

The Perkins House
605 N. Bradley Street
McKinney, Collin County, Texas 75069

By: Faith M. Kuczaj
605 N. Bradley Street
McKinney, TX 75069
469-742-9822
Faith.mckinney@yahoo.com
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Introduction: McKinney's Roots

William S. Peters and his associates were hired by the state of Texas to entice settlers to move to the area called Peter's Colony in 1841. Settlers were usually offered up to 640 acres of land, a gun and help building a cabin. They braved the elements, wild animals, and native Indians for the possibility of a better life. They found Wilson Creek and the East Fork of the Trinity River provided ample water. The land was fertile but could be as hard as rock so only the most tenacious of them stayed to establish farms, communities and commerce in the area.

In 1846, the majority of northeast Texas, which was then called Fannin County, was divided into Collin County and several other counties, each of which was thirty miles square. The Texas Legislature decreed that a county seat had to be within three miles of the center of the county so a rider could get from the edge of the county to the county seat and back home in one day. [1] The population of Collin County voted on two viable options – what is currently McKinney and a spot near Sloan's Grove, what is currently Fairview. Mother Nature's torrential downpours and rushing creeks made it impossible for Sloan's Grove voters to cast their votes on voting day, so McKinney won the vote for county seat. The state legislature passed an act establishing McKinney as the county seat of Collin County on March 16, 1848.

Both Collin County and the city/county seat of McKinney were named after pioneer and land surveyor Collin McKinney. He contributed to the draft of Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico, which he also signed in 1836.

McKinney's population and commerce did not explode until the Houston and Texas Central Railroad came in 1872, solving the challenge of transporting goods and people in and out of town. Cotton was king in Collin County and it generated a tremendous amount of revenue from many sources including cotton gins, cotton compresses, and a textile mill – The Texas Cotton Mill Company. It was only one of two mills west of the Mississippi that manufactured color-print cloth. It later became a major manufacturer of denim. [2] But, the huge yields of grains like corn, wheat and oat also influenced the area's growth.

In 1883 the city's first telephone exchange arrived. By 1885, McKinney enjoyed newspapers, banks, flour mills, an opera house, churches and two thousand residents. [3] In 1887, citizens organized the first volunteer fire department to protect their growing city. In 1889, the first electric lights dispelled the darkness. In the 1890s, many of McKinney's leading citizens built the large, impressive historic homes that are a significant part of our city's charm today.

605 N. Bradley – Owners in the Early Years

While it is unclear if the house at what is now 605 North Bradley Street was built at the time of his ownership, it is clear the Geo W. Fox owned/sold said property to W.W. McDowell in 1892. [4]

Geo W. Fox was “one of McKinney’s most successful businessmen for seventeen years [who] entered the retail grocery business at 21 years of age.” [5] His store “handle(s) the best grade of staples and fancy groceries and guarantees satisfaction.” [6]

W.W. McDowell who purchased the property from Mr. Fox was also in the retail business in McKinney selling clothing and groceries on the west side of the square. [7] He was an excellent marksman who regularly competed in the weekly competition among the members of The McKinney Gun Club. [8] Mr. McDowell was ordained a deacon of the New Christian Church by Elder Charles Carlton in December, 1897. [9] His wife was a member of The Owl Club, which was organized in 1893 as one of McKinney’s first women’s civic clubs (see photo which possibly depicts 605 N. Bradley in the background). [10]

The Perkins Family

While 605 N. Bradley’s previous owners were successful businessmen in their own right, it is Tom W. Perkins, who purchased the property in 1898 from John S. Bristol for \$1,237.50 and lived there until late 1905 [11], that is of significant interest. Tom W. Perkins was born in Lamar County to Dr. and Mrs. J.W. Perkins in 1872. He lived in Collin County for fifty-seven years (from the age of seventeen until he died in 1946). He married Sallie Faulkner in/near 1892, which was also when he was admitted to the bar at the age of twenty. According to the 1900 United States Census, he was a twenty-eight year old printer by trade with three children – Marie, age 7; Maxwell, age 4; and Leonard, age 1 -- when he and his family owned 605 N. Bradley. They also had a servant, Leslie Ray, age 12.

“The McKinney Gazette came into existence May 4, 1886, with Clint Thompson, fresh from his experience on The Democrat, as publisher, editor, and owner. On January 21st,

following (1887), the Gazette plant went up in smoke when the West side of the public square burned where the paper was located. Mr. Thompson resumed business with a job printing plant, but didn't resurrect the burned-out Gazette plant until October, 1889. The late Ernest Parker joined him in renewing the publication of the Gazette after the burnout, but after a year he sold his interest in the same to Clint Thompson who continued as sole owner and editor until 1897 when he sold a half interest to Tom W. Perkins. The latter ran the paper for a year, then buying out the interest of Mr. Thompson and continuing the paper until 1906. In the meantime he established The Daily Gazette in 1899. On July 15, 1906, Mr. Perkins combined his papers with those of Walter B. Wilson, forming the firm of Perkins & Wilson, as editors, publishers and proprietors of The Daily Courier-Gazette and The Weekly Democrat-Gazette. [12]

Tom Perkins was among a group of McKinney businessmen who organized The Possum and Tater Club, a men's social club that was 'tongue in cheek' and for fun only, on December 4, 1901. The first big dinner was held at the New Century Hotel with a big 'possum and tater spread' for all members, supervised by Editor Tom W. Perkins of The McKinney Gazette, and Jim W. Dockins, the toastmaster. [13]

Tom Perkins was the brainchild of the bandstand at Finch Park. [*Way It All Began*, pg 31] He was part of another group of distinguished McKinney citizens who wanted to bring a new railway that would connect McKinney with the West. It would be called the Texas, New Mexico, and Pacific Railway. While plans were made to build a roadbed from McKinney, with the city buying 209 acres for a shop and roundhouse to be located near the Cotton Mill, the cost of building the right-of-way (estimated to be \$1,000 per mile) contributed to it being the 'railroad that failed.' [14]

However, that did not stop Tom W. Perkins, he went on to become mayor of McKinney from 1905-1906 and 1923-1928 according to *City of McKinney History 1180-1910*. In fact, Tom W. Perkins; a printer, editor, Democrat, Elk, Mason, Knight of Pythies, Woodman, and president of The Possom and Tater Club, then went on to win the race for State Senate in 1908. [15] He was highly regarded as an “able and effective speaker...loved by all his friends...was a progressive citizen who took the lead in all movements having the improvement and betterment of the city and community as their objective.” He was the president of the Texas Press Association; a member of the House of Representatives and the State Senate of Texas; a 32nd degree Masonry and a Shriner. He was the first president of the McKinney Commercial Club, the forerunner to the present Chamber of Commerce. [see obituary]

Subsequent Owners

As you can see from the Owner History, subsequent owners of 605 N. Bradley Street were many. J.E. and Lillian (Lillie) Mallow purchased the home from N.L. Talkington in 1906. They sold it to their daughter, Lillian Mallow (Chaddick) in 1925 but continued to live there until the 1940s. J.E. worked as a patent agent and then in real estate according to the 1910 and 1920 U.S. Census reports. Lillie was a stenographer for the McKinney Chamber of Commerce (note that Tom W. Perkins founded that organization). Lillian Tobey, the wife of Thomas Tobey, was a noted stained glass artist in McKinney and worked at Chestnut Square.

The House Itself

Based on the Texas Historic Sites Inventory Form, 605 N. Bradley is an example of the most common regional plan type – an L-plan one-story frame dwelling with weatherboard

(cypress) siding, gable roof with composition shingles and box eaves. The windows are wood sash double-hung with 1/1 lights. The single door primary entrance has a transom. The three-bay port with shed roof within the front projecting wing has turned wooden posts, and squared wood balusters, jig-sawn.

According to Deborah Kilgore, acting curator of the Collin County Historical Society and Museum, "In 1902 your house number was 509 at the time but there would be a number of changes by the post office between 1902 and 1924 for house numbers. As you can see your house had a small front porch and a smaller back porch. There appears to have been a small room built on the south side between the original house and the back porch. This map helps document how old such an addition is. The house was listed as a 1 story wood house with shingle roof. There is no change to the house in 1908 but a great change in 1914. Your house gets a new number 605 N. Bradley and the back has been enlarged. There is no longer a back porch. Again these maps are important because they document changes that are 100 years old. The June 1920 seems to show a slightly different outline. One that is closer to the original footprint of your house. I am sure the Guy will have an idea of why 1920 is different from 1914. By 1927 there are some additional structures on your property. None are labeled A for auto so they are not a garage but might be a barn for a large garden, even a chicken coop or piggery. They seem to large to be outhouses. Once again, the outline of your house has changed with a little extension to the south and a small stoop out back that may hint at where the kitchen was at the time. The final Sanborn map took the 1927 map and simply pasted updates over it in layers to 1960. It shows no changes to your property although the house south of you goes away." [in an email dated 01/19/2016]

There is classical detailing on door and window surrounds and at the eaves. The front door was featured on the cover of *McKinney* magazine in March, 2013. It is “an Eastlake door, original to the Victorian residence. It represents the late 19th century American fascination with Hints on Household Furnishings, Upholstery and Other Details (1872, Amer.) by English architect Charles Eastlake. His style was marked by multicolor schemes and architectural ornamentation that imitated intricately turned furniture.” The four original rooms; now used as bedrooms, a living room and a dining room; all have decorative trim around the ceilings, floors, windows, and doors that ranges in size from 5-8” in width. The ceilings are over ten feet tall in three of the four original rooms.

According to McKinney Main Street Project research, baths and a rear room were added about 1920, at which time J.E. Mallow and his family owned the property. The kitchen was updated in the late 1980s when the Williams’ were owners. A deck and carport were added prior to 1996 when the Mitchells owned the property. A shed was built in 2010 and a new wooden fence was built in 2013 when the Tobey’s lived here. Lillie Tobey designed stain glass specifically for the front bedroom, and dining room, which hang in those windows. A stained glass sculpture that she created is permanently planted in the backyard.

The footprint of the exterior of the house has remained basically intact since the additions in the 1920s. According to local carpenter, Jim Coulshaw, the weatherboard is cypress that was affixed to the structure by handmade nails. The wooden windows are original to the structure with the exception of the small kitchen window, which was replaced with a

Pella window in the 1980s. There is evidence of fireplace bricks under the house but there is no detail of when it was removed or by whom.

The current owner, Faith Kuczaj, has completed the following work:

- Sistered garage rafters
- Build a service platform in the attic
- Replaced all the HVAC ductwork in the attic
- Repaired/weatherstripped the two original front doors
- Replaced part of rotted weatherboard siding and exterior trim
- Caulked exterior trim/windows
- Installed missing roof flashing/drip edge
- Rebuilt frame/threshold and installed wooden door to old carriage house
- Completed inspection report electrical issues
- Had exterior windows re-glazed
- Replaced/rebuilt front porch rotted railings, floorboards and steps

In Summary:

605 N. Bradley has many distinctive features that make it worthy of historical designation as well as eligible for Level 1 Tax Exemption:

- 1) The distinction of being owned by Tom W. Perkins who published McKinney newspapers, founded McKinney organizations, served as mayor, was an ardent supporter of improvements for the city, and went on to serve the state. Can you imagine the topics of conversation that these walls must have heard?
- 2) The distinction of having been built, albeit modestly in comparison to some, with architectural ornamentation and a front door influenced by architect Charles Eastlake.
- 3) The distinction of have the front door on the cover of *McKinney Magazine*.
- 4) According to Deborah Kilgore, acting curator with the Collin County Historical Society and Museum, "...as part of the historic resources study of McKinney that lead to

the creation of our historic district, your house was rated "high" for preservation priority."

Email dated 01/19/2016