

Chapter 7: A Childhood Dream Is Fulfilled

While C.E. Duffner was developing homes in what is today the southwest part of The Village, Floyd Harrison and Associates began development to the east of Pennsylvania in what is now the southeast part of the city.

At the age of eight, Harrison had the opportunity to ride with his family on a railroad flatcar outfitted with canopy and seats to observe the groundbreaking of Post, Texas. According to Harrison, Post was nothing but bare and flat land divided into lots with stakes and string. Harrison saw first hand how the homes and businesses sprang up from the site. The experience left a lasting impression on him. Fulfilling his childhood dream of building new communities, Harrison would later go to work in the construction industry as a developer. In 1949, Harrison began construction of his first residential development in what was destined to become part of a new town.

“I knew that the World War II GI’s were due to start getting out of college and they were going to be starting families and have a place to live,” recalled Harrison in 1975.

Harrison had his name on a million dollars worth of notes and nobody was buying the houses he was building miles out in the country from town. Harrison, completely confident, kept on digging more foundations and kept right on building more houses.

Floyd Harrison’s first development in the area was named Casady Heights. The plat for the unincorporated addition was filed on January 18, 1950 a mere five days before The Village was incorporated as a town.

The addition, located east of Pennsylvania Avenue and south of Britton Road, was a wheat field in 1948 when Harrison and his son, Joe Bob, and Sylvanus Felix bought the 135 acres on which the addition was built. Harrison later told the press that developing the land north of Nichols Hills was his wife Loreen’s idea who thought the homes would be ideal for the children of their friends in Nichols Hills.

Harrison named the new addition after Casady Hall, a private school located directly to the north of Harrison’s development. Founded in 1947, Casady Hall was named in honor of Reverend Thomas Casady, First Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma. Harrison would continue to capitalize on the Casady name by using it in all his future developments in The Village.

As Harrison’s Casady Heights development began to take shape and as the Duffner Company pushed further to the east by acquiring the land to the east from Greystone to Pennsylvania, the Town of Britton began to take a fanciful eye toward the new developing area. Rumors and other subtle clues indicated that

annexations by the Town of Britton were in the offing. Floyd Harrison hastily called Duffner to tell him that the Town of Britton had turned a wary eye in their direction.

Neither Harrison or Duffner wanted their developments to be annexed by the Town of Britton. Britton already had a commercial district and Harrison was concerned that his plans for Casady Square shopping center would be stymied by the governing body of Britton that would not be eager to zone new competition for its downtown merchants.

Ironically, both Harrison and Duffner both initially contemplated having their new additions annexed by Nichols Hills. In fact, the original plat of The Village Addition, consisting of the 2100 and 2200 Blocks of Westchester and Brighton, had originally been platted as "The Village Addition to Nichols Hills" in hope that the addition would be taken in by Nichols Hills.

This was not to be as town officials of Nichols Hills, fearing that it would change the character of their exclusive community, rejected the notion of taking in the community of smaller homes springing up to its north. Oklahoma City only extended as far north as 50th street and could not legally annex the developments because its boundaries did not abut the area. The only logical alternative left to Harrison and Duffner was to incorporate themselves a new town of their own.

And, so it was that mutual business interests brought the two developers together to found a town. By mid-morning on the day after that fateful telephone call from Harrison to Duffner, an application to incorporate both of the areas under development by Harrison and Duffner was filed with the Board of County Commissioners. According to Harrison, an early visit to his lawyer and partner Sylvanus G. Felix had accomplished the required paperwork in record time.

The petition and application for incorporation was signed by G.A. Nichols on behalf of the Nichols-Chandler Company and by J.W. Coyle on behalf of the J.W. Coyle Company. Also signing the petition were Floyd Harrison, A.W. Harrison, Mrs. A.W. (Burtie) Harrison, Ollie Malcolm, Floyd A. Myers, Cleo E. Myers, Sylvanus G. Felix, C.E. Duffner and C.E. France. *(One other signor could not be identified as his or her signature was not legible.)*

A public notice declaring that the Board of County Commissioners would hold a hearing to consider the petition and application for incorporation on January 4, 1950 was signed by C.E. Duffner on December 5, 1949.

As required by law, a survey and census of the property to be incorporated was filed with the petition and application for incorporation. The survey defined the area to be incorporated as two roughly equal tracts of land joined together by a point on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The tract located to the west of Pennsylvania Avenue and south of Britton Road roughly encompassed Duffner's Village Extended and Village 2nd Additions. This tract was bounded on the east by Pennsylvania Avenue, on the south by the middle of Westminster (now in Nichols Hills), on the west by Greystone and (roughly) on the north by Carlisle Court.

The tract of land located east of Penn and south of Britton Road consisted of Floyd Harrison's recorded plat of the Casady Heights Addition. This tract was bounded on the west by Pennsylvania Avenue, on the north by Britton Road, on the east by Waverly Avenue (excluding what is now the Mason Addition) and on the south (roughly) by Sheffield Drive. Together the two tracts of land comprised a total of 159.5 acres

The census identified the name of every head of a family residing within the territory to be incorporated and the number of persons then belonging to every such family as of December 5, 1949. The census revealed that the area had two households with a total population of (7) seven.

The first household was located at 1825 Brighton Avenue and consisted of Floyd A. Myers, Cleo E. Myers and Kenneth F. Myers. The second household located at 1800 Brighton Avenue included Ollie Malcolm, Thelma Malcolm, O. Mary Malcolm and Carol Ginger Risley. The third original household was established sometime after the December 5, 1949 census but presumably before the incorporation election when Floyd Harrison's parents, A.W. and Burtie Harrison moved into one of Floyd's newly constructed homes in the Casady Heights Addition. A.W. and Burtie were the first residents of The Village east of Pennsylvania Avenue.

"We moved some furniture in and Daddy slept on a cot," said Harrison adding with a hearty laugh, "Mother was supposed to have been there with him."

By the time of the filing of the petition to incorporate, the name of the new town had already been decided by the key individuals that had been involved in promoting the new town. Although, there are no known records of this meeting, it would have taken place sometime before the filing of the petition for incorporation on December 5, 1949.

Newspaper accounts indicate that Floyd Harrison had wanted the new town to be named the Town of Casady to promote his Casady Heights development and the commercial development he envisioned at Britton and Penn. On the other hand, Duffner wanted the new town to be named "The Village" to help market his Village additions. Duffner, having more of his colleagues involved in the incorporation process ultimately prevailed and the petition and application for incorporation cited the proposed new town as the Town of The Village. Newspaper accounts indicate that the vote was 9 to 2 in

favor of the name of "The Village". Based on the known associations among the eleven petitioners, a vote of 7 to 4 would have seemed more plausible.

For unknown reasons, the Board of Oklahoma County Commissioners was unable to complete the review of the petition and application for incorporation on their meeting scheduled for January 4, 1950. The Commission continued their deliberations on this matter on January 11, 1950, on which date the Commission approved the petition and application and ordered a meeting of the qualified voters resident in the proposed town to be held on January 23, 1950. Floyd Myers' residence at 1825 Brighton Avenue was established by the Commission as the official the meeting location. In accordance with the applicable laws, the Commission ordered that ten days notice of the meeting be given by publication in a newspaper published in the county and by posting of copies of the notice in not less than ten of the most public places in the proposed incorporated town. In 1975, Harrison recalled doing a lot of the footwork himself.

"I went around to all of the telephone poles myself and tacked up the notice of election," said Harrison.

The meeting of the resident qualified voters of the prospective town was convened at 9:00 o'clock sharp on the chilly winter morning of January 23, 1950. The first order of business was to elect three inspectors to supervise the balloting. Chosen were Floyd A. Myers, Cleo Myers and Ollie Malcolm. The electors then elected Cleo Myers to serve as Clerk.

Having carried out these important procedural matters, the electors thereupon proclaimed that the polls were open and ready to receive the ballots of the voters. The polls remained open until 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Promptly after closing the polls, the three inspectors counted and verified the ballots cast by voters. The counting couldn't have taken very long. Six votes had been cast all of which were in favor of incorporation.

The County Election Board does not keep permanent records of the persons who voted in an election, so it is not known who actually cast votes in the historic election. The list of voters, based on their ages and residency at the time would probably have included Floyd Myers, Cleo Myers, Ollie Malcolm, Thelma Malcolm, A.W. Harrison and Burtie Harrison.

On January 24, 1950, the very next day after the historic election, the Board of County Commissioners issued an order acknowledging the validity of the election and proclaiming that a majority of the ballots cast had been in favor of incorporation of the territory as a town. With the issuance of this momentous order, the Town of The Village had officially been born. A new, albeit small, dot had been added to the map of Oklahoma, --the Town of The Village had taken its rightful place among the family of cities and towns in Oklahoma.

One interesting question that comes to mind is why the original Village Addition was not included in the original boundaries of the Town of The Village. These forty acres, bounded on the south by Westchester Drive, on the east by Greystone, on the north by Churchill Way and on the west by Wellington, was Duffner's first development in the area. So, why was it excluded from the original boundaries of the Town of The Village?

To gain some insight into this question, County records indicate that many of the homes in The Village addition had been built and occupied in 1949, --many months before the incorporation election took place. One might surmise that this area was excluded to ensure that the incorporation election would go the way the developers wanted it to. Harrison and Duffner may have considered it too risky to include these residents in the important decision. It is easy to see how the two might have felt that success would be easier to achieve through the exclusion of the more heavily populated neighborhoods in favor of the more sparsely populated, developer-controlled areas. Whatever the case, it is certainly not a coincidence that all of the participants in the process leading up to and after the election were in some way connected with the two developers either as employees, relatives or close business associates. In the final analysis, we will probably never know the answer to this question with any certainty.