

Charlotte Observer, The (NC)
2008-08-10
Section: THE CITY
Edition: STATE
Page: 8M

HUNTINGTOWNE HAD FIELDS, PTL SouthPark area - **Janet Haas**

I recently received a history lesson from a few locals about one of my favorite SouthPark neighborhoods: Huntingtowne Farms.

"(What is now) Huntingtowne Farms was nothing but fields and woods when I grew up as a kid," said 73-year-old Jim Templeton, a Charlotte native. The creek that now runs behind the house of his daughter, Christin Boone, on Red Barn Lane was a favorite spot. Templeton said, "There was an area there that we called initial trees. They had smooth bark, and kids would carve their initials in there."

On the land where Forest Hill Church now stands, Templeton spent time at an old farm. "As you went up the driveway, there was a slave quarters over to the left, and us kids used to play in it." In 1954, F.N. Thompson purchased more than 200 acres of farmland along Park Road, where he built a colonial-style home. Today, that home is dubbed "The Mansion," and Forest Hill Church now uses it for classes and meetings.

During the 1960s, SouthPark developer John Crosland Sr. purchased the majority of Thompson's land, minus the home and approximately 25 surrounding acres. Crosland went on to build the neighborhood of Huntingtowne Farms and began selling homes in 1964. Back then, homes sold in the high \$20,000s.

In 1976, Thompson's heirs sold his remaining 25 acres, located smack dab in the middle of Huntingtowne Farms, to Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker's Praise The Lord ministry.

Ashlynn Kelker, former Huntingtowne Farms Neighborhood Association president, said, "Tour buses used to get stuck in our neighborhood. If they made a wrong turn and couldn't turn around, they'd have to fish through the neighborhood. They weren't super popular."

Throughout their stay, the Bakkers added several buildings, including one they built to resemble Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, said Bryan Snow, Forest Hill Church's ministry support director. In the basement of that building, the Bakkers built an Olympic-sized pool with Greek columns and a mirrored ceiling.

In 1985, Forest Hill Church purchased the land and buildings from PTL, which then moved its growing ministry to Heritage USA in Fort Mill. Forest Hill Church has since built over the PTL pool, and it is now home to their Family Life Center.

Over the years, a number of disputes arose between the residents of Huntingtowne Farms and the Bakkers. At one time, the Bakkers lobbied for a PTL service entrance to be added from one of

Huntingtowne Farms' dead-end streets. A petition filled with signatures from concerned residents did the trick, and the Bakkers backed down.