

## Parkwood Community Club Baseball Fields

3017 Aldrich Lane, parcel 06000005700, 10.78 acres

Current Owner: Parkwood Community Club, Inc.

The early history of the Parkwood Community Club Baseball Fields is rooted in the Cumberland Sertoma Club and the Parkwood Men's Club. Charter presentation ceremonies for the Cumberland Sertoma Club, which was formed through the Nashville Sertoma Club (est. 1946), took place in November 1952.<sup>1</sup> Composed of "businessmen who reside in or operate businesses in North Nashville and the Bordeaux area," the new Cumberland Sertoma Club joined the Nashville club as members of Sertoma International, an organization of service clubs unified by the mission of "Service to Mankind."<sup>2</sup> The Cumberland Sertoma Club's president was R. E. Wyatt, Jr.<sup>3</sup> Sponsorship of Girl Scout Troops in the Bordeaux area was one of the club's early projects and by May 1953, they had one full troop. The troop's first investiture service took place at the Cheatham Place Community House on May 19, 1953.<sup>4</sup> Cumberland Sertoma also sponsored a team in the North Nashville Knot Hole League.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, Aldrich Heights was platted in five sections, from 1954 to 1959. The development included the building of Aldrich Lane, south of Ewing Drive. Additionally, Parkwood Estates was platted in four sections, from 1960 to 1962. The Parkwood Men's Club was formed by 1966, when then-president Pete Stanfield recounted the formation of the first Parkwood baseball league. According to Stanfield, almost 80 boys in the Brick Church School area had expressed interest in playing baseball, well more than the one team usually sponsored. Recognizing the interest in additional teams, and the need for a ballpark in the area to support them, the Parkwood Men's Club built Parkwood Community Park. Together, Stanfield, Walter "Red" Aldridge, and other men in the neighborhood, including Herschel Nolen, Jimmy Taylor, Kenneth Stromatt, Red Sanders, and Rip Ryman, leased a piece of property, built a diamond, and formed a league of four teams. The park opened June 11, 1966 (Fig. 1). The group also had plans for little league football in the fall and a larger baseball league the following year.<sup>6</sup>

Although the Parkwood Men's Club began leasing the property that year, initially it may not have been directly from the Cumberland Sertoma Club, as the Sertoma Club's purchase of the property from Alexander Bennett, Jr., and Albert D. Gray was not recorded until June 8, 1967.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Nashville Banner*, Wed, 11/19/1952, 5.

<sup>2</sup> "North Nashville [notes]," *Nashville Banner*, Mon, 5/4/1953, 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Nashville Banner*, Sat, 3/7/1953, 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Nashville Banner*, Tue, 5/19/1953, 6.

<sup>5</sup> "Local Diamond Doings Today," *Tennessean*, Sat, 7/20/1957, 10.

<sup>6</sup> "Sandlot Sidelights," Bob Teitlebaum, *Tennessean*, Sun, 6/12/1966, 63. Former Dixie Youth state director Ray Hodges is also credited with supporting the league's formation.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Bennett, Jr., and Albert D. Gray to The Cumberland Sertoma Club of Nashville, Tennessee, Inc., Deed Book 4139, page 999, recorded June 8, 1967.

Bennett and Gray had acquired the property as part of an 81-acre purchase from Fisk University in the 1940s.<sup>8</sup> According to an article from 1970, the Cumberland Sertoma Club purchased the property for \$15,000 and leased it to the Parkwood Men's Club for \$1 per year. Reportedly, the property was so heavily wooded, the city had to build a road to the park area.<sup>9</sup>

Parkwood Men's Club and Sertoma Club dedicated Sertoma Park on Saturday, June 10, 1967. The park did not yet have lights, but the organization hoped to install them at a later date.<sup>10</sup> The park hosted 10 teams in a Pee Wee League for boys ages 8 to 12 that summer, and in the fall, it participated in the Don Wade Football League, named for the former star center from Vanderbilt University.<sup>11</sup>

Parkwood joined the Dixie Youth Baseball League in 1968 with three leagues, the first in Nashville. At that time, the Dixie Youth Baseball League had teams across nine states with 54 leagues franchised in Tennessee.<sup>12</sup> In less than fifteen years, Parkwood would boast "Home of Dixie Youth World Series Champions" for 1978, 1979 and 1982 (Fig. 2).<sup>13</sup> In 1980, the club recognized Coach Jerry Hale's "dynasty" coaching Parkwood teams to the Dixie Youth League's World Series by naming Hale Field for him.<sup>14</sup> Hale coached Parkwood teams until 1984.<sup>15</sup>

By 1970, Parkwood hosted 28 baseball teams, two Don Wade football squads, and softball for girls. The park's four baseball diamonds were built for different uses, with two for ages 8-12, one for Babe Ruth, and one for Dixie Youth. The programs were funded by volunteer workers, \$5 membership to Parkwood Men's Club, donations, collections passed around during games, and concession sales.<sup>16</sup>

Over time, the Parkwood neighborhood changed from white to African American, and its league became the only predominately African American franchise in Dixie Youth.<sup>17</sup> The Men's Club membership became mostly African American, too. In 1984, the Cumberland Sertoma Club of Nashville, TN, Inc. sold the property (10.46 acres) to the Parkwood Community Club, Inc., a

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<sup>8</sup> Fisk University to Alexander Bennett, Jr., and Albert D. Gray, Installment, Deed Book 1391, page 200, 5/11/1946.

<sup>9</sup> "Parkwood Youth Program on a Big League Budget," Bob Teitlebaum, *Tennessean*, Thu, 6/11/1970, 62.

<sup>10</sup> "Final Debuts in Sandlots," Bob Teitlebaum, *Tennessean*, Sat, 6/10/1967, 19.

<sup>11</sup> *Tennessean*, Fri, 10/27/1967, 36.

<sup>12</sup> "Three Leagues for Parkwood in Dixie Youth," *Tennessean*, Sun, 5/5/1968, 66.

<sup>13</sup> "It takes a mean vandal to victimize young ball players of summer," Dwight Lewis, *Tennessean*, Thu, 6/13, 2002, 17.

<sup>14</sup> "Hale Keeps Winning in Dixie Youth Play," Jerry Ingram, *Tennessean*, Tue, 7/8/1980, 18. "Hale Dynasty Begins Quest for 3rd Title," Tom Wood, *Tennessean*, Mon, 8/18/1980, 18. "Parkwood youth baseball hit a homer by breaking barriers," Don Majors, *Tennessean*, Tue, 4/11/2006, A15. According to Majors, in 1973, coach Jerry Hale was the first Dixie Youth coach to play African Americans. MHC staff has not been able to verify this statement. It is likely this pertains to teams in Nashville or Tennessee but not the entire organization.

<sup>15</sup> Majors. Hale remains a celebrated coach, along with his son, having led youth teams in Goodlettsville to World Series success.

<sup>16</sup> "Big League Budget," Teitlebaum.

<sup>17</sup> Majors.

non-profit organization with a minority-led board, making it the “only African-American owned and operated youth sports complex in Tennessee.”<sup>18</sup> In the early 1990s, Parkwood and a franchise from South Carolina successfully petitioned the National Board of Dixie Youth for a waiver from wearing the Dixie Youth uniform patch, which included the Confederate battle flag; the board voted to have it redesigned.<sup>19</sup>

By 1994, Parkwood provided baseball diamonds for 25 teams, serving 400-450 kids, ages 5-16.<sup>20</sup> In 2002, the Parkwood Community Club ballpark, which served about 18 teams and 250-300 kids at the time, experienced three acts of vandalism in one summer week, including graffiti and arson. According to an appeal by the organization for assistance after the series of incidents, “There are only five privately minority-owned parks in the United States, and Parkwood is one of the five.”<sup>21</sup> The damage, which exacerbated already pre-existing needs, would require rebuilding of the facilities and enhancements to the field landscaping, including remodeling the restrooms and concession stand, light poles, painting, improving the four baseball diamonds, replacing uniforms, rebuilding the equipment storage shed, and portable office for meetings and office space. That fall, the Parkwood Community Club broke ground on a two-story building that would serve as a community center for the club.<sup>22</sup>

-Metropolitan Historical Commission  
February 11, 2021

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<sup>18</sup> Cumberland Sertoma Club of Nashville, Tennessee, Inc., to Parkwood Community Club, Inc., Deed Book 6402, page 124, recorded September 26, 1984. *Tennessean*, Tue, 5/10/1994, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Majors.

<sup>20</sup> *Tennessean*, 5/10/1994.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis. “Parkwood Community Club ready for kids to return,” Michelle E. Shaw, *Tennessean*, Tue, 6/18/2002, 46.

<sup>22</sup> “Groundbreaking at Parkwood on Sunday,” *Tennessean*, Fri, 10/18/2002, 103.



—Staff photo by Dale Ernsberger

## *First Pitch on Its Way*

Play opened in a unique kid's league in the Brick Church School community with appropriate ceremonies, including the throwing out of the first ball by Richard Hage, of Mayor Beverly Briley's office. From left, rear, are Jim Ryman, of the Parkwood Cubs; Pete Stanfield, league president; Hage; and Wayne Haun, of the Parkwood Yanks. The players are Jim Taylor, 11, left of the Cubs, and Chuck White, 10, of the Yanks.

Figure 1: "First Pitch on Its Way," *Tennessean*, 12 June 1966.



— Photo by Earl Hughes

The Nashville Parkwood Dixie Youth baseball team will leave tonight for the 11-12 years old Dixie Youth World Series in Bartow, Fla. The Parkwood team won the Tennessee state championship last weekend to earn the trip. Team members, front row from left: Tyrone Coleman, William Humes, Manasseh Clark,

Gerald Batchlor, Trent Fortner, Ronnie Quillen, Jerry Groves. Second row from left: Coach Don Fortner, David Peach, Pat Campbell, Rodney Osborne, Mayor Richard Fulton, Manager Jerry Hale, Shane Norton, Frankie Ingram, Todd Simpson, Harold Cannon, Coach Steve Lamberth.

Figure 2: "Nashville Team Eyes Dixie World Series," *Tennessean*, 13 August 1977.