



Abbottsford Entrance

Introduction

Everybody remembers the cows!

A herd of cattle in a pasture surrounded by a white fence was a surprising sight to see in the middle of the bustling Green Hills suburb on Abbott Martin Road. The farmland was owned by Frank and Margaret Leu. By the late 1990s, all of the property had been sold to Mr. Fred Webber, the primary developer of Abbottsford. Today, we continue to benefit from the vision of Mr. Leu and Mr. Webber to preserve the pastoral quality of this beautiful area.

The Leu Family

Frank Russell Leu came to Tennessee from Nebraska where his family raised cattle and his father had a construction business. After attending the University of Nebraska, Mr. Leu moved to Nashville and worked as an actuary for Life & Casualty Insurance Company of Tennessee. In 1932 he married Margaret Oman, and, in the following year, purchased the original eight acres of land with a small one-story home from Guy Wallace. Mr. Leu bought additional adjoining tracts as they became available until his estate included close to 60 acres. One parcel, consisting of ten acres and originally part of the Castleman lands, was purchased in 1939 from Lalla Radebaugh¹ who had bought it with her husband O.B. Radebaugh in 1919.² The last parcel Mr. Leu purchased was the land that runs up toward the corner of Abbott Martin and Vailwood; he made this purchase in the 1950s or later. All of the acreage was open land. Mr. Leu built a large brick house and a barn where he housed both cows and horses. In later years, Mr. Leu kept only cows; buying them as calves, and then selling them as they matured. Neighbors all knew

each other and their children played together in everyone's yards. Some of the boys especially like to hunt for civil war miniballs in the pastures and ravines on the Leu property.

History of the Abbottsford Development

By the 1970s developers began to make offers to buy Mr. Leu's land. One of these developers was Fred Webber, who had been in the residential development business for some 20 years. It was not until the mid 1980s that Mr. Leu finally agreed to sell his land to Mr. Webber to build an urban development called Abbottsford. About 43 acres of Mr. Leu's land were to be sold and developed, but Mr. Leu would retain his house and about 13.5 acres surrounding the house for the rest of his life. Mr. Leu also retained the right to sit on the development's architectural review committee to insure that the new houses met his approval.

After Mr. Leu's death in 1997 the remaining acres were added to the approved city Planned Unit Development (PUD) in 2001.³

When Mr. Leu sold his land to the developer, the agreement included an assurance that a particular parcel of the land would be preserved forever as a Civil War memorial, with any alterations subject to the approval of the Tennessee Historical Society.⁴ Mr. Leu provided funds to have a marker placed on what is now Foster Hill to commemorate the site of Redoubt #4. Mr. Webber also was committed to preserving this site because his grandfather had fought in the Battle of Nashville on the Union side. Today this site has become an inviting place to reflect upon the local historical events.



Current view of the site of Redoubt #4

Developer Fred Webber

Fred Webber, the developer for both phases of Abbotsford was very much involved with the design of the PUD. He had built a number of other developments in the area including Sugar Tree, Hillwood Estates, and Gloucester Square.

For Abbotsford Mr. Webber envisioned creating an open, gracious neighborhood based upon classic British models, naming the development “Abbotsford” after Sir Walter Scott’s home, “Abbotsford”, in Scotland.⁵ To achieve this vision of traditional residential serenity, several park-like areas were designed. These park like areas were to be encircled by houses whose front doors would face the shared green space. Streets were named after London parks. Service drives were located at the rear; main drainage areas were constructed with an eye toward enhancing green space; utility lines were buried. Each house would have at least 2800 square feet of living space and a garage. Even the gatehouse would display an inviting touch—reminiscent of a classical garden folly, a building meant to delight the eye of a garden visitor.⁶ Construction of the first homes in Abbotsford began in 1985 on St James Park and Hyde Park. When Phase II, the land around the Leu house, began development in 2001, the Leu house was torn down. There are 172 homes in Abbotsford.



The Leu house when Abbotsford began. Picture provided by Mr. Leu’s daughter.

History of the Land

Abbotsford residents are certainly not the first people to live on this land. Remains found in caves and in mounds indicate that prehistoric people lived in the area and then up through the 1700s the land west of the Appalachian Range was a vast hunting ground for various Indian

Tribes, the earliest known being the Shawnees who were subsequently replaced by the Cherokees. In 1768, the Six Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora) ceded the land between the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers to the English. The next year a large company of colonial adventurers formed for the purpose of hunting and exploring in what is now Middle Tennessee. In 1783 a peace treaty between the 13 original colonies and Great Britain was signed and in that same year Davidson County was organized as a civil division of North Carolina. In 1790 the territory in Tennessee ceased to be part of North Carolina. In June 1796 the State of Tennessee was formed.⁷

Davidson County records show that a man named Andrew Castleman was one of the Revolutionary War veterans who received bounty land in this area and that he also bought additional land from other owners. Various tracts of land designated as having been part of the Castleman lands⁸ were bought and sold by various people over the ensuing years.

In 1862 the American Civil War came to Middle Tennessee. By late in 1864 General John Bell Hood had positioned his troops south of Nashville in an attempt to retake the occupied city from the Union Troops. To defend his flank, he ordered the construction of five log and earthen forts, called redoubts, along what is now Hillsboro Road and ordered the men to hold their positions "at all hazards." One of those forts, Redoubt #4, was positioned on what is now called Foster Hill in Abbottsford. Commanded by Virginia Military Institute graduate, Charles L. Lumsden, the redoubt was a semi-enclosed fort, with four twelve-pounder Napoleon field guns in embrasured emplacements and manned by about 148 of Lumsden's battery. In heavy fighting on the afternoon of December 15, 1864 all five redoubts fell to the Union army.

After the war ended in 1865, the land in this area continued to be rural and owned by individuals.

Abbott Martin Road was originally only one lane, covered with gravel and was called Abbott Road, named after an Abbott family who lived there in 1919. By 1939 Martin was added to the name honoring Alex Martin, another resident along the road. By 1935 the road had been straightened and then stretched from Hillsboro to Lynwood Boulevard.⁹

Endnotes

1 Davidson County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 1092, p 146

2 Davidson County Register of Deeds, Deed book 528, p 146

3 Fred Webber, *One Man's Story, A West Side Story*, Nashville, 2006 p 57-68,137-139,157-158

4 Article X Abbottsford Covenants

5 Bob Battle, *The Nashville Banner*, Sep 26, 1984

6 Mr. Webber was knowledgeable about classical British architecture. He admired the work of Robert Adam (1728-1792). Adam, a Scottish neoclassical architect and interior designer, was a leader of the first phase of the classical revival in England

7 W.W. Clayton, *The History of Davidson County Tennessee*, Philadelphia 1880 p 9-68

8 Davidson County Court Minute Book J. p 30

9 Ridley Wills II, *Nashville Streets and Their Stories*, Nashville, 2012 p 3

Additional sources:

Abbottsford Covenants 1989

Winston Groom, *Shrouds of Glory*, New York, 1995, p 236-252

Wiley Sword, *Embrace an Angry Wind the Confederacy's Last Hurrah* Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville, 1992, p 316-317, 331-343

Narrative by Wiley Sword, author of *Embrace an Angry Wind the Confederacy's Last Hurrah*, accompanying the print of Rick Reeves' painting *The Darkest of all Decembers*, which depicts General Hood at Redoubt #4. (Print and narrative are displayed in the Abbottsford Clubhouse.)

Communication with designers, architects and attorneys involved in the laying out and building of Abbottsford

Conversations with members of the Leu family, neighbors of the Leu family, and longtime residents of Abbottsford

Conversation with a member of the Battle of Nashville Preservation Society regarding the Civil War redoubt on Foster Hill

Newspaper articles from the *Nashville Banner* and the *Nashville Tennessean*

Websites containing information about Redoubt #4:

<http://www.bonps.org/features/redoubt-no-4/>

<http://gregsegroves.blogspot.com/2013/12/the-battle-of-nashville-attack-on.html>

<https://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/Parks/docs/historic/Fort%20Negley/Battle%20of%20Nashville%20Driving%20Tour.pdf>

<https://emergingcivilwar.com/2014/12/16/james-wilson-and-the-battle-of-nashville-part-ii/>