

City of McKinney  
Historic Building Marker Application  
(Supporting Documentation)

**The Neathery House**  
215 North Waddill Street



**A. Alterations & Construction**

**Construction**

The Neathery House, constructed in 1915, is a two-story, wood-frame residential structure built on a pier-and-beam foundation. The house has an L-shaped, cross-gable roof with three eastern-facing dormers. Its east facade is symmetrically organized around a centrally located entryway with a portico supported by Tuscan columns. The house is fenestrated with six-over-one, single-hung windows. The floor plan is a symmetrical one oriented around a large foyer. Oak flooring is used throughout the house. A sleeping porch accented with trellis-like trim is attached to the southern wing on the second floor. Below this porch is a space that was originally a veranda but which is now enclosed as

a sun room. The home's design follows the Colonial Revival Style with its gabled roof atop a rectangular footprint with an emphasis on symmetry.

### **Alterations**

The original structure was likely a nine-room home but has experienced several alterations since its original construction. Bathrooms and the kitchen have been updated and the attic has been converted to a living space. This attic conversion necessitated the addition of a stairway from the second floor. The entrance to a second floor bathroom was altered to accommodate this addition. The only obvious external alterations relate to the enclosure of the first floor veranda. This alteration occurred at some undetermined time prior to 1985.

Though significant interior alterations have been made, the wood-paneled library of the original owner remains in pristine condition. Some fixtures, fireplaces, mouldings, grills, and French doors are also in good condition. The overall floor plan is little changed from the original.

### **Anticipated Needs**

The current owner has no plans to expand or otherwise remodel the house, but does anticipate repairing some stuck windows and doors. Should other repairs be necessary, it is the intention of the owner to preserve the historic nature of the house

## **B. Historical Figures**

### **Sam Neathery (1881-1970)**

Sam Neathery served four years as Collin County District Attorney beginning in 1915. He was active socially and politically, serving as the Collin County Democratic Party Chairman for 12 years.

Sam Neathery was born in 1881 in Farmersville to physician Allen H. Neathery and Jemima Buie (pronounced Bowie). Sam's paternal grandparents were among the pioneer settlers who came to Texas after it won its independence from Mexico. They arrived from Arkansas in 1837, settling in Lamar County. Sam's father Allen, who was four years old when the family arrived, later went on to attend medical school in Tennessee but returned to Texas in 1856 to begin his practice in Farmersville. Sam's mother had arrived in Farmersville from Mississippi two years earlier. After a brief courtship, the couple married in 1857 and eventually became the parents to 12 children. Sam was the youngest.

When Sam reached college age, he attended State University (now the University of Texas) and received a law degree from there in 1904. Following his graduation, he returned to Farmersville for a few months before moving to McKinney to open a law practice. When Sam arrived in McKinney, his brother Dan had just finished a term as the Collin County Treasurer. It did not take Sam long to insert himself into the City's social circles. In 1906, he was elected to the office of Esteemed Loyal Knight in the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Lodge No. 828. That is the third highest office within the local lodge.

As Sam was beginning his legal career, it is likely that brother Dan's connections in government helped Sam get a plum political appointment. In late 1906, Sam became the personal secretary to Choice B. Randell who was the U.S. Representative serving the Texas 4th Congressional District.

Mr. Randell held this office from 1903 to 1913. He is best known for authoring a bill preventing members of Congress from receiving gifts or fees from anyone with business before Congress. When his district was facing reapportionment, Mr. Randell vacated the office in order to run for Senator but lost to Morris Sheppard, a strict Prohibitionist who authored the Eighteenth Amendment establishing a national prohibition on alcoholic

beverages, thus earning him the title “father of national Prohibition.” The Congressional seat that Mr. Randell left open when he ran for Senate was won by Sam Rayburn. Sam Rayburn went on to serve 24 terms in the House and became its 43rd Speaker in 1940.

Sam Neathery worked for Mr. Randell for three years. Much of that time he spent in the Sherman area where Mr. Randell had an office. Not long after Sam moved to Sherman, he met Willie Bounds, the daughter of the successful cattle dealer Edward H. Bounds and Bessie E. Grinstead. The couple married in Sherman on Wednesday, November 4, the day after William Howard Taft defeated William Jennings Bryan in the 1908 presidential election.

After Sam ended his work for Mr. Randell in 1909, Sam and Willie moved to McKinney where they lived in a house on South Tennessee Street. Once back in McKinney, he opened a law office in the Foote House Building, a three-story building that once stood on the northwest corner of the intersection of Kentucky and Virginia Streets on the Square. Sam’s private practice was maintained for the next year by his frequent newspaper ads. However, in early 1911 Sam began working as the Assistant County Attorney under the newly elected Luther J. Truett. Sam held this position until 1914, when Mr. Truett decided not to run for re-election. That summer Sam announced his bid for the top law position and won the election in November. He held the office for two, two-year terms. At the end of his second term, Sam partnered with this former boss Luther J. Truett in a private practice with an office in the Collin County National Bank Building. However, it was not too long before Sam Neathery and his partner would again be doing legal work for the County.

In 1921, tenant farmer Ezell Stepp was arrested in the death of fellow tenant Hardy Mills when Mr. Mills’ body was found at the bottom of an abandon well northwest of McKinney. The jury in the subsequent trial found Mr. Stepp guilty and after all appeals were exhausted, Judge F.E. Wilcox sentenced Mr. Stepp to be hanged at the Collin County jail on November 17, 1922. The firm of Truett & Neathery was hired by the Mills family to aid the County in its prosecution. The hanging was the last legal hanging in Collin County and the third to the last in the state of Texas. Nearly 100 people witnessed the event.

From the very beginning of Sam’s legal career, politics played a major roll. Beginning with his work for Rep. Randell, then as County Attorney, Sam was elected to the office of Collin County Chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee in July of 1922. He held this position for two, two-year terms. It was the duty of the Chairman to ensure fair

nominations and elections within the party. This task was made difficult by the political rise of the KKK that attempted to establish greater control of the party by nominating its own challengers to established Democratic incumbents. Sam was particularly vocal in his opposition to the organization's political tactics. In July of 1926, Sam resigned the Chairmanship in order to accept the appointment as a member of the Board of Regents of the State University by the State's first female Governor Miriam "Ma" Ferguson. His term expired in 1930.

It is not surprising that Sam had an active civic life. He was the President of the McKinney Rotary for two years, a mason, an Elk, a Woodmen of the World, a Chamber of Commerce member, and a member of the First Methodist Church board for 19 years. What is surprising is that despite his deep social roots, Sam and his wife left McKinney to live in Houston in January of 1929. However, the opportunity to become that City's Attorney was too much to pass up. His appointment was made by Mayor Monteith in October of that year. Sam served as Houston City Attorney until resigning in 1933.

Sam spent the rest of his life in Houston. The last major position he held came in 1938 when the Supreme Court of Texas appointed Sam to the Board of Law Examiners, the organization that oversees the granting of licenses to practice law. He held this position for 18 years until resigning in 1956 at the age of 75.

In 1970 at the age of 88, Sam died of a heart attack in Houston. He was survived by his wife Willie and only child Mary Elizabeth (Neathery) Smith. He is buried at the Forest Park Lawndale Cemetery in Houston.

Willie lived another three years following Sam's death. When the couple lived in McKinney, Willie hosted many events of the Edelweiss Club, organized in 1898 to promote cultural and philanthropic service. One of the most significant events held at the Neathery home on North Waddill Street happened in January of 1920 when the club hosted a reception honoring the young, up-and-coming Collin County artist Frank Klepper, whose art is now seen in the Collin County History Museum and the Heard-Craig Center for the Arts. At the time of the reception, Mr. Klepper was opening an art studio in McKinney. He would later become the director of the Southwestern School of Fine Arts in Dallas and is now one of the best-known Texas artists. Willie died in 1973 and is buried next to husband Sam.

### **William Avery Dowell (1878-1948)**

Avery Dowell took over the daily management of the J.P. Dowell Hardware Store when his father, the store's namesake, died in 1898. Avery managed the business for 50 years and was active in McKinney's civic, financial and political affairs.

The story of Avery Dowell began in 1856 when his grandfather Francis Dowell emigrated to Collin County from Tennessee, settling about six miles west of McKinney. At the time of Francis' arrival, the Dowell clan consisted of his wife Carolyn, three sons, and a nephew. Their eldest son was James Patterson Dowell who later started the implements business which became J.P. Dowell Hardware. Their other sons, Willis and Francis, Jr. worked the family farm. Their nephew Jonathan became a Captain in the Confederate Army during the Civil War and was wounded and captured at the Battle of Gettysburg. Upon Jonathan's return to McKinney after the war, he engaged in farming and livestock trade.

The Dowells had large families. In the 1880s, when the population of McKinney was near 1,500, there were at least three dozen Dowells living in McKinney. That's about 2.5% of the town's population. With such large families, giving distinct names to children might be a challenge. However, the Dowells did not seem to mind duplications. In fact, the James Patterson Dowell who started the hardware store had a son named James Patterson Dowell. Willis Dowell (the brother of James Patterson Dowell) also named one of his sons James Patterson Dowell, who later had a son he named James Patterson Dowell. For nearly 30 years there were three James Patterson Dowells living in McKinney at the same time.

The James Patterson Dowell who started the hardware store began his business on North Kentucky Street in 1873. It was while the J.P. Dowell Hardware store was at this location that James and his wife Ida had their sixth child William Avery Dowell.

In 1888, James Patterson Dowell moved the business to a newly erected, three-story, brick building that currently stands at 208 East Louisiana Street. The building still displays a faint ghost sign bearing his name. However, ten years after the move, James died leaving ownership of the 25-year old business to his heirs and its management to his 20-year-old son Avery.

Avery Dowell turned out to be an effective manager. Under his direction, the family store continued to thrive. In 1904, he leased the building next door in order to add a line

of furniture and housewares to the store's inventory. The store grew to be one of the largest of its kind in North Texas.

As effectively as he was managing the business, Avery was just as effective leading civic organizations. During his lifetime he was involved in leadership positions in the Elks, the Confederate Picnic, the Commercial Club, the County Fair, the Business Men's Association and the Chamber of Commerce. He was a director of the Texas Electric Railway and in 1941 he was elected President of the Central National Bank of McKinney. He was also active politically being a delegate to the National Democratic Convention at which he helped nominate Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 and 1936. In 1946, Avery hosted a social event in his North Waddill Street home honoring fellow Texan Sam Rayburn who at the time was the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representative.

In 1924 at the age of 46, Avery married 42-year-old Cassie Seay, daughter of McKinney residents Herbert S. Seay and Castora Kyle. Cassie's mother died four months after giving birth to her in 1882. Cassie's father remarried several years later but both he and his new wife died within days of each other in 1891 when Cassie was nine years old. The orphan Cassie was taken in by her mother's cousin Julia Coffee who was the wife of McKinney attorney John Church (County Judge from 1906 to 1910).

After finishing high school in McKinney, Cassie attended the St. Mary's College of Dallas, an Episcopal school for women. When she graduated in 1904, Cassie accepted a position as the secretary to Bishop Alexander C. Garrett, the founder of the school. She held the position for about five years. Beginning in 1910, Cassie would periodically spend months at a time visiting her uncle William Kyle in Los Angeles, California. Other places she traveled included Oregon, Washington, and the Hawaiian Islands.

In contrast to Cassie's early childhood, her time with the Church family was full of social functions, travel and study. She was a member of the Owl Club and a founding member of the Delphian Study Club that formed in 1914 by Mrs. J.C. Erwin for the purpose of studying the art and culture of ancient and modern societies.

Although Cassie's young adult years with the Church family were full of fun and adventure, it was not without tragedy. In 1913, while shopping in the three-story, brick building known as the Mississippi Building, Cassie became trapped when the building collapsed killing eight and injuring a dozen more including Cassie. She was one of three woman near the front of the store when the collapse occurred. A display counter kept the front

door from crushing two of the women. The third woman Mrs. Mary Stiff, though within arm's reach of Cassie, did not survive. Cassie and Mrs. W.M. Shirley were only slightly injured.

In 1924, when Cassie married Avery Dowell, the couple moved into the house of Cassie's foster mother Mrs. John Church on North Tennessee Street. The couple lived there until they purchased the house at 215 North Waddill Street from attorney Sam Neathery in 1933. The couple had no children.

Avery Dowell died in 1949 following a few years of declining health. Bishop Harry T. Moore of Dallas conducted services at the St. Peter's Episcopal Church in McKinney. Cassie died two years later. Both are interred 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.

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 known 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 and 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 of McKinney's most expressive homes for the period, including the two-story house he built on North Waddill for attorney Sam Neathery in 1915. 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 led 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 Dallas.

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:** 215 North Waddill Street, McKinney, Texas 75069

**Legal Description:** Waddill Addition, Blk 5, Lot 2a

Purchase Date	Seller	Buyer	Book/Page
Jul. 31, 1855 <sup>1</sup>	State of Texas	Thomas T. Bradley	I / 370
Jan. 31, 1855	Thomas T. Bradley	Andrew J. Tucker	I / 310
Sep. 27, 1855	Andrew J. Tucker	Robert L. Waddill	I / 393
Feb. 24, 1902 <sup>2</sup>	Fannie P. Waddill	Vernon O. Marshall	112 / 50
Apr. 17, 1905	Vernon O. Marshall	Matilda A. Warden	133 / 439
Nov. 16, 1906 <sup>3</sup>	William Warden	Cora Dodson	143 / 357
May 18, 1907	J.B. & Cora Dodson	Mary L. Gebhand	148 / 420
Jun. 19, 1908	Ed & Mary Gebahand	Gus Allen	152 / 245
Jul. 25, 1911	Gus Allen	Sam Neathery	184 / 275
Nov. 24, 1933	Sam Neathery	W. Avery Dowell	393 / 256
Jun. 16, 1947	W. Avery Dowell	Cassie (Seay) Dowell	393 / 253
Sep. 16, 1950	Cassie Dowell, <i>deceased</i>	Herman E. White	419 / 373
Sep. 10, 1953	Herman E. White	John & Hermine Hooper	475 / 41
Jun. 23, 1987	Hermine Hooper	Patrick C. Jackson	2659 / 770
Jun. 25, 2004	Patrick C. Jackson	James L. Sanderson	5702 / 3934
Nov. 18, 2016	James L. Sanderson	Michael Davis	20161122001588150
Feb. 17, 2017	Michael Davis	Tiffany Bellino	20170221000227930

<sup>1</sup> This is the date the State of Texas issued a patent affirming T.T Bradley's ownership.

<sup>2</sup> Inherited from mother Sarah, widow of R.L. Waddill.

<sup>3</sup> Surviving spouse.

## D. Tenant History

Daniel E. Neathery, Sam's brother, was a tenant from winter of 1929 to fall of 1933.

## E. Narrative History

Edward Bradley came from Kentucky to Texas with his wife Nancy and four children in 1842 to partake of the land being offering by the settlement company known as the Peter's Colony. The Republic of Texas (and later the State of Texas) used organizations like this to attract immigrants to its territories by offering settlers lucrative land contracts. Ed Bradley's family was among the first 200 families to settle in the area. Despite having plenty of land to give away, the Peter's Colony managers had difficulty settling as many people as required by their agreement with the Republic of Texas. Management issues within the Peter's Colony organization led to great legal confusion regarding the titles held by the settlers. It was only after Texas joined the United States that most of these disputes became settled. In the end, Ed Bradley's headright grant of 640 was affirmed. In 1855, Edward Bradley's son, Thomas T. Bradley (1824-1881), was deeded a separate grant signed by Texas Governor Elisha M. Pease for 291 acres situated a half mile west of the McKinney town square.

Over the next several years, Judge Robert L. Waddill, Sr. purchased portions of this tract at different times. By the time of his death in 1867, he owned about 108 acres of it. His widow Sarah died in 1896. The following year, the surviving five children subdivided the land into 28 blocks which became known as the Waddill Addition. Fannie Page Waddill, the couple's only daughter and youngest child, received 15 lots in the new subdivision. One of these was Lot 2 in Block 5. Fannie was a school teacher and owing to her connection to one of the wealthiest families in Collin County owned a substantial amount of property in McKinney and elsewhere. She held onto Lot 2, Block 5 until 1902 when she sold it to Vernon O. Marshall. The unimproved lot changed hands several times until Assistant County Attorney Sam Neathery purchased the northern half of Lot 2 from grocery salesman Gus W. Allen in 1911 for \$1,250.

At the time of the purchase, Sam was living with his wife Willie on South Tennessee Street. It was not until Sam won his election to the position of County Attorney in 1914 that he hired contractor Arthur W. Dowlen to build the two-story, Colonial-Revival style house that now exists at 215 North Waddill.

A.W. Dowlen was building houses as tastes in McKinney were turning from the Victorian Style to more modern styles like the Prairie or Craftsman Style. He was particularly skilled at constructing intricate roofs with expressively exposed rafters, a motif so connected to the Craftsman aesthetic. However, the house he built for Sam Neathery

was of a style rare to McKinney at the time. The Neathery House is likely the first Colonial Revival Style house to be built in McKinney. Though the design was new to the area, it had a familiar, traditional feel since it borrowed its form from some of America's most iconic structures, including George Washington's Mount Vernon estate.

Sam and Willie, along with their two-year old child, moved in to their new house upon its completion in 1915. The house soon became the meeting place for the Edelweiss Club. Many meetings were held there including one honoring the young emerging artist Frank Klepper who was opening his art studio in McKinney in 1920. Mr. Klepper would later achieve significant critical notoriety. His works now belong in several museums and private collections including the Heard-Craig Center for the Arts.

In 1929, the Neathery family moved to Houston when he was selected to become that City's head attorney. During Sam's tenure in Houston, he rented the Waddill Street home to his brother Daniel who was the Collin County Tax Collector. It is not known whether Sam had thoughts of returning to McKinney when his stint in Houston was done but by 1933 he appeared decided. That year, he sold his McKinney home to hardware store manager Avery Dowell. Sam lived in Houston the rest of his life.

At the time of the purchase, Avery Dowell and his wife Cassie were living with Cassie's foster mother Julia Church on North Tennessee Street. They had been living there for nearly a decade following their wedding in 1924. Given Avery's prominence in the business and civic affairs of McKinney, their living arrangement was not one dictated by financial lack.

While Avery and Cassie lived at 215 North Waddill, they did not open it often to large social events. Though Cassie did host the Bridge Club for its Thursday meetings, there are not many notices in the local newspapers of large-scale events. The exception was a reception the couple held in 1946 for U.S. House Speaker Sam Rayburn (third in line to the Presidency). The event coincided with the Speaker's visit to partake in the Collin County Centennial Celebration in observance of the county's founding. The event occurred about six weeks before the November 5th election where the Republicans gained 55 seats in the House and the majority, thus ending Mr. Rayburn's tenure as Speaker.

Avery Dowell's health, which had been in decline several years before his death, necessitated that he settle his affairs. In June of 1947, Avery sold the house to his wife for \$1 along with "further consideration of love and affection." This sale occurred just days

before he underwent a scheduled operation at the City Hospital. He survived the operation only to die the following summer. Cassie lived in the house until her death in the summer of 1950.

The executors of Cassie's estate sold the house to auto-accessory store-owner Herman E. White in September of that year. Mr. White sold the house in 1953 to physician John M. Hooper. Dr. Hooper made 215 North Waddill his home for 32 years before dying in 1985, thus becoming the home's longest dweller. The property changed hands four more times until the present. Some interior alterations occurred and the first floor porch was enclosed during this time. However, the historical integrity of the home remains intact as does the home's unique contribution to the history and architecture of McKinney.