

# Landowners May Lose Homeplace

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die it successfully.

"They gave us 60 days to get a survey done, and we couldn't get the money together that soon," Shabazz said. "So we just sent them a letter stating we owned the property and enclosed a copy of the deed. But we didn't send it registered mail, so that was the technicality they used to say we were in default."

On July 22, 1986, Judge James A. Harrill ruled against the Conrad heirs, ordering them to remove the mobile home from Speak's lot, and to pay Speaks \$1,000 in legal costs.

The money is still unpaid; The trailer has not been moved.

Too late, the Conrad heirs hired a surveyor, Clay Fulton, who reported in July 1987 that they owned 2.41 acres.

This week, a Forsyth County map planner used the dimensions from Byers' 1910 deed to map their property on paper — and drew a 2.37 acre lot.

### Handicapped by the legal system

Attorney Michael Grace counseled Byers and Shabazz in the early stages of the 1986 proceedings. He agreed that people like the Byers' are handicapped by background and financial means. He said Byers has virtually no legal recourse at this point.

"As a general rule," he said, "... if one party didn't appear in court or didn't offer proof, then the judge rules in favor of the other side. It's difficult to come back eight or nine years later to put up a defense."

Shabazz said he has "never stopped continuously going at this thing."

"We were poor," Shabazz said. "It isn't like we had money to get surveys and lawyers on a minute's notice."

### Trespassers or rightful heirs?

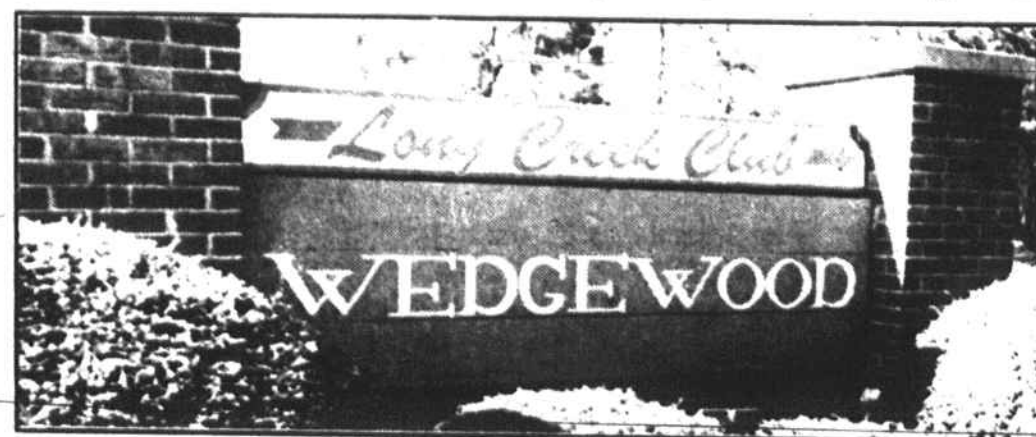
Winifred Speaks said she did not know Shabazz and his mother owned a title to the land. She says she simply thought of them as trespassers.

"I could never get them off," she said. "How do you keep somebody off something when they crawl back on it every day? They've called me all kinds of names."

She said she has tried unsuccessfully to block the driveway.

"I tried to put a cable across it. I had a boulder put across it. I dumped a load of dirt, and they spread the dirt."

The four lots in question are now part of Wedgewood Estates, a rolling middle-class development sporting streets with names like Green Turf Court and Sandwedge Court.



Part of the Byers' land is now included in the Wedgewood development.

### Preserving history

In the early 1900s, Bethania had a thriving African-American community. Former slaves bought land, operated stores, and filled the Bethania AME Zion Church, which the Moravians established for them.

The Conrad home place is one of a few original buildings in the African-American community still standing.

Shabazz wants to establish a Black Historical Properties Commit-

tee. He is looking for volunteers, and hopes to use his old home place as the first building to restore.

This month, Byers and Shabazz have been afforded use of an attorney through the Forsyth County Law Volunteer Program. He is somewhat bitter about the potential loss of his grandfather's land.

"People state that things just happen. But they just happen too often to poor black people who are not knowledgeable of the law. We're just out here in limbo because the county kept making mistakes," Shabazz said.

Still, he hopes to resolve the dispute.

"We want to keep the land because it's of historical value to us. But land is too valuable to give away. We would like the dispute resolved through a fair and legal way."



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### How The Land Changed Hands

Documents in the Forsyth County Register of Deeds vault verify the following transactions. They illustrate that Betty Conrad Byers and her ancestors have owned the two-acre plot since 1910, and why Winifred Z. Speaks also holds title four lots included in the 1910 deed.

Lord Granville of England owned what is now Bethania. William W. and Julia A. Vogler bought a large parcel of land from Granville in the 1880's.

- 1885 - William W. Julia A. Vogler sold the two-acre tract of land to Israel T. Speas for \$25.
- 1910 - Israel T. Speas sold the same two acres to William M. Conrad (Betty Conrad Byers' grandfather) for \$25.
- 1950 - C.A. and Grace Slate sold 350 acres to Pery E. and Margrat Gaines Platt. One of its boundaries called for a straight line through Conrad's property, severing over an acre which appears to include the four tracts in question.
- 1963 - Perry E. and Margrat G. Platt sold 12.21 acres to Northwest Estates.
- 1971 - Northwest Estates sold 12 lots to J.R. and Elizabeth K. Lyon. Four of these lots include land the Conrad family has owned since 1910.
- 1975 - J.R. and Elizabeth Lyon sold the four lots to Mrs. (Winifred Z.) Marshall L. Speaks. In 1986 she filed a trespass complaint against Byers and her family, and legal proceedings began.

# National AIDS Quilt On Display in Triad

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She said that McKellar's panel will be accepted by the San Francisco headquarters, even though the woman's death was not of full-blown AIDS.

"I'm just surprised to see a black woman, even though I hear AIDS is kind of prevalent where black women are concerned," Davis said. "But just seeing her face on the panel made me want to stop and take a closer look."

Dickens also said seeing a panel in observance of a black woman "hits homes."

"You see something like that, it makes you realize that it's not just a gay disease," he said.

Dickens said, "There was one panel of a fellow who went to Howard University. Other than the McKellar panel, that one probably moved me the most. And I don't know who it was."

The panels were presented and laid out on the exhibition floor while speakers took turns reading the names of people that the panels acknowledge.

Fewer than 50 quilt panels from the Piedmont were inducted Monday into the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Organizers said more panels are expected until the exhibit closes Thursday, Dec. 3.

Darnel R. Gay, fundraising committee chairman, said other blacks besides McKellar were honored with thousands of panels from the massive AIDS Memorial Quilt.

"The black churches and most black organizations and heterosexual people aren't accepting the fact that AIDS doesn't discriminate," Gay said. "It's especially affecting

black women and children at an alarming rate. People are not going to be aware until the last minute."

Vanessa White of Greensboro spent more than an hour examining the detailed work on many panels. "I like the effort put into them," White said. "I wanted to read the individual panels."

"The work is beautiful," she said. "It's hard to understand how people can take so much time out of their work and away from their families and friends to do this. It's unbelievable."

Lisa Rowells of Greensboro said the emotional content, embroidered in the works, was not lost to her.

"I would say the most emotionally moving panels

contained poems written by family members and lovers," Rowells said.

"All of them were beautiful," White added. "But the ones with letters from Mom and pictures of sisters and brothers were personal."

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