of the beginnings of city-sponsored recreation on the Yoder playground. The story of Yoder's closing in 1970 ends the section.

Neighbors decided that they wanted the written history to end there, too, but they also wanted at least some attention to what happened between 1970 and 2010. At least until the mid-1990s, it is a sad story.

School integration and the loss of Yoder, upward mobility and the resulting decline in neighborhood population, deterioration and demolition of houses, the crime that came along with the increased demand for illegal drugs, neglect by City government—these interrelated forces took a heavy toll on Tinbridge Hill in the 1970s, the 1980s, and into the 1990s. As in

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[69] Thompson interview.

neighborhoods everywhere, automobiles, air conditioning, television, and electronic entertainment did their part to isolate neighbors from each other; changes in the structure of families played a role, too.

Like thoughtful people everywhere, neighbors who have left Tinbridge Hill, as well as some who remain there, value the history of their place. Their collective sense of the neighborhood's past is much more than nostalgia, their talk about family much more than rhetoric. They want to extend the old neighborhood sense of family to children and young people they will never know, and they believe that telling old stories might—just might—help to shape new ones.

Contributors

Contributor	Birth Year	Tinbridge Hill Address(es)	Interviewer	Date of Interview/Memoir
Barbour, Aubrey	1938	94 & 103 Polk	Katherine Scott, Desiree James	11 Jan 2011
Berry, Mae		343 McIvor	Contributed to others' interviews	
Camm, Leslie Morgan	1939	1208 Garland	Memoir, "Selected Memories of Growing Up on Tinbridge Hill During the 1940s"	2009
Franklin, Gloria	1923	416 Polk, 404 Taylor	Carolyn Bell, Ted Delaney	27 Aug 2010
Gordon, Shirley Bell	1929	106 Polk	Evelyn Thompson	3 Dec 2010
Harvey, Richard P.	1945	?? Federal, ?? Jackson	Memoir, "My Reflections of the Past"	2007
Herndon, Norman	1943	83 Monroe	Mae Berry	15 Oct 2010
Lewis, Minnie	1924	?? Hollins	Evelyn Thompson	19 Nov 2010
Miller, DuBois	1944	62 & 76 Polk, 10 McKinley, 89 Jackson	Patricia Patrick Brice; Memoir, *Ten on Tin: My McKinley Street Years, 1950-1960*	19 Nov 2010 2010
Patrick, Mary Cardwell	1926	73 Monroe, 71 Taylor	Lauranett Lee, Carolyn Bell	25 Sept 2010, 7 Jan 2011
Shelton, Marie	1939	61 & 76 Polk	Vivian Williams	1 Oct 2010
Stevens, Marvin	1944	323 Jackson	Vivian Williams	3 Dec 2010
Tanner, Texas Marie Oglesby	1950	302 Jackson, ???? First	Marvin Stevens	1 Oct 2010
Thompson, Evelyn Dennis	1931	64 & 83 Polk, 1008 Garland	Grace Wilson	15 Oct 2010
Walthall, Mary	1957	307 Polk (grandparents)	Carolyn Bell	19 Nov 2010
White, Marie	1925	75 Taylor	Mary Patrick	19 Nov 2010
Wilson, Grace	1928	114 Polk, 82 Monroe	Evelyn Thompson	5 Nov 2010

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