

Holly Tree Plantation

This article was composed in the 2002 timeframe.

One man's vision for Simpsonville countryside develops into neighborhood with mix of people

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Once upon a time, and it seems a long time ago, developers built a golf course way out in the country near Simpsonville.

Holly Tree Country Club, they called it, and Dr. Jim McNamara envisioned an upscale neighborhood surrounding it.

Nearly 30 years later, Holly Tree Plantation is marketed for its convenience rather than its pastoral setting. And as the older kid surrounded by upstarts Spaulding Farm, Kilgore Plantation and River Walk, its residents tout getting more house for their money in the older subdivision.

"You definitely get more bang for your buck, living out here," said Trey Werner, 28, who moved from downtown three years ago. "We paid about \$65 to \$70 a square foot, and we looked at houses off Augusta Road that were \$110."

Werner grew up in the earliest section of Holly Tree, and was anxious to return to the neighborhood that provided him a stable childhood. He spent all his summers at the Holly Tree golf course, tennis courts and swimming pool, and bought a 2,800-square-foot house with the expectation that in the future, his children will be able to do the same.

"Everything's within a quarter of a mile, so we won't have to worry about them being out on main roads," Werner said. "And we won't have to worry about taking them somewhere and dropping them off."

The 18-hole golf course, beautifully carved out of rolling pastures and woodland, is certainly the selling point for the community's 530 homes, many of which back up to its fairways. Lots are large and deeply shaded by mature oaks, maples and Bradford pears. Many sit on tentacled cul-de-sacs laid out in the master plan.

Country club membership also includes 10 tennis courts, a swimming pool and a variety of special activities.

Residents who don't want to join pay only \$75 in annual homeowners' dues, which covers landscaping common areas and streetlights.

In addition, the homeowners' association organizes luminary displays at Christmas, Santa's visits, a book club, a Bunco-playing group and preschoolers' play groups. One summer, it had a family festival at the nearby Golden Strip YMCA.

The club separately has its own events, such as Fourth of July fireworks, and next summer is planning summertime sports camps for children.

The two groups joined forces to present a hayride and haunted house last Halloween, and resident real estate agent Carol Pyfrom fed hundreds of neighbors hot dogs and chili beside the club pool on Halloween night.

The houses themselves are a mix of vinyl and brick, one- and two-story, Cape Cod and Georgian and contemporary. Redtips — victims of blight in other areas of Greenville County — grow here to gargantuan size, easily blocking views of State 14 or tennis court fencing or neighbors' houses.

Covenants include prohibitions on chain-link fencing, long-term street parking, visible RVs or boats, and

utility buildings. All additions and paint changes must be approved by an architectural committee.

The generous lot sizes are a major selling point, according to Pyfrom, who bought her golf course home 10 years ago.

"The other thing that sells it," she said, "is the size of the rooms."

She calls Holly Tree, in fact, "a Beaver Cleaver neighborhood" of comfortable, spacious homes like those on the old "Leave It to Beaver" television show.

Emily Haller, 39, agrees that it was the privacy and size of the lots that brought her and her young family from Taylors.

"We're not on top of each other like some of the newer neighborhoods," she said.

Even a weekday drive from her job in downtown Greenville to pick up her children on the Eastside and then return home doesn't faze her.

"Growing up, I thought, 'Who would live this far out?' " she laughed. "Now that we're out here, I like it."

Holly Tree is home to a mix of long-time Greenvillians and newcomers brought to the area by industries, including ones on nearby Woodruff Road, said Pyfrom.

The current homeowners' association president is Richard Hagins, a retired U.S. Navy commander and businessman who moved from Massachusetts five years ago.

It was the golf course that attracted Hagins, but it is the diversity of the neighborhood that keeps him.

"People from all over the United States are here," he said. "When you bring in a diverse group, it helps with the climate of the community. There's no set mind-set. It is open to change. That's what diversity brings, whether that's geographic or cultural."

Hagins and his wife, Priscilla, have a daughter in each of the area's three public schools — Bethel Elementary, Hillcrest Middle and Mauldin High.

The oldest plays on Mauldin's golf team, honing skills she learned on the country club course.

Hagins also is on the board of the Golden Strip Y, where he and his first-grader participate in the Indian Princess program.

"It's busting at the seams it's growing so rapidly," he said. "We had over 500 kids sign up for soccer."

The availability of sports and recreation for children and teens is an attraction most residents cite for choosing Holly Tree.

Barb McPoland's husband moved from Kingston, N.Y., eight months ahead of the rest of the family in 1994, and joined Holly Tree Country Club.

When she and the four children arrived, she decided it made sense to locate close by for maximum use of the facilities.

"The very first day we moved here, we went down to the pool and everybody came up to the kids and introduced themselves," she said. "It's just a great place."

But even without that bonus, McPoland said, the mature neighborhood appealed to her.

"Once I came and looked around, it was the one I liked the most," she said.

"The trees were all grown up. It made it seem more homey than a lot of the newer developments that had no big trees or bushes."

"The beauty of the community," agreed Pyfrom, "is the established look we have."

Holly Tree Country Club and Community History

Holly Tree Country Club is a Member owned club built in 1973. Holly Tree Country Club is located in the Southeast part of Greenville County, off Highway 14, near Woodruff Road, which was once the Gilder Plantation. [Nathaniel Austin](#) headed the Gilder Plantation in the 1800s along with his wife, sons and only daughter. They are still buried next to the 13th tee. Col. Austin arrived in America in 1761 from England, first serving King George III as High Constable and later fighting with his ten sons and other Carolinians in the struggle for America's independence.

Holly Tree Country Club began in 1973 as a private development project by Dr. McNamara but later was purchased by the members. Since then it has developed a reputation of offering the best in southern hospitality.

The original clubhouse was modeled after the famous [Boone Hall Plantation](#) and built in 1973. The clubhouse offers dining, bar/lounge area, large ballroom for special events, men's and women's locker room, golf pro shop, and a bag storage area. Many special Member events are held to compliment normal usage of the Club. Our Chef provides a wide variety of his favorite selections and delicious recipes for Members and their guests. Our private dining area and ballroom offer the perfect setting for weddings, rehearsals, business meetings, etc. Our professional and courteous food and beverage staff is here to assist Member and their guests with all their special needs. The views from the upstairs and downstairs dining areas are spectacular!

Hunters roamed area in 10,000 B.C.

Greenville County was officially formed in 1786

Published: Wednesday, December 21, 2005 - 6:00 am

STAFF REPORTS

People have been in these parts for a while.

Archeological finds show that man started hunting in what is now Greenville County as far back as 10,000 B.C.

From 10,000 to 1000 B.C., Greenville's winters and summers resembled what the weather is like now in southern

Canada.

Native American tribes and territories were established from 1000 to 1600 AD. Trading among tribes started and

wars were fought for territories.

The Cherokee lived in the region beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries, and all the land now called Greenville

County was part of their hunting grounds. Cherokee had settlements in what is now the city of Greer, and they held

onto their land through more than a century of British colonial rule.

The Cherokee were active traders in deer hides and other frontier goods with Lowcountry British settlers following the 1680 settlement of Charleston. As the American Revolution neared, the Cherokee sided with the British and staged raids against white settlers in the Tyger and Enoree river basins. Settlers sought revenge and raided Cherokee settlements, driving them from the state after the trail of tears in 1830. With the end of the Revolution, veterans of the war claimed Greenville as home, and in its first census in 1790 there were 6,503 residents. Around 1770, the first white settler — Richard Pearis — settled near the Reedy River Falls and established a plantation called Great Plains. Greenville County, which encompasses 795 square miles, was officially formed in 1786. It was named for Gen. Nathanael Greene, hero of the Southern campaign during the Revolution. By 1816, Vardry McBee had generated signs of Greenville's earliest economic development with the construction of a saw mill, flour mill and corn mill on the Reedy River. He also started brick-making and stone-quarrying and opened a general store. In 1835, Greenville's first coach and cart factory was built. In 1820, Joel Poinsett, who served as state public works director, built the first road across the mountains in northern Greenville and established trade routes with North Carolina and Tennessee communities to make the area a crossroads of commerce. The first railroad in Greenville was completed in 1853 and it opened the door to manufacturing after reconstruction. Greenville's 1860 census reported 14,631 whites and 7,261 African-Americans. In 1980, the county population had reached 287,913 and about 51,000 were African-Americans. Greenville was solidly Unionist until the outbreak of the Civil War, when the Rev. James Clement Furman, president of Furman University and a Secessionist, persuaded many residents to change their minds. Furman preached orthodox religion and states rights at local Baptist churches. During the Civil War, refugees came to Greenville, but the town wasn't in the path of Sherman's march through Georgia and South Carolina, and it escaped the war unharmed. By 1882, three textile mills — Vardry, Camperdown and Huguenot — had been built on the Reedy River, and by the 1930s Greenville had woven itself into a place that eventually would become known as the nation's textile center

KEY DATES

c. 1770 — Richard Pearis settles near Reedy River in Greenville

1775 (December) — Battle of the Great Canebrake

1786 — Greenville County established by act of state Legislature

1795 — U.S. Post Office opens in Greenville village

1813 — Whitehall, the oldest house in Greenville, built by Gov. Henry Middleton

1815 — Vardry McBee, who built grist mill on the Reedy River near downtown falls, purchased 11,000 acres along the river.

1820 — First textile mills built on Rocky Creek and Enoree River; Poinsett Bridge built in northern part of county.

1823 — First petition to charter the village of Greenville filed with General Assembly

1826 — The Greenville Republican, village's first newspaper, starts publication

1829 — The Greenville Mountaineer, an antebellum newspaper, publishes under editorship of Benjamin F. Perry, who later became governor; Springwood Cemetary opens as village's first public burial ground

1831 — Greenville Baptist Church opens as first Baptist church in village; City of Greenville chartered as a village

1851 — Furman University moved to Greenville from Winnsboro

1853 — Greenville and Columbia railroad constructed with western terminal on Augusta Street

1865 — Benjamin F. Perry, who is buried in Christ Church cemetery, was appointed provisional governor of South Carolina

1866 — Wesley United Methodist Church, which has been restored, was organized with the Rev. J. R. Rosemond as pastor.

1868 — The Rev. Gabriel Poole served as pastor of Springfield Baptist Church when it was organized.

1868-1869 — City of Greenville designated as a city rather than a village by the state Legislature

1874 — The Greenville News started publication

1875 — Camperdown Mill, the first textile mill in the city, started manufacturing

1872 — Huguenot Mill started operations; telephone service with about 30 customers started

1874 — Greenville Daily News starts publication

1875 — Camperdown Mill, first textile plant in Greenville, starts manufacturing

1882 — Home mail delivery started in the city; telephone service begins with 30 customers; Hugenot Mill, second textile plant in the city, begins operations

1885 — Greenville City School District created

1892 — Greenville Post Office constructed at corner of Main and Broad streets.

1895 — Chicora College, a Presbyterian school for women, opened.

1896 — Greenville City Hospital, forerunner of Greenville Hospital System, admitted its first patient on June 17.

Sources: Historic Greenville Foundation; Richard Sawyer's "10,000 Years of Greenville County, South Carolina, History"; and "Famous Greenville Firsts."