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Holston Hills Trolley Tour

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A Brief History of Holston Hills

One of the best-kept secrets in Knoxville, Holston Hills is named for the river that borders the neighborhood on the south and east. The neighborhood has meandering streets lined with roomy houses on spacious, tree-lined lots. Holston Hills dates from the mid-1920s, when part of the neighborhood was developed in connection with the establishment of the Holston Hills Country Club. A group of Knoxville-area businessmen, who wanted Knoxville to have a top-caliber golf course, formed a corporation called Holston Hills, Inc. in 1926 and purchased the 180-acre McDonald farm along the Holston River. The Country Club was built, and memberships to the club cost $1,000, including a free home site. The club house was designed by Knoxville architect Charles Barber of Barber & McMurry in 1927, and the golf course was designed and laid out by Donald Ross in 1928. Ross is regarded as among the finest golf course architects in the world.

Many opulent homes were built during the 1920s, but following the stock market crash of 1929, smaller cottage-style homes were built, many of stone and brick. The Depression and World War II stopped further housing development, but in the post-war housing boom, a number of ranch-style homes were built around the traditional two-story stone and brick homes of the original development. Holston Hills was included in a major annexation into the city of Knoxville in 1962, which took 12,871 residents in 12.1 square miles into the city. It was Knoxville’s first eastward annexation since 1917.

The neighborhood sees many visitors every April when it hosts a Dogwood Arts Festival “trail” during the month-long Festival. The first trail opened in Sequoyah Hills in 1955, a year later, and the next trail opened in Holston Hills. Holston Hills has always been a community of successful upper-middle class professionals: doctors, lawyers, educators, executives and their families. It’s most famous resident was the late United States Representative John J. Duncan, Sr., who lived on Sunset Road for many years and was mayor of Knoxville before going to Congress.
This Minimal Traditional style home with Colonial Revival influence was built around 1937 for Ira and Mildred Whaley, the family owned this house from 1937 until 1946.

Mildred had a colorful family past. Her brother, Austin Cate, was a former Knox County sheriff and her brother-in-law, H.B. Watts, was a former mayor of Lake City. Ira was a manager for Family Loan Company of Tennessee in 1937 and a manager for Mutual Loan & Thrift Corporation in 1946.

Other owners were W.P. and Lucille King Haynes (1946–1958) and Howard R. and Lillian N. Harris (1958–1985).
Acuff was a surgeon and civic leader and is said to be one of the most famous citizens of Knoxville. Acuff graduated from Carson Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee, and received his medical degree from the University of Louisville. He did professional graduate work in Vienna, where he was a student of Dr. Hans Finsterer, a famous Austrian surgeon. Before moving to Knoxville, Acuff served as an officer in the Medical Corps during World War I. During his time in Knoxville, he established a medical clinic called Acuff Clinic and was president of the Civitan Club, and later became the International President of the club. He was president of the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce in 1925 and was one of the leaders in the movement for the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Acuff was also instrumental in securing the establishment of the East Tennessee Tuberculosis Hospital in Knoxville. Acuff was president of the United States Chapter of the International College of Surgeons in 1945, and in the following year he became head of the world organization itself, presiding over gatherings in Detroit in 1946 and in Rome in 1948. He was head of the medical staff of St. Mary’s Hospital and a member of the staff of Knoxville General and Fort Sanders Hospital. He was also a district surgeon for Southern Railway. Acuff enjoyed the dairy and turkey farm he owned near Strawberry Plains, and despite the many demands on his time, he was an avid golfer and fisherman, as well as an amateur photographer. Dr. Acuff died in his Sequoyah Hills home on November 2, 1951. Mrs. Lola Acuff was a leader in Church Street United Methodist Church and a former president of the Church Street Woman’s Society of Christian Service. She was one of the leaders in helping provide financial aid to the Holston Home for Orphans in Greenville, Tennessee. Other owners include Hoyt W. and Blanche L. Wells, who owned the house from 1950 until 1968. Mr. Wells was the former owner of Wells Equipment Company. Hugh F. and Mildred K. Haston have owned the house since 1968; in 1955 Mr. Haston was named Knoxville’s Young Man of the Year by the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

This Minimal Traditional style house with Tudor influence was built in the mid 1930’s. Stuart Emerson (Dick) Adcock and his wife Jane Ingram Adcock owned the house from 1946 until the mid-1950s. Adcock ran the first commercial radio station in Knoxville.

Adcock founded the Knoxville radio station WROL, he sold the station in the mid-1950’s and relocated in Florida. While in Knoxville, Adcock was an avid member of the Knoxville Rotary Club.

Adcock was a director of the People’s First National Bank of Miami Shores and the People’s American National Bank of North Miami. He was also a deacon and trustee of Miami Shores Presbyterian Church and a former member of First Christian Church of Knoxville.
This Minimal Traditional style house with Tudor influence was built in the mid 1930’s. Claude Ernest Fox, Sr. and his wife Mary K. Fox bought this house in 1945. The house is still owned my the same family. Fox was a retired manufacturing representative.

He was a member of First Baptist Church and the general sunday school secretary for 30 years. Fox was a graduate of The University of Tennessee and was a member of Electrical and Electronics Engineering Society, UT Century Club, Tau Beta Pi Honorary Engineering Society, and Phi Kappa Phi Fraternity.

Fox was also a licensed professional engineer in the state of Tennessee and was a captain in the U.S. Corp of Engineers during World War II.

This Colonial Revival style home was built in 1927 for Edward M. and Dorothy F. Vestal. Mr. Vestal was one of the South’s most known lumberman and Executive Vice President and Secretary of Vestal Lumber and Manufacturing Company. For more then 40 years this Knoxvillian, whose family gave Vestal in South Knoxville its name, was known throughout the country as a leader in his field. Vestal served on the boards of all the major hardwood groups, including the National Hardwood Lumber Association, Southern Hardwood Producers Association and the Southern Cyprus Manufacturers Association.

The business he and his brother founded as young men operated big mills in several southern cities. Mr. Vestal was a life-long member of the First Presbyterian Church and was a member of Cherokee Country Club, Civitan Club and the Executives Club. Mrs. Vestal met Mr. Vestal while visiting relatives in Knoxville in the summer of 1914, and they were married in the spring of 1915.

Mrs. Vestal was born in Pueblo, Colorado, and graduated from Colorado College in Colorado Springs in 1911 where she majored in English and minored in Greek. For more then 75 years, she contributed both time and money to many Knoxville charities. In the 1940s, she co-founded the Baby Food Service, which dispensed free baby food to underprivileged mothers and one of her favorite charities was the Knoxville News-Sentinel’s Empty Stocking Fund. Mrs. Vestal was on the Blount Mansion Board and a member of Junior League of Knoxville, Knoxville Garden Club, Friends of the Library and Knoxville Symphony Guild. At the time of her death in 1992, Mrs. Vestal was 102 years old and was the oldest living member of the First Presbyterian Church in Knoxville. On her 100th birthday former mayor Victor Ashe declared the occasion “Dorothy Vestal Day” and President George Bush sent her a letter of congratulations. The Vestal’s lived in this house from 1927 until 1936. Another owner of this house was Dr. Collis Burns, a Knoxville dentist. Dr. Collis practiced dentistry in Knoxville for more than 40 years. A graduate of old Knoxville High School, he received his D.D.S. degree from the University of Tennessee School of Dentistry in Memphis. The Burns family owned the house from 1936 until 1964.
This stone Colonial Revival style home was built in 1929 for Asa R. and Bessie B. Ambrister. The Ambrister family owned the house until 1935. Mr. Ambrister was an established Knoxville real estate developer. The Ambrister’s celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1972, having married in December 1921 at Broad Street Methodist Church. Throughout her life, Mrs. Ambrister was a member of Church Street United Methodist Church, Ossoli Circle and Phi Mu sorority.

George E. and Virginia R. Chollman owned the house from 1951 until 1955. Mr. Chollman was a charter member, past deacon and elder of Eastminster Presbyterian Church. He was a past president and secretary/treasurer of Manufacturers Acceptance Corporation where he began his service in 1929. He was a lifetime member of the YMCA, the F&AM and served on the board at Fort Sanders Hospital for 19 years.

This stone Minimal Traditional style home with Tudor influence was built in 1941 for Charles L. Peckinpaugh, a designer and contractor in Knoxville for more than 30 years. The Peckinpaugh family owned the house until the mid-1940s. Raymond B. and Lois L. Norris owned the house from the mid-1940s until 1951. Mr. Norris was a politically active civic leader and former used car dealer. He was also the former chairman of the law enforcement committee of the United Forces for Good Government in 1956.

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This Minimal Traditional style home with Tudor influence was built in the mid-1930s for J. Frank and Virginia Baker who owned the house until 1945. Mr. Baker, a native of Roane County, was a graduate of the College of Engineering at UT. He immediately joined Sanford-Day Iron Works in 1908 and became a stockholder in the company in 1916. Eventually Mr. Baker moved up in the ranks of the company, becoming president of the firm in 1940. He retired as president in 1947, but continued his association with the company as chairman of the board. Mr. and Mrs. Baker were active in First Christian Church and Cherokee Country Club. Hubert J. and Thelma B. Ford owned this house from 1945 until 1947. Mr. Ford was co-owner of Twin City Buick Company. The couple later moved to Maryville. Kenneth R. and Priscilla G. Kaiser owned the house from 1947 until 1973. Mr. Kaiser was a graduate of Pennsylvania State College (now Penn State University) and played lacrosse, becoming captain in 1930. He was also president of the college chapter of Kappa Sigma fraternity. In 1947 they moved to Knoxville from Pennsylvania so Mr. Kaiser could head of the Rohm & Haas Company Dale Avenue plant in Knoxville. Mr. Kaiser was president of the Knoxville Symphony, led the 1954 March of Dimes campaign, was chairman of the Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center building fund drive and was on the executive board of the Boy Scouts, among other civic activities.
Designed and opened in 1927, Holston Hills Country Club is perched on a hill in the Holston Hills neighborhood. The club house was designed by Charles Barber of Barber & McMurry, and shows excellent scale in the degree of irregularity and also the texture of the brick walls which give the exterior walls a rough texture.

The center of the club house overlooks the golf course and is composed of alternating bay windows with tall and elegant arched doors, and has a central ballroom with large cathedral ceilings and exposed wood trusses.

Also noteworthy are the entrance, with its porte cochere and double stairway to the lobby, the roof projection, and cornice detail.

During the depression, the club property faced foreclosure but 15 club members formed a company and bought the property. The nationally recognized firm of Barber & McMurry (Charles I. Barber and Benjamin F. McMurry), established in 1915 was noted for its residential, institutional, and ecclesiastical work. The entire issue of Southern Architecture and Building News of June 1930 was devoted to the work of this firm. In later years they were noted for their collegiate work such as that at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and the University of Tennessee at Martin and at Maryville College. In the 1920s their residential work included grand Colonial Revival and Neo-Gothic examples, but increasingly they became involved in the design of smaller suburban houses and churches.

West Knoxville, Lyons Bend, and Sequoyah Hills reveal an impressive array of their residential work.

This Italianate Revival style home was built in the early-1930s for Gaines M. Harrill, Jr. The Harrill’s owned the house until 1938. Mr. Harrill owned and managed The Harrill Transfer Company, which his father founded in 1866. The Company was sold to a Loudon firm in 1949.

When his father started the moving and transfer business, he had only one wagon and two horses. Eventually his equipment grew to include 24 horse wagons that could haul 20 tons of marble from the area quarries to the railroads, and in 1916 Mr. Harrill switched to gasoline transportation. After his father’s death in 1921, Harrill continued the 83-year-old family business until its liquidation in March of 1949.
This Tudor Revival style home was built in 1928 for Ray V. and Audrey P. DePue. The couple owned the house until 1937. Mr. DePue was Knoxville’s first clinical pathologist and well known physician. Dr. DePue graduated from Lincoln Memorial University in 1910 and received specialized laboratory and pathology training at the University of Chicago. Dr. DePue was born in Stillwater New Jersey, the son of a prominent farmer. The family came to Knoxville in 1895, and started Knoxville’s first steam laundry, named Knoxville Steam Laundry near W. Fifth Avenue. Dr. DePue was an avid athlete as a young adult, excelling at golf, football, baseball and wrestling. Mr. and Mrs. DePue were avid golfers and members of Holston Hills Country Club.

Dr. Robert P. and Madge B. Layman owned this house from 1937 until 1975. Dr. Layman was a physician in Knoxville for 38 years starting his practice in 1936. He was a member of Knoxville Academy of Medicine and served for 3 ½ years as a Captain in the Medical Corps United States Army during World War II. He was a graduate of the University of Tennessee Medical School.

Dr. and Mrs. Layman were instrumental in the establishment of Eastminster Presbyterian Church on Asheville Highway.

**Holston Hills Country Club Golf Course**

This 18-hole Donald Ross designed course sits on 180 open acres of rolling hills adjoining the Holston River. Designed and opened around 1928, the course has changed very little over the years. Today the course rates in the top 100 of classic golf courses in the United States by Golf and Travel Magazine. When the course was designed Ross was one of the most famous golf course architects in the world. He immediately gained recognition with his signature layouts. Ross did not have the modern means to design a golf course; he did not have the golf carts, aerial photography, or heavy equipment. Ross would walk his layouts and staked the basic design. His major resources were men, mules, picks, shovels, drag pens, and wheelbarrows.

The course featured 100 sand and grass bunkers, with Bermuda grass fairways. The golf course remains practically the same as Ross laid it out in 1928, with only small changes made; a bunker was added at the par 5 seventh hole, and traps were filled on the ninth and eighteenth hole. With the exception of those changes, the course is played the way Ross designed it. Described as an “old fashioned” golf course, it has no island greens, no 100-year sand traps, and no “waste” areas. The course has no resemblance to a modern stadium course layout.

Donald J. Ross was born in Scotland in 1872. Arriving in the United States in 1899, he went to work designing golf courses all over New England. His practice spread into the Midwest and down the Southeast coast. In association with design assistants J.B. McGovern and Walter Hatch, Ross maintained a summer office in Little Compton, Rhode Island and satellite offices in North Amherst, Massachusetts and Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. At his death in 1948, Ross left behind a legacy of 413 courses, including Pinehurst No. 2 in North Carolina, Seminole in Florida, and the site of the 1996 U.S. Open, Oakland Hills outside Detroit.
John E. and Dorothy B. Kirby lived in this Tudor style home from when it was built in 1939 until 1956. Mr. Kirby was a real estate agent. Mrs. Kirby was active in the King’s Daughters, having been president of Altha Circle. She worked for Brooks Equipment and Manufacturing Company for 14 years until her retirement in 1945. Her brother, E. Neil Brooks, was president of the firm. Mr. and Mrs. Kirby were active members in the Holston Hills Country Club, and Mrs. Kirby served on many committees for the club.

Leon and Lola K. Shamblin owned and lived in the house from 1964 until 1975. Both were avid members, directors and committee members of Holston Hills Country Club. Mr. Shamblin was assistant treasurer of TVA and employed by TVA for 30 years. Mrs. Shamblin was president of the Akima Club and handicap chairman of Holston Hills Country Club golf course. Mrs. Shamblin was also a graduate of the New York School of Interior Design; she took her full course load via correspondence.

This Colonial Revival style home was built in 1939 for Samuel B. and Jennie E. Beaty, who owned the house until 1953. Mr. Beaty was founder and owner of Beaty Chevrolet Company. Before founding the company he operated a used car business. In 1932 Mr. Beaty and a H.C. Buchanan started the B&B Chevrolet Company. Mr. Beaty bought out his partner’s interest and the firm became what it is known as today. Later during the company’s growth, his sons entered the business with their father.

In 1952 the Beaty’s moved to California expecting the climate to be beneficial to their health, but they would return Knoxville for visits. They were avid members of First Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thomas and Jeanne Stevens owned have lived in the house since 1952. Dr. Stevens is credited with having administered the first injection of penicillin in Knoxville. He also discovered a cure for the once fatal condition of gaseous gangrene and pioneered in research of total joint replacement and orthopedic rehabilitation therapy.

Dr. Stevens was a graduate of Knoxville High School and the University of Tennessee. He received his medical degree from The UT Medical School in Memphis. Dr. Stevens was also orthopedic surgeon for the UT athletic department. Active in community affairs, he served as chairman of the city’s Civil Service Merit Board and chairman of Holston Hills Country Club.
This Colonial Revival style home was built in 1927 for Judge John M. Kelly. Kelly and his family owned the house until 1936. Born in Knoxville and educated in Washington D.C. schools and Georgetown University, Judge Kelly started practicing law with his brother in 1916. He was elected as a Knoxville Circuit Court Judge in 1942 and held the bench until retiring in 1963.

James S. and Opal M. Bowman owned this house from 1943 until 1957. Mr. Bowman was a native of West Liberty, Iowa. He graduated from the University of Iowa with a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering, and later spent a year at the University of Wisconsin in graduate work and teaching.

He came to TVA in October 1933 as a hydraulics engineer and in March 1935 became head planning engineer. Two years later he was made head project planning engineer. In 1941 he became assistant chief water control planning engineer and in 1943 was made chief water control planning engineer, a post he held until his retirement 12 years later in April 1955.

The Salomone family lived in the house until 1941. One of Mr. and Mrs. Salomone’s children also had a colorful past. Al Salomone, Jr. was a well known hotel manager in New York City. Having begun his career at the Andrew Johnson Hotel in Knoxville while attending The University of Tennessee, Salomone, Jr. held jobs as a mail clerk, cashier, and room clerk for the hotel. During World War II, he was a major in the U.S. Army and was awarded a Bronze Star for his combat in Europe. After the war he returned to home and became the assistant manager at the Andrew Johnson Hotel. Salomone, Jr. moved to New York City in 1947 and joined Hilton Hotels Corporation. His first post was with the Plaza Hotel as an assistant manager. He would later become president of Realty Hotels, Inc., and thought out his career was manager of the Biltmore, Barclay, Commodore and Roosevelt Hotels in New York City. In 1969, Salomone, Jr. was awarded with the industry’s highest honor, “Oscar of the Waldorf” award, citing him as outstanding hotelman of the year.

E.J. and Lillian J. Sherwood owned and lived in the house from 1941 until 1983. Mr. Sherwood was owner of O.P. Jenkins Furniture Company. Mrs. Sherwood was director of the Around-the-World department of the International Order of the King’s Daughters and Sons and the North American Indians department for the King’s Daughters. In 1956 she was Beta Sigma Phi Sorority’s choice for Knoxville’s “First Lady of 1956”, given to women who devote their efforts to civic and cultural activities.
5421 Holston Hills Road

This Italianate Revival style home was built in 1928 for Charles M. Rodgers. Edward J. McMillan and Mamie McMillan owned the house from 1936 until 1939.

Mr. McMillan was one of the South’s leading industrialists. McMillan was president of Standard Knitting Mills Inc. and on his retirement in 1956 he became chairman of its board. He entered the textile industry after completing a course in engineering at UT and graduating from the Philadelphia Textile School in 1909.

After returning to Knoxville, Mr. McMillan started working for the mill, starting at the bottom and working is way up, he learned every operation in all the departments. He started in the fall of 1909 and was elected president of the company in 1932 upon the death of his father, who had been the president since it was founded in 1900.

Mr. and Mrs. McMillan were married in February 1918. They were members of First Presbyterian Church and Cherokee Country Club.

5518 Crestwood Drive

This Colonial Revival house was built in the early 1920s and is thought to be one of the first houses built in the neighborhood. John L. and Adele F. Kennedy lived in the house from the early 1920s until 1941. Mr. Kennedy was a shoe store partner with L.S. Hall and Ambrose Gaines and later a partner in the Kennedy-Gillespie and John L. Kennedy store on Gay Street. At one time he was with Lord & Taylor’s shoe department in New York City. The Kennedy’s were members of the Church of the Immaculate Conception and Mr. Kennedy was an avid golfer and won several championships. William K. and Jo B. Johnson owned the house from 1941 until 1942.

Mr. Johnson was a well known Knoxville building contractor and civic leader. He was the founder/owner/president of Johnson and Galyon Construction Company. Among the buildings his company constructed was the Civic Auditorium, Presbyterian Hospital, University Hospital and a number of buildings on the UT campus. Before starting Johnson and Galyon, he was associated with J.E. Willard in a firm called Johnson & Willard. This firm built the East Tennessee Tuberculosis Hospital, Austin Homes and Western Heights housing projects. Glenn and Betty Cate owned the house from 1942 until 1974. Mr. Cate was a top sales representative for Eastman Kodak and owner of Glenn A. Cate Aircraft Company.

Mr. Cate was a U.S. Army veteran of the Korean Conflict and his family was members of the Chilhowee Hills Baptist Church. Mr. Cate was also 1984’s Father of the Year.
This Colonial Revival style home was built in 1939 for William R. and Pearl E. Chambers who owned the house from 1939 until 1966. Mr. Chambers was called the Father of Oak Ridge. He was the individual who recommended the site of Oak Ridge to the Army as an atomic energy center in 1942. A native of Ohio, Mr. Chambers selected Knoxville for his permanent home in 1934.

A graduate of Ohio State University with a degree in engineering, Chambers first job in East Tennessee was as an engineer with TVA. He would later help direct the engineering phase of the Oak Ridge project’s development. He also recommended the site and supervised planning for the Watts Bar Steam Plant.

In 1947 Chambers began a part-time job as an instructor at UT in the engineering department and in 1949 became head of the department of Mechanical Engineering. Chambers retired from UT in 1952 and was a consultant for several years for Union Carbide. Mr. Chambers was honored by his own associates when he was given the 1965 Nathan W. Dougherty Award, presented annually by UT’s Engineering College to an outstanding engineering leader.
1. 5016 Shady Dell Trail
2. 4815 Westover Terrace
3. 4900 Westover Terrace
4. 4920 Westover Terrace
5. 5001 Westover Terrace
6. 5200 Holston Hills Road
7. 5405 Holston Hills Road
8. 5417 Holston Hills Road
9. 5421 Holston Hills Road
10. 5610 Holston Hills Road
11. 5600 Crestwood Drive
12. 5518 Crestwood Drive
13. 5517 Crestwood Drive
14. 5420 Crestwood Drive
15. 5404 Crestwood Drive
16. 5408 Crestwood Drive
17. 5417 Crestwood Drive
18. 5400 Green Valley Drive
19. 5301 Green Valley Drive
20. 5300 Green Valley Drive