

WYNNEWOOD

"A Tonic to the Shelter-hungry Nation"

BY RON EMRICH

The result of showman, fine art collector, war hero, and visionary entrepreneur Angus Wynne Jr.'s "ahead of his time" imagination, the 820-acre planned community of Wynnewood was lyrically described in its initial promotional materials in 1946 as perched "on crested highland at the Southern Gateway where Dallas meets the Gulf breeze." With ultimate development costs expected to reach \$25 million, Wynnewood was predicted in five years to house 10,000 people in more than 2,200 houses and 1,000 apartment units and was considered "the country's largest privately owned housing project."¹

Never before had a Dallas land development been this large or comprehensive, but Wynne's community, located southwest of "old" Oak Cliff, was planned to dramatically and quickly alleviate the severe housing shortage that had plagued the city—and the nation—as returning war veterans by the thousands sought homes. Not only was Wynnewood to be big, but it was also to be unique. A nationally prominent landscape architecture firm from Kansas City planned the 820 acres following the most modern of community planning precepts. A distinguished Dallas architect and his colleague were responsible for the design of hundreds of homes and buildings in the development. The result of their work would be an unconventional layout of winding streets with only limited connections to major thoroughfares. Features would include wide building lots, a central shopping center integral to the community, an apartment complex located in a lush garden setting, and distinctive, contemporary architec-

tural design for both individual houses and public buildings. All these features were peerless among conservative postwar Dallas housing developments.

A year later, on February 16, 1947, Wynne's development company, American Home Realty, advertised that homes were finally available for inspection and purchase in "Dallas' largest and most modern development."² For veterans of World War II, Wynnewood home purchases could be financed without a down payment, and with monthly payments beginning at \$54.00 including taxes and insurance. During the same week, President Harry Truman announced the lifting of most postwar price controls; the Cunard White Star Line advertised the first postwar sailing of the *Queen Elizabeth* from New York to Liverpool; Van Winkle Pontiac on Oak Lawn Avenue in Dallas asked car buyers to be patient while waiting for production to resume on automobiles; and at the Polaroid headquarters in New York Edwin Land unveiled the first camera to produce a finished print one-minute after the picture was snapped.³

Advertising materials described the new Wynnewood neighborhood as a "nationally recognized, long-range, well-planned development offering a sound investment in good living. Each home incorporates the best in architectural conception and quality workmanship."⁴ Wynnewood houses, designed by prominent Dallas architect Roscoe DeWitt, were available with eighteen different floor plans and three to four alternate elevations in traditional, ranch, or modern designs built in brick or stone veneer.



Angus Wynne, Jr., about 1946.

The first houses in Dallas to be constructed with concrete slab foundations,⁵ the homes boasted ceiling insulation, weather stripping, central heat and attic fans, and all-electric kitchens, and some had wood-burning fireplaces with gas inserts. Some 665 houses were under construction or immediately planned in the development south of Illinois Avenue, with purchase prices in the first inventory of available houses west of Zang Boulevard in the \$10,000 range, and additional homes east of Zang to be priced between \$6,500 and \$8,500.

The earliest public announcements of the Wynnewood development appeared in the daily newspapers, the Dallas Power & Light Company's customer magazine, and other publications in April 1946, at the height of immediate post-war shortages of housing, building materials, steel, automobiles, and other commodities. The shortage of housing units, both rental and for purchase, was critical. As late as December,

President Harry Truman was describing the housing crunch being experienced by war veterans as "extremely urgent"⁶ as he lifted controls on building starts for new, "non-luxury," housing units while maintaining tight limits on new commercial construction. Wartime industries were still re-tooling for peacetime production, and the housing shortage was being exacerbated by extreme shortages of building materials as well. The office of National Housing Expediter, headed by former Louisville mayor Wilson Wyatt, was scrambling to push legislation through Congress that would encourage private investment in large scale housing developments by adopting a government guarantee to developers of a 3-1/2 to 4 per cent return on investment, 95 per cent FHA loans, and other mechanisms to assist moderate-income families and returning veterans in meeting their housing needs.

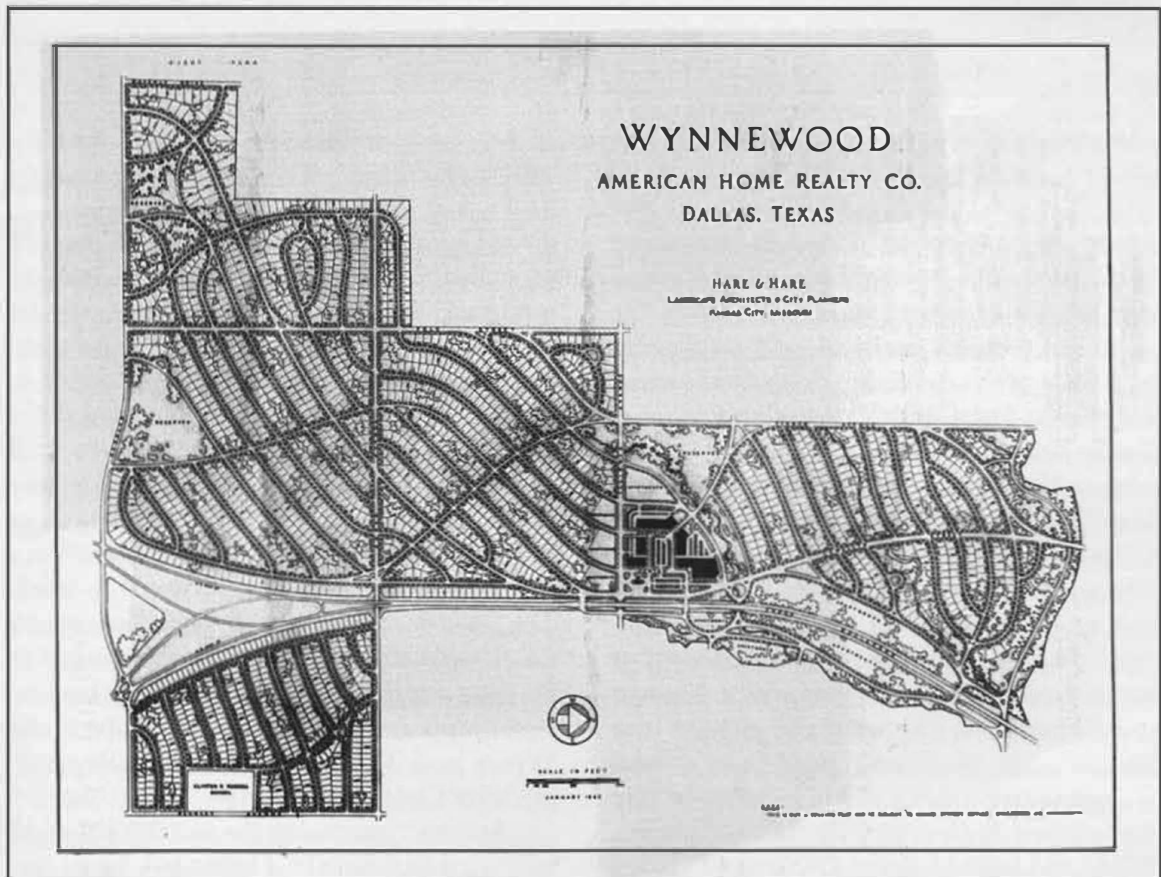
Dallas Mayor Woodall Rodgers appointed a panel to explore ways to speed up housing development in Dallas as well. He asked the Dallas Home Builders Association to survey builders about materials shortages, saying, "It's not how many homes we can start, but how many veterans we can put under a roof that counts."⁷

The land that would become Wynnewood had been assembled during the previous thirty-five years, mostly by banker Edward J. Gannon and his family in a largely unrealized vision for expansive development south of downtown Dallas. The 820-acre tract was carved out of two original Peters Colony land patents granted before 1852 to the Wright and Robinson families, who had emigrated from Tennessee and Missouri. By the 1870s, the precinct was widely settled and under cultivation by dozens of families who were part of the community of Jimtown. Located near the present intersection of Hampton Road and Clarendon Drive was druggist James Bumpas' general store, waystation and feed store. The crossroads was dubbed Jimtown in 1878 when it was designated as a U.S. Post Office. The store served some three dozen farm families in the area, and eventually a Cumberland Presbyterian Church was also founded in a brush

arbor nearby. The Jimtown Road followed the main branch of Cedar Creek and connected Hord's Ridge with the village of Cedar Hill to the southwest. From Jimtown, the Hampton Road extended north to the railhead town of Eagle Ford. The Wrights sold land in about 1882 to the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railroad to provide the right-of-way along a Cedar Creek route paralleling Jimtown Road as the Santa Fe connected Dallas with DeSoto, Hillsboro, and Central Texas. (The right-of-way is now the DART Light Rail line.)

The Wright family still owned much of the farmland near Cedar Creek when, just before World War I, Dallas banker and real estate

investor E.J. Gannon, with realtor B.R. Parks, First National Bank executive Nathan Adams, and other partners, began purchasing large parcels of land in the area. Gannon expected Dallas to grow to the south, according to descendants who remember his fondness for the hilly topography and lush landscape.⁸ In 1911 the partnership, named the American Home Realty Company, deeded a right-of-way along part of Cedar Creek to the Texas Electric Railway for the interurban streetcar system's Trinity Heights Loop. The partners no doubt expected that transit access to the land would encourage development. But while developer Frank Jester's Elmwood neighborhood was platted and under



Hare & Hare, Kansas City landscape architects and planners, completed the development plan for Wynnewood in November 1945. Following the natural conformation of the hilly land, residential streets were well insulated from the noise and odors of nearby major traffic arteries by limiting entries from the thoroughfares into the neighborhoods. The streets were deliberately curved in order to cut down motorists' speed and discourage through traffic, as well as to create a more attractive, pastoral setting for the new community.



Some in Oak Cliff called Wynnewood North "Pill Hill" during the 1950s because of the many physicians who lived there, including Dr. Charles Ogilvie, who bought the DeWitt & Swank-designed modern house at 421 S. Manus in 1951.

construction on a former dairy farm to the west by the late 1920s, most of the so-called Gannon tract remained undeveloped until the 1940s.

It was probably family connections that led to the sale of the American Home Realty company and its Oak Cliff land to the partnership of **Toddie Lee Wynne** and Clint Murchison, for a relationship by marriage linked the Gannon and Murchison families. Then, in the early 1940s, the 820 acres south of Cedar Creek was conveyed to Wynne when he and Murchison dissolved their business partnership. The land was gaining value rapidly and was ripe for development. **Straddled by the Beckley Club neighborhood to the east and Elmwood to the west, the property was bisected by the new State "superhighway" 67 and 77, connecting Oak Cliff and Dallas to San Antonio and Brownsville.** The Dallas County-, WPA- and State Highway Department-funded project created a four-lane, "high speed" trafficway divided by a planted center parkway. The road was an extension of a widened Zang Boulevard south past the city limits, over the

Santa Fe Railway tracks and the "semi-jungle of vegetation along the course of Cedar Creek" by way of a 350-foot overpass.⁹ Two miles south, the new motorway would split into two roads, one connecting to State Highway 77 leading to Waxahachie, Austin, and San Antonio, and the west branch carrying motorists past Cedar Hill all the way to Brownsville. The new highway would create instant and easy access directly to the heart of Wynne's 820 acres, even as the Texas Electric's nearby interurban line was abandoned. The Santa Fe overpass established a gateway into the property, and the highway's split occurred in the middle of the tract. There could have been no better opportunity for development of the Wynne land. The highway was slated for opening "after Christmas" in 1941.¹⁰

At some time during the war that halted all significant building in Dallas and across the nation, Toddie Lee Wynne tapped his nephew, Angus Wynne, Jr., to head up American Home Realty and the development project in south Oak Cliff. Young Angus had entered the U.S. Navy in

1940 and was distinguishing himself in service in both the European and Pacific theatres of war, earning eight battle stars and a presidential citation.¹¹ Ultimately appointed Executive Officer on the battleship *USS Nicholson* (1941-44) and *USS Grayson* (1944-45), Wynne honed leadership skills that, with his charming and ebullient personality, would serve him well in the highly competitive postwar world of Dallas business, and particularly real estate development.

Angus, perhaps with his uncle Toddie Lee's involvement, selected a historic family-associated name for the massive real estate venture, which given the heavily wooded nature of at least the northern portion of the tract was particularly appropriate. The Wynnes were believed to be descendants of Dr. Thomas Wynne, a Welsh physician who had immigrated with William Penn in 1682 to the American colonies and helped to found the Quaker settlement of Pennsylvania. Dr. Wynne's descendant, Col. Owen Jones, constructed a mansion on the family's plantation outside Philadelphia in the mid-nineteenth century, naming it Wynnewood.¹² It was after this historic family homestead and the nearby railroad station and surrounding community that the development in Oak Cliff, Texas, would be named.¹³

Before the war's end, American Home Realty had already engaged the landscape architecture firm Hare & Hare to lay out a land development plan for the 820-acre Wynnewood property. Founded by Sidney Hare in Kansas City in 1902, the firm expanded in 1910 to include Hare's son Herbert, a Harvard-educated student of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. The partnership established an early and long association with fellow planner George Kessler and worked on early "district scale planning" projects such as J.C. Nichols' 2,500-acre Country Club District in Kansas City beginning in 1913.¹⁴ Its national reputation established by the late 1920s, Hare & Hare was by that time providing consulting services to city planning and parks commissions throughout the United States, including Oklahoma City, Houston, Fort Worth, and

Dallas. Indeed, Hare & Hare took up many of George Kessler's commissions upon his death in 1923, including his ongoing work in creating and expanding his Plan for Dallas. Herbert Hare was working on a parks master plan for the City of Dallas at about the same time as he began drafting a land plan for the development of the 820-acre Oak Cliff tract, and in 1945 the city annexed the Wynne property in anticipation of its development.

Angus Wynne returned to Dallas from Navy duty in the summer of 1945, having amassed more "points" toward release from duty than nearly anyone in the U.S. military, and plunged into the planning and construction of the Oak Cliff development.¹⁵ B. "Hick" Majors, a Dallas real estate investor and developer of long standing, joined Toddie Lee Wynne in overseeing the project. It was Angus, however, who created the vision for a unique, well-designed, and high quality community. Dallas architect Roscoe DeWitt joined the team, having been recruited by the "uncompromising" Angus, probably as a result of his two-decade reputation for outstanding design commissions in the city.

DeWitt had been an early business partner with Mark Lemmon when that distinguished architect established his own practice after leaving the office of Hal Thomson in the 1920s. Later DeWitt would design the Contemporary Home for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition at Fair Park, and in 1937 he picked up where Frank Lloyd Wright left off in designing Stanley Marcus's East Dallas residence. The Modernist Movement-inspired design for the Cedar Springs Place public housing project in Oak Lawn of 1937 was also a result of DeWitt's creative involvement.¹⁶ Roscoe DeWitt's decade of work in the modern architecture idiom was well known by the time Angus Wynne tapped him as architect for the Oak Cliff development. DeWitt was engaged to design the prototype houses for the residential portion of the development, and his distinctive designs, incorporating the "newest architectural and engineering ideas," were a major marketing prop for the development.¹⁷

The City of Dallas issued the first building permit on February 22, 1946, based on plans by Roscoe DeWitt for a one-story brick veneer house with integral garage at 2319 Salerno Street.¹⁸ The Henry C. Beck Company, soon to be an international construction giant, was the contractor charged with erection of the first 150 houses, which were underway by the summer. Mass production techniques developed in various war industries were used to build quickly and efficiently, with pre-fabrication “mills” placed on the site to assemble roof trusses and other important elements of the dwellings. The company stated its goal to erect a complete house frame in half a day in order to finish each house in twenty days, although materials shortages continued to plague the project throughout the year and into 1947. The aggressive construction schedule was rarely met.¹⁹ In a postwar climate of continued shortages and high costs—an October 1946 newspaper headline announced that “Meat, Plentiful But Costly, Regains Place on Menus”²⁰—homebuilding was at best an uncertain enterprise. Mayor Rodgers’s special housing committee identified severe shortages of hardboard, floorboards, doors, and windows, and in August newspaper headlines read, “Lack of Bathtubs Keeps Vet from 1,290 New Houses.”²¹ A particular shortage of sheetrock, the gypsum-based substitute for plaster that sheathed house and apartment interior walls, lasted well into 1950. Contractors would have to secure quantities of the material before bidding projects while still paying as much as 50 cents for a square foot that normally cost a nickel.²² In June 1946, AHR announced that it had purchased the “second oldest” lumber mill in Dallas, Blessing & Giddens, in order to speed up construction by controlling a source for specially milled products such as stairways, door and windows and frames and cabinet work.²³

The private and public sectors were scrambling to address the challenges and shortages in order to speed up house construction. The FHA mortgage insurance program—critical to Wynne’s ability to sell Wynnewood houses to

veterans and to build the hundreds of apartment units soon to come on line—relaxed its rules on yard size, ventilation, type of construction, room size, and other quality issues in early 1947.²⁴ Meanwhile, Dallas-based Texlite company, which during the war had manufactured wing assemblies for B-24 bombers, was hurriedly re-tooling to fabricate porcelain enamel sinks to respond to the critical shortage of plumbing fixtures.²⁵

In spite of the shortages, homebuilding continued briskly in Dallas. Residential building permits issued in the State of Texas in May 1946 reached \$50 million in construction value,²⁶ and in one week in August, residential permits worth \$1.5 million were released by the City of Dallas, two-thirds of which were for Wynnewood houses alone.²⁷ Dallas Power & Light, the local utility company, estimated that by year’s end, more than 4,500 new houses would be constructed in Dallas in 1946.²⁸

During the week in early December 1946 in which Wynnewood’s first completed house was pictured in the newspapers, an Oldsmobile with automatic transmission was finally available for inspection at the Lone Star Olds Cadillac dealership. At the Majestic Theatre downtown, Paulette Goddard was appearing in the film “Diary of a Chambermaid”; at the Kessler Theatre, the nearest neighborhood movie house to Wynnewood, “Captain Kidd,” with Randolph Scott was playing; and at the Fair Park Auditorium, Georges Balanchine was directing the Dallas appearance of the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. The first families moved into houses on Salerno and Anzio Streets in early 1947, just as DeWitt and his new architecture partner Arch B. Swank began work on construction drawings for the first group of apartment buildings. The two-story buildings of the first phase, with one- and two-bedroom units, were to be located along Illinois Avenue on the north edge of the new housing development. The architects’ blueprints included a lush landscaping plan designed by Hare & Hare, specifications for children’s playgrounds serving groupings of



Shoppers from across Dallas and the region came to Wynnewood Village to take advantage of the thousands of close-in parking spaces and expansive selection of stores.

apartment buildings, and extensive telephone wiring for each unit, touted as a “first” in Dallas apartment complexes.

Angus Wynne hired the United Construction Company to build the red brick apartment buildings, and the company tapped Luther Clark to supervise construction during 1947 through 1949. In that year, at least 590 apartment units had been completed in five phases along both Illinois Avenue and Zang Boulevard, and Wynne recruited Luther Clark to serve as American Home Realty’s own construction manager. The vision for Wynnewood called for much more to be built, and quickly.

Dallas shoppers had heretofore been limited to making their major purchases at the big stores downtown and the Highland Park Village Shopping Center on the north side of town, which had opened in 1931. Although Oak Cliff residents also had the benefit of the growing “Main Street” retail business corridor along Jefferson Boulevard, Wynne and American Home Realty recognized the potential of a more regional shopping opportunity at Wynnewood. With its proximity to the new Highway 67/77 and its “two stoplights to Union Station,” ten-minute drive convenience to most Dallasites, the central shopping district planned for Wynnewood was marketed on a regional basis to

attract shoppers from outside the immediate development. Construction on “Wynnewood Village” began in 1949, based on designs by DeWitt and Swank, and soon a Skillerns Drugstore, A&P and Safeway supermarkets, M.E. Moses five-and-dime, and two filling stations were opened near the corner of Zang Boulevard and Illinois. When Harvey Titsworth applied for a Veterans Administration loan for \$4,000 to open a shoe repair shop in the Village, the VA turned him down, stating “the shopping center has no potential.”²⁹ Within two years, the retail center would also include a children’s clothing store, toy store, several restaurants, the Wynnewood Hardware store, Titsworth’s shoe repair business, a barber and beauty salon, a movie theatre, and several small offices.

Also contributing to the “self-contained” community character of the development was the Wynnewood Hotel, designed by DeWitt & Swank and opened in the Village in December 1951. The 73-room, two-story hostelry offered rooms for \$4.00 per night with coffee and newspapers in each guestroom, an amenity apparently offered by few Dallas hotels that made the Wynnewood particularly appealing to traveling salesmen. It was not salesmen, however, but Wynnewood residents to whom much of the marketing for the hotel was targeted. Residents



Salesmen calling on merchants in the Village raved about the free newspaper and free coffee available in each guestroom at the Wynnewood Hotel, which opened in 1951. The downtown hotels didn't offer such amenities. The hotel was later demolished and replaced by a drive-in bank facility.

were encouraged to book rooms at the hotel for friends and family members visiting from out of town, so that the local residents would not be inconvenienced in their own homes.

The number of nearby families whose guests could check into the hotel was growing rapidly. American Home Realty continued to build DeWitt-designed houses in the first sections of the development south of Illinois, while selling tracts of raw land as well as subdivided property to other homebuilders. Brothers Vernon and James Smith developed a large tract in the southwest corner of Wynnewood starting in the late 1940s, building mostly modest frame houses, and builder Rouse Howell purchased a smaller number of lots on which to build brick homes in several areas throughout the development.

Meanwhile, in November 1949, AHR opened its first home in the sixth section of the development, north of the Village on the more heavily wooded land that had been John Wright's farm. The section would be called Wynnewood North, and was designed for more distinguished homes on larger lots. The company would only construct a handful of houses itself, but it laid out streets, sidewalks, and curbs and sold building lots to individuals as well as experienced home-

builders. As in the rest of the 820-acre development, Angus Wynne and his construction director, Luther Clark, retained design review over every house built in Wynnewood North, by builder or homeowner. Wynne's commitment to high quality and the precepts of modern design and community planning are particularly evident in Wynnewood North, and in the AHR house that opened to the public on November 13, 1949.

The "Revere Quality House" at 444 Mayrant was designed by DeWitt & Swank and promoted as part of a national program of homebuilding standards developed by the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio. Offering a "seal of approval" for homes built to contemporary design philosophies, the Revere houses met standards of site planning, efficiency of space, healthful use of natural light, convenience and low-maintenance, privacy, and quality materials and construction. The 1,700-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath contemporary styled house was open to the public for a month, costing a quarter to tour. The house was sold to Dudley Killian, a vice president of the Morris Stores, who would soon open a store in the Village. AHR built several additional homes in Wynnewood North in 1951, including DeWitt



The sloping and wooded terrain near the "Jimtown" branch of Cedar Creek offered architect Bud Oglesby a challenging site for the Dallas ALA-sponsored Vacation House. Hundreds toured the unique home during May and June of 1953; buyer Elzie Jenkins opted not to take the free eight-day trip to Havana that came with the home purchase.



Wynnewood architects DeWitt & Swank designed the house at 504 Monssen in 1951 in the contemporary style, with low-pitched roof and a front facing carport that could double as an "outdoor room" or patio.

& Swank-designed contemporary houses at 421 S. Manus and 504 Monssen, as well as the traditional, Georgian-influenced house by architect Hal Yoakum at 515 S. Manus.

Angus Wynne's interest in high quality modern design never fully captured the interest of most homebuilders or buyers in Wynnewood. Instead, prolific builders such as the Smith brothers, Rouse Howell, and Hicks Coleman constructed and sold dozens of sprawling, well built, and finely detailed Ranch-style houses in the development, which clearly met with conservative Dallasites' preference for the most popular and prevalent house type during the period. Never one to pass up a creative and artistic marketing opportunity, however, Angus embarked on a partnership with the Dallas chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1952 to promote contemporary design, custom-built houses—and stalled lot sales—in Wynnewood North.

The AIA chapter, under the creative direction of Arch Swank's wife, Patsy, produced a 13-part television program depicting the process of

home design and construction, entitled "So You Want to Build." The program, broadcast on Sunday afternoons in April through July 1952 on WFAA Channel 8, starred Patsy Swank, local architect Ralph Bryan, and a number of prominent local designers and real estate business people.³⁰ The cast portrayed a young Dallas couple working with an architect to design and build their dream home. Then in the spring of 1953, as the culmination of the "So You Want to Build" television series, an actual house opened for public inspection on Bizerte Street in Wynnewood North which was sponsored by the Dallas AIA and built by Luther Clark's Wynnewood Village construction crew. The contemporary house, set into a rolling hillside, was actually designed primarily by a young Dallas architect, Enslie "Bud" Oglesby, who had previously worked for DeWitt & Swank and would go on to become one of the most widely respected and acknowledged modern architects in the city. Billed as the "Vacation House" because its modern materials, fixtures, and design made it so easily cared for that home ownership was "like a vacation," the low-slung



The "ultra-modern" Wynnewood Theater, designed by architects Pettigrew & Worley, seated nearly 1,000, making it one of the largest "suburban" cinemas in the city at the time. Jeff Chandler starred in "Smuggler's Island," which played at the theater's debut in 1951. Multiplexed in the 1980s, the theatre was closed for many years and demolished in the mid-1990s.

dwelling, sheathed in board-and-batten siding and Roman brick, was shown fully furnished with the latest in contemporary furniture, appliances, and labor-saving devices. The house was advertised for sale for \$55,000, with furnishings, and the ultimate buyer was offered an all-expense paid, eight-day vacation in Havana, Cuba, via Braniff Airways.³¹ Insurance agent Elzie Jenkins, whose offices were already in the nearby Village, was the lucky purchaser of the Vacation House.

While ever-larger Ranch-style houses continued to be built in Wynnewood North during the early and mid-1950s, a few adventuresome clients had more contemporary homes constructed in the development. Dean Lem, an advertising executive friend of Angus Wynne's who published the *Wynnewood News* in the Village in the early 1950s, bought a modern house on North Manus Drive in 1954 that had been designed by

Dallas architect Thomas Scott Dean. Two years later, Frank and Ruthmary White commissioned Dean to design their contemporary residence on Monssen Drive, and architect Forrest Upshaw was already living in the contemporary house he designed for himself on Hoel Street. Eugene O'Brien, whose father Paul owned the Wynnewood Village Hardware store and had built a house on Bizerte Street, admired an architect-designed house in Kessler Park (possibly planned by Hal Yoakum) and imported antique Mexican brick with which to construct a similar house on Mayrant Street.

Perhaps the most unusual residence in the development, with its heavy, flat concrete roof that was planned to collect rain water to insulate the house, was designed and built for his own family by civil engineer Barney Reif. On the staff of Powell & Powell, the engineers that worked on the Wynnewood land development, Reif hired curb and gutter concrete contractors to build his one-of-a-kind—and controversial—house in 1950. Insurance broker and American Home Realty executive Ted Holland chose an infamous corner of Wynnewood North land on which to build his elegant, Georgian-influenced home. The small stand of post oak trees in the open pasture across muddy, unpaved Llewellyn Street from the first houses built on Monssen Drive in 1949 had been a popular "lovers' lane" for Oak Cliff teenagers.³² In 1955, the year couples parked under the trees were listening to Bill Haley & the Comets sing "Rock Around the Clock" and Nat King Cole's "A Blossom Fell," Holland bought the lot from Angus Wynne and asked Dallas interior designer Jed Mace to design his elegant house for the spot. Holland insisted nostalgically that the lovers' lane oaks be saved by turning the house diagonally on the lot.³³

Despite the loss of the lovers' lane, Wynnewood residents of all ages still had many recreational and entertainment outlets. Teenagers hung out at the Wynnewood Record Shop in the Village or caught the movies at the Wynnewood Theatre, which had opened in July 1951. For a time during the 1950s, Wynnewood offered

summer recreation programs for all residents, held mostly on the grounds of the Wynnewood Presbyterian Church, located just west of the Village. Softball, baseball, square dancing, badminton, ping-pong, canasta, and bridge were all available, mostly supervised by Wynnewood residents themselves.³⁴ The Wynnewood Swim Club debuted in the early 1950s, with a large outdoor pool open to all residents, at Kiest Boulevard and Connor Street. (Now the site of the Christ for the Nations school, the pool is gone.) Shoppers could stroll along the landscaped pathways of the Village and shop at E. M. Kahn's, Dallas's oldest continuously operating store, which opened a marble-fronted suburban branch at Wynnewood in 1952. Mothers would let their children entertain themselves watching the live monkeys—named Matilda, Remus, Zeppo and Elvira by Wynnewood kids in a store contest—in the glass enclosure near the rear entrance of the Volk Brothers store, another distinguished downtown clothing emporium that opened a branch in the Village. Older children enjoyed seeing the bones in their hands and feet through the foot-measuring fluoroscope in the Volk's shoe department. Youngsters—and many adults—enjoyed fishing in the two branches of Cedar Creek, or playing or relaxing in Gannon Park along its banks. Homeowners living on Bizerte and South Manus Streets were particularly fortunate to share a small lake in their backyards, one of two natural ponds on the Cedar Creek branches that AHR enlarged and improved.

The third small lake, on the southernmost creek branch, was originally planned to remain as well, platted between additional streets of Wynnewood North homes. But the success of the shopping village adjusted Angus Wynne's vision, and in 1952, planning permission was gained from the city to expand the center from 27 to 49 acres. By 1956, a Montgomery Wards store was being designed to anchor many more shops in the northward expansion area, and the third creek branch and its lake were buried in a storm sewer.³⁵ At the southern end of the

Village, a large Medical and Professional Building had opened in 1953, again drawn by DeWitt & Swank. Its modern design included interior patios to allow each office on the three levels to have natural light and air. The Wynnewood Post Office was located in the Professional Building. Across Illinois Avenue, AHR provided the city with a lot and designed a fire station to serve the community, and also provided land at the southern end of the development on Kiest Boulevard at Polk for a second elementary school, Jefferson Davis, now Dr. Barbara Jordan School. The first was the expanded Clinton P. Russell School, first opened by the Dallas County Schools in 1930 on Beckley near Kiest and enlarged on AHR-donated land some twenty years later.

Angus Wynne's vision for a self-contained community was largely realized at Wynnewood, and his business acumen, creativity, and contributions to the community were widely praised and rewarded. As president of American Home Realty, president of the Wynnewood State Bank, which opened in the Village in 1952, and director of many local and national corporations and charities, Wynne had become a respected business and civic leader. The National Association of Homebuilders, as early as 1949, recognized the significance of the Wynnewood development, awarding Angus and AHR two top honors in the national Neighborhood Development Contest. The prize described the winners as reflecting the homebuilding industry's "best plans for residential developments and stimulatio(n) of progressive trends in the field of land planning" in both "economy homes" and "larger homes" categories.³⁶ Wynne was awarded both the Dallas Homebuilders Association's "Hugh Prather Trophy" as the builder who had contributed most to civic work and the Dallas Real Estate Board's "Easterwood Cup" as the most outstanding member in 1952. Always seeking new and innovative ways of doing business, he was often reported to be traveling the country, looking at similar residential and retail developments for ideas to improve or expand Wynnewood, and in



Angus Wynne, Jr. (left) accepts the Hugh Prather Trophy from Dallas Chamber of Commerce President Ben H. Wooten in a 1952 ceremony honoring Wynne for his civic contributions "for the betterment of Dallas." The local Homebuilders Association offered the accolade two years after the National Association of Homebuilders awarded Wynnewood two prizes for outstanding neighborhood design.

1955 he purchased a hardboard manufacturing facility in Jacksonville, Texas, where a wood and resin compound was fashioned into a building material he dubbed "Wynnewood."³⁷ The combination of sawdust and glue, pressed under extreme pressure, made a material so dense that a nail could not be driven through it without drilling, and the particle board was used in construction of later phases of the Village.³⁸

By 1960, more than \$40 million had been expended to develop Wynnewood, and Angus Wynne and his team were ready to move on to new business and development opportunities. The neighborhoods at Wynnewood were maturing, even as the new R.L. Thornton Interstate 35-E freeway was taking shape east of and parallel to the now "old" Highway 67/77, Zang Boulevard connection to Wynnewood.³⁹ In perhaps the community's only moment in a national spotlight, Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird were greeted by a "wildly cheering" crowd of 2,500 people at a presidential campaign rally in the Wynnewood Village parking lot on November 7,

1960. The Wynnewood crowd treated the Johnsons considerably more politely than had those in a notorious confrontation with the couple downtown at the Baker Hotel earlier in the day.⁴⁰

Angus and Toddie Lee Wynne and their colleagues had moved on from Wynnewood by 1961, when the Six Flags amusement park opened as the next phase of their Great Southwest Corporation industrial development in Arlington, west of Dallas. The community in Oak Cliff was on its own, successfully folded into the fabric of rapidly expanding southern Oak Cliff, its significance as perhaps the nation's first and largest postwar privately owned housing project largely forgotten. Now a series of separate neighborhoods ringing the still bustling shopping center—some stable and successful and others not as well maintained—Wynnewood as a single self-contained community is no more. But the distinctive architecture, much of the landscaping, and the unique street layout remain to tell the tale of an important and visionary American real estate development.

NOTES

¹ Dallas Chamber of Commerce, *Dallas*, April 1946, 90.

² *The Dallas Morning News*, February 16, 1947, II:17

³ *Ibid.*, February 22, 1947, I:1

⁴ *Ibid.*, February 16, 1947, II:17

⁵ Luther Clark, interview, June 14, 2002 and Dallas Chamber of Commerce, *Dallas*, February 1947, 9 - 10

⁶ *The Dallas Morning News*, December 1, 1946, I:1.

⁷ "Housing Inventory Ordered in Drive by Mayor's Group for Completed Units," *Ibid.*, August 18, 1946, II:1.

⁸ Interview, Fayette Gannon (granddaughter), May 15, 2002.

⁹ "Work on Zang Gateway Started at Jefferson," *The Dallas Morning News*, March 6, 1941, clippings collection, Texas/Dallas Archives, Dallas Public Library

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Dallas Times Herald*, July 7, 1955, I:2

¹² Lower Merion Historical Society, *The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion* (Philadelphia: Diane Publishing Co., 2000), 41.

¹³ Interview, David Wynne (son), July 25, 2002.

¹⁴ Cyndy Millstein *History of the Landscape Firm of Hare & Hare* (Hare & Hare Architectural Records, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-KC, University of Missouri, ND).

¹⁵ Interview, David Wynne.

¹⁶ Larry P. Fuller, ed., *The American Institute of Architects Guide to Dallas Architecture* (Dallas: AIA Dallas Chapter, 1999), 83, 94

¹⁷ City of Dallas Building permit files, various addresses.

¹⁸ Permit # 3468, 2319 Salerno, City of Dallas Building permit files. Angus Wynne named the streets in Wynnewood for battles, ships, and military leaders of the recent war. Streets south of Illinois Avenue were named for the *USS Nicholson*, Wynne's own ship, as well as the destroyers *O'Bannon* and *Bancroft*, and for battles, including Salerno and Anzio, in which the *USS Nicholson* played a role. General (later President) Dwight Eisenhower had a street in Wynnewood named for him, as did generals and admirals such as Nimitz, Bradley, and Halsey. In the later, northern addition of Wynnewood, streets were named Manus, Monssen, Hoel, Mayrant, and Woolsey for naval destroyers, and Bizerte for a North African battlesite in which Wynne's ship played a prominent role.

¹⁹ *The Dallas Morning News*, December 22, 1946, V: 2.

²⁰ Ibid., October 18, 1946, I: 1.

²¹ Ibid., August 25, 1946, II: 1.

²² Interview, Luther Clark, July 15, 2002.

²³ *The Dallas Morning News*, June 30, 1946.

²⁴ Ibid., January 8, 1947, I: 1.

²⁵ Ibid., January 12, 1947, V: 1.

²⁶ Ibid., July 7, 1946, V: 1

²⁷ Ibid., August 11, 1946, II: 1.

²⁸ "Dallas Leads Texas Major Cities in Rate of Residential Construction," *Dallas*, Dallas Chamber of Commerce, December 1946, 61.

²⁹ *The Dallas Morning News*, undated clipping, collection of Suzanne O'Brien, 1974

³⁰ Ibid., April 26, 1952, VII: 4.

³¹ Ibid., May 24, 1953, VIII: 1- 8.

³² Interview, Mrs. Sidney Harper, June 9, 2002.

³³ Interview, Luther Clark, June 14, 2002.

³⁴ *Oak Cliff*, Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce (August 1953), 7.

³⁵ Interview with Luther Clark.

³⁶ Urban Land Institute, *Urban Land* (February 1950), 3.

³⁷ Burt C. Blanton, *Technical survey portraying present and future....Wynnewood Products Co.*, typescript, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library, 1953.

³⁸ Interview with Luther Clark.

³⁹ *The Dallas Morning News*, January 21, 1959, unidentified clipping, Texas/Dallas Archives clipping file.

⁴⁰ *Oak Cliff Tribune*, November 7, 1960, 1.

THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE WRECKING BALL.

Swiss Avenue, the Magnolia Building, Winnetka Heights, and the Historic West End are just a few beneficiaries of Preservation Dallas' tireless efforts to preserve and revitalize Dallas' buildings, neighborhoods and other architectural, historical, and cultural resources. If you share our belief that a community's future must be built on an appreciation of its heritage, pick up a pen (or a phone) and let us know who you are. We need your help.



Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Work Phone _____ Home Phone _____

Or stop by for a visit—you'll find a wealth of ideas about how you can help make Dallas an even better place to live.

PRESERVATION DALLAS • 2922 SWISS AVENUE • DALLAS, TEXAS 75204
214.821.3290 PHONE • 214.821.3573 FAX • WWW.PRESERVATIONDALLAS.ORG