

604 Heard St., McKinney, TX 75069

Owner: Ceilidh (Susannah) Charleson-Jennings

Alterations

While the structure of 604 Heard St. remained completely unchanged for the first 55 years of its existence, the original family still in possession of it into the early 1960s, family accounts mention that a hackberry tree in the front yard was felled by winds accompanying the May 1948 McKinney tornado which passed blocks to the south. With one of the last surviving daughters of the original family *in* the house, that tree landed on the roof and front porch and apparently was tumbled from west to east across the front of the house, badly damaging much of the porch's roof structure and one exterior wall and window—though miraculously, the home's beautiful Eastlake front door was untouched. The owner inside, Florence Talkington Warden, 69, emerged unharmed.

The porch was rebuilt in a much simpler style afterward – with straight columns and no ornamentation, save a Greek revival peak over the front steps-- and the damaged wall and window were repaired (a companion window as added) though some of the trim elements from the original were saved kept in a shed on the property. The Talkingtons had a history of frugality and preserving anything that might be used later—which is to this house's good fortune. (Current owners have the original key to the front door.)

The house wore that simpler look through the 1980s, when a restorer returned it closer to the original, adding back the turned wood Queen Anne columns, the porch railing, the “gingerbread” corbels, and the spandrels, some of these original to the house and others crafted to the same

design. A later owner/restorer raised the porch back to its original floor elevation and returned the stairs and handrails to the original design, as well.

At some point in the 1950s, two back service porches were incorporated as extensions to the kitchen area of the home. While the original shape of both porches remains and the elevation of the home little changed, those porches, now enclosed, have been part of the house for almost 70 years and may have been separate “dining” areas for each of the tenants that rented the home when it was used as two apartments divided by a central hallway and kitchen.

The current 604 Heard bears a close resemblance to the original in both design and color scheme, which was learned from an elderly 2010 visitor who had briefly lived with the family during the 1918 Spanish Influenza pandemic.

Historical Figures / Historical Information Associated with the House

604 Heard (previously numbered as 26 Heard in the early 1900s and 500 Heard in the 1920s) was built by **Leonidas “Lee” M. Talkington**, with the assistance of his sons Charles Isaac “Ike” and Nathaniel “Nat” Talkington. Theirs was one of the founding families of Collin County and McKinney, and they are buried in the Founders section of Pecan Grove cemetery. Though the family had come from Kentucky before the Civil War, and Lee Talkington had co-founded one of the first schools in Collin County west of McKinney (Hackberry later called Vineland, in 1858) and had a substantial farm in Bloomdale, Talkington had suffered progressively worsening strokes in the Texas heat and moved with his wife, Margaret Rector Talkington, into town in 1888 after he was elected **County Treasurer**. They lived in a house on Waddill and then another on Bradley while their own home was being built with the assistance of their sons. **Ike**

Talkington had focused on construction rather than farming and had been a builder on the **Adolphus Hotel** in Dallas, as well as other homes and structures in McKinney. Ike was also briefly implicated in construction work that was investigated as a possible contributor to the 1913 store collapse in downtown McKinney. He, his workers, and the work they had done in the Odd Fellows building were later exonerated.

When the Talkingtons took possession of the Heard Street home, they brought their three youngest daughters, Florence, Josie, and Mary, with them. Though there was not a formal “upstairs” to the home, there is some suggestion in a letter that the three girls climbed a ladder to a sleeping loft in what’s now the attic.

Ike and his wife and children lived in a smaller cottage on the property that sat where the current garage sits now.

Josie Talkington would go on to marry **Walter B. Wilson, owner/proprietor/editor of The McKinney Courier / The McKinney Gazette / The McKinney Courier-Gazette** with Tom. W. Perkins. As Lee Talkington’s health failed and his strokes increasingly debilitated him, the couple moved to the Heard Street house to assist Lee’s wife Margaret with his care. Of note, Walter Wilson was working in the newspaper offices on Tennessee St. when the Odd Fellows building collapsed, killing 8 and injuring many others. According to writer Carol O’Keefe Wilson in her book, *The 1913 McKinney Store Collapse*, Wilson – in his suit and slick-bottomed shoes-- was one of the first on the scene and is credited with pulling the first living victim from the rubble. **Walter B. Wilson would also serve Collin County as Postmaster, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Secretary of the county's Red Cross chapter, and member of the School Board for more than 30 years. He also held various elected offices with the Texas Press Association.**

Leonidas Talkington died in the house in 1912. Josie and Walter Wilson would live with Margaret in the Heard St. home until Margaret's death there in 1929. By this time, **Florence Talkington Warden**, who had married **James H. Warden**, a favored son of a Collin County Sheriff and one of McKinney's earliest firefighters, returned to the Heard St. home a widow and mother, following the murder of her husband on a train platform in Yoakum, Texas. **Jim Warden was returned to McKinney for a funeral in the Heard St. home, with the McKinney Fire Department, including Fire Chief J.S. McKinney, serving as pallbearers.**

Walter B. Wilson died in the home in 1939, leaving his widow Josie and her sister Florence there alone. On the day of his funeral, McKinney was closed for a day of mourning.

At Heard St., Florence and Josie would be joined by sister Mary, also widowed. In the end, Florence was the last of the original family to live there. She built a second house on the property (construction began in 1945 and finished in 1952, and 906 College still exists, also restored), living there with Mary and supporting them both by renting the larger family home as a duplex.

Though the *men* of the Talkington, Warden, and Wilson families often get the credit for notable contributions, it's worth mentioning the stamina and gumption demonstrated by the women of this family across the 65 years they were in this house. Margaret Talkington, described as "the wife of [Lee Talkington's] bosom," had worked the farm beside him, borne nine children, losing one in childhood, and had supported the physically failing Lee for the last 24 years of his life, learning to assist him in such subtle ways that acquaintances and other city and county officials never knew how drastically the strokes were affecting him—mobility diminished but sharp of mind. A 1905 picture of the two of them in front of the house illustrates that relationship. Margaret and Leonidas both stand at the fence. He doesn't look entirely strong,

propping up his toddler granddaughter on a railing. Margaret stands beside him, just a little space away—strong, competent, her gaze direct.

In 1918, the family sheltered a very young child, Elizabeth Miller, who was the granddaughter of a family friend in Kentucky. Lizzie Miller had lost her father and all her siblings to Spanish Influenza, and with her mother ailing, her grandmother in desperation sent the one surviving child to the Talkingtons in Texas, where she lived long enough that she almost didn't recognize her mother when she came to take her home 18 months later.

According to papers in **The Walter B. Wilson Collection (1895-1939) at the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, Austin**, Margaret was “the silent pillar of the family” who instilled in her daughters a similar strength. They would need it. Under pseudonyms (women writers not yet quite respectable locally), both Josie and Florence would write for *The Courier Gazette*, both traveling with Walter Wilson to the Texas Press Association's annual conference. According to family records, in the days following Walter B. Wilson's death, for a short period Josie Talkington had to run the paper, uncredited.

Florence Talkington Warden, the last of the original family in the house, seems to have been a woman of substance. While the second house on the property was being built, Florence survived the 1948 tornado that passed considerably south but sent a tree crashing through the front section of the home. She used the needed repairs as an opportunity to loosely convert the house into two apartments.

A visitor told me this story: In the 1950s, while her new house was a-building, Florence lived in one half of the family home and rented out the other. One very late night she woke to a furious knocking, the roar of a man shouting, her young tenant screaming, and then the sound of splintering wood and shattering glass. Someone had kicked through the Eastlake door. By the

time Florence got from her own rooms into the hallway where the phone was, the man was inside the house—a large man wavering there, his bellows shifting from outrage to confusion. Heavily intoxicated, he had walked home from somewhere to the wrong Folk Victorian on the wrong corner. Assuming he was locked out by his angry wife, he had kicked open the door, only to storm into a house he didn't recognize.

But Florence Talkington Warden recognized *him*. According to my visitor, *the old lady talked him down* and got another neighbor to help him home. Then she cleaned up the mess. My visitor knew the story because his mother had been the young, single tenant who screamed. The girl moved out days later, too shaken to stay.

Florence moved into her new house on the property shortly afterward, renting out the Heard St. house, the door now repaired. A photo from the period shows a fresh clutch of irises planted by the porch.

NEWLY DECORATED 4 RM, BATH APT. reads a *Courier-Gazette* classified published not long afterward. COUPLE ONLY. The next tenants would have to save themselves.

Property Ownership:

Leonidas M. Talkington (original owner)

Josie Talkington Wilson

Florence Talkington Warden

Margaret Warden Cox

Jerry Carlyle Cox

Matthew DuPre (first owner out of extended original family, approx. 2003)

Joseph Ziegler & Young-Sun Ziegler (2004)

“Muddy Dog Ventures” LLC DBA “Porchlight Properties” (2008)

Ceilidh Charleson-Jennings (current, purchased 2010)

Out-of-family rental tenants included:

Johnnie Lawrence Mann and Addie Lee Edwards, 1947-1949

Candace “Cookie” McCall, 1952

M Bryan Berry, 1959

Kenneth Smith, 1964

Ronny Ward, 1964

Brenda Lee Kirbo, 1964 (at age 15, she took the family car without a driver’s license and promptly crashed into another vehicle on College at Hunt)

L V Reid, 1971 (for a time according to classified ads of the period, it seems he was the contact for other applying tenants, though he appears to have never owned the home)

Kelley K Graham, 1999

References:

“Body of Warden Arrives for Burial: Former McKinney Man Slain by Intimate Friend.” *The Courier Gazette*. McKinney, Texas. 23 May 1923, p. 1.

Classified Ads. J-2, Apartments. *The McKinney Courier-Gazette*. McKinney, Texas. 6 January 1962, p2.

“Four Persons Injured.” *The McKinney Courier Gazette*. McKinney, Texas. 16 December 1964. p. 1

Hall, Roy F. “On the Wing Over Collin County,” *The McKinney Daily Courier Gazette*. September 15, 1952. p. 5.

James McCall Fielding. Personal Interview. May 2018.

“Josie Lee Talkington Wilson.” *FindaGrave.com*. Accessed 20 September 2019.

McAlester, Virginia, Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.

“T P& L Power Company Announces New Customers,” *The McKinney Courier-Gazette*. McKinney, Texas. 17 July 1964, p. 5.

Elizabeth Miller Tate. Personal Interview. June 2010.

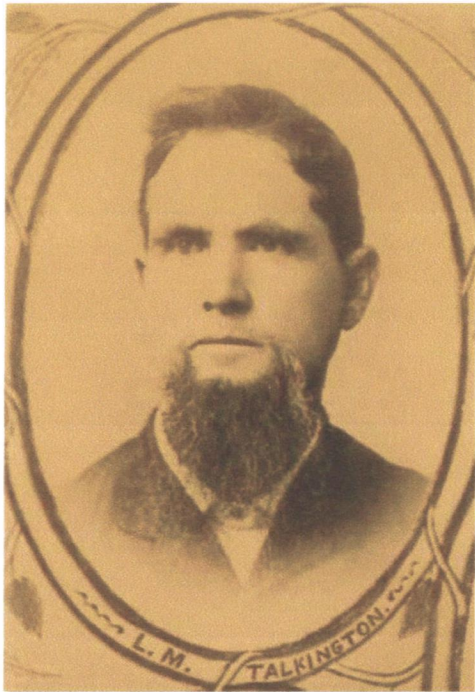
Property Search. *CollinCAD.org*. <https://www.collincad.org/propertysearch?prop=1107929> Accessed 17 September 2021.

“Taps Sounds for Veteran: L.M. Talkington Peacefully Succumbs After Long Fight to Attack of Paralysis.” *The Daily Courier Gazette*. McKinney, Texas. 29 April 1912, p. 1.

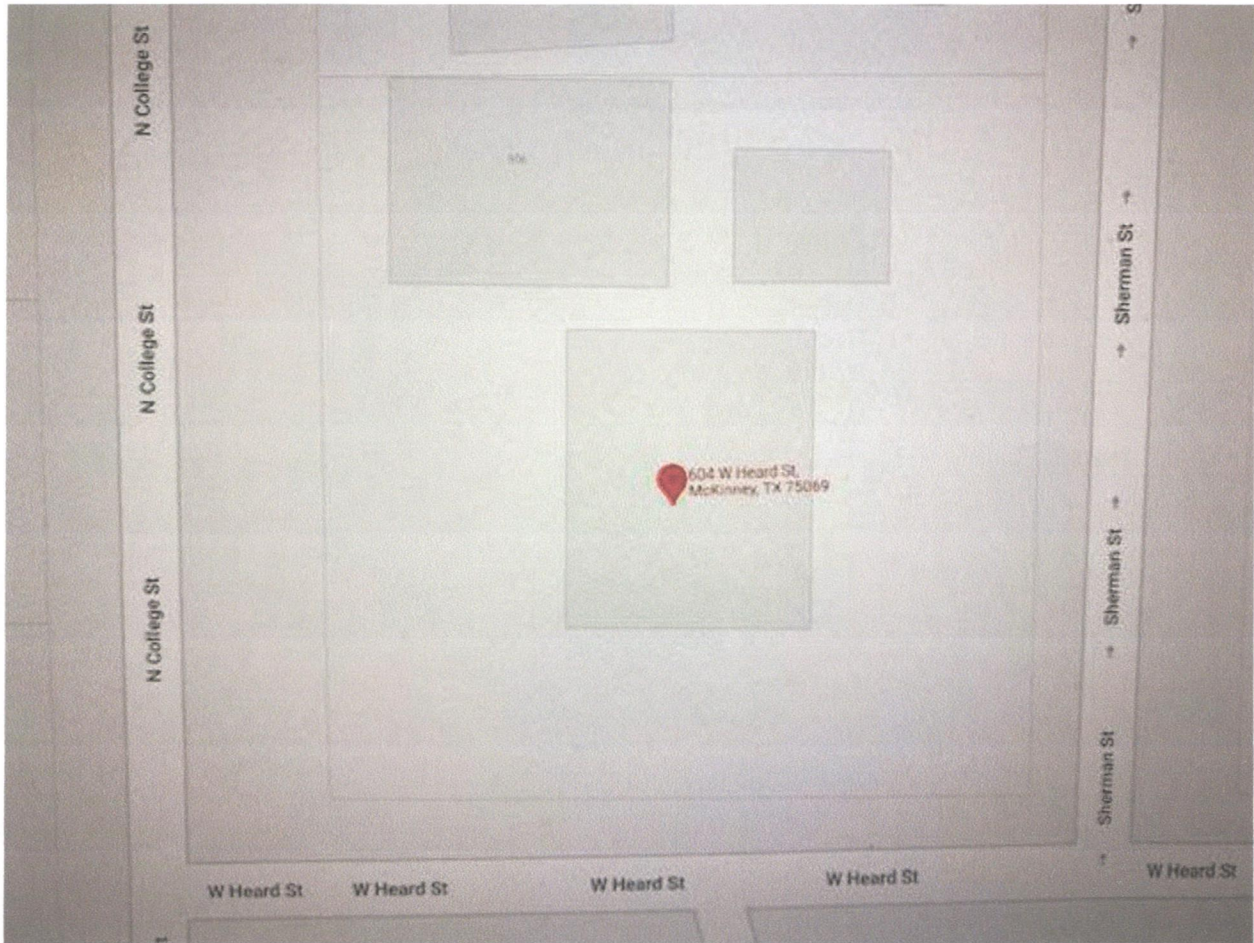
The Walter B. Wilson Collection 1895-1939. Personal artifacts. Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

“Walter B. Wilson.” *FindaGrave.com*. Accessed 20 September 2019.

Wilson, Carol O’Keefe. *The 1913 McKinney Store Collapse*. The History Press, 2018. p. 94.



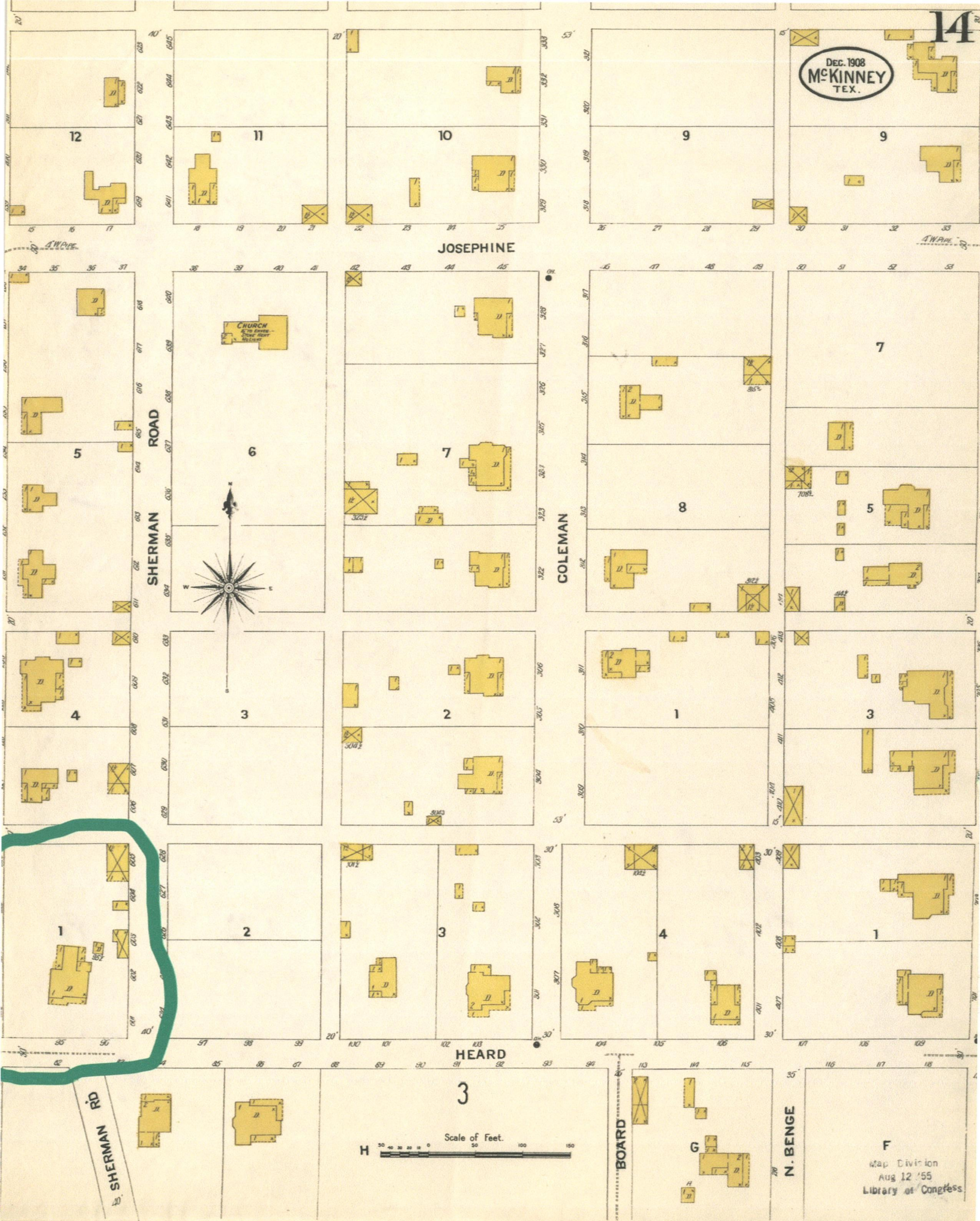
WALTER B. WILSON



Site plan. Original home tagged. Florence Talkington Warden's additional home completed 1952, tagged "906" for 906 College.



Depending on size, marker would go either beneath mailbox or above mailbox on the left side of door.



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin



Margaret Rector Talkington, Leonidas M. Talkington, and granddaughter Margaret Warden at Heard St. Home, 1905.



May 2021



Front of house at corner of College and Heard. O

W



East side of 604 Heard.

R

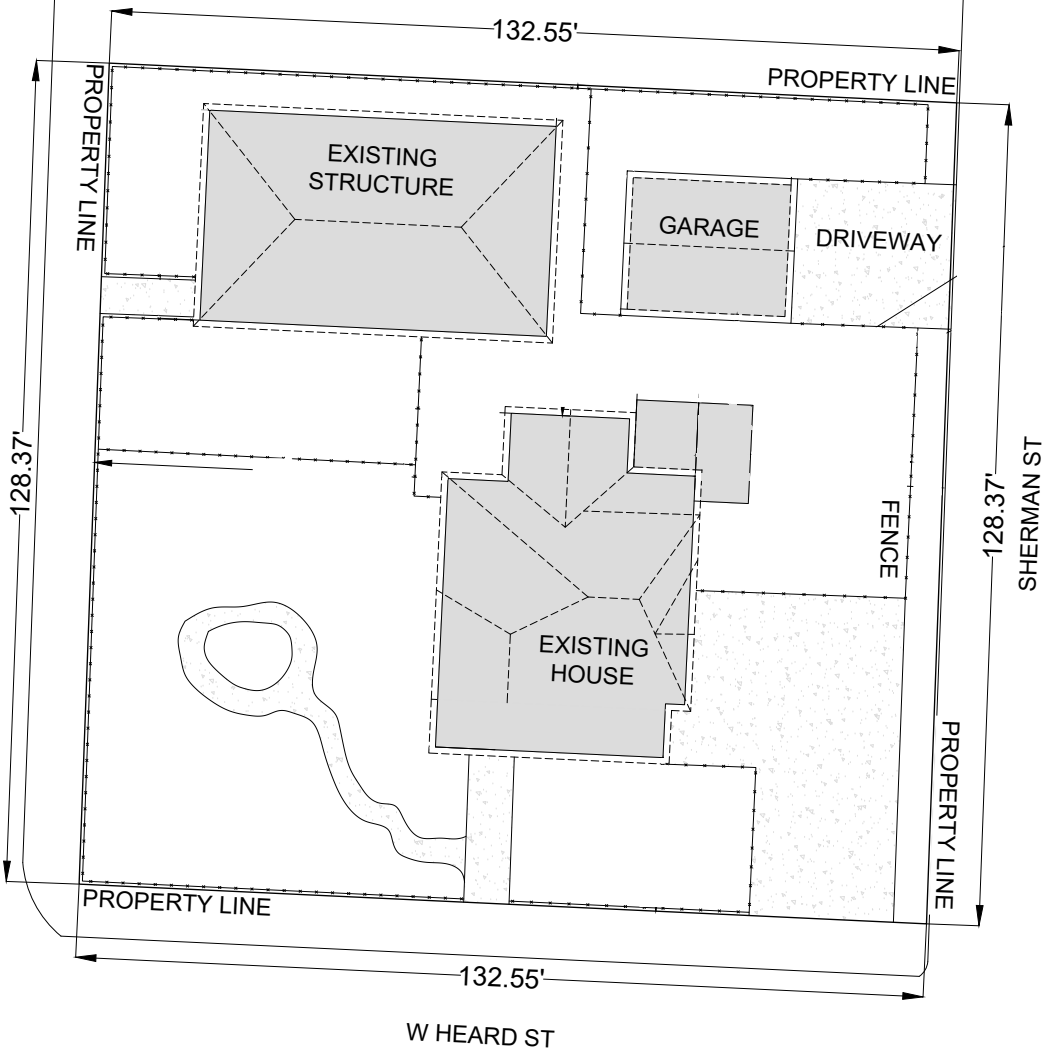


West side of 604 Heard.



Rear of home.

N COLLEGE ST



NOTES:

ADDRESS:
 604 W HEARD ST
 MCKINNEY, TX 75069

SITE PLAN

PARCEL ID: 1107929

LOT AREA: 0.3912 ACRES

PLOT SIZE: 8.5" X 11"

DRAWING DATE: 11/17/2021

DRAWING SCALE: 1"=30'

