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History of Virginia-Highland

{Part IV}

By 1903, so many families had been drawn to the scenic and increasingly convenient area between Ponce de Leon Place and Highland Avenue that a neighborhood school had to be constructed on Frederika, between Greenwood and St. Charles. The new Highland Park School (which became crowded as soon as it opened its doors and was turning children away within six years) was among the neighborhood assets pictured in a real-estate advertisement for the second subdivision to be developed in the district: Highland View. Just north of the now well-established Highland Park and southwest of the main Virginia-Highland crossing, the property—in the name of Adelaide L. Adair—was prepared for sale by the Atlanta Development Company. By mid-1913, forty residence lots - each 50 by 250 feet - were ready to sell for \$1,400 to \$1,700 each. “Situated in the very best residential section of Atlanta, . . . with Ansley Park on its left and Druid Hills on its right,” Highland View was served by two street-car lines and liberally enhanced with “city improvements.” Moreover, all lots were sold “with restrictions,” which confirmed the subdivision’s status as a “‘High-Class’ residence section of Atlanta.”

With this development, suburban growth began to encompass the jewel of the neighborhood (once a country estate), the Adair mansion at 1000 Highland. Green B. Adair died in April 1914; the funeral was held at home and attended by “an escort of prominent citizens and confederate veterans.” Afterward, Adair’s widow, Adelaide, moved to the family’s country home in Wilkes County, and the Atlanta “home place” was taken over by the newly formed Adair Park Company, which immediately began “extensive improvements” to the roughly triangular plot of land surrounding the house: “Among the larger improvements will be the cutting of a splendid drive through the property and the erection of some twenty houses.” The drive, which bisected the property, was named for E. C. Rupley, the company’s newly elected secretary and treasurer.

It was proposed that the Adair house itself become the clubhouse of an exclusive “Town and Country Club,” which “bids

fair to become one of the most popular of Atlanta’s several high class social clubs.” The club would meet a distinct demand, its promoters believed, “as it is close enough in to be easily reached during business hours, and far enough out to be away from the rush and noise of the city.” The mansion could easily accommodate large parties, but it also had plenty of small reception rooms for more intimate gatherings and space in the basement for a bar; “thoroughly modern in every way,” it even boasted an elevator. There was room on the grounds for automobile parking and tennis courts, and “adjacent territory might easily be obtained for a golf course.” The proposition was of course strategic: much undeveloped land remained in the vicinity, and experience had shown that property surrounding a country club inevitably escalated in value. Accordingly, a charter was applied for in July, but it may have been denied; in any event, for better or worse, no further mention is made of a Town and Country Club in Virginia-Highland.

Just as houses had sprung up along Highland during the first decade of the twentieth century, during the second they were built in rapid succession all along Virginia Avenue. In 1914 a realtor announced that four new homes were under construction, with two more to follow the next week: “Join us,” the advertisement reads: “Live in the new section where everybody’s house is new. Get in on the ground floor.” And for the first time, the neighborhood’s proximity to the newly developed Piedmont Park was touted as an asset of the area: “Be near the beautiful Piedmont lake”—Clara Meer—“where you can get your morning dip, your evening dip and your night dip.” “Get near Piedmont park,” another ad urges, adding a more practical consideration: “Property will always be valuable around Piedmont park.”

Next issue: Boulevard Park

Sources: Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution, 1924–32; Neighborhood plats, district 14, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, vol. 2 (1911), Atlanta History Center.