This brief history of Rosewood includes major events that affected and influenced the neighborhood. Please share an event you think is important. Let’s not forget our history!

The Rosewood neighborhood story begins when Rosewood School was built in 1926 but there is an earlier story. On April 25, 1925 9.23 acres of land was sold by Ott Realty for $10,153.00. The deed describes the property as surrounded to the north by Sims property, D.B. and W.P Ott property to the east and south and Ott Road to the west. This describes the 4.5 acre Rosewood School property and the surrounding block. Some residents agree that the Rosewood neighborhood was once the Ott farm and cautiously hint that the Ott farmhouse still exists on Ott Road.

While the location of the farmhouse is unconfirmed we do know that William Frederick Ott died at his home on Ott Road, Sept 27, 1925. He was born April 21, 1844 in Clarendon County and was a wealthy planter in the St. Matthews area. He served under the command of Captain Dannelly (20th SC Infantry, Company D) during the Civil War. Near the turn of the century Ott moved to Columbia and lived in the Ott Road area until his death. He was a loyal member of Shandon Methodist Church.

By the early 1920’s the Olympia School District was overrun with mill family students. A new school was needed to relieve the overcrowding at Heathwood and Rose Hill Schools. According to a 1926 article in The State newspaper the area around the school was already being referred to as Rosewood (which was considered to be east of Woodrow and south of Wheat). Records are not available to indicate how Rosewood got its’ name but the last trolley stop was in Rose Hill and the area beyond was mostly woods and farmland so it is not difficult to guess how the area became known as Rosewood.

From the late 1920’s until after World War II Rosewood experienced many of the changes we see and live with today. The Columbia City Directory starts to indicate, in 1928, the name change from Fifth Avenue to Rosewood Drive and Owens Field was dedicated in 1930. Following World War II the city directories also show the expansion of properties in the Rosewood neighborhood. Classified ads in The State advertise lots in “Rosewood Gardens”, “South Shandon” or “Shandon Annex “with special loans to veterans. In 1948 the Columbia city school system voted to acquire Rosewood School from the soon to be defunct Olympia District.

“Business Community Developed on Rosewood Drive in last decade”, an article in The State newspaper on May 26, 1948, describes many Rosewood Drive businesses including the Rose Bowl Restaurant, Fort Jackson Laundry, several service stations, the Perfection Bakery and Compton’s Department Store. It’s obvious from the article that the area was booming. The description of Smith’s Hardware, below, is especially poignant since the store remained open until 2002 and is even remembered by “newer” residents:

“D.K. Smith, owner of Smith’s hardware store at 2709 Rosewood Drive, has been connected with the hardware business since he was 13 years old. While in high school, Mr. Smith worked in a hardware store at Walterboro, and when this company opened a branch at Bamberg he went there and worked for a while. Mr. Smith came to Columbia in 1939 and operated a service station before opening his hardware business in July 1946. Mr. Smith married the former Miss Lola Deer of Fairfax and they have three sons, David Smith Jr., six years old, Randy, four years old and the baby Jerry.”

Of course, the big neighborhood story was the opening of Rosewood Shopping Center in 1954. The 13 unit shopping center boasted off-street parking for 280 automobiles. Built by J. Donald Dial the plaza was the “most complete and modern shopping center in Columbia” and served the “8,000 families
in the fast growing southeastern area of the city”. It included a Colonial Store, Dodd’s 5, 10 & 25 Cent Store, Ali Baba gift shop and several other convenience stores. Around the same time Hendley Homes Apartment Complex was built to help with the local housing shortage. This replaced the mill village at the same spot and expanded the Rosewood community. Many long-time Rosewood residents remember the Trampoline Center at the corner of Holly and Rosewood. The Trampoline Center also included a fresh air market and was owned by Wiley Koon.

Churches are a big part of the Rosewood Community. There are several tucked away down side-streets not only in Rosewood but the neighborhoods of Edisto Court and South Kilbourne that are part of Rosewood community. The Columbia Original Free Will Baptist Church moved to the South Kilbourne neighborhood in 1961. Rosewood Baptist Church began in 1937 and built the present sanctuary in 1968. Lutheran Church of the Resurrection was organized in 1948 and the church was dedicated in June 1949.

Starting in 1971 Columbia began hearings to discuss the widening of Rosewood Drive. This was needed to accommodate the new beltway connecting 1-26 with 1-77 and to help with traffic flow. The widening finally began in 1979. By this time Rosewood Drive businesses included the Basil Pot (now called Rosewood Market), the Steak Mart, Piggly Wiggly and the Twilight Lounge. The environmental cost of widening Rosewood included demolishing the healthy oaks that shaded the two-lane Rosewood Drive and the end off-street parking. Katie Wurtz, owner of Katie’s Liquor Store told The State newspaper on January 14, 1979 that “The future of Rosewood is really one question no one can answer at this moment”.

One of the first businesses to leave the Rosewood area following the widening of Rosewood Drive was the popular Colonial Store in Rosewood Shopping Center. The infamous Rockaways, however, came to Rosewood Drive in 1982. Then in 1992 city councilperson Ann Sinclair began to voice concerns and fought for redevelopment of the Rosewood neighborhood.

In 1982 Basil Garzia helped with the reemergence of Rosewood by staying in the neighborhood and building a new store called the Rosewood Market across from the Rosewood Shopping Center. In 1996 Owens Field Park, the city’s first regional park opened and Hendley Homes was demolished in 2000. A year of impressive growth was 2002 when the new First Citizens Bank, Rockaways and Publix reestablished Rosewood as a neighborhood friendly business district.

With the addition of City Roots and the Southern Vista the Rosewood community has become a self-contained community where residents walk and bike to the grocery store, bank, drug store and restaurants. New neighborhood festivals like the Rosewood Crawfish Fest and the Krewe de Columbi Ya-Ya Mardi Gras Festival have brought a revival of pride to the neighborhood. Everyone wants to live in ROSEWOOD!