



*The Historic  
Brookfield Heritage Neighborhood*



PHOTO FROM THE BROOKFIELD HERITAGE NEIGHBORHOOD WEB PAGE PHOTO GALLERY

EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN

MARCH 1, 2016

# BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE BROOKFIELD HERITAGE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Introduction

The Brookfield Heritage Neighborhood has evolved from its beginnings in the 1920's from a quiet neighborhood in the country, to a neighborhood in the middle of a busy, yet exciting, urban area. We are fortunate to be near Michigan State University and the state capital along with their accompanying amenities. We are a neighborhood of friends and families, where we can safely walk through the neighborhood and enjoy the beautiful trees and homes, and where we watch out for each other.

Many of us work or teach at the university, work in state government, teach at local schools in the area, or are doctors, attorneys, professional landscapers, or noted musicians who teach and/or play throughout the region, just to name a few occupations. There also are a number of us are retired but continue to live here because the East Lansing area and this neighborhood are welcoming to active adults.

Brookfield is a relatively small neighborhood in East Lansing with 94 homes, 2 vacant lots, and a small pocket park. There are 5 streets in the neighborhood, including Oakland Drive, Maplewood Drive, Roseland Avenue from Hagadorn Road to the east city limits, the east side of Hagadorn Road from East Grand River Avenue to the first house north of Roseland, and the north side of East Grand River Avenue from Hagadorn Road to the east city limits.

Our main claim to fame is the beautiful canopy of trees that line our streets. Most of the trees are silver maples and are getting quite old, but there has been an aggressive campaign over the years to replace old and damaged trees where necessary. It is interesting that the developer of the neighborhood planted one elm tree on each lot, hoping they would grow and become the specimen trees of the neighborhood. The developer planted the silver maples knowing they would grow faster than the elms. The plan was that as the silver maples aged and died, the neighborhood would be forested with elm trees. However, with the infestation of Dutch elm disease, nearly all the elms died while the silver maples flourished.

Over the years, there has been much discussion among neighbors about creating more diversity of trees on our streets, but for historical purposes it has been decided to stay with the silver maples. There is a new strain of silver maple, however, that has been used as a replacement tree which is stronger, slightly more upright in its growth, and provides more fall color. Pat Robinson, our neighborhood tree specialist, indicates the replacement trees are *Acer Freemanii* (Autumn Blaze), which is a cross between a red maple and silver maple. It is seedless. The variety received recognition as the Tree of the Year in 1997 by the Iowa Nursery and Landscape Association and in 2004 by Society of Municipal Arborists. It exhibits the fast growth of a silver maple, but has stronger limbs. It has a bright



**AUTUMN BLAZE MAPLE**

red/orange color in the fall as the name suggests. The tree has an oval shape rather than the arching limbs of the silver maples, but this leads to better strength.<sup>1</sup>

### Early History

The Brookfield area in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was heavily forested and marshy with an abundance of wildlife. You can experience what it must have been like by walking through the Sanford Natural Area just south of Grand River Avenue on both sides of Hagadorn Road, or just across Grand River from our neighborhood. The photo at left shows the natural area in the spring.



PHOTO OF SANFORD NATURAL AREA ON MSU

Prior to the arrival of settlers to Michigan, the land was primarily inhabited by the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes. Most famous of the Indians in this area was Chief Okemos who was both Ottawa and Chippewa. He distinguished himself at the Battle of Sandusky (Ohio) where he was severely injured with a sabre cut across his back. He won the respect of the Chippewa people and was subsequently made a Chief. After fighting other battles, he decided there was no way to defeat the settlers, so he told the U.S. Government that he no longer wished to fight. Chief Okemos later signed the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw which ceded a large amount of land including what later would be called Meridian Township to the U.S. Government.<sup>2</sup> It also included the land on which our neighborhood is located.



CHIEF OKEMOS - PHOTO FROM OKEMOSFOOTBALL.ORG

Native Americans were here when white settlement began in 1839 with the arrival of Sanford Marsh and Freeman Bray. A post office named Sanford was established the following year. Bray founded the village of Hamilton in 1840, and he recorded the plat in 1851. In 1859 the state legislature renamed the village Okemos in honor of Chief Okemos.<sup>3</sup>

Our neighborhood was bordered on the south by a path that eventually became known as Grand River Avenue. It was originally a Native American trail that went from Detroit to the eastern shores of Lake Michigan for more than 1,000 years. Over time, it served as a footpath, horse trail, wagon rut, stagecoach route, plank road, and ultimately the road that it is today.

The Michigan Legislature in 1837 decided to move the capital from Detroit to Lansing. They did so because it was more centrally located and also because there were fears about having the

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<sup>1</sup> From the Brookfield Heritage Neighborhood website, Tree Care Information, by Pat Robinson.

<sup>2</sup> Michigan History Magazine, Michigan Historical Society, 1922. *Chief Okemos* by Dr. F.N. Turner, Lansing

<sup>3</sup> Durant, Samuel W. (1880). History of Ingham and Eaton Counties, MI. D.W. Ensign & Co., Philadelphia

capital so close to the border with Canada, particularly because the memories of the War of 1812 were still fresh.<sup>4</sup>

The legislature determined it needed improvements to transportation from Detroit to the new capital in Lansing, and decided in 1850 to enact a law establishing the Lansing and Howell Plank Road Company. The company was charged with the construction of a wooden-plank thoroughfare that would connect to the Detroit and Howell Plank Road, thus improving the horrendous traveling conditions between Lansing and Detroit. The plank road, built of lumber hewn from the forests along the way, was completed in 1853 and included seven tollhouses between Lansing and Howell.



PLANK ROAD TOLLHOUSE INITIALLY LOCATED NEAR THE BROOKFIELD AREA

The tollhouse above is the one closest to Brookfield. It was located near the intersection of what is now Grand River Avenue and Dawn Avenue, approximately where Paul Revere's Tavern is located. It was on property owned by Alonzo and Hannah Proctor who were commissioned to operate the tollhouse. After the toll road went out of business, the tollhouse was moved in 1907 to 564 N. Hagadorn Road (on the east side of the street between Snyder and Melrose), where it was used as a residence for decades. It is the sole remaining plank road tollhouse in Michigan and was listed on the State Register of Historic Places on March 14, 1973, and moved soon afterward to the Meridian Historical Village in Central Park, Okemos. It has been restored to its original appearance and placed in an interpretive setting complete with a gate and a placard of toll rates.<sup>5</sup>

The first record of a settler making a claim for land that included our neighborhood was from Mortimer Martin.<sup>6</sup> He purchased the land from the U.S. Government on May 1, 1839. The first log cabin within the present East Lansing city limits was built in 1845 by Horace Havens at the site of what is now the Waterfront Apartments.<sup>7</sup> It was backbreaking work to turn the land into farmland and he was faced with many obstacles, including wild animals such as bear and wolf that preyed on his sheep, cows and pigs. This farm property was owned successively by the Havens, Chatterton, Sturges, Hagadorn and Brook families.<sup>8</sup>

The Chatterton's moved here in 1851 from Vermont. They bought the farm at the S.E. corner of what is now Grand River Avenue and Hagadorn Road. The farmland included the area that was

<sup>4</sup> Historic Detroit.org, *Michigan State Capitol*

<sup>5</sup> Meridianhistoricalvillage.org/villages-buildings

<sup>6</sup> Brooks Abstract Company, Abstract for Lot 19 of the Brookfield Neighborhood

<sup>7</sup> Undated brochure titled, "Welcome to Brookfield Heritage Neighborhood"

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

eventually to become the Brookfield Heritage Neighborhood. Sarah Chatterton wrote a letter to a friend in Vermont on August 3, 1851 which describes the area, as follows<sup>9</sup>:

Meridian Aug. 3d, 1851

Dear Friend,

I now devote a few moments in writing a letter to you thinking perhaps you would like to hear from us. We are here in Meridian and all well and hope you the same. I am teaching school two miles from home at the village of Okemos. It is a very pleasant school. I have ten shillings a week. We have bought a farm her one hundred and fifty acres, paid fourteen hundred and forty dollars. We have forty acres improved. There was six acres of wheat, we have one half of it, three acres of rye and we have all of that. We have harvested the wheat and rye. There is six acres of corn, we have one third of it. There are about fifty apple trees, most of which are large enough to bear, over twenty peach trees, they are very flourishing trees, some quince bushes, current bushes and most all kinds of fruits and berries grow here, and nuts. It is a very pleasant place here. There is a large river on the south side of our farm, the Cedar River. It is four or five rods wide and an excellent spring of water, pure and cold, as good as that in VT which we left. There is a beautiful flower garden in front of our house and large oak trees all around the house for shade trees. The plank road goes by here from Lansing (the capital) to Detroit. It is not finished all of the way but it is by here. The stage goes by here twice a day. People say that this is the handsomest place in the county. We live a little over four miles from the capital and eighty miles from Detroit. The folks say it is not near as much work to clear up land as in VT. Our house is a log house. There is two on our farm. We think of building soon. The roads do not go winding round hills and mountains but straight. They are laid out throughout the state to go east and west, north and south and once in a mile is four corners.

We had a very pleasant journey coming here. There were five families with us moving to the west. Two to Wisconsin, one to Illinois, one to the south of Michigan and we went to North Farmington, to C.D. Wolcotts, father's cousin. We stayed there about five weeks. While we were in Farmington I got acquainted with the people, liked them very well. There, they asked from 25 to 30 dollars an acre and so we thought we would go where we could get land cheaper, so we came here, a little over 60 miles from there. The people appear very friendly here and it is called a very good neighborhood. There is Vermont people that live each side of use right in sight of us. Our land is mostly oak, opening so open that we could see a deer forty or fifty rods away, so you know it not be much work to clear up the land here, so we will soon get it cleared if we have our health. I like it well here and don't wish to go back but it does not seem like old Vermont. I often think about the people there and wish that I could see them here, I think they would like it. I hope some of them will come out here before long to live. But if we never see each other again, I want to write and I will try to answer it and may we live so that we may meet where parting will never come, and be forever happy. The happy hours that I have spent with you on those green mountains will not be forgotten by me. Please tell the folks that I have not forgotten them if I am a great way from them. When it's well with thee, remember me. Write as soon as you get this letter and tell the others to write for I would be glad to hear from them. Direct your letter to Sanford P.O., Ingham County, Michigan.

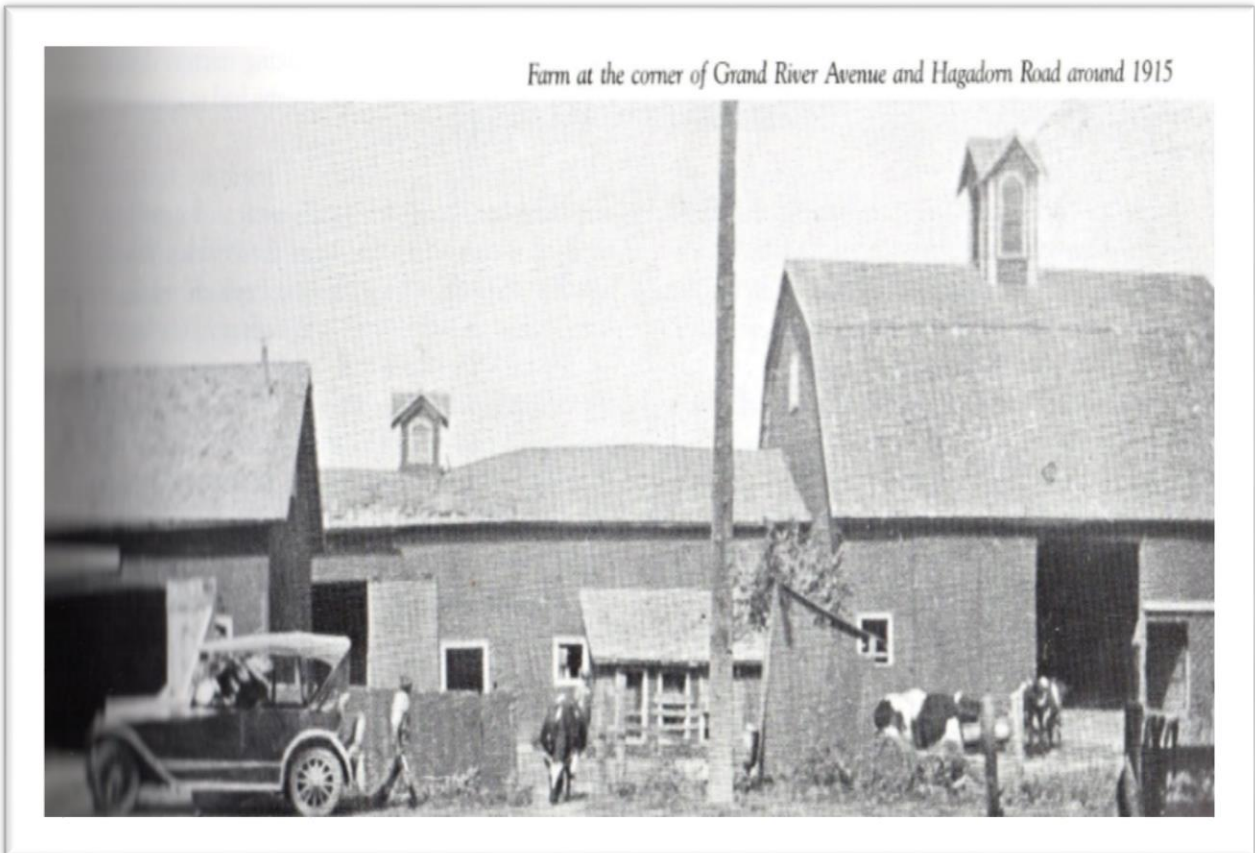
Yours Affectionately,

Sarah E. Chatterton

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<sup>9</sup> Letter maintained at the East Lansing Public Library in the Neighborhood section for Brookfield. Original letter transcribed by Hope Borbas (no other information provided)

The land remained a farm until 1923. Below is a photo of the farm dated around 1915<sup>10</sup>. Note the car parked in front of the barn and other outbuildings. It is parked on a dirt road that runs in front of the farm buildings. The house is not visible, but the barns and outbuildings are on the north side of the road and the car is parked facing west towards East Lansing and Lansing. This road eventually becomes Grand River Avenue. Beyond the barns and other out buildings are pastures and fields for growing crops. This was the land which our homes are built on.



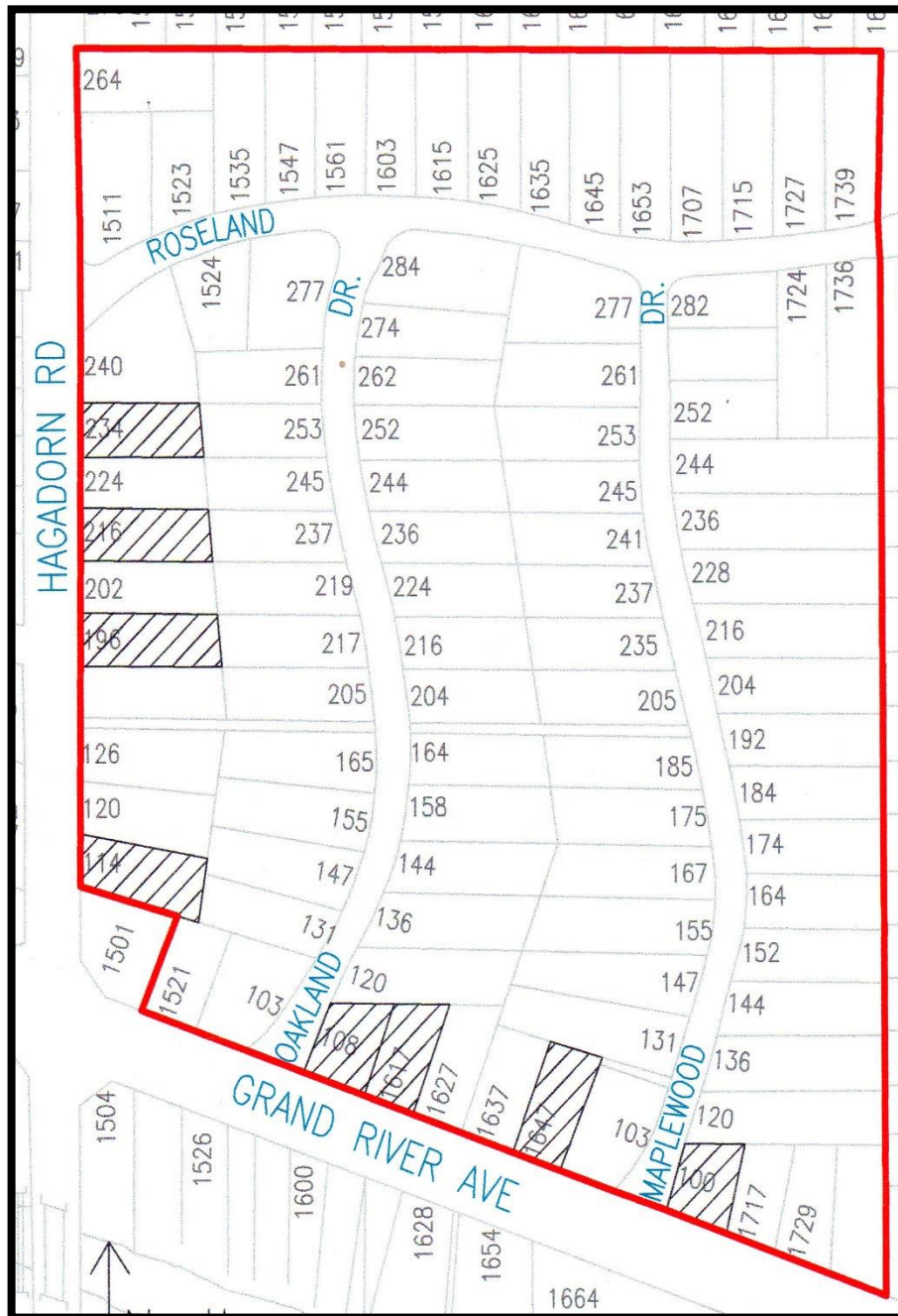
### Development of the Brookfield Neighborhood

The land was eventually bought by John and Grace Brook (hence Brookfield) from the East Lansing Realty Company in 1923. The original plat (Plat of Brookfield) was dated April 27, 1923 and recorded on August 1, 1923. The plat was divided into 98 lots of land as follows:

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<sup>10</sup> *Lansing Capitol, Campus, and Cars*, by Sallie Manassah, David Thomas and James Wallington, page 39

The plat was approved by the Meridian Township Board on May 15, 1923, the Ingham County Board on May 23, 1923, and the State Auditor General on July 31, 1923. This gave the developers approval to start the Brookfield project.



CITY OF EAST LANSING, ORD. 1082 OVERLAY DISTRICT MAP, LICENSED RENTAL PROPERTIES IDENTIFIED WITH HASH MARKS

The first house in the new subdivision was built in 1926, and the Lansing State Journal ran an ad describing the house<sup>11</sup> that read:



**An Object Lesson in Home Building and Furnishing**

Home owners and home seekers alike will find much that is interesting and instructive in the model home, just completed on Oakland Drive in beautiful Brookfield. They are cordially invited to inspect it.

Formal opening takes place this Saturday afternoon and evening, with artistic souvenirs to be distributed among the ladies. The home will also be open to visitors Sunday and every afternoon and evening next week.

**Complete in Every Detail**

The home is a perfect English type and has been modernized in all respects. It has many special features that will appeal to the housewife.

Through the co-operation of The F. N. Arbaugh Company and its eastern connections, the house has been furnished and decorated to express the latest modes. Furniture, rugs, drapes and art features carry out artistically the modern trend towards harmonizing colors.

Accompanying the ad was an article published in the Lansing State Journal, East Lansing Community Life Section dated September 2, 1926, which read as follows:

East Lansing's phenomenal development of the last few months, not only in its own city growth but as a preferred home section of the city of Lansing, is accentuated in the announcement of the fall opening of the highly restricted subdivision, Brookfield, which is on East Grand River Avenue just west of the fairgrounds (see note below). The East Lansing Realty Co., which sponsored Ardson Heights and Strathmore, invites the public to inspect the property this Sunday.

The property contains but a limited number of lots, platted to the wider frontages that modern architecture demands. They range in width from 80 feet up and average one-third to one-half acre in area. The improvement program has been rapidly pushed forward and the property

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<sup>11</sup> The ad and article were provided by Pat and Kevin Poli, 217 Oakland Drive.

offers surfaced roadways, electricity and sidewalk, with careful restrictions that assure only the most desirable residential tone. When built up, the property gives East Lansing a new \$700,000 residence district.

“Brookfield supplies the larger demand of modern development,” says I.M. Shoesmith, general manager of the East Lansing Realty Co. “Rapid transportation afforded by the automobile has changed the old order. Discriminating families require home sites of larger area and tend to range farther from the congested smoke-grimed sections where they can establish little estates and live in quiet, healthful conditions, yet be within a few minutes easy ride of the shopping district.

“East Lansing meets this need perfectly, and this is responsible for the really sensational growth that the city has shown in the past five or six years. It accounts for the outstanding success of other subdivisions which made these perfect for the home builders and both the lender and the investor profited.

“East Lansing, five years from now, will demonstrate the wisdom of this. The building activity now going on is a forecast of the future that is already in the making. This city, without a doubt, will double and triple its population in less than ten years.”

The sponsors of Brookfield have gone a step further. They have provided the same improvements and the same careful restrictions, but in addition have platted the property to the exceptionally roomy lots that insure privacy, and promote health in the home.

The model home, now nearing completion, will be open for inspection in the immediate future. The East Realty company, also, anticipating the swift, steady development of this section, has enlarged its operating staff by the addition of a fully equipped subdivision department. Fred M. Hill and Lon Polk, who were motivating forces in the development of Westmoreland, Inverness, Heathwood and other sites in Lansing, have joined the organization, and Charles Moses, of Youngstown, long associated with Lansing developments, has been rehired as sales manager.

Brookfield will be open for inspection this Sunday, but it is anticipated that no lots will be sold until representatives will be on the site in the afternoon to furnish information and show visitors around.

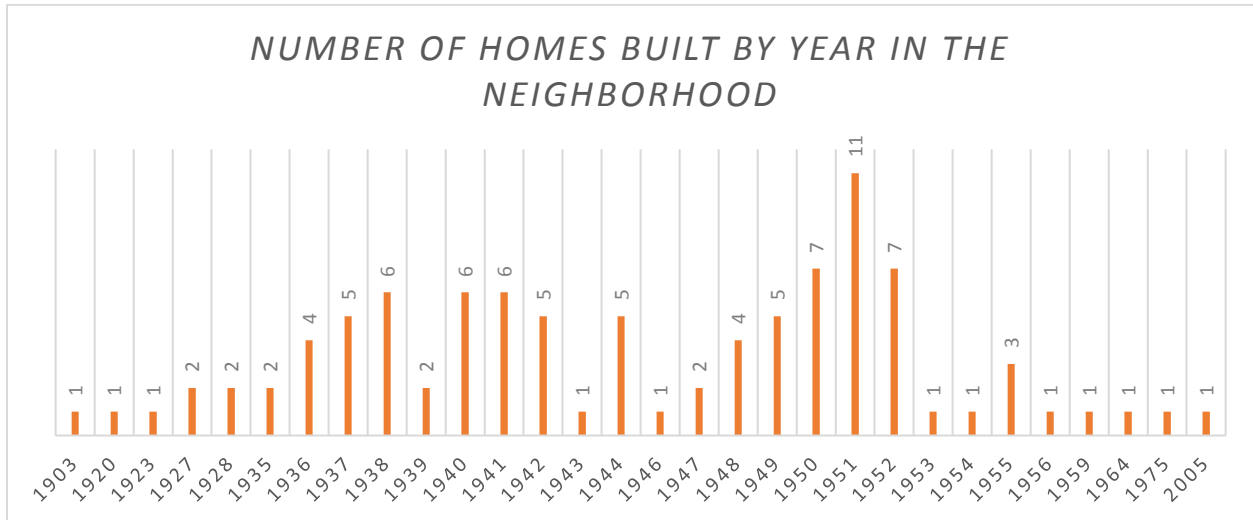
(Note: There was a fairgrounds just east of Brookfield that included a stables on the south side of Grand River Avenue and a horse trotter’s track on the north side of Grand River. The east side of the track ran from Roseland to Brentwood in Meridian Township. These roads mirror the outline of the old track.)<sup>12</sup>

The house in the ad is at 217 Oakland Drive and the current owners are Pat and Kevin Poli. There were several other houses already built in the neighborhood, but they had been built prior to Brookfield being platted as a subdivision. The oldest house in our neighborhood is at 1617 East Grand River Avenue, which was built in 1903 and is currently owned by Harvey and Donna Clarizio.

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<sup>12</sup> Kathy Prince provided me this information. She also has two maps which are of interest, one from Sept. 1950 and the second from Sept. 1954, copies of which are included at the end of this document as Items 4 and 5.

Unlike most subdivisions, our homes were built over time and each home is quite distinct from the others in the neighborhood. Below is a chart showing how many homes were built by year in the neighborhood:



City of East Lansing Assessing Records

<https://is.bsasoftware.com/bsa.is/AssessingServices/ServiceAssessingAttachmentDetail.aspx?p>

Annexation to East Lansing, Becoming a Neighborhood Association and Designation as a Heritage Neighborhood

Although the Brookfield Neighborhood was often mentioned as being in East Lansing, it wasn't until there was a special election held on November 5, 1957, that approved the annexation of our neighborhood from Meridian Township to East Lansing. The purpose of the annexation was principally to move to the East Lansing school district. Also, because Brookfield was contiguous to the City, it seemed rational to annex to the city to take advantage of the services offered by the city. Emily Frame and Verna Hodge, both residents of the neighborhood, spearheaded the campaign and the annexation was effective on December 31, 1957.

I could not find a date when Brookfield was made a neighborhood association. However, the purpose of the association has always been clearly stated as follows:

Purpose of the Association

- Foster goodwill and friendship among all residents.
- Preserve the residential character, natural environment and trees lining the streets of the subdivision.



NEIGHBORHOOD BANNER DESIGNED AND SEWN BY VERNA HODGE

- Act in the best interests of the neighborhood or Association members regarding requests for community improvements and welfare.
- Study the problems of the neighborhood as brought to the attention of the Association by its members and to take whatever action may be necessary to support the purposes outlined above.

In 1989 and 1990, the neighborhood lead by Emily and Verna also organized the effort to get the Brookfield Neighborhood recognized as a Heritage Neighborhood as allowed by the city's Code of Ordinances.<sup>13</sup>

They, along with other volunteers, completed the History and Reconnaissance survey of buildings and structures in the neighborhood. These documents were submitted to the East Lansing Historic District Committee and incorporated in their report to the Michigan Bureau of History in 1987. They found that our neighborhood had continued its original covenants of 1924 with renewals in 1949 and 1974 current to the date of 1999.

The volunteers then collected signatures for a petition which contained 113 signatures from 68 properties, representing 69.4% of the residences in the proposed Heritage Neighborhood area as required by Section 8.509 (I) of the Historic Preservation Code.

On January 11, 1990 a petition was officially submitted to the East Lansing Historic District Commission who accepted it and forwarded it to City Council recommending unanimous approval. City Council, without debate, did unanimously approve designation of Brookfield as a Heritage Neighborhood effective on February 6, 1990. (Note Attachment A for formal actions.)

### Summary

Our neighborhood continues to be one of the more desirable places to live in the city. However, it is important we continue to be vigilant and to work hard to assure our neighborhood remains a vital part of East Lansing. We face certain challenges, such as aging trees, encroaching commercial development, traffic caused by vehicles cutting through the neighborhood to avoid the lights on Grand River and Hagadorn, noise related to traffic, and expansion of services such as the Bus Rapid Transit System proposed by CATA which could have unintended consequences for our neighborhood.

We are fortunate to have people in the neighborhood that can help us address these issues. Also, East Lansing has established Neighborhood Partnerships Initiative City Liaisons which provides city staff liaisons to neighborhoods as part of the Neighborhood Partnerships Initiative. These liaisons work one-on-one with neighborhood associations to create important two-way dialogue. The liaisons also provide support to neighborhoods by creating a personal link to City Hall.

The idea behind the liaison is to provide neighbors with the tools and information necessary to

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<sup>13</sup> East Lansing City Code Sec. 8.409 and 8.510 – it encourages residents to recognize and preserve the historic identity and livability of their neighborhoods, including such amenities as signs, tree planting, lighting fixtures and landscaping. However, there are no remodeling restrictions as applicable to buildings in historic districts.

work with other neighbors, take on new projects and become more actively engaged in their neighborhood. The specific role of a city staff liaison is to:

- Get to know the neighborhood, its officers and residents.
- Put a name and a face to city government by creating a working relationship with their assigned neighborhood associations.
- Attend neighborhood association meetings and events as necessary.
- Serve as the primary point of contact for any questions or concerns from the neighborhood association or individual residents.
- Provide important information to neighborhood associations on City services and programs.

The city staff liaison for Brookfield is:

- Eilis Seide, Assistant to the City Manager
- Phone: (517) 319-6920
- Email: [eseide@cityofeastlansing.com](mailto:eseide@cityofeastlansing.com)

I have accumulated what information I could find of the Brookfield Heritage Neighborhood from material at the state of Michigan, Ingham County, Meridian Township, and city of East Lansing histories and records. If you have anything you like included, such as old pictures, newspaper clippings, or legal documents, please contact me at [michaelvbenedict@msn.com](mailto:michaelvbenedict@msn.com).

*Item One:*  
EAST LANSING  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
AGENDA ITEM – NEW BUSINESS, ITEM C  
January 11, 1990

New Business, item C: A completed petition for Heritage status was submitted by the "Brookfield Heritage Neighborhood."

Edna Brookover moved with support by Chris Hill-Rowley to accept the petition for "Heritage Neighborhood" designation.

All yeas. Motion carried.

*Item Two:*  
EAST LANSING  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
RESULTS OF COMMISSION ACTION

January 17, 1990

Ms. Judy Benedict, President  
Brookfield Neighborhood Association  
147 Oakland Drive  
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Dear Ms. Benedict:

At its January 11, 1990 meeting, the East Lansing Historic District Commission took action to unanimously recommend approval of a Heritage Neighborhood designation for Brookfield Neighborhood.

The Commission's recommendation will now be sent to City Council for review and final action. I will keep you posted on the status of your application and notify you when Council is likely to take action.

Sincerely,

Donna J. Steinebach Historic Preservation Officer  
Community Development Department

cc: Emily Frame  
Verna Hodge

*Item Three:*  
EAST LANSING CITY COUNCIL

ACTION ON REQUEST FOR DESIGNATION  
OF  
BROOKFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD AS A HERITAGE NEIGHBORHOOD

Minutes  
East Lansing City Council  
February 6, 1990

Council considered a request from the Brookfield Neighborhood Association to the Historic District Commission for designation as a Heritage neighborhood, as provided in the Historic Preservation Code. The petition submitted by Brookfield meets the requirements of the Preservation Code and all other stated requirements for Heritage Neighborhood designation and the Commission recommends unanimous approval. Heritage Neighborhood Plans and budgets must be approved by both the Historic District Commission and City Council.

In support of Heritage Neighborhood designation and Heritage Neighborhood Programs, the Commission also recommends an \$18,375 General Fund appropriation for FY 90/91 to provide signage and matching funds to help implement Heritage Neighborhood Improvement Plans.

It was moved by Council member Monsma and supported by Council member Rosen to approve the resolution only which designates the Brookfield Neighborhood as a Heritage Neighborhood. All yeas. Motion carried.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, the City's Historic Preservation Code provides for the designation of Heritage Neighborhoods to encourage residents to preserve and enhance the historic identity and livability of their neighborhoods; and

Whereas, Brookfield Neighborhood has complied with all the requirements for Heritage Neighborhood Designation, including the submission of a petition signed by a majority of the Neighborhood residents endorsing said designation; and

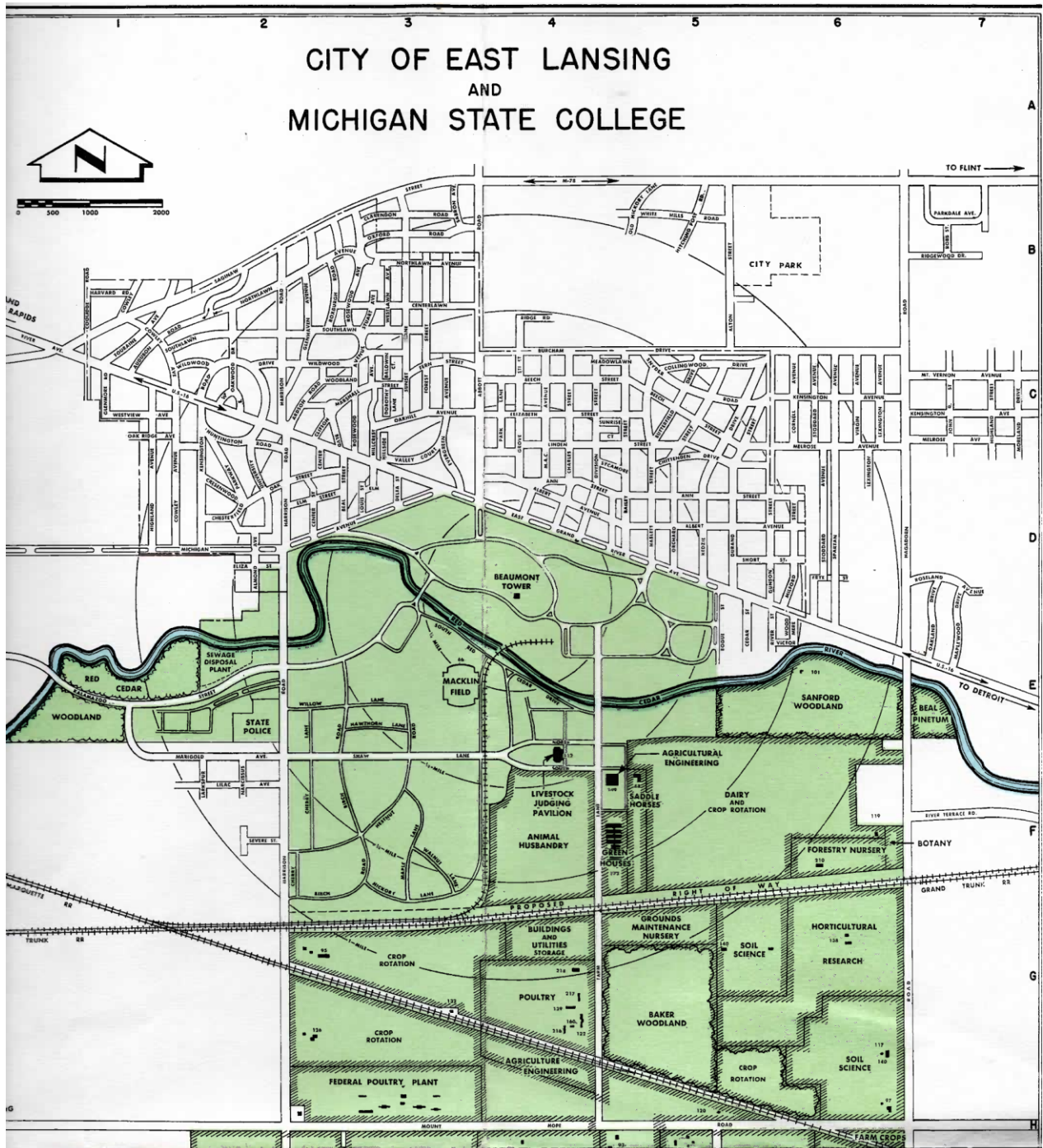
Whereas, the Historic District Commission has unanimously recommended designation of Brookfield as a Heritage Neighborhood.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that in accordance with Section 8.509 of Chapter 104 of Title VI 11 of the Code of the City of East Lansing, the East Lansing City Council hereby designates the Brookfield Neighborhood as a Heritage Neighborhood.

City of East Lansing  
Liz Schweitzer, Mayor  
Michael Benedict, City Clerk  
Date: February 6, 1990

*Item Four:*

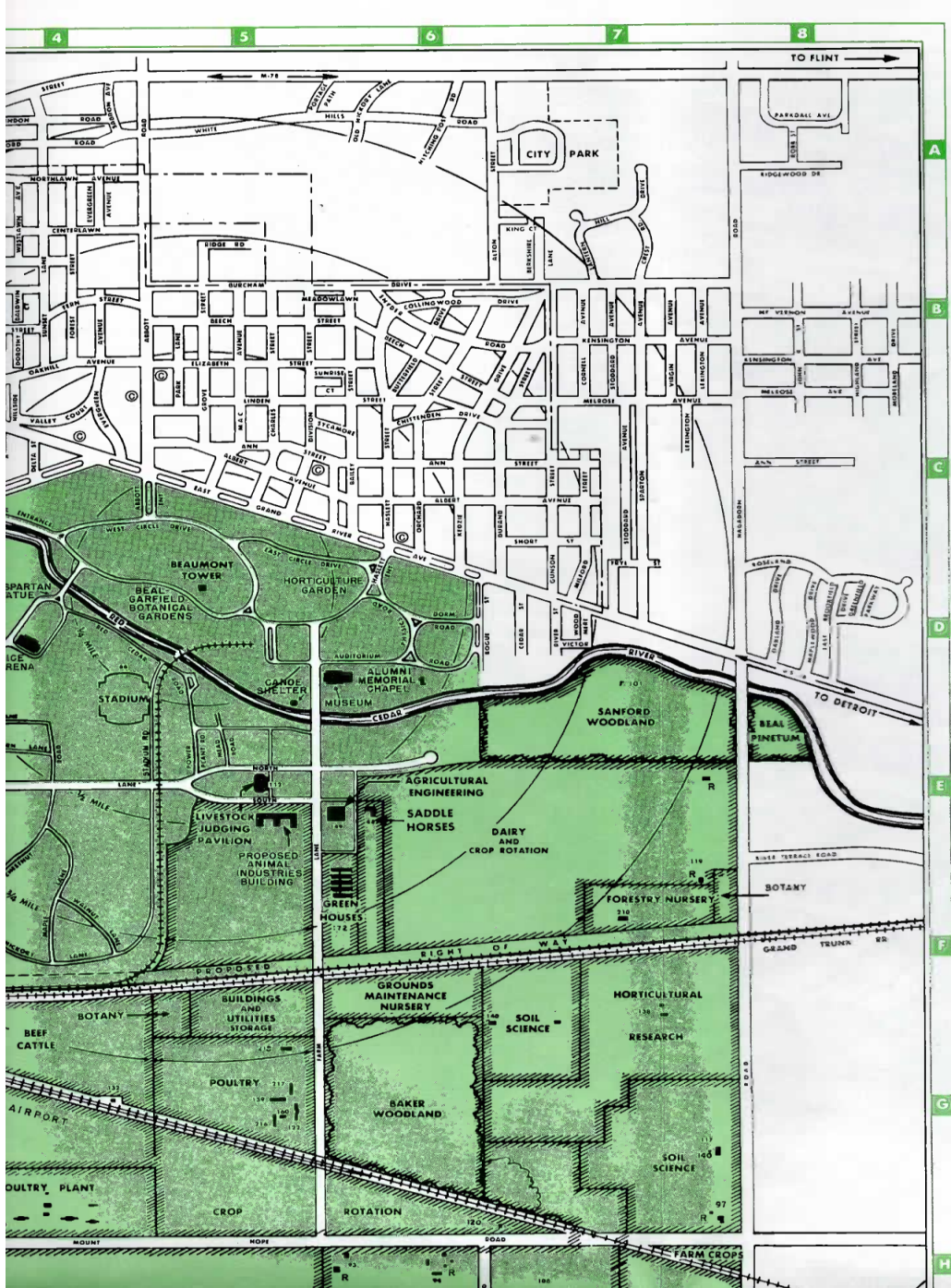
Map Dated September, 1950



In 1950, Roseland Avenue was a dead end street heading east from Hagadorn Road. Bill Sharp, a previous member of the East Lansing City Council and now deceased, told me that he used to hunt for rabbit and pheasants in the field at the end of Roseland. Also, although not shown on the map, there was a trotter's horse track and stables in that area.

Item Five:

Map Dated September, 1954



In 1954, Roseland was extended east and several streets were added, although Roseland was still a dead end street.