DR. J.C. “JIM” TUMBLIN

Dr. J.C. “Jim” Tumblin is a Knoxville native and a graduate of Illinois College of Optometry. He was President of the Tennessee Optometric Association in 1962 and its Optometrist of the Year 1975. He became a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Optometric Association in 1964 and was elected President in 1972. After eight years service as the Director of Research for the Optometric Extension Program, and he was elected its President (1983–87). Before retirement he specialized in General Optometry and visually-related learning difficulties. Dr. Tumblin enjoys gardening, travel, and East Tennessee history during his leisure hours.

FOUNTAIN CITY CONNECTIONS

Fountain City Connections was formed with the purpose of making Knoxville a more pedestrian-friendly place. The organization originated at a pedestrian workshop (April 2006) held by noted pedestrian advocate Mark Fenton. The group continues to focus on the challenges faced by pedestrians in Fountain City and the greater Knoxville area.

FC Connections is a non-profit organization in the state of Tennessee. As such, they welcome your contributions to help them with their efforts on behalf of pedestrians.

THANK YOU

Fountain City Connections wishes to thank the following: Dr. Jim Tumblin for his time, talents and expertise in leading our tour, writing this brochure, and inspiring us all to learn more about Fountain City’s colorful history; Ellen Zavisca for encouraging and supporting a Fountain City walk; Robin Easter and her wonderful staff for making this brochure possible.
The 12-acre campground (now Fountain City Park) had been used for religious camp meetings as early as the 1830s.

An announcement that appeared in the September 8, 1868, Knoxville Register announced, “Arrangements for a camp meeting at Fountain Head completed. First gun will be fired Thursday night. A number of eating houses will be established.” A later announcement said, “The early morning services at the church were attracting people to their devotions. The church is a large frame building 60 x 100 feet painted white and therefore showing to an advantage amid the surrounding scenery.”

“There are two services in the morning and one at 3 o’clock p.m., and the last at ‘early candle light.’ The meetings have been largely attended and great interest manifested. On Sunday last there were over 2000 persons in attendance. The average number of visitors since last Thursday, the opening day, has been about 1200.”

Today, the park is the site of hundreds of family and group picnics. Each Memorial Day, Honor Fountain City day attracts up to a thousand for a simulation of a 1900 4th of July celebration.
A group of investors decided Fountain City should become a “destination place” and formed a corporation in 1885 to build a three-story 40–50 room hotel on the hill above the spring. Imagine the spectacular panoramic view of the Park, grassy valley and the mountains which a guest would see from the balconies and the crow’s nest.

Rates were $2.00 per day and multi-course evening meals were 50 cents. At 6:30 each evening Prof. Guilliano and his Italian Band marched down the steps to present a concert in the park. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1920.
The Fountain City Land Company had thought that establishing a college and bringing numbers of students to the campus would help the business community. They contacted Holbrook College in Lebanon, Ohio, a leading so-called "Normal School" (teacher’s college), which provided the know-how and a nucleus of faculty members. By April 1893, a contract for $41,800 was granted to a local firm, W.H. Dawn and Company, to build three large three-story brick buildings, two wooden dormitories for boys on the west side of the school and the president’s home to the east.

The school opened on September 4, 1893 with an enrollment of 100 students studying in nine departments, including curriculum in teaching, business, art, music and military science.

Holbrook had many distinguished graduates including E.E. Patton (Class of 1900) who became the mayor of Knoxville, and Hassie K. Gresham (Class of 1902) who was the beloved principal of Central High School from 1919 to 1947.

The College thrived for about ten years, but in 1906 attendance waned and the buildings and the campus were purchased by Knox County. It became Central High School until 1931, when a larger building was constructed on the site. Much of that second building was converted to become Gresham Middle School in 1971.
E.F. Sevier, John Sevier’s grandson, came to Fountain Head as a Methodist circuit rider in 1824. A congregation that would become the Fountain City Methodist Church, South was established near the park in 1825.

They built a log cabin church about 1828. Then, in 1845, the congregation built a white frame church.

In 1851 the church purchased the 12-acre wooded grove (now known as Fountain City Park). Facing the park, this unique rounded sanctuary with its impressive chime tower was built in 1891 and was used until 1957.

The present sanctuary was built in 1957 and the education building, office complex and Christian Life Center were added later.
This unique oval door in the center of the block was the entrance to Dr. Fred Tallent’s Drug Store.

This was a favorite place for the teen-agers to stop for a fountain coke (10 cents), an ice cream soda (15 cents) or a sundae (25 cents) after school.

It was particularly popular in the 1940s and 1950s with Central High School students. Central High occupied “The Hill” until 1971 when the building was remodeled and expanded to house Gresham Middle School.

Doc Tallent was of the “old school,” as he rewarded each customer with a candy bar or a package of gum when he filled an Rx. or made a purchase.
When Fountain City was annexed in 1962, Dossie Cooper called her friend Knoxville Mayor John Duncan, and said, “John, you’ve taken my job away from me.”

“Never mind, Mrs. Cooper, I’ll give it back to you,” Mayor Duncan said. So, she resumed supervision of the street cleaning crew.

She was considered Fountain City’s unofficial “mayor” before annexation. She supervised the street cleaning crews and the teen-agers who tended to gather at the Station after school.

Her husband, William E. Cooper, passed away in 1930 and Miss Dossie presided over the activity on “her” corner for another 38 years. Her apartment was on the second floor and the balcony (with ferns hanging half way down to the street) was her platform. Early in the century, she and her husband ran a confectionery at the SW corner of Hotel and Broadway. They also managed a carousel on Church Street, which bordered the lake (circa 1910).
The northern terminal for the FHRW was at Hotel Avenue and Broadway, an area known as “The Station” even to today. The building also served as the entrance to the Park and housed the offices of the Fountain Head Improvement Co., a real estate firm.

The first track for the 5.25 mile rail line was laid early in 1890, and the line opened for business by May 17th that year in a record time of only five months. Up to 10,000 fares a day were collected from those commuting to work at the businesses, railroads and textile factories downtown and in near north Knoxville.

At first, inexperienced crews, balky early-stage locomotives and a “green” track that was still quite bumpy resulted in frequent breakdowns about halfway to the final terminus at Fountain Head. A group of downtown entertainers, the Singleton Quartet, composed a ditty that became quite popular:

“Some folks say that the dummy won’t run/But I done seen what the dummy’s done/It left Fountain City at half past one/And it got into Knoxville at settin’ of sun.”

The Dummy Line ran until 1905 when it was replaced by a trolley and later by streetcars.
The years 1890 and 1891 were busy ones in Fountain City. Probably no other years in its history saw as many changes and new developments. The Knoxville and Fountain Head Land Company was responsible for much of the change.

Perhaps the most visible new feature was the spectacular Fountain City Lake. Felix G. Phillips, a prominent civil engineer, was hired to design a romantic heart-shaped lake with a walkway on its perimeter. White picket fences highlighted its innovative shape.

A wide walkway connected the Park and the Lake, and the Cooper’s carousel was located alongside that walk.

The Fountain City Lions Club spearheaded a fundraising to completely refurbish the lake in 1985–86. Both the State and Federal Government contributed funds for the grand undertaking.
Col. J.C. Woodward (1841-1913) earned the lion's share of the credit for making Fountain City the destination place it became early in the 1890s. He sold his mansion and subdivision (Woodward Heights) in Lexington, Kentucky and bought 431 acres, which included the area from the new Kroger Store to Fountain City Park for $159,600.

Woodward then bought an additional 14-acres and the Fountain Head Hotel for $27,500. He almost immediately hired Baumann and Baumann Architects and William H. Dawn, contractor, and began his mansion, Park Place. It cost $20,000 and was hailed as "one of the finest and most complete residencies in the country."

One local historian described it as follows, "... great stone arches and columns decorated with remarkably delicate carvings ... make the structure a notable example of 19th Century craftsmanship."

The house was demolished in 1980 to make way for Target™.
Soon after he built his own mansion, Col. Woodward built Lakeview for his son, Hu Woodward. The father and son owned Knoxville Business College downtown in addition to their real estate and hotel investments in Fountain City.

One of the school’s professors, James W. Baker, decided he could write a better bookkeeping text than the one the college was using. He wrote the book, 20th Century Bookkeeping and Office Practices, and soon received numerous requests for it. With that encouragement, he launched his own publishing house.

Partnering with J.C. and Hu Woodward, Baker set his plan in motion. On February 6, 1903, South-Western Publishing Company was officially born. The South-Western Publishing Company grew to reach sales of $50,000 by 1910. That same year the partners moved the business to a downtown location in Cincinnati, Ohio where it continued to grow.

In 1986 South-Western was purchased by The Thomson Corporation, a Canadian-based publishing giant and digital information provider. The company continues to be a major player in the field of book publishing.
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Walking Tour Map

1. Methodist Campground and Fountain City Park
2. Fountain Head Hotel
3. Holbrook Normal College and Central High School
4. Fountain City United Methodist Church
5. Tallent’s Drug Store
6. Dossie Miller Cooper
7. Fountain Head Railway (The Dummy Line) and Station
8. Fountain City Lake
9. Park Place (The Woodward/Williams Mansion)
10. Lake View (The Gentry-Griffey Chapel)