

## Chapter 15: The De-annexation Battles

By the mid 1950's, the Town of The Village had grown and prospered for half of a decade. However, as the town continued to spread its wings and reach out to expand its horizons, not everybody shared the same vision for the future.

In April '55, in a move to beat Oklahoma City to the punch, the town trustees annexed the Mason Addition on the southwest corner of Britton and Waverly. As had happened five years earlier with the sudden annexation of West Nichols Hills, surprised and incensed property owners led by Tom Garrett, Jr. petitioned the trustees to de-annex. The angry delegation descended upon the town council citing several reasons why prompt de-annexation would be in their best interest.

One unwilling citizen asserted vehemently that being part of The Village had lowered property values. Arguments were also made that police and fire protection was inadequate. Not being notified or consulted in advance about the annexation was perhaps the biggest complaint aimed at the town.

Defending the town's position vigorously, Trustee Ben McCammon retorted that annexation was necessary because Oklahoma City had haphazardly annexed a strip of land south of Brighton Avenue and there was no assurance that they would not do this again with respect to the property in question.

What McCammon meant by "haphazard" would be pure speculation but one might assume that any annexations that close to home by a land-hungry giant such as Oklahoma City might be considered as such by the leaders of the fledgling town.

McCammon argued that the circumstances required quick and decisive action by the town as undue and lengthy discussion on the matter could have given Oklahoma City an opportunity to annex the property first. McCammon added that annexation would offer benefits to the area such as better sanitation service. Since the people in the annexed addition shared common problems with people in The Village, McCammon reasoned that the annexed people would have better representation in city government.

It was a good argument. Having totally convinced themselves that they had done the right thing, the trustees voted unanimously to reject the petition. One cannot help but wonder if those citizens felt well represented that night after having been so flatly rejected by the trustees.

On that same day the town brought into its limits the Northeast quarter of Section 25. The annexed real estate was located west of May between Lakeside Drive and Hefner Road. Homesteader James V. Bonner had been the original owner of the land but much later in 1946, the area was platted by former Governor Trapp as the Casady Lakeside Estates.

The annexation of this quarter section would lead to another challenge by disgruntled residents. In what had become a familiar scenario, exasperated residents rose up in-arms over the sudden and unannounced take over and promptly petitioned the town trustees for de-annexation.

Resident Carl Ziese told the trustees that he could see no advantage of being part of the town. Ziese complained that Lakeside Drive was a mud hole and that the town was not equipped to maintain unpaved streets. Ziese also complained that no reduction in insurance rates would take place by being incorporated.

Raymond Johnson, a local businessperson and property owner, expressed fear over the widening of May Avenue and the prospect of property owners bearing the cost.

Another disgruntled resident, Mr. L.P. DeWitt, complained that he did not want to pay higher property taxes to pay for the paving of streets in the rest of the town.

Ben McCammon, rising to the town's defense again, assured Mr. Johnson that no widening was planned at the time. The trustees advised Mr. DeWitt that paving was already paid for and that the main reason for annexation was to stave off the possibility of annexation by Oklahoma City and to allow the town to exercise control over commercial development on May Avenue.

Despite the energetic and acrimonious challenge to their actions, the town trustees held their ground and, like they had done with the Mason Addition, rejected the de-annexation petition. The effort, however, had not been totally in vain. Not long after the insurrection, and in an apparent attempt to smooth ruffled feathers, the town agreed to pave Lakeside Drive from May Avenue to Hefner Road.

Yet, despite the much needed road improvements, very little development of this area would take place until several years later. Tom Graham, who served the citizens of The Village as a Planning Commissioner and City Councilman, moved to the Casady Lakeside Estates in 1958.

According to Graham, "the area west of May was our idea of the 'wide open spaces.' A little lake and open ground was directly in front of the house we bought at 10724 Major. Only an occasional house was between Lake Hefner and us. One graveled path was our only entrance to the driveway," said Graham.

Graham remembered the area as quiet and peaceful. "People used the lake for a quiet afternoon of fishing and bird-dog owners worked their dogs on the numerous covey of quail that whistled in the evening," recalled Graham.

According to Graham, Casady Lakeside Estates began to dramatically change in 1959 when Floyd Harrison bought the land and began development north of Lakeside Drive.

“Our gravel road was removed to fill up the little lake and we wallowed in mud from Thanksgiving to the first of March trying to get to our house,” recalled Graham. Today Our Lord’s Lutheran Church sits on the property where the lake used to be.

“This is the winter I will always remember, --I can still see Mrs. Graham chasing the builder, trying to get him to place some gravel in the mud holes so that she could move her car off the Nazarene parking lot to the front of our house, “ remembered Graham.

“Relief finally came, but the wide-open spaces were no more. Where the wild flowers blossomed and the birds fed, were the signs of progress, new homes and yards,” said Graham.

Graham not only remembered this as a time of great change in his neighborhood, but also as the year when he would unexpectedly win a seat on the City Council.

In 1959, a new Council ward was created and Graham filed for the post. According to Graham, he drew two strong opponents for this race.

“Knowing no other way to see people, my wife and I covered every home in The Village with a personal visit. She would take one side of the street and I the other, “ said Graham.

Not expecting to win the election, Graham and his wife took the day of the election off for picnicking. When they got home, many of their friends and supporters were waiting on the front lawn. “We invited all in and tried to act like we knew what a victory party was all about, ” recalled Graham. “ This was the time the wife burned all the snacks, but we survived,“ said Graham with a chuckle.