

THE REPOSITORY

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HOOVER: Company built homes for employees

CONTINUED FROM A-1

homes for employees probably read like a wives' tale to modern workers.

But these houses and the people who live in them will go on — no longer tied to the company that shaped this city.

KNOWING EVERYBODY

There was a time when everyone who lived on Edgewood worked at the Hoover Co. Now, they are restaurant owners, retirees, mechanics, stay-at-home and working moms. The street, which begins on the west at McKinley Street, is only a quarter-mile walk from the Hoover plant on East Maple.

Edgewood is in the center of an allotment called Hoover Housing Project #1. It's unclear



PHOTO COURTESY HOOVER HISTORICAL CENTER WALSH UNIVERSITY

QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD Edgewood Street SE in North Canton features homes originally built for Hoover Co. employees in the 1920s.

if there was a number two or any others for that matter. Neither the North Canton Heritage Society nor the Hoover Historical Center has much information about the 35-acre housing layout that likely included Fairview Street, as well as parts of Bachtel and McKinley.

The April 30, 1919, issue of the "NEWSY NEWS" (a Hoover publication) noted the formation of a separate business — Hoover Development Co. — to purchase land to build homes, which were to be sold at cost.

Beginning in 1920, Hoover

Development built 13 houses on Edgewood. The street ended at what's now Thompson's house to the east. Beyond that was only a fence, pasture and cows. Current owners are aware of the history, but mostly from third-hand stories by George Takacs, a Hoover retiree who lives at 323.

"Everybody knows everybody on this street," he said.

He marvels at the architecture. Only three or four simple designs. Builders made houses look unique by turning the fronts and sides to face different directions on the lots. Over the years, new owners added

personal touches: porch additions, vinyl siding, paint, dogwoods, fences.

These days, Edgewood Street is sidewalk-chalk drawings. A kid in a helmet riding a bike. A driveway basketball hoop and porch swings. Chirping birds and barking dogs. Mulched flower beds and ornamental yard lamps.

It's welcome mats and Old Glory draped from Takacs' front yard flagpole. The kind of place where you ask your neighbor for a cup of sugar, or to watch after your kids.

"There's been people (who) move off this street who tell me

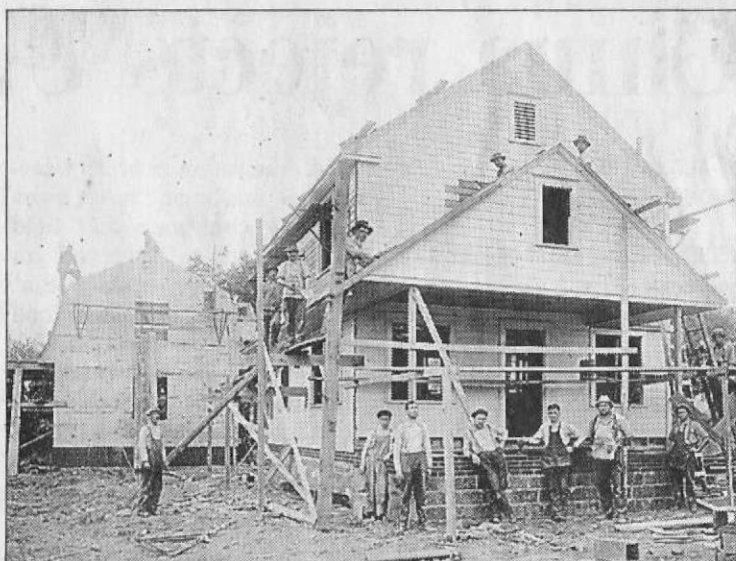


PHOTO COURTESY HOOVER HISTORICAL CENTER WALSH UNIVERSITY

GOING UP Construction proceeds on a Hoover home along Edgewood Street in North Canton in 1919.

later how they regretted it," Thompson said.

Diane Feller and her husband, Ron, rented a house on Edgewood before they bought another on the same street 30 years ago. Their children are grown. They've thought about buying a ranch someplace else, without all those steps. But she's not sure they can leave.

"This just feels like home," she said.

WHITES ONLY

The Hoover Development Co. sold most of the new homes for \$2,200 to \$3,500 apiece, according to county records. City directories indicate that all the owners worked at Hoover.

James and Viola Armstrong, Joseph and Helen Blubaugh, Ernest and Sadie Brung, Russell and Mattie Church, William and Ellen Hill, Harry and Ida Gothard, Henry and Mary Jones, Hazel Horton, Clyde Schiltz, Henry and Laura Sprung, Roy and Mary Wenger, Oscar McCamant and Joseph and Helen Blubaugh.

All are long gone. Died years ago.

Deeds to the properties included stipulations such as:

- No liquor was to be sold on the land;
- No fences higher than 30 inches in the front yard and 60 inches in the back yard;
- No property shall be sold to any "excepting member of the Caucasian race." In other words, whites only.

Takacs, a Hoover Co. tool and die maker for 40 years before retiring three years ago, heard plenty of stories about

"Boss" Hoover from older employees. Hoover's civic duty and generosity is legend in this city.

He delivered groceries to families in need during the Depression. He donated a community building and gobs of money to the city. And he often did it with little fanfare, even when it came to building houses for employees who otherwise couldn't afford a home.

BLOCK PARTIES

Every summer, Edgewood neighbors gather in the middle of the street for a block party. They play volleyball, catch, and throw water balloons. They eat and drink. They fuss over new babies and admire those who've grown up so fast. The children make tanks out of boxes and roll them down the street.

Families come and go. The McCues, Alice Ross, Grace Terrett, Ruth Mills, the Coomeses, the Peters', Dervins, Rodriguezes and Paul Strausser who lived to be 99. Gradually replaced by the Montes, Brenduses, Rices, Becky Flad, Zepps and Crawford.

This summer, Thompson will add block party photos to albums that date back to the beginning of the event 30 years ago. A close and tight street. A touch of Americana, she said, that makes it always feel like the good old days. And maybe a bit like the 1920s, when neighbors shared the common bond of Hoover.

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