

# City of McKinney

## Historic Building Marker Application

(Supporting Documentation)

### The Anne McKey House

615 North Church Street



## A. Alterations & Construction

### Construction

The Anne McKey House was built in 1919 as a six-room bungalow with a second story sleeping porch. The house is a wood-frame structure on a pier-and-beam foundation with simple a square footprint. The roof plan involves intersecting gable roofs. The interior floor is made of pine and the home is fenestrated with the original vertically-oriented four-over-one sash windows.

The home design with its broad roof, overhanging eaves, and wrap-around porch follows the Craftsman Style popular in the early decades of the 20th century. This style of architecture was a thrifty alternative to the more elaborate Victorian style which preceded it.

The architectural significance of this house derives from its deliberate expression of the Craftsman Style and its generously sized porch on the southeast corner of the house.

### **Alterations**

Little exterior alteration has occurred since the home's original construction in 1919. In 1975, the owners who purchased the house from Anne McKey added a sun-room at the rear of the house, turned the upstairs sleeping porch into a bedroom and converted the attic into additional living space. A subsequent owner made alterations to the interior and added French doors to a first-floor living area connected to the porch. The current owners have restored the altered living area by removing the French doors and replacing them with windows originally used in the rear of the house.

### **Anticipated Needs**

Since purchasing the house in 2017, the current owners have painted the exterior and interior of the house, restored the front porch, added a laundry room and updated the bathrooms and kitchen. They have gone to considerable expense to stabilize the foundation and address drainage issues on the property. Looking ahead, the owners have no immediate plans to perform further upgrades.

## **B. Historical Figures**

### **Anne Belle (McWilliams) McKey (1882-1977)**

Anne Belle McWilliams arrived in McKinney at the age of 11 in 1893. At the age of 20, she married a railroad-depot telegrapher but became a widow at age 29 and worked in sales for many years before becoming a corsetiere for the Perkins Brothers Company.

Anne's story begins with her mother Belle Means in Holly Springs, Mississippi. Belle's parents were plantation owners and were among the town's first settlers. Belle's husband William McWilliams was the deputy sheriff of the town and worked for his brother, Sheriff Robert A. McWilliams. A newspaper article from 1893 indicates that William brought suit against his brother for his salary of \$50 per month and "promised the public some further developments as regards to the sheriff's office." The details of the dispute are beyond the scope of this research but around that same time Belle appeared in McKinney with their three children Anne, John and Roy. William McWilliams was never heard from again. Two years later, William's brother, the sheriff, attempted to take his own life. It is not certain that these incidents are related but it does suggest some family discord caused Belle to settle in McKinney. Curiously, Belle indicated that she was a widow on the 1900, 1910 and 1920 census even though her husband did not die until 1923.

Following the Civil War, there were several Holly Springs families that moved to McKinney. Perhaps the most notable among them was the Abernathy family. Several of its members were judges and lawyers. The Abernathys were one of McKinney's preeminent families. Belle's sister Emma married Ed Abernathy while Belle's aunt Lucy married William M. Abernathy. Since Ed and William were brothers, this meant that Lucy and her niece Emma were sisters-in-law. (See the genealogy on page 34).

When the 28-year-old Belle arrived in McKinney with her three children, they rented a house on Bengé Street near her sister Emma. At the time, Roy was 8, John was 3 and Anne was 11. Belle worked as a saleslady in a department store as did Anne when she was old enough.

In 1902, Anne married James A. McKey (pronounced "Macky") who moved into the house on Bengé Street to live with the McWilliams family. The census from 1910 indicates that James was the head of the household living with his wife Anne, their daughter Rosa Belle, mother-in-law Belle, and brother-in-law John.

James McKey was born in Myles, Mississippi in 1871 and moved to Dallas at the age of twenty to work for the Houston & Texas Central Railroad Company (H&TC). Six years later he accepted the position of operator and ticket clerk at the McKinney depot. In 1911, he died of pneumonia when was 39 years old leaving Anne to raise their two children, Rosa Belle and infant son James, Jr. The following year tragedy struck again when twenty-one-month old James, Jr. died following a short but agonizing illness.

Following her husband's death Anne, continued to work as a saleslady at the Cheeves Brothers Dry Goods Store where her mother Belle also worked. The three-story building at the corner of Tennessee and Virginia Street was owned by the International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F) who used the top floor for their meetings but rented floor space below to businesses. The building was commonly known as the Mississippi Store because of a previous tenant. On January 23, 1913 the store was holding a ladies' white-goods sale when the building suddenly collapsed killing eight people and trapping dozens more. Many of those trapped in the collapsed were injured including Belle who was hospitalized and bed-ridden for nearly a month.

A few years later, the household on Bengé Street consisted of Anne, her sixty-year-old mother and her seventeen-year-old daughter Rosa Belle. Her brother Roy left McKinney to join the Wells Fargo Company and moved to Sherman. Her other brother John became a Presbyterian minister working in Panama. In 1919, Anne sold the house on Bengé Street and had a new house built at 615 Church Street on a lot her husband had purchased before his death. Anne hired J.E.Cooper to build a six-room bungalow with an ample veranda and second-story sleeping porch. The construction was completed in June.

In the 1930s, the Anne, Belle and Rosa Belle continued to lived together. Anne continued working in sales and in 1937 traveled to Dallas to attend a corsetiere class given by the H.W. Gossard Company. Anne applied what she learned to her job with the ladies' ready-to-wear department of Perkins Brothers Company located at 101 E. Louisiana Street. Rosa Belle who was in her late 20s worked as a school teacher.

In 1932, Rosa Belle married local journalist Henry Mouzon. The couple moved to Fort Worth for many years which left only Anne and Belle living in the Church Street house. However, following WWII Rosa Belle and Henry returned with to McKinney with their two children. During most of the 1950's, the household consisted of four generations of family members including, Anne McKey, Belle McWilliams, Rosa Belle and Henry Mouzon along with their children Henry, Jr. and Dorothy.

Both Anne and Belle were active in the First Presbyterian Church of McKinney. They joined in 1895 when the church was a wood-frame building on the corner of Hunt and Tennessee Street. When a new brick church was built on the corner of Kentucky and Lamar Street, Anne was the first bride to have a wedding in it. Years later, Anne (along with the preacher's wife Mrs. R.L. Cowan) was responsible for raising funds for a large stained glass window for the church she was wed in. That church was razed in 1967 and a new one was built at 2000 W. White Street. The window Anne helped the church buy is now placed high above the entrance of the present building. At the time of their deaths, Anne and Belle were the church's oldest and longest serving members. Belle died in 1959, just three days shy of her 99th birthday. Anne died in 1977 at age 95.

### **James Calvin Rhea (1837-1925)**

In 1855, when J.C. Rhea was 18 years old, his mother and father Joseph R. Rhea migrated to Texas from Tennessee. The Rhea family settled about 10 miles west of McKinney in the area now known as Rhea Mills. James and his older brother, William, purchased and operated a wool carding machine there for the purpose of preparing wool for spinning. Later, they began milling grains and thus became the name sake for the area. Their success in the ginning and milling business gave them the capital to invest in land throughout Collin County.

In 1861, James became a member of Company D, South Texas Cavalry and was wounded at the Civil War Battle of Corinth in Mississippi. His brother William lost a foot in the same battle. They both returned to Texas after the war to continue their successful business operations. Ironically, three years after losing a foot in the War, William married a woman named Ella Foote, the daughter of Dr. Gerald A. Foote, a prominent McKinney doctor and businessman.

In 1874 at the age of 37, James Rhea married Mary Gossett. Two years later James secured a post office for the Rhea Mills community and became its postmaster for three years. He resigned in order to spend more time on his various business interests which included a mercantile store and real estate.

James and Mary moved to McKinney in 1892 eventually retiring from active business. While in McKinney he was a member of the Central Presbyterian Church and staunch advocate for Prohibition. Though he held no political office, he chaired the county committee that helped Prohibition become law in 1902.

When James C. Rhea died on March 19, 1925 the McKinney mayor Tom W. Perkins issued a resolution that flags be flown at half-staff and City offices to be closed in honor of Mr. Rhea's passing.

### **James Edward Cooper (1864-1936)**

James E. Cooper was born in Missouri in 1864. He was an active builder/architect in McKinney during the first part of the 20th Century. The story of the builder's arrival to McKinney begins with his grandfather's desire to join the Texas Revolution.

James Cooper's grandfather, Thomas A. Cooper, was born in Tennessee in 1812, spending his early life on the family farm. It happened that the governor of Tennessee when Thomas Cooper was a teenager was Sam Houston. Years later when he heard that Mr. Houston was in Texas leading a rebellion against Santa Ana, Thomas Cooper joined two companions and headed to Texas to help. They called themselves "the company of Highlanders." The trio gathered British muskets in Nashville and made their way to New Orleans. Once there, they set out for Shreveport in a skiff underestimating how long the trip would take them. They had hoped to join the Texas army and help Texas gain its independence from Mexico but because of their delay, they arrived at the San Jacinto battlefield seven days after Sam Houston accepted Santa Ana's surrender.

Thomas A. Cooper did not return to Tennessee but instead settled in the new Republic of Texas at Independence in Washington County. He married Miss Mary Ann Boyd. In 1838, she gave birth to their son, Thomas D. Cooper. The family left Texas to return to Tennessee just before the Civil War broke out. When there were calls for volunteers, Thomas A. Cooper immediately joined the Confederate Army. He served two years under Gen. Morgan. While engaging in a raid in Kentucky, he was captured and confined for two months in the Louisville Barracks before being paroled.

After the War, Thomas A. Cooper spent time expanding the size of his family as he moved from Kentucky to Tennessee, then Missouri. The elder Thomas Cooper fathered 13 children between 1838 and 1863. In fact, his youngest child was born within a year of the birth of his first grandson. Some time after 1880, Thomas A. Cooper, along with his son and grandson, returned to Texas settling in McKinney where they worked as a carpenters. Thomas A. Cooper's wife Mary Ann died in 1885. That same year the widower moved to Dallas where he died in 1913 at the age of 101. Meanwhile, his son Thomas D. Cooper and grandson James E. Cooper remained in McKinney. Both "Uncle Tom" and Jim Cooper were well-known in the building trade.

Jim Cooper married twice. His first wife was Mineola Walker, the daughter of William M. and Bettie (Levy) Walker. Jim and wife "Minnie" had three children Mineola, Bettie, and Walker. His wife Minnie died in 1924. Years later he married Della J. (Sparks) May, also a widow.

Jim Cooper was affiliated with two prominent fraternal orders, the Woodmen of the World (W.O.W), and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.). In 1909, Jim Cooper was affiliated with the Magnolia Camp, No. 431 of the W.O.W. The group took its inspiration from the pioneer woodsman who cleared away forests to provide for his family. This imagery became a metaphor for the organization's mission which was to "clear away problems of financial security for its members." When Jim was a member, the local camp claimed over 400 members. That same year the Magnolia Camp hosted a regional class initiation where about 1,500 people were initiated "into the forest." It was estimated that more than 5,000 members visited McKinney to witness the ceremony. In 1914, the Camp built a two-story brick building at 119 S. Tennessee Street to become its new home.

The organization that Jim Cooper was most dedicated to was the I.O.O.F. The mission of the organization was to "visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan." The Empire Lodge No. 68 was one of the largest and most active in Texas. It was successful enough to be able to own its own three-story brick building on the northeast corner of the McKinney Square. The Lodge met on the third floor with the other floors leased to businesses.

Unfortunately, tragedy struck on January 23, 1913 when the building collapsed unexpectedly killing eight people. The Lodge moved its meetings to the Masonic Lodge on North Kentucky Street and continued to add new members and serve the community. It was after the 1913 tragedy that Jim Cooper was elected to the position of Noble Grand of the Empire Lodge No. 68. This position is equivalent to a chairmanship. It was a difficult time for the Lodge as it spent the next three years in litigation defending itself against law suits filled by the families of the victims.

Finally, in November of 1916 the Empire Lodge was forced to file for bankruptcy after \$51,000 in civil judgments were levied against it, ending its 62 year presence in McKinney. In its place a new Lodge arose financed by mill magnate J. Perry Burrus. The new Lodge was named W.C. Burrus Lodge No. 953 in honor of the benefactor's father. The Lodge rented the second floor of the building at 211 N. Tennessee and was comprised

of essentially the same members as the earlier Lodge. In 1926, Jim Cooper was presented with a "jewel" honoring his 25 years of continual membership in the order.

Jim Cooper was known as one of the best builders in McKinney. His client list of homes reads like a Who's Who of McKinney. He built for E.L. Swaim, Fred Brannon, George Fox, J. Perry Burrus, Rev. E.E. King, A.M Welford, and Vernie Graves. His commercial work included the Harris Funeral Home, Dowell Garage, the additions to the Cotton Mill and remodeled storefronts for J.C. Penny and Dowell Hardware.

Though he was best known for this buildings, perhaps his most notorious and historically significant project was the construction of gallows for the third, and last, legal hanging in Collin County in 1922. He and his crew of four carpenters spent four days erecting the structure in the south yard of the County Jail for farmhand Ezell Stepp who was convicted of murdering his boss Hardy Mills a year earlier.

Jim Cooper die in 1936 at the age of 72 of a bladder infection. He was survived by his second wife Della, daughters Mineola and Bettie. His son Walker preceded him in death by two years. He is buried in Lot 4 of Block 55 of the Pecan Grove Cemetery. No other family members are buried with him.



## C. Property Ownership

**Address:** 615 North Church Street, McKinney, Texas 75069

**Legal Description:** W.A. & J.C. Rhea Addition, Lot 2a

Purchase Date	Seller	Buyer
Spring, 1841	Republic of Texas	William Davis
Jul. 26, 1841 <sup>2</sup>	William Davis	John B. Denton
Jul. 26, 1872	A.N. & J.F. Denton	James & William Rhea
May. 17, 1884	James Rhea	Annie Laura McAulay
Mar. 20, 1908	Annie Laura McAulay	Eula McCroskey.
Dec. 23, 1909	Eula McCroskey	James A. McKey
Jul, 15, 1975	Anne Bell McKey	Jerry & Peggy Weems
Sep. 30, 1994	Jerry & Peggy Weems	Mark Sells & Rhonda Green
Sep. 17, 2001	Mark Sells & Rhonda Green	Michael L. Peckham
Oct. 26, 2004	Michael L. Peckham	Natalie & William Rohloff
Jan. 30, 2007	Natalie & William Rohloff	John & Julia Copeland
Sep. 15, 2014	John & Julia Copeland	James D. Huffman
Sep. 5, 2017	James D. Huffman	Jocelyn & Lance Miceli

<sup>1</sup> *The Republic of Texas grants Wm. Davis 3,129 acres. Reaffirmed by the State of Texas in 1850.*

<sup>2</sup> *William Davis promised to sell J.B. Denton 640 acres.*

## D. Tenant History

Tenant history is same as deed history. However, the list below shows the people who lived in the Anne McKey house when Anne owned it.

Anne McKey: 1919 - 1975

Belle McWilliams: 1919 - 1959

Rosa Belle McKey: 1919 - 1932, 1945 - 1968

Henry Mouzon, Jr.: 1945 - 1964

Henry Mouzon, III: 1945 - 1953\*

\* Attended college at S.M.U. and T.C.U from 1953-1957. Married in 1958 and took a job in Fort Worth.

## E. Narrative History

Texas joined the United States in December of 1845 which sparked the Spanish-American War. U.S. troupes were sent to enforce the border claims of the 28th State as it joined the Union. The treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo ended the dispute in 1848. 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. However, years before his grant was recognized by the State of Texas, William Davis made his living by selling and trading tracts of his land.

In the Summer of 1841, William Davis promised to sell John B. Denton (for whom the city and county of Denton is named) 640 acres of land from his original 3,129 grant. At the time, Mr. Denton was a member of the Texas Militia under Brig. Gen Edward H. Tarrant. Unfortunately, John B. Denton was killed during a skirmish with Indians east of Fort Worth. This promise which involved a bond for title was never recorded but Mr. Denton's heirs sued William Davis for performance of the bond. The case lingered in court until Mr. Davis died in 1868. He left no will which only added to the property's legal ambiguity. Sallie, his second wife, became the administratrix of the estate and party to the suit in 1869. The suit went to a jury trial and the verdict found in favor of the plaintiffs. However, the Denton heirs were only awarding half of the 640 acres that was promised because there was not enough of the Davis tract left to fulfill the entire bond.

In 1872, the 320-acre land award was subdivided among the heirs of John B. Denton. One such 4.86 tract was assigned jointly to three of his children, John B. Jr., John F., and Ashley N. The following year the children sold this tract to William & James Rhea for a total of \$379. The pioneer mill owners William and James Rhea could arguably be called the fathers of the industrial age in Collin County since they were the first to use steam power in their mills.

Soon after the Rhea brothers purchased the tract, they began selling lots in the southern portion. In 1884, Anne McAulay purchased the lot which is now at 615 Church Street. Anne was the sister-in-law of Edwin McAulay who organized the First Prebyterian Church in 1874. The congregation met in Edwin's house until their first building was built in 1876.

The Rhea bothers jointly owned the tract until William's death in 1906. James held the property along with his brother's heirs until 1911. When James Rhea was 74 years old, the remaining acreage was subdivided into 12 lots on North Church Street that became the Rhea Addition. The real estate firm of Scott & Emerson ran ads in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* offering these lots for sale to the public.

Anne McAulay owned her unimproved lot until selling it in 1908 to Eula (Means) McCroskey of Holly Springs, Mississippi. Eula had two sisters and an aunt living in McKinney at the time and according to the *McKinney Democrat* was considering moving to the city herself. One of Eula's sisters along with her aunt were married to members of the Abernathy family while her sister Belle (Means) McWilliams was living as a single mother with three adult children on Benge Street.

Eula decided not to move to McKinney and instead sold the lot to Belle's daughter Anne and her husband James McKey in 1909. Anne and James McKey paid \$360 for the lot. They did not build on the property but rather continued to live on Benge Street with their young daughter and Anne's mother and brother. That living arrangement evolved dramatically over the next several years. In 1911, James died. A year later, widow Anne's infant son died. In 1913, the Mississippi Store collapse left Belle injured and unable to work. In 1914, Brother-in-law John married and moved away.

Eventually in 1919, Anne hired carpenter J.E. Cooper to build a six-room bungalow with an upstairs sleeping porch on the lot on Church Street that her husband had purchased. This bungalow became home to Anne, her mother and her daughter Rosa Belle. The three lived together until Rosa Belle married in 1932 and moved to Fort Worth with her husband Henry Mouzon. Anne and Belle were the only ones living in the house until Rosa Belle returned with her husband and two children after World War II.

This living arrangement lasted until the children were adults and moved away. The household tragically dwindled in size as Belle died in 1959, Henry died in 1964 and Rosa Belle died in 1968. After a lifetime of living with relatives, Anne was 86 years old and living alone.

At age 93, Anne moved to Presbyterian Village Nursing Home in Dallas and sold the house to Jerry Weems in 1975. He and his family owned it for the next 19 years.