

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.



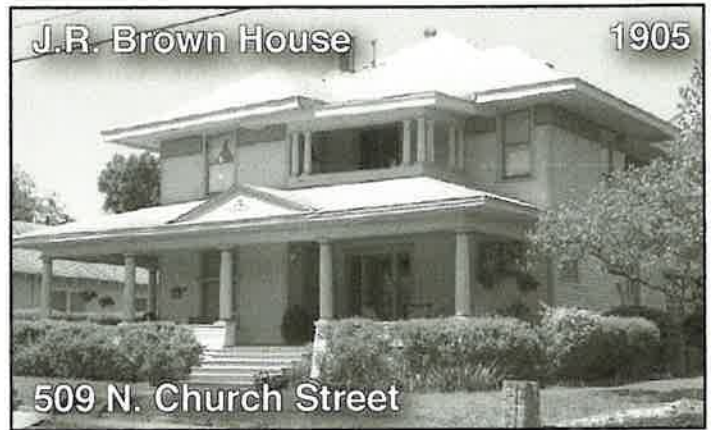
By the early 1900s, not all builders and clients were ready to abandon the old familiar style and the prestige it conveyed. This resulted in many homes becoming an eclectic mixture of new and old styles.

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 608 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

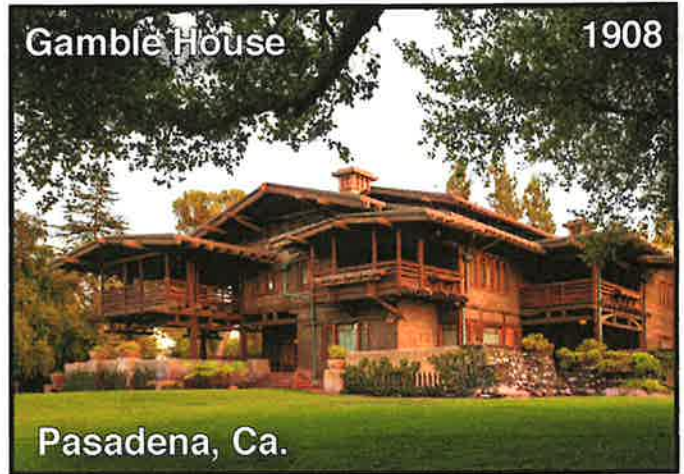
The Arts & Craft Style was another popular alternative to the Queen Anne Style. This style originated in England in the late 1880s and was espoused by social commentator John Ruskin and textile designer William Morris. The Arts & Craft movement emphasized natural, handmade elements. It was as much a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

The elements that characterize the Colonial Revival Style are:

- typically two stories
- symmetrical front facade
- accentuated front doorway
- evenly spaced windows
- long roof ridge with side gables
- dormers
- shallow eaves
- boxy, rectangular mass
- wing extensions of the sides
- understated adornment

The Colonial Style encompasses two stylistic variations, Georgian and Federal. The most notable difference in the variations can be seen in the windows and front door. In both cases, the Federal Style entryway and windows are more elaborate often with Palladian inspired effect. The entryway is usually sheltered by a classical portico. Thomas Jefferson's Monticello home is a good example of the Palladian influence on this style.

The Federal Style was developed in Scotland by architect Robert Adam in the late 18th century and is sometimes called the Adam Style. This style was popular during the founding of the United States. Its stately proportions made it popular among people of "traditional" values. Its regular geometry and lack of adornment made it an economical choice as well. Interest in this style was re-ignited by the U.S. Centennial Exposition of 1876 and again by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The style maintained its popularity until the 1950s when a less formal aesthetic began to take hold. Still, this architectural form has never gone completely out-of-style. Federal Style homes can be seen even in new subdivisions.

The Colonial Revival Style, though varied in its expression, essentially combines elements popularized by the homes of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas P. Ives. The style's association with the Nation's founding along with its stately qualities have contributed to the style's lasting popularity.



The above illustration is from a pattern book of 1923 showing a Colonial Revival home.



Thomas Jefferson's Monticello (1772)



George Washington's Mount Vernon (1778)



The Thomas P. Ives House (1806)

Colonial Revival Style in McKinney

Though interest in Colonial Revival Style was ignited by the late 19th Century expositions in Chicago and Philadelphia, it did not appear in McKinney until much later. The exhibitions that inspired architects and designers to celebrate the traditions of America also inspired other designers to seek something more modern.

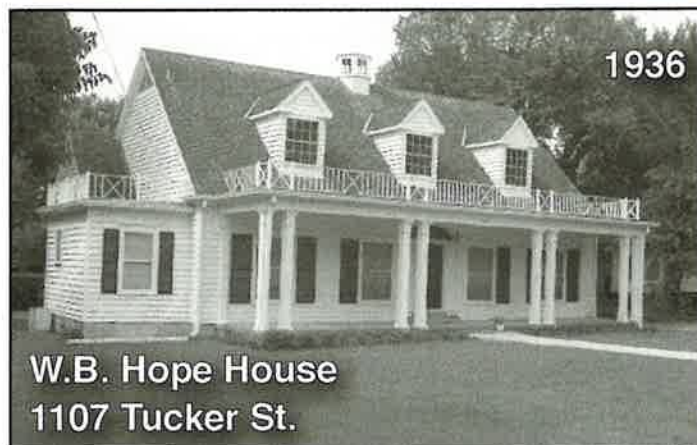
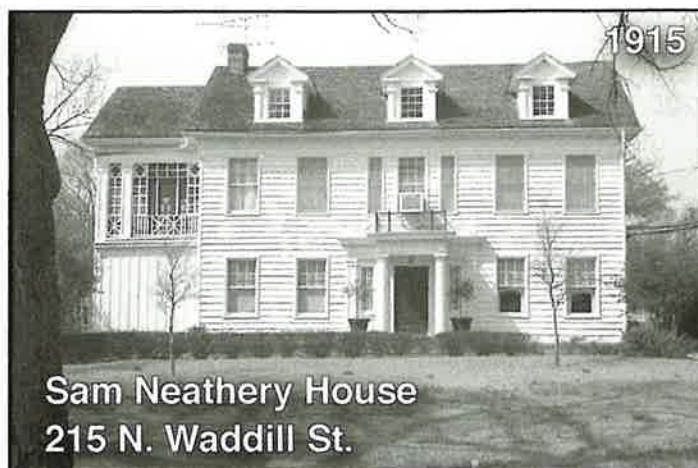
In McKinney prior to 1900, the residential architecture was mainly influence by variations of the Victorian style. After that, interest in newer styles like Craftsman and Prairie began to take hold. It would take nearly two decades for the Colonial Revival Style to catch on in McKinney.

Part of the reason for the slow adoption of the style was due to the few residents who could afford a two story house. Those who could, usually preferred the newer styles, that projected a "progressive" attitude. Around 1920, that preference seems to shift to a desire for "tradition."

It is not an accident that the many of the Colonial Revival Style homes in McKinney are on Waddill Street, once considered the most prestigious area of town. This wide street on a hill offered the perfect setting for large, stately structures. One of the first Colonial Revival Style homes to appear on the street was built in 1915 for attorney Sam Neathery. This home revives the architecture of the Federal Style with its classic portico centered on a symmetrical facade. Other houses, such as the one A.J. Martin built for Robert D. Erwin, followed.

Not everyone could afford a true a large Colonial Style home but the style was so popular, builders found ways to satisfy the demand with smaller versions of the style. The house built at 1102 W. Virginia Street in 1935 for bank cashier Newton Burkett shows an attempt to downsize the Mount Vernon Style into a smaller house. This re-proportioned house assumes a quaint, cottage appearance as opposed to the stateliness of the original.

Another attempt to downscale the Colonial Revival Style can be seen in the house built for hardware store-owner Washington Byron Hope on Tucker Street around 1936. The W.B. Hope House has the columns, balustrades, dormers, and even a cupola.

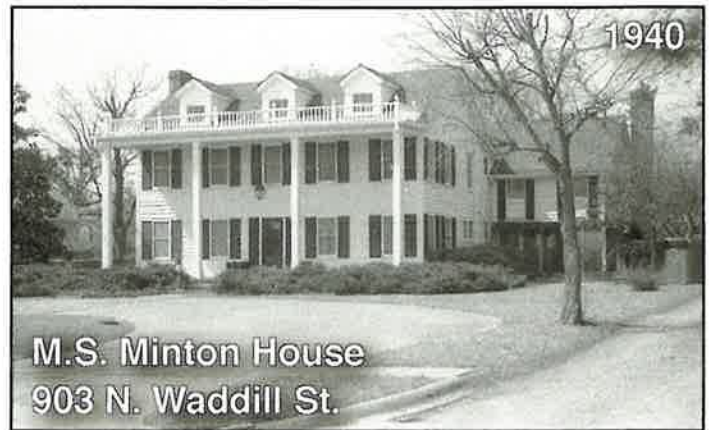


It is the truest imitation of Mount Vernon that exists in McKinney, albeit a somewhat diminutive one. It is not known whether Mr. Hope's first name influenced his home design choice. Nevertheless, this house preserves more of the stately character of the iconic original.

The Minton House built by contractor Lee Elliott in 1940 follows a more literal translation of the stately Mount Vernon Style. The symmetry, dormers, portico and massing are all Colonial Revival elements and the way they are used in this house approaches a faithful projection of those qualities Washington's house is known for.

Other notable McKinney homes that followed the style are the Ben Hill House built in 1941 and the Earl Walker House built in 1950 (also built by Lee Elliott).

Interest in the Colonial Revival Style ebbed during WWII but never went completely out of style. Because of its connection to the historical foundation of America, it still appeals to those who appreciate a grand expression of tradition.



Work of Arthur 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.

