Dust Bowl Lake Becomes Lake Katharine with an “A”

By David G Hodges

Before World War II, soldiers marching through the sandy land of Fort Jackson kicked up the training ground’s choking dust and referred to their temporary home as a dust bowl. This land along current Shady Lane and Forest Drive was not the most desirable land, but it has since developed to be one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Columbia.

Thomas Harwell first owned the dust bowl property through a state land grant in 1784 and purchased 640 acres, the maximum amount allowed, from the South Carolina Legislature. Due to the land’s clay and sandy soil, it was poor farm land, but its proximity to Gills Creek provided sufficient water for crops and it remained in the Harwell family for over one 150 years. The land tract sat about four miles from Columbia and very little development existed between the two until Camp Jackson was created in 1917, bringing to it thousands of soldiers and creating a boom for the local economy.

The property around the lake belonged to the federal government and had no houses on it. Many youngsters in the area enjoyed its recreational benefits. Occasionally, the military police would show up to oust the latest crop of little boys who were paddling about the lake.

Camp Jackson closed, but by 1941, Columbia had successfully lobbied to have it reopened as a permanent fort and the army, needing substantial amounts of water for troops, expanded an old mill pond to provide six million gallons of water each day to the new Fort Jackson filtration plant. Naturally enough, the new lake was named Dust Bowl Lake.

Moses Chappell Heath was a developer who built a home he called Heathwood Hall near Devine Street and Kilbourne Road.  He started an exclusive subdivision called Heathwood near his home but died before he could complete the project. His son-in-law, Burwell Deas Manning, Sr, finished Heathwood in the mid-1930’s and then bought land further out of town for future development. Over 15 years, Burwell Manning, Sr bought tracts of land in the current Trenholm Road, Kilbourne Road, Forest Drive area totaling about 250 acres. Between the world wars when Camp Jackson had closed and before it would reopen as Fort Jackson, Manning purchased the land under Dust Bowl Lake, leasing part of it to the government and developing the rest.

Burwell Manning and his sons, C Heath Manning and Burwell D Manning, Jr, created lots around Dust Bowl Lake along with the other tracts of land they owned. Burwell Manning, Sr eventually renamed Dust Bowl Lake after his wife, Katharine Heath Manning and the smaller Bowers Beach swimming hole after his mother, Lelia. Many of the streets surrounding Lake Katharine were named for family members, such as Sanford, Rickenbaker, and Heath Hill or for family recreational interests like Quail Lane. Local realtors recognized the potential of such a location and Lake Katharine has continued as a dynamic neighborhood ever since.