

History of Cheshire Bridge Road

Early History The earliest record of Cheshire Bridge Road appears in the early 1820s, when whites first began to settle the area. At the time, the area was still inhabited by Native Americans and was part of the DeKalb County wilderness, as Fulton County had not yet been created. As such, these early settlers were primarily pioneering farmers or millers who worked at a few small mills along area creeks.¹

One such early settler was Abraham Chandler. It is known that by 1823 Abraham Chandler had built a home, small store and farm at what is now the intersection of LaVista and Cheshire Bridge Roads. While by today's standards it would be viewed as little more than an outpost in the wilderness, the farm was a tangible sign of progress at the time. On May 20, 1823, the Inferior Court of DeKalb County created a new militia district for the area that now includes Cheshire Bridge Road, and simultaneously appointed Abraham Chandler as overseer of the poor in the area. The appointment was a positive reflection on both him and his store.²

The Cheshire Bridge Another well-known settler in the early nineteenth century was Captain Hezekiah Cheshire. Captain Cheshire actually lived at what is now 1184 North Highland Avenue,³ but his sons Napoleon and Jerome built small farms on both sides of Peachtree Creek's south fork, near the present location of the Hellenic Center and Faulkner Road.⁴ In order to connect their farms, they built a small bridge known as the Cheshire Bridge. In time the bridge, located at the site of the current bridge over the south fork, became a landmark in the area and the entire

¹City of Atlanta. Department of Budget and Planning. [NPU F Profile](#). Atlanta: City of Atlanta, 1982.

²Garrett, Franklin. [Atlanta and Environs](#). 2 vols. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954.

³City of Atlanta. Department of Budget and Planning. [NPU F Profile](#). Atlanta: City of Atlanta, 1982.

⁴Martin, Albert. Personal Interview. 14 May 1998.

Appendix

section of road running from Piedmont north was called Cheshire Bridge Road. (see Figure 1)

Transportation In 1835 the area received a major boost when DeKalb County began developing a road designed to improve transportation between Decatur and Pace's Ferry on the Chattahoochee River. Part of this road was to run from Garrison's Mill on Peachtree Creek to Abraham Chandler's store and then on to Decatur. The road, which was called Paces Ferry Road, included a bridge over Peachtree Creek called Chandler's Bridge and was located on parts of today's LaVista Road and Morosgo Drive.⁵

The Cheshire Bridge Road area changed little during the period from 1835 to the 1870s. More small farms were built, but perhaps the most noteworthy event from the period occurred in 1857 when a grand jury found Chandler's Bridge to be one of only two unsafe bridges in the county. During the Civil War, Union forces on their way to Atlanta burnt the bridge over North Fork Peachtree Creek northeast of today's Cheshire Bridge Road, but little else happened during the war. A few years later, in the 1870s the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line Railroad was completed and included a stop in the nearby Rock Spring community, which opened the area up to potential future development.⁶ The railroad ran on the path of the current railroad right-of-way which passes under Cheshire Bridge Road.

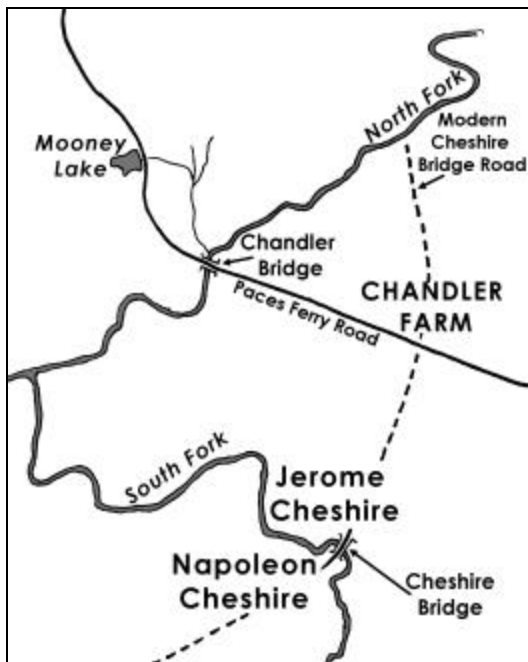


Figure 1: Early settlement around Cheshire Bridge Road.

When Southern agriculture experienced a slump in the period following the Civil War the effects were felt on Cheshire Bridge Road. Many of the farmers had their land foreclosed on by banks because they could not afford to pay their mortgages. So it was that Mr. Veach, a banker from Adairsville, GA, came to own approximately 5,000 acres of land around Cheshire Bridge Road in the post Civil War slump.⁷

When Mr. Veach died he left all of the property in the area to his five children. This, however, presented a problem since there were only four corners around the Cheshire Bridge and LaVista Road intersection. To compensate for this he gave four children parcels around the intersection and gave his son Grady the land running east into DeKalb County along what is now Woodland Avenue and Lenox Road. Each child built a permanent residence on their parcel, except for his daughter who owned the land to the northeast of the LaVista Road and Cheshire Bridge Road intersection, where the Tara Theater is. She continued to

⁵City of Atlanta. Department of Budget and Planning. NPU F Profile. Atlanta: City of Atlanta, 1982.

⁶Mitchell, Herman. Personal Interview. 14 May 1998.

The Twentieth Century Suburbanization Begins

live in Adairsville, but did eventually build a summerhouse at the northeastern corner of the intersection.⁸

The Cheshire Bridge Road area began to experience its most significant changes in the 1910s. By 1914 plans were underway for a garden suburb called Woodland Hills, on the land owned by Grady Veach. The developer of Woodland Hills boasted of “property of the highest class” with “beautiful forest trees,” in real estate advertisements of the time. Furthermore, they boasted of suburban train service to the city and the expected arrival of the trolley.⁹



Figure 2: Bungalow at 1073 Woodland Avenue

By 1921 Woodland Hills appeared on city maps alongside other intown neighborhoods such as Druid Hills and Ansley Park. However, unlike the latter two, Woodland Hills failed to develop as a garden suburb and remained idle for almost thirty years. A sole bungalow at 1073 Woodland Avenue and a handful of homes along Lenox Road serve as the only reminder of Woodland Hills’ beginnings. (see Figure 2)

By the 1920’s there had also been some small-scale residential development around the southern portion of Cheshire Bridge Road and a small public school for white children was located on what is now Manchester Street.¹⁰ A 1923 road map of Fulton County calls this cluster of buildings around the intersection of Piedmont Road and Cheshire Bridge Road “Mina.” On later maps, however, there is no reference to “Mina.”¹¹

The Twenties

The area once again entered a period of stagnation between the two world wars. Even during the Roaring Twenties, when much of the open land around Atlanta was being replaced by bungalow development, Cheshire Bridge was overlooked by the development community. This may be largely attributed to poor transportation facilities in the area when compared to other parts of the city at the time.

⁹Yaarab Shriners. Convocation Program. Atlanta: Yaarab Shriners, 1914.

¹⁰United States Coast Guard and Geodetic Survey and Atlanta Mapping Division Topographic Map, Sheet 58. Map. Atlanta: City of Atlanta, 1927.

¹¹Road Map of Fulton County. Map. Atlanta: HC Wilson Civil Engineers, 1923.

Appendix

Post World War II

Only with the arrival of post-World War II prosperity did Cheshire Bridge Road begin to develop in earnest. By 1948 development was once again underway at Woodland Hills. The new Woodland Hills, however, was quite different from the original plan. Instead of a gracious garden suburb with large lots and gently curving streets, the Post War Woodland Hills included almost 500 closely spaced, single-family homes on small lots built with money from GI loans.¹² (see Figure 3) Many of the homes were built with lumber produced from trees on the site, which would eventually cause the paint on the homes to peel, as green wood does not hold paint well.¹³

Another residential community developed in 1948 was D.L. Stokes' subdivision in the southwestern quadrant of the Cheshire Bridge and LaVista Road intersection, now part of the Lindridge-Martin Manor neighborhood. Like the Woodland Hills neighborhood, this development was developed primarily for GI's returning from World War II.¹⁴



Figure 3: Post War development in Woodland Hills

Also at this time, a large apartment complex was constructed at 2240 and 2250 Cheshire Bridge Road.¹⁵ This project, along with the other residential subdivisions, spurred the development of auto-dependent businesses to serve the new residents.

Commercial Development

The commercial development on Cheshire Bridge Road initially occurred in two nodes. One node was around the intersection at LaVista Road, and included a building housing LaVista Hardware, Happy Herman's, and a dry cleaner. (see Figure 4) This intersection also included a gas station owned by Bill Myers. During the early years of operation, many of these businesses relied entirely on commuter traffic, as there was still not a sizable residential base in the neighborhood and the women who stayed at home during the day generally did not drive. At Happy Herman's, for example, most of the customers came in

¹² Royston, Deborah. "Woodland Hills." *Atlanta Journal-Constitution Homefinder* 23 May 1993: 6,7.

¹³ Mitchell, Herman. Personal Interview. 14 May 1998.

¹⁴ Mitchell, Herman. Personal Interview. 14 May 1998.

¹⁵ Atlanta City Directory Company. *Atlanta City Directory*. Atlanta: Atlanta City Directory Company, 1948.

Appendix

between 4:00 and 6:00 PM as male commuters drove home from their jobs downtown.¹⁶

The other node was farther south, at the intersection with Piedmont Road. Perhaps the most prominent feature of this southern node was a popular restaurant called Twelve Oaks. Because it was still considered to be “out in the country” in the 1940s, many high school kids would drive their cars up to Twelve Oaks to get away from their parents. After that, they may have decided to head out to the area on Lenox Road near where the railroad crosses it, which was a popular “make out” spot.¹⁷



Figure 4: The building housing LaVista Ace Hardware represents early commercial

During the 1950s freeway construction also began to alter the area. The construction of Interstate 85 greatly improved accessibility to the area and encouraged additional commercial and residential development, including LaVista Park. This accessibility would have been further enhanced by the construction of Interstate 485, which was designed to cross Cheshire Bridge Road near its intersection with Piedmont.

At the end of the 1960s Cheshire Bridge Road had been commercialized along its length with a variety of businesses.¹⁸ The road even boasted a small shopping center (at the northeast quadrant of the Cheshire Bridge Road and LaVista Drive intersection) which once housed a gentleman’s club called the Brave Falcon. There had even been some industrial development around Faulkner Road, on which Erwin Greenbaum and John Huntsinger had developed industrial and warehouse space and Ervindale Dairies had built a processing plant.¹⁹

The 1970s

By the beginning of the 1970s some of the residential districts around Cheshire Bridge Road, and in particular, Woodland Hills, began to enter a period of decline. Drawn by new development farther out in the suburbs, families began to pass by Woodland Hills as a potential neighborhood to live in. With its small homes on small lots, the neighborhood no longer met the expectations of young

¹⁶ Mitchell, Herman. Personal Interview. 14 May 1998

¹⁷ Mitchell, Herman. Personal Interview. 14 May 1998

¹⁸ Atlanta City Directory Company. *Atlanta City Directory*. Atlanta: Atlanta City Directory Company, 1962.

¹⁹ Mitchell, Herman. Personal Interview. 14 May 1998.

families in search of a home. Many of the homes fell into a state of disrepair, and some homes close to Cheshire Bridge Road were razed and replaced by apartments.²⁰ In 1975 the Atlanta Housing Authority began construction on a public housing complex at 2170 Cheshire Bridge Road, which also indicated declining property values.²¹

While the residential areas of Cheshire Bridge Road declined in the 1970s, the situation was not as bad for commercial properties. With time, the commercial district continued to grow and change. Many new restaurants opened along the road and it was known locally as “Restaurant Row.” Furthermore, many antique stores also opened on the road to capitalize on the growing antique industry in Buckhead and the northeast suburbs of Atlanta. (see Figure 5)



Figure 5: One of many antique stores located along Cheshire Bridge Road

The 1980s Paradoxically, the 1980s brought a near reverse of fortune for the commercial and residential districts. Many of the homes in Woodland Hills began to be bought up and renovated by singles and childless couples in search of affordable housing near downtown Atlanta and Buckhead.²²

The commercial component of Cheshire Bridge Road fared considerably worse. In the early 1980s adult businesses began moving into the area and caught the attention of many area residents. As time went on, the road began to lose the “Restaurant Row” image and started to be known as the best place in Atlanta to buy pornography, view erotic dancers, and partake in other adult activities. This perception still exists today, even though restaurants, antique stores, and other establishments far outnumber adult businesses.

Today Cheshire Bridge Road is again in a period of transition. Throughout the City of Atlanta the demand for intown living is increasing as suburban congestion and pollution make urban neighborhoods, such as Cheshire Bridge, more attractive.

²⁰ Royston, Deborah. “Woodland Hills.” [Atlanta Journal-Constitution Homefinder](#) 23 May 1993: 6,7.

²¹ Atlanta City Directory Company. [Atlanta City Directory](#). Atlanta: Atlanta City Directory Company, 1975.

²² Royston, Deborah. “Woodland Hills.” [Atlanta Journal-Constitution Homefinder](#) 23 May 1993: 6,7.

Appendix

Furthermore, zoning changes enacted by the City of Atlanta have stopped the spread of adult businesses along the road, but pre-existing businesses were exempted from the changes and continue to operate. Meanwhile, businesses along the road have joined forces with the City of Atlanta in an attempt to revitalize Cheshire Bridge Road. If plans are successful, the neighborhood will capitalize on its rich inventory of antique shops, restaurants, and other businesses to change the road's image and create a truly unique urban neighborhood for residents, businesses and visitors.