

## Evolution of 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.

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 same architectural vocabulary.

Just before the 20th Century began, however, new architectural forms offered by the Prairie, Craftsman, 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 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.

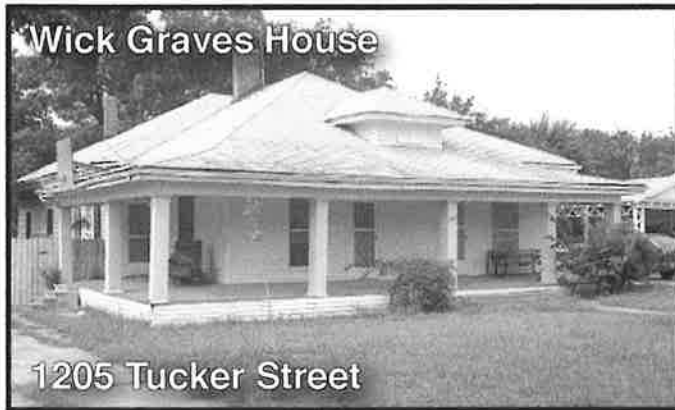
McKinney builder W.J. Higgins built the Brooke House at 608 W. Hunt Street in 1910. It appears that neither the builder nor the client was ready to embrace the “modernness” of Flander’s designed. Instead, the Brooke house preserves the gabled pavilions and proportions of the Queen Anne Style while adding 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 <sup>built</sup> the street at 613 W. Hunt Street was probably built 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.





## The Work of William J. Higgins

The pictures on this page are known structures built by William J. Higgins. He was born in Arkansas in 1850 and began his carpentry career in McKinney around 1900. He was a skillful builder of wood-frame homes in the American Foursquare style and applied its characteristics to nearly everything he built. His larger homes often have both Victorian and Foursquare elements in them. However, the Bush House at 211 N. College Street shows that he was capable of building structures that clearly expressed the Prairie Style.

Higgins is also known as the building of the Foote Baptist Church which he built in 1908. This building was moved from its original location in 1994 to be a part of Chestnut Square Complex.

Higgins was a prolific and well-known builder whose death in 1927 came as a surprise even though he was 77 years old.



### EXCERPTED FROM HIS OBITUARY:

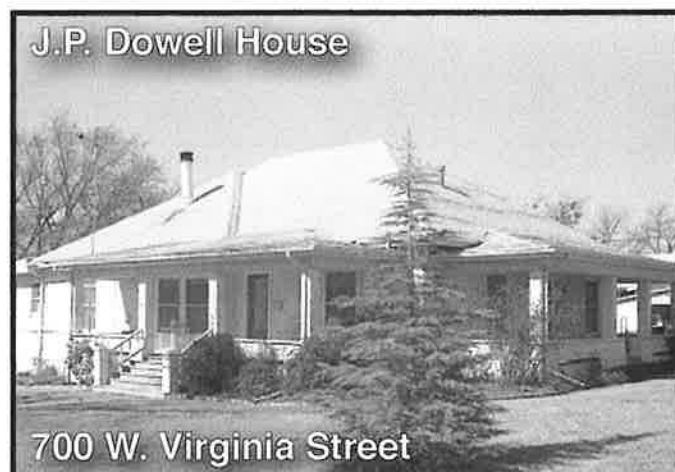
William Jordon Higgins was born near Eureka Springs, Ark, March 23, 1850. His parents were Rev. Phillip N and Mary Elizabeth (Culwell) Higgins. His father was a local Methodist preacher.

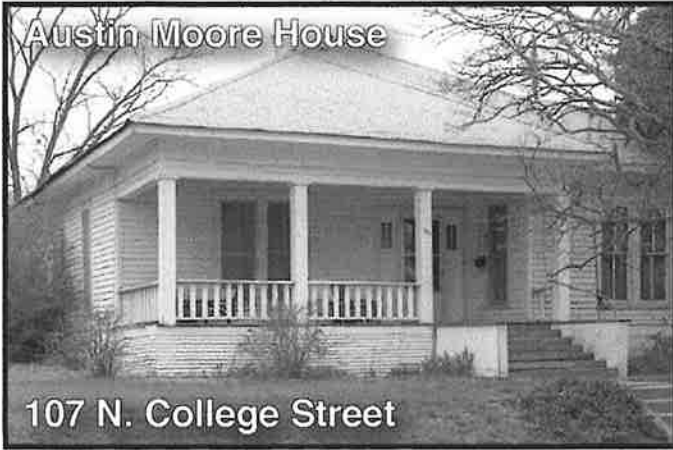
When the deceased was only nine years old his parents left Arkansas for Texas. His mother sickened and died en route.

The father and his children settled at Springtown in Parker County, Texas, where they lived until the close of the Civil War, which during the conflict the father and two of his brothers all died. The deceased and his brothers and sisters then all went to their relatives in the Weston community about fourteen miles northwest of McKinney.



The deceased was married July 25, 1875 to Miss George Ann Bates, daughter of John C. and Elize Bates, a pioneer Collin County couple. Their marriage ceremony was performed by Rev. J.A. Moore, a Baptist minister who was a brother of the late Dr. W.T. Moore, former county treasurer of Collin County. Five children were born to their union.





The deceased was a citizen of a ruggedly honest type of character. For sixty years, Collin County has been his home. When he first engaged in farming, he opened up a farm about four miles east of McKinney, clearing the thickly wooded land with his own labor and marketed the cord-wood in McKinney. He later sold his farm to engage in carpenter work in McKinney at which trade he succeeded. He built many barns, residences, business houses in McKinney and different parts of the county.



He combined the virtue of industry, rugged honest, dependability and expenses in his work which all enabled him to succeed in life in a moderate business way. By his thrift and sound business judgment, he accumulated some city property and did his full share in a civic way as a citizen and property owner. He was considerate of the fights and feelings of others who's sympathy always went out in behalf of the sorrowing, the bereft, the suffering and the unfortunate.

*McKinney Democrat-Gazette, July 28, 1927*

