

## **B. Historical Figures**

### **William H. Matthews (1866-1931)**

William H. Matthews arrived in McKinney in 1906 at the age of 40 to establish and manage one of the city's largest dry-goods store on the Square.

William was the son of Coleman G. Matthews and Annie Buchanan of Groesbeck, Texas, about 30 miles east of Waco. Groesbeck is best known for being near where Cynthia Ann Parker was kidnapped by Comanches in 1836 and who later became the mother of Quanah Parker, the last Comanche Chief.

William and his brother Perl were partners in a dry-good business in Houston for two years before moving their headquarters to Ennis where they opened a store in 1906 along with a store in McKinney, managed by William. The Matthews' store in McKinney was located in the Waddill Building on the Square at the corner of Kentucky and Virginia Street. The store operated at this location from 1906 until the brothers sold the store in 1920. The Waddill Building was destroyed by fire in 1928 and replaced by the Ritz Theater building which occupies the site today.

When William Matthews first arrived in McKinney in 1906, he and his wife (also his cousin) Daisy rented rooms at the New Wade Hotel while he worked to get the store up and running which opened in February of that year. In October, William and his wife purchased a house from J.A. Rogers on the northwest edge of town. The house they purchase had been originally owned by W.R. Hill who sold it to Mr. Rogers in 1904. Mr. Rogers had the house moved from the corner of Tucker and College Streets to the lot that would later become 403 Tucker Street.

William and family lived on Tucker Street for about eight years. In 1910, the Matthews household consisted of his wife Daisy, their adopted infant son Frank, William's father Coleman, and Daisy's nephew George Copelin. Around 1912, William had a new brick house built at the corner of Hunt and Benge Streets. After moving into his new house, he began renting out the Tucker Street house.

The Matthews Brothers Store (also known as the Big Daylight Store) was a great success. The store was well-known for its customer service, even offering home delivery with their horse-drawn wagon. The company motto was, "Give one and all a square deal, from the least to the greatest." In 1910, the brothers re-newed their lease

and negotiated more floor space which doubled the size of their store. The second and third floors of the store were accessed by an electric elevator which could hold up to eight people. The elevator is cited as the first of its kind in McKinney.

The business was best known for selling clothing and dry-goods but after the store's expansion, other wares were added to its inventory. One of these items was a product called Essenkay which was a substance one could inject into an automobile tire to prevent punctures and blowouts. Mr. Matthews was the exclusive agent in McKinney for this automobile accessory.

William was an active member of the McKinney Chamber of Commerce, an Elk, and a deacon in the First Christian Church. His business success gave him the resources to accumulate a substantial portfolio of residential real estate properties. In 1920, he and his brother sold the store to the Hudson, Davis & Company of Dallas. William stated his reason for leaving the business in a newspaper article claiming that, "He had realized for some time that the business needed a more aggressive management than the condition of his health would permit."

After selling the business William, his brother, their wives, his niece Flora, son Frank all moved to Long Beach, California. There, the brothers engaged in the real estate trade including the purchase of a 48-room apartment. In 1930, William, Daisy and Frank were living at 1208 Cedar Avenue. William Matthews died in his Long Beach home in April of 1931. He is buried at the Sunnyside Cemetery in Long Beach.

### **James Calloway Copeland (1854-1944)**

James C. Copeland was a farmer in Princeton, Texas for many years before becoming a piano salesman for the J.T. Couch Music Company of McKinney, a dealer for Gulbransen player pianos.

James was born in Rome, Georgia in 1854 to Alexander Copeland and Miranda Tate. The family moved to a farming community in Grayson County, Texas around 1871. James was the second oldest of eleven children and took up farming as an adult in the Weston area near Anna.

In 1878, James married 16-year-old Sarah Frances Young, daughter of Emanuel M. Young and Marsella Sheppard of Oklahoma. Sarah's father Emanuel was a 1st Lt. Col. in William Fitzhugh's 16th Cavalry Regiment during the Civil War. This regiment is

best known for its engagement in the battle at Milligen's Bend, Louisiana which pitted Confederated troops against a Union force composed mostly of former slaves recruited by the North. The battle was violent with each side reporting casualties of nearly 50% killed or wounded. It was one of the first Civil War battles involving African-American troops, demonstrating how well free and former slaves could perform as soldiers.

James and Sarah Copeland had eight children. They lived and farmed in Weston until moving to Princeton, Texas around 1910. At that time, James became associated with the J.T. Couch Music Company in McKinney as one of the firm's outside sales representatives responsible for selling the Gulbransen player pianos among other brands. Gulbransen was the largest manufacture of player pianos in American and the first to make an upright piano with player-piano action. James' experience as a farmer allowed him to be an effective salesman as he traveled around North Texas. A 1926 article in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* claimed "he has the distinction of having sold more Gulbransen pianos to the country trade than any other man in the United States." The writer of this article also revealed Jame's strategy for success.

Mr. Copeland says that no real piano man will leave a piano on trial. He takes a Gulbransen on his wagon (pulled by a mule team) to the farm home and eats chicken and dumplings, ham and hominy or hog jowl and turnip greens with the farmers until he closes the sale.

James' business success allowed him to purchase the six-room home at 403 Tucker Street in 1920. He and Sarah moved in with their four children, Lela, Monnie, Roberta, and Wilma. The family lived on Tucker Street for five years before moving to a larger house at 1108 West Virginia in 1925.

In 1935, Wilma Copeland received a degree from East Texas State Teacher's College and two years later a Master's degree from Texas A&M. She left home when she married fellow teacher Thomas B. Cathey in 1939. She taught school in Texas, California, and Alabama for nearly forty years. She died in 2005 and is buried along with her husband in the Copeland family plot at the Pecan Grove Cemetery.

James' eldest daughter Lela taught music before accepting an assistant cashier position with dry-goods store owner Morgan Weaver in 1919. A few years later she began working as a stenographer in the Collin County Tax Office. By the early 1930s, she was elected to the County Treasurers Office, a position she held for four years before making a failed attempt to run in the Democratic primary for County Clerk in 1938. In the

mid 1940s, she regained her original position as County Treasurer but lost that position in a re-election bid to Jack Ray in 1948.

James C. Copeland died in 1944 at the age of 90 after a long bout of senility caused by arteriosclerosis. Lela, who had continued to live with James following her mother's death in 1935, took care of him during his decline. Lela died in 1951.

### **Dixie Lawrance Watkins (1879-1933)**

Dixie Watkins was born in Lebanon, Tennessee, the son of Mr. and Mrs. James T. Watkins who arrived in Collin County when Dixie was an infant. Dixie operated several successful garages in McKinney including one on North Tennessee Street in the building that is now occupied by Local Yocal.

The Watkins family settled in the farming community of Weston, about 10 miles north-west of McKinney. When Dixie was in his early 20s, he and his brother Charlie moved to Omaha, Nebraska. Periodically, Dixie would return to Weston where he owned a threshing business along with Joel Burger. Mr. Burger was also in the automobile repair trade in McKinney where owned a garage near the Square. The Burger garage was described by the *McKinney-Courier Gazette* as being the "neatest and most up-to-date automobile garages in this part of the state." Even in the first decade of the 20th Century, the repair business was a competitive field and knowing one's customer and creating a good experience was not to be overlooked if one wanted to succeed. In 1911, a reporter writes this about the Burger Garage:

*The most attractive feature of his garage is a ladies' waiting room furnished with old Mission furniture throughout. In the sitting room, he has a nice writing desk, a library in which he has a full set of the American Encyclopedia, consisting of fourteen volumes. The room is cut off from the noise and odor of the mechanical room, and is indeed a comfortable rest room for guests.*

Around 1913 Dixie Watkins moved to McKinney and purchased a half-interest in the Burger Garage which was to relocate to North Tennessee Street in the building now occupied by Local Yocal. The firm of Burger & Watkins operated for about a year on North Tennessee before Dixie sold his interest to his partner. In 1915, the Watkins family left McKinney to return to Weston where Dixie continued in the gin and threshing business. The family's departure was short-lived with them returning to McKinney and purchasing a home on Bradley Street in the fall of the same year. Ironically, exactly one year after Dixie sold his interest to Mr. Burger, Dixie teamed up with new partners to

buy out Mr. Burger's garage. The new firm, which included Walter Cockrell and Jess McClusky, became known as the Standard Garage. A newspaper article appearing in 1923 attributes the first car repair in Collin County to Walter Cockrell.

In October of 1916, the new firm leased space from G.I. Wilcox who erected a new, two-story brick building on the east side of North Tennessee Street, across the street from the garage's previous location. The Standard Garage operated next door to the offices of the McKinney Courier-Gazette until 1918 when it was sold to new owners Aubrey Hamilton and W.C. Patterson. Apparently, the terms of sale did not include a non-compete agreement since one month later Watkins and Cockrell opened a new garage near the Square on West Louisiana Street. They occupied the new location only temporarily while James P. Dowell built a new building on North Tennessee Street for them to lease. The new location was at the corner of Tennessee and Hunt Streets, a mere block north of the Standard Garage which they sold to Hamilton and Patterson.

The Watkins & Cockrell garage operated successfully for over a decade. Not only did they repair automobiles, they also sold them. They were dealers of the Oakland Six, the Essex Coach and the Hudson. They were also dealers for Michelin Tires.

Along with Dixie's financial success, he became increasingly active in real estate investment and purchased a new Dallas apartment building in 1928. However, despite his growing real estate interest, Dixie remained active in the automotive trade. In August of 1929, Dixie sold his interest to his partner Walter Cockrell. A few months later Dixie teamed up with his former partner Joel Burger to start a new gas station on East Virginia Street, across from the Post Office (now the Collin County History Museum). However, before the end of 1930 Burger and Watkins sold their business to mechanic Ed Walden. A newspaper article at the time cited retirement as the reason for the sale. Nevertheless, in April of 1931, Dixie purchased another service station near the Square on West Louisiana Street, just west of the Harris Building on what is now City Parking Lot #2.

At the beginning of Dixie's career in the McKinney automobile repair business, he married Ruby L Brown, a member of one of Weston's oldest, most prominent families. The *McKinney Courier-Gazette* was effusive in its praise of her on the occasion of her marriage to Dixie in January of 1914:

*The bride is a daughter of Wm. Brown of Weston. She is a most attractive young lady in face and form and possessed of all the graces of noble, womanly character that command admiration and respect... These*

*papers join in congratulations to Mr. Watkins on the prize he has won and wish for the happy couple a long life of prosperity and marital bliss.*

Eleven months following their wedding, the couple welcomed their first (and only) child, Dixie L Watkins, Jr. into the world. The family lived on Bradley Street until moving to Tucker Street in 1919. The couple divorced in May of 1926. The timing of their relationship difficulties coincided with Dixie's purchase of the house at 403 Tucker Street. After owning it for three years, he sold it in 1928.

The 1930 Census shows Dixie and his 15-year-old son living together in a boarding house on South Kentucky Street. By 1933 they were living at 501 North Bradley. Dixie died in November of 1933 due to a stroke. He was interred in the family plot at McKinney's Horn Cemetery near Erwin Park. His ex-wife Ruby remarried paint salesman Walter J. Davis. She died in 1974 and is buried at the Hillcrest Cemetery in Dallas.

## C. Property Ownership

**Address:** 403 Tucker Street, McKinney, Texas 75069

**Legal Description:** McKinney Original Donation, Blk 87, lot 258a

Purchase Date	Seller	Buyer
Spring, 1841	Republic of Texas	William Davis
Jul. 26, 18??	William Davis	Collin County
Apr. 2, 18??	Collin County	G.A. Foote
Jan. 15, 1858	G.A. Foote	Eliza Jane Foote
Apr. 2, 1884	Eliza Jane Foote	J.S. Jenkins
Jan. 10, 1900	Mary E. Jenkins <sup>1</sup>	W.L. Nelson
Jan. 11, 1901	W.L. Nelson	J.A. Rogers
Oct. 6, 1906	J.A. Rogers	W.H. Matthews
Dec. 10, 1919	W.H. Nelson	Ward Hart
Jan. 6, 1920	Ward Hart	W.C. Shirley
Jan. 30, 1920	W.C. Shirley	J.C. Copeland
Apr. 6, 1925	J.C. Copeland	D.L. Watkins
Jan. 12, 1928	D.L. Watkins	Frank Blackwell
Jun. 22, 1939	Frank Blackwell	Ike L. Smith, Trustee
Jul. 22, 1942	Dollie Smith Neely <sup>2</sup>	Roy C. Knox
Jul. 12, 1952	Roy C. Knox	H.B. Thompson
May 7, 1956	H.B. Thompson	T.L. & Minnie Carr
Aug. 11, 1969	Pauline Carr	Mary Lee Bell
Jan 2, 1979	David Bell <sup>3</sup>	Ann C. Greengus
Apr. 6, 1981	Ann C. Greengus	John M. Kever
Mar. 1, 1984	John M. Kever	William D. Walker
Jul. 31, 1996	William D. Walker	Stacey & James Sweet
Jan. 21, 2004	Stacey & James Sweet	Kobey Seale

<sup>1</sup> *Widow of J.S. Jenkins*

<sup>2</sup> *Trust Beneficiary with Ike L. Smith, Trustee*

<sup>3</sup> *Heir of Mary Lee Bell*

## D. Tenant History

W.H. Matthews rented out the house from 1915 to 1919. One of his tenants was chiropractor Dr. Gregory Gould in 1916.

## 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 square-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 87 of the Original Donation, located in the northwest corner of the city, was purchased by Dr. G.A. Foote. The Foote family divided the block into three lots selling



the two northernmost lots (258 and 259) to attorney John S. Jenkins in 1884. The 1897 Sanborn Map shows a house on each of these lots facing east on Bengé Street. When this map was published, J.S. Jenkins was the owner both of these lots. However, neither house appears on the 1902 maps when the property belonged to a subsequent owner.

In 1901, J.A. Rogers purchased the two lots from W.L. Nelson. Three years later Mr. Rogers purchased a house which sat on property belonging to William R. Hill who lived on the northwest corner of the intersection at Tucker and College Streets. Mr. Roger's purchase included only the house which he moved onto his Tucker Street lot, facing the house north. The footprint of this house appears on the 1908 Sanborn Map. This is the house and lot that William H. Matthews purchased in 1906 when he came to McKinney to begin his dry goods business. Mr. Matthews lived in the house until around 1912 when he moved to a new house built for him on Hunt Street.

W.H. Matthews' business furnished him plenty of cash with which to buy property. Not only did he keep his first home to rent out but purchased other properties as well. As a strategy for maximizing his cash flow, Mr. Matthews divided his Tucker Street lot along a north/south axis and built a rent house on the east lot at the corner of Tucker and Bengé Street.

Around 1920, W.H. Matthews moved to California and sold the west lot and house to piano salesman James C. Copeland who lived in it for five years. Mr. Copeland sold the property in 1925 to automobile dealer Dixie L. Watkins who lived elsewhere on Tucker Street but was dealing with his divorce at the time. Mr. Watkins purchased the property for \$2,250 in cash and a 60-day \$1,750. He also borrowed additional money from the United Savings Bank of Detroit. This, along with the evidence of a new footprint in the 1927 Sanborn Maps, indicates that he is responsible for remodeling the original house into the basic structure seen today. This theory is supported by the fact that when Dixie sold the house in 1928 he was able to make a 20% profit on the sale. Though it is not known exactly where Mr. Watkins lived during the three years he owned the property, it is he who gave the house its symmetrical facade with the centrally located portico and its Craftsman-like accents. It is likely that Dixie's brothers-in-law Ike and Nathan Talkington were responsible for its construction.

In 1928, D.L. Watkins sold the house to farmer turned real-estate dealer Frank Blackwell who lived in the house for a decade. In 1939, he sold it to a trustee of Dollie Smith Neely. The trust held the property until selling it to Roy C. Knox in 1942 who sold it in 1952. Following Mr. Knox's ownership, the property has been owned by eight sepa-

rate families, including its current owners.

The home at 403 Tucker Street is unique due to its evolution. It began as a late 19th Century house sited on McKinney's original plat and over the decades changed with the times as did the town itself. It was home to some of the town's best-known residents who contributed socially and economically to the town's history. The current owners are an extension of the principles that have shaped the house from its beginning. Though they have made their own contemporary alterations, they have used materials and construction consistent with maintaining the home's own evolving architectural origins.