

City of McKinney  
Historic Building Marker Application  
(Supporting Documentation)

**The Ditto-Dowell House**  
313 North Benge Street



## **A. Alterations & Construction**

### **Construction**

The Ditto-Dowell House, constructed in 1913, is a two-story, wood-frame residential structure built on a pier-and-beam foundation. The house combines gabled and hipped roof structures with a hipped roof rising above an intersecting cross-gable. The east-facing house has a porch wrapping its southeast corner. The house is fenestrated with one-over-one single-hung windows often grouped in threes. The floor plan is asymmetrical with rooms connecting to a central axis. The home's design follows the Prairie Style while displaying many of the underpinnings of a traditional Foursquare Style house. The centrally located hipped dormer and symmetry of the front facade are typical of

the Foursquare Style but the broad horizontal expression of the house and the soffited eaves demonstrates the Prairie influence. The house design possesses other stylistic influences as well. A low-pitched gabled portico suggests a Neo-Classical influence but the square, paired columns supporting it exhibit the solid, grounded aesthetic of the more modern Prairie Style. Also, early photos of the house show Victorian Style finials accenting the apexes of the gables and hipped dormer. These are no longer present.

Other building elements include a hardwood floor used for the first floor and heartwood pine used for the second floor. Molding and door trim is made of stained pecan. The stair railing and banister are also pecan. The house has three chimneys. One provides a fully-functional wood-burning fireplace in the living room. Another allows for a fireplace in the study. A third chimney, used for cooking in the kitchen, is no longer serviceable. Below the kitchen is a basement that once housed the home's original coal burning furnace.

### **Alterations**

The Ditto-Dowell House was originally constructed as a twelve-room house built to replace a fifty-four-year old home that previously occupied the site. The house was first updated in the late 1960s with the remodeling of the kitchen and baths and the laying of carpet throughout the house. Later renovations were not made until the 1990s. The most obvious external alteration made in recent times is the enclosure of the second floor sleeping porch. Other alterations include remodeling at the rear of the house that was partially performed to restore a deteriorated portion of house structure. A second floor was added above this remodeled area.

Interior alterations have been made to kitchen and baths. Yet, the original trim, built-in elements and many of the original fixtures have been preserved. The HVAC system has been modernized but the original iron floor-grates belonging to the coal burning system still remain.

### **Anticipated Needs**

The current owner has no plans to expand or otherwise remodel the house but should repairs or additions be needed, they are committed to preserving the historic nature of the house.

## **B. Historical Figures**

### **Gerard Alexander Foote (1823-1902)**

Gerard A. Foote was one of McKinney's early pioneer settlers. He was a physician and drug store merchant who helped establish Collin County Bank in 1881. In his 1902 obituary the *McKinney Democrat* wrote, "He was looked upon almost as the father of McKinney."

Gerard Foote was born in Virginia to parents William A. Foote and Jane E. Washington in 1823. When Gerard was nine years old, the family moved to Mississippi. Both parents could boast an impressive family lineage. The Foote family claimed the U.S. Senator from Mississippi Henry S. Foote (1804-1952) among its members. Meanwhile, not to be out done, Gerard's mother Jane Washington, had as her great-great-great grandfather Col. John W. Washington who also happened to be the great grandfather of George Washington (1732-1799), the nation's first president.

In 1845 at the age of 22, Gerard emigrated from Mississippi to Collin County. His obituary states that he began his "study of medicine" in 1836 at the age of 16 and that he later attended the Memphis Medical College, graduating in 1856. He practiced medicine in McKinney for twenty years. During the Civil War he was a surgeon in the Confederate Army, a member of Col. William Young's Eleventh Texas Cavalry. After the war, Gerard owned a drug store in McKinney with Henry C. Herndon until 1880.

Gerard was politically active. He was twice elected to the Texas legislature, once in 1865, then again in 1874. As a legislator in Austin, he is likely to have become friends with Sam Houston. According to historian Roy Hall, Gerard hosted Sam Houston's visit to McKinney during his 1859 gubernatorial campaign. Gerard was also known to be hunting buddies with fellow McKinney politician James Throckmorton.

The Census of 1860, indicates that Gerard's real estate holdings total \$35,000 while his personal estate totaled \$25,000, making him one of the richest men in McKinney. His wealth and political connections allowed him to be one of the founders of the Collin County National Bank. It organized as a bank in 1881 but did not nationalize until 1883. The bank first operated on Louisiana Street just east of the Square but in 1891 moved into a Richardsonian Romanesque building that once stood on the southwest corner of the intersection at Tennessee and Louisiana Street. Some of the founders associated with this bank include: I.D. Newsome, W.L. Boyd, Z.E. Ranney, W.A. Rhea, J.A. Aston, H.M. Markham, J.W. Throckmorton, and T.B. Wilson. Gerard served as President of the bank for 20 years.

In 1847, Gerard married Eliza Jane McGarrah, daughter of pioneer merchant John McGarrah and wife Mary P. Graham. Historian Roy Hall asserts that in 1859 Gerard and Eliza built a home on their property on what is now North Benge Street just west of the now existing First Methodist Church. According to Mr. Hall, the house was a two-story stone structure which was, at the time, the largest building in McKinney. However, the earliest Sanborn Insurance maps show the home as a two-story, wood-frame structure. Curiously, the deed recorded at the County Clerks Office immediately following the record of Gerard's purchase of Block #71 on which he build his house is one granting Gerard Foote title (J/574) to a runaway slave known as James that he purchased at auction at the Collin County Courthouse for \$1,025. Though the original home of Gerard and Eliza no longer exists, other structures do. The Foote barn still stands and continues to functions as such and his wrought iron fence set in cut limestone still surrounds a large portion of the property. An iron gate bears a name plate that reads, "G.A. Foote."

Gerard's wife of 40 years, died in 1889. The couple had six children, Lawrence, Ellen, Henry, Edwin, Ludwell, and Mary. Nine years later, when Gerard was 76 years old, he married 33-year-old Corinne Lee of Clarksville, Texas. The four-year marriage ended when Gerard died in 1902, leaving behind an estate valued at approximately \$200,000, consisting of money, bank stock, and 2,000 acres of land. His net worth was greater than that of the Collin County National Bank at the time. Gerard's will provided that his young bride Corinne would received \$25,000 in money and stock. The balance of his estate would be divided into five equal shares to be distributed to his sole surviving son Henry and to the four families of his deceased children.

Gerard's passing was a widely attended event. The *McKinney Democrat* wrote, "A great throng of friends and acquaintances assembled at the residence Thursday afternoon to attend the funeral of Dr. G.A. Foote." The Episcopal Bishop of Dallas, Alexander C. Garrett along with Rev. J.O. Miller of McKinney performed a solemn and impressive service. Gerard was a devoted member of McKinney's St. Peter's Episcopal Church, having donated the land in 1892 (more in 1897) on which the church is currently sited at the corner of Lamar and College Streets.

Following the service, a long procession of vehicles and people made their way to the Pecan Grove Cemetery where the Masons of the St. John's Lodge took charge of the graveside service. Gerard had been a Mason for over a half century, being one of its founders. The *McKinney Democrat* finished its obituary of Dr. Gerard Foote with these words:

*The grave was closed over his body, and his familiar form will be seen no more among the walks of men, but the memory of him will live through time to come.*

Gerard helped these words come true with the \$2,500 his will set aside for the erection of a monument, the costliest monument in the county at the time. The 18-foot memorial is made of Texas gray granite and embellished with emblems relating to the fraternal orders of which he was a member. To this day, his monument stands as one of the most impressive in the cemetery. His first wife Eliza is buried next to him. Corinne remarried in 1904 and moved to Clarksville, Texas where she is now buried.

### **William Ernest Ditto (1864-1929)**

William Ernest Ditto was a successful McKinney grocer for over a dozen years before turning his business interests to real estate in 1909.

Ernest Ditto, as he was known as, was born in Kentucky in 1864 to farmer Lewis C. Ditto and Sarah E. Hall. Ernest moved to McKinney while in his early 20s. In 1889, he married Lula Wiley, daughter of Dr. W.T. Wiley and Susan E. Henderson of McKinney.

Ernest began his business career in the grocery business with fellow Kentucky native Henry Lewis. The two ended their business partnership in 1896 with Henry becoming a cotton trader while Ernest remained in the grocery business with a store on the east side of the McKinney Square next to the Smith Drug Store. Within a month of taking on sole proprietorship of the business a fire broke out on the east side of the Square and consumed his inventory. Undeterred by the setback, Ernest quickly set up a temporary shop on East Louisiana just east of J.P. Dowell Hardware until repairs could be made to the burned building.

Ernest Ditto operated his grocery store on the east side of the Square until 1909. During his years in business, he experienced ravaging fires in the years 1896, 1904 and 1906. Despite these setbacks, he was able to thrive in a highly competitive market. In 1902 there were 17 grocers serving a city with a population of about 4,500 people.

Luckily for Ernest Ditto, he had other sources of income. While running the grocery business Ernest was also active in the mule trade under the name Hight & Ditto. Ernest's partner in the mule business was Arkansas native Robert L. Hight. In 1901, the firm sold 75 mules to the British government most likely for use in Britain's Boer War. It was also common for grocers to be engaged in farming and Ernest was no exception. In

1895, Ernest began purchasing farm acreage and a few sizable city lots. He purchase one such lot of roughly four acres from physician Gerard A. Foote in 1904. This lot was bounded between North Benge and College Streets with frontage on the south edge of West Lamar Street. By 1909, when Ernest retired from the grocery business his land holdings were large enough to launch his career in real estate. He set up his new office with his mule-trading partner in the Heard Building. The firm was involved in buying, selling and development of land. Today, two subdivisions established by the firm near the intersection of East Virginia Street and Lively Hill bear the firm's name.

In 1913, once again a tragic fire played a role in the life of Ernest Ditto. That year Ernest and his wife Lula and two younger children, Elizabeth (12) and Carlisle (16) moved from their 50-four-year-old house that they purchased from Dr. Foote to a house on Lamar Street in order to have a new two-story, 12-room house erected in its place. While living in their temporary quarters, a fire broke out one December afternoon while Ernest and the children were away. When daughter Gladys was returning from visit with a friend, she saw smoke coming from the kitchen. Assuming the house was unoccupied, Gladys ran into the house to call the fire department and dashed out. The firemen were soon on the scene and extinguished the blaze in only a few minutes. Later, when the firemen began investigating the fire, they discovered Lula's burned body on the floor where the fire had begun. It was supposed that while she was cleaning the pantry in preparation for the move into their new home, her clothing caught fire causing her to faint and to be consumed by the flames. Soon after Lula's death the two children and Ernest moved into the newly constructed North Benge Street house that exists today.

For the next few years, while Ernest pursued real estate, his son Carlisle developed into a talented scholastic debater who later attended the University of Texas at Austin after graduating from Boyd High School<sup>1</sup> in 1915. Elizabeth also excelled academically at the same school and was well-known for her "expression" ability, a course of study that combined elocution with public speaking. Her "expression" teacher in her senior year in 1918 was Mamie Dowell, daughter of pioneer farmer Jonathan S. Dowell. Upon graduation Elizabeth attended Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

Elizabeth's departure to college left Ernest as the sole resident of the North Benge Street home, but only for a short while. In October of 1919, at the age of 55, Ernest

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<sup>1</sup> From 1909 until the end of 1914 the McKinney High School was located in the Jones Academy building on West Lamar Street, the site of an apartment complex today. Its last graduating class was in May of 1914. In the fall of 1914, a new high school was being built on the site that Caldwell Elementary now occupies. This school was officially named Boyd High School in honor of Mrs. Mary E. Boyd who donated money to finish its construction when the funds of the original \$50,000 bond allocation were depleted. Though the name of the school had been changed, the school was often called McKinney High School.

married his daughter's former expression teacher, the 43-year-old Mamie Dowell. Owing to the poor health of the bride's mother, the couple were married in the bride's home on Parker Street with only close family members present. First Presbyterian pastor Rev. E. B. Fincher performed the service amid a robustly decorated parlor of ivy and chrysanthemums. After the wedding, Ernest and Mamie made the house on North Benge Street their home.

In the years that followed, Ernest continued in real estate and farming while Mamie focused much of her time on Owl Club activities. The couple often hosted social gatherings and Baptist church meetings in their home. In August of 1923, the Dittos took off on a month-long road trip that took them through Colorado, Utah and California.

In 1926, Ernest turned his business focus from real estate to making loans to local farmers. The 1916 Federal Farm Loan Act established 12 regional loan banks in the U.S. that made it easier for farmers to obtain credit. Ernest became a representative of the Federal Farm Loan Bank in Houston and began offering loans at an attractive 5% rate out of his new second floor office on the North side of the Square (above where Layered is currently located).

At the end of 1928, Ernest's health began a decline that forced him to retire from his business affairs. In August of 1929, Ernest Ditto died of heart failure at the age of 65. Dr. M.E. Hudson of the First Baptist Church performed the funeral service at the Ditto home accompanied by a choir. He was interred at the Pecan Grove Cemetery following a brief graveside service conducted by funeral director Sam J. Massie. He was laid to rest next to his first wife Lula. Years later when his second wife Mamie died, she was interred in the J.S. Dowell family plot.

### **Marie Blanche "Mamie" Dowell (1876-1974)**

Mamie Dowell taught elocution in the McKinney public schools in the first decade of the 20th Century and served three separate terms as president of the Owl Club, the oldest, continually-operating literary-service organization in McKinney.

Born in McKinney in 1876, Mamie Dowell was one of ten children born to Civil War Captain Jonathan S. Dowell and Elizabeth Williams. Jonathan S. Dowell arrived in McKinney from Tennessee in 1856 with his aunt, uncle and three cousins, James, Willis and Francis. The Dowell clan was large and influential in the social and economic affairs of McKinney. In the 1880s, when the population was around 1,500, there were at least three dozen Dowells living in McKinney. That's about 2.5% of the town's popu-

lation. One of the best known Dowells is James Patterson Dowell who started the hardware store on East Louisiana Street. He is also well-known by the obelisk erected in his honor in the Pecan Grove Cemetery which depicts his likeness in bas-relief. Mamie's father Jonathan served as a Captain in the Confederate Army and was wounded in the chest by a bullet during the Battle of Gettysburg. He was captured and held in a Northern prison until the end of the war. Upon Jonathan's release and return to McKinney, he engaged in farming and livestock trade. In 1872, he married Elizabeth Williams of Dallas and set up home at 608 Parker Street in McKinney.

During her early education, Mamie focused her attention on the arts. In 1894 she graduated from the McKinney Collegiate Institute, a private preparatory school once located on West Lamar Street. Three years later, she graduated from Mary Hardin Baylor College in Belton, Texas. Soon after graduation, she accepted a teaching position in Greenville, Texas but returned to McKinney a couple of years later. Beginning around 1900, she sought out additional educational opportunities in Boston and Chicago in between her intermittent teaching duties at the private Jones Academy and the McKinney public schools.

In 1901, when Mamie was 25 years old, she joined the McKinney Owl Club, a literary organization established in 1893 by Mesdames Church, Garnett, Finch, Wiley, Erwin and Plemmons. Early on, the Club provided books for rural schools and supported city beautification. Given the group's emphasis on art, culture and education (especially women's education) Mamie became one of its most dedicated members. She was among a small number of unmarried women who were allowed to join and quickly began participating as a club officer. In 1915, she was elected as the Club's President. She was the first and only unmarried woman to hold the position until Miss Earlene Herron became president in 1987. In the years following her marriage, Mamie served two more, two-year terms (1932-1933 and 1942-1943) as the Club's head. The last time she served as President she oversaw the preparations and celebrations of the Club's fiftieth anniversary. The Owl Club continues its mission to serve and educate to this day making it the longest existing women's service organization in McKinney.

In November of 1919, Mamie married Ernest Ditto, who happened to be the father of one of Mamie's recently graduated students, Elizabeth Ditto. At the time of the wedding Mamie was 43 years old, 12 years younger than Ernest. The wedding ceremony and reception was held at her parent's Parker Street home. It was a small affair owing to the ill-health of Mamie's mother. Though the gathering was small, the house was spectacularly decorated with ivy and chrysanthemums. The event was witnessed by socialite



reporter Ruth Finch who wrote glowingly about her friend Mamie in an article appearing in a November issue of the *Weekly Democrat-Gazette*. Though Miss Finch admits her bias, her writing provides a glimpse into Mamie's personality. She wrote:

*The writer wishes she could reveal with her pen the many wonderful attributes of the bride but to say that she is a loyal friend, culinary artist, splendid conversationalist, capable in home and outside duties, possessing both a pleasing and magnetic personality is only a small revelation of her capabilities and intrinsic charms. The bride is always a treasure any where and the groom is to be congratulated in choosing such a talented bride.*

In contrast to the edifying prose used to describe Mamie, Miss Finch writes of Ernest in a more matter-of-fact way, "The groom is one of our most useful citizens and is considered one of our most efficient real estate men." Following the wedding, Mamie and Ernest made their home together at 313 North Benge Street.

After her marriage, Mamie retired from teaching and focused on Owl Club activities and the Alathean class of the First Baptist Church of which she was a member. The Alathean class was a combination Bible study and social organization. For the next decade, Mamie frequently hosted these groups and other social activities in her North Benge Street home. Mamie insisted that the Owl Club have its October meeting every year, regardless of the outside temperature, in her living room in front of her blazing fireplace. Given the varied seasonal temperatures, members learned to dress accordingly.

Ernest's health began to fail months prior to his death in 1929. According to the book *One Hundred Years of the Owl Club*, Earnest asked that Mamie not sell the house after he was gone, a request she made good on. Mamie continued to live in the house hosting her civic and cultural groups. For many years, she was the home's sole resident but in 1967 she invited her unmarried sister Ruth to leave the family home on Parker Street and live with her. The two lived together until the early 1970s when Mamie was moved to an assisted living facility north of town on Highway 5 called The Pavilion . Mamie died in 1974 at the age of 98. Ruth Dowell continued to live in the house until her death in 1991. Both Ruth and Mamie are interred in the J.S. Dowell family plot at the Pecan Grove Cemetery.

### **Arthur Whitney Dowlen (1865-1947)**

Arthur Dowlen was a successful builder in McKinney during the first two decades of the 20th Century. His portfolio of work includes at least two brick buildings near the McKinney Square and dozens of residences. Despite the similar spelling of his

surname, he is not a member of the Dowell family. However, his life and roll in the construction of the house at 313 North Benge Street is worth recognizing.

Arthur Dowlen was born in Cheatham, Tennessee on April 9, 1865, the same day General Lee surrendered to General Grant at the Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia. Arthur was one of ten children born into the farming family of parents Harris Dowlen and Sarah Mathis. He was educated in Springfield, Tennessee and afterwards taught school in four different counties in the state.

In 1891, Arthur married Ida Carney also of Cheatham. The couple lived in Tennessee for two more years before moving to McKinney to be near Arthur's four older siblings, three brothers and one sister who had moved to the area years earlier.

One of his brothers was Prince A. Dowlen, an educator, who arrived in Collin County in 1881 and owned land between McKinney and Farmersville. The area was know as Wilson's Switch because of the railroad that passed over land owned by T.B. Wilson. However, when the area residents tried to use the name to get a post office, it was rejected because the name had already been taken by another Texas town. The post office, and eventually the town, chose the name Princeton in honor of Prince Dowlen. In later years, Prince Dowlen became a judge in Beaumont, Texas.

The other siblings, Finis, Gideon and Carrie arrived in Collin County around 1872. Carrie was married to educator Issac A. Looney when she arrived. Mr. Looney established a private school in McKinney an ran it for a number of years before moving to Farmersville in 1885 to teach there. The brothers Finis and Gideon followed the building trades. Finis became a lumber dealer in Hillsboro, Texas while Gideon, the oldest of the brothers, worked as a carpenter in McKinney.

Arthur Dowlen had worked several years as a teacher back in Tennessee before moving to Texas in 1893 at that age of 28 with his wife Ida. He continued that trade for another seven years. However, around 1900 Arthur's work interest shifted to carpentry, apparently influenced by his brother Gideon. One of his first major contracts came to him in 1904. He was to build an eight-room, two-story parsonage for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church which was at the time located on the southwest corner of the intersection at Church and Davis Streets. Around that same time he and his wife purchased and built a house on College Street.

Arthur's influence in construction and civic affairs expanded over the next few years. By

1915, he owned the McKinney Manufacturing Company which made building components such as doors, moldings, windows as well as desks and cedar chests. He was also the Worshipful Master (president) of the St. John's Lodge of Masons, a title that he held for years. His business success and leadership abilities led some McKinney residents to urge Arthur to run for the Office of Mayor. In March of 1915, he announced his candidacy to run against the popular incumbent Henry A. Finch. Perhaps realizing his unlikely prospects for success, Arthur decided to withdraw his name from the ballot. As it turned out, Mr. Finch ran unopposed and naturally won the April election.

Arthur Dowlen was a prolific builder in McKinney between 1905 and 1915. He built at a time when interest was waning in the Victorian Style as the Prairie and Craftsman Styles were becoming popular. He is responsible for erecting some McKinney's most expressive homes for the period, including the 12-room, two-story house on North Bengue he built for real-estate-man William E. Ditto during the summer of 1913. Mr. Dowlen is not likely to have designed these homes but his skill at building them allowed him to compete in the homebuilding market of Dallas. His success lead him to move there in 1920.

The Dowlen family consisting of Arthur, wife Ida, daughter Onyx and son Carney moved into a house in the Lower Greenville area of Dallas on Victor Street. In Dallas, Arthur continued to work as a building contractor. Ida kept house. Onyx worked in the Dallas County Clerks Office. Carney began a career in banking which lead him to become the President of Highland Park State Bank.

In 1942, at the age of 42, Carney resigned his position at the bank to join the Army as the United States' participation in World War II was expanding. However, on a training mission in November of 1942, a plane he was on crashed into the St. Lawrence River near his base in Maine. Of the nine people on board, Carney was among the five who lost their lives. In 2009, the co-mingled remains of the five fallen crew members were discovered and in 2015 interred at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Three years before Carney's death, Arthur's wife Ida died of a heart attack in 1939. In the years that followed, Arthur continued to live in Dallas with his daughter Onyx. Arthur died in 1947. Both Arthur and Ida are buried at the Dallas Restland Cemetery. Onyx never married and lived in the family home in Dallas until her death in 1972. She is also interred at Restland Cemetery.

## C. Property Ownership

**Address:** 313 North Benge Street, McKinney, Texas 75069

**Legal Description:** McKinney Original Donation, BLK 71, Lot 2 & ol 618

Purchase Date	Seller	Buyer	Book/Page
Sep. 23, 1841	Republic of Texas	William Davis	
Mar. 24, 1849	William Davis	Town of McKinney	B / 279
Sep. 6, 1850 <sup>1</sup>	State of Texas	William Davis	J / 459
Mar. 1, 1852	Collin County Court	George White	F / 85
Nov. 28, 1856	George White	G.A. Foote	J / 573
Apr. 15, 1898	G.A. Foote	Corinne Foote	83 / 104
Dec. 6, 1904	N.A. & Corinne Shaw	W.E. Ditto	130 / 72
Feb. ??, 1906	W.E. & Lula Ditto <sup>2</sup>	Dr. W.T. Hoard	139 / 25
Feb. 20, 1906	W.E. & Lula Ditto <sup>2</sup>	Matthew Metz	145 / 107
Feb. 21, 1914	W.E. & Lula Ditto <sup>2</sup>	H.A. Abernathy	204 / 315
Sep. 1, 1974	Mamie (Dowell) Ditto <sup>3</sup>	Ruth Dowell	
Apr. 25, 1989	Ruth Dowell	Nina Dowell Ringley	3042/266

<sup>1</sup> This is the date the State of Texas issued a patent reaffirming William Davis' ownership.

<sup>2</sup> Indicates the sale of portions of W.E. Ditto's original purchase.

<sup>3</sup> Ruth Dowell inherited the house from her sister Mamie Ditto.

## D. Tenant History

Tenant history is the same as owner history.

## **E. Narrative History of 313 North Benge Street**

In 1841, the Republic of Texas granted William Davis 3,129 acres of land in return for his participation in the new nation's battle for independence. This two square-mile tract of land was situated on East Fork of the Trinity river in what was then Fannin County. After the Republic of Texas became the 28th state to enter the United States of America in 1845, it subdivided several counties into smaller units. Collin County was such a county, carved out of Fannin County.

In 1850, Peter H. Bell, the third Governor of Texas, signed a Letter of Patent re-affirming the Republic's grant of land to William Davis. This grant was recorded and signed by Governor E.M. Pease in 1856. Even before this grant was recorded by the new State of Texas officials, William Davis and his wife at the time, Margaret, "donated" 120 acres of this tract to the Collin County Commissioners to create the new County Seat in the City of McKinney in 1849. At the time of his donation, Mr. Davis considered this acreage to be some of his least valuable land because of the heavy brush that covered it. Still, as consideration for granting this property, he was deeded three lots within the new town site, which he sold as quickly as he could. This 120 acres became known as the McKinney Original Donation and was divided into 87 blocks. The blocks were subdivided into smaller lots and sold to finance the City of McKinney. As a side note, shortly after donating the land to be a new city, William abandoned his wife and child in McKinney and headed to California to search for gold. Land records indicating that William and Margaret were married for only a few years following the donation. By early 1859, William was married to a woman named Sallie (a.k.a. Sarah).

After the Original Donation's 87 blocks were further divided into lots, it was the job of the County Commissioner to sell these lots to buyers. In March of 1852, Judge J.B. Wilmeth acting on behalf of Collin County sold the entirety of Block #71 along with some contiguous lots to surveyor George White for \$250. Four years later in 1856, Mr. White sold Block #71 to physician Gerard A. Foote for \$300.

A newspaper article appearing in the April 21, 1952 edition of the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* written by historian Roy F. Hall describes a campaign stop Sam Houston made in McKinney in September of 1859. Sam Houston was running for the office of Governor of Texas and according to the story Mr. Houston gave a speech to the voters of McKinney from the porch of Dr. G.A. Foote's house which was still under construction. A later newspaper story from 1913 mentions the Foote house as being over 50 years old,

giving credence to the possibility Dr. Foote did indeed build a pre-Civil War house on the property. The connection to Sam Houston, though probably true, is harder to verify.

When Dr. Foote purchased Block #71, he was married to Eliza Jane McGarrah who also purchased some contiguous property in her name. When she died in 1889, Dr. Foote inherited Eliza Jane's property. Nine years later in 1898, at the age of 75, Dr. Foote married the 33-year-old Corinne Lee of Clarksville, Texas. Four days after the wedding, Dr. Foote deeded Block #71 and the lots he inherited to his new bride for "one dollar paid in cash and love and affection." With unusual specificity for a warranty deed, the document describes the property as follows:

*To wit all of Block (71) Seventy one as shown on the map on plat of the Town of McKinney, containing residence house, and out houses, smoke house, store house, and servants house, also all household and kitchen furniture, silverware, piano, library and books and any an all things belonging to said household, said Block 71 containing building lot North of residence, also one surry (sic) and double harness for same, also about two (2) acres of land including barn, carriage house, corn house and hog lot.*

What appears to be a gallant gesture of love, later in the document shows that Dr. Foote was merely establishing a life-estate that gave him possession for his life but not ownership. Four years after signing the deed, Dr. Foote died leaving Corinne to do what she wanted to with the property. Corinne remarried in 1904 to wealthy farmer Nicholas A. Shaw in her home town of Clarksville, Texas. That same year Corinne sold the property that Dr. Foote had given her as a wedding present to grocery merchant William Ernest Ditto for \$8,000.

In 1904, Ernest Ditto with his wife Lula and three children moved into the 45 year-old house Gerard Foote had built in 1859. Two years later, Ernest sold lots adjacent to his own house. The lot to the south he sold to Dr. Matthew Mezt for \$1,000. The larger lot to the north he sold to dentist W.T. Hoard for \$2,500. The Ditto family lived in their North Benge Street house for another seven years before having it razed to make way for a new two-story, 12-room house to be built by Arthur W. Dowlen. Some contemporary sources attribute the house construction to Gideon Dowlen. However, a June 1913 article appearing in the *McKinney Democrat-Gazette* indicates that it was his brother Arthur Dowlen who had the contract to build the house.

In order for Mr. Dowlen to construct the new home, the Dittos moved to a house around the corner on West Lamar. Tragically, just days before the new house was to

be completed in December of 1913, the West Lamar house burned killing Lula. Ernest and his two youngest children moved into their new North Benge Street house later that month.

The house design is strongly influenced by the Prairie Style with its low-pitched roof, broad eaves, covered soffits, square columns and grouped windows. A large porch wraps the southeast corner of the house. The asymmetrical floor plan has rooms connecting to a central axis. The living room and parlor each have brick fireplaces and built-in bookcases. These rooms are separated by sliding pocketed doors. The ceilings are accented with exposed wooden beams. The pecan wood trim throughout the house is treated with a dark stain. A second-story sleeping porch, now converted to an interior space, occupied the southeast corner of the house. Below the house is a utility basement. Foundation piers on which the home is secured are said to be sunk 18 feet to bedrock.

In 1914, following his wife's death, Mr. Ditto sold a little over an acre of his property fronting West Lamar Street to real estate abstractor Harvey A. Abernathy, nephew of attorney William M. Abernathy. Quickly, Harvey Abernathy went about dividing the property into three lots which he later sold.

In 1915, Ernest added a detached garage to the property. Even though automobiles first appeared in McKinney as early as 1903, North Benge Street was not a paved road until 1919. In fact, it was one of the last close-in streets to be paved.

At the end of 1919, Ernest's youngest child was off to college. In late October of that year he married Mamie Dowell. The couple occupied the house together until Ernest's death in 1929. Mamie continued living in the house alone until her sister Ruth moved in with her in 1967. At that time, some alterations were made to the house including, a kitchen update, carpeting added and the coal burning furnace in the basement was replaced with a modern HVAC system. It is likely that during the time of these alterations the finials were removed from the roof. Despite the interior plumbing being updated, it is said that Mamie continued to use water she pumped from the still-working well behind the house.

After Mamie died in 1974, Ruth continued living in the house until her death in 1991. Prior to her passing, the ownership of the house was transferred to Ruth and Mamie's great niece Nina Dowell Ringley.

Nina and her husband Lawrence substantially updated the house again in 2000. Though

the alterations were made chiefly to accommodate their family of four, many changes were made to restore the home to its original condition. The most significant change they made was to the rear of the house where some structural damage existed. As a part of the reconstruction, additional space was added to allow for two bathrooms on the second floor. Other alterations included enclosing the second floor sleeping porch and additional updates to the kitchen.

Much of the original architectural character of the house remains intact including, windows, several light fixtures, wood trim, built-in bookcases and seating, sliding pocketed doors, floor grates, ceiling beams and a wood-burning fireplace. Adding to the home's historic authenticity, is the wrought iron fence, the functioning water well, and the working barn from the early days when Dr. G.A. Foote (and probably Sam Houston) walked the property.

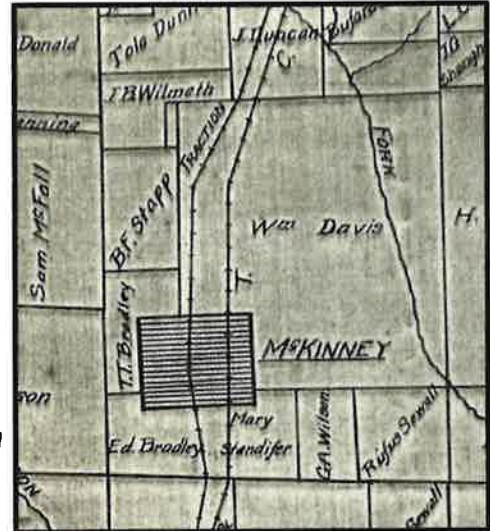


## F. Drawings

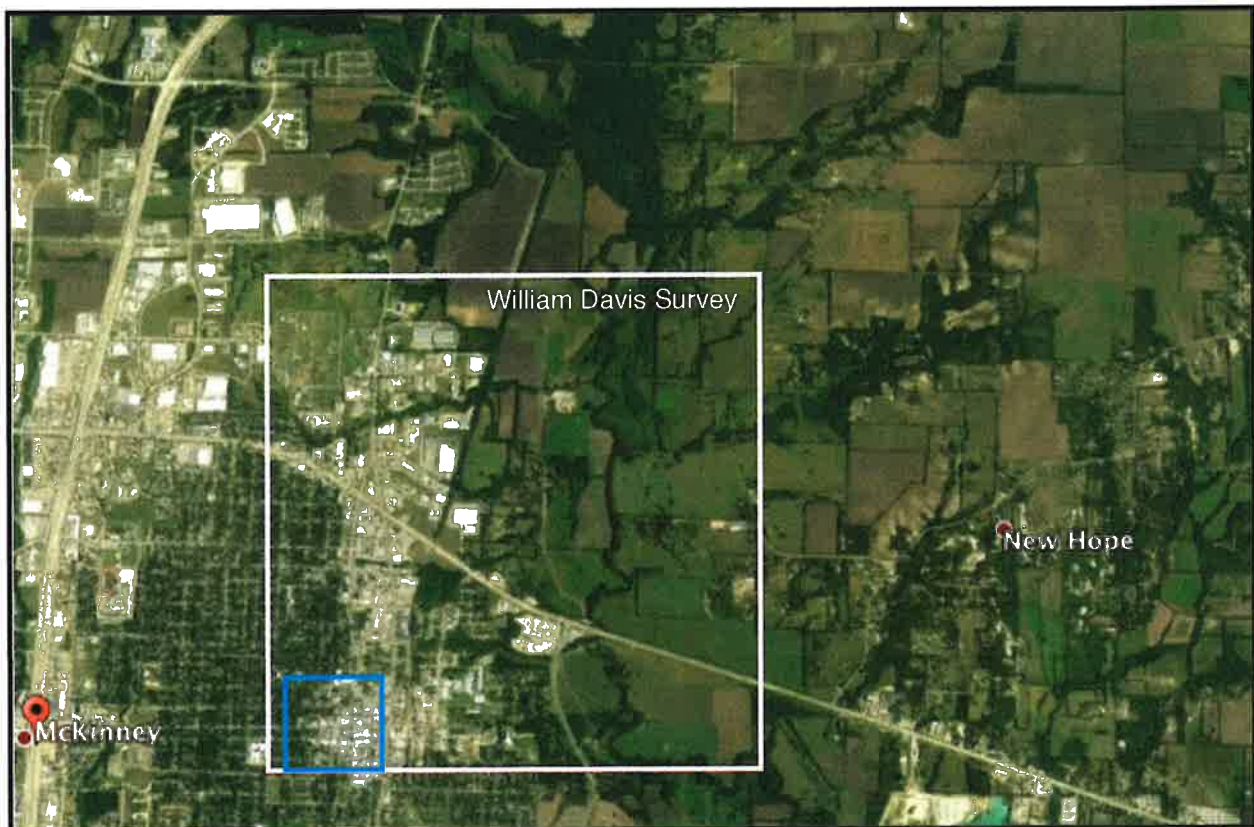
### William Davis Headright

*When Texas became a republic, it granted land to participants in the battle for independence. There were several classes of grants available depending on when a person arrived in Texas and if they were married. Generally, a married man who was in Texas before March 2, 1836 would be eligible for a First Class Headright grant of one league and one labor of land (4,605 acres). A single man could get 1/3 of a league and one labor.*

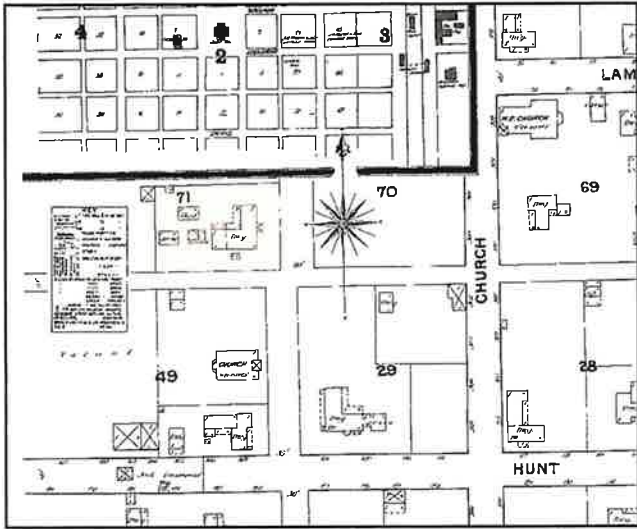
*William Davis was granted 2/3 of a league and a labor of land in 1841. This type of grant did not fit any of the regular headright classes at the time and suggests that William Davis (who was single at the time) was granted an augmentation based on some unique performance associate with his contribution to Texas independence.*



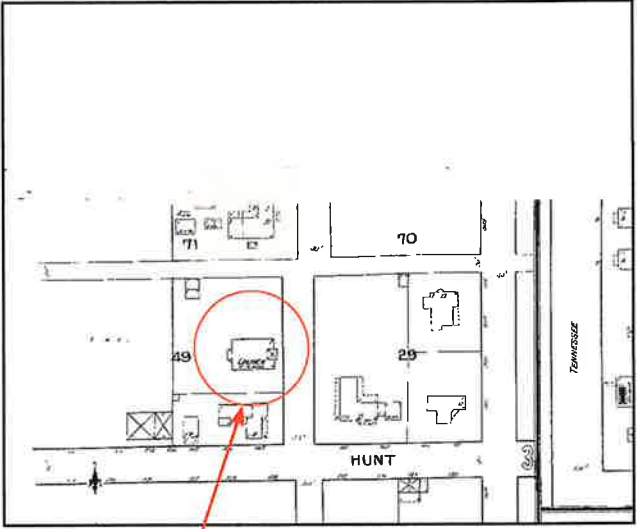
*This grant became known as the Davis Survey and amounted to 3,129 acres which encompassed the site chosen to be the County Seat of Collin County. William Davis donated 120 acres of his land to the County Commissioners to be used to create the town of McKinney. The legal description of properties which were a part of this donation include the words "McKinney Original Donation." The photo below shows the Davis Survey and the McKinney Original Donation (outlined in blue) overlaid on a map of McKinney's downtown area.*



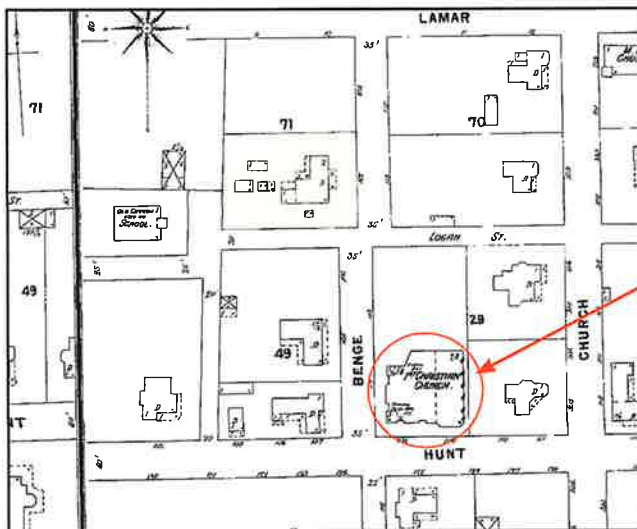
# Sanborn Maps: 1888 - 1927+



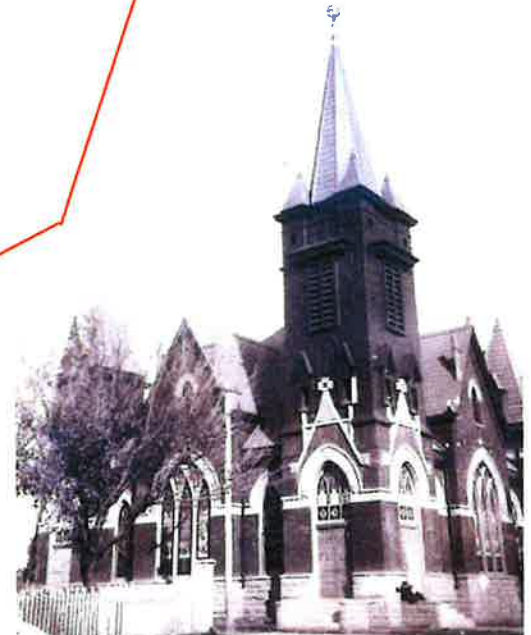
1888



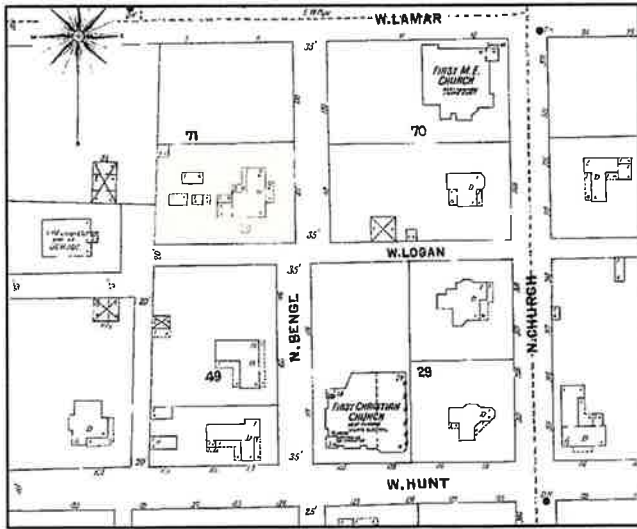
1893



1897



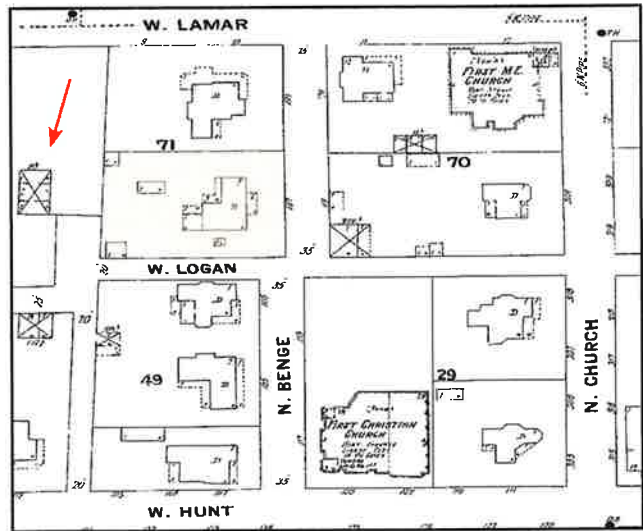
*In 1897, the First Christian Church moved from their wood-frame building they built in 1858 just south of Dr. G.A. Foote's house into their new Gothic Revival Style brick building across the street. In 1970, the nearby First Methodist Church purchased the church property and razed the building to accommodate its own expansion.*



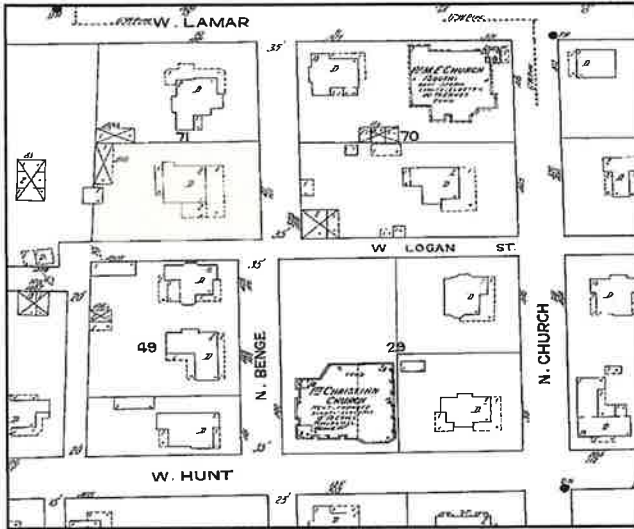
1902



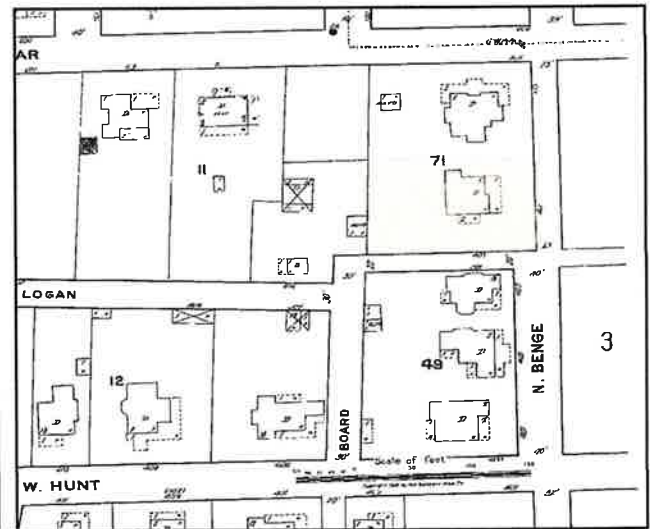
The barn in the photo above first appears on a Sanborn map in 1897. It is also mentioned in the 1898 deed that conveyed the property to Corinne Lee, Dr. G.A. Foote's second wife. The barn is now home to the current owner's mule, goats and geese.



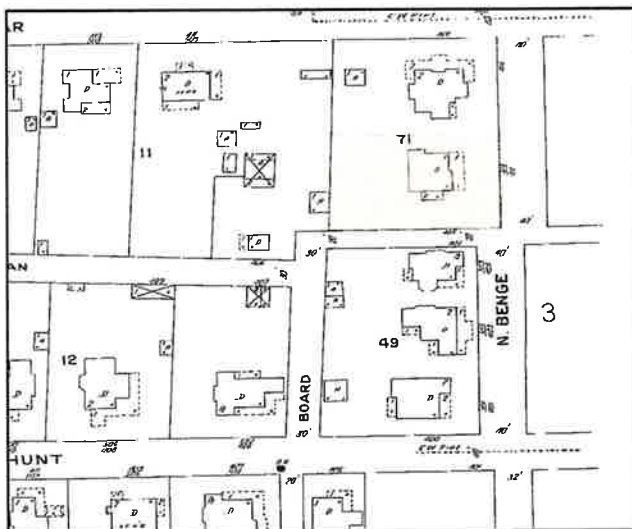
1908



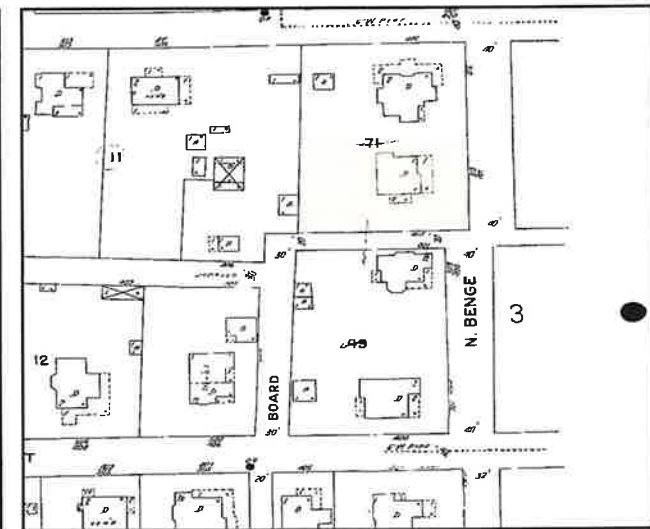
1914



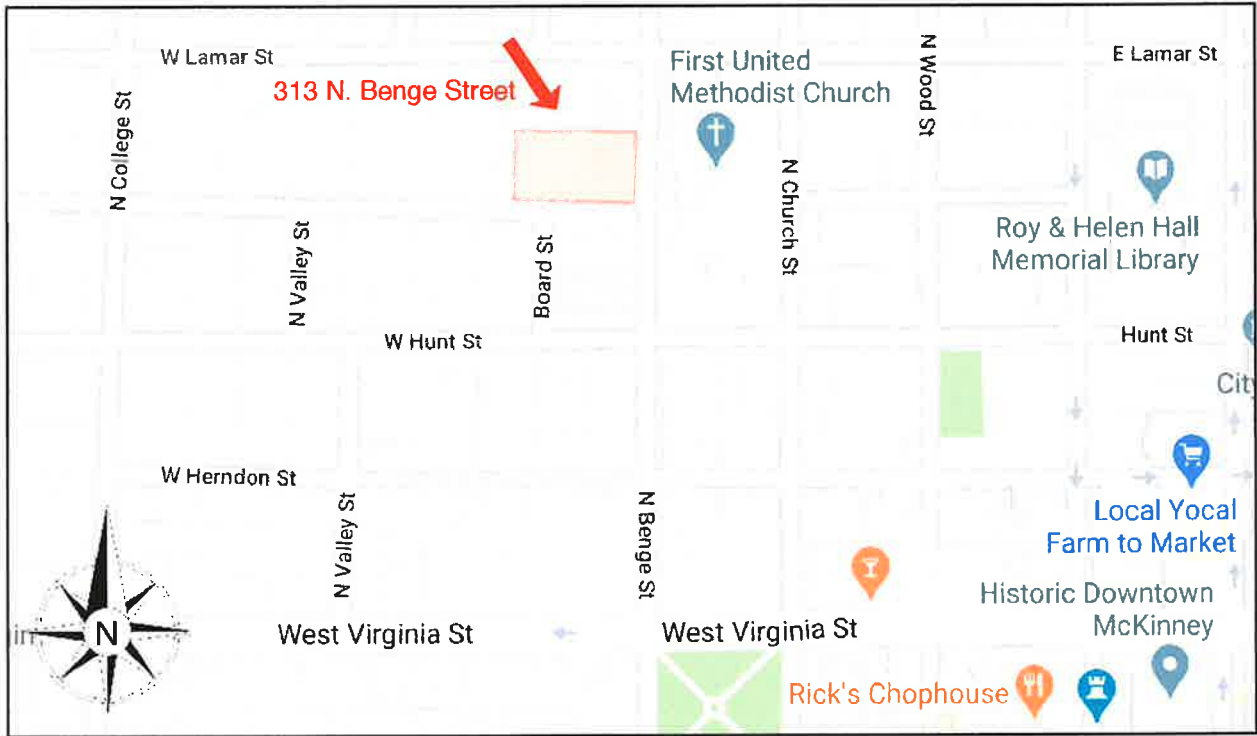
1920



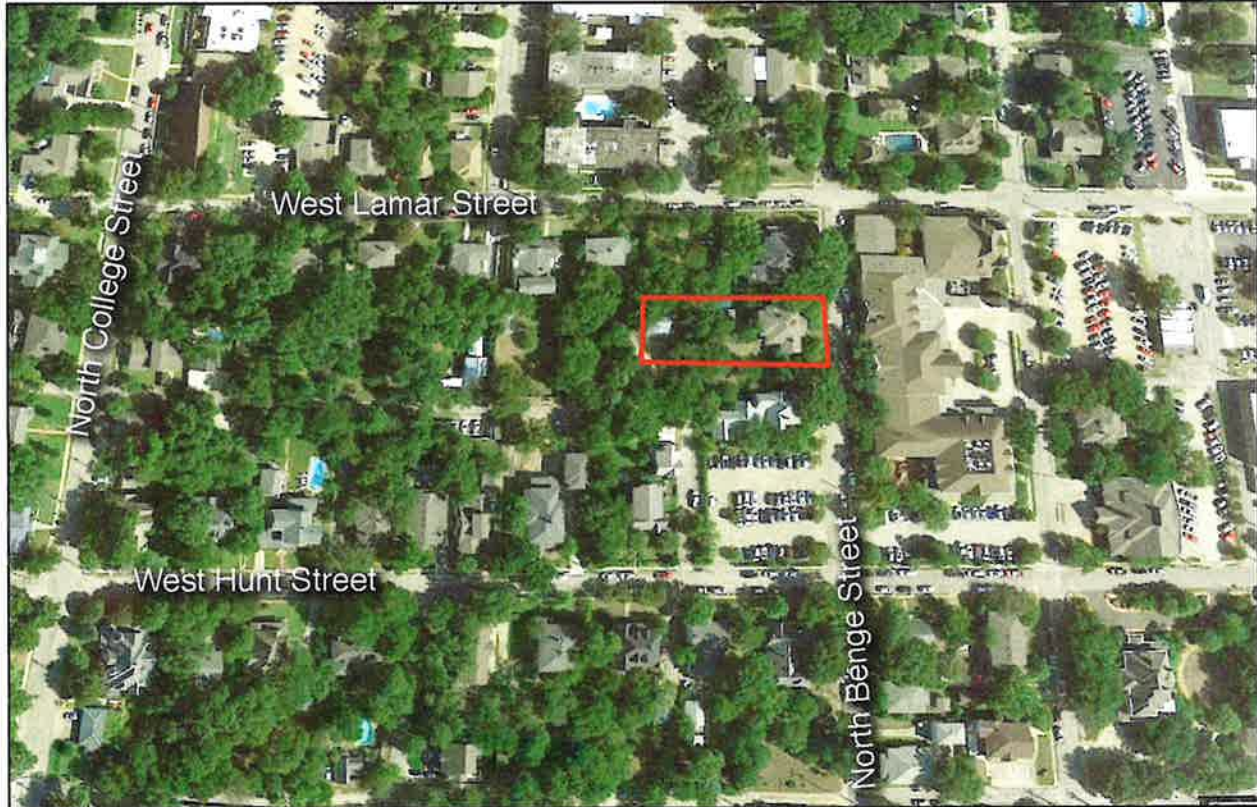
1927



1927+



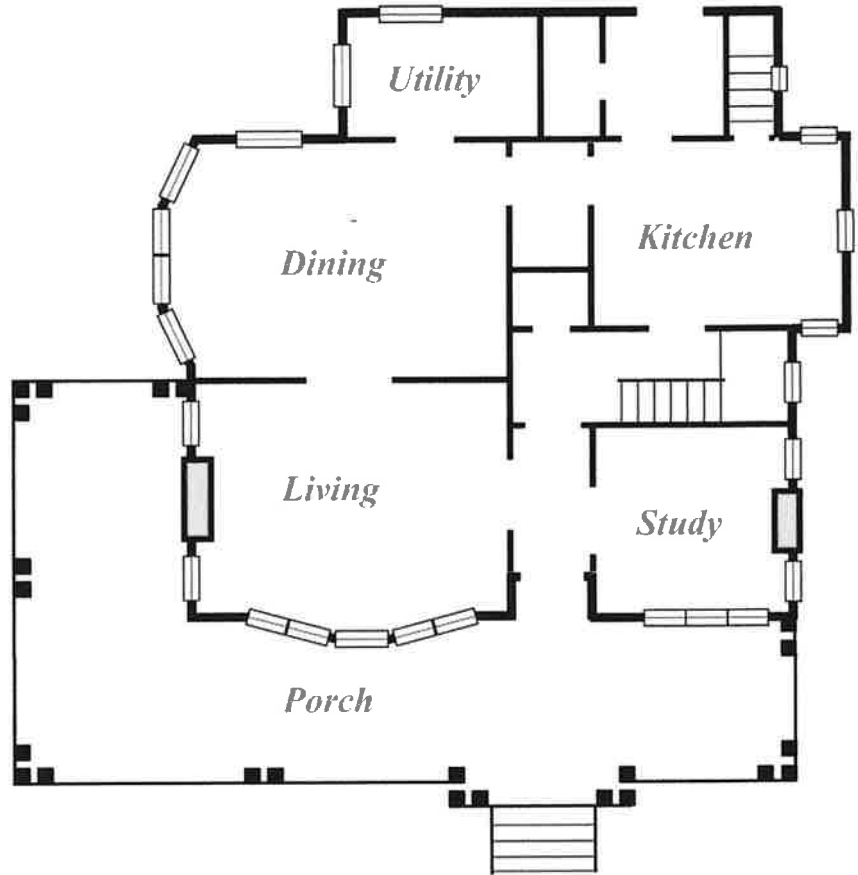
The map above shows the neighborhood around 313 North Benge Street. The aerial photo below shows the immediate neighborhood bordered by North College, West Lamar, North Benge and West Hunt Street.





# Floor Plan

This plan shows the Ditto-Dowell House in its current configuration.



## First Floor



## Second Floor

# G. Photographs



**Dr. Gerard Alexander Foote**  
(1823 - 1902)

*Dr. G.A. Foote was a pioneer settler of McKinney arriving 1845 at the age of 22. He practice medicine and was in the drug store business for many years. When Collin County Bank nationalized in 1883 he became its president, a position he held for 20 years.*

*The*  
**Collin County National Bank.**  
**M'KINNEY, TEXAS.**

Capital † † † \$100,000

..... OFFICERS:.....

*G. A. Foote,.....President.*  
*E. N. McAulay,.....Vice-President.*  
*J. L. White,.....Cashier.*  
*T. C. Goodner,.....Ass't Cashier.*

**ANNUAL STATEMENT OF THE**  
**Collin County National Bank.**  
*McKinney, Texas, December 31, 1897.*

**RESOURCES.**

<i>Loans and Discounts.....</i>	<i>\$293,965.74</i>
<i>U. S. Bonds.....</i>	<i>25,500.00</i>
<i>Other Stocks and Bonds.....</i>	<i>3,076.50</i>
<i>Real Estate and Fixtures.....</i>	<i>30,855.87</i>
<i>Cash in Vault.....</i>	<i>\$ 72,876.70</i>
<i>Cash in Other Banks.....</i>	<i>152,113.60</i>
<i>Cash with U. S. Treasury.....</i>	<i>1,147.50</i>
<i>Expense Account.....</i>	<i>4,786.30</i>
	<b><i>\$584,322.21</i></b>

**LIABILITIES**

<i>Capital Stock.....</i>	<i>\$100,000.00</i>	
<i>Surplus and Profits.....</i>	<i>42,736.14</i>	<i>\$142,736.14</i>
<i>Circulation.....</i>		<i>22,950.00</i>
<i>Individual Deposits.....</i>	<i>408,213.81</i>	
<i>Bank Deposits.....</i>	<i>10,482.26</i>	<i>418,646.07</i>
		<b><i>\$584,322.21</i></b>

OF TEXAS )  
OF COLLIN ) ss.

White, Cashier of the Collin County National Bank, do solemnly swear that the above statement is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

J. L. WHITE, Cashier

to and subscribed before me this, the 1st day of January, 1898

JOHN CHENEY, Notary Public.

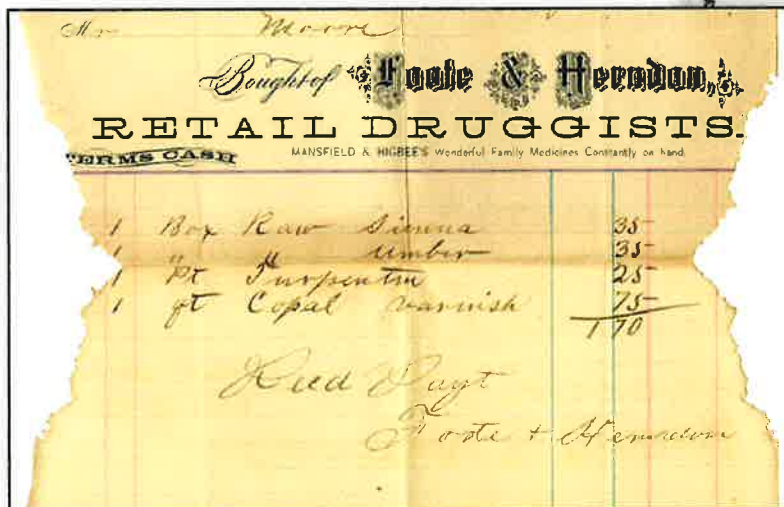
Correct—Attest:

G. A. FOOTE,  
E. N. McAULAY,  
W. A. BREA, Directors

SIR: We beg to hand you the annual statement of the Collin County National Bank for the year ending December 31, 1897. We return our thanks for favors in the past, and promise for the future all business entrusted to us, our very best care and attention. We wish you a happy New Year. We are,

Respectfully,  
J. L. WHITE, Cashier

FOOTE, President.





**William Ernest Ditto**  
(1864 - 1929)

**Ernest Ditto**, arrived in McKinney from Kentucky in the mid 1880s when he was in his early 20s. Soon afterwards, he teamed up with fellow Kentuckian Henry Lewis to run a grocery business.

Wholesale and Retail Grocer.

**W. E. DITTO,**  
Successor to Lewis & Ditto

Has a Large Stock of  
**Seed Potatoes, Onion Seed.**

Large variety of Onion Seed and Garden Seed  
In bulk, and a complete line of GROCERIES  
which were bought in large quantities at lowest obtainable price for  
cash, therefore he is in position to have you money. Do not fail to  
see him before buying anything in the Grocery line.

**Special Prices on Tobacco.**



In 1896, **Ernest Ditto** became the sole owner of the grocery store when his partner left the business to become a cotton trader. The store was located on the east side of the McKinney Square next door to Smith Drug Store.



# \$235,000 BUSINESS

From January 1, 1925, through our combined efforts, we have sold and exchanged interests in the amount of \$235,000. We consider this goal, and are very thankful for the degree of success, and extend special thanks to those who have contributed to our success either by purchases, advances or loans. After January 1, 1925, the size of our list will be.

## Ditto & Hight, Real Estate Exchange

Feeling that we are better prepared than ever to handle the real estate business to the satisfaction of our clients, we respectfully solicit your business for 1926. Wishing all a happy and prosperous New Year, we remain, very respectfully,

# R. L. Hight and W. E. Ditto

Hight & Ditto shipped 75 mules to Fort Worth Saturday which were sold to the British government.

In 1909, **Ernest Ditto** retired from the grocery business and joined with his mule trading partner to start a real estate company. The company bought, sold and developed land in McKinney. A subdivision on the east side of town bears their company name. In 1926, Ernest became a representative for the Federal Farm Loan bank with an office on a second floor office on the north side of the Square, above where Layered in currently located.

# W. E. DITTO

## Real Estate and Commission

Land, City Property and Merchandise bought and sold.  
Office in Heard Bldg., West Side Sq., McKinney, Texas.



This 1917 photograph shows **Ernest Ditto** in the Land Mortgage Bank office on West Virginia Street near the northwest corner of the McKinney Square.



*Jonathan S. Dowell* arrived in McKinney in 1856 with his aunt, uncle and three younger cousins. After participating in the Civil War and the death of his first wife, he married Elizabeth Williams in 1872. The couple had ten children. Their second child was **Marie Blanche Dowell**, popularly known as Mamie.

**Jonathan S. Dowell**  
(1841 - 1929)



*This photo (c.1900) shows the J.S. Dowell family when Mamie was about 24 years old. Seated (l to r): Martha, Horace, J.S. Dowell, Ruth, wife Elizabeth, Pearl. Back row (l to r): Mamie, Sarah, John, Jesse, Tom.*



**Marie Blanche "Mamie" (Dowell) Ditto**  
(1876 - 1974)

**"Down in Dixie,"**  
Great Southern Comedy-Drama  
UNDER DIRECTION OF MISS MAMIE DOWELL.  
**Opera House, Wednesday Evening, November 28.**

---

Come out and see the BEST LOCAL TALENT in the most popular entertainment of the season.

**Benefit Public School Library.**  **Prices 15c, 25c and 35c.**

Seats now on sale at D. GOODIN'S

***Mamie (Dowell) Ditto** was an avid supporter of art and culture in McKinney. She graduated from Mary Hardin Baylor College and received additional education in New York and Chicago. She taught elocution in the public schools and directed publicly performed plays. In 1901, she joined the Owl Club, a literary public service organization. In 1915, she became the Club's first unmarried president. It wasn't until 1987 that another unmarried woman was elected president. When Mamie married Ernest Ditto at the age of 43 in 1919, she retired from teaching and devoted her time to her favorite club.*



*Members of The Owl Club in 1901.*

*First row left to right: Mrs. J.C. Erwin, Sr., Mrs. W.E. Ditto (nee Mamie Dowell), Mrs. John Church, Mrs. George Wilcox. Second row: Mrs. L.J. Truett, Mrs. H.H. Garnett, Mrs. H.A. Finch, Sr., Mrs. W.W. McDowell. Third row: Unidentified, Mrs. L.C. Clifton, Mrs. J.L. Lovejoy, Mrs. T.W. Wylie. Identified by Mrs. L.C. Clifton (Deceased).*



**Ruth Dowell** was Mamie Dowell's youngest sister by 18 years. She graduated from McKinney High in 1911 and graduated from Mary Hardin Baylor College with a Bachelor's Degree in 1915. After receiving a Masters Degree from North Texas State College in Denton, Ruth was hired by McKinney Public Schools. She taught at Boyd High School for 45 years, earning her respect from college admission offices around the country with her quality teaching. Dowell Middle School was named for her in 1995.

**Ruth Dowell**  
(1894 - 1991)



**Ruth Dowell** was a member of the social literary group know as the Jeanne d'Arc Club, founded in 1918. In this group photo of the Club (circa 1950), Ruth is in the middle row, second from the right. The woman to Ruth's right wearing a wide-brim hat is her cousin by marriage Christelle (Oneal) Dowell,

<b>GENERAL CONTRACTORS</b>	
A. W. Dowlen Phone 627	R. L. Hankal Phone 304
<b>DOWLEN &amp; HANKAL GENERAL CONTRACTORS</b>	
Estimates made and furnished. All work firstclass and guaranteed. No contract too large or small.	
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	



**Arthur W. Dowlen**  
(1865 - 1947)

*Arthur W. Dowlen, not to be confused as a member of the Dowell family, moved to McKinney in 1893 and worked a teacher until around 1900 when he followed his brother Gideon into the construction trade. One of Arthur's first major contracts involved building a manse (pastor's residence) for the Overland Presbyterian Church in McKinney.*

*Local and long distance telephone connections*

**McKinney Manufacturing Co.**

*We Manufacture*

**Sash, Doors and General Building Supplies**

*Mantles a Specialty* **J. H. MINOR, Manager**

*Around 1910, Arthur Dowlen established the McKinney Manufacturing Company that specialized in fabricating building components along with desks and chairs and other items made of wood.*

**CITY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Election Tuesday, April 6.

**For Mayor:**  
A. W. DOWLEN.

**For City Commissioner:**  
WICK GRAVES.  
W. S. MATHEWS.

*In March of 1915 Arthur Dowlen announced his candidacy for the Office of Mayor in McKinney against the popular incumbent Mayor H.A. Finch. Arthur later withdrew his name for consideration leaving Mr. Finch to run unopposed in the April election.*

**A. W. DOWLIN**  
 Home Man, Home Contractor  
 Patronized  
 By HOME PEOPLE

**Make us Prove it--here it is:**

Fine Two-Story Home: being built for County Attorney  
 Sam Neathery.  
 Fine New Bungalow Home for Fred Coffey,  
 of Coffey Bros.  
 Fine Two-Story Home for W. L. Fitzgerald,  
 with J. P. Crouch & Co.

All These Homes Within A Three Minutes' Walk  
 Of Each Other.

NOT TOO BUSY TO FIGURE ON YOUR CONTRACT. I WORK FIRST CLASS, COMPETENT WORK  
 MEN - NEVER LEAVING A JOB UNTIL ITS FINISHED. ASK ANYONE FOR WHOM I HAVE EVER  
 WORKED. THE "CITY OF THE FUTURE" IS GROWING. LET ME HELP YOU TO MAKE IT GROW FAST.  
 I THANK MY FRIENDS FOR THEIR PATRONAGE AND HELP.

**A. W. DOWLIN,** The Home Contractor  
 Phone 627

The years from 1914 to 1915 represented Arthur Dowlen's most prolific building period in McKinney. During this period he completed nearly a dozen two-story homes. The name "Dowlin" often appears appears to be a frequently used and accepted alternative to "Dowlen." He is also known to have used the first name "Pat" and "Whit."



The above photo exposé appeared in the January 22, 1933 issue of the "Nashville Banner." There was no additional information regarding why the Dowlen family merited this recognition as all ten children lived in nine different cities spread over three states. Also, it is curious that the author of this piece was familiar enough with the family to have pictures of them but misprinted P.A. Dowlen's name (not F.A. Dowlen) and the city where G.H. Dowlen lived (McKinney, not McKenzie).

The Officers and Directors  
of the  
HIGHLAND PARK STATE BANK  
Announce the Election of  
**MR. LUTHER M. JORDAN**  
as President Succeeding  
**CAPTAIN CARNEY L. DOWLEN**

who has been called to the service of our country  
in the U. S. Army Air Corps at Miami Beach,  
Florida.

*E. B. GERMANY,*  
*Chairman of the Board.*

**HIGHLAND PARK  
STATE BANK.**  
HIGHLAND PARK (DALLAS), TEXAS  
MEMBER FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION



*Carney L. Dowlen, the son of Arthur and Ida Dowlen, was born in 1900 and attended A&M College (now Texas A&M). One of his first jobs out of college was with the Collin County State Bank in McKinney. He advanced quickly in his banking career to become the President of the Highland Park State Bank in Dallas. Soon after the U.S. involvement in WWII, Carney resigned his banking position and joined the Army.*

*During a training mission while stationed in Maine, an aircraft he was in crashed into the St. Lawrence River killing five of the nine crew members. Carney was one of the five men killed. It was not until 2009 that the remains of the fallen soldiers were discovered. In 2015, the mixed remains were interred and a memorial placed at Arlington National Cemetery*



## Evolution of Architectural Style

The first decade of the 20th Century witnessed a huge shift in architectural styles. This shift paralleled the cultural shift that saw improving labor conditions and a growing middle class that had enough money to spend on property and homes, modest though they may be. This new culture had little affinity for the older aesthetic which valued ornamentation and grandiosity. This change is clearly apparent in the architecture of McKinney.

### Queen Anne Style

Before 1900, the preferred style was what we now call the Queen Anne Style. This style is characterized by complex gabled roofs, asymmetry, turrets, and an abundance of elaborate ornamentation. Locally, the Aron House at 523 W. Hunt Street exhibits this architectural vocabulary.

### Prairie and Foursquare Styles

Just before the 20th Century began, however, new architectural forms offered by the Prairie and Foursquare Styles began appearing in home construction. The Bristol House at 508 Tucker Street was one of the first homes in McKinney to incorporate the deep eaves, hip roofs, and the sprawling geometry these new styles offered.

The Heard-Craig House at 205 W. Hunt Street designed by Dallas architect J.E. Flanders incorporates many of these new forms into a home that is still essentially Queen Anne but mimics the symmetry of the American Foursquare Style (see 801 N. Church St.). Five years later, Flanders moved closer to creating a pure Prairie Style home when he designed the J.R. Brown House at 509 N. Church Street.





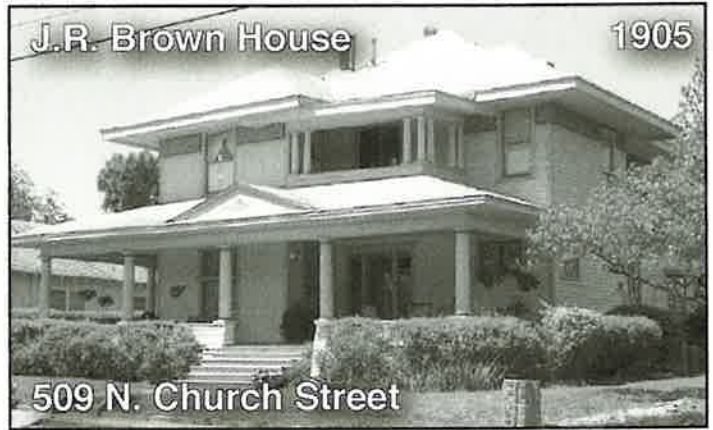
By the early 1900s, not all builders and clients were ready to abandon the old familiar style and the prestige it conveyed. This resulted in many homes becoming an eclectic mixture of new and old styles.

McKinney builder W.J. Higgins built the Brooke House at 608 W. Hunt Street in 1910. It appears that neither the builder nor the client was ready to embrace the “modernness” of Flander’s designed. Instead, the Brooke house preserves the gabled pavilions and proportions of the Queen Anne Style while adding sprawling porches on the first and second floors. The result is a marriage of two styles with a practical solution to ventilation.

The Davenport House which sits across the street at 613 W. Hunt Street was probably build by Higgins in the same year as the Brooke House. Higgins was an accomplished builder of American Foursquare homes and incorporated its boxy, pyramidal forms into many of the homes he built. The pavilion which had a gabled roof in the Brooke House now has a hip roof. Though Davenport house moves further away from the Queen Anne Style, the builder put an ornamental finial at the apex of the roof to remind us of the home’s (and the client’s) appreciation of tradition.

Elsewhere in McKinney, builders and clients were warming up to the new style. The home at 510 Foote Street build for F.E. Wilcox in 1910 is decidedly in the Prairie Style with its wide eaves, square columns, and hip roof. Still, the window treatment lacks a complete expression of the style.

Finally, in 1911 J.P. Burrus spent \$30,000 dollars on a house at 405 N. Waddill that was unabashedly in the Prairie Style. The Queen Anne vocabulary is completely gone. Thus, a new design paradigm became the mode of the day in McKinney.



### Arts & Craft Movement

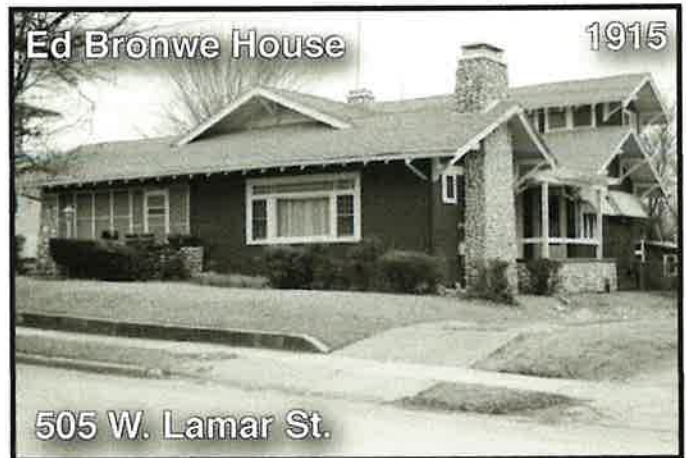
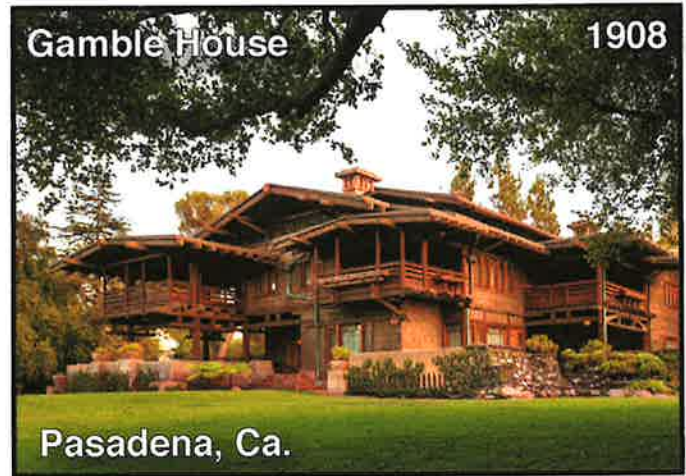
The Arts & Craft Style was another popular alternative to the Queen Anne Style. This style originated in England in the late 1880s and was espoused by social commentator John Ruskin and textile designer William Morris. The Arts & Craft movement emphasized natural, handmade elements. It was as much a style innovation as it was a social movement that regarded the craftsman as artist.

In America, the architectural firm of Greene and Greene was influential in this area, creating what is often called an American architectural masterpiece in the Gamble House in Pasadena, California in 1908. This style is characterized by broad, low-pitched roofs with extended eaves supported by exposed rafters. Stone, brick and wood were used to a natural effect.

In McKinney, the Arts & Craft aesthetic is clearly evident in a house built by Mr. L. Caruthers in 1915 for grain dealer Ed Browne at 505 W. Lamar Street. This house utilizes the same architectural vocabulary expressed in its Californian predecessor.

### Other Styles

To a lesser degree, there are other early 20th Century architectural styles represented in McKinney's historic neighborhood. These styles include Classical Revival, Colonial Revival and English Cottage (see examples below). Though these homes are impressive, they did not enjoy the same popularity as the more "modern" looking Prairie and Art & Craft Styles.



## The Early Prairie Style

The elements that characterize the Prairie Style are:

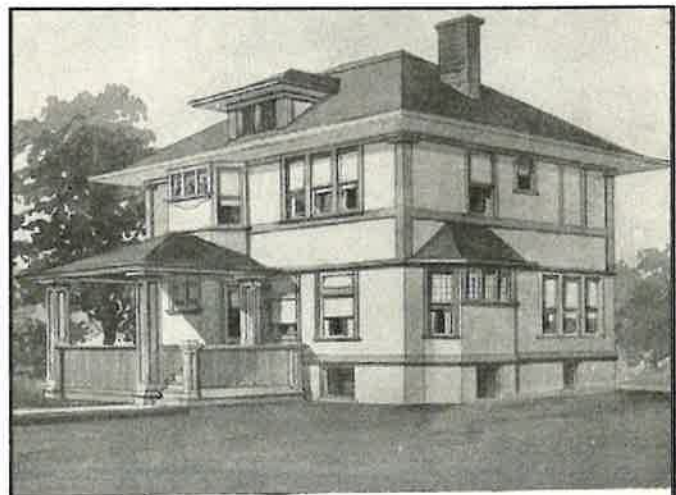
- low-pitched, hipped roof
- broad eaves with soffits
- rock or brick fireplace
- porches/balconies under overhangs
- square columns
- tall windows arranged in groups
- horizontal massing
- rectilinear lines
- 2 story (most common)

The early Prairie Style is a transitional form that combines the vernacular American Foursquare form with an Arts and Craft aesthetic. At the beginning of the 20th Century when Victorian era tastes were changing one of the most popular styles was the American Foursquare house. It was a pragmatic solution to dwelling that took its inspiration from the farmland houses of the mid-west. Sometimes called the “prairie box,” the style was essentially a cube with a pyramid on top.

As this form was developing, the Arts and Craft Movement was beginning in Europe. The Arts and Craft Movement celebrated nature, art, and hand-craftsmanship. One of the goals of the Movement was to elevate the “decorative arts” to the status that the “fine arts” enjoyed.

Many American architects began applying the Arts and Craft aesthetic to the prairie box to create a distinct looking house with hipped roofs, deep eaves, square columns and horizontal lines. This style became known as the Prairie Style with Frank Lloyd Wright being its best known proponent. The style was impressive and easy to construct and most effective in two-story structures. The more modest Craftsman Bungalow evolved along side the Prairie Style which shared many of the same elements. The Style was most popular between 1900 and the 1920s.

Early Prairie Style homes will include many of the features of the American Foursquare Style including hipped roofs, a centrally located dormer, soffit-covered eaves and a somewhat classical gabled roof at the home’s entrance. As the Prairie Style matured, these homes



Design No. 7011

Size: Width, 42 feet; Length, 30 feet, exclusive of porches



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

The above illustration is from a 1908 William A. Radford Company pattern book showing a “Prairie Box” Style home.



began exhibiting broader, more horizontal elevations and fewer classical forms.

Popularity in the Prairie Style wained in the 1920s as people become more interested in Craftsman bungalows and revival styles. However, following World War II interest in the Prairie Style resurfaced (along with Frank Lloyd Wright's career) and was the primary influence behind the Ranch Style.



*The Darwin Martin House in Buffalo, NY was built by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1905 and demonstrates the Prairie Style aesthetic.*

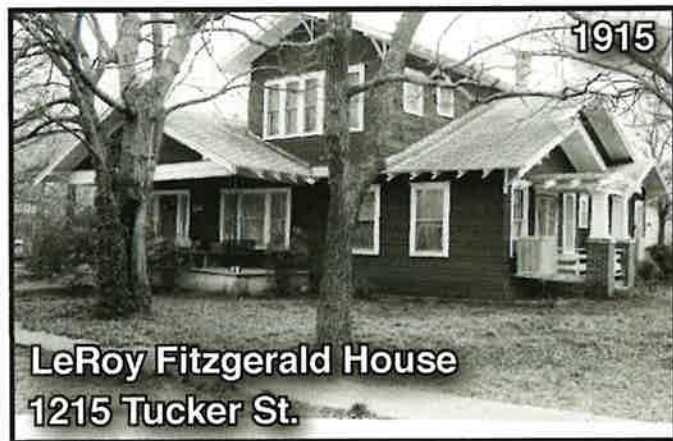
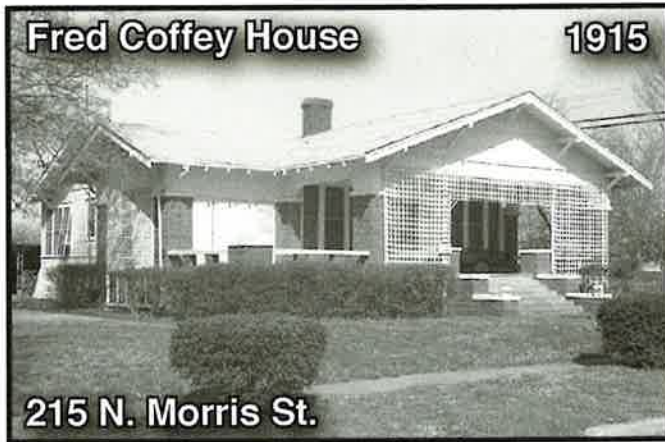
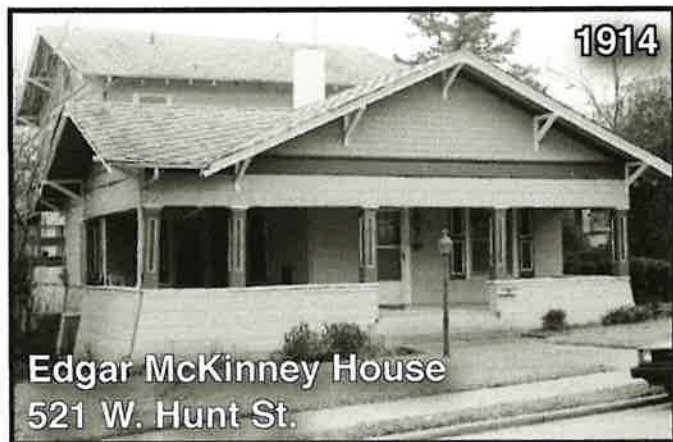
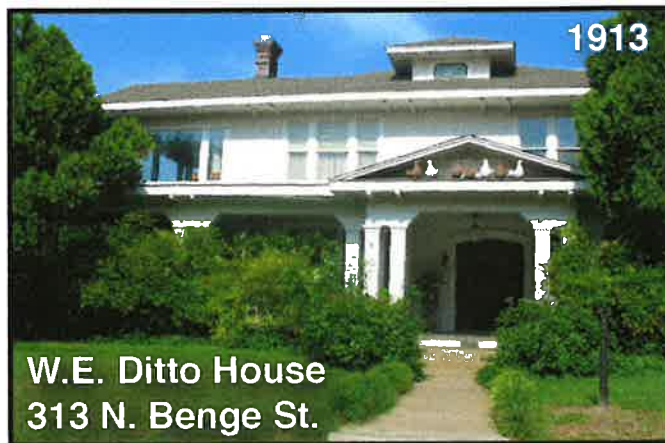
## Work of A.W. Dowlen

When Arthur Dowlen came to McKinney in 1893, he spent the next seven years working as a teacher. He left that profession to become a contractor and quickly became one of McKinney's most popular builders. It is not known who designed the homes that he build but they all have a distinctive flourish that seems intended to catch a person's attention. Exaggerate eave returns and jerkinhead roofs are good examples of some of attention-getting elements he constructed.

(continued)



Arthur Dowlen built homes during a time when interest in the Victorian Style was nearly all but gone, replaced by the more popular Craftsman Style and the stately Prairie Style. Mr. Dowlen seemed to have no difficulty understanding how to respond to the different construction techniques each of these styles required. His success as a builder in McKinney allowed him to tap into the building market in Dallas which lead him to move there in 1920. NOTE: The house at 1215 Tucker St. is often called the Richard Bass house in many historical writings, however, it was originally built for LeRoy Fitzgerald in 1915.

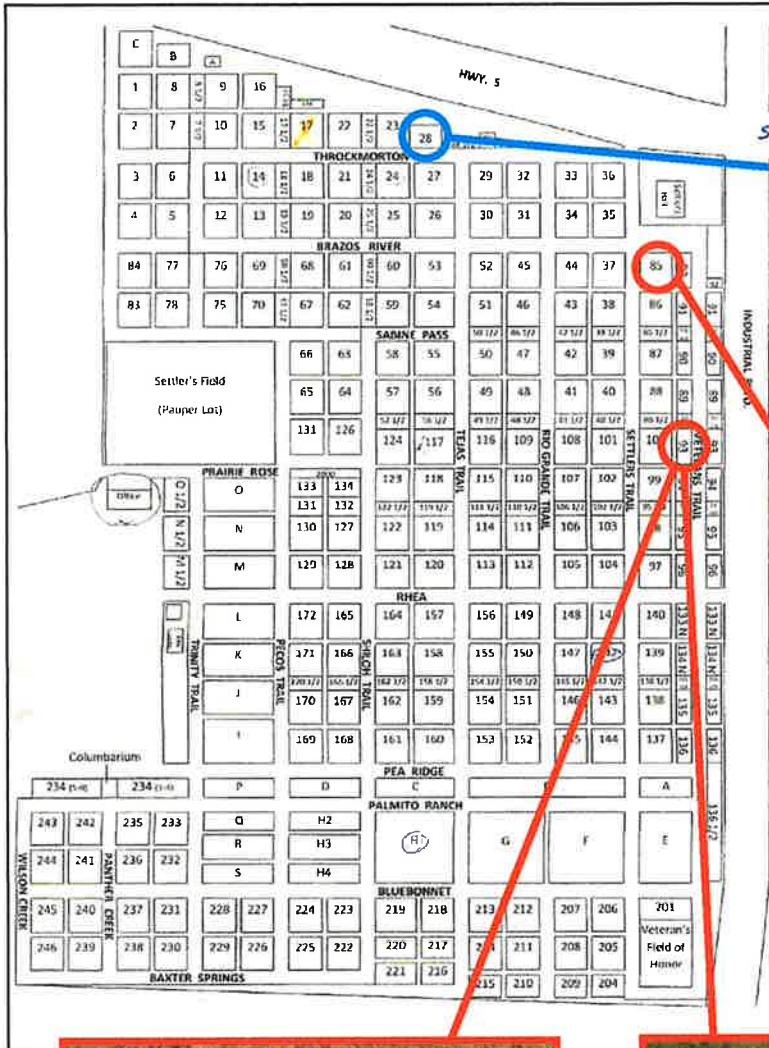


# Pecan Grove Cemetery

This map of Pecan Grove Cemetery in McKinney shows the final resting places of people associated with 313 N. Benge Street.



**Dr. Gerard A. Foote**  
Sept. 23, 1823 - Oct. 24, 1902



**Mamie (Dowell) Ditto**  
Jan. 5, 1876 - Sept. 1, 1974

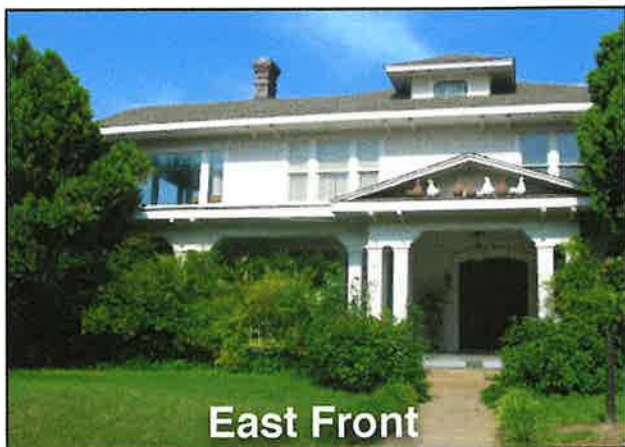


**Lula (Wiley) Ditto**  
Mar. 25, 1869 - Dec. 1, 1913



**William Ernest Ditto**  
Aug. 15, 1864 - Aug. 21, 1929

# Photos of 313 N. Benge Street





# Neighborhood Context (2020)

## 313 North Street neighborhood context



*View looking south on N. Benge Street*



*View looking north on N. Benge Street*

## Homes near 313 N. Benge Street



*309 N. Benge St.*



*401 W. Hunt St.*



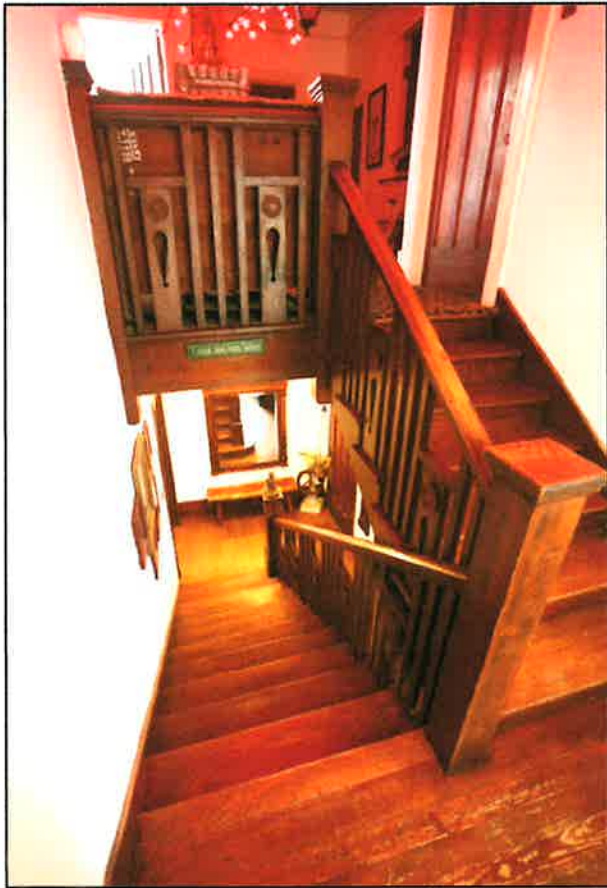
*502 N. Hunt St.*



*401 W. Lamar St.*

**Architectural Accents**









**From the days of G.A. Foote**



*Artifacts from the **Gerald A. Foote** house include an iron hitching post, well, fence name plate and barn.*



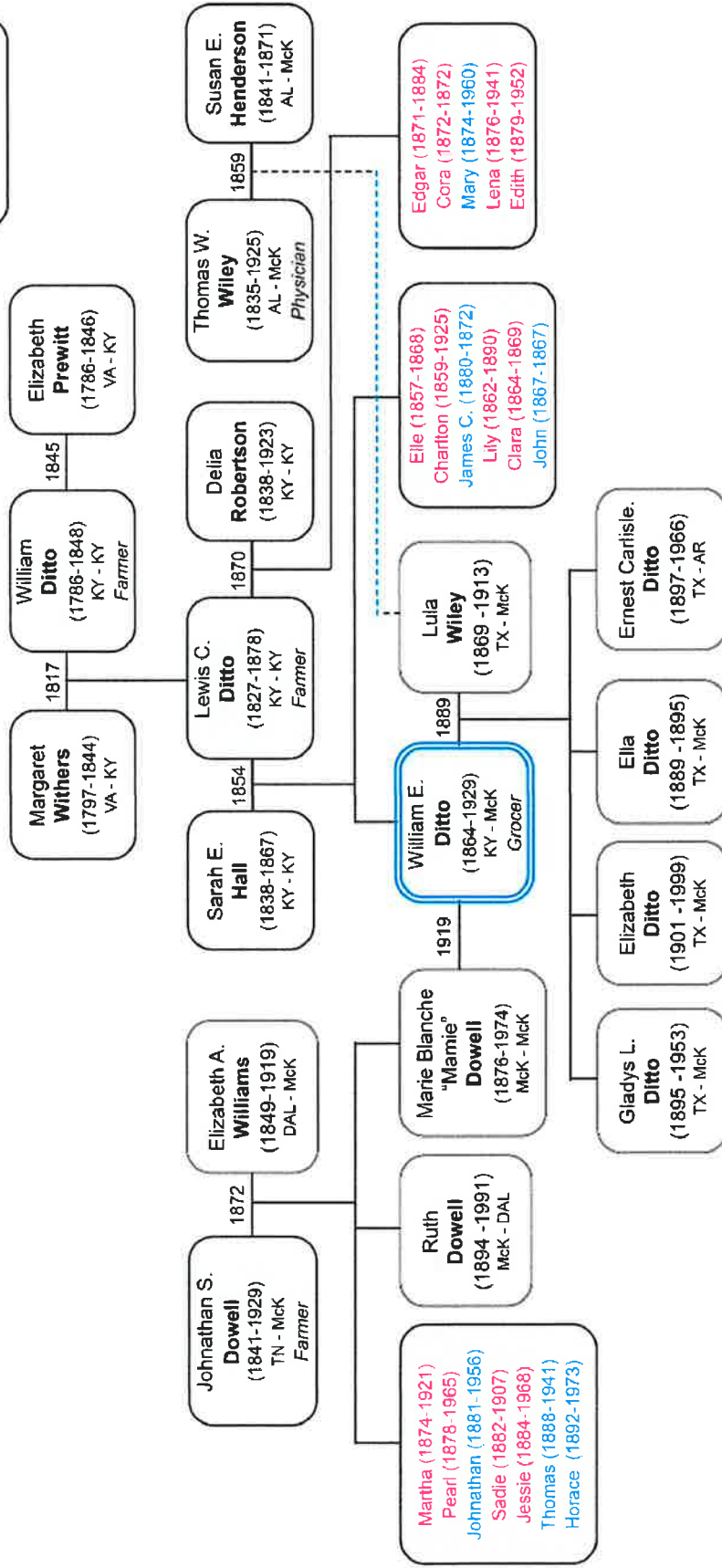


## H. Additional Information

### William E. Ditto Family of Early McKinney\*

**Legend**

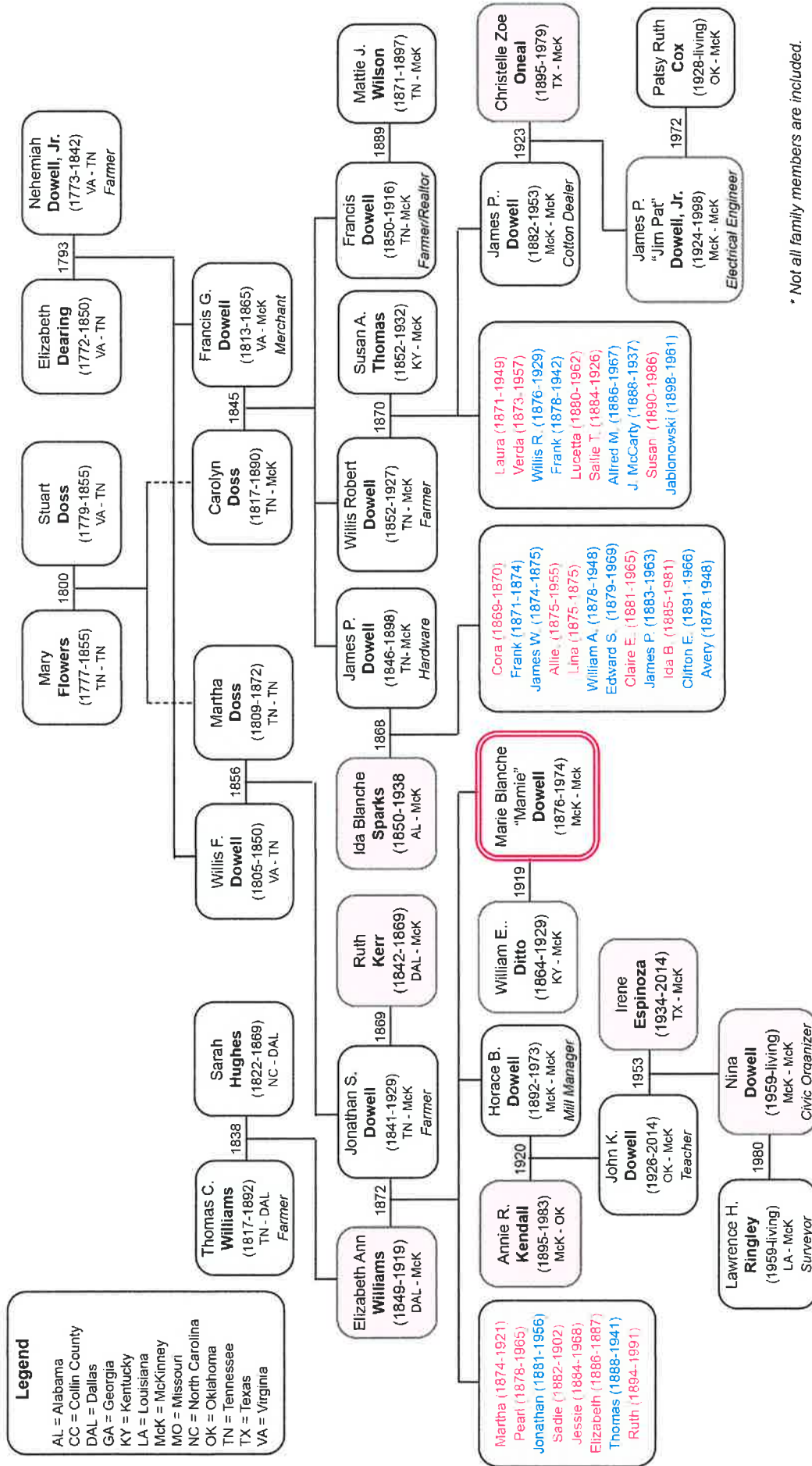
- AL = Alabama
- AR = Arkansas
- CC = Collin County
- DAL = Dallas
- KY = Kentucky
- McK = McKinney
- MO = Missouri
- OK = Oklahoma
- PA = Pennsylvania
- TN = Tennessee
- TX = Texas



\* Not all family members are included.



# “Mamie” Dowell Family of Early McKinney\*

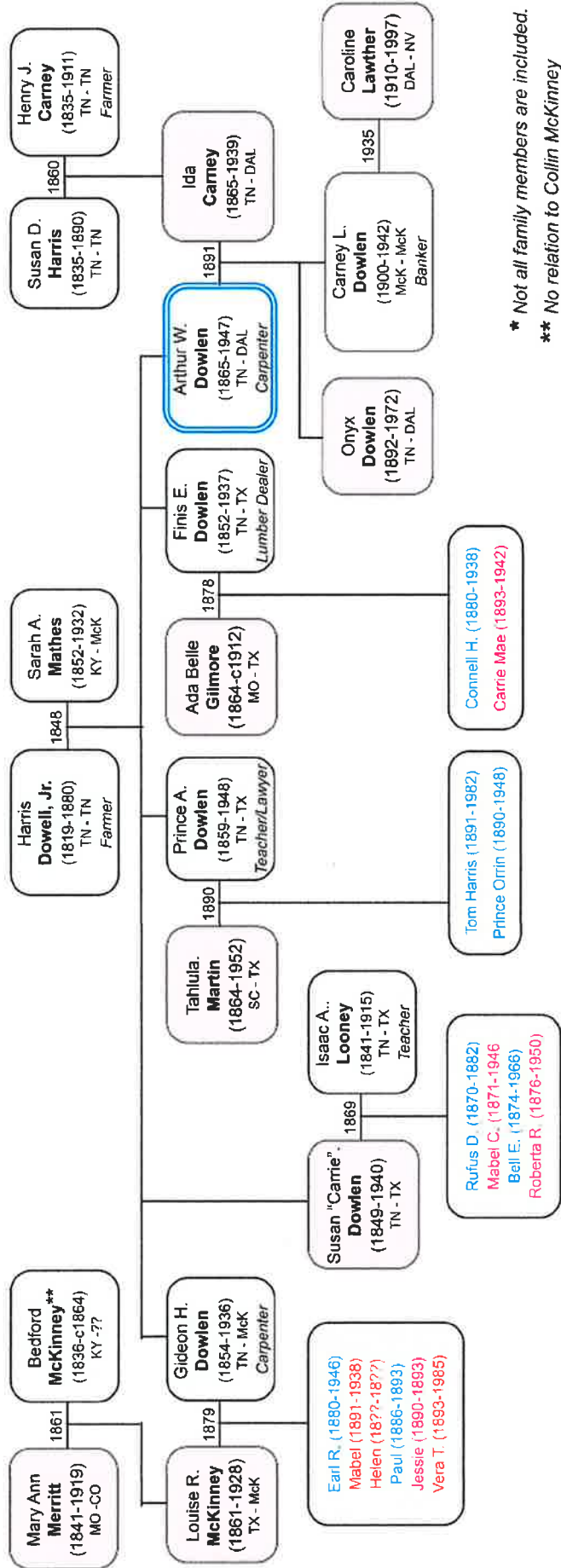


\* Not all family members are included.

# Dowlen Family of Early McKinney\*

**Legend**

- CC = Collin County
- CO = Colorado
- DAL = Dallas
- KY = Kentucky
- McK = McKinney
- MO = Missouri
- NV = Nevada
- SC = South Carolina
- TN = Tennessee
- TX = Texas
- VA = Virginia



\* Not all family members are included.  
 \*\* No relation to Collin McKinney

## **I. References & Resources**

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One Hundred Years of the Owl Club, Williamson Printing Co. (1994)

Photos, books and stories provided by Nina Dowell Ringley

Ancestry.com

McKinney Public Library