

## History of Gresham Park

Now that we have seen how the census information is gathered, and how the data is used to distribute funds back into the community, I thought it would be interesting to see what the census tells us about our community Gresham Park. Since I know nothing about Gresham Park as a community, I thought this would be a good opportunity to gather some history.

Gathering information on Gresham Park was not easy, we are not among the, rich and famous in Dekalb County, however I will share with you the brief history I could find.

In 1821, when the Indians sold the land the area we know as Gresham Park was part of Henry County the map for the new land was drawn by Joseph M. Elder of Liberty County, each tract number contained 202 1/2 acres of land the tract numbers have never changed. In the same year there was a State Land Lottery, the Land Lottery of 1821. Using County maps I learned that I live and go to school on tract number 109. During the lottery lot number 109 was won by John W. McWilliams. He paid the processing fee of \$19.00 for the purchase of the land. Dekalb County was founded on December 10, 1823.

Mr. McWilliams, served in the civil war. On Thanksgiving day in 1889, McWilliams and Sons opened as a general merchandise store at Flat Shoals and Glenwood Rd. in East Atlanta. The first item to sell was a pound of coffee. The store served as a Post Office and he served as, Post Master for East Atlanta, and also had one of the first telephones in the area. Mr. McWilliams lived north of Flat Sholas north of the store.

In an interview with Mrs. Jacqueline-Gresham Chandler a resident of Gresham Park for 50 years and the daughter of Mr. Benjamin Madison Gresham for whom our community was named. Mr. Gresham was born in Winder, Ga, on September 21, 1890. He moved to the area in 1922 and was married to Ruth Stubbs and they had three children Benjamin M. Gresham Jr, Jacqueline L. Gresham and Ed Young Gresham.

Mr. Gresham opened a dairy, he did not like working with the cattle, he was more of a people person, so he work as much as he could at Hicks Hardware Store in East Atlanta, leaving Mrs. Gresham to run the dairy. Mr. Gresham was a member of the Board of Elections and held all the elections in the area, he also was a member of the Board of Education.

Gresham Rd. as we know it was a pig path not wide enough for cars to travel through. There were four dairy owners on Greshams Rd. Knight's Dairy, Wright's Dairy, Park's Dairy, and Gresham's Dairy. In 1927, the pig path was widen to a two lane dirt road. The resident of the area went to the old Decatur Court House to speak with Commissioner Mr. Scott Candler about the name of the new road, Mr. Candler said the name of the new road would be Gresham Rd. in 1946 the dirt road was paved.

There were no black families in the area, there were no retail businesses in the area until about 1955, when the first A & P Grocery Store, Drug Store and a Gas Station were built, where Gresham Plaza is now. Until then the closest shopping area was in East Atlanta.

Mrs. Chandler was honored to attend the dedication of Gresham Park Elementary School, which was also named for her father. The School was opened in 1958.

During another interview with Mr. & Mrs. Jack Awtry 49 year residents of Gresham Park and owners of Louise Flower Shop. I learned that our community has changed since the early 1940's. My respondents remember, there were several dairies in the area among them were, Frank White's Dairy on Gresham Rd., Park's Dairy on Gresham Rd., Jarrett's Dairy on Bouldercrest Rd., and Gresham's Dairy on Gresham Rd.

There were no retail businesses in the area the closest grocery store was in East Atlanta.

The population in the community was very small, there were no black families in the areas they knew as Gresham Rd. Then in the 1950's the community being to grow slow at first, and then in the 1960's there were subdivisions everywhere and thus Gresham Park Community was born.

As part of the 1957 bond issue, Gresham Park was built in 1961, with ball fields and picnic shelters. After a second bond issue in 1961, the Recreation Center was built. And they remember that the high school there children attended was built in 1964 Walker High School (now McNair High School). I enjoyed talking with them.

In 1974, both "Gresham Park Civic and Athletic Association" and the "Gresham Park Football Rattlers Association" were formed, bringing both children and families together. In 1979, the Gresham Park Community Organization" and "Local Development Business Men's Association" were formed to create an attitude of cooperation within the business community.

In 1990 Gresham Park Recreation Center has begun renovations at a cost of \$2,406,958.00, the Sugar Downs subdivisions were built. And during this decade we are going to see many changes come to our community. Gresham Rd. is going to be widen, and Bouldercrest Rd. is going to be widen. Although the history that I was able to find is brief I found it to be interesting.

#### **The Census of Gresham Park**

Now let's see how the census data saw our community from 1960-1980. I did not understand the data before 1960.

According to the census tract map of 1970, the boundaries of the Gresham Park Community are: Brannen Rd., Clifton Rd., Bouldercrest Rd., Cecilia Rd., and Sugar Creek.

On the census tract map of 1960, (tract no. DC-0038) includes part of East Atlanta, that's why the data is larger than the later census. I was interested in the population and housing for each decennial census.

In 1960, the total population was 11,116, there were 10,703 white residents, 406 black residents, and 7 other residents, and a total of 2,812 housing units.

In the 1970 Census, there was a redistricting, the census tract number changed (tract no. 238.03). The total population changed and the community is as we know it today. In 1970, the total population was 6,620, there were 6,608 white residents, 1 black resident, and 11 other residents, and 1,938 housing units.

The 1980 census tract map remained the same (tract no. 238.03). The total population was 6,232, there were 761 whites residents, 5,448 black residents, and 34 other residents, and 1,830 total housing units. We lost some housing units I wonder if everyone was counted.

The data that the census give is indeed interesting, we can see how the race of our community has changed, and the change in the housing patterns, it will be interesting to see what the 1990 Census tells us.

The Census Bureau, has something for everyone in the country. Collecting the information is a job that requires many abilities and people to collect, analyze and distribute the data. The law protects the information from anyone outside the Census Bureau. The government, schools, local communities, businesses and industries use this information to gain seats in the Congress and put needed services in the community.

The history of Gresham Park, should be kept as a piece of wonderful information for people who want to know how the community was named and started.

This has been a great history lesson for me, I never knew how much history, the Census Bureau has and how important this information is to everyone.