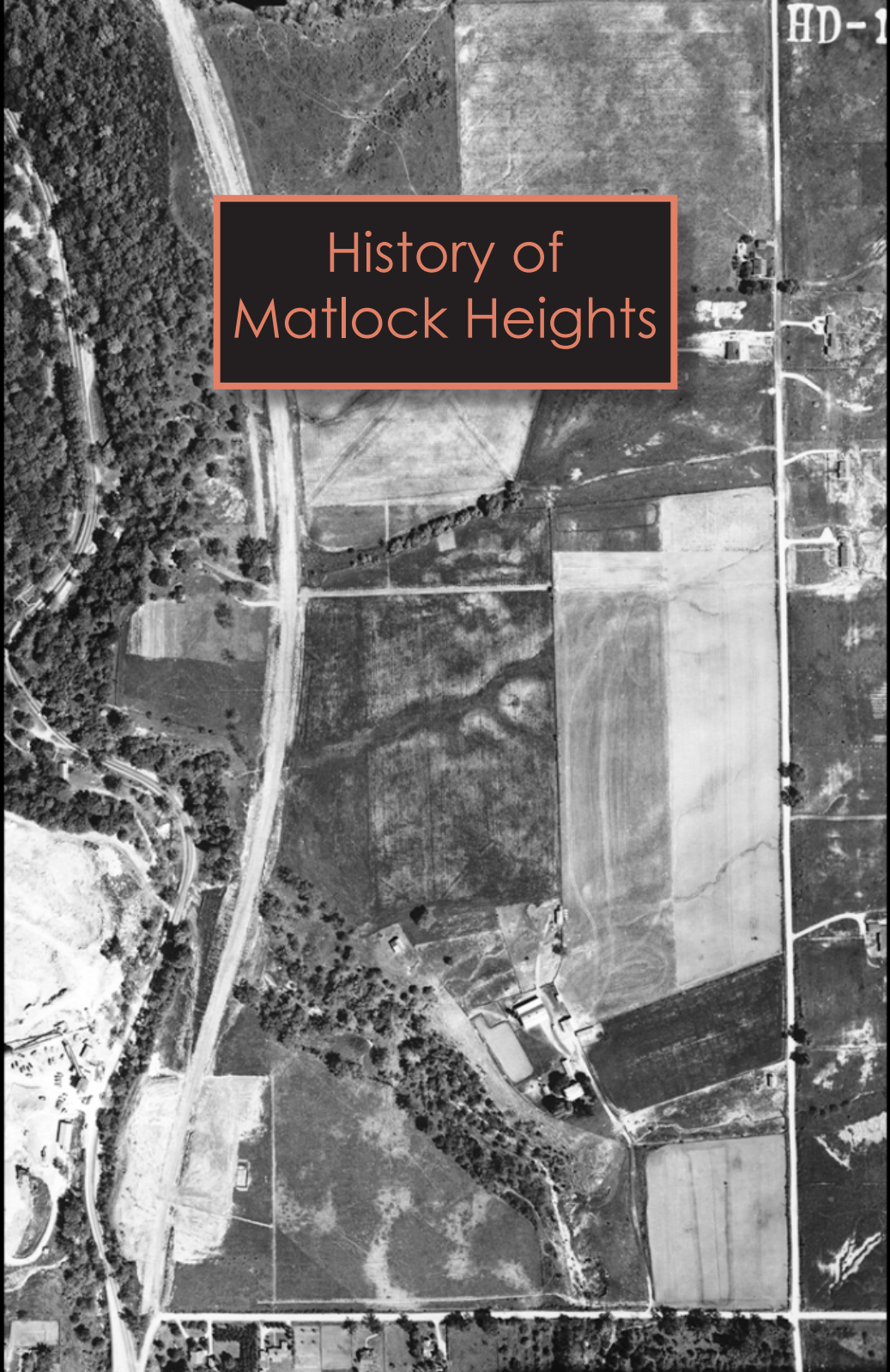


History of
Matlock Heights





Department of Housing and
Neighborhood Development

Written, Edited, and Designed
By Joshua Brewer
2014

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Matlock Heights Sign Circa 1954
Bloomington HAND Department

Introduction

The streets in Bloomington's Matlock Heights neighborhood may seem utterly normal. The roads don't have sidewalks, but walking on the edge of the road feels acceptable. As the route twists and curves around small hills and a large ravine, it feels more like a country-path than a neighborhood street. Houses sit around every half acre. The yards are covered in large trees with flowers blooming in tidy gardens. One striking old farm house stands out. Otherwise, most of the houses are similar, either one or two-story '50s-style ranch homes. It is impossible to miss the consistency. If not completely made of limestone, almost all have limestone features. Neighbors walk their dogs, waving at the few cars that drive slowly past. It feels unpretentious and comfortable. It is the way many 1950s suburban neighborhoods feel. It's the type of neighborhood that has had time to grow and settle into itself.

Thousands of these suburban developments were built during a nationwide housing boom in the 1950s and 60s, including a dozen or so in Bloomington. Yet, Matlock Heights stands out as the city's first. Its construction began about a year before other neighborhoods and shows how this nationwide building obsession began locally.

The Matlock Heights neighborhood was an economic gamble because it presented Bloomington with an entirely new model of residential development. Its builders believed that people would be willing to move out to a cluster of homes in the countryside. For the city, this became the beginning of a massive shift towards suburban expansion. Matlock Heights shows the changing ideals of 1950s Americans, who sought the convenience of urban life but the beauty and affordability of a rural environment.

The Matlocks

Tucked away in a quiet corner on the north side of Bloomington, today the Matlock Heights neighborhood sits on a 54-acre parcel of land bordered by North Walnut Street, the 46/45 Bypass, and North Dunn Street. The neighborhood was developed in 1952 as Bloomington's first suburb by two ambitious builders, Waldron Fritz and Gilbert Swaim.

The land itself can be dated back to October 12, 1816, two years before the City of Bloomington was established. The 54 acres were part of a land-purchase originally bought by John Lee, one of the area's early settlers. He took advantage of affordable land sold by the United States government as an initiative to encourage westward expansion. This historical connection has become part of the development's lore, and some residents joke that the land was sold to Lee by George Washington himself. This land saw some interesting early owners after Lee that included Monroe County settlers Francis McKinley, William Lowe, and notable farmer Jonathan Hinkle.

The neighborhood's namesake comes from the Matlock family. Although almost forgotten today, the Matlocks were once well-known farmers in the area. They emigrated from Tennessee to Monroe County in 1816 as part of a wave of early residents to relocate from that region. The family patriarch, George Matlock, first bought land in Van Buren Township to start a small farm. The family quickly developed a successful agriculture farming business as Bloomington began to grow throughout the late 1800s. The Matlock name became



Paris and Margret Matlock with sons

Charles and Dolly
 Courtesy of Randi Richardson



Matlock Farmstead, 1947
 Courtesy of Eugenie Sullivan

associated with the founding figures of the community and forged deep respect. When George Matlock died of paralysis in 1877, *The Bloomington Courier* wrote that he was “a gentleman of unimpeachable integrity, such a citizen as we can ill afford to lose.”

The family business was eventually passed down to George’s son Paris Matlock. By the turn of the 20th century, the Matlocks were no longer small time farmers. In 1897, Paris bought the land on the north side of Bloomington, which was to become Matlock Heights. The property cost \$4,000 and consisted of 100 acres. It boasted an 1850s Greek Revival farmhouse and a milk barn. By the time of his death in 1917, Paris Matlock was called one of the country’s wealthiest farmers and largest landowners, by *The Bloomington Telephone*.

Paris passed the business on to his eldest son Charles, who married and raised a family in the 1850s farmhouse. Charles worked

hard growing corn and other produce, often driving horses and pulling plows through a patchwork of fields. Business was successful for decades.

In 1925, the City of Bloomington seized a portion of the north end of the Matlock property to build a new water source, creating Lake Griffy. But by the 1930s, the Matlock farm had become a community landmark due to the family's connection to the land. It had five large barns visible from Matlock Road, which is now the 46/45 bypass. Sadly Charles could no longer run the farm after his wife died in 1950. The house fell into disrepair, and two years later he sold the entire property to home-builder Waldron Fritz.

Fritz chose to name the development Matlock Heights, knowing the Matlock name would be instant identifier to anyone familiar with Bloomington history or geography. Both boasting a historical connection and evoking notions of manifest destiny was a popular marketing trend at the time. The name "heights" simply referred to the neighborhood's view atop rolling hills. When Waldron Fritz bought the Matlock farm in late summer 1952, he stood looking over the nearly 140 year old farm and envisioned something entirely different for Bloomington: a modern suburban neighborhood.

Post-War Bloomington

In the early 1950s, the nation was amidst large social and economic changes that were felt in Bloomington. The middle class suffered greatly during World War II and The Great Depression. The economy had crippled specialized regional industries like furniture manufacturing and limestone. Enrollment at Indiana University, Bloomington's largest employer, had dropped to a low of 3,500 in 1930.

However, Roosevelt's New Deal, a surge in wartime spending and consumer products soon fueled the national economy and afforded new opportunities for the middle class. In 1940, RCA relocated its radio manufacturing assembly line to Bloomington from Camden, New Jersey. Bloomington suddenly proved attractive to businesses. Other companies relocated as well, including Westinghouse, General Electric,



Woodlawn Courts, 1946
Courtesy of Indiana University Archives

Otis Elevator, and local Sarkes Tarzian. The local economy grew as RCA converted its assembly line to war materials and then the new consumer television industry. By the end of World War II, Bloomington saw thousands of people from all around the region flock to its burgeoning job market. In just over a decade and a half the population grew by one third.

Bloomington also grew as a result of post-war enrollment at Indiana University. In 1944, the United States government passed the GI Bill that guaranteed returning veterans a university education. IU saw a massive growth in student enrollment. As much as 50 percent of post-war university growth resulted from these veterans benefit programs. In 1945 enrollment was only 7,500, but by 1947 it had swelled to over 14,000 and the number of faculty jobs had tripled. With such a massive influx, Indiana University struggled to find adequate housing for student families. This even led to IU's housing over 300 families in temporary mobile homes located in Woodlawn Field, between 1945-1958. The mobile home park was named "Woodlawn Courts."

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1955 Construction Ads
Bloomington Star Courier
Courtesy of The Monroe County Public Library Indiana Room

Above:
Black Lumber Co.
Right:
Rogers Building Supplies Inc.

Housing Boom

The United States faced a serious housing shortage after World War II. In an effort to conserve war materials during the 1940s, the U.S. government imposed a ban stopping all new construction. Yet the end of the war brought millions of veterans home eager to start families. Between 1945 and 1950 alone, the U.S. grew by twelve million. Millions looked for affordable housing, but the market could not keep up with such rapid growth. In response, President Harry Truman's passed the landmark 1949 housing act which lifted the construction ban and expanded veterans benefits, including increased federal mortgage insurance. This aid specifically targeted returning veterans and young families seeking to move from crowded inner apartments to single family houses. Home-building quickly surged as government programs doled out low-cost loans to fund the creation of millions of new homes. By 1950 building reached an all time high of 1,692,000 single-family homes constructed in a single year.

Across the country, increased housing demand created an opportunity for experimentation with new models of neighborhood design and housing construction. Subdivision, or tract-housing, was originally invented in California during the 1930s. Suburbs were initially developed in an effort to house migrant workers using a small amount of land. By 1950, housing developers refined single family home-building techniques and modern suburban neighborhood design. Levittown in Long Island, NY, became the most famous and influential suburban development. Massively publicised, Levittown nearly single-handedly popularized the subdivided suburban development, and more importantly, a new suburban ideal. By the early 1950s, the desire for suburban housing reached the midwest with large developments built in Illinois, Michigan and Ohio. Eventually news of these post-war housing trends finally spread to places like Bloomington.



Waldron Fritz

Courtesy of The Monroe County History Center

The Builders

To further understand the genesis of Matlock Heights, it is important to understand the backgrounds of its ambitious builders. Waldron Fritz led the Matlock Heights project and purchased the property. He grew up as a Kansas farm-boy, where he learned building and hard work. He earned a law degree from University of Kansas before enlisting in the Marines during World War II, where he met his wife Martha. Fritz returned stateside in 1945 and moved to Indiana. Bloomington attracted Fritz, like countless others, for an education at Indiana University. He began taking graduate classes in business and law afforded by his GI benefits. To support his family while attending school, he started a construction business. At first, Fritz could obtain only small bank loans, a \$3,000 maximum. He learned to build modest and affordable homes out of necessity, including some in Bloomington's east side Green Acres neighborhood. Housing demand soon grew, and he quit graduate school to focus on his construction business full time. Customers contacting him with building requests were mostly young, middle-class and student families. As a young transplant himself, he felt that Bloomington needed something built specifically for these new young families.

Similarly, Fritz's partner Gilbert Swaim was a transplant to Bloomington, attracted by the booming economy. He was described as smart, inquisitive, and patient. He was also about ten years older than Waldron. Gilbert met his wife Glendora while obtaining a journalism degree at Indiana University in the 1930s. After graduating, Gilbert worked as newspaper editor in Union City, Indiana, before moving his family back to Bloomington. He worked for a short time as editor of RCA's internal wartime newspaper, *The Bloomington Bomber*. When the war ended and RCA cut back jobs, he joined the charismatic Fritz



Gilbert Swaim at RCA, 1940s
Coutresy of Susi Miller

designing and building new houses.

Fritz and Swaim met through a mix of family and business connections. Described as both ambitious and practical, they had similar ideas on construction and housing design. It was the early 1950s, and while laying bricks in the spring sun, they envisioned a modern suburban development as the solution to Bloomington's rising housing problem. Bloomington was "beginning to burst its seams as a result of postwar prosperity and business expansion," explained historian James Diehl. The partners sensed this perfect storm of growth and shortage. Fritz and Swaim opted for an affordable neighborhood for working-class families, nothing upscale.

Creating Matlock Heights

First, they needed to find land. The Matlock farmland presented them an affordable and treeless landscape outside the city limits. Fritz and his wife bought roughly 45 acres on July 17, 1952 for \$20,000. At that time, any traditional city lots ended at 17th Street, and Highway 37, then two-lanes, exited town winding through lower Cascades. The old neglected Matlock farmhouse was all that remained on the land, and a gravel road was its only access to town. Fritz and Swaim quickly took the project head on, laying out the neighborhood themselves. Although untrained, the men used their practical experience to design a neighborhood which they felt reflected the new suburban model.

Builders were constructing new houses all over Bloomington in the early 1950s, but there really wasn't anything like a suburb before Matlock Heights. For generations, contractors built homes in a gridded pattern around an urban town center. Imagine walking around Bloomington's Elm Heights, McDoel Gardens, or Near Westside neighborhoods. The streets lay on a grid, houses all in a row on square plots, most with front porches leading directly to the sidewalk or street. Fritz and Swaim wanted to offer families someplace different. They envisioned a secluded neighborhood with homes in a natural environment, accessible by car, and secure from crime. Interestingly, it is unclear what initially inspired Fritz and Swaim to design a stand-alone suburb. Some suggest that it began with Fritz's unique position as a pilot. He had flown across the country with the Marines, and it is possible that he had seen the changing suburban landscape of curved streets and spotted clustered homes from the bird's-eye-view of his pilot seat. Alternatively, the partners were practical businessmen and land that far out of town was a cheap, low-risk investment. Waldron's son remembered his father saying, "Even if he [and his crew] built and sold two homes a year, [they] would all make a good living - not a bad

fallback position.”

As a young girl Gilbert Swaim's daughter remembered Fritz and her father rolling out the big Matlock Heights design maps across her family's kitchen table. For the street names, they named Gilbert Avenue and Fritz Drive after themselves, and as good family men, they named the other streets after their wives and children. Glendora Drive was named for Gilbert's wife, and Martha Street named for Waldron's wife. Vernon Avenue and Barbara Street were named for Waldron's two children and Laverne Drive, Waldron's sister. Saville Avenue is the one street that was not named by either partner. Then County Planning Commissioner John Stapleton had always wanted to name a street but never had the chance. He had helped with the design process, and Fritz saw no problem letting Stapleton name one. Stapleton wanted something exotic so he wrote Saville, after the Spanish city of Seville. Fritz noticed that the street was misspelled but left it alone all the same. The street remains misspelled to this day.

The original Matlock Heights design maps included room for sidewalks. Skepticism grew as Waldron requested permits to have the government build roads, sidewalk, and gutters for the development. Although undocumented, Fritz claimed the county government denied any public construction in Matlock Heights by arguing “in 20 years [we'll] have to plow it all up, because nobody [will] live that far out of town.” Although comical today, this concern would have been reasonable at the time. No one but farmers lived that far out of town, and Fritz wanted roads and sidewalks built for nearly 80 homes. Waldron Fritz remained confident. He was known as a contrarian and often described as “a maverick.” The refusal only spurred his desire to continue the project and stick his thumb out at those who doubted him. Fritz just did it himself and paid for a fleet of trucks and bulldozers to clear the land and lay roads himself. Bud Bales, a longtime friend of Waldron Fritz, put it simply, saying, “Fritz was bold. He was on top of the whole cotton pickin' thing. He just got in on the ground floor before



Aerial Photograph of Matlock Farm, 1949
Bloomington HAND Department

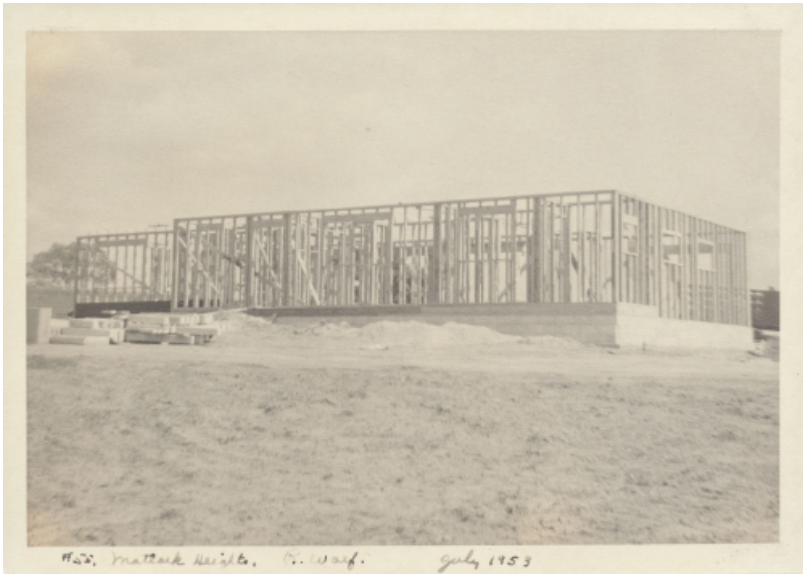
anyone else.’

By spring of 1953, building had started in Matlock Heights. Fritz, Swaim, and their crews spent long days in the field pouring concrete, framing roofs, plastering, laying floors, erecting walls and ceilings. Eager families quickly bought dozens lots and contracted homes. Fritz and Swaim contracted separate homes. Fritz built the first house for his family to live right in the middle of the neighborhood

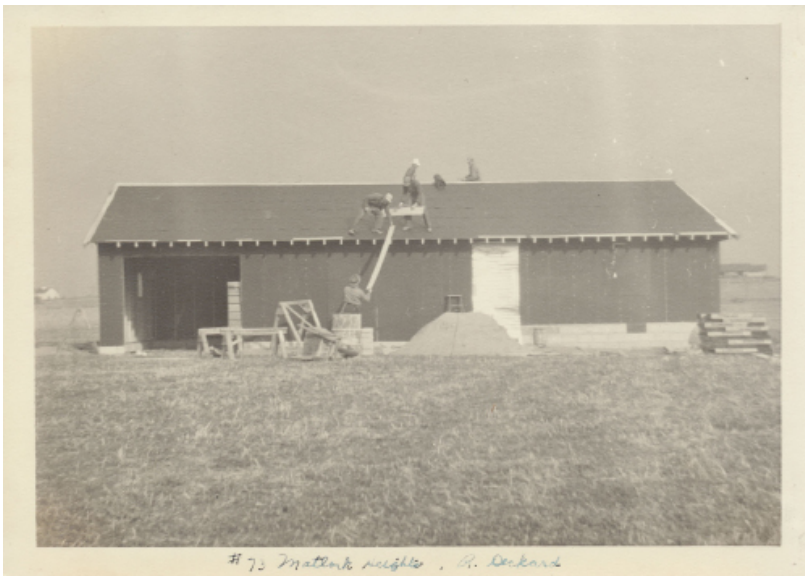
at 300 Gilbert Ave. He claimed, “When you build homes, you have to build at least one home for yourself to get people interested.” It was a modest single-story ranch painted barn red. Practical and homey, the early homes were meant to attract middle class families. Swaim built a series of eight homes. While his ranch homes were similar, they introduced simple decorative doors and windows. Both men built sturdy, simple, and well-made houses. Even today, current owners often admire the quality of construction.

In 1954, Fritz and Swaim ended their partnership, leaving the further building to other contractors. For Fritz, Matlock Heights proved an economic and personal success and inspired him to move from one project to another, always looking for something new. He developed a much larger northside housing development called Fritz Terrace and built Classic Bowling Lanes. In 1972, Fritz and his wife moved to Madison, Indiana where he constructed townhouses for a couple years before finally settling in Omaha, Nebraska. Waldron’s son Monroe described his father’s business career by saying, “He was known as a rich man... but he had pride in doing things, not being a rich man.”

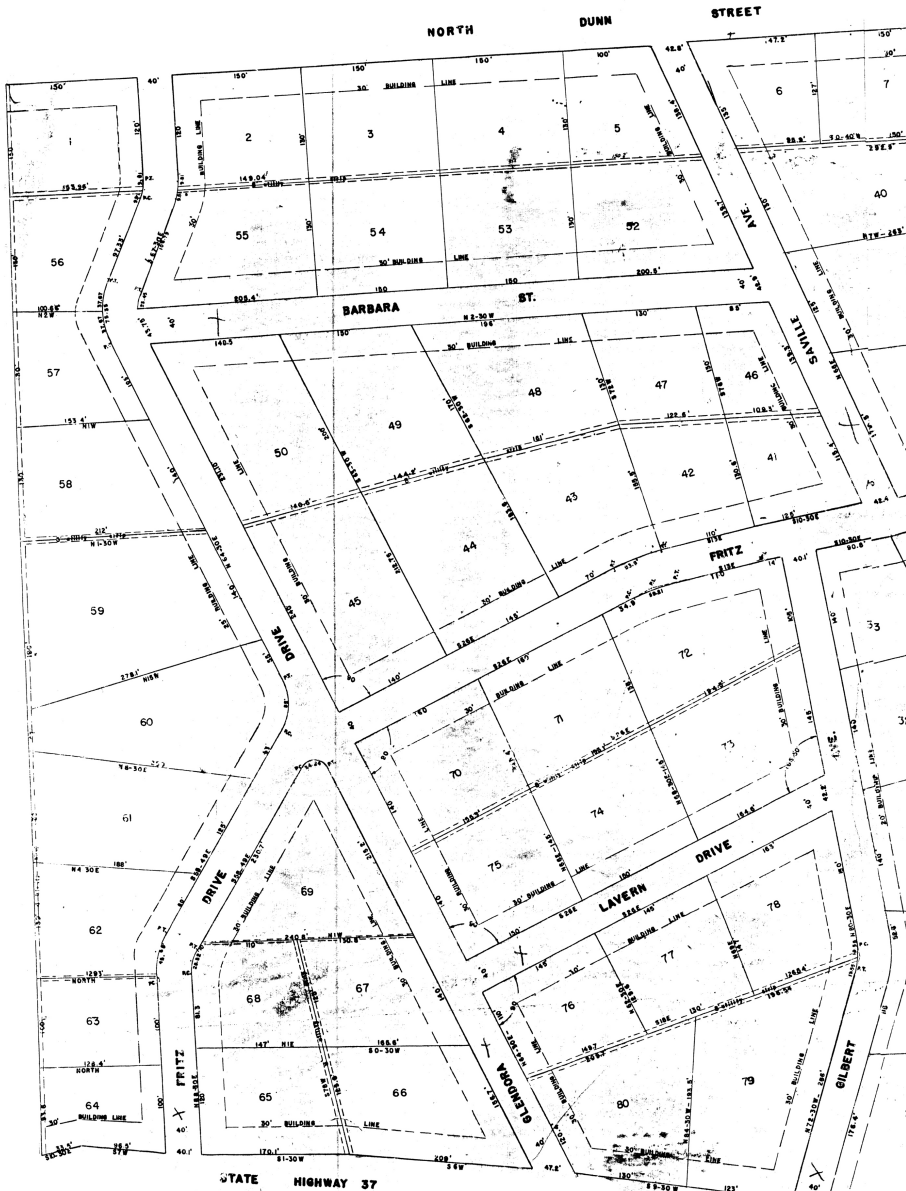
Similarly, Gilbert Swaim invested a lot of himself in Matlock Heights. He moved his family back to Union City using the lessons learned in Matlock Heights to start his own housing development. The area’s Westinghouse factory presented a familiar post-war industrial boom, but the development struggled as the factories closed. Five years later, he moved his family back to Bloomington and got out of the construction business. Gilbert Swaim’s daughter described her father as an idealist and “everything man.” He was always dreamer, always creating new projects, and never interested in the money.



Barbara Street, July 1953
Courtesy of Monroe Fritz



Corner of Gilbert Avenue and Laverne Drive, 1953
Courtesy of Monroe Fritz



I, Walter E. Fritz, a Licensed Civil Engineer in the State of Indiana, hereby certify that the plat above is a correct and true copy of the original filed in my office on this 10th day of November 1952.

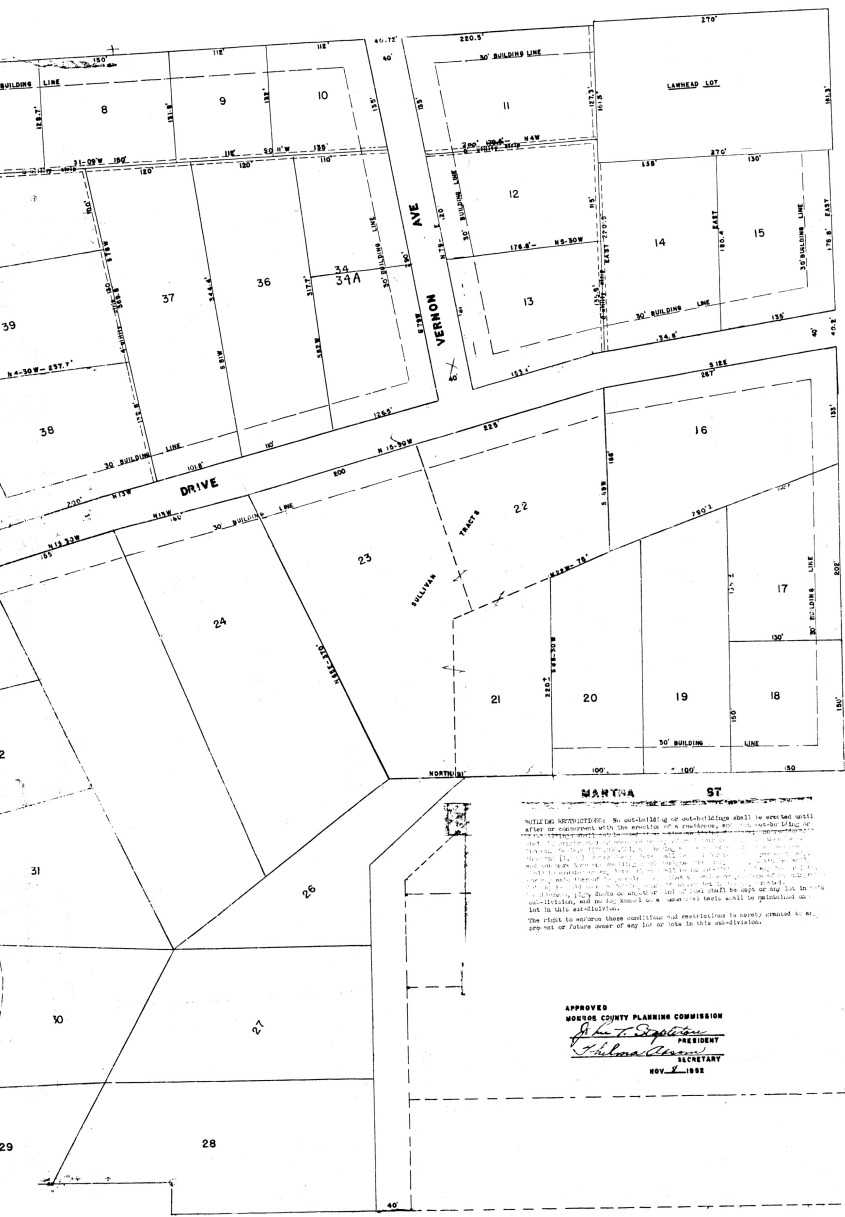
NOTICE: THERE ARE STRIPS OF ABOUT 4 AND 8 FEET IN WIDTH AS SHOWN ON THE PLAT, HEREBY SET ASIDE FOR THE USE OF PUBLIC UTILITIES AND OVER WHICH NO PERMANENT STRUCTURES SHALL BE ERRECTED OR MAINTAINED.

THE UNDERSIGNED, THE OWNERS OF THE REAL ESTATE DESCRIBED ABOVE, HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXECUTION OF THIS PLAT, THE SAME TO BE FOR THE USE OF PUBLIC UTILITIES AND OVER WHICH NO PERMANENT STRUCTURES SHALL BE ERRECTED OR MAINTAINED.

Walter E. Fritz
Walter E. Fritz
 ENGINEER

STATE OF INDIANA 55
 COUNTY OF MONROE
 PERSONALLY APPEARED Walter E. Fritz
 AND ACKNOWLEDGE
 WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL THIS 10th DAY OF NOVEMBER 1952

1952 Matlock Heights Design Map
 Bloomington HAND Department



ROAD
MATLOCK

MANTUA ST

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MORRIS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
John T. Stapleton PRESIDENT
Richard C. ... SECRETARY
 NOV. 2, 1982

JOHN T. STAPLETON, C.E.

MATLOCK HEIGHTS

APPROVED
BOARD OF MORRIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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Arthur ...
 COMMISSIONERS

34079
 RECORDED
 Book # Page 37
 5-21 A.M.

*Nov 7
 Morris County
 Clerk*

NOTARY PUBLIC IN AND FOR SAID COUNTY THIS 2nd DAY OF NOVEMBER 1982 *William B. ...*

William B. ...
 BY COMMISSION EXPIRES: April 14, 1985

NOV 2 1982

200107774
 Corrected Street Names
 Dan Siddle, Recorder

*See the Plat in the Auditor's Office
 for the closing line for Lot 29*

Building Homes

Today families can choose from a multitude of housing options, yet it wasn't always this way. Bloomington was much smaller before the 1950s. Most young families lived in the few affordable apartments or small bungalows, which were often old and allowed little room to grow. Some early Matlock residents remembered starting families in small downtown apartments in the 1940s. One couple lived in a small cramped apartment on 2nd Street in the Elm Heights Neighborhood with their young child. Another lived near downtown on North 8th Street and yet another on South Lincoln. The suburbs were needed and presented young families with the prospect of large affordable homes, with a different pace of life. Initially, Matlock Heights attracted a diverse mix middle-class professionals. Local business owners, school teachers, managers, industry and local government workers comprised most of the early homeowners. Almost all the residents were young families.

Throughout the 1950s people became obsessed with building new homes. Suburbs, like Matlock Heights, provided the American people an affordable place to live and a normalcy only dreamed of a generation before. The western ranch house epitomized this new relaxed suburban mindset, and grew to become one of the most popular forms of American architecture. Like sleek cars or televisions, the suburban ranch was a new, affordable, coveted thing previously inaccessible to working families. Within eight short years nearly 80 similar ranch homes were constructed in Matlock Heights.

The homes in Matlock Heights are historic in terms of representing an era. Influenced by designs of Frank Lloyd Wright and hispanic missions, architects first created single-story ranch style houses in California during the 1920s and 30s. Developers and the US government invented new processes in mass produced building materials to efficiently house soldiers during World War II. Architects combined California ranch designs with these new building materials

to create the 1950s suburban ranch we think of today. Physically, these houses consisted of a simple one story rectangular layouts under a single gabled roof with as open asymmetrical interior floorplan and an access to the outside. The single family suburban ranch design also reflected new post-war ideals, including comfort, privacy, and utility. Author Alan Hess explained, in his 2005 book *Ranch House*, that the style “represented a whole range of powerful images and myths: new possibilities, rugged individualism, self determination, ease, convenience, informality, and wide open spaces.” Ranch houses were small, but usable and easy to maintain. The ranch became so popular in the 1950s that local Bloomington hardware stores offered to draw up ranch homes blueprints on site.

The simplicity of ranch home design allowed owners and builders to work together throughout the building processes, creating a “custom-made” feel that was central to their appeal. For example, early



Construction in Matlock Heights, 1950s
Courtesy of Carol and Richard Darling

residents Carl and Peggy Price hired builder Bob Talbot to construct their home. Talbot was just one of dozens of local contractors starting businesses at the time. The Prices were young and represented an early Matlock Heights family. With a baby on the way, they wanted to move out of their small apartment. The couple heard of Waldorn Fritz and the Matlock Heights development and bought one of the biggest lots for an affordable \$2500. Young families then chose design plans that fit their needs. The Prices chose a front living room with large paned window, a couple of bedrooms off a central hallway, and a full basement. Suddenly, families could afford a custom-made home for less than the price of homes in other neighborhoods. Plus, ranch homes were designed to easily allow additions as families grew bigger. The simplicity and versatility of the ranch was central to its appeal.

The ranch allowed millions of middle class Americans to suddenly designing their own homes and popular media gave them things to discuss and pine over. Nationally, magazines like *Sunset*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Better Homes & Gardens* created an entirely new suburban economy driven by advertising and consumer products. Home products and designs were so popular that the local *Bloomington Star Courier* ran a weekly column called “Modern Home Planning.” As in the national magazines, each week home plans and appliances were advertised and discussed specifically for the local Bloomington audience. Detailed home blueprints were often advertised for Bloomington neighborhoods, marketed with catchy names like, “The Buick,” “The Chester,” or “The Annapolis.” The column also discussed new appliances, home economics, and home improvement projects.

It is impossible to notice that almost the 80 homes in Matlock Heights are very similar; its part of what makes the neighborhood special. Fritz and the County Commissioner implemented housing restrictions to ensure consistency, unity, and middle-class clientele.

Modern Home Planning

Home Designed for Bloomington

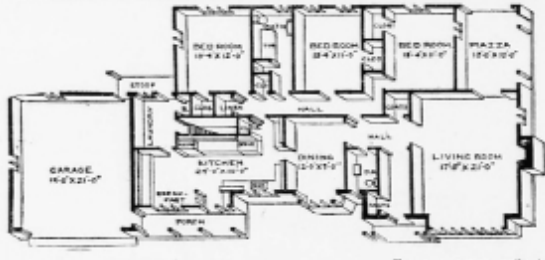
Stone Facing Adds
Distinctive Note
To 'The Annapolis'

Rooms Six
Bedrooms Three
Closets Six
Cubage 45,200 ft.
Dimensions 85' x 36'

LARGE AND PICTURESQUE, "The Annapolis" presented today by the Home-of-the-Week Team Service, was long used appearing in a suburban or rural house. Finishes and wood, combined as in the accompanying illustration, make an especially attractive and appropriate touch for the exterior of this eight-room house. Beside the roof line, the wide outside eaves, the little porch-ways and the large window areas all contribute to the distinctive appearance of "The Annapolis".

Measuring 85 by 36 feet this spacious one-story house has a total cubage of 45,200 feet. At least a 30-foot lot would be required for this house and attached garage. To give an overall appearance of spaciousness to conform with the modern appearance of the house itself, "The Annapolis" should be situated a good distance from the road with ample land on either side.

Inside this well planned modern home, the kitchen, dining room and living rooms are in the front



Bloomington Star Courier January, 25, 1955
Courtesy of The Monroe County Public Library Indiana Room

One of these restriction ensured no house cost less that \$12,000, cover less that 1,000 square-feet, or include any additional apartments. Another restricted any “chickens, pigs, ducks or any kind of fowl...[or] dog kennel.” Yet it is not only these restrictions that made the houses similar. In order to keep ranch homes affordable, basic structural design was limited. Therefore, homeowners distinguished their house from others by choosing interesting floor plans, or adding simple modern design flares on windows and doors. For example, one house in Matlock Heights may boast as large multi-pane picture windows, while another



Limestone Facade, 2420 N Fritz Drive
Bloomington HAND Department

a sleek front door with diagonal glass windows-panes. The houses all looked somewhat similar, but these small differences express the unique taste of the original homeowner.

In addition, the widespread use of local Indiana limestone made the neighborhood particularly special compared similar mid-century neighborhoods. Specifically in Bloomington, the abundance of limestone in Monroe County supplied a readily available and pleasing building material. People were inventing cheap mass produced materials specifically for use in suburban homes. Homeowners in Bloomington were fortunate that a high quality sought after material was affordable at the time. Most houses in Matlock Heights display some form of limestone facades or detailing.

By the early 1960s, nearly all construction was complete. Matlock Heights residents settled in and developed a rich life and

community. Suburban life proved to fulfill the desires of its residents. Families sought open space that allowed the outdoor environment to be an integral part of social life. The backyard became a space for children to play on home playground equipment and for inviting neighbors and friends to barbecues. Front yards became a place for green lawns, flower gardens, and pick-up baseball games. The ranch allowed the yard to become a truly usable space.

Children

To most, Matlock Heights was a place of new beginnings. A place where they could afford mortgages, enjoy space to raise a family, and generally get ahead in the growing economy. Yet there is an entire demographic that was completely uninterested in these benefits: children. The number of children in Matlock Heights has ebbed and flowed over time, but in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, the neighborhood was crawling with kids. There was always a neighborhood pick-up game or adventure to be had with one neighbor or another. Matlock Heights was the quintessential suburban environment for kids growing up. It was located in that space directly between country and city that was fertile ground for exploration.

Up until the 1970s, there were very few houses in the surrounding area that gave way to the natural country side. On the east side of Matlock Heights sat seemingly endless farmland and even a small cave. Named The Matlock Cave, it was a kind of natural wonder to explore only a stone's throw from the neighborhood, and was referenced in a 1960's guide to the caves of Indiana. More frequently, kids would explore the neighborhood itself. They would climb in the ravine running through the neighborhood, curving between the houses. The ravine, or "The Canyon" as one young girl called it, was filled with wild vegetation and even prickly pear cactus. Not only did



Children in Matlock Heights, 1960s
 Courtesy of Carol and Richard Darling

the ravine give plant life, it also gave access to exploration in Cascades Park. Kids would follow the ravine as it turn into a tunnel under north Walnut Street and emerge out into the bright light of Cascades. There kids would wander through the forest and falls, and play with snakes or turtles and other wildlife. Children could explore the curiosity of the natural environment around their own neighborhood.

Although the kids of Matlock Heights adventured into the wooded greenery bordering the neighborhood, they also enjoyed the man-made wonders of suburban life. One of Bloomington's first McDonald's and Dairy Queen bordered the neighborhood on North Walnut. Whether hanging out away from parents or working a first time job, these new staples of the suburban world became cornerstones of the community for kids. There was also a bowling alley on North Walnut and a putt-putt course on the corner of Walnut and the Bypass

that drew swarms of kids looking for something to do. As the area grew throughout the 1960s and 70s, traffic limited the freedom of kids in the neighborhood, but they still found ways to explore. Kids also explored to the newly build Indiana University sports complex, which dominated the area after the football stadium was built.

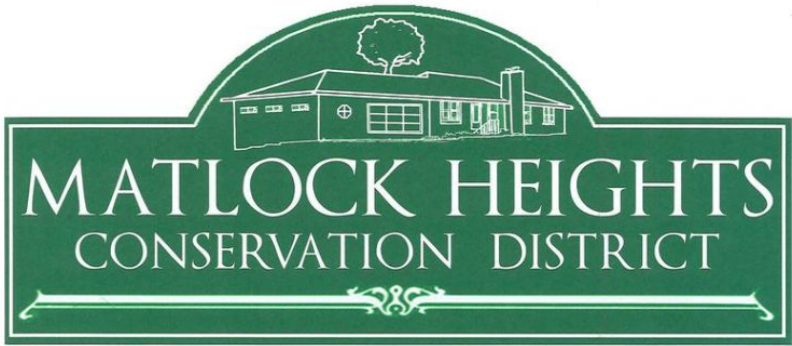
The children of Matlock Heights were the products of the early suburb. Farm kids called them city slickers, and city kids called them country. Some rode their bikes to school as kids did in the city, others ventured into the forest around Lake Griffy. They attended McCalla, Marlin, Headly, and Arlington Elementary Schools, as well as Bloomington High School North. The kids of Matlock Heights enjoyed the benefits of proximity to both urban and rural landscapes.

Becoming a Neighborhood

By the 1960 and 70s, Bloomington's northside had grown substantially. The Blue Ridge and other surrounding neighborhoods were developed and created their own identities. In the early 1970s the 46/45 Bypass was built and radically changed the northside. The highway simultaneously isolated and connected Matlock Heights. Indiana University also expanded, constructing sports facilities south-east of the neighborhood, starting with Memorial Stadium (originally called the Seventeenth Street Football Stadium) in October 1960. Like all of Monroe County, the ground under the stadium was covered in limestone and had to be blasted for the foundation. Many homes in Matlock Heights were damaged by the huge blasts, which cracked many plaster ceilings and walls, leaving a permanent reminder of the construction.

Throughout the 1970s, suburban expansion continued to push city boundaries and Bloomington's northside neighborhoods felt the growing pains. The city annexed Matlock Heights into the City of Bloomington on November 22, 1971. Nearly all the neighbors were in agreement on the annexation decision. The neighborhood had never been connected to city utilities, and many households had sewage utility problems. Annexation also brought one of the first Bloomington transit lines out to Matlock Heights, further blurring the line between suburb and city. Initially, the "bus" was a small Mercedes van that could not hold more than a dozen people.

In the 1980s a group of residents formally created the Matlock Heights Neighborhood Association and joined The Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA). To this day, the association has consistently held meetings, an annual picnic and existed as the social backbone of the community. As a strong organized group, the MHNA has fought against rising development and traffic on Bloomington's northside. In the 1990s, they successfully lobbied for stop signs on Dunn Street. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, large apartment



Street Sign Topper
Courtesy of Matlock Heights Neighborhood Association

complexes, like Colonial Crest, changed the demographic of nearby neighborhoods. Development only increased as Indiana University athletic facilities expanded and commercial buildings, like Days Inn, Denny's and a car wash, were built across the bypass.

The neighborhood has experienced increased pressure from developers over the past two decades. The neighbors have fought to preserve single-family zoning that they have long come to enjoy. With an overwhelming majority, residents of Matlock Heights voted, petitioned, and were granted designation as a neighborhood conservation district in 2013. Matlock Heights became the first historically protected mid-century neighborhood in the state of Indiana.

When asked about Matlock Heights, the first answer most residents give is how its a great place to live. The neighbors have built a close knit community and support network. It is the people of Matlock Heights who have made it the hidden gem of Bloomington. Matlock Heights is like an old map. It seems merely quaint or neat but upon deeper examination it give a glimpses of an entirely different time and place. Matlock Heights may be an ordinary neighborhood, but shows a deep rich history along its winding streets.



2301 Fritz Drive: The Matlock Farmhouse

Today, the Matlock farmhouse evokes notions of stateliness by connecting the neighborhood to its historical roots. Yet little is known about the history of the Matlock farmhouse. Although it is named for the Matlock family, this is a slight misnomer. The house was built in the 1850s, a full fifty years before Paris Matlock bought the property. The original deed to the house shows that man named Francis McKinley owned the property between 1847 and 1871. It is McKinley who most likely built the house or had it commissioned.

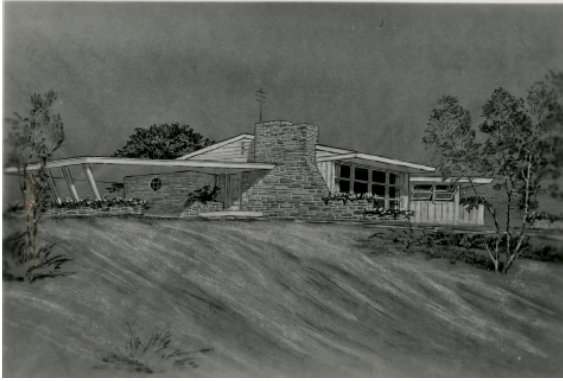
The Matlock farmhouse was characteristic of its time. The house is a Greek Revival style I-house, an architectural trend prevalent between 1840s and 1850s. I-houses often include a symmetrical two-story floor plan with details of pillars, simple 6-pane windows, transoms, inexpensive bold molding, and side-facing low pitched gables. The term “I” House was coined in the 1930s, for the prevalence of similar homes in states like in Illinois, Iowa, and Indiana. The Matlock farmhouse took from the Greek Revival style, meant to emulate the temple-like forms of ancient Greece. Greek Revival houses had been built in eastern states and by the 1840s, the style traveled west as migration moved into what is now the midwest. Like the ranch homes of the 1950s, the Greek Revival was beloved for its practicality and simplicity.

In 1952, Mrs. Eugenie Sullivan and her husband Robert bought the old Matlock farmhouse from Waldron Fritz nearly one hundred years after its construction. The Sullivans wanted to move to a larger house. A clerk at the local Black Lumber hardware store mentioned that Fritz was going to tear down the old Matlock farmhouse unless someone would buy and fix it up. Although it had fallen into disrepair, the Sullivans loved the house and felt it was a perfect fit. They bought it for \$12,500. They made many changes, including most drastically replacing the original two-story columned porch.

The Sullivans watched as the neighborhood grew up around them. Matlock Heights grew and started to develop its own unique historical markers. The farmhouse adapted along with the neighborhood, and the Matlock name was dropped, commonly called “The Sullivan House.” Mrs Sullivan initially feared that her kids would feel ashamed of living in the old house when all the other kids in the neighborhood lived in new modern ones. But to her surprise the neighbor kids said they always loved the old feel of the house. The farmhouse connected them to history, and in a neighborhood designed to be nothing if not modern, this was important.

Left page: Matlock Farm, 1948 *Photo Courtesy of Eugenie Sullivan*

Right page: *Photo Courtest of Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana*



201 Gilbert Avenue: The Marxson

Called “The Marxson,” the house located at 201 Gilbert Avenue was built in the Populist Modern style between 1954-55. The Marxson stands out through its unique style and its architect’s deep connection to the history of home design. The house captures a moment in time when architects were rejecting traditional design and embracing notions of “modern” living. Some of its prominent features include board and batten style aluminium siding, a large sandstone chimney, and a sloped carport. Inside, the open floor plan exemplifies the modernist desire for “leisure” and “relaxed” living. The house has one continuous living area that includes a vaulted living room, kitchen and patio. Although now the house is integrated indistinguishably into the neighborhood, it was one of the first houses built in Matlock Heights in 1954 and noted as artistically progressive.

The house was named for its original owner Elsie Marxson. She commissioned noted modern architect A. Judson Rogers to design her house. Mrs Marxson spent nearly three months working closely with Rogers on the blueprints in his Brown County studio. Over the next five months, Rogers met with builders, plumbers, electricians, and photographers to finish the project. In one of his final inspections of the Marxson, Rogers was asked by an art professor from Indiana University to bring his class on a tour of the house.

Alvah Judson Rogers was part of a new era of designers out of California who rejected traditional home-building styles, embracing modernism. Rogers grew up out East in Gloversville, New York, and began his career as an artist, until his brother invited him to work in California. In the 1920s and 30s California home design and building styles were on the cutting edge. Rogers’ brother built homes in Oakland and they soon began Rogers and Rogers architectural contractors. They designed small cottage-style Californian tract homes. These homes stressed up-to-date design and functionality.

By the late 1930s Rogers took what lessons he had learned and moved back east, settling in Nashville, Indiana. He brought his contemporary aesthetic to the area and developed quite a reputation. Rogers embraced modern design styles of Frank Lloyd Wright and visionary Californian architect Cliff May. The Brown County Democrat wrote of Rogers, “He is a strong believer that a home should be more than shelter and function. It should be a joy to live in—affording a pattern of living that is relaxed and conducive to a gracious way of life.”

“The Marxson” stands out as a local example of modernist architecture. Rogers continued to design houses, apartments, and public buildings throughout the 1960s. He even designed the modernist home of Matlock Heights developer Waldron Fritz in 1955, located on north of Bloomington on Bottom Road.

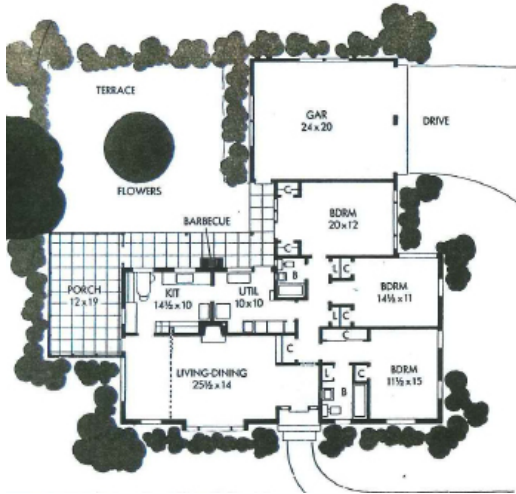


300 Gilbert Avenue: Gilfoy Sound Studios

Bloomington's vibrant music scene is nationally recognized, but Matlock Heights may seem like an unlikely place of musical importance. Yet one Bloomington's first recording studios started right in the middle of the neighborhood, at 300 Gilbert Avenue. Although the exact date is unknown, Gilfoy Sound Studios started sometime the early 1970s. IU Music Professor Jack Gilfoy converted his family's one-car garage into a state of the art recording studio. An Indiana native, Gilfoy had attended Indiana University, and was the first student to earn a degree in jazz percussion. He became well know as a professional show drummer, first playing for Al Cobine, then other greats like Errol Garner, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, as well as pop acts like Sonny & Cher, Andy Williams, Johnny Mathis, and even Elvis. Most notably, Gilfoy spent nearly thirty years as Henry Mancini's drummer.

Then noted for a rare 16-track master recorder, the Ampex MM-1000, the Gilfoy Sound Studios attracted student, professors, and musicians seeking high quality recording. The musicians recorded at Gilfoy Studios varied widely, but included jazz, independent rock bands, classical records, jingles, and demo tapes. Al Cobine recorded there, as well as renowned Bloomington composer and teacher David Baker. Other musicians included drummer Peter Erskine, pianist Alan Pasqua, bassist Chris Brown, and The Screaming Gypsy Bandits, just to name a few.

Gilfoy used his studio to foster a creative environment for learning. The studio offered audio recording classes, called Gilfoy Sound Seminars. At the time, classes like these were rare. In 1973 Gilfoy's seminars were een advertised in a issue of Billboard magazine. A nurturing teacher, Gilfoy mentored many young recording engineers, including longtime Bloomington resident and teacher Mark Hood. The Gilfoy Sound Studios later moved to a renovated house in 17th Street in early 1975, engineers produced even more records, including John Mellencamp's first demo album. Jack Gilfoy moved to Indianapolis a few years later and continued his teaching career, until his death in 2008. His studio wasn't around for long, but will always be a bit of hidden musical history of tucked away in Matlock Heights.



2431 Barbara Drive: Better Homes and Gardens Plan #2001

The home at 2431 Barbara Drive is unlike other historic homes. It not the oldest, nor the most architecturally progressive. It's simply the most popular.

Since contractors constructed homes from mass produced design plans, thousands of homeowners contracted the exact same home. The design, called "Plan #2001," was created by *Better Homes and Gardens Magazine*. Designed by architect Bertram Weber, Plan #2001 was first published in the January 1950 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens*. It quickly became their best selling plan, and thousands were built across the country. The article discussed an ingenious design with all rooms leading off a central hallway, running from the front door to the back bedroom. The magazine called the plan a "home of beauty--and convenience."

In the 1950s, *Better Homes and Gardens* was the most popular suburban home planning magazine. It started a home planning service guide in 1932 and expanded this service in the 1950s, creating a booklet called *Five Star Homes*. This publication introduces new homeowners to the homebuilding process. *Five Star Homes* published massively popular designs plans, like "Plan #2001," but also supplied materials specifications, cost-finding aids, and sample contracts upon request. *Better Homes and Gardens* proved so popular in the 1950s, it even teamed up with retail stores across the country to create permanent home planning centers.

A few homes in Matlock Heights stand out as unique examples of mid-century architecture. Yet the vast majority are more modest. Whether by desire or financial limitations, most houses in the neighborhood are small popular ranch style buildings, like the popular "Plan #2001."

Notable Neighbors

Sue Aquilla

Sue Aquilla is the owner and founder of The Bloomington Bagel Company. After attending graduate school at Indiana University for Sports Management, Sue opened BBC in 1996. Her business has become a staple of the community. Sue continues to be an avid athlete and active community member.

Hector-neri Castaneda (1924-1991)

Hector-neri Castaneda was the first Dean of the Latino Affairs at Indiana University, holding the position between 1978-1981. He came to Indiana University in 1969 and founded the philosophy journal *Nous* in 1966. It quickly became one of the most prestigious journals of its kind. He was both a Guggenheim Fellow and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Jean Creek

Dr Jean Creek was a co-founder of Internal Medical Associates in Bloomington. After graduating from the Indiana University School of Medicine in 1952, Jean became an internal medicine specialist. Jean Creek was a general practitioner, but he held the title as private doctor to revered IU President Herman B Wells.

Harold Elgar (1910-1984)

Harold Elgar was a renowned stone carver, learning his trade first at Bloomington High School, then at Herron Art School in Indianapolis. His work can be seen from Bloomington to Washington, DC. In 1979 he gained notoriety from his acting role as a stone carver in the film *Breaking Away*. Harold's front yard on Barbara Street in Matlock Heights was full of stone statues and carving. His final work is possibly his most prominent Bloomington piece: the two faces sculpture called "Red, Blonde, Black and Olive," sits on the north side of Showers-Mills Park.

Dean Fraser (1916-1986)

Dean Fraser was a celebrated Indiana University Professor of Microbiology. A Harvard graduate, he started his career at Monsanto, then spending nearly a decade in California as a professor and researcher. A professor at Indiana University for nearly 20 years, he became an authority on viruses and started a series of classes on biology for non-majors. He and his wife were proud members of their neighborhood and community.

Rosemary Fraser (1930-2009)

Rosemary Fraser was a long-time supporter of the Bloomington arts scene both as a parton and business woman. In 1968 she opened Bloomington's first local art gallery, called The Gallery, which she ran for nearly 35 years. Fraser played a major role creating the Bloomington Community Arts Commission. With her help the BCAC commissioned the limestone water sculpture outside Bloomington's city hall and the iconic bears outside the library. Fraser loved her neighborhood. She was an artist and built a small studio in Matlock Heights. She and her husband often hosted neighborhood parties, built gardens, and organized an annual Matlock Heights Fourth of July Parade.

Gil Holt

Gilbert Holt was a pilot in Matlock Heights. He worked as a state police air patrolman and pilot. He also flew for construction developer Ralph Rogers. Anyone who lived in Matlock Heights in the 1950s and 60s remembers Holt landing a helicopter in his backyard. And some lucky adults remember him giving them rides as children.

Charles Hyneman (1900-1985)

Charles Hyneman was a Professor of Political Science at Indiana University. He was born in Indiana, but left the state after graduating from Indiana University in 1923. After obtaining a PhD Hyneman spent the next decade teaching political science at many universities and even landing a job as Executive director of the Federal Communications Commission. After an illustrious career, Hyneman went back to Indiana University in 1957, gaining a Distinguished Professor title in 1961.

Doctor Tom Middleton (1916-1988)

Tom Middleton was a well respected pediatric doctor in Bloomington and surrounding counties. He came to Bloomington for college and medical school. Middleton practiced pediatrics locally from 1950 until his death in 1988. He was also an activist interested in providing better medical care for low income people. Director of health services for MCCSC, Stonebelt, Head Start, and the Monroe County Jail, he also served on the Monroe County Council from 1975-1979.

James Nakagawa

Osamu James Nakagawa is a world renowned photographer. He was born in New York City but has lived and worked in the US and Japan. He is currently a Professor of Photography at Indiana University. He is an recipient of the 2009 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship and 2014 Sagamihara Photographer of the Year Award in Japan. His photographs of limestone caves in Japan may hold particular local interest.

Tom Osborne

Thomas Osborne was the first employee at Cook Medical. In 1964, at age 17, only a few weeks before finishing high school, Tom worked in the summers for Bill Cook. His father was a jeweler and knew Bill Cook and recommended his son to help with his new business. At first Tom worked in Bill and Gayle Cook's extra bedroom making medical wire guides. Tom stayed with Cook and became senior engineer. He is also said to have had the very first color TV in Matlock Heights.

Doctor Jerry Ruff

Jerry Ruff was a pediatric doctor on Bloomington. Jerry came to Bloomington in 1949 and obtained a degree in pediatrics from IU Medical School. Jerry was always active, even racing in the first three Little 500 races between 1951-1953. The Ruffs built a tennis court and became the neighborhood's center of sport and activity for years. Dr. Ruff was a caring pediatrician, even seeing patients in his basement examining room in need be. He also sat on many local boards including those for Harmony School, the YMCA, The Human Rights Commission, and The Bloomington Track Club. The Ruff boys held the Matlock Heights newspaper route for nearly a decade.

Todd and Terry Smith

Todd and Terry Smith were both champion golfers who grew up in Matlock Heights. The Smith family is one of the most respected and talented in the history of Indiana golf. Todd was nine-time Indiana PGA Player of the Year, turning pro in 1985.

Robert (1922-2004) and Eugenie Sullivan

Robert and Eugenie Sullivan owned Sullivan's Fashion for Men in downtown Bloomington for decades. After the war Robert and Eugenie graduated from Indiana University with degrees in Business. They married, had children, and developed their beloved clothing business. Although Robert passed away in 2004, Eugenie continues to live in the old farmhouse on Fritz Drive. The Sullivan's house acted as a second home to many kids in Matlock Heights. The Sullivans' are beloved in the neighbor, and so are Mrs. Sullivan's cookies.

