

Orange Mound Neighborhood Survey, Memphis, Shelby County TN

by

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Housing & Community Development

Final Report

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3. Project Summary

The objective of the Orange Mound Survey was to survey the properties in an area bounded by Airways Boulevard on the west, both sides of Dallas Avenue on the east, the south side of Carnes Avenue on the north and the north side of Park on the south. This historic area is south of the boundary of the Cooper Young historic district and east of the South Parkway historic district but contains building stock of a dissimilar ages, styles, and architectural significance.

This survey included the 1890 E. E. Meacham Orange Mound subdivision whose boundaries included Cable Avenue to the north, Trezevant Avenue (currently Airways Boulevard) to the west, Park Avenue to the south, and Marechalneil Avenue to the east. The survey area was .17 square miles/106 acres. There were 593 properties and 1 historic site surveyed. The field work began April 1, 2025 and data entry finished August 6, 2025.



Figure 1. Location Map of Orange Mound Survey Area

4. Survey Methodology

The survey came about due to the efforts of the Orange Mound neighborhood and the City of Memphis to preserve and acknowledge Orange Mound's history. The neighborhood's residents foster civic and neighborhood pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past and a sense of identity based on Orange Mound's history. The survey will facilitate the early identification and resolution of conflicts between preservation of historic resources and alternative land uses. Finally, it hopefully will conserve valuable material and energy resources by ongoing use and maintenance of the existing built environment.

The architectural firm Self + Tucker Architects is an interdisciplinary team of Architects, Planners, Interior Designers and Sustainability Specialist located in Memphis, TN. They were awarded a contract for overseeing the survey and for design and construction of an ABODE Demonstration House for a model for affordable housing. Judith Johnson & Associates (Consultant) a historic preservation resources consulting firm based in Memphis, TN performed the intensive architectural survey. Project personnel included Judith Johnson, Leah Greenburg, Hayes Smith and Bill Yerian.

The initial phase of the survey in April 2025 and consisted of the Consultant performing preliminary research to gather a historical overview of the district using tax records, subdivision plat maps Sanborn maps and other historical data relative to the development of the area and the building stock to insure all resources were identified. Other research resources include the Worldwide Web research and Virginia Savage McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Knopf, 1984, 2013. Field documentation involved photography of primary structures, significant secondary structures, and vacant lots and note taking within the boundaries.

5. Historical Overview

When John G. Deaderick arrived in 1825 to look over the property he had recently purchased a few miles east of Memphis, Tennessee, the small town perched on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River was not much different from the frontier trading post it had been just six years earlier. With only a few hundred inhabitants and not yet incorporated, it was also far removed from the city of his birth. ¹

Deaderick's father, George Michael Deaderick, was a banker, wholesale merchant, and real estate developer, and considered to be one of Nashville's wealthiest men. He was also friend and business partner to future U.S. President Andrew Jackson. The family later donated the land on which the state capitol is built. ²

The area was originally part of North Carolina Land Grant #21 given to a Mr. Edwin Hickman at an unknown time. Deaderick's 5,000 acre plantation ran on the east side of Trezevant/Airways from Southern Avenue south to Barron Avenue. Upon Relocating to Memphis, John George built a lovely, two-story home for his new bride, a Virginia girl named Eliza Dunn, which was located east of present day Airways Boulevard between Carnes and Spottswood. When the Deaderick home was in its heyday, the west end of the lawn ran along what is now Airways, and the carriage entrance was what has become Carnes Avenue was surrounded by a thick grove of Osage orange trees. ³

The original way to the Deaderick home was the old Pontotoc Trace, now named Lamar Avenue after the distinguished senator Lamar of Oxford, Ms. Later, Airways Boulevard, (originally named Trezevant after the Trezevant property north of the Deaderick place) became an important early

¹ Jay Killingsworth, The Orange Mound Collection, <https://www.memphislibrary.org/digmemphis/>.

² Ibid.

³ Judith Johnson, The House Detective, "2438 Carnes House History," property of the author, Memphis, TN.

cross town route between the Pontotoc Trace (Lamar), the Cherokee Trace (Poplar) and the road to Raleigh (Jackson Avenue).⁴

John G. Deaderick died in 1841 at the age of 40. After the death of Deaderick Sr, his sons Michael and William began to develop their inherited property as Memphis grew. Family members are remembered with the Park, David, Barron, Spottswood, Hamilton, and Deaderick street names. Part of the land was sold to the organization of the Memphis Jockey Club in 1851; after horse racing was outlawed in Tennessee, it would later become the Mid-South Fairgrounds.⁵

John and Eliza Deaderick had four children, including a son William P. Deaderick before John died in December, 1831. William Deaderick was reared on the farm, attended county schools and spent two years in college. He married his first wife in 1855 and she died in 1861. After the Civil War, William began subdividing some of the remaining acres and named several of the roads which have become city streets. He gave the county right-of-way for a road that has become Park Avenue, which was named in honor of his second wife, Mattie. S. Park, the niece of John Park who served as a mayor (1861-1866). A small Deaderick family cemetery remains there today on the north side of Park Avenue which causes the road to curve slightly. He also named Barron, Spottswood, David and Hamilton. Most of the streets that crisscross the old Deaderick Plantation have been in the city since 1919 when this area was annexed.⁶

After William died unexpectedly in 1889, Mattie sold a remaining parcel of 53 acres at the northeast corner of Park and Trezevant/Airways land to a Memphis real estate developer Edward Eugene (E.E.) Meacham in December, 1889. E.E. Meacham's plan for Orange Mound was novel because

⁴ Johnson, "2438 Carnes House History."

⁵ History through Homes. <https://www.historythroughhomes.com/>

⁶ Johnson, "2438 Carnes House History."

segregation offered such limited opportunities for home ownership, not just for Memphis but for the entire country: the homes within the subdivision would be built by and for African-Americans. Meacham's Orange Mound subdivision marketed tiny, 25-wide so-called pony lots for sale. However, this almost 1,000 lot subdivision would mark the first time in America's history that black citizens were given the opportunity to build and live within a brand new neighborhood.⁷



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Figure 2. Typical Shotgun house.

⁷ History through Homes, Accessed July 30, 2025, <https://www.historythroughhomes.com/>.

⁸ Josh Whitehead, Crème de Memph, E.E. Meacham and M. M. Gilchrist, accessed July 30, 2025, <https://cremedememph.blogspot.com/2021/02/ee-meacham-mm-gilchrist.html>.

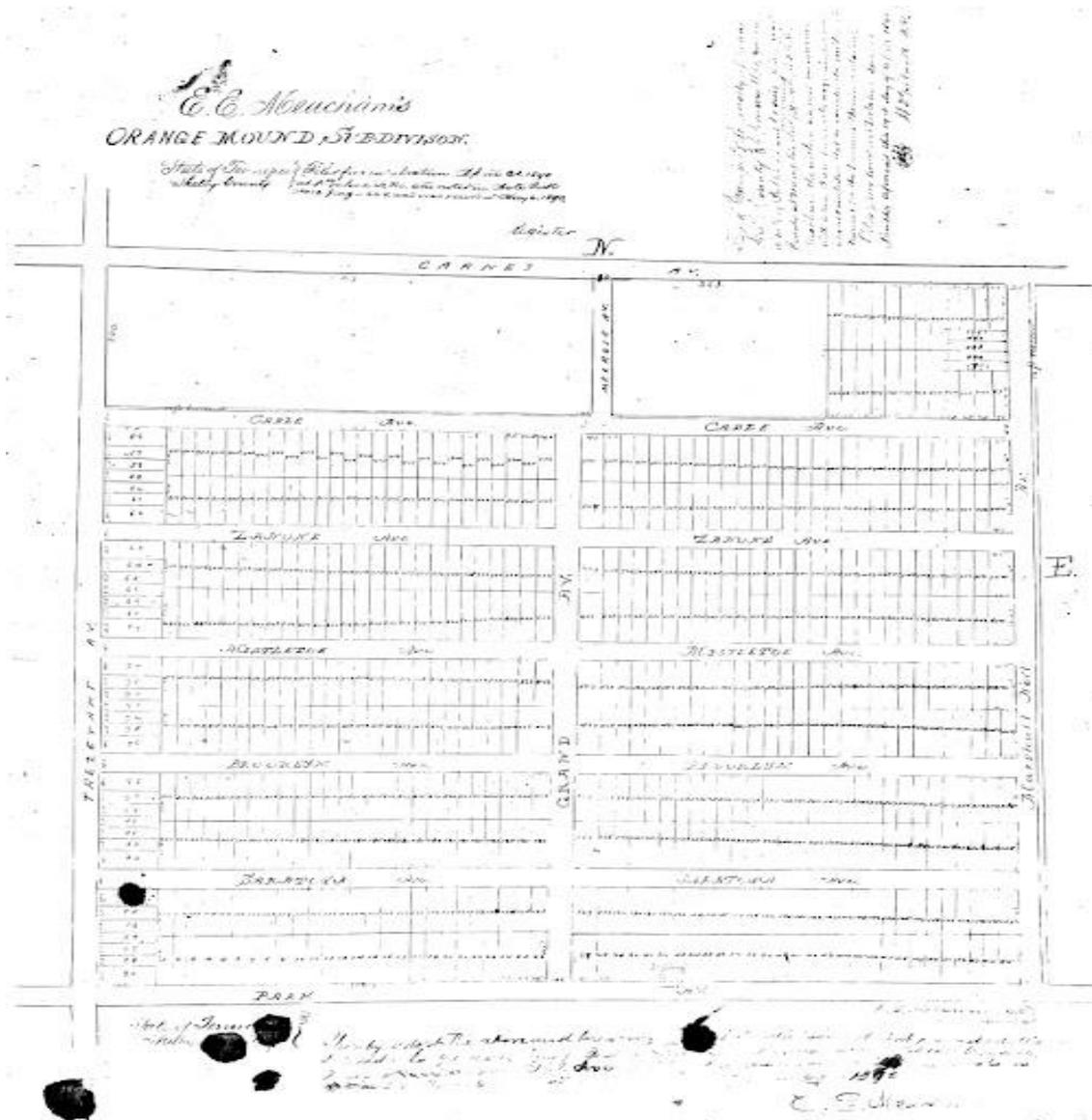


Figure 3. Plat Map of E. E. Meacham's Orange Mound subdivision.

These lots could be purchased for \$40. Nearly all the houses were “shotgun style” three or four rooms in a straight line. A number of years would pass before municipal services arrived but the attracted a wide variety of residents including doctors, laborers, teachers and domestics.¹⁰

⁹ Shelby County Registrar of Deeds, “Orange Mound Subdivision.” accessed 8/14/2025, <https://search.register.shelby.tn.us/search/index.php>.

¹⁰ Killingsworth, Orange Mound.

This ad below appeared in 1894.

ORANGE MOUND

Memphis' Large Suburb in East End, near the
EAST END ELECTRIC CAR LINE.

Hundreds of lots at \$10 per lot, \$12 per lot, \$15 per lot, \$20 per lot,
\$25 per lot, and up to \$50 per lot.

Terms, \$5.00 cash, balance 50 cents per week, with interest 6 per cent.

ORANGE MOUND has 100 houses now built and many more to go up
at once. EVERY HOUSE is tenanted and under rent.

We offer 30 New
2-Room Cottages,
with lot, at \$150 to \$175 each.

Terms, \$15 cash, balance \$4 per month, with
interest 6 per cent. Title perfect.

Three Grand Sale Days
On
Thursday, Nov. 22;
Friday, Nov. 23;
Saturday, Nov. 24.

Take the East End Railway cars going east be-
tween the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (each sale day);
leave the cars at Montgomery Park, where FREE
CARRIAGES will convey you through the property.

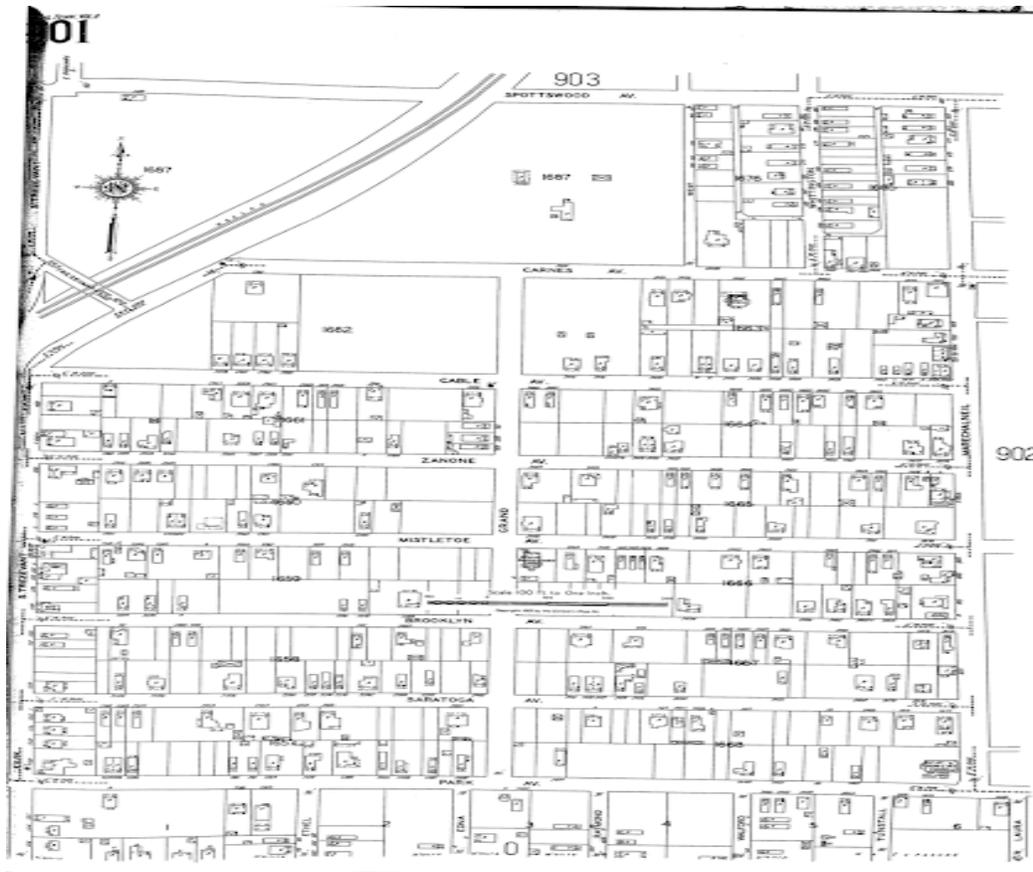
A FREE DINNER SERVED AT 12:30.
SPLENDID MUSIC DURING THE SALE.

♦ ♦ ♦ E. E. MEACHAM, 9 UNION STREET. ♦ ♦ ♦



Figure 4. 1894 Newspaper ad for Orange Mound subdivision.

¹¹ "Advertisement, Memphis Commercial Appeal newspaper, November 20, 1894, <https://static.commercialappeal.com/archives/>.



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Figure 5. 1927 Sanborn Fire Map of Orange Mound subdivision, Page 910.

By the 1920s, the number of working professionals in the neighborhood grew to include teachers, doctors, and business owners. By 1927, about half of the lots in the Orange Mound subdivision had homes, as reflected on the above Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Trezevant Street on the left has since been renamed Airways Blvd. The 1930s-1960s were a period of growth. Homeownership rose, thanks to residents' steady incomes and more professionals moving into the neighborhood. Larger homes were built amongst the shotgun houses. The thriving community gave rise to recreational and entertainment centers. The W.C. Handy Theater and the Esquire Theater showcased theatrical shows,

¹² Sanborn Map Company. (1927). Insurance maps, Memphis, TN [Fire insurance map]. Library of Congress Map Collection.

musicians, and cinema. Orange Mound Park was a popular outdoor space with a pool and basketball and tennis courts.¹³ By 1951 the Deaderick subdivision has increased in housing stock. The 1951 Sanborn Map below attests to the population growth.

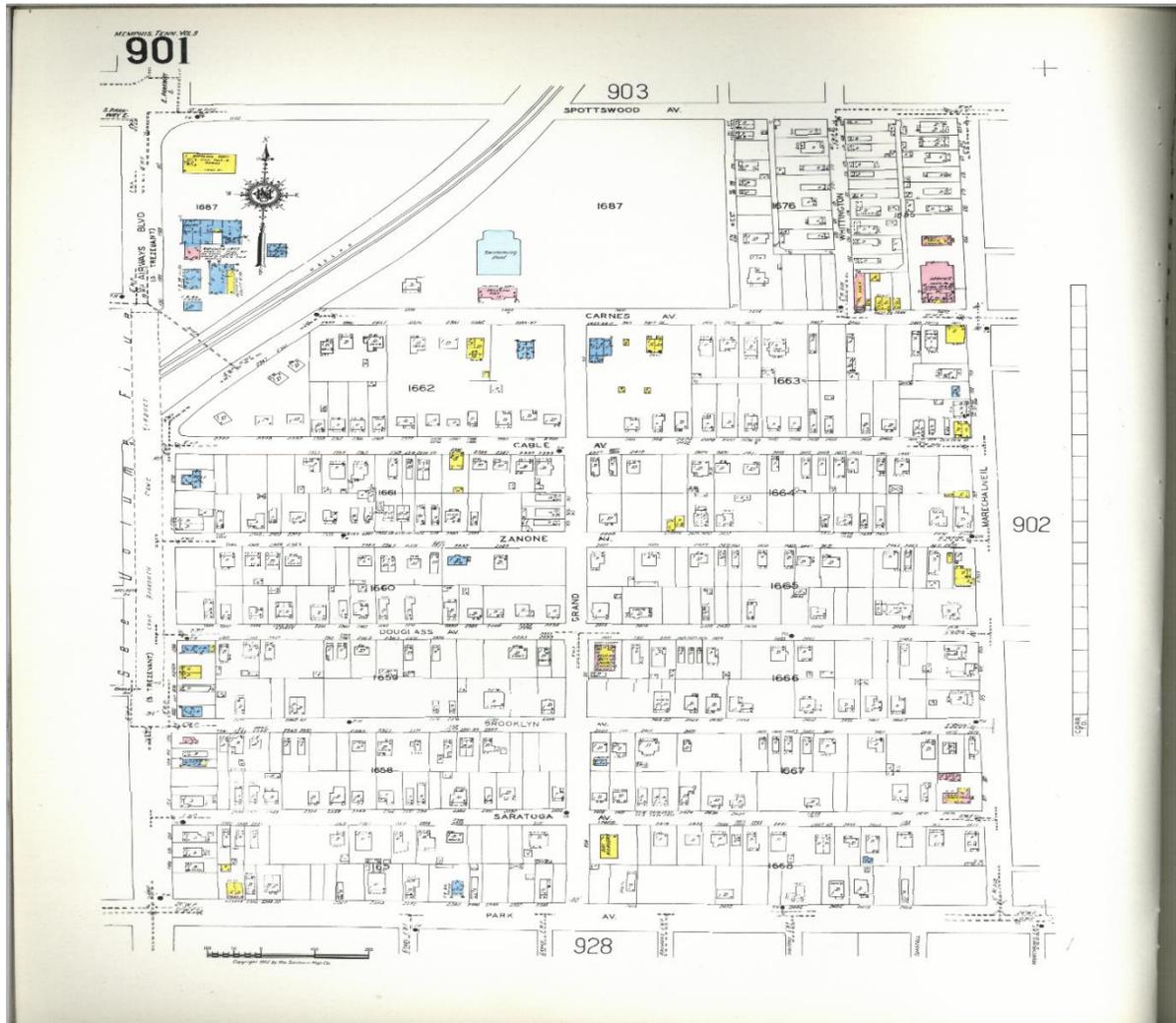


Figure 6. 1951 Sanborn Map of Orange Mound, Page 901.

¹³ "Black History in Memphis-The Orange Mound Story," Memphis Museums of Science and History, <https://moshmemphis.com/black-history-in-memphis-the-orange-mound-story/#:~:text=From%20its%20inception%2C%20family%2C%20friends,pride%20and%20assets%2C%20and%20revitalization>, accessed August 10, 2025.

¹⁴ Sanborn Map Company. (1951). Insurance maps, Memphis, TN [Fire insurance map]. Library of Congress Map Collection.

The first school in Orange Mound, a small one-room building on Spottswood Avenue, opened in 1890. Later, in 1914, this school was replaced by a Rosenwald school. In 1938, a Works Project Administration initiative expanded Melrose School into a 79-room K-12 facility on Dallas Street. The new building included labs, a library, a gym, and a music room.¹⁵

By 1972, Melrose High School opened on Deaderick Avenue as a separate building and still serves the community today. The old Melrose School is adaptively used as a public library.

Orange Mound's population remained heavily African American throughout the 20th century as the neighborhood gained a reputation as a refuge for blacks moving to Memphis from rural areas in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi. By 1970, Orange Mound was known as the American neighborhood with the second most concentrated population of African Americans, behind only Harlem in New York City. By 1979, 97% of the 8,400 residents were African American. The neighborhood fell into decline in the 1980s and 1990s but since 2000 has experienced a revival, driven in part by older residents utilizing the neighborhood's rich heritage to help influence the next generation to take a more active role in improving and maintaining the community.¹⁶

Notable structures that are no longer extant include the Deaderick family home which stood east of present day Airways Boulevard between Carnes and Spottswood. The actual area where the old antebellum house stood was later converted into a swimming pool and today it is a city park. However, the Deaderick family cemetery remains intact on Park Avenue. Most of the original tiny shotguns in the subdivision have been demolished, only a few remain and most are altered. Many

¹⁵ Judith Johnson, Melrose School, National Register of Historic Places nomination file, May 2, 2001, State Historic Preservation Office, Nashville, TN.

¹⁶ "Orange Mound Neighborhood, Memphis, TN," Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, accessed August 10, 2025, <https://www.achp.gov/preserve-america/community/orange-mound-neighborhood-memphis-tennessee#:~:text=The%20neighborhood%20of%20Orange%20Mound,former%20John%20Deaderick%20Plantation.>

are either vacant lots or a newer home has been constructed there. This has always been a low income area and much of the housing stock has been demolished due to lack of maintenance, etc. The remaining structures have been altered through repairs or occasionally extensively rehabbed or demolished and replaced with a new structure. There is really no documentation on the loss of the built environment other than the vacant lots.

Orange Mound is in the south part of town and even today the area has an uneven terrain with the north boundary being the lowest elevation. The architectural styles that are predominate in the area are shotguns and double shotguns, composite cottages, Craftsman cottages, bungalows, 20th century commercial, and some post-WWII housing. There abusively altered houses and some post-1975 infill.

6. Previously and Newly Recorded Properties Identified with the Survey Area.

The only prior resource in the survey area listed on the National Register is the old Melrose School (5/22/2001). Memphis is a Certified Local Government and has an active Historic Preservation Commission, however, they do not currently have jurisdiction within the survey area. There were 594 properties surveyed. There were 315 properties determined eligible for the National Register. A total of 106 properties were determined not eligible for the National Register. There are 173 vacant lots in the survey area.

7. Evaluation of Survey Data.

It is the Consultant's opinion that the part of the survey area that comprised the boundaries of the Orange Mound subdivision is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A due to its significance as the first planned community in the US built by and for African Americans,

offering a unique opportunity for Black homeownership and community development. There are a few older areas where such as the Treme in New Orleans that developed organically but the planned Orange Mound subdivision is unique because it became a thriving cultural hub with its own schools, churches, businesses, and a strong sense of community.

8. Architectural Overview

As stated previously, the historic architectural styles that are predominate in the area are shotguns and double shotguns, composite cottages, Craftsman cottages, bungalows, 20th century commercial, and some post-WWII housing. There abusively altered structures and some post-1975 in-fill. There are a few shotguns remaining in the subdivision boundaries but all appear to have been altered. The original subdivision area still has a majority of the 25' wide lots and is bordered by the north/south line of Marchalneil Street which stretches the whole length of the subdivision boundaries.

9. Conclusion

The .17 square miles/106 acres area that composed the 1890 E. E. Meacham Orange Mound subdivision whose boundaries included Cable Avenue to the north, Trezevant Avenue (currently Airways Boulevard) to the west, Park Avenue to the south, and Marechalneil Avenue to the east is eligible for listing on the National Register for its association with Black ethnic heritage as this almost 1,000 lot subdivision would mark the first time in America's history that black citizens were given the opportunity to build and live within a brand new neighborhood.

10. Bibliography

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<https://cremedememph.blogspot.com/2021/02/ee-meacham-mm-gilchrist.html>.