BROOKSIDE PARK

A BIOGRAPHY OF A SUBURBAN PLACE

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ABSTRACT

This study was a landscape biography of Brookside Park, a suburban community in New Castle County, Delaware. The primary objective of this study was to document the changes to the landscape of Brookside Park over six decades and to create a biographical account of both the neighborhood and its residents. The second objective of this study was to draw attention to the importance of individual perceptions and misconceptions in the decision-making processes of landscape actors.

The biography of Brookside Park focused upon qualitative interviews with residents of Brookside who had lived or did live in the neighborhood at the time of study. The work was executed in the theoretical framework of vernacular landscape study and most importantly the biographical approach to landscape. The study revealed that the landscape of Brookside Park, including the homes, recreational spaces and social scene had all changed considerably. Many changes to the landscape were found to be linked into a pattern of resident apathy sparked by an initial retreat from neighborhood. When comparing the primary sources and the accounts of the interviewees, this study found that resident perceptions of their neighbors and the nature Brookside Park were the largest influence on their decision-making.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The geographer has filled many roles over the centuries, from the administration of empires to the study of natural processes and from interpretation of population demographics to the understanding of human territoriality. Through it all the goal of the modern geographer has always been to understand the interaction of humankind and their environment. To look at the tapestry that is our landscape and see how we as human beings are represented in the spaces that we create is a fundamental part of geography.

The cultural geographer studies the landscape as the physical representation of the relationship and as the interaction of the individual, culture, and the physical environment. Thus the cultural geographer wears many hats, for to study these three elements requires an understanding of anthropology, social science, history, geomorphology, philosophy and many others. Despite the wide reaching scope and subjective focus of cultural geography many believe that the study of the cultural landscape is essential to understanding human experience as well as understanding the influences on individual actors within the landscape. No event past, present or future occurs in a vacuum. The location of an event, while not a determinant, influences how that event unfolds. This has been the assumption of the geographer for generations, and the study of places and how they affect the activities and lives of people has
typically fallen under the purview of geography. In modern geography, landscapes both natural and human are studied, quantified, and organized by cultural geographers who have sought to understand them not only on a material level but also from an emotional and sensual perspective. In the field of geography several approaches have emerged to help the geographer understand the cultural landscape in light of subjective human experience as well as empirical fact. Among these, most pertinent to this study, are the vernacular landscape and landscape biography.

Vernacular landscape study has been an important topic for several decades in the field of geography and continues to change the way geographers approach the world around them. John B. Jackson was among the most influential in introducing and defining this approach and many of his ideas are utilized in this work. Vernacular landscapes are the landscapes of ordinary people in a modern society that lacks a strong folk tradition. It refers to common people in much the same way vernacular refers to a common tongue. The neighborhood, the main street, the small community are all examples of vernacular landscapes that Jackson uses to draw our attention to our everyday landscapes. Those landscapes are created, maintained and manipulated not by external authority, such as a government or elite group, but by ordinary people going about their daily lives. Their choices, preferences, and values are played out in the landscape, in its form and in its function. In order to understand any group of people you must study the spaces and objects over which they have the power of agency. It is from the realization that the grand landscapes of state power, economic elites, and social authoritarians tell us very little about the majority of a culture that vernacular study emerges. Vernacular landscape study steers the geographer away
from lofty architecture and planned landscapes to focus on the largely ignored corner store, urban neighborhood, and Midwestern Main Street. These are the landscapes that respond most quickly to the choices of individuals and small culture groups, and it is through them that the identities of ordinary people emerge. It is to better understand ordinary people that this study was undertaken, so that an anonymous landscape that has influenced the lives of thousands of people over six decades could be brought to light.

Rising out of the above mentioned ideals of vernacular landscape study, landscape biography is a field that approaches landscapes not merely as physical, static artifacts but as living, breathing entities. The landscape biographer treats the landscape like an individual, hence the name landscape biography. The idea being that landscapes have a power to influence those that live in them and an inertia created by the number of people who interact with them. In this way the landscape comes to have its own persona and seemingly its own ability to influence the world around it. By seeking the stories of those who have lived in, manipulated, and maintained the landscape the geographer understands the life and personality of the landscape. More than that, however, this term has come to mean that the landscape acts as an autobiographical work representing the group that occupies the landscape. The desires, values, struggles, and even failures of a group are commemorated in the form and changes they make to the landscape.

This study focuses upon Brookside Park, a large suburban neighborhood in New Castle County, Delaware. Built in the post World War II suburban boom, this neighborhood boasted thirteen hundred housing units and promised to give its
residents a piece of the American dream. This neighborhood has housed factory
workers, DuPont chemical engineers, Chrysler mechanics, and a whole host of people
from several socio-economic classes. In six decades this neighborhood has
experienced much change and has had a great influence on both those who resided
within it and those around it. This study endeavors to take this vernacular landscape,
largely anonymous and unknown, and use it as an example of why the study of
vernacular landscapes through the biographical approach to landscape is so important.

Utilizing the biographical approach, a sample of residents of Brookside past
and present were interviewed and asked questions about the social and physical
landscape of Brookside and how it has changed over time. More than just survey
questions, the participants were asked to share stories, their treasured memories of the
neighborhood, both good and bad. They were asked who and what was responsible for
the positive and negative changes within the neighborhood. Likewise they were asked
why they moved to Brookside and why they left, as well as what were the people like
then versus now, and how has the landscape physically changed. These were just some
of the questions that were asked. I endeavored to speak to people from as many
different backgrounds, classes and ages in order to write the biography of Brookside
by collecting stories of how it has influenced the lives of its residents. The following
biography focuses on the accounts of residents because I hold the hypothesis that in
understanding changes in the landscape, the opinions and perceptions of the agents of
change are more important in shaping outcomes than the objective facts. To put it
simply, what people think and believe to be true has more to do with their decision
making than what is factually the case. Therefore in order to truly get at the “facts” of
landscape change one must study not only the census records and maps but also collect the stories of those who lived in the moments of change. This study includes not only a thorough survey of primary and secondary sources but also a thorough understanding of the subjective world views of the individuals and cultures that changed the landscape of Brookside Park. To answer the eternal question of geography “Why is the Landscape the Way That it is?”, one must consider both the objective and subjective approaches.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE AND THEORY

Landscape

The term landscape is powerful and diverse in its meaning and application to the physical and cultural environment in both rural and urban areas (Cosgrove 1985, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). It is a term that has experienced wide usage both in popular discourse and in the discourse of geographical scholars. Its origins are humble; one would hardly think that such a powerful and inclusive term like landscape would have as its root in a simple terms such as landskip, an English word referring to a small rural plot, and landschap, a Dutch word referring to a small unit of feudal territory or cultivated land (Cosgrove, America, and Grigg 1985). This term would later be elevated from its humble origins and utilized by the painters of the landscape school who used plots of feudal territory as the subject matter of their art (Meinig 1983, Cosgrove, America, and Grigg 1985). The subject of these paintings was the rural manor and their goal was to glorify the agency of man in nature and promote the veneration and power of the landed aristocracy. Their usage of the term landscape led to the rise in popular language usage of the term today (Sauer 1925, Cosgrove 1985, Jackson 1986, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). In vernacular speech landscape references the aesthetic and artistic aspects of the term. The term landscape is also commonly used to describe a group of complex phenomena that cannot be easily understood (Tuan 1979, Cosgrove 1985, Lopez 1989, Groth and Bressi 1997). For example, the sum of all the actors and factors that shape the international economy
would be referred to as the economic landscape, or the climate of politics across the entire United States might be referred to as the political landscape. It is not clear why this has become so but the prevalence of this usage speaks to the complexity of the term. Since landscape and all of its myriad meanings is at the core of this work the first section is dedicated to landscape as a term and as a way of seeing the world (Bunkšė 1981, Bunkšė 2004, Bunkšė 2007).

The modern term landscape can be broken down into two distinct conceptual parts: land and scape (Jackson 1986). The former immediately informs you that the subject matter will be the physical world and the latter implies the shape and collected elements of the environment (Jackson 1986). This seemingly straightforward concept becomes muddled in meaning when one contemplates the ambiguous and wide usage it enjoys in vernacular speech (Cosgrove 1985, Jackson 1986, Henderson). Landscape is a term that can refer to an attractive nature scene or work of art. Important to this understanding of landscape are the concepts of perception and representation (Cosgrove 1985, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). These terms refer to the point of view and biases of the viewer of landscape and those of the artist representing the landscape in an artistic work (Meinig 1983, Cosgrove 1985, Lopez 1989). Furthermore, it can be used to describe the process of beautifying a suburban property or the ordering/manipulation of the ‘natural’ environment by human agency (Tuan 1979, Meinig 1979).

For some the term landscape is synonymous with pretty scenery depicted in works of art and wall calendars (Tuan 1979, Cosgrove 1985, Lopez 1989). This usage is common in vernacular conversation and harks back to the artistic origins of the
word and the origins of Landscape painting in 15th century Europe first discussed by the art historian Kenneth Clark (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). Landscape from its first popular usage had a strong visual emphasis and draws one’s attention to the dominance of vision as our principle aesthetic sense (Cosgrove 1985, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, Bunkše 2007). For those who hold landscape as an artistic term it implies a visual ideology mentioned above (Cosgrove 1985, Cosgrove, America, and Grigg 1985). The artist, through what he chooses to photograph or paint, shapes the perceptions of beauty of those who would consume that art. The landscape is an image frozen in time, created by the artist to interpret and attach value to the scene (Cosgrove, America, and Grigg 1985). In this way landscapes that people gravitate towards are influenced by the artists, in the same way that clothing and body types are influenced by the movers and shakers of the fashion world. This in turn leads those with the power to manipulate the landscape to fit the socio-political constructs and expressions of cultural power represented in art (Cosgrove 1985, Cosgrove, America, and Grigg 1985). The result: Those landscapes are changed as tastes change to conform to aesthetic values put forth by an elite group (Cosgrove 1985). This artistic and aesthetic usage of the term will be especially important to understanding of why individuals make the residential landscape choices that they do.

The linkage of landscape and art has had profound influence on how the term has been used since it first emerged (Cosgrove 1985). The artistic origins of landscape have lent it a focus on the interaction of man and nature. The original landscape painting in Europe depicted an idealized nature that was ordered and made beautiful by the agency of man (Meinig 1979, Jackson 1979, Cosgrove 1985). Though this
outlook dominates the study of modern American landscape, there is a strong following that considers the landscape to be nature and wilderness without the agency of man in view (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, Lopez 1989). While there is something to be said about the appreciation of landscapes for their own sake (Lopez 1989), to consider any landscape to be untouched by human activity is a falsehood (Meinig 1979, Naveh 1995, Antrop 1998, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000). It is for this reason that modern landscape study focuses more on occupied and continuous landscapes, rural and urban, rather than archaic or archaeological landscapes. The key element of the modern geographical use of the term is a staggering holism of values, culture, natural processes, and human perceptions.

Edmunds Bunkse in 2008 said to young geography masters student that to study landscape is to willingly jump into the most inclusive field of humanistic study. The holistic nature of the field and the term is well documented by both his colleagues and predecessors, starting with Carl Sauer and continuing even to this day (Lowenthal 1975, Meinig 1979, Tuan 1979, Lewis 1979, Lewis 1983, Cosgrove 1985, Ingold 1993, Lorimer 2005). Landscape, like a puzzle, cannot be understood by looking at its principal parts without regard for the whole. At its most basic level, modern humanistic study has realized that there is a need for holism and subjectivity in the study of landscape. The environment does not determine but offers possibilities and choices to the course of history (Meinig 1979, Lewis 1979, Marcucci 2000). To understand this reciprocal relationship it is useful to think of the landscape not as an object frozen in time but a living thing, both made by and making human beings (Ingold 1993). A landscape is a continuum, a never-ending chain of events that has

The subjective perceptions of the landscape are often the ones that reveal the most about us. To focus too strongly on the objective is to dehumanize understanding of the landscape. The geographers themselves are an instrument through which the landscape is perceived (Sauer 1925). Like an artist the individual observer paints the landscape with his own values, perceptions, and perspective (Tuan 1979, Jackson 1980, Jackson 1986, Nassauer 1995b). Here again are seen the elements of aesthetic value and worth playing out in landscape.

The understanding that all geographic uses of the term imply that an individual observer is present has many implications for the meaning of landscape (Sauer 1925, Samuels 1979, Meinig 1983, Muir 2003). From the outset, human faculties are the tools that we use to make sense of landscapes in our daily lives. Our sensory experiences and our memories create our perspectives and our preconceptions, which in turn shape our interpretations (Ackerman 1991, Bunkše 2007). The study of the feelings and impressions given to the individual by their physical and mental faculties is at the core of understanding how we understand and attach value to our landscapes (Tuan 1979, Ackerman 1991, Lorimer 2005).

However, the focus on the individual observer in modern landscape study makes the results idiosyncratic. No two individuals share the same life experience or even an identical biology, making experiences of landscapes unique despite the similarities between individual world views (Nassauer 1995a). Since no landscape is perceived the same way by different individuals, this approach calls for the geographer
to use both subjective and objective observation in defining the features of a landscape. This field, known as “lifeworld geography” or phenomenology, seeks the experience of individuals and their stories in order to recreate the mental maps, the varied perceptions and organization of perception that individuals use to make sense of the world around them (Samuels 1979, Muir 2000). In this way the landscape is studied by finding the similarities and differences between individual accounts.

Lifeworld geographies are the practical, emotional, and sensual worlds in which we live. To study such a personal aspect of someone’s life is to wade waist deep in the emotions of those individuals who act as the artists and observers of landscape (Sopher 1979, Tuan 1979, Samuels 1979, Cosgrove 1985, Schein 1997, Muir 2003). Yi-Fu Tuan described landscape as a thought based construct of both our rational and emotional minds, a possibly infinite Gestalt of information, associations, and connections (Tuan 1979). In his view of landscape the ideas that govern our behavior and our manipulation of the landscape come either from a functional or a moral aesthetic perspective (Tuan 1979). He and Sauer also liken landscapes to living beings, claiming that time is a critical variable of landscape much the same as it is for a human life (Sauer 1925, Tuan 1979). The geographer acts as a kind of intellectual middleman, for his task is to tease out from the perceptions and memories of an individual the geographical ideas that define a landscape both for those who live in it and those who observe it as outsiders (Meinig 1983).

If the emotions, memories, and imperfect perceptions of the individual are to be the building block of landscape study then the geographer must avoid losing sight of objective fact (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). Despite the heavy emphasis on the
individual in some modern geographical studies there is a degree of apprehension that study of human landscapes could devolve into a completely relativistic, subjective line of inquiry. Many in the field over the 20th century and into the new millennium have spoken of this concern and have concluded that landscape must always be an idea that blends objective study and sensitivity to the subjective experience of individuals (Tuan 1979, Meinig 1983).

Landscapes and their interpretation may be largely based on the individual. However, landscape as a term and as an idea is also representative of shared ideas, values, and pasts (Sauer 1925, Lowenthal 1975, Meinig 1979, Hoskins, Taylor, and Butler 1988, Naveh 1995, Bunkšė 2007). Ultimately, landscapes are cultural monuments (Nassauer 1995b). So strong is the relationship between culture and landscape that you can scarcely understand the one without studying the other, for how could an observer hope to understand the concept of the sacred cow in India without understanding the realities of a physical landscape that requires that cattle be used as draft and not dietary animals (Meinig 1979, Lewis 1979, Schein 1997, Marcucci 2000). Indeed, American geography from the organic and largely unplanned cities of the Atlantic coast to the suburbs of middle America is culture made manifest in the landscape (Jackson 1979, Schein 1997, Jackson 1986). Each landscape, however, should not be considered individual and insular, for just as the processes and pieces of one landscape cannot be understood alone, so the whole of human society cannot be understood without a study of its landscapes and how they interact with one another (Meinig 1979, Ingold 1993).
The shared values, histories, and aesthetic tastes within a culture are evident in their landscapes. Landscape as a term infers beauty and worth, and therefore an observer can discover what a group holds dear by studying its ideal landscapes (Sopher 1979, Schein 1997). Any landscape becomes a unity of culture and nature, and the interactions between these are made manifest in the choices and actions of the shapers and shaping forces of landscape (Jackson 1976, Tuan 1979, Henderson, Jackson 1987). In this way landscape is a symbolic term representative of people, for when given the choice individuals and groups shape their landscape in a way that they feel represents their desires, values, and cultural pillars (Marcucci 2000, Bunkše 2007). To study the cultures of the world and the landscapes that they create is to acknowledge an essential truth, that change is the one constant in both the physical environment and human society (Sauer 1925, Ingold 1993, Antrop 1998, Muir 2003). In any given moment every person, every group, and every landscape is part of a complex matrix of processes and causal factors which leave everything in a constant state of flux (Marcucci 2000, Muir 2003). In order to capture landscapes accurately, one must look to both the future and the past, seeking to place the present in continuity with the past and think to the future of the landscape (Lowenthal 1975, Meinig 1979).

Vernacular Landscape

The vernacular landscape is often defined as the cultural landscape that has evolved through the everyday activities and shared occupancy of ordinary people in a given landscape (Jackson 1986, Cosgrove and Jackson 1987). Through its forms the cultural, biological, physical and personal elements of everyday activities and every
people are expressed. The question is which cultural, social and political values are represented and whom do they represent? Since Carl Sauer wrote his definitive work *The Morphology of Landscape*, there have been many studies about the rural and natural landscapes as well as those of major cities, empires and capitals (Sauer 1925, Lewis 1979, Jackson 1986). Many scholars and literary leaders have tended to focus on the landscapes of the elite, designed by professionals, due to the ephemeral nature of ordinary landscapes (Meinig 1979). This becomes a problem when one considers that many grand landscapes have features and processes that are more resistant to change and less sensitive to the changes in culture that influence other landscapes (Lewis 1979, Meinig 1979, Samuels 1979, Jackson 1986, Groth and Bressi 1997). In this way landscape studies have fallen prey to similar predisposition as traditional history towards the great men and women. Early landscape studies tended to focus on these grand landscapes because the neighborhood and small town landscape were seen as too local and specific for geographical generalization that would make their study meaningful to audiences (Lewis 1979, Jackson 1987, Groth and Bressi 1997).

While these grand landscapes may be integral to understanding a nation or large cultural group, they are hardly representative of the numerous sub cultures and individuals that make up society (Jackson 1986, Nassauer 1995a, Naveh 1995, González 2005). One of the reasons for this is that landscapes of the grand tradition (as opposed to the folk or the vernacular) are largely resistant to the actions of individuals or small culture groups and as such are not representative of them (Samuels 1979, Jackson 1986). The study of grand landscapes is too general to understand the specifics and nuances of daily cultures, habits and tastes. Many writers
in the second half of the 20th century realized that the vernacular landscape, that is the landscape of ordinary people, were largely misunderstood and ignored by scholars (Lewis 1979, Jackson 1986, Lorimer 2005).

The landscapes of ordinary people and their study has at its center the idea that vernacular landscapes cannot be understood outside of the context of their authors (Samuels 1979, Marcucci 2000). Therefore the goal of the vernacular geographer is not only to seek the generalizations that can be used to categorize landscapes but also to look for the idiosyncrasies of culture and environment that produce the unique landscapes of everyday life. To the modern student the vernacular the landscape is reflective of everything: the changing values and habits of a culture, the passing of time and the decay of the material and the evolution of technology and the change of infrastructure (Lewis 1979, Lewis 1983, Jackson 1986, Ingold 1993, Nassauer 1995b, Nassauer 1992, Lorimer 2005). Obviously all elements of the landscape, not just the architecture and planned features, are key elements of the vernacular landscape. Everything from lawns, fast food restaurants, abandoned buildings and gas stations reveal the desires, lifestyles and values of those that live and work in that landscape (Jackson 1986, Jackson 1987, Ingold 1993, Crang 1996, Daynes 1997). Most changes in the material or social forms of the vernacular landscapes do not come from an authority or government. They will occur from the local culture groups who speak with their spending and choices (Jackson 1986, Baldassare 1992, Schein 1997, Muir 2000, Muir 2003).

Vernacular landscapes are Gestalts of culture, nature and the individual (Lewis 1979, Lewis 1983, Baldassare 1992, Ingold 1993). These landscapes, however
mundane and plain to the naked eye, are actually treasure troves of symbols and objects of cultural identity (Jackson 1986). If you think of a culture as a unity of people and ideas, and the landscape as the holistic representation of a culture, the importance of vernacular landscape study becomes clear (Ingold 1993, Nassauer 1995b). Vernacular landscape study is necessary to understand the most basic landscapes that shape our lives and the values that give those landscapes importance in lifeworld geographies. Vernacular landscape, like a vernacular language, tells the story of a people and contains the ethnic and aesthetic values of a group of individuals related by usage of the same space (Ingold 1993, Nassauer 1995a, Antrop 1998, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000).

The landscapes of ordinary people cannot be easily studied by the traditional means that geographers have used for centuries (Cosgrove, America, and Grigg 1985, Meinig 1979, Lewis 1983, Lewis 1979, Naveh 1995). They cannot be understood from a bird’s eye view or with two-dimensional maps because these landscapes exist primarily in the hearts and minds of the people who interact with them on a daily basis (Meinig 1979, Bunkše 2007b). These landscapes must be studied from the same perspective as they are viewed and manipulated by the local stakeholders and their subjective human perspective (Jackson 1986, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, Cosgrove 1985). In short, the landscape can only be understood through the eyes of those who live there. Theirs are the actions that shape the landscape and theirs are the stories that have the vernacular landscape as their setting (Jackson 1979, Jackson 1986, Upton 1991, Berkhofer 1997, Schein 1997, Marcucci 2000, Scanlon 2006).
To study landscape from the perspective of individuals is to realize that the landscape is just as temporal and changing as the people who occupy it (Ackerman 1991, Upton 1991, Marcucci 2000, Scanlon 2006). A natural part of this is to view the vernacular landscape through the sensory experiences and memories of the locals and to acknowledge the flawed nature of human perception, memory and rationality (Lowenthal 1975, Jackson 1986). Each individual is limited by his or her perspectives, perceptions and experiences, and as such their stories are subjective and should be regarded as possibly truthful but not factual (Lowenthal 1975, Haney and Knowles 1978, Bunkśe 1981, Schein 1997). These stories when collected and held next to each other create a mosaic of experience—a mosaic that helps the geographer understand the essential features and processes that create, maintain and change the landscape (Jackson 1986). Vernacular landscapes are linked to vernacular histories that have become popular in today’s studies of space and time since 1807 when Herder changed the study of history. In vernacular histories we now focus on the history of individuals and every day people more than we focus on the actions and spaces of great men and women (Jackson 1979, Tuan 1979, Jackson 1980).

The concern with the study of vernacular history and vernacular landscapes is that fact and objective accuracy are hard to attain when dealing with the vernacular (Jackson 1980, Lopez 1989). Our flawed perceptions and memories are even more noticeable when dealing the histories of ordinary landscapes. The individual mind is ever changing, to the point that the present reinterprets and reinvents the past constantly (Lowenthal 1975, Lowenthal 1979, Jackson 1986). Our memories are fallible and undergo an editing process that creates a discrepancy between the real and
the imagined of our emotions and attachments (Lowenthal 1975, Lowenthal 1979, Sopher 1979, Bunkše 2007a). For example, a neighborhood resident who has volunteered for decades may have sharp memories of the events at which he/she worked, but also believes those events to have been more important or influential to the neighborhood than they actually were (Lowenthal 1975, Upton 1991, Berkhofer 1997, Scanlon 2006).

The idiosyncratic and subjective nature of vernacular landscape study should not be seen as a weakness of the field but a strength. For it is the individuality and specific nature of these studies that lend them their value (Lowenthal 1975, Jackson 1986, Schein 1997). One of the most important lessons of history is that human beings frequently are not the rational actors that economic and social theory would lead you to believe (Muir 2000, Muir 2003). Western civilization is full of situations in which individuals or groups made decisions contrary to what was expected, often with incomplete and/or false information. These ‘mistakes’, if that is what one calls, them are responsible for great change in the landscape, society and the lives of individuals (David 2007).

Any individual actor in a landscape lives simultaneously in the real or external landscape and the imagined landscape of their life-world (Tuan 1979, Henderson, Jackson 1980, Jackson 1986, Bunkše 2007). One of the key features of this work is the emphasis on the imagined landscape as an important subject for study in vernacular landscape (Tuan 1979, Seamon 1979). Many scholars have over the years noted that it is the imagined world that most individuals use to make their decisions in the world. If the decisions that shape the landscape are based on the perceptions of individuals more
so than the ‘facts’ then one must seek to understand those perceptions as well as the
objective features of the landscape (Seamon 1979, Samuels 1979, Sopher 1979).

These imagined worlds are powerful forces in the vernacular landscapes of our
neighborhoods, towns, and consumer centers. As our minds collect experiences we
change our tastes, values, and behavior and these in turn change our landscapes. Our
preferences for cars, homes, proximity to cities, and cohabitation with other group are
all influenced by our identities both cultural and individual, which are linked to our
Our identities are constructed of vernacular elements that we perceive to be but they
may not actually be representative of ourselves (Tuan 1979, Gans 1982, Lopez 1989,
Murphy 2007). The suburban ideal for example is a strong normative force in the
residential choices of Americans that many (despite back to the city movements and
gentrification) continue to subscribe to (Jackson 1986, Gans 1982, Jackson 1987,
Cosgrove and Jackson 1987, Jackson 1976, Stilgoe 1990, Collver and Semyonov
1979, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Scanlon 2006). Therefore it is important for the
student of the vernacular to discover the histories and romanticized views that create
the ideals to which people seek to emulate in their landscapes.

The landscapes that we define as vernacular, those that occupy the daily lives
of individuals, often include their homes. Homes and neighborhoods are frequently the
topics of vernacular landscape studies and are a treasure trove of information about
any group (Jackson 1986, Sopher 1979, Jackson 1987). Home is a powerful word in
the English language and there are no words in other languages which encompass the
concept that home does for English speakers (Bunkše 2007, Sopher 1979, Bunkše
2004). Home is where you start from. Every day you awake in your bed and your home is the first place you interact with, and generally it is the last place you see before you go to bed (Sopher 1979, Lorimer 2005). Home is our sanctuary and our most important place. Our homes are the landscapes of strongest emotional attachment as we invest so much of ourselves in how they look, where they are and how they are organized (Tuan 1979, Lorimer 2005).

It follows, then, that in past studies of vernacular landscapes home is the central point around which the vernacular landscape is constructed in the mind of the individual (Schein 1997, Muir 2000, Sopher 1979, Lorimer 2005). Home is essential to any study of vernacular landscape primarily because it has the unique features that associate it both with our pasts and places most fondly remembered (Cooper Marcus 1992). These landmarks of home will shape the neighborhoods we choose, our habits and our agency in the vernacular landscape for our entire lives (Jackson 1986, Sopher 1979, Ackerman 1991, Cooper Marcus 1992).

All landscapes are experienced through our senses and yet few are as rich with sensory experiences as our home spaces (Lorimer 2005, Ackerman 1991). Other landscapes may contain stimulus for all of our senses, but only our homes are designed to be that way. The smell of food, the feel of a soft blanket, the sounds of creaking woodwork, all remind us that we are home. The landscapes of work and leisure outside the home cannot compare with the familiarity and ease that can be experienced at home, which is why the sensory experiences of home are so vivid and important to our memories and identities (Sopher 1979, Jackson 1986, Jackson 1987, Bunkše 2004, Lorimer 2005, Cooper Marcus 1992). Home is also the one landscape that is based
primarily on our own direct experience and the material objects we have collected over a lifetime. Author Chuck Palahniuk once said “that the things we own end up owning us”, and to a degree that is true. In the home every object is connected to a memory and every memory an anchor for who we are and where we have been (Sopher 1979, Cooper Marcus 1992, Lorimer 2005).

How do we unearth the connections to the past and the elements of our values that are built into the vernacular landscapes? We do so by looking to the ideals that people seek to emulate and the values they profess to hold dear (Muir 2003, Sopher 1979, Cooper Marcus 1992, Bruch and Mare 2006, Collver and Semyonov 1979). Rare is the instance where an individual or group will choose to manipulate a landscape in a way they believe will make them unhappy or that they feel does not represent them (Schein 1997, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Vaughan et al. 2009, Schnore 1963). The task of the geographer is to find the mediums through which the ideal landscapes and homes are represented and immortalized throughout the decades and centuries (Lewis 1979, Jackson 1987, Lewis 1983).

American vernacular landscape ideals are based heavily on visual aesthetics and consumption of prestige goods (Schein 1997). As noted by several in the field of landscape aesthetics and landscape ecology, our landscapes are influenced by a gestalt of individualism, capitalistic values and consumerism (Schein 1997, Sopher 1979, Jackson 1987, Walker and Lewis 2001, Ingold 1993, González 2005).

Individualism is an inseparable part of the American identity; it is one of the psychological pillars of our society. We have industries of fashion, film, and novel
based upon the idea that everyone should be a free-thinking individual, making the choices we see fit (Schein 1997). Regardless of how greatly we are influenced by economic forces or fashion or peer pressure, we as an American people like to believe that our choices are our own. As such, our choices as rational actors are supposed to represent us as unique human beings. With such consideration in mind it is easy to see how the choice of where to live, what colors to choose, what clothes to wear, etc may seem trivial but are in fact integral to our sense of self (Cooper Marcus 1992, Vaughan et al. 2009, Scanlon 2006, Orians 1986). The fact that we chose options in dress and landscape that identify us as part of larger groups does not reduce the satisfaction we get from exercising our individuality and we relish the opportunity to choose the values and tastes of the group to which we believe we belong (Schein 1997, Jackson 1986, Jackson 1987, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Scanlon 2006, Jackson 1976, Zukin 2010, Naveh 1995). This self determination, evident in American landscapes, is also important because a single individual always has the choice to diverge from the expected or fashionable. When this occurs a new chain of events may be triggered that changes the tastes and values of entire culture group or even an entire nation (Schein 1997, Muir 2003, Muir 2000).

Vernacular landscapes are also landscapes of capitalism and consumption. This is especially true for residential landscapes where virtually all the elements are commodities with a value and a prestige attached to them (Schein 1997). The real estate industry and the systems of property valuation are based on the idea that every feature of a home and a neighborhood can be considered to either add or subtract value and desirability from a property (Schnore 1963, Jackson 1987, Nassauer 1992, Stilgoe
1990, Daynes 1997, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Vaughan et al. 2009). Due to the contentious and delicate nature of property value, many in our society place high importance and derive great prestige from the neighborhoods and homes in which they live. It is the prestige and social clout gained from residential landscapes that cause many to live to the upward limit of their means (Baldassare 1992, Schnore 1963, Murphy 2007, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Haney and Knowles 1978). When one considers the importance of conspicuous consumption and outward displays of wealth in modern society it becomes clear how important the vernacular landscapes of our residence are to our sense of self and the identities we hope to portray to the world.

Idealized homes and neighborhoods are iconic elements in the American psyche. Indeed, for many the “American dream” is synonymous with the suburban ideal—an ideal that to many is the very antithesis of individuality (Jackson 1986, Jackson 1987, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Vaughan et al. 2009). These mythic homes and neighborhoods are created by processes that largely discourage uniqueness and idiosyncrasy. Therefore in our mental maps we emphasize the small distinctions between homes and neighborhoods (Sopher 1979). Small distinctions such as knick knacks, minor architectural differences, colors, and patterns are not trivial to the individual but become major points of emotion and identity in the vernacular landscape of home and neighborhood (Muir 2003, Muir 2000, Sopher 1979, Samuels 1979, Gans).
Methods for Reading the Landscape

A landscape tells the story of the people who have changed it over the years. It is a narrative that can be read by the careful observer, whose authors are the people who manipulate that landscape and hold ties of memory and emotion to its features (Ingold 1993, 152-174, White 1990, Laurel, Strickland, and Tow 1994). The techniques for reading the landscapes of our world are many and varied in both scope and scale. They tend, however, to share a common trait that landscapes must be viewed not as static items, but as living entities. Through such a study of a landscape the human personality of a region can be discovered (Tuan 1979, Laurel, Strickland, and Tow 1994, Meinig 1979). When discussing techniques for reading the landscape it is useful to begin with the six questions of landscape posed by D. W. Meinig in 1979. Included below are the questions posed by Meinig and paraphrasing of their explanations.

1. **What are the Landscapes which have acted as templates for our symbolic and dream landscapes?**

   As mentioned above, the landscape ideals which individuals hold dear have far reaching effects in the landscapes in which we live. Landscapes are shaped to fit the expectations and desires of those that consume them and therefore one of the most important tasks in reading the landscape is to identify what landscapes, real or imagined have created the symbols and dreams that individuals look to when judging real world landscapes.
2. **How do actual landscapes become symbolic landscapes?**

This question is essential to understanding the nature of our perception but also gives the geographer insights into the tastes and values of a group. This in turn illuminates the choices it has made in picking and manipulating landscapes. What is the selection process that is used and who are the creators of the symbolic? Many geography writers point to literature, film, commercialism and advertising as the determining forces in modern landscape preference, though other sources certainly influence preference (Jackson 1986, Jackson 1980, Jackson 1987, Meinig 1979). For example, in the United States our sense of wilderness and pastoralism can be attributed to both our English heritage and our calendar and cinema industries which have for some time propagated an idyllic view of nature and rural living (Meinig 1979, Lopez 1989, Stilgoe 1990, Nassauer 1992, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Igler 2002). Also, magazines that popularize the choices and tastes of celebrities and elites greatly influence the landscape agency of ordinary people who attempt to emulate those choices. Examples of such elite influence include celebrity life magazines, home and decorating television networks and design magazines.

3. **How do we assess the impacts of the symbolic on the mundane?**

In order to understand how the symbolic influences the everyday landscapes of our world one needs to look no farther than the substance and form of those landscapes (Muir 2000, David 2007, Crang 1996, Upton 1991). The impact of the symbolic can be measured by noting to what extent landscapes are planned or changed to conform to the symbols. For example many of the Protestant churches in the US mirror the

4. **How do we define and assess the significance of differences between ideal and real landscapes?**

   One of the most important elements of this question is the relative nature of perception and the fact that what is ideal for one group may not be for another that occupies the same landscape (Meinig 1979, Scanlon 2006, Zukin 2010, Groth and Bressi 1997, Duncan and Duncan 2004). The quiet and idyllic rural hamlet may be a paradise for the elites who live there and a ghetto for those that work there (Duncan and Duncan 2004, Duncan and Duncan 2003, Duncan and Lambert 2004). Everything is based on perspective and point of view as discussed above, therefore it is difficult sometimes to get a sense for how much the disparities between the ideal and the real affect individuals and groups. To overcome this challenge the only solution is to engage as many people as possible and lay the stories on top of one another.

5. **What do the most prominent US symbols, such as the suburbs, Main Street and the New England village, tell us about American society?**

   What do our idealized landscapes say about us? To read the landscape effectively the answer to this question must be found. The desires and symbols we hold dear are pillars of our sense of worth and identity as mentioned above. The
idealized Main Street, the New England village and the picturesque suburb all show
who we think we are, where we think we’ve been and what we think we want (Muir

6. **What new patterns of society and landscape are emerging?**

After the symbolic landscapes and how they have influenced real landscapes are
assessed, the currently emerging forms and changes in the landscape must be
observed. Do these new landscapes fall into the same patterns as those that came
before? What are the new symbols and ideals? Why are they different? Why are they
the same? All these questions must be answered for landscapes both emerging and
existing are in constant flux. All events have precedents and antecedents and as such
the study of landscape requires constant updates (Meinig 1979, Scanlon 2006, Lewis
1979, Meinig 1983).

An example of a longstanding and evolving pattern in American society is the car
as the basic unit of American economic and individualistic values (Jackson 1986,
war the automobile has completely changed the form of American landscapes and it
continues to influence the way we build, live and think (Daynes 1997, Vaughan et al.

Most geographic research deals with changes and the study of landscape is no
different. However, it is also important to study the ‘what and why’ of stasis in our
landscapes (Muir 2003, Muir 2000). It is easy to focus on the change when reading the
landscape, but sometimes what has stayed the same can reveal just as much about a
landscape and its people (Muir 2003, Bruch and Mare 2006, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Antrop 1998, Nassauer 1995a). Values, aesthetic elements and forms that persist throughout years or decades are often symbolic elements that have become entrenched in the hearts and minds of cultural groups and are no less than sacred cows of landscape aesthetics (Meinig 1979, Cosgrove, America, and Grigg 1985, Schein 1997).

When reading the landscape one must take care to study the history of the landscape in order to frame the current properly (Muir 2000, Scanlon 2006, Lewis 1979, Meinig 1979). Landscapes change and evolve as time passes and the forces that create and maintain them disappear or change (Lewis 1979, Lewis 1983, Lowenthal 1979, Lowenthal 1975). Indeed the landscape is a palimpsest where the ghosts of the past linger in the medium of the material form (Crang 1996, Marcucci 2000).

The study of landscape history is important for several reasons noted by sociologists, historians and geographers. First and perhaps most related to our discussion of vernacular landscape is that the changes in our needs, values and tastes are commemorated in the changes to our landscape (Antrop 1998, Nassauer 1995a, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Nassauer 1992). This record of our tastes, in addition to informing us about where we have been, also sends strong echoes through our current wants and values (Lewis 1979, Ingold 1993, González 2005). We are products of our own histories whether the choice is to go against or with what has been in the landscape and in our lives. Regardless of which choice we make, the continuity of our current landscape with our past is necessary for the maintenance of our identities, values and the causality of events (Meinig 1979, Lowenthal 1975, Meinig 1983).
To quote Meinig “we do what we do and make what we make because our doings and our makings are inherited from our pasts” (Meinig 1979). The current form of the landscape is both reflective of the people who built it and its current residents (Schein 1997, Lewis 1979, Ingold 1993). It is important to note, however, that changes in the landscape are not instantaneous. The landscape suffers from a kind of lag and it is often slower to change than the ideas that create it. What this means is that the current landscape is more a reflection of the recent past of a group’s values and aesthetic preferences (Marcucci 2000, Ingold 1993). Landscapes also have a pattern of sequent occupance as mentioned above, but beyond just succeeding from one form to another landscapes also succeed between groups and cultures (Stilgoe 1990, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Scanlon 2006, Marcucci 2000, Murphy 2007, Duncan and Duncan 2004, Jackson 1987, Jackson 1987). For example, when discussing the pattern of suburbanization in America one must understand the process of filtering and housing succession that occurs when more affluent groups move to new housing and lower and middle class families come to occupy the housing vacated by that affluent group (Baldassare 1992, Stilgoe 1990, Schnore 1963, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Scanlon 2006, Jackson 1987, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993).

The landscapes of the present and past must be understood in the context of the technology that made their creation possible (Collver and Semyonov 1979, Antrop 1998, Lewis 1979, Lewis 1983). Technological innovations such as railways, the use of coal for making large quantities of iron and steel, and the creation of the superhighway network are just three examples of technological achievements that both
defined generations but also drastically changed the form of landscapes (Collver and Semyonov 1979, Jackson 1987, Jackson 1986, Jackson 1976).

Reading the landscape is a time consuming and taxing undertaking. The landscape is a gestalt of so many forces and individuals that it cannot be understood except through long study and affection (Antrop 1998, Lopez 1989). In order to achieve this, many landscapes are studied by resident scholars who experience the landscape first hand and attempt to “go native” to read the landscape and understand the points of view of those who know the landscape best (Antrop 1998, Scanlon 2006, Meinig 1979, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Lopez 1989, Gans 1982). Since all landscapes are perceived differently by individuals, it becomes useful to experience the landscape firsthand as a resident to add your own perceptions as a geographer to the study (Schein 1997, Meinig 1979, Tuan 1979).

**Biography of landscape**

If the goal of reading the landscape is to identify and understand the connections of our current landscapes to the pasts that created them, then the goal of landscape biography is to find the authors of landscape (Scanlon 2006, Lewis 1979, Meinig 1979, Samuels 1979). The name of the approach comes from the prevailing viewpoint that landscapes are autobiographical works created by those with power of agency in the landscape or on their own power as unique landscapes (Muir 2003, Muir 2000, Schein 1997, Schein 1997, Scanlon 2006, Nassauer 1995b). For the chroniclers of landscape man is the author of all places in which he lives and man’s agency and choice leaves no landscape unchanged. When the careful eye looks at the landscape
the imprints of our actions can be seen everywhere (Muir 2003, Bruch and Mare 2006, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Antrop 1998, Samuels 1979).

Landscape biography seeks the cause, choice and responsibility behind every landscape, and attempts to find the individuals whose choices made the landscape what it is and has been. It is a field that is strong in its defense and sensitivity to the ‘I’ of subjective humanistic study (Samuels 1979, Groth and Bressi 1997). If the landscapes of ordinary people, particularly the landscape of home, are meant to be interpreted as representative of the values, tastes and identity of the individual then an individual approach must be taken. For many in the field of social science the individual has become the villain of “meaningful” research. The subjective become the enemy of empirical geographic research and objective results, instead the focus is on hard data and demographic mapping from which the identities and values of groups are to emerge for the geographer to document, never once having interacted directly with the authors of the landscape (Schein 1997, Scanlon 2006, Samuels 1979, Groth and Bressi 1997, Bunkšē 2007, Lorimer 2005, Duncan and Lambert 2004). The modern landscape student believes that the landscape can only be viewed through the eyes of those people who created it, and in that way landscape biography is vernacular in the truest sense. It is a landscape according to the individual who experiences it (Samuels 1979).

Proponents of this approach to landscape stand in defense human experience and its importance in understanding landscapes (Samuels 1979, Sopher 1979). The landscape of home is meant to be representative of the owner’s values, culture and tastes. Therefore in order to understand a landscape fully you must study the
individuals as well as the physical form of the landscape (Sopher 1979, Ingold 1993). If man is the author of the landscape in which he lives, as Meinig famously said in ten views of the same scene, then the habits, perspectives and values of the artist that must be understood first and foremost (Meinig 1979, Meinig 1983). In that way the landscape is like a novel or a work of art that cannot be understood fully without the context of the individuals perspective and life experience. Shakespeare and his works are much easier to understand in the context of the time, and political climate in which he wrote them.

Much like reading the landscape, landscape biography requires the understanding of the choices and mental worlds of the individual (Samuels 1979, Seamon 1979, Sauer 1963). Again, here one encounters the goal of a lifeworld geographer. It is important, however, to note that there is a distinction between causal factors and responsibility for the landscape (Samuels 1979). In many works dealing with landscape there is a tendency, even when the individual is included, to point to deterministic forces and inevitable causal chains. This approach comes to the defense of the power of the individual, rejecting the inevitability of any event or existing causality and emphasizing the agency the individual in changing the landscape and shaping larger society (Samuels 1979).

Samuels, in his definitive work on landscape biography, discusses several categories of limitations on human agency. The first and perhaps most notable when dealing with suburban neighborhoods are deed restrictions (Samuels 1979, Scanlon 2006, Duncan and Duncan 2004, Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Dolan and Dunn 1959). Deed restrictions are a common feature of many neighborhoods and limit the actions
that owners may take in modifying or utilizing their property. Usually deed restrictions are automatically considered binding when one purchases the home, though some residential communities with neighborhood associations require that residents sign specific contracts. The provisions of these deed restrictions usually cover what and how additions and modifications to property can be made as well as restrictions about the types of activities that may be performed in the house. For example, many suburban deed restrictions require certain dimensions for fences and sheds and prohibit business endeavors to be operated out of the home (Samuels 1979, Duncan and Duncan 2004, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Schein 1997, Schnore 1963, Baldassare 1992). Included also in these restrictive forces are cultural norms, societal expectations and laws.

Home designers, planners, celebrities, fashion leaders and many others created the aesthetic ideologies to which we as a society subscribe (Meinig 1979, Schein 1997, Scanlon 2006, Jackson 1987, Lopez 1989, Schnore 1963, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000). These ideals influence the landscape and the world in general. The choices that people make as to what to wear, what to say, what to do for a living, where to live, how to decorate and shape their homes are all influenced by trendsetters and their ideologies of beauty (Samuels 1979, Scanlon 2006). These ideologies create what Samuels calls an “ideology of place” which create paradigms and taste constructs that shape our landscapes. These ideologies and the individuals that create them are largely influenced by a combination of capitalism, inertia of ideas (tradition) and personal preference (Samuels 1979). The reason it is important to note these trendsetters and the ideologies of aesthetics is that they have a large though largely uncredited
influence on the story of the landscape. If the landscape itself is a narrative with authors and contributors then ideologies are the author’s influences (Samuels 1979, Meinig 1979, Meinig 1979, Meinig 1983). The subscribers to those ideologies may be the one making the choices that shape the landscape but the trendsetters, planners and authors of those ideologies are just as much involved in the landscape because of their influence on the perceptions and choices of the author (Samuels 1979, Meinig 1979, Meinig 1983). Think of these ideologues of place as the authors that influence the authors, much in the same way artists today are often inspired by their favorite master painter or poet.

One of the they key tasks of the landscape biography is finding these elites, both in society at large and in the particular landscape that is being studied (Samuels 1979, Sopher 1979, Jackson 1986, Lopez 1989, Duncan and Lambert 2004). In many ways planners are the original authors of the landscape, responding to the tastes and needs of the society that hires them to create a development or sculpt a landscape (Schein 1997). Especially when dealing with suburban landscapes, the planners and architects that design the development interpret both the desires of their clients and the norms and aesthetic values of the society at large. They have as their goal the generation of profit and the creation of a product that people want to consume. In this way their actions can be pointed to as good examples of powerful elites who shape the landscape both through their own choices and through the acceptance of the ideology of place (Schein 1997, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000Marcucci 2000, Antrop 1998).

Elites within a neighborhood can be found through several means. Some of these are obvious and others are more subtle. One of the most obvious indicators of
elite status within a community is holding a leadership position in official or recreational organizations (Samuels 1979, Gans 1982). The citizens who hold office in the community, whether in an official governmental capacity or via a local civic association, are important sources. These individuals are usually at the forefront of change to the landscape and persons of interest for a landscape study. When looking for them it is useful to keep an eye out when scouring the archives, public records, and newspaper articles, for names that repeat themselves in the community history. Even outside of positions of leadership, most communities usually contain active citizens that frequently get involved in moments of change and have had a strong influence on the decisions of others. These are the citizens who carry the petitions and literature around to inform their neighbors and who organize protests and sit-ins at city council meetings. Another good way to find the elites within a given community is to seek out non-governmental leaders and figures. For example a church pastor has a powerful influence on the values of a community and through his leadership he shapes the choices (to a degree) of his congregation. Another example is an involved parent or group of parents in youth recreation. They are the leaders who raise money to maintain or build ball fields and recreation equipment. These are just a few examples but as mentioned above the internal elites must be sought out and spoken to, those that not only made up their own minds but the minds of others as well (Samuels 1979, Marcucci 2000).
Suburbanization and Suburban Landscapes

When studying the landscape one must understand the histories, ideals and narratives that created that landscape. In order to understand the current temporal form of any landscape one must understand its past, therefore a discussion of American suburbanization, specifically in the post WWII era is important for understanding the history and context of Brookside Park (Baldassare 1992, Antrop 1998, Scanlon 2006, Marcucci 2000, Berkhofer 1997, Muir 2000, Upton 1991). Even today, despite their immeasurable influence on American society, the suburban form and suburban neighborhood studies are under-represented in the literature with a strong focus remaining on major cities (Baldassare 1992). This underrepresentation becomes particularly glaring when one considers that beginning in 1970 more than half of all people in the US reside in suburban communities not cities (Walker and Lewis 2001, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Scanlon 2006).

The first characteristic of suburban landscapes identified by Jackson and others is peripheral location (Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Jackson 1987, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Stilgoe 1990). From the outset, these neighborhoods had as their defining feature their intermediate location between the countryside and the city (Jackson 1987, Stilgoe 1990, Gans 1982). This feature comes primarily from the long standing association of large cities with vice, social ills and negative housing traits (Walker and Lewis 2001, Haney and Knowles 1978, Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987). As a result of this, moneyed individuals would leave the cities when possible (Walker and Lewis 2001, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Baldassare 1992). For much of early American history this luxury was limited to the very wealthy, and it was not until the
onset of the Industrial Revolution and the advances in transportation that came along with it that the middle class was able to leave the city and create communities in the space in between the rural manors of the wealthy and the cities (Walker and Lewis 2001, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Baldassare 1992, Collver and Semyonov 1979). Its location was also influenced by social theorists such as Rousseau who had left in Western civilization a strong disposition to the rural as the ideal place to raise children (Jackson 1987). Indeed the earliest forms of suburbs were decidedly more rural in appearance until the commuter and rail suburbs emerge in the late 1800s (Jackson 1987). Furthermore it is worth noting that this desire for wealth to leave the city has serious side effects including the decline of municipal services, tax base, housing deterioration and the segregation of incomes with poverty concentrated in major cities and wealth stratified without (Walker and Lewis 2001, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987).

The peripheral location of the suburbs is made possible and affordable in the United States because of the relatively low cost of land and the undeveloped nature of that land (Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987). Furthermore several governmental and private transportation initiatives enabled the suburbs to grow cheaply and quickly across the United States in the 20th century. First and foremost, the creation of commuter trains and trolley cars in American major cities in the 1800s enabled the creation of the first commuter suburbs, which helped to alleviate urban population pressures (Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Baldassare 1992). Following these first suburban forms, the transportation construction implemented under the Federal Highway Acts of 1916 and 1956 helped to lay the groundwork for the inexpensive and easy transportation that
made the suburban boom possible (Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Baldassare 1992, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Schnore 1963, Gans 1982). These leaps in transportation efficiency enabled the middle class American to move farther and farther away from the city and contributed greatly to both the modern form of suburban landscapes and the sprawl and isolated neighborhood structure that dominates the United States today (Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Stilgoe 1990, Baldassare 1992, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Vaughan et al. 2009, Jackson 1976). Since people did not need to live near work in the city, and since land costs were less expensive outside the city; people moved farther away. This trend is reflected in landscapes based on car-centered communities (Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Baldassare 1992, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Jackson 1976).

The second prominent feature of American suburbs is their relatively low population density compared to urban spaces (Jackson 1987, Jackson 1976). While the row house may have been the original and most traditional form of the earliest American suburbs, the enduring model of modern times is the detached single family home (Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Gans 1982, Jackson 1976). In this instance technology and inexpensive land is again the explanation. Especially moving into the 20th century, inexpensive, mass-produced materials, and, later, mass produced developments known as Levittowns, made the low population density neighborhood model profitable for builders and affordable for consumers (Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Jackson 1987, Baldassare 1992, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Gans 1982, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Jackson 1976, Gans, Murphy 2007, Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992).
The relatively low population density of American suburbs was further supported by government subsidies of suburban development (Stilgoe 1990, Schnore 1963, Gans 1982, Jackson 1976). The first government support for suburbia’s low density is the federal support and insurance for the mortgage system. Through interest rate regulation, lending insurance, and the creation of the Homeowner’s Loan Corporation, the government of the US directly supported the self amortizing mortgage and the growth of suburban landscapes (Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Baldassare 1992, 475-494, Schnore 1963, Baxter and Lauria 2000). These factors, coupled with mortgage tax breaks and low interest post-war veteran’s loans, led to the suburban boom of the 1950s and 1960s. This boom would reshape the American dream to the point that a detached house, a car, and a deep desire for homeownership became the norm (Stilgoe 1990, Baldassare 1992, Gans 1982, Jackson 1976).

The nature of post-war suburbs has persisted into the twenty-first century due to many forces (which are not pertinent to this thesis). However, it is important to note that one of the desires was to limit growth in suburban communities and another was to perpetuate racial and economic segregation. Furthermore the suburban form and the pro growth policies that created it continue to contribute to the crippling housing crisis that has made home ownership all but impossible for much of the working poor and service employees of this country (Walker and Lewis 2001, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Scanlon 2006, Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Baldassare 1992, Schnore 1963, Gans 1982, Jackson 1976, Murphy 2007, Duncan and Duncan 2003). The issue is that the preservation of property values coupled with the desire of residents and builders to create the most attractive neighborhoods prices out many people in the modern
housing market. Adding to this housing crisis was the lack of affordable housing built in the last thirty years, even prior to the recent recession (Walker and Lewis 2001, Stilgoe 1990, Schnore 1963, Vaughan et al. 2009, Murphy 2007, Baxter and Lauria 2000, Bruch and Mare 2006).

The next and most notable feature of the suburbs is its architectural homogeny. This feature is the one most visible in popular culture, film and academia; it is demonstrative of the (supposedly) homogenous and repressive nature of suburbs (Jackson 1987, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000). Despite the homogeneity of form within suburban neighborhoods, it is important to note that suburban landscapes do vary greatly across the United States and should hardly be considered a monolithic landscape form (Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Vaughan et al. 2009, Nassauer 1992).

The cause of the homogeny of the suburban landscape is the mass production of materials and the nature of our modern conspicuous consumption. The easy availability and reduced cost of generic housing is profitable both in that it cuts costs and creates a mass appeal product that is more accessible and attractive to consumers (Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Vaughan et al. 2009, Jackson 1976). The nature of vernacular landscape study in the United States requires the study of the homogenized spaces of suburbia, the everywhere and nowhere of shopping malls and Arby’s (Jackson 1987, Baldassare 1992, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Vaughan et al. 2009, Jackson 1976). These spaces are made less unique and more accessible so that they fit into the consumption paradigm of modern society. The onset of the Industrial Revolution created a conspicuous consumption pattern that departed from tradition: where it had been the goal of the middle class to own the one-of-a-kind items
purchased by the wealthy, it has become the goal now to consume the same mass produced goods that other middle class people could afford (Jackson 1987, Jackson 1976). What this simply means that individuals prefer things they see other people buying and are comparable measures of wealth to unique items that others may or may not value (Jackson 1987, Jackson 1976).

The fourth characteristic identified by Jackson is the easy availability and reduced cost of the suburban landscape model (Jackson 1976). As mentioned above the costs of suburban housing was kept down by the mass production of building materials, the standardization of house styles, and the availability of cheap land in the United States (Daynes 1997, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Baldassare 1992, Gans 1982, Schnore 1963, Stilgoe 1990, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Jackson 1987). The continued popularity of suburban neighborhoods and the persistence of the suburban ideal have also created a never-ending supply of fresh housing that provides inexpensive (relatively) housing to the middle and upper middle class (Baldassare 1992, Scanlon 2006, Baxter and Lauria 2000, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Duncan and Duncan 2003, Murphy 2007). Unfortunately the burgeoning middle class of the post-war period has gradually slowed in growth and declined in economic power as costs of living have increased and many industry-based middle class jobs have disappeared (Daynes 1997, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Schnore 1963, Jackson 1987, Baxter and Lauria 2000, Murphy 2007, Walker and Lewis 2001). The deterioration of the middle class, the advent of the dual income household as a necessity, and other social factors have led to a change in the nature of suburban communities, a change
that becomes apparent in the literature discussed at greater length below (Collver and Semyonov 1979, Jackson 1987, Murphy 2007).

The final defining feature of American suburbs is their racial and economic homogeneity (Jackson 1976). This aspect of suburban landscapes is not unique in the US. In fact many theorists argue that the racial and socio-economic segregation of the suburbs is merely an accentuation of the trends that can be found in most American cities (Baldassare 1992, Gans 1982, Stilgoe 1990, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Jackson 1987, Duncan and Duncan 2003, Murphy 2007). In the suburbs racial and income segregation was much more avidly defended and continues even to this day for several reasons. First among these is the appraisal and real estate practices laid down in the late 19th and early 20th century that persist to this day (Collver and Semyonov 1979, Stilgoe 1990, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Jackson 1987). Chief among these are those created by Richard Hurd in the 1920s, where he created a system of appraisal that held that racial and class composition are more influential in determining the desirability of property than the houses themselves (Baldassare 1992, Jackson 1987). When banks, real estate agents and government appraisers began to take these racially derisive ideas to heart, they enshrined them in the housing market and dramatically changed the face of American housing (Stilgoe 1990, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Jackson 1987).

Homes represent the single largest investment that most households will make in their lifetimes. As such the protection of that investment and the equity and stability it is meant to create is of paramount importance. To protect the value of the suburbs, real estate agents and banks redlined, blockbusted and steered their way into largely
racially homogenous suburbs (Jackson 1976, Collver and Semyonov 1979, Gans 1982, Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Murphy 2007). Even after housing segregation was made illegal, the practices informally persisted and will continue to do so until the mixing of race and class does not cause the decline of perceived and real values of suburban homes (Collver and Semyonov 1979, Baldassare 1992, Jackson 1987, Murphy 2007, Walker and Lewis 2001, Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992).

Suburban Change

When looking at the literature, one sees two vastly different pictures painted depending on the time period in which an author was writing. For the last forty years at least, the American suburb has been viewed with a critical eye (sometimes too critical), with academics, commentators and geographers focusing on the negative elements of this enduring landscape (Baldassare 1992, Gans 1982). If one looks back, many of the early writings on suburbs describe them in largely utopian terms (Baldassare 1992). In the academic literature of the late 19th to mid 20th century the suburb was the cure for urban ills, and that mindset persists today in the perceptions of average people if not in the minds of academics (Jackson 1976, Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Murphy 2007, Nassauer 1992). Indeed, planners and social engineers saw the suburb as the ideal community, free of the crimes, racial tensions and vices they saw manifest in urban living (Baldassare 1992, Jackson 1987). By the start of the 20th century many social and architectural theorists began to herald the suburb as the utopian urban form of the future (Jackson 1987). The suburban utopia and its persistence in today’s popular culture despite studies and films
portraying its more dystopian qualities is largely the legacy of Andrew Downing, Catharine Beecher and Calvert Vaux. These three social figures, wrote letters, papers, and studies in the late 1800s that popularized the moral, social and economic superiority of the suburban resident. Even to this day when one talks to the modern young professional they speak of settling with a family in the suburbs as if to do otherwise would be unthinkable and absurd (Jackson 1976, Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987).

In the decades following World War II the social and physical elements of American suburbs would change dramatically. First and foremost is that much of the employment that supported the American working suburb has disappeared. Most of the manufacturing and semi-skilled labor jobs that provided income for the working middle class have left the United States (Collver and Semyonov 1979, Baldassare 1992, Schnore 1963, Stilgoe 1990, Jackson 1987, Murphy 2007, Walker and Lewis 2001). With those sources of employment gone, many suburban neighborhoods have deteriorated, due to the fact that residents could no longer afford to maintain them. Another by product of the loss of these jobs is that many of the people who held them now work in the service economy as part time employees. What this means is that many suburban residents who once had full time employment with benefits and the protection of unions now worked longer hours without those benefits and protections. This warrants mention because the transition from a manufacturing to a service economy is heralded in the literature as the cause of the deterioration of suburban socialization and community involvement (Collver and Semyonov 1979, Baldassare 1992, Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Jackson 1987, Baxter and Lauria 2000, Antrop

Since the 1970s the quality of life and the fabric of the community have deteriorated in many suburbs. In fact many modern suburban studies show that an increasing number of urban problems can now be found in American suburbs (Baldassare 1992, Walker and Lewis 2001). The sense of community and shared values has eroded out of many middle and lower suburbs as the neighborhoods integrated and as economic hardship eroded the leisure time found in the lives of post-war suburbanites (Duncan and Duncan 2003, Murphy 2007, Dolan and Dunn 1959). Even in more affluent suburbs the rise of the nuclear household can be seen to eclipse the importance of the extended family and community at large. The car and the disjointed, short-trip nature of modern suburban life has created a landscape of islands where individuals can pick and choose where and what to do with little or no interaction with their immediate community (Schnore 1963, Jackson 1987, Murphy 2007, Walker and Lewis 2001). Also the rise of foreclosures and the economic hardship experienced by the working class has caused the property values to drop in many neighborhoods, opening these neighborhoods up to rental properties and the forces of property succession (Baxter and Lauria 2000). For many the suburbs have become a haven and island of isolation from the rest of world, and their neighborhoods are landscapes of prestige instead of communities (as seen in the early stages of the suburban boom).
Chapter 3
DATA AND METHODS

Data Sources
When gathering information for a biography of landscape it is important to exclude very few sources of data (Antrop and Van Eetvelde 2000, Berkhofer 1997, Cooper Marcus 1992, Cosgrove, America, and Grigg 1985, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, Duncan and Lambert 2004, Duncan and Duncan 2004, Crang 1996, Gregory 1981, Jackson 1986, Jackson 1980). As discussed above, any change in the landscape is demonstrative of change in the culture, values and demographics of the authors of the landscape. It is in the spirit of holism and rigorous landscape study that the data was chosen for this biography of landscape.

Primary Sources
First among primary sources are the homes themselves, which act as an impartial record of the changes in the landscape. In the choices of what residents had chosen to do and not do I could see their values, aesthetic tastes and identities played out (Samuels 1979, Hoskins, Taylor, and Butler 1988, Meinig 1979, Jackson 1980, Jackson 1986). The additions to the homes, the modifications of the properties and the varying styles of decoration were a mosaic of Brookside both past and present. Included in this source is also my own observation of the forty acres of parkland contained within the corporation. Walking its creek beds, ball fields, and hiking trails enabled me to see firsthand the state of the neighborhood and its recreational activities.
Related to personal observation of the homes and parkland in its present state is the how the homes and lands of Brookside Park have changed over time. In order to capture the neighborhood both past and present one of the most useful primary sources utilized in this work are personal photographs taken by residents. These photographs were gathered from several sources and provided considerable insight into how the neighborhood landscape had changed over time. Sources for these photographs included the special collections library at the University of Delaware library, the residents themselves and several photo albums borrowed from the Brookside Community Incorporation office. Furthermore, the local churches and recreational organizations such as the Brookside Activities Council (BAC) provided numerous pictures that were utilized in the biography. The personal photos of residents, churches and recreational groups, in addition to acting as windows to the physical form of the landscape, generate stories and memories. These stories, often told with great reverence, allow the landscape to be seen through the eyes of those who experienced it firsthand. People take photos of their most cherished memories and as such these pictures show us which parts of the landscape were most valued and interacted with by the residents.

The original plans utilized by Brookside Park Associates in creating the neighborhood were also utilized in the study. Plans, architectural drawings and planning proposals are useful tools for the landscape geographer because they act as a window into the mindsets of the elites that create a residential landscape (Samuels 1979, Crang 1996, Upton 1991, White 1990, Scanlon 2006). Plans include the original architectural layouts, as well as how the neighborhood was pitched both to the county
and to customers. Furthermore, the original plans included records of how the preceding landscape was transformed into the landscape that it is today.

When looking over the original plans for Brookside I came across a series of notebooks that included transcriptions of the first meetings of the homeowners association for the neighborhood. Some of the meetings preceded the completion of the neighborhood and included discussions between the first homeowners and the developers as to how the neighborhood would be set up. Corporate and council minutes acted as a rare record of the interactions and opinions of the early resident and a chronicle of the neighborhood’s construction from the perspective of the residents. Also, the minutes included the creation of the deed restrictions, neighborhood corporate charter and the first origins of the Brookside social scene and recreational clubs.

After the creation of the BCI the Brookside Corporate Board held monthly meetings to keep the residents informed and called meetings as necessary to deal with the maintenance of the neighborhood and its recreational facilities. Documents of this kind with only a few gaps are kept on file at the Brookside office and were utilized as a source. Most of the decisions that changed the landscape that occurred in the neighborhood were either dealt with by the board or at least discussed by them, making these minutes an excellent source of data for this study.

In addition to the monthly public meetings of the corporation the board held closed meetings at irregular intervals. Board meetings dealt often with financial or administrative matters and many landscape changes were caused as a result of these meetings. Several parks and recreational facilities were changed during these meetings.
as were the enforcement standards for the deed restrictions. The minutes of these meetings were not complete, with several meetings unrecorded and missing periods of time during the administration of various boards. Be that as it may the records were also a useful source of information about how the landscape of Brookside has changed over time.

Another source of information about changes in the landscape both physical and social were the records of the Brookside Police Department. The BPD was comprised of county accredited constables who acted as the local patrolmen for Brookside for more than twenty years. Their dispatch records, personal logs and various other scraps are kept in the Brookside corporate office. The crime statistics, vandalism reports and shift of law enforcement to the county and state were also very telling. My youngest informant described how juvenile delinquency and vandalism had an adverse effect on the neighborhood:

‘When we were younger they built this really awesome playground and then over the years that got kind of to the point of no end so now it’s a cheaper playground” (Jansen December 23, 2010)

Landscapes change. As they do so, there are records kept in the form of insurance and zoning maps, renovation plans, development proposals and innumerable transportation and property assessment files. For this study I utilized New Castle County zoning and insurance maps as well as development records kept both by the county and the Brookside Community Incorporated. Additional maps were taken from
several sources including the census bureau and aerial photography taken by private and public agencies. Satellite imagery from Google earth was also utilized to provide aerial photos and up to date maps.

Last but not least, the single most important primary source was the interviews with current residents. Personal interviews were carried out with how many? current residents of different tenures and ownership statuses. Through interviews the stories and personal history of Brookside was revealed and with each interview it became more concrete and vibrant. Compilation of personal stories also allowed the neighborhood to be understood through the values and experiences of different generations, races and socioeconomic classes. For example, a resident who started his tenure in the neighborhood in the 1950s as an adult has a different set of experiences and perspectives than woman who moved into Brookside as a teenager with her parents in the 1970s or a child who grew up in the neighborhood and later inherited their house from their parents. The interviews were the single greatest source for understanding how the neighborhood had changed over time and why.

Secondary Sources

The secondary sources used for the study were diverse in origin. Chief among them were interviews with past residents of the neighborhood. While many of their accounts qualify as primary sources, many of the opinions on the neighborhood and discussions of how the neighborhood has changed are indirect. Their perceptions of the neighborhood are either frozen as of the moment that they left Brookside Park or based on second hand information from news, old friends or conjecture. Included in
the group interviewed were former child residents, original home owners, renters, and at least one former resident from each decade leading up to the present day.

Following the interviews with past residents were two scholarly works on Brookside, which helped inform the choice to use Brookside as the focus area of the study. One of these is a planning study written on the neighborhood in 1959 entitled: *Brookside; a study of suburban real estate development in Delaware* was written by Paul Nolan and Albert Dunn in 1959. This work was a veritable gold mine of information that included the building of the neighborhood as well as the early racial, economic, employment, religious, and several other demographic breakdowns of the neighborhood. Furthermore this document compared Brookside to other suburban developments in Delaware, and more specifically New Castle County, showing how it measured up to other post-war growth in the state. This work gave insight into the neighborhood’s first few years and gave a strong starting point for noting of change in the neighborhood. The second of the two scholarly works was an architectural paper on the nature of the garage and carpark in the modern American suburban home titled: *Cars, Carports, and Suburban Values in Brookside, Delaware* by Gary Daynes written in 1997. This work was an interesting discussion of the role of the car culture in suburban life throughout the decades as well as how the changes to the garages and carparks of Brookside reveal the priorities of the residents.

Newspapers such as the *Wilmington News Journal*, the *Newark Post* and the *Brooksider* were also good sources of information on how the neighborhood has changed over time. Everything from demolitions to construction and crime to youth sports seems to have been covered by at least one of these papers making them
excellent secondary sources about the neighborhood. The neighborhood monthly news pamphlet entitled The *Brooksider* was particularly useful to the study as it chronicles events occurring in the neighborhood from the perspective of the residents. The news articles and commentary presented in The *Brooksider* creates a contrast between the accounts of Brookside in the external news media and the accounts of the residents, allowing for a more unbiased and balanced view of the history.

The final secondary source utilized for the study is the orientation and advertisement documents used to attract residents to Brookside over the decades. Included in this category are newspaper, real estate and pamphlet advertisements for the neighborhood, as well as the orientation booklet given to new homeowners by the corporation to this day. From the advertisements one can learn what elements of suburban life were emphasized by realtors and what new residents would be expecting to see in the neighborhood. The orientation documents were useful for several reasons: they included a current version of the deed restrictions, recently taken pictures of the neighborhood and the information that *Brooksiders* felt was most important about their neighborhood.

**Interview Methodology:**

The eleven interviews with residents were the greatest single source of information for this study. The interviews were semi-structured interviews using an open-ended set of questions approved ahead of time by the IRB. The interviews were recorded using a tape recorder and hand-written notes. All of the interviewees signed waivers consenting to both the interview and the taping. The interviewees were
guaranteed anonymity after the fact and after transcription their true names were removed from the transcripts. Only the interviewer and the IRB are aware of the identities of the informants and any names used below are pseudonyms used to protect the identity of the informants. This was a key feature of the interview process as it allowed the subjects to speak freely without fear of the social repercussion of sharing their true views on the neighborhood landscape and the people who reside within it.

The interviews were between 45 – 90 minutes in length and took place in various locations including private homes, the public library, restaurants and the Geography office. To promote good rapport and increase the comfort of the informant the dialogue was kept informal and friendly. The interviews contain many digressions and side conversations, which often yielded more information than the initial questions. To gather informants for the project I met with friends, public servants and colleagues until I was able to get in contact with a few residents who were interested in speaking with me. Through them, the churches, the Neighborhood Watch, and the neighborhood corporation I was able to gain personal referrals which eventually led me to eleven interviews with key informants.

The basic questions, listed below, were a template for the interviews, a template that was only modified as needed for easier phrasing. Questions were not intended to be answered quickly, and during the interviews different follow up techniques were used to reveal the stories and additional information. The list below does not include follow up questions, which were informal and spontaneous.
Questions:

1. When did you move to this neighborhood and what was going on in your life when you moved into the neighborhood?

2. What made you (or your family) choose Brookside when you decided to move here?

3. If the person moved there as head of household, where did the head of household work—in Newark, Wilmington? At what employer?

4. Do you/does your family own or rent your house? Own_____ Rent _____

5. Can you tell me any stories or any history that you know about Brookside?

6. How would you describe the people who live in Brookside? The nature of Brookside as a neighborhood or community? How has that changed over time?

7. What do you like most about living in Brookside? Is there anything that you don’t like?

8. Could you describe how the neighborhood has changed physically and socially during the time that you have been living here?
9. How have the houses in Brookside, as well as yards and streets, changed in appearance since you moved in? Would you say that the changes are for the better or worse?

10. Do you have any other stories or memories about the neighborhood that you would like to share with me?
Chapter 4
THE CREATION OF BROOKSIDE

The Need for Housing in New Castle County

In the post WWII economic boom the US became the building ground for hundreds of new suburban communities known affectionately as Levittowns (Gans). This new mass-produced suburban form spread from a few isolated communities in the Midwest and East coast across the nation in a short span of time from the end of World War II to the end of the 1950s (Dolan and Dunn 1959). This type of neighborhood is characterized by the standardized styles of architecture and prices of most suburban communities, but with an emphasis on higher concentrations of single family dwellings and smaller plots to increase affordability (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Baldassare 1992, Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992; Schnore 1963, 122-133). The Brookside community falls into the category of a Levittown and its inception and construction can be understood through the lens of working class suburbs that has already been established in this paper (Dolan and Dunn 1959).

The story of Brookside’s construction begins in the early 1950s with changing economic and social conditions in New Castle County. In a short period after World War II, northern New Castle County transformed from an area of small towns and farms into a growing industrial and commercial area (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992). The post-war emergence of the Chrysler and Avon plants at the edge of Newark in New Castle County created a rapid increase in the population, which resulted in demand for more and more housing (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Chase,
Ames, and Siders 1992). In the late 1940s the housing shortage was bad enough that many new Delawareans were forced to double up, rent rooms or move into substandard housing just to get to work (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992). To meet the demand, dozens of developments were planned and executed throughout New Castle County and Delaware at large. The largest of the projects, and the largest ever built in the state of Delaware, was the Brookside Park development (Dolan and Dunn 1959).

Many of the developments built in New Castle County between 1946 and 1960 were in the seven northern “hundreds” of the county closest to Wilmington and the Pennsylvania border. In the Pencader Hundred, in which 2/3 of the complete Brookside community would reside, a 77 percent increase in population occurred between 1950 and 1957. Overall in the county 106 new developments were built between 1950 and 1957 containing 18,000 new dwellings for the residents of New Castle County (Dolan and Dunn 1959). By the time all of these developments were finished, those 18,000 units held 61,200 people, many of whom were new to the county and the state (Dolan and Dunn 1959). To put the growth in perspective consider that in the span of seven years enough housing was built to provide accommodation to a third of the population of Wilmington, which was Delaware’s largest city (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992). These new developments varied in size from 80 to 1,300 units, and were spread out in the northern half of the county. This development boom convert the previously agrarian landscape into a suburban one almost overnight.
In order to provide support and services to this emerging suburban landscape, the expenditures of the county government more than doubled between 1947 and 1958 (Dolan and Dunn 1959). Many of the expenses were subsidized by the developers and new tax revenue, but even so the county experienced a 376 percent increase in bonded debt as they attempted to lay the infrastructure for sewer, electric and transit that would be necessary to supply all of the new neighborhoods (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The ambitious growth in New Castle County also led to the creation of a regional planning and zoning commission, as well as a before unheard of real estate management board (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992).

**The Construction of Brookside**

In order to understand the founding of Brookside, along with its unorthodox political and municipal organization, one must first understand some features of Delaware’s political and governmental landscape. First and foremost, organization lines are drawn somewhat differently in Delaware than they are in many other states, especially back during the period when Brookside was created. In most states the basic unit of local government is the township or city municipality, but in Delaware the county government takes on many roles that would ordinarily be handled by city government (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992; Jackson 1987). This peculiarity of Delaware’s governmental system is then complimented by a passing of the buck between county and state. Since many of the responsibilities of townships fall on the county then upon the state falls many of the responsibilities that would be handled by the counties. The State of Delaware is responsible for all the
roads outside of incorporated areas and all welfare and health were and are administered solely on the state level (Dolan and Dunn 1959). This arrangement managed well before 1945, but with the creation of so many unincorporated communities across the state the bureaucracy had difficulty keeping up with its increasing responsibilities. Municipal services including trash, electricity and police coverage in the state suffered from growing pains. It was because of the shortcomings of state level management that many developers and community leaders began to cut deals with adjacent townships, county government and private contractors for their road maintenance, sewage, trash, and other municipal services (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992).

Brookside, which would become the largest single unincorporated community in Delaware, was announced in July 1951. It was originally pitched as a working and middle class mixed residential suburb containing 1,200 units and costing 12,250,000 dollars to complete (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The original developer behind Brookside was Brookside Park Associates of Trenton, NJ. The company was enticed by the Chrysler Corporation to purchase a 285 acre parcel in the Pencader and White Clay Creek Hundreds of New Castle County. This lot, which had previously been five family farms, was to be the new home for the employees of Chrysler, Avon and other new commercial interests in the county (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992). The land itself cost the developers 450,000 dollars and took up more space than many of the incorporated towns in Delaware at the time. Part of the conditions of Chrysler opening the plant was that NCC bring in developers to supply housing for the employment opportunities provided by the plant.
On May 16th 1952 ground was broken on the first 228 housing units in Brookside and the first owners moved into these homes in the fall of that same year. The first section located along Marrows Road was called C and each of these homes
retailed for just over 10,000 dollars apiece making them modest but nice homes by the standards of the decade and location (Baldassare 1992, Schnore 1963; Collver and Semyonov 1979, Dolan and Dunn 1959). Compared to other neighborhoods built elsewhere in the country these homes were in line with the standard of what Schnore calls the “industrial suburbs” of the post-war period (Schnore 1963). The following year the homes of section K were built along the same size and price guidelines as section C. Section K contained 276 new units bringing the total size of Brookside to 504 occupied units by the end of 1953. It was also in 1953 that the community building that would serve as the corporate headquarters of Brookside was built. Also a professional space was built during this time near the community building which served as an elementary school to residents between 1953 and 1958. This building was originally intended as office rental space but was pressed into service when the residents of Brookside realized that the local elementary schools did not have the room for their children. The temporary school was part of the Newark special school district and was used until other the dedicated elementary school was finished in 1958 (Dolan and Dunn 1959).

The community building and the temporary school were the first buildings constructed in what would come to be known as section M. By the time section M was completed in 1954 the total number of occupied units in Brookside had increased to 893. It is also important to note that section M contained the last houses that were built by Brookside Park Associates who passed the contract on to another company due to pressing contracts elsewhere (Dolan and Dunn 1959). All of the remaining houses and buildings were constructed by the S & L Development Company of Wilmington.
S &L Development Company announced its plans to build the last 335 units of Brookside at the end of 1954. The plans included not only houses but also a shopping center, which still stands today, as well as a junior high school and public pool. Homes included in S&L’s plan would be completed by 1958 and the shopping center and other buildings would all be finished by the middle of the year in 1959 (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The units included in this plan would come to be known as the M2 section and would contain some of the lower end housing found in the neighborhood. The retail park had room for eighteen establishments and three hundred parking spaces when it was completed. Also constructed during this time period were two churches, which were also constructed by S&L in association with other local contractors (Dolan and Dunn 1959).

**Brookside’s Public Works**

As discussed above, the unincorporated nature of the Brookside Park community made providing necessary public services more complicated and difficult than in other developments which incorporated into existing city municipalities. One of the most pressing considerations was supplying the large neighborhood with water. The potable water for Brookside Park was provided by an independent contract with a private (not governmental) water company called New Castle Water Co. All of the water mains and connections had been laid by the developers and had been taken into account in their initial budgets though the maintenance and care of those lines would be handled by New Castle Water for a fee collected through neighborhood dues (Dolan and Dunn 1959).
The integrated sewer system for the community was financed by Brookside Park Associates and was started just prior to the first ground breaking in 1952 (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The county demanded that BPA sign a contract to build all necessary water and sewer lines before approving the final building plan. After the construction of the neighborhood, the Levy Court of New Castle County provided the sewage service and maintenance of the lines by means of a private contract with the Brookside Community Incorporation. In the first decade that the neighborhood was occupied these services cost the citizens of Brookside 15 dollars per year, per household (Dolan and Dunn 1959).

The maintenance and plowing of streets in Brookside were a concern when the neighborhood was first built, because once again the City of Newark did not want to provide services to an area that was not within its incorporation (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The developer’s of Brookside made a deal with State Highway Administration to maintain and plow the roads. However, the SHA only took responsibility for the two main roads (Marrow’s Road and Delaware Route 4). State Highway claimed that they were forced into this course by the fact that many of the streets and sidewalks in Brookside were not built according to regulations of the state and that Brookside had broken their contract with the state by not bringing their streets up to code (Dolan and Dunn 1959). From 1952 -1957 the neighborhood was responsible for maintaining and plowing their own roads through private contractors and resident upkeep requirements. By the start of the fiscal year in 1957 all of the streets had been brought in line with the regulations and the State Highway Administration took over maintenance and plowing of all of the streets in the neighborhood (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The
sidewalks in Brookside followed a more traditional suburban model and were considered the responsibility of the home owners. Persisting to today the bylaws of the BCI require that all members of the community maintain their sidewalks or be fined.

When Brookside Park was first planned there was no provision in the original builder’s plans for street lighting for any of the streets besides Marrows Road Delaware State Route 4 (Dolan and Dunn 1959). Beginning in 1953 the Brookside Community Incorporation and a coalition of concerned residents began an initiative to promote residents turning on their porch lights at night to illuminate the street at night. The campaign failed, since most residents did not want to waste the electricity or just forgot to leave the lights on (Dolan and Dunn 1959). After the failure of the initiative, residents of Brookside circulated and submitted a petition to the Levy Court asking for the installation and maintenance of street lights in the neighborhood. The added costs of the installation, maintenance and electricity for these lamps were rolled into the annual tax assessments of the properties. In this way they could frequently adjust the cost to reflect the changing energy costs (Dolan and Dunn 1959).

Considering the neighborhood was not incorporated into the municipal limits of Newark, there were concerns about fire protection during the planning stages. The farms that had previously occupied the land on which Brookside was built had been covered by the Aetna Hose and Ladder Company. To make up for the increase in population caused by the neighborhood, Brookside Park Associates made provisions with the Aetna Hose and Ladder Company to provide coverage for the neighborhood in exchange for yearly donations and fundraising from the residents of Brookside (Dolan and Dunn 1959). In 1954 an initiative was put forward by several interested
citizens in the neighborhood to create a Brookside volunteer fire company but due to budgetary, insurance, and enrollment issues plans for the fire company were abandoned in 1958 (Dolan and Dunn 1959). Going hand in hand with the need for fire protections was the need for police coverage on the new and very large neighborhood. Brookside was not part of a municipality, and as such the police protection had to be provided by the county and state police. The county police covered the neighborhood streets which were not major roads, and the state police covered Chestnut Hill Road, Marrows Road and Library Avenue. In 1955 the Brookside Community Incorporation petitioned for and received its own dedicated detachment of county police to patrol and serve the neighborhood on a more routine basis (Dolan and Dunn 1959).

Private contracts were common to Brookside. Another public service for which the BCI brought in private contractors was for trash removal (Dolan and Dunn 1959). Originally the designers had hoped to convince Newark to extend its trash removal service to the neighborhood in return for yearly payments from the community, but the city declined to extend its services to a community that didn’t pay Newark taxes (Dolan and Dunn 1959). A petition was put before the Levy Court in New Castle County for trash removal service through the county services, but that also was rejected and in the end the community was forced to bring in a private trash removal firm. This contract would cost the residents $1.50 a month for their twice weekly trash removal in 1954 (Dolan and Dunn 1959).
Early Brookside and Education

The new residents brought with them a large number of school-age children who needed somewhere to go to school. This is not surprising considering that this neighborhood was created and first occupied during the baby boom and that in the post WWII period new suburbs were being built specifically for young families (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Baldassare 1992, Jackson 1987; Collver and Semyonov 1979).

By the end of 1952 when the first homes were finished and occupied there was an estimated two hundred school-age children in Brookside. Two years later in 1954 that number had skyrocketed to 950 children, 800 of them elementary school-age (Dolan and Dunn 1959). During the first year all of the school-age children were bused to appropriate schools in Newark and the surrounding area. The pressure on the district was noticeable but manageable; by 1953 it had become apparent to both the
residents of Brookside and to the citizens of Newark that the community would need its own schools (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The most pressing need was for a Brookside community elementary school that could handle the increasing numbers of young
children that simply could not be handled by Newark elementary or effectively bused to other places.

In 1953 the first buildings were finished in the Brookside community shopping center. Originally one of these buildings was slated to be used as a professional building. The structure was commandeered by the Newark Special School District to act as a temporary elementary school (Dolan and Dunn 1959). By the end of the year in 1954 only half of the elementary age children were still being bused into Newark and a more permanent solution was in the planning stages (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The Brookside Community Incorporation took some of the unused land and donated it to the school board in 1955 and by November of that same year the sixteen classroom building had been finished and began serving most of the elementary age children who were not enrolled in private schools (Dolan and Dunn 1959). The following year in 1956 four additional classrooms were added to the school to accommodate the rising population. In 1958 construction on another elementary and middle school was completed down the road from the community, further alleviating the pressure on the Newark district and the temporary school. It would close that same year and the building would be rented out for commercial use the following year (Dolan and Dunn 1959).

**The Brookside Community Incorporation (BCI)**

During the era that the neighborhood was built its independence from a city or town would have been a major selling point (Dolan and Dunn 1959; Baldassare 1992, Chase, Ames, and Siders 1992; Jackson 1987; Mieszkowski and Mills 1993, Walker
and Lewis 2001). Residents were free from taxes that did not directly benefit them and could instead focus their money and their time on the things that benefitted their community alone.

The civic corporation for Brookside Park would be called the Brookside Community Incorporation and be decided on by the residential civic association and representatives from each of the sections (Brookside Community Incorporated 1953, Nourse 1953, Brookside Park Civic Association 1952, Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959). The organization was intended first and foremost to preserve the neighborhood and its amenities and was not intended as a government body or city council equivalent (Brookside Community Incorporated 1953, Nourse 1953, Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959).

One of the most important features of the neighborhood corporation was the nature of its membership. By purchasing a home in Brookside Park a resident automatically became a shareholder in the corporation, with all the rights and responsibilities of a shareholder. On paper the BCI was created to collect the dues necessary to maintain the parkland and pay the various service contracts that the neighborhood held. Upon closer inspection of the minutes of the organizational committee and the interviews it becomes clear that the neighborhood was treated like an investment and an asset. The BCI had a clear mission to protect that investment by maintaining the parklands and by enforcing the deed restrictions and by laws. In the eyes of many residents the purpose of the BCI was to maintain the value of the neighborhood by keeping everything in good order and acting as an enforcer when residents engaged in behavior that could decrease the value of the properties (Nourse
1953, Brookside Park Civic Association 1952, Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959, Skibinski 1973). Only secondarily was the BCI designed to promote socialization or instill a sense of community cohesion.
Chapter 5

BIOGRAPHY OF THE CHANGES TO THE LANDSCAPE

Home and Yard

When attempting to understand a neighborhood such as Brookside Park it is useful to begin with the central point of the landscape for the residents: the home and yard. If you ask most individuals their neighborhood begins with their home and it is the central point of their lifeworld geography.

Like most neighborhoods built during the suburban boom of the post World War II period Brookside Park was designed to appeal to the exploding working middle class of the country, riding high on the post war economic boom (Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979). The neighborhood was constructed using three basic rancher floor plans and two split level plans and was meant to appeal to a wide range of middle class residents. The houses vary in sizes by section though generally speaking the lot sizes did not. The different floor plans appear in separate sections of the neighborhood with the Rancher style being the dominant style of the neighborhood (Dolan and Dunn 1959, Brookside Park Associates Incorporated 1954, Brookside Park Associates Incorporated 1953, Brookside Park Associates Incorporated 1952a, Brookside Park Associates Incorporated 1952b). The homes came at a modest price and with reasonably sized lots though they did vary in price and size to accommodate multiple income levels. Furthermore the influx of new jobs during the post war period created a burgeoning group of new Delawareans that formed new communities around these Levittown type

The homes and yards of Brookside experienced many rapid changes in the first few years. First and foremost was the planting of greenery throughout the neighborhood. When Brookside Park Associates constructed the first sections there was no foliage of any kind. The original swamp and farmland had been clear cut, filled in and divided up without any real care for “landscaping” (Dolan and Dunn 1959). Therefore one of the most noticeable changes to the landscape of home and yard was the planting of grass, trees, shrubs and other foliage throughout the neighborhood. These first modifications are noteworthy because they were universally implemented, for everyone in the neighborhood was required to at least plant and maintain a lawn by the deed restrictions and by laws of the community (Brookside Community Incorporated 1953, Nourse 1953, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979). Furthermore, the cultivation (or neglect) of the greenery of the properties is a source of identity and pride for the residents to this day. Many of the informants spoke at length of their gardening work and it is clear that this manipulation of the landscape remains an important aesthetic value for the residents.
The second change that occurred rapidly in the early years of the neighborhood was the construction of backyard fences to divide the properties. None of the properties came with dividing fences despite the fact that many of the streets are arranged back yard to back yard. Almost all of the informants who had resided in the neighborhood during the 1950s discussed the construction of back yard fences to divide the yards for pets and for privacy. By the end of the 1950s most of the homeowners had built fences though some, especially those who back up against the parkland do not. Further exterior modifications made by residents over the years include the construction of backyard sheds, decks and the tilling of gardens. In keeping with planning regulations common to suburban neighborhoods, all modifications to the property and construction of structures needed to be permitted by
Miss Utility and the County Planning and Zoning Commission. Furthermore at least in the early years all modifications to the homes, construction of shed/decks and major landscaping modifications had to be approved by the Brookside Corporation with a quick glance to make sure they complied with the deed restrictions.

The usage of backyard space in Brookside has also changed over time. According to the deed restrictions and by-laws of the neighborhood it is a violation to hang laundry outside on clotheslines. Over the years the enforcement of this regulation has waned with the power of the BCI and with the shift in demographics that have occurred in Brookside over the past thirty years. As the group activities of the neighborhood have waned, more people utilize their backyards as a recreational space than the parklands. In addition to personal modifications to the backyards and foliage, the neighborhood has also had numerous groups throughout its history that have influenced the appearance of the homes (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011).

One of these was the Brookside Garden Club, which encouraged residents to plant and maintains flowers in their front and back yards. The Garden Club was founded in the late 1950s and was involved in home beautification throughout the decades. The garden club offered to give instruction and free help to anyone who was willing to invest in making their property more beautiful. It is a clear example of a few influential elites using their clout and expertise to influence the aesthetic decisions of others. The garden club also was affiliated with the Brookside Beautification Council, the sole purpose of which was to maintain the aesthetic and value of the neighborhood homes (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Skibinski 1973, Brookside Community Incorporated
By giving gardening lessons and instructing residents on the basics of garden design, they influenced how other residents in the neighborhood designed their own yards.

The most notable change to the yard space has been the emergence of the above ground pool as a personal modification to the landscape. Such pools were nonexistent in the first years of the neighborhood and over time have become more numerous. During the early years the three Brookside public pools located on Marrows Road were the most prominent recreational feature of the neighborhood and were a major summertime gathering area for the residents (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Skibinski 1973, Anderson December 2010, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979, Dodson November 13, 2010, Mullens November 9, 2010). As the neighborhood grew in size the pool became more crowded it became a less attractive recreational space (Samuels December 8, 2010, Barnes November 9, 2010, Salter December 2010). The overcrowding, coupled with the voluntary nature of the pool membership, led many to invest in above ground pools for their backyards (Nourse 1953, Samuels December 8, 2010, Salter December 2010). The deed restrictions laid down at the construction of the neighborhood prohibited the construction of in ground pools in an attempt to promote pool membership (Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979, Daynes 1997). This element of the deed restrictions had two unforeseen side effects: The above ground pools adversely affected property values in the neighborhood for they are associated with lower socio economic groups by realtors and the above ground pools allowed the residents a relatively inexpensive way to opt

Street lamps are a common element of many suburban neighborhoods. To see them on the sides of the street in Brookside would hardly warrant a second thought today. Yet few people realized that the original neighborhood had no streetlamps for almost a decade (Dolan and Dunn 1959, Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Rush October 21, 2010). The original builders did not put up the cost for constructing the streetlights nor did they make any power provisions with the county, so the original Brookside was unlit by night. Beginning in the late 1950s an initiative was undertaken to add street lights to the landscape. This initiative gave after failed attempts to convince the residents to leave their outdoor lights on to light the streets. A group of residents who desired street lights for driver safety and crime prevention submitted a petition to the County for the installation and maintenance of the streetlights. The County agreed to put in the street lamps only if corporations and the residents agreed to a maintenance and electricity contract. Each of the sections voted and all but two sections decided to construct the street lamps and sign the contract (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959).

The front yards in Brookside became another contentious issue, one that has led to changes in the appearance of the neighborhood. The sidewalks that line the streets of Brookside have been a major point of contention between the County, the BCI and the residents (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979)(Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Skibinski 1973, Lao 1973). In the original charter of the neighborhood, the sidewalks were to be maintained at the expense of the
residents. This too was a product of suburban trends of the time as well as the unincorporated nature of Brookside Park. Over time, especially as the property values and average incomes of Brookside’s residents declined, the residents have chafed at this added cost. At several points throughout the decades the residents have attempted to sue the county and force them to repair the sidewalks at county expense. All attempts on the part of residents and the BCI have failed and now many of the sidewalks in the neighborhood are worse for wear (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979, Lao 1973, Kaley March 18, 1959). A sizable contingent of residents continues to maintain their sidewalks as per their deed restrictions but many do not, especially in the last decade since deed restriction enforcement has declined.

One of the changes to the neighborhood homes that came out strongly in interviews was the appearance of cars, toys and other litter on the front yards of homes (Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Dodson November 13, 2010, Moon October 24, 2010). The concerns over front lawns were echoed not only by the older residents but also by three of the residents under the age of 40 that I interviewed. The litter issue also appears in the Brookside newsletter starting in 1969 and continuing until the present (Brooksider 1957 - 2006). The outcry from the Brookside Beautification Council (BBC) and concerned residents is a recurring theme in almost every interview (Brookside Community Incorporated 1953, Brookside Park Civic Association 1952, Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Soulsman 1982, A1, Lao 1973). The litter and junk collecting on the front lawns of properties is also a violation of the deed restrictions and are a symptom not only of decreasing interest in maintaining the
middle class aesthetic but also the waning enforcement power of the BCI. Many of the interviewees claimed that the decay of many homes was equal parts apathy on the part of residents and lack of enforcement on the part of the homeowners association and BCI (Brookside Community Incorporated 1953, Karlson 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Rush October 21, 2010, Moon October 24, 2010).

The deed restrictions attached to the dwellings become a recurring issue in the landscape starting in the late 1960s when many families began operating businesses out of their homes as well as modifying the homes in ways that were not allowed. These modifications included front yard fences, backyard clotheslines, indoor furniture on porches on front lawns and parking cars on the yard (including out of service vehicles which must be removed after 30 days) (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Soulsman 1982, A1, Mullens November 9, 2010, Barnes November 9, 2010, Salter December 2010, Lao 1973).

As time passed in the world of renovations and modifications to the homes, several common changes by the residents could be seen. The most noticeable and common of these was the repurposing of the original carports that accompanied the rancher model homes (Jansen December 23, 2010, Anderson December 2010, Jones January 2011, Salter December 2010, Daynes 1997, Motley December 2010, Moon October 24, 2010). The original rancher models were modest in size and by modern standards were “cozy”. As the neighborhood filled and the original residents moved up the economic ladder, many of them decided to convert the carport or car porch, to be more accurate, into an additional room or garage. From the interviews I gathered that as the families grew both in size and in means they desired the extra living space over
the porch rather than parking for their cars. These carport conversions took many forms throughout the neighborhood, and there was little if any standardization in what or how they were completed beyond county code requirements. The additions included dens, dining rooms, workshops, spare bedrooms, etc and were largely reflective of the desires of the residents past and present who occupied the homes. Based on what I learned from the six respondents who had carport conversions, they appeared to be motivated by equal parts desire to stay in the neighborhood and an inability to afford a larger home. The carport conversions were not a universal and many of the homes still exist with the un-altered original design.

![Figure 4 A Carport Conversion in Brookside (Personal Photograph of Interviewee)](image)

The removal of the carport in favor of extra space was an important aesthetic choice on the part of *Brookside*. It showed that contrary to the beliefs of the
planners, who felt that a car space was more important than an additional room, the residents of Brookside chose to reshape their neighborhood to fill their own desires rather than the ideal that the developers had in mind (Jansen December 23, 2010, Anderson December 2010, Jones January 2011, Salter December 2010, Daynes 1997, Motley December 2010, Moon October 24, 2010).

Other modifications to the homes themselves included renovations, repairs and cosmetic changes. These were many and varied, though a few merit discussion in this biography of landscape. First and perhaps most sweeping was the removal or covering of the original asbestos siding that came standard with all of the homes (Anderson December 2010, Dodson November 13, 2010, Barnes November 9, 2010). The asbestos siding is a health hazard and should the homes catch fire, a danger to the neighbors and emergency crews. Asbestos is costly to remove however and that has led many residents to cover the siding with steel or vinyl siding and leave it to the next occupant to remove it. Another renovation common to the split level homes that make up the “ritzier” section of Brookside is the removal of the in the floor radiant heat (Rush October 21, 2010, Krusso October 21, 2010). These homes were furnished with steam heating pipes laid in the concrete floors which were cutting edge and popular at the time the neighborhood was built. Unfortunately, almost all of the informants who lived in the split level model had dig up and replaced the in floor heat with more tradition base board or radiant heat. The primary reason was that this form of heat is prone to pipe breakage and other problems. When these sorts of repairs are needed the homeowner must pay someone to rip up the floor and the concrete to get to the heating pipes, adding tremendous cost to any repair. The added cost of resetting the floor
afterwards caused most of the residents to replace the original heating system at the
time of first repair. Some of these homes experienced broken heating pipes in their
first winter due to the pipes bursting (Karlson 2010, Rush October 21, 2010, Krusso
October 21, 2010).

Another noteworthy renovation to the properties was the creation of new
additions and decks. These modifications were less common than the carport
conversions but are nonetheless a feature of the modern neighborhood (Salter
December 2010). Many of these homes tended to be well maintained and belonged to
long tenured or legacy residents. Due to the more expensive nature of these changes, it
is not surprising that many of the homes that have these additions belong to long term
residents or inheritors of the homes.

While discussing the tenure of residents it is important to bring up the wide
divide in housing tenure in the neighborhood and how it affected the physical
landscape of the neighborhood. During the first interviews almost all of the informants
attributed the decay of the properties and the general disrepair of many of the homes to
the short tenured and rental residents. With further research and interviews with
shorter tenured residents I found this to be a half truth. There are a higher number of
disrepair properties in the hands of renters or shorter tenured residents, but there are
also several homes in the neighborhood occupied by the original owners in a state of
disrepair. For some renters it seemed that since they had no investment stake in the
property and no access to the equity built via the mortgage they allowed properties to
decline. Many of the landlords have not shown interest in maintaining properties and
slumlording has been common in the past. Rare is the renter who will sink his or her
own money to maintain or augment a property. Furthermore, many rental landlords are hesitant and unwilling to invest in repairs or renovations for their rental properties so that they can maximize the profit margins on their rents.

**Parks, Fields and Recreation**

Over the decades the 40+ acres of parkland and sports fields owned and operated by the BCI have changed dramatically. Built to increase the self sufficiency and value of the neighborhood, the parkland has always been a defining feature of Brookside Park (Nourse 1953, Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959, Soulsman 1982, A1). The ball fields, parks and pools of Brookside are integral to understanding the identity of the neighborhood as a whole. Vernacular landscapes are those that are utilized in our everyday activities. These parklands were and to a degree still are central foci for youth and adult activity in Brookside. In many ways these spaces and how they’ve changed over the years are reflective of the neighborhood as a whole (Anderson December 2010, Moon October 24, 2010, Krusso October 21, 2010).

In early 1957, the year before the last homes were finished, several proposals were put forward about how to best use the undeveloped parkland. Much of the land was originally dreamed up to be ball fields for each section, as well as outdoor theaters, tennis courts, youth centers and planned parks (Dolan and Dunn 1959, Kaley March 18, 1959, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011); (Nourse 1953, Brooksider 1957 - 2006). However, due to budgetary restrictions only the major ball fields and jungle gyms on Marrows Road and in section K were ever built. The rest of the parkland was either left as flat grass or planted as woodland (Brooksider 1957 - 2006,
Many residents past and present have considered the undeveloped parkland around Cool Run Creek and the edges of the neighborhood to be a major asset to the neighborhood, providing a rural aesthetic to the suburban neighborhood (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Skibinski 1973, Rush October 21, 2010, Krusso October 21, 2010, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011).

To put the recreational landscape in context one must understand that Brookside Park was a post-war, baby boomer neighborhood. Almost all respondents who lived in the early neighborhood described it as being a picturesque neighborhood where they and their many kids could feel safe and enjoy the American Dream. (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Motley December 2010, Krusso October 21, 2010). Almost all of the original residents echoed the sentiment expressed by this 50 year woman? that children should be able to travel the neighborhood safely.

“walk up to the shopping center [or anywhere], you really, you know you didn’t mind them going by themselves”(Mullens November 9, 2010)

The age, income, ethnic and life stage similarities of the residents coupled with commonality of the single income household during the post-war boom created a social / recreational scene that many would call idyllic (Dolan and Dunn 1959, Jackson 1987, Schnore 1963, Stilgoe 1990).
The most influential group in Brookside’s recreational sphere was the Brookside Activities Council (BAC) (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Jones January 2011, Dodson November 13, 2010). This group directed most of the community social activities until 1982 and was key in raising funds for recreation and creating unity among the residents (Nourse 1953, Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Barnes November 9, 2010, Motley December 2010). The BAC was never directly affiliated with the BCI though many members of the BAC also served on the corporate board over the years (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979).

Teen and adult mixers, flea markets, carnivals and even beauty pageants were organized by the BAC over the years, beginning in the 50s with the organizational committee (Nourse 1953). Two of the most important social events that were organized by the BAC were the Mrs. Brookside and Brookside Day. The Mrs. Brookside competition was a unique beauty and social pageant that honored women (single or married) nominated by the neighborhood for their poise, style, families, beauty and contributions to the Brookside social scene (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Jones January 2011). One of my respondents, a former judge of the pageant, informed me that the women would also be judged on activities such as “cooking, baking and their….. activism in the community” (Jones January 2011). In addition to being a major social event, the Mrs. Brookside pageant was also a major fundraiser for the Brookside Activities Council and the proceeds from the tickets and events would be
folded into the social budget for the following year (Jones January 2011, Salter December 2010, Motley December 2010).

The advertisements and biographies of the contestants appeared yearly in the *Brooksider* and included the women’s marital status, number of children, occupation, husbands occupation, social obligations and head shots. This event is useful in a study of the recreational and social landscapes of Brookside because it reveals much of the neighborhood. First of all, Mrs. Brookside is an expression of the “ideal” wife of the early suburbs in Brookside’s early years, with a homemaker of the year competition being one of the central social events (Jansen December 23, 2010, Karlson 2010, Jones January 2011, Motley December 2010). Second of all the documents and news articles associated with contest draw attention to the fact that women were the driving force behind Brookside’s recreational activities.

The pageant persisted as a major social event and source of money for the BAC until 1975, at which point interest and volunteers began to wane (Brooksider 1957 - 2006). Several of the older respondents who had experience in neighborhood volunteer work attributed the decline to increasing tensions in the BAC between long time volunteers who controlled the organization and younger (newer) members who desired more control over the recreational landscape (Karlson 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Mullens November 9, 2010, Motley December 2010, Rutter February 9, 2011). These newcomers felt locked out of control and three of my respondents in particular expressed concerns over the stranglehold on the social calendar that the original residents enjoyed. In 1975 the BAC experienced a control shift and the pageant failed due to poor organization and lack of interest. The pageant
never returned and a marked decline in BAC volunteers and success began as many volunteers stepped down and no one came forward who was willing or able to replace them (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011). The loss of the pageant also severely reduced the budget of the BAC, which led to several years of failed or low turnout events, and culminated in the collapse of the BAC in 1982 (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Jones January 2011, Salter December 2010, Motley December 2010, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011).

In the wide world of Brookside sports the major players were the Community Athletic Association (CAA) and the Brookside Baseball League (BBL). These two organizations managed most of the sporting events for children and adults throughout the six decades since the neighborhood was built. The BBL in particular managed the little league, the Babe Ruth League, and the softball leagues for the neighborhood and continues to do so in the present. They were required to draw upon only Brookside residents since the parklands is private to Brookside residents. In return they gained assistance in equipment and maintenance from the BAC budget. Both the CAA and the BBL volunteered time raising funds and working to maintain the parkland throughout the years. It was only beginning in 1982 after the collapse of the BAC that these organizations really began to founder. By 1995 the CAA had taken most of its sports leagues other places, due to disagreements with the BCI board over maintenance responsibilities and costs. While the BBL continues to today, it is only in a limited capacity. For disinterest and lack of funds make it difficult for the BBL to maintain the ball field (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Jones January 2011, Lao 1973, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011).
One feature of the recreational landscape that had a community-building effect on the neighborhood over the years was the public pool (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959, Lao 1973). Constructed by S & L Development Company, the three pools that remained in service until 1978 were a central geographical nexus and one of unifying elements of the landscape (Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Barnes November 9, 2010). The pools were built on Marrows Road next to the elementary school; they occupy the land where the Brookside corporate building and event field now sits. Sentimentality towards the pool among those who experienced it is high: “the center of the community in the summer was the pool. Everybody went to the pool and that was where you met everyone in the neighborhood after you moved in” (Jones January 2011). So important was the pool to Brookside’s identity that the pool appeared nearly as often as the houses themselves on advertisements for the neighborhood. The orientation document given to new residents had pictures of the pool on the front cover until the pools went out of service (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959, Skibinski 1973, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979). Not surprisingly, the neighborhood having its own private pools was a selling point for Brookside and made it stand out as a middle class suburb in northern Delaware. In the interviews the pool came up time and again as a central location for both socialization and recreation for the years it was in operation.

The upkeep and staffing of the pool was maintained by the BCI but not funded by the residential dues. The neighborhood dues required to maintain the parkland and BCI were a mandatory obligation that came with owning a Brookside home.
(Brookside Community Incorporated 1953, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979). The pool was not funded by the Brookside neighborhood dues, despite being constructed by the neighborhood contractors and being part of the integrated parkland, all funding for the pool was provided by optional membership fees. Any resident who wished to be a member could pay an annual fee based on the number of adults and children in their household to use the pool as much as they liked. Some respondents considered the voluntary nature of the pool membership an oversight because it allowed the pool decline due to inadequate funding (Samuels December 8, 2010, Salter December 2010). They believed that the pool was a major source of housing value and the optional nature of membership allowed the pools to decay over time.
Looking at the history of the pool through the interviews, the *Brooksider* and the official BCI minutes it’s hard to disagree with the notion that optional membership was the downfall of the pool. Over time the costs of the pools rose while membership in the pool decreased at a steady rate after the 1950s (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011). The decline in pool membership is attributed to many things: overcrowding, racial integration of the neighborhood beginning in the late 60s, the prevalence of above ground pools as an opt out and the breakdown of the Brookside social scene (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Salter December 2010, Lao 1973, Krusso
October 21, 2010). Whatever the reason, by 1971 the Brookside pool complex cost more money to run than the collected fees could cover. This situation continued and worsened as the pool aged and more and more repairs were required to keep it running. A negative inspection in 1974 by New Castle County, when the pools were found to be in violation of several codes, led to its eventual closure. With repairs estimated to cost between $100,000 and $150,000, it was much more than the pool fund or the BCI could handle. In 1979 the pools closed and in 1984 the pools were filled in with concrete and grass was planted where they stood (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Jones January 2011, Barnes November 9, 2010, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011).

Many today see the loss of the pool as a blow to the cohesion and the unity of the neighborhood and a major loss to the sense of community.

The early neighborhood lacked any foliage as it had been clear cut prior to construction of the first homes. One of the first changes made to the parkland included the planting of trees along the fringes of the neighborhood and along Cool Run Creek. The entirety of the parkland was also seeded with grass and maintained at the expense of the BCI in order to cultivate a suburban aesthetic (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959, Anderson December 2010, Brookside Park Associates Incorporated 1952a, Brookside Park Associates Incorporated 1952b, Jones January 2011). This undeveloped parkland would begin to disappear beginning in 1965 when the first apartments were built inside of the Brookside neighborhood on Brookside Boulevard. These apartments were contested by the residents, but their objections were overturned by the county. Residents feared both the loss of the parkland and renters who might
bring with them declining property values and undesirable behaviors and friends (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011).

There were several more events that influenced the parkland landscape dramatically. First among these was the 1970 lawsuit filed by the BCI against the City of Newark and New Castle County for dumping oil, trash and factory waste products in cool run creek. This year-long battle ended in a settlement in the favor of the neighborhood and a nine month long decontamination and cleanup program executed by a cooperation of Brookside residents and clean up experts (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Rush October 21, 2010, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011).

Late in 1972, one part of the 1957 recreation plan was realized. A baseketball court was built in section K; unfortunately the courts and fields were later taken out in the 1990s due to vandalism on the part of delinquent youths and lack of funds for upkeep (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011). In 1981 the bridge over Cool Run Creek was destroyed by vandals, incurring a significant cost to the BCI and cutting into the parkland maintenance budget for that year. The increasing vandalism, lack of volunteers for maintenance and unwillingness of the residents to donate money led the BCI into the red in 1982. The money situation was so dire that in 1983 the BCI called for a referendum to open the parkland to the public in order to receive county funds for maintenance. This referendum failed, however, and Brookside Park Day, an annual fund raising tradition for the parkland maintenance and youth sports, was cancelled
due to lack of volunteers and ticket sales (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011). In light of this failure and others, the CAA and BBL both collapsed, leading to the end of all organized sports except for the little league.

In 1982 the BAC disbanded due to lack of volunteers and interest in their sponsored events. It was replaced by Brookside Family Activities (BFA), which in turn disbanded in 1985. The lack of volunteers was attributed to the retreat of many of the original residents either by them moving out or through they fact that they were by now empty nesters. During the 1980s almost every recreational and parkland activity suffered from want of money and volunteers. All of the fields and pathways fell into disrepair and almost all organized social activities except for the flea market disappeared. It is during this time period that the sense of community and connectivity between the residents disappeared and began to be replaced with the social and recreational isolation of modern suburbs discussed above (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Dodson November 13, 2010, Salter December 2010, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011).

Adding to a series of problems, in 1987 the Cool Run Creek bridge was destroyed by vandals on mischief night, and it took a referendum to acquire the funds to repair it. By the 1990s the most common activity found in the parkland appeared to be partying on the part of the neighborhoods youth. Many of the informants correlated the disappearance of the pool, youth activities and parkland upkeep with the increased juvenile delinquency in the neighborhood as well as the decreasing sense of unity in
the neighborhood. The vibrant recreational landscape that made Brookside unique and attractive declined with time as the supply of volunteers, money and time dried up. This decline was attributed largely to the moving on of volunteers that occurred over time as the original members of the BAC, CAA and BBL retired as they left the neighborhood or their children grew up. They left a vacuum of leadership and effort that was not filled by anyone in the increasingly dual income households that made up the neighborhood of the 1970s and 1980s. The story of the parkland of Brookside Park is a reflection of the landscape as a whole, with the residents pulling away from each other over time due to racial tensions, economic decline, suburban isolation and decreased free time. Eventually the social landscape matched the recreational landscape; it too suffered from lack of interest, low involvement and diminished pride in place. Brookside had turned into just another development instead of the strong community it had been in the early days (Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Salter December 2010, Motley December 2010, Rush October 21, 2010).

The BCI and the Social Landscape

Any landscape is an autobiographical work that reflects the individuals and groups that occupy it (Samuels 1979). Brookside is a neighborhood highly influenced by its people. In order to understand the changes in the physical landscape detailed above, one must understand the changes in the social fabric and demographic makeup of the neighborhood. To this end, the story of how the people and institutions of Brookside have changed over time was a key element of this study.
One of the first social gathering points of the neighborhood were the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, which were completed even before the shopping center was occupied (Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010). These churches drew their memberships almost entirely from the neighborhood and were a major force in youth and community activities, including scouting, theatre, and neighborhood flea markets (Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Dodson November 13, 2010, Salter December 2010, Motley December 2010). As mentioned above, another social gathering point was the pool, which acted not only as a source of recreation but also as a place for the residents to be visible and get to know each other (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Skibinski 1973, Brookside Community Incorporated 1958 - 1979). The high levels of membership and involvement in the early years of the pool were instrumental in maintaining the sense of community. This recreation space was the central focus of the summer activities of the children and by extension their parents (Brooksider 1957 - 2006). Many of the respondents talked about the church functions and the pool as providing a sense of community; they also spoke of the high degree of accountability and transparency in the early neighborhood (Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Jones January 2011, Dodson November 13, 2010).

In the early days of the neighborhood, the BAC and it’s social events provided many opportunities for socialization and the cultivation of neighborhood pride. One of the most telling changes to Brookside’s social landscape was the gradual decline of the BAC and the activities it organized (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011). Much like the BCI itself,
the 1950s and 1960s were the golden years, with high involvement, packed meetings, and a never ending supply of volunteers. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing to today there has been a decline in interest and participation in the neighborhood that has led to a downward spiral of isolation and community decline (Anderson December 2010, Jones January 2011, Mullens November 9, 2010, Salter December 2010). This outcome is not surprising. Without activities to bring residents together to instill a sense of pride in the community, the residents retreated into their own lives and the neighborhood changed from a community to a development.

When discussing the early neighborhood and the idyllic manner in which it is described, there are some caveats to narrative history. First and perhaps most important of these is that hindsight tends to be nostalgic and rose-colored. Another consideration discussed by all six of my original resident respondents is that the early neighborhood was defined by a large number of children, all in the same age range, as well as a relatively young average age for the adults:

“Originally you knew every neighbor and their kids, parents with children the same age get to know each other better than older people [or varied age people] we’re more isolated” (Jones January 2011)

The post-war baby boom had put a large number of like-minded people who were in the same stage of life in the same place. Maintaining community activities, especially those involving children, would have been easy when there were over 800 elementary school-aged children in 1959 and there were at least ten birth notices in every issue of the *Brooksider* (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959).

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Going hand in hand with the life stage and family status similarities is the simple fact that the economy played a large role in facilitating community involvement (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Dolan and Dunn 1959, Lao 1973). In the early period homemaker and engineer tended to be the most common professions (Dolan and Dunn 1959). Homemaker came in first at 40%, which illustrates the economic stability of the post-war period and suburban dream manifest in this neighborhood (Schnore 1963, Stilgoe 1990, Scanlon 2006). Both the interviews and the demographic research show that the majority of original Brookside residents had a single income household or a dual income with one spouse working only part time. This enabled the residents of the neighborhood to be more involved in the social scene and in volunteering. In fact, several interviewees who have lived in Brookside since the 1950s described a tremendous amount of peer pressure involved with volunteering if you did not work (Mullens November 9, 2010, Krusso October 21, 2010).

As time went on the economic status of the neighborhood changed. Many of the white collar workers, such as the managers and DuPont chemists, moved on into Newark proper where newer housing developments were emerging, causing a gradual shift in the Brookside residents towards more blue collar employees (Anderson December 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010). Beginning in the 1970s and continuing even to this day the relatively well paying blue collar jobs that were the staple of Brookside’s employment dried up (Lao 1973). For many years there were rumors that the Chrysler plant was going to close—a situation that also contributed to uncertainty in the neighborhood. The final blow came in 2009 when the plant finally closed, sending many semi-skilled and unskilled workers into the service economy. This trend
translates into a shift from single family income to a dual, full time income households. To put it simply, people did not have the time to volunteer or get involved any longer and as such the social scene declined, which precipitated even less unity and socialization. Furthermore, it took a certain kind of person to dedicate his or her unpaid time to the community when not working. When Brookside changed to a dual income sustenance, most people did not have the energy or motivation to get involved as evidenced by the quote below which comes from a middle aged, educated male resident, which summarizes the feelings of many residents:

“More women were going out to work, more people who could afford single incomes were moving out of the neighborhood … when a neighborhood is new and everybody moves in together they all tend to know each other … and they (pause) you lost that as the neighborhood gets older its gone through so many changes and cycles that people just don’t have time to know each other” (Rush October 21, 2010)

Although the change in the racial composition of the neighborhood is a sensitive subject it is integral to understanding how the social landscape has changed over time. In the early years of the neighborhood the residents were all white (Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Samuels December 8, 2010, Barnes November 9, 2010). The first African American family did not move into the neighborhood until 1968. The stories by minority residents who moved into the
neighborhood during the late 1960s and early 1970s were very telling. Consider the story below coming from a man who moved to the neighborhood in 1977:

“I understand prejudice first hand, my wife was Korean … our neighbors made comments like ‘there goes the neighborhood’. The slant eyes are moving in. My kids aren’t going to play with them [slant eyes] we got that first hand. They literally told their children not to play with my children”

(Barnes November 9, 2010)

While this story may not seem out of the ordinary, what is telling is that Mr. Barnes still spoke at great length about the positive elements of the neighborhood and his involvement in it. Although only portion of the residents seemed bigoted, there was a marked decline in civic involvement after the integration of the neighborhood. Perhaps civic unity is easier in a neighborhood that is culturally and racially homogenous. However, despite this trend, many including Mr. Barnes never gave up on the neighborhood, dedicating their time to making the neighborhood better for everyone (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Skibinski 1973, Soulsman 1982, A1).

Several interviewees described the construction of the apartments on Marrows Road and Brookside Boulevard in 1970 and pin point the integration of the neighborhood shortly thereafter as the “beginning of the end” (Anderson December 2010, Salter December 2010, Motley December 2010). In their minds these two events brought in a type of resident that that did not belong in Brookside, and turned the neighborhood into a type that had hoped to leave behind in the city. However, I would
like to state that for many this judgment seemed more based on the socio-economic status of the groups moving in instead of merely race (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Lao 1973, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011). Disdain for the so called “lower class” residents moving into Brookside was mirrored by several interviewees who made a distinction between the hard working, decent folk of the early neighborhood and the perceived uneducated (not decent) poor residents of the later neighborhood. Without belaboring the point, it is clear that the perceived diversity of age, income, and race that occurred over time as residents moved out and are replaced by newcomers caused a fracturing of the neighborhood’s social landscape. The identity of the neighborhood became more complex as more distinct groups were represented, and as such less accessible to the residents of the neighborhood.

To put the racial and socio-economic tensions of Brookside into context, one must understand its relationship with Newark, the city which is located adjacent to it. In the same time period when Brookside was undergoing decline, Newark was experiencing something of a incline. It attracted white collar professionals connected to the University of Delaware as well as other large corporations such as DuPont and Gore to newer housing developments with larger lots and more expensive housing on the western and northern periphery of the city. Between the 1970s and 2000 the University of Delaware expanded considerably, recruiting more and more students, faculty and staff, and buying up centrally located properties and expanding its footprint in town. This resulted in the conversion of owner-occupied housing into rentals for students and indirectly drove up housing costs for both potential
homeowners and renters. This meant that working class families and individuals tied to jobs in the Newark area had to look for housing in Elkton, Maryland (ten miles to the southwest of Newark) and Brookside and other aging developments immediately to the south and east of Newark (Anderson December 2010, Salter December 2010, Motley December 2010, Lao 1973). This process only strengthened the popular image of Brookside as a working class neighborhood and caused those outside the neighborhood to consider Brookside a lower class (and by extension bad) neighborhood.

Another major change to the social landscape was the advent of crime in the neighborhood (Jansen December 23, 2010, Jones January 2011, Barnes November 9, 2010, Moon October 24, 2010). The first mention of any serious crime is a home invasion in 1965. From that point on crime steadily increased in the neighborhood, reaching its high point and only starting to come down in the 1990s. Brookside was, as mentioned above, unincorporated and as such had its own accredited constabulary force which policed the neighborhood in lieu of county patrols (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011). This force of five to ten officers utilized resident donations and a grant from New Castle County until the 1970s. The police force kept the peace in Brookside until budgetary deficits, the destruction of their dispatch trailer in 1979, and political disagreements conspired to shut down the department in 1982 (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011).

Not surprisingly after the Brookside police department ceased operation, crime reached an all time high in the neighborhood. Crime and the perception of decline
became a defining feature of the neighborhood, so much so that the neighborhood earned the nickname “Crookside”. From 1977 onward a detailed listing of the crime statistics appeared in every issue of the *Brookside*. This is emphasis on crime showed that the perceptions and decisions of the residents and City of Newark are being influenced not by the positive elements of Brookside but by the crime rate in this period (Jansen December 23, 2010, Brookside 1957 - 2006, Anderson December 2010, Dodson November 13, 2010, Barnes November 9, 2010, Rush October 21, 2010, Lao 1973, Moon October 24, 2010). There were and are many dedicated, hardworking and law abiding residents of Brookside but mention of them was eclipsed by discussion of crime during this period. This is a clear example of how the perceptions of individuals can change a landscape. Crime became the defining feature in people’s minds and it changed the way people behaved towards each other as well as the identity of Brookside.

Eventually the residents of Brookside became tired of the negative reputation and decided to take back control of their neighborhood from the criminals and to take the identity into their own hands. In 1987 the Neighborhood Watch forms, breaking the trend of disinvolvement and apathy in the neighborhood (Brookside 1957 - 2006, Barnes November 9, 2010, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011). Over the next two decades the Watch, which worked in cooperation with the New Castle County Police Department in a purely surveillance capacity, dropped the crime rate by 70% (Brookside 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011). The Watch let to a sense of empowerment described
eloquently by one of Brookside’s middle aged men?—a viewpoint that was echoed by several other respondents of varying ages and tenure status:

“The identity of the community went from Crookside, all the crooks in town lived in Brookside….now we have kind of changed that and got it to where they are at a low roar, so [they know] to come back to Brookside you are going to jail” (Barnes November 9, 2010)

Unfortunately, much like the closing of the pool and the collapse of the BAC, the two decades of crime led to increased isolation and suspicion on the part of the residents (Salter December 2010, Motley December 2010, Rush October 21, 2010, Moon October 24, 2010). Gone are the days when children walked the neighborhood freely and when doors were left unlocked (Anderson December 2010, Karlson 2010, Jones January 2011). Many of the interviewees claimed that the crime was a major factor in their retreat from social activities and community involvement. The crime and the decay of properties dropped the property values and with the property values dropped the pride. The residents of Brookside opted to socialize elsewhere and treat the neighborhood as a bedroom suburb (Krusso October 21, 2010, Rutter February 9, 2011).

As all of these social changes were occurring in Brookside, the BCI itself also experienced many changes. Much like the BAC, the BCI slowly succumbed to fatigue. In the early years the official minutes and accounts of residents show that 50 to 100 residents attended every monthly meeting of the Brookside council. Elections for
board positions used to be contested between interested and qualified individuals. Unfortunately, as time goes on many of the interested and experienced volunteers retire from public life or move to other neighborhoods. This left the few long time residents to hold together the BCI in the face of a disinterested community and decreasing budget. Beginning in the early 1970s and continuing to this day dues delinquency severely limited the financial strength of the BCI. At its worst 15% of all of the housing units in the neighborhood were delinquent in paying their dues. This is striking when one considers that the dues themselves at their highest only amounted to $50 per year per household. Using the meager sum the BCI had to administer to all of the park land as well as pay for legal council to enforce deed restrictions and by-laws. As the BCI came to have difficulty affording its responsibilities, and residents retreat from community involvement, a downward spiral begins. In 1978 two board positions – that of treasurer and secretary of the Brookside board – had no candidates. Over the decades several referendums to amend the by-laws and or increase the dues failed, not to opposition but because too few people attended to meet the minimum number of votes necessary pass a referendum (Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 -2011, Brookside Corporate Board 1956 - 2011).

With the BCI struggling and diverting an increasing portion of its budget to legal action against delinquent or by-law violating residents, the park land began to decline and the neighborhood as a whole suffered from a decline in curb appeal, since the Brookside beautification council and the deed restrictions ceased to carry weight with residents. Starting in 1974 the first mention of junked cars, furniture on the laws, clothes lines, dead grass, and unlawful disrepair appeared in the Brookside
(Brooksider 1957 - 2006, Samuels December 8, 2010, Rush October 21, 2010, Krusso October 21, 2010). Up until its discontinuance every issue of the *Brookside*, with a small number of exceptions, included mention of property declines, by-law violations, and dues delinquency. There were several letters to the editor of the *Brooksider* as well as articles and letters that appeared in the *Newark Post* and the *Wilmington News Journal*. These news reports argued over whether Brookside was lost to the fate of being a slum or whether the neighborhood could yet be saved. The late 1970s and early 1980s were especially important to the study because it is during this time that many of the older residents were galvanized into speaking out in defense of their neighborhood, as well as creating organizations like the Neighborhood Watch and Community Outreach programs to enfranchise newer residents (Skibinski 1973, Soulsman 1982, A1, Lao 1973).

Despite the picture painted above, many of residents that I interviewed never lost faith in the value of Brookside as a community. Several of the interviewees spoke at great length about their wonderful relationships with their neighbors and the great sense of community that they have enjoyed over the years, including the so-called dark times of the 1970s and 1980s. My youngest interviewee, in fact, grew up during the “Crookside” period and claims that from her experience it was never as bad as people made it seem:
“I guess everybody I know has always been very nice, that’s always a good quality to have… there is a true sense of kind of an old time community, I don’t know if that would be the case in other places but that’s a good quality to have in a neighborhood” (Jansen December 23, 2010, Jansen December 23, 2010, Jansen December 23, 2010)

So perhaps while organized community activities may have ceased and while those who bemoaned the loss of the 1950s suburban feel may have retreated, there was a community for those who sought it and for those who made the time (Jansen December 23, 2010, Jones January 2011, Barnes November 9, 2010, Moon October 24, 2010).
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Outcomes of Methodology

After completing the study it became clear that the vernacular approach was appropriate for Brookside Park. Using the attention to mundane and minute detail the vernacular approach I was able to see elements of the landscape that go unnoticed by the casual observer. Rather than focus on the neighborhood in abstract or general terms I focused on the homes, the sidewalks, the backyards, and the streets. In doing this, the values and aesthetic sensibilities of Brookside’s residents both past and present were revealed to me.

The appreciation for holism lent to me by the works of J.B. Jackson and others revealed that every element of the neighborhood can shed light on its identity. The renovations of the homes and the arguments over the sidewalk belied the priorities and economic status of the residents. For example, in the early years maintenance of the sidewalks was accepted as the responsibility of the residents, where as now residents feel that is the responsibility of the county to upkeep the sidewalks, which leaves them in a state of general disrepair. In material objects as simple as a parkland bridge over Cool Run Creek or a backyard garden, I can see the essence of the neighborhood and the ways in which the residents feel attachment to their surroundings.

The appropriateness of the vernacular approach is best represented by the parkland study. Here is a landscape largely unknown to outsiders. Certainly, most of it is off limits to non-residents, not to mention being out of the way. Here you can see an example of a landscape that changes not with the whims of an external authority or a
large group, but with the desires of ordinary people who call Brookside their home.
Furthermore, the diligence and care afforded to the parkland is reflective of the value that they place on it. This is a key element of vernacular landscape that changes occur based on the values and perceptions of those who utilized it as part of their daily lives. Like any other common person’s landscape, the parkland of Brookside can be easily generalized but is difficult to truly understand. When I began this study, I believed that the parkland and its decline was the product of changing economic demographics. Only through long study and calling upon the knowledge of local experts was I able to understand how the parkland was reflective of the neighborhood as a whole, as well as how the decline of recreational activities belied a shift in all aspects of neighborhood life.

The final and most important element of my methodological approach was taking the biographical approach to landscape. The goal of this study was to unearth the identity of the neighborhood as a landscape by hearing the stories and collecting the biographies of the residents who gave it life. This turned out to be the perfect approach to bring to a neighborhood like Brookside. Unincorporated as it was, Brookside has always received less attention from local newspapers such as the Newark Post and the Wilmington News Journal. Without the stories of the residents, so much of what had happened and why it happened would have remained unknown. The available primary sources, such as the Brooksider and the minutes of the Corporate Board provided an outline of events. If this study had been based on these documents alone, the landscape biography would be incomplete. It would be known what Brookside was and where it had been, but not who it was. The stories conveyed
the meaning and attachments in the landscape and these speak volumes as to why the landscape is the way that it is.

Through the narrative history gained from the residents it was possible to understand the important moments and periods through the eyes of those who had lived them. Without knowing the stories of the neighborhood, the history has no context nor emotion attached to it. The events that unfolded over the decades may be abstract notes for me, but for the interviewees they are memories. The stories may be a subjective history, more emotional than factual, but the understanding gained from them is irreplaceable. It became clear that when interviewing the residents that these stories had not been heard, so much of Brookside’s history would have been lost with the Greatest Generation which is now in its twilight. These original residents, many of whom have lived their entire adult lives in the neighborhood, are treasure troves not only of history but also of emotion and affinity for this neighborhood which had defined their lives.

Another benefit of the biographical approach was the overwhelming enthusiasm on the part of the residents. Many people chose to tell their story, from every generation and socio-economic status represented in the neighborhood. They showed what this neighborhood meant to them and who they were as people. From hearing their emphasis, emotion, and their choice of words Brookside’s identity was illuminated. Not just the identity in a general sense, but also the many Brookside’s which have existed for each individual and each generation of residents who made Brookside their home.
Interview Methodology and Lessons Learned

Looking back on the data collection used for this study, several things became evident. First among these was that anonymity for the interviewees was instrumental in gaining insight into the decision-making processes of landscape agents. Knowing that their words would not be attributed to their names loosened the tongues of the interviewees and many of the stories revealed were off color or contained sensitive, highly personal information about the neighborhood and the individuals within it. I believe that open-ended interviews were also an appropriate choice for the study as they lent themselves well to narrative description on the part of the interviewees. Arguably using surveys or rigid questions would have gathered more concrete, quantifiable data, but the point was not to discover numbers. The point was to discover the identity of Brookside.

One part of my methodology which I felt was unsuccessful was the system of gathering key informants. In the beginning of the study I depended largely on word of mouth and direct referrals from one informant to the next. While I never had a shortage of individuals willing to speak with me, I noticed that I was introduced time and again to like-minded individuals. By the end of the study it became clear to me that I should have developed a more efficient way of ensuring diversity in my key informants. It was only through cold calling and attending numerous community meetings that I was able to get the more diverse sample that I had intended to reach all along.
The Biography of Brookside Park

This study set out to answer the question “Why is the landscape the way that it is?” Through the sources and interviews which were gathered, that question as well as “Who is the neighborhood?” was answered. To understand Brookside as a landscape is to understand the three theatres in which its identity has played out over the years. The first and most visible of these is the homes and yards of individual residents. In the 1950s and 60s the homes were new and the people who occupied them were living in a booming economy. The changes that they made to the landscape are reflective of the time and circumstance in which they lived. It is during the 1950s and 60s that the vast majority of car port conversions occur. It is also during this period that most of the room additions and other major modifications to the properties occur in high concentration. Over time, however, the homes of Brookside Park decline. While many of the homes continue to be modified and well cared for, a large number of them fall into disrepair. In this trend a change in the values and nature of the residents can be seen. The affluent in the neighborhood move up and out, and as the neighborhood shifts downward in socio-economic status residents cannot afford or do not care to maintain or renovate their properties.

The homes represent the residents. They shape them to fit the identity, which they feel is theirs. In the homes belonging to the older residents, their pride and investment in the neighborhood can be seen through the modifications they have made. In the gardens, flower boxes and backyard playgrounds, the families, the cooks, and the gardeners who live in this neighborhood can be seen. While some from the early neighborhood may claim that newer residents do not value the neighborhood in
the same way that they do, it became clear to me that many see a value in maintaining
the suburban aesthetic. The difference is that many now cannot afford or do not have
the time to invest in their homes the way that the first generation was able to. Also, it
is important to remember that in the golden age of the neighborhood, to which many
of the older interviewees refer, was a time when the homes were new and the
maintenance was far less expensive. It is only once you come to the 1970s and 1980s
that the homes are old enough to start breaking down. In conclusion, one of the most
important understandings which arose from this study was that the diversity in the
homes in Brookside represents the diversity of the residents. Unlike the early
neighborhood, when the houses were all the same, in keeping with Levit’s ideals the
modern neighborhood, reflects the individuality of the people who live there and the
diversity, both racial and socio-economic, which defines today’s Brookside.

The parkland and recreational landscape of Brookside and its decline was the
most telling story in this biography. Through the memories of the interviewees dealing
with the pool, the sports leagues, the dances, and other recreational activities more was
learned about how the neighborhood had changed than through any other story that
was collected. The discussions of the recreational landscape revealed the identity of
the early residents and the changes to that landscape showed how the identities of the
residents too had changed. In the beginning every event was packed and the
neighborhood had no shortage of volunteers or events. Several of the residents
participated drew attention to the fact that this recreational paradise was less a product
of any moral superiority on the part of the early residents and more a by-product of the
demographics. The first generation of residents was largely baby boomer parents with
young children. Most were between the ages of 25 and 40 with children who were
elementary school-aged or younger. The single most important feature of the early
neighborhood was the children. They were the glue that bound the community
together and made it what it was. It was because of their children that these early
residents poured so much time into the community, for they were all connected by the
friendships of their children.

Furthermore, the early neighborhood was marked by single income
households, with one parent available to be involved in the recreational landscape.
With time, however, families move out, children grow up, and residents are replaced
with individuals and families of varying ages and stages of life. This breaks up the
solidarity of the neighborhood’s social and recreational landscape. With time the old
volunteers leave public life and no one steps up to take their place. The decline of the
recreational landscape is a snowball effect. As more of the sports teams and events
lose momentum and eventually cease interest in these events decreases. When they
cease for new generations of residents it is as if they never existed and within two
short decades, Brookside went from a lush recreational landscape to a bedroom suburb
of isolated households and streets. The collapse of organized social events also led to a
decrease in civic involvement and a decreased emphasis on maintaining the parkland.
This is not surprising. Without expressions of the neighborhood’s positive virtues in
the form of social gatherings and organized activities, resident apathy was bound to
grow.

These changes to the neighborhood should not be considered only in a negative
light. In the interviews it became apparent that for the older residents, the story was
one of paradise lost, whereas shorter-term residents tended to have much more favorable opinions of the modern neighborhood. For the early residents the close-knit homogenous neighborhood of the 1950s and 1960s is something that can never be replaced and can certainly never be recreated. For some of them the fracturing of the social landscape that occurred when the residency became diverse is to blame for the negative aspects of the landscape. What I discovered in this study was that many of the newer residents felt like outsiders. Whether it was because of race, socio-economic status, or life stage, many new residents were intimidated by the old timers who dominated social and civic life. So when long time volunteers and leaders stepped out of public life, no one took their place.

Many younger residents also described an unexpected Brookside. They spoke of a vibrant neighborhood for children in the 1980s, a neighborhood where they felt accepted and safe despite the opinions of older residents and those who lived in adjacent communities. They told of a landscape that was still defined by children and the networks of socialization created by their friendships. This led to the important realization that lifeworld geography and landscape biography are paramount in understanding landscapes. Without speaking to many individuals I would have never known the merits of Brookside through the 1980s and 1990s. The news stories in the *Brooksider* and in the *Wilmington News Journal* painted a picture of a neighborhood lost to crime and physical decline. The stories of the residents each illuminated part of a Brookside filled with concerned citizens who fought to make something good for themselves and their families and who took control of their neighborhood from the undesirables who gave it a bad name. Brookside is a neighborhood that was and

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continues to be defined by its children and the parents who desire their own piece of the suburban ideal.
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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A Biography of Landscape: Brookside, Delaware

RESEARCHER:
Daniel Spinosa, Department of Geography, University of Delaware. (302)242-9036

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:
As part of a master’s thesis I am conducting research on neighborhood identity, landscape change and personal experience in the neighborhood of Brookside in Newark, DE. The purpose of this project is to document and interpret the experiences of residents in a neighborhood over time and the changes that have occurred there.

You were chosen for participation in this study because you are or were a resident of the neighborhood or because you are affiliated with a neighborhood as a community leader, local expert, realtor, religious figure, educator or representative. Approximately 15-20 people will be interviewed during the course of this study.

PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY:
Participation in this study will involve a 60 minute face to face interview. Participation in this project is purely voluntary and there will no form of compensation for the interview. Your answers to questions and statements will be represented in the study but your identity will not be included in the analysis and all sensitive information will be held confidentially. All interviews will be audio-taped. The audiotape and the interview notes will be destroyed within one year of the completion of the project. You can
refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the project will not result in any negative consequences for you.

The risks involved in participation appear to be minimal; if you have any questions about the project you may contact Daniel Spinosa, Department of Geography at (302)-242-9036. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study you may contact The University of Delaware IRB at 302-831-2137.

Do you wish to participate in this study? Please initial here __________ to consent to the audiotaping of the interview. You are free to stop the audiotaping of the interview at any time during the interview. By signing below you are agreeing to participation in this study. You will be given a copy of this form.

________________________ Date ________       ___________________Date______

Signature of Subject    Signature of Researcher