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Living in Twickenham

Jerri Hightower

I have asked myself this question many times. Why do I like living on Randolph Street in Twickenham? Some of the answer is: When I rise in the early morning, I can listen to birds singing and hear the train whistles. I am awed by the hymns of the organ in the church nearby or the church chimes, and it seems to me that the solace of small town Main Street in the youthful dreams of this North Georgia country girl have been truly realized. I think maybe it's the sounds of my surroundings that make me know that Twickenham is where I want to come home at the end of the day.

Then as I walk down these sidewalks along the tree-lined streets to the Jim Williams Aquatic Center through our beautiful Big Spring Park or walk to the Von Braun Center or our new Huntsville Art Museum or to Panoply or Trade Day on the Square or to the Concert in the Park, I think it is the beauty, the serenity, and the convenience that pulls me like a magnet to my Twickenham home.

Then as I sit on my Jackson Vine enclosed front porch, reading my evening edition of *The Huntsville Times*, my neighbors pause from their evening stroll just to find out how things are going, or I hear the giggles of playing children and listen to their delightful breathtaking gasps as Daddy swings them, "Higher, Higher" on their backyard tree swings. I listen to the thump of skateboarders as they jump their handcrafted hurdles and watch the smiles of rollerbladers as they glide down the sun-soaked walkways. I watch the grinning parents as neighbors gather around the carriage to see how much our latest edition has grown, and it is then I am very certain it's the people that make Twickenham, Twickenham.

Yet as I ponder these things I realize that most small town Main Street all over the United States is no different from my Twickenham. So what is so different about Twickenham!

Maybe it's the fact that Twickenham was built in the midst of a pecan grove and that every other year neighbor meets with neighbor to gather pecans if the squirrels have been kind

enough to let us share the year's bountiful harvest. It's like an Easter egg hunt as neighbors race to the treasures before the fuzzy-tailed friend grabs and scampers to bury his stolen winter's subsistence in the soft mulched blooming flowerbeds of autumn or in someone's tastefully placed porch planters.

Maybe the difference is in the architectural features of Twickenham, or even the architects who planned and built all the gingerbread trimmed homes, or the Gothic or Doric columns found here, or even the cottage-style colonnade home of the early 20th century—all together in Twickenham.

Maybe it's the beautiful churches or the elegant synagogue in Twickenham. Each house of worship representing its own historical and theological background, welcoming and inviting believers who each have a story to tell and who invite one and all to come hear about their background and who are anxious for all to know how often we all agree on philosophy here in Twickenham.



Fig.2 Figures Alley in Twickenham between Randolph and Clinton Avenues.

Courtesy Jerri Hightower.

Maybe it's the schools. East Clinton School is just a few blocks away. Or maybe it's the pre-schoolers from the churches marching along, clinging to their life-line rope and daring to wave a friendly little hand, throw a short kiss, or murmur a quick "Hello" before skipping along. We listen to the sounds of those little children on a morning outing satisfied that they have a treasured life as their hearts soar, their spirits rise, and their smiles melt hearts.

I am now convinced, more than ever, that it is not just the historical setting of Twickenham nor the remembered traditions nor the sights or sounds of Twickenham, but the people, the truly wonderful, unique individuals who, combined with all the Twickenham attributes, make this magnificent area called Twickenham deserving of preservation and worthy to be extended to future generations.

Editor's note: Jerri has sold her 1919 stucco home on Randolph, but because she cannot bear to leave the district, she has bought a smaller house on the west side of Wells Avenue just a few blocks from her current home.



Fig.3 View down Figures Alley of backyards in Twickenham.
Courtesy Jerri Hightower.



STREET IN VILLAGE OF DALLAS

Fig.1 Dallas Mill Village c. 1910s.
Courtesy Huntsville Public Library.



Fig.2 Rison School 1984.
Courtesy Huntsville Public Library.