

Who is the “Texan” who developed Texas Lane?

Texas Lane was laid out in the Town of Ithaca (later incorporated into the Village of Cayuga Heights) by developer Otto B. Schoenfeld Jr. (1906-1984). Louisiana-born Schoenfeld earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from Cornell in 1933.

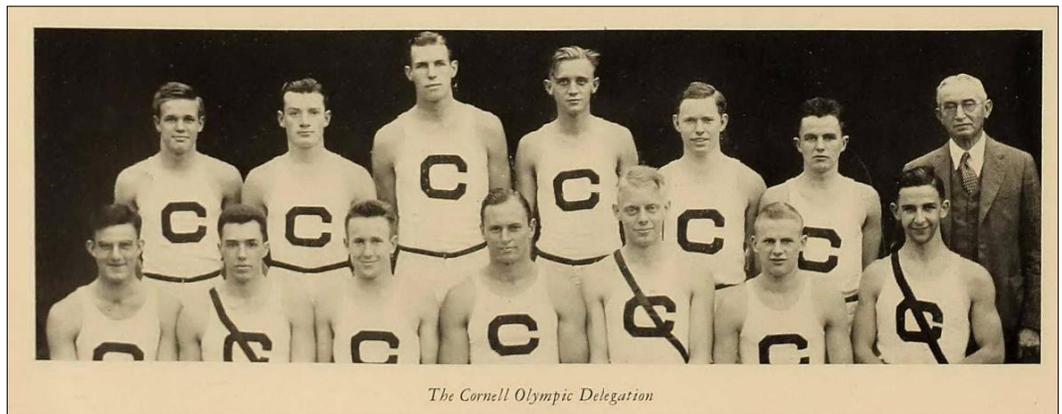
While at Cornell, “Ott,” the son of Olympic fencer and high-jumper Otto Schoenfeld Sr., tried out for the 1928 Summer Olympics, although he failed to qualify. He was also a member of the Cornell Olympic delegation at the 1932 Summer Games in Los Angeles. An all-around athlete, Schoenfeld set records at Cornell in shot put and discus and was the captain of the varsity track team. The end-of-season wrap-up in the 1932 *Cornellian* yearbook ranked Schoenfeld as “the mainstay and high point man of the team.”



Otto Bruno Schoenfeld,
Cornellian, 1932

Leaving Ithaca and Ivy League track competitions behind, Schoenfeld started a company in Texas to manufacture and sell pumps for the ranching industry. This venture led him to co-found Gulf Chemical Company in Houston, Texas. Schoenfeld served as vice president and general manager of the company.ⁱ

Like many Cornell graduates, Schoenfeld maintained ties to Ithaca and his alma mater. He kept in contact with track teammate Robert Kane, who was

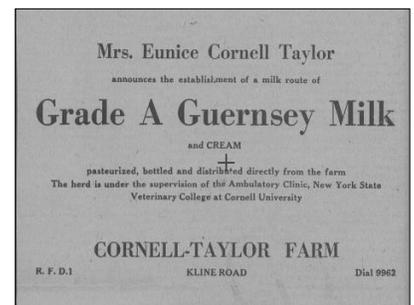


Cornell’s Athletic Director from 1944 to 1976. Kane reportedly drove Schoenfeld around Ithaca and showed his friend properties that were available for purchase.ⁱⁱ Schoenfeld bought the Eunice Cornell Taylor farm in 1948, and his family spent the summer in Ithaca.



The entrance to Texas Lane at the corner of North Triphammer Road

Soon after, the developer laid out Texas Lane on the southern portion of the Cornell-Taylor farm and named it after his adopted home state. The homes on this street were built between 1950 and 1963. Texas Lane in the 1950s may indeed have felt a bit like rural Texas: a barbed wire fence separated the backyards of some of the homes from the adjoining farm, and cows came up to the fence to greet their new neighbors.ⁱⁱⁱ A pond and swamp and their attendant wildlife provided excellent



Ad from *Cornell Daily Sun*, Volume 54, Number 8, 3 October 1933

entertainment for neighborhood kids, who often came home after a day of outside play covered in mud up to their knees.



On Texas Lane, Schoenfeld laid out the street and individual lots and arranged for utility service hookups. Builders constructed the spacious ranch-style and split-level homes that were popular designs in the 1950s. Contractor Ben Boynton Sr. (1923-2014) was a local franchisee for Techbuilt Homes, a company

started by architect Carl Koch (known as “the grandfather of prefab”). Koch had studied with Walter Gropius at Harvard and was influenced by the clean lines of Scandinavian design. The Techbuilt frame, built in panels at a factory, was transported to a site and could be assembled by a crew in two days. Homeowners then finished the interior and exterior. Several of these modern, economical kit homes were built on Texas Lane.

In the 1960s, Schoenfeld was co-developer of the Williamsburg Park neighborhood north of Texas Lane. The homes in the Schoenfeld developments expanded the housing choices and made living in the Heights affordable for young families. The new homes on Texas Lane were part of the Village’s rapid postwar growth. In 1954, the borders of Cayuga Heights were extended, quadrupling the physical size of the Village. Between 1950 and 1965, the population grew by 50%. This Texas-proportioned growth spurt brought new challenges to community services and infrastructure in the second part of the 20th century—and debates over the pace and sites of Village residential expansion.

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Ad from *Cornell Alumni News*,
Volume 64, No. 6,
January 1962.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ George A. Butler and Anne G. Butler v. Commissioner. John M. Sheesly and Jean Sheesly v. Commissioner. Otto B. Schoenfeld and Hazel Schoenfeld v. Commissioner. United States Tax Court. Files July 31, 1958.

http://leagle.com/decision/195876917fbtcm752_1612/BUTLER%20v.%20COMMISSIONER

ⁱⁱ Phone conversation with original homeowner on Texas Lane

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