

City of McKinney

Historic Building Marker Application

(Supporting Documentation)

The J.P. Harris House 608 W. Virginia Street



A. Alterations & Construction

Construction

The J.P. Harris House, constructed in 1918, is a one-story, wood-frame residential structure built on a pier-and-beam foundation. The house has a gabled roof and an ample porch spanning the south side of the house facing West Virginia Street. Brick work around the porch provides piers that support square, tapering columns. Oak flooring is used throughout the asymmetrical floor plan. The house is fenestrated with large, vertically-oriented four-over-one double-hung windows. The home's design follows the Craftsman Bungalow Style with its exposed rafters, knee bracing and broad, horizontal elevations.

Alterations

The original structure was a six-room home. It is likely that no alterations were made to the house until the early 1930s. Following the death of J.P. Harris in 1932, his widow Hattie turned the home into a duplex with five rooms in each unit. This change of use would suggest that the east bathroom was added at that time and perhaps a small kitchen.

Isaac and Eula Griffin purchased the house from Hattie in 1944. The duplex layout probably suited their needs since the home was simultaneously occupied by the Griffins as well as Isaac's mother and aunt.

Successive owners have also rented all or a portion of the house up until the mid 1980s. During that time it was used as an office for two doctors. Though the interior has experienced a series of alterations, the exterior of the house appears unaltered from its original design.

Anticipated Needs

The current owner purchased the house in 2016 and has undertaken measures to update the insulation, plumbing, foundation and electrical systems. It is the intent of the owner to maintain the integrity of the house while beginning internal cosmetic work, including painting and fixing windows that do not work.

B. Historical Figures

James Patrick Harris (1878-1932)

James P. Harris was a widely-known traveling sales in the wholesale grocery trade. He was born March 27, 1879 in Virginia. He was the son of two highly educated teachers in Virginia. His mother was Rebecca Richmond, a member of a noted Virginia family⁽¹⁾. One of her brothers, Col. J.R. Richmond, was a member of the Constitutional Convention of Virginia and served two terms in the State Assembly before serving the U.S. Congress. James' grandfather, Howell Harris, lived in Southhampton, Virginia in 1831 and was among the white farmers targeted by the slave uprising popularly known as Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion. James' father, Theophilus F. Harris, was a graduate of Emory University. He practiced as an attorney before moving to the Farmersville area sometime after 1880.

James P. Harris, who was himself well-educated, worked as a teacher in the Farmersville area for several years before engaging in business activities at the beginning of the 20th Century. Around this time, he became a traveling salesman for the American Tobacco Company. He held that job for 12 years and later provided the same service to other companies in the grocery industry including the Mayfield Grocery of Tyler and Webster Grocery of Dallas. The Webster Grocery Company was an enthusiastic supporter of the Pure Food Show that exhibited in McKinney during the 1910s. The event focused on all manner of food stuffs and was organized by the First Presbyterian Church of McKinney as a way to raise money for church operations.

In 1914, James married Harriet L. Buck, a woman prominent in the social and artistic activities of McKinney. At the time of their marriage, James was using Dallas as his base of sales operations. He was a 32-degree Mason and a member of the Dallas Scottish Rite. Around 1917, the couple moved to McKinney and purchased a house on a lot that is now known as 608 West Virginia Street. In 1918, James removed the existing house and had a six-room Craftsman Style bungalow built in its place.

As a traveling salesman, James Harris spent much of his time traveling by car to visit accounts. In 1929, after spending a day in Dallas James was returning home to McKinney at 6:30 pm when he was involved in an automobile accident in which he sustained a skull fracture and cuts to his face. He was taken to a Dallas hospital where he stayed for several days.

Though James' participation in the civic affairs of McKinney was limited by his frequent travels, he was an ardent attendee of the church services offered by the First Baptist Church where he was a member. The *McKinney Courier-Gazette* claimed "When in McKinney, he never failed to attend the Sunday School class or church services."

In 1932, James was a sales representative for Hankey & Kinsells, a wholesaler of coffee and spices headquartered in St. Louis. James' success as a salesman garnered him an extended trade territory that included San Angelo, Texas. During a Friday night stay at the Roberts Hotel in that city, he complained of indigestion to the hotel manager and retired to his room. The following morning James was not seen in the lobby. The concerned manager went to James' room to check on him only to find him dead, partially clothed lying across the bed, the result of a possible heart attack

James' body was conveyed to McKinney where Dr. J.H. Cozad of the First Baptist Church conducted the funeral. His burial at Pecan Grove Cemetery was performed under local the auspices of the local Masonic Lodge, Saint John's No. 51. Because of James' extensive business contacts throughout the region, his funeral was heavily attended by out-of-town guests.

(1) Though Rebecca Richmond and her family have close ties to Virginia, the family name has no connection to the city of Richmond, Virginia. The city was named by William Byrd in 1775 because the view of the James River reminded him of his home in Richmond Hill, England.

Harriet Lucille (Buck) Harris (1884-1952)

Harriet "Hattie" Buck was born in Collin County on August 16, 1884. Her father was Civil War veteran Maj. John A. Buck, who breed and raced some of best pacer horses in Texas. Hattie's mother was Susan H. Patillo, whose family migrated from North Carolina to settle in Cass County, Texas near the Sabine River. Hattie's maternal grandfather, Lewis Patillo, was a wealthy slave-owning farmer who was murdered, according to his obituary, in 1861 by Alfred A. Wilson "without cause or provocation."

Hattie Buck attended school in McKinney. Following high school, she attended Baylor Female College in Belton, Texas. After finishing her education, Hattie returned to live with her parents in McKinney. Several newspaper articles speak to Hattie's "charming personality." She frequently hosted and attended events relating to social clubs she was associated with, including the Daughters of the Confederacy, the ^{Rush Light} Rush Light Club, and the Prescilla Club. Each of the clubs she was a part of had something to do with the arts, literature or geography. Though she was not among the founding members of the

Art Club of McKinney which was founded in 1914, she was one of its earliest members and became the club president in the 1930s.

In 1914, the 30-year-old Hattie Buck married traveling salesman James P. Harris in a elaborately decorated ceremony officiated by Baptist minister Dr. E.E. King. Following the wedding, the couple took up residence on Howell Street with Hattie's mother.

In 1932, Hattie's husband James died while on a sales trip to San Angelo. This event was the impetus for Hattie leaving McKinney and moving to Dallas to be closer to her sister Birdie Mae who was also married to a man with the surname Harris, though no relation to Jame P. Harris. While in Dallas, Hattie's connection to McKinney diminished to managing the rental property she owned on Virginia Street.

In 1952, Hattie died in her home in the University Park neighborhood of Dallas. Her remains were transfered to McKinney for a burial at the Pecan Grove Cemetery next to her husband.

Issac Newton Griffin (1903-1985)

Issac Griffin was born in McKinney on Valentine's Day in 1903, the son of farmer James Preston Griffin and Artimissa Black. As was common at the time, farming families tended to be large, close-knit and shared many of the same names. So it was with the Griffins.

Isaac Newton Griffin had a father named **James Preston** Griffin and an uncle named **James Isaac** Griffin. These two brothers moved from Tennessee to Texas with their wives around 1869, eventually settling in the McKinney area in 1889. The two brothers were prominent farmers and partners in a ginning operation known as Griffin Brothers Gin. In 1903, **James Preston** Griffin and his wife Artimissa Black had a child they named "Isaac Newton" Griffin. In 1905, **James Isaac** Griffin and his wife Elizabeth Rutherford had a son they named "James Isaac" Griffin, Jr. Both of these young children went through school in McKinney known as Ike or in some cases Isaac.

James Isaac, Jr. excelled scholastically, participating in drama and debate while in school and went on to be a successful farmer and business man. Meanwhile, Isaac Newton became a civil engineer after attending Austin College.

In 1931, Isaac Newton Griffin married Eula Mae Erwin, whose father was a shoe repairman in Lamar, Texas. Isaac N. Griffin was employed by Lone Star Gas Company

as a surveyor and lived in Ranger, Texas for over a decade. In 1944, Isaac's aunt became a widow when her husband Elmo O. Ragsdale died. Shortly, after that event Isaac N. Griffin and Eula Mae moved to McKinney and purchased the home at 608 West Virginia Street.

In 1946, Eula Mae was introduced to the Pierian Club by Mrs. J.H. Merritt, the wife of the former Chairman of the Federal Reserve in Dallas. The Pierian Club was established in the 1890s as a social organization devoted to charitable work. Such an introduction to this well-established group indicates that Eula Mae was welcomed into the highest strata of McKinney society.

Isaac N. Griffin continued working for Lone Star Gas Company while in McKinney and in 1949 was responsible for surveying the route of a 160-mile natural gas pipeline from Hamilton to Kerrville, Texas. In the early 1960s Isaac and family moved to Allen where he began his own company offering residential surveying services. Isaac and Eula Mae Griffin had one child, Mary Black Griffin who worked as a musical director in the Fort Worth school system.

Isaac and Eula Mae Griffin returned to McKinney in the late 1960s and resided on Barnes Street. Eula Mae died in 1980 and Isaac N. Griffin died in 1985. Both are buried at Pecan Grover Cemetery.

C. Property Ownership

Address: 608 W. Virginia Street, McKinney, Texas 75069

Legal Description: McKinney Outlots, Lot 583a

Purchase Date	Seller	Buyer	Book/Page
7/31/1855	State of Texas	Thomas T. Bradley	I/370
4/10/1871	Thomas T. Bradley	Jane & George O'Brien	U/174
11/9/1888	Jane & W.D. Parker	F.M. & M.Q. Hill	5/36
Sep 28, 1888	F.M. & M.Q. Hill	H.L. Hill	37/634
Jan 21, 1893	H.L. Pearson	I.E. Webb	54/617
Feb 28, 1918	I.E. Webb	James P. Harris	215/633
May 16, 1944	Harriett L. Harris	I.N. Griffin	342/504
Feb 9, 1946	I.N. & Eula Griffin	Mary E. Ragsdale	362/284
Mar 25, 1965	Carlton Black	T.B Derryberry	650/251
Oct 15, 1980	T.B Derryberry	Mark White	1317/826
Feb 17, 1984	Mark White	Jimmy LaFerney	1833/715
Apr 17, 1885	Jimmy LaFerney	Sylvia A. McCollom	2112/20
Aug 22, 1988	Sylvia A. McCollom	Robert G. Hamilton	2902/422
Nov 17, 1989	Robert G. Hamilton	Kenneth W. Atkins	3172/772
Sep 1, 1992	Kenneth W. Atkins	Fleet Mortgage Corp.	92-0063130
Sep 1, 1992	Fleet Mortgage Corp.	Housing & Urban Dev.	92-0066414
Apr 14, 1993	Housing & Urban Dev.	Robert & Robbie Beck	93-0029359
Feb 17, 1999	Robert & Robbie Beck	David & Diane Beat	99-0020319
Sep 14, 2000	David & Diane Beat	Diane M. Beat	00-0138620
Mar 18, 2008	Diane M. Beat	Jill & John Rix	5882/2024
May 2, 2016	Jill & John Rix	Roberta J. Chandler	050400544350

D. Tenant History

Various owners have owned and rented the J.P. Harris house to tenants. Not all tenants can be identified. The following is a partial list tenants (non-owners) and a known date of their occupancy:

Howard & Julia Norwood, 1960

Dr. Jimmy LaFreney, 1985

Dr. Denniss R. Taylor, 1985

E. Narrative History

Edward Bradley came from Kentucky to Texas with his wife Nancy and four children in 1842 to partake of the land being offering by the settlement company known as the Peter's Colony. The Republic of Texas used organizations like this to attract immigrants to the young nation by offering settlers lucrative land contracts. Ed Bradley's family was among the first 200 families to settle in the area. Despite having plenty of land to give away, the Peter's Colony managers had difficulty settling as many people as required by their agreement with the Republic of Texas. Management issues within the Peter's Colony organization led to great legal confusion regarding the titles held by the settlers. It was only after Texas joined the United States that most of these disputes became settled. In the end, Ed Bradley's headright grant of 640 was affirmed. In 1855, Edward Bradley's son, Thomas T. Bradley (1824-1881), was deeded a separate grant signed by Texas Governor Elisha M. Pease for 291 acres situated a half mile west of the McKinney town square.

Thomas Bradley's tract was popularly known as College Hill. Though Thomas was a farmer by profession, he made a good living selling off the land he owned. He even donated two acres to the City of McKinney which is now the site of Caldwell Elementary. Some of the land he sold to real estate developers but he also sold much of it to individuals. In 1871, Thomas' daughter Sarah Jane married George M. O'Brien. That same year, for consideration of "love and affection" Thomas deeded a two-acre parcel to the newly weds. George was a member of the pioneer O'Brien family that settled the town of Buckner, the county's second oldest town. George and Sarah had one daughter in 1872. Tragically, an epidemic of Small Pox broke out in Collin County in around 1873 killing hundreds of people, George was among them. Soon afterwards, Sarah Jane married harness maker W.D. Parker. In 1877, Thomas Bradley corrected the deed that granted ownership to his daughter and now deceased first husband to emphasize that the tract was Sarah Jane's separate property. For whatever reason this was done, five months later Sarah Jane (and her new husband) sold the southern half of the 2-acre tract she received as a wedding gift. Francis Marion "Tuck" Hill, who purchased the property, lived just west of Sarah Jane's land.

Tuck Hill was a well-known former Confederate captain and successful stockman who was known to have hosted several visits of his cousins, Frank and Jesse James, on their visits to McKinney. Tuck purchased Sarah Jane's land for \$175 cash and a note for \$150. Tuck held the property for over a decade. In 1888, he sold an eastern portion of the property to local dentist Dr. Henry L. Pearson (1858-1945) for \$400 in cash and a

\$500 one-year note. The higher price Dr. Pearson paid suggests that Tuck Hill may have built a home on the site prior to the sale.

The footprint of an early structure as it appears on the Sanborn Insurance map of 1902 indicates that it was a modest residence built in the Folk Victorian Style having a cross-gabled roof flanked by a covered porch. Another reason to believe Tuck Hill was responsible for this house is that the neighboring structure to the west was also owned by Tuck Hill and has a nearly identical footprint which suggests they were built at the same time by the same person. Also, since these structures were not occupied by their owners, it can be deduced that these properties were income-producing investment of their owners.

Dr. Pearson held on to his investment for five years before selling it in 1893 for \$1,800 to Dr. Isaac E. Webb (1864-1902), who continued to rent it out. By 1900, Dr. Webb was living in El Paso where he died in 1902. His brother James W. Webb inherited the property and sold it to traveling salesman James P. Harris in 1918 for \$2,500 cash.

James P. Harris (1878-1932) purchased the property in February of 1918 and by May was having a new six-room bungalow built on the property. He and his wife Hattie (Buck) moved into their new house in August. When James died in 1932, Hattie converted the house into a duplex and moved to Dallas to be near her sister. Meanwhile, she rented out both sides of the house on Virginia Street for several years until she sold it to civil engineer Isaac Newton Griffin in May of 1944 for \$1,350 cash and a \$4,500 note.

Isaac Griffin's aunt, Mary (Black) Ragsdale, became a widow in January of 1944. It is likely that Isaac's purchase of the home on Virginia Street was in part to provide a home for her as well as for his own mother. Records show that both Isaac's mother Artimissa and aunt Mary were living in the house early on.

In 1946, Isaac sold the Virginia Street property to his aunt Mary for \$2,300 cash along with paying off the Isaac's remaining balance of a note in the amount of \$3,700. The sale only changed the ownership of the property, not the living arrangements. Isaac, wife Eula Mae, daughter Mary, mother Artimissa, and aunt Mary continued living in the home.

With the death of Artimissa in 1948 and Mary in 1960, it appears that Isaac and Eula Mae continued to live in the Virginia Street house until Mary's brother (and heir) Carlton Black sold it to FAA Inspector Thurman B. Derryberry in 1965. Mr. Derryberry lived in the house for 15 years before selling it to Mark F. White and wife Laurie in 1980.