

## Chapter 5: The Postwar Years

In the years immediately following the Second World War, untold thousands of veterans who had recently returned from the armed conflict began to settle down and raise families in Oklahoma City and the surrounding areas. The postwar “baby boom”, as it has been called, unleashed an urgent need for new housing, --especially housing tailored to the needs of the returning vets. Farsighted real estate developers scrambled to meet the anticipated demand for new homes in the suburbs.

Despite the rapid postwar growth of Oklahoma City, by the autumn of 1948 there had still been very little development on what we know today as the northwest side of Oklahoma City. Lake Hefner, which had been built by Oklahoma City on Bluff Creek in 1943 using labor supplied by German prisoners of war, had already become a popular fishing spot. Penn Square Shopping Mall was yet to be built and the Northwest Highway was but a two-lane road. Most of the area stretching north of Nichols Hills was fallow land with a few wheat fields and farms interspersed here and there. Old timers recall shooting ducks on a small lake which is now the 1800 Block of Andover Court and quail hunting in the immediate vicinity.

At the intersection of Wilshire and May Avenue there were, however, a few solitary buildings. On the northwest corner of the intersection was a place called Elmer's Bait House, which doubled as a small café where the "locals" had breakfast or just visited over a cup of coffee. A water tower belonging to the Suburban Water Company was also located on this corner along with the company offices. The privately owned water system served an area extending from Grand Boulevard to the south and to Guilford Lane on the north serving water to much of Nichols Hills and West Nichols Hills.

A couple of doors east at 2832 Wilshire Avenue one could find a hardware and general store owned by a man named Jake Strange. The quaint store, with a decidedly English flavor, was aptly named “The Village Store”. Located on the second floor of the store were the offices of Phillips & Stong Engineering Company, the firm that had done much of the Suburban Water Company’s engineering work. These were the only business establishments within a mile or so. Wiley Post Airport was located on the northwest corner of Britton and May and a mile to the east was Casady Hall which was founded in 1947 on the northeast corner of Britton and Penn. On the far northeast corner of what is now The Village was a dairy farm known as “Meeker” farm. Not much else existed to the north of Nichols Hills until one reached Mabel's cafe and a filling station in the old Town of Britton. But, things were about to change.