

E. Narrative History

Texas joined the United States in December of 1845 which sparked the Mexican-American War. Troupes from the United States were sent to enforce the new International border created when Texas joined the Union. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the dispute in 1848 but it took two more years for the U.S. Congress to establish the actual borders of the State.

In 1850, Peter H. Bell, the third Governor of Texas, signed a Letter of Patent granting to William Davis two thirds of a League and one Labor of land (3,129 acres) situated "in the waters of East Fork of the Trinity including the town of McKinney." This grant affirmed Davis' ownership of land that was given to him by the Republic of Texas in 1841 in exchange for his assistance in the Republic's fight for independence. This two-mile by two-mile tract of land was situated on East Fork of the Trinity River in what was then Fannin County. When the Republic of Texas joined the United States of America, several counties were subdivided into smaller units. Collin County was such a county, carved out of Fannin County.

The town of Buckner, being the largest town in the county, was deemed the seat of the new county until the 1848 State Legislature required that the seat be within three miles of the geographical center of the county. A new site was choose by open election where only 11 people voted due to heavy rains that made getting the to polls impossible for some people. The new location that was chosen sat in the southwest corner of William Davis' tract.

In 1849, William Davis, along with his wife Margaret, "donated" 120 acres of this southwest corner of his original tract to the County Commissioners which became the new town of McKinney. At the time of his donation, he 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. This 120 acres became known as the McKinney Original Donation and was divided into 87 blocks which were to be sold to finance the City of McKinney. As a side note, despite being one of the County's largest landholders, Mr. Davis abandoned his wife and child after making his land donation and headed to California for several years in search of gold.

Block 85 of the Original Donation, located near the northwest corner of the city, was purchased by Dr. Gerald A. Foote, a distant relative of George Washington, in 1852.

Mr. Foote sold the property to Robert L. Waddill in 1856 for \$100. The raw land traded hands around half-a-dozen times before any structure appeared on the property, according to the Sanborn Maps prior to 1902. Prominent farmer J.L. Greer owned the property for four months in 1902 but probably did not live there. However, since he sold the property for \$1,000 more than he paid for it, it is likely that he is responsible for the structure that appears on the 1902 map. The first person known to own and reside in this house was insurance agent E.T. Fant who added to the rear of the house sometime before 1908. He sold the house soon after he became the manager of the Burrus Mill in Fort Worth in 1910.

The property traded hands another five times until Prof. Thomas J. Taylor purchased the property in 1914. Professor Taylor was selected to be the principal in an Allen school then later in a Prosper school. Because of these appointments, he did not make the home his permanent residence for another two years. In the summer of 1916, Prof. Taylor ran for and won the Democratic primary for Collin County District Clerk. He, along with this wife Alice and their three children, then moved into the house. In December, Prof. Taylor died leaving the family in a difficult financial state.

After the death of Prof. Taylor, his widow Alice moved to Weston with her three children in order to teach school. She, also, likely worked on the family cotton farm in some capacity. An article appearing in the *Courier-Gazette* suggests that she and her three children spent the fall of 1917 picking cotton. In 1918, Alice sought the same office her husband had held. She emerged victorious and returned with her family to McKinney and moved into the house on North Church Street.

In 1922, Alice moved the existing house off of the lot and hired contractor Andrew J. Martin to build a new six-room home. Mr. Martin was a popular contractor at the time and built many such wood-frame houses around McKinney. However, Mr. Martin was also a skilled builder of brick homes and built a Colonial Revival Style house in the same year for insurance agent Robert D. Erwin who lived two doors south of Alice's lot.

Alice lived in the house until her marriage to cotton-ginner Albert F. Tidwell in 1930. After her wedding, she continued to own the house but rented it to various tenants for the next 22 years. Among those renting the house included her son Floyd as well as non-family members Ridgell M. McKinney, grandnephew of Collin McKinney. She maximized her rental potential by configuring the house to accommodate two families.

In 1952, when Alice was 67, she sold the lot and house to construction manager Dale

Thurman who owned the adjoining lot to the north. He did not reside at either of these lots but rather made them available for rent. Mr. Thurman is also responsible for subdividing the lot he purchased from Alice to create a lot fronting Wood Street. The Alice Taylor house changed hands several times over the following decades and was not occupied by an owner until Jimmy L. Hill moved in two years after he purchased it in 1975.

The historical significance of the Alice Taylor House is two fold. First, its is a craftsman-style creation of one of McKinney's most significant builders. Secondly, the house belonged to the first woman elected to a Collin County office, a truly precedent-setting achievement. The home and its various owners have contributed significantly to the history of McKinney and Collin County.