

Where artists dream

THESE ARE YOUR NEIGHBOURS

THE GARDEN OF SCULPTURE ON SIXTH AVENUE



ANNE ZIEGLER and WEBSTER BOOTH in the garden of the home they have renovated in Parktown North. In June, they leave Johannesburg to settle in Knysna.

This is no veld township...

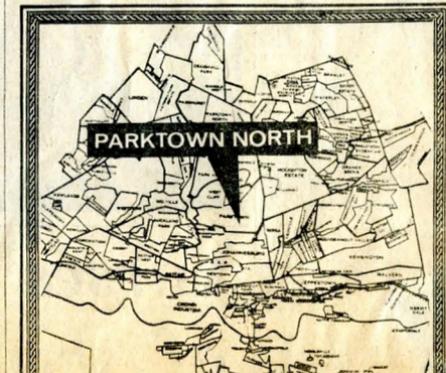
THERE WAS A CURIOUS little booklet published about 1904. Simply entitled "Parktown North," it enticed the people of Johannesburg to buy land in the new township.

"Remember, this is no veld township you are asked to pioneer," the commentary explored. "There are already 40 to 50 houses standing on the property and about 150 inhabitants."

The prospective buyers needed reassuring. The photographs in the brochure show a very rural Parktown North indeed with the road from Johannesburg passing through seemingly virgin countryside.

To get there buyers were advised to drive through "fashionable Parktown and the charming Sachsenwald Estate... an easy 20 minutes ride or a delightful walk."

Half-acre plots could be bought for £5 down and the rest paid off over years if necessary.



Roving Reporter

I WANDERED around a garden of sculpture created by Mr. Herman Wald of 52 Sixth Avenue.

Mr. Wald is the man responsible for the leaping bronze impalas of Johannesburg's Oppenheimer Fountain and with his leonine mop of hair, Hungarian-accent and shirt tails that, despite his persistent efforts, kept fluttering about his trousers, looked every inch the sculptor of renown that he is.

I interviewed him in his living-room where the paintings of Norma Ingram take pride of place.

He told me that his work was a combination of form and symbol "organically fused together," but, whatever it may be, his sculpture garden will certainly prove a unique attraction.

PEDESTALS

When it is finished — "I hope by the end of the year" — there will be about 30 of Mr. Wald's best works grouped on stone pedestals on a stretch of lawn facing his modern red-brick studio. They represent a lifetime devoted to his art.

Ranging the pure symbolism of "Expulsion from Paradise," a twirling vortex of metal expressing the elements of a whirlwind and representative of man's eternal fear of losing his place in the sun to the realism of a large stone head of a Biblical Moses, each piece will blend with the rest to create a composite exhibi-

tion of work in stone, metal and other media.

Mr. Wald was most proud of a recent sculpture which to me appeared to be a tangled combination of figures. He has entitled it "Job and his consolers" and that it portrayed man's trials and tribulations and that Job was an example of man's power of endurance.

CARVINGS

I was interested to learn what Mr. Wald intended to do should a sudden thunderstorm break over the garden. There are carvings in wood that would not take kindly to constant exposure to wind and rain. "I'll carry them inside," he said rather hesitantly while eyeing the sometimes heavy exhibits.

Mr. Wald also creates apothems, pithy and often witty they are too. "Art is the lift between

heaven and earth," he told me. Pink gates in a white wall at 31 Second Avenue, lead me to the house of the tuneful duetists, Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth. They told me that they had spent years repainting, refurnishing and renovating the house.

Their work has born fruit. Today their garden is an enclosed half-acre of colour and their home has been likened to a small villa on the French Riviera.

"My wife is a very good interior decorator," said Mr. Booth. "She does the wall-papering and I do the shading."

LEAVING

"And this was the second house that we have done," commented Anne Ziegler. "In June we will be leaving to settle in Knysna, where we have another house that needs attention."

"I feel it a bit like a weaver bird. We build up these nests and then we — figuratively — tear them down again. But we pack up and leave."

"We can't wait to go," she said. "Just to have a little rest and enjoy each other's company without having to work a clock. All our life we've worked but we have never time, — there has never been now is the time."

Parktown North, Booth, reminds her of Surrey. Although



Rhona Stern and Herman Wald.

the centre of Johannesburg, she described as "full of charm and completely unpretentious."

And what of their singing career? "You can't go on singing love duets after a certain age," she replied candidly. "It looks so stupid."

From Second Avenue I detoured down First Avenue East past the house of Giuseppe Cattaneo, a painter many art authorities regard as among South Africa's best. I turned left into Fifth Avenue to greet a man with an almost unpronounceable name, Tadeusz Jaroszynski.

Mr. Jaroszynski and his wife Karin are a husband and wife art team who studied together in the Helsinki Academy, Finland. She is a Finn but he is a South African, born of Polish parents in Yugoslavia.

They are also busy renovating the elderly house they occupy,

this itself has something of an artistic heritage. It was owned by Major Gardner and the studio at the base of the garden was once used by Pearl Collins, a prominent ballet teacher.

"I don't think an artist should explain his work," he said. "How can you analyse a feeling which motivates something which is essential an ethereal creation?"

In common with the other artists I met in Parktown North, Mr. and Mrs. Jaroszynski had no serious complaints about their suburb. They keep dogs themselves and so were hardly in a position to comment on the incessant yapping I heard.

Other residents, not artists, have christened their suburb Barktown North but the description is not very fair.

Rhona Stern, sculptor, who lives on the borders of Parktown North in Jellicoe Avenue, is another artist who prefers an old home which lends itself to modernization. She has lived in her present house for 20 years and soon will vacate it for three months while alterations are made.

I emerged from an boisterous encounter with her Afghan hound to hear her telling me that she is also a novelist.

Gwelo Goodman, an oil painter, was a former owner of Mrs. Stern's house. When the changes are complete she will have an outside patio in which to work on some of her larger sculptures.

Back into the artist's suburb I drove to meet a sculptor with stars in his eyes. Peter Kirchoff of Tenth Avenue is a keen astronomer who has built his own telescope and who is a past

mundane matters of applied physics.

Dr. Kirchoff has lived in Parktown North for more than 30 years — "when it was almost rural" — apart from a break of four-and-a-half years which he spent in Pretoria leading the team which made the models for the marble frieze in the Voortrekker Monument.

DIFFICULT

Today much of his work is architectural and he told me that applying art to today's architectural styles is far more difficult than it was in the days when he was commissioned to carve the stone medallions of poets and philosophers which decorate the walls of the Johannesburg Public Library.

Dr. Kirchoff also said that often he is so absorbed by his work that he forgets to sign it.

It epitomizes a less pretentious but well established and socially acceptable northern suburb of Johannesburg. It is aptly named for its wooded enclaves and shady walks are parklike in concept; its inhabitants are a hotchpotch of tradesmen, teachers, business workers... and a few millionaires.

But above all Parktown North is a suburb of artists.

It is redolent with art atmosphere and history. The late Albert E. Mason, well-known painter and sculptor, created many of his best works at his house "The Studio" in Eighth Avenue. He was a pioneer of contemporary art in South Africa. Now — very belatedly — his work in cubism has gained a following.

Sidney Carter lived and worked in his home "Devon Cottage" in First Avenue. Tommy Dickinson, the water colourist, lived in Second Avenue.

SCULPTOR

Maj. J. Gardner, a sculptor and former head of the Art School of the Witwatersrand Technical College, lived in Parktown North before his departure for Canada. Near by lived the well-known landscape painter, Norlem Hendriks

Today, probably even more than in the past, Parktown North has a preponderance of painters, sculptors and people who have found a home in the arts.

It was the artists... and artists... of Parktown North with whom I spoke this week.

