

B. Historical Figures

Henry Calvin Myrick (1875-1953)

Henry Myrick owned and operated a grocery business in McKinney near the Flour Mill for nearly two decades beginning in the early 1920s.

Henry Myrick was born in Tennessee in 1875 to William T. Myrick and Mary Jarrell. He was the fifth of eleven children and arrived in Collin County with his family at the age of 14. His mother and father left Tennessee to Texas in 1889, settling in the Lowry Crossing area about 5 miles southeast of McKinney. At the age of 26, Henry purchased 100 acres near Lowry Crossing to follow his father's profession of farming and later become involved in the grocery business there.

The Myrick's were well-known citizens of the area actively engaged in the Methodist Church and civic affairs. Henry was among three trustees who oversaw the annual late-spring festival held at the Wilson Chapel Cemetery. The event featured decorations, music and speeches. He was also connected to a church-related festival held each August.

At the age of 33, Henry married into a Lowry Crossing family just as prominent as his. In 1908, he married 19-year-old Ama "Cattie" Bridgefarmer, the daughter of Dr. David Bridgefarmer and Nancy Willis. The Bridgefarmer family, like the Myricks, moved from Kentucky to Collin County in the early 1880s. Dr. Bridgefarmer taught school in the area before attending medical school in Memphis, Tennessee. He began his medical practice in 1891. Another Bridgefarmer with medical credentials was Ama's cousin, the optometrist Dr. James S. Bridgefarmer, who owned a jewelry store on the McKinney Square for decades and in 1946 boasted that it was the only air-condition business in town.

Henry and Ama continued to live and farm in the Lowry Crossing area until around 1920. The area got its name because the East Fork of the Trinity River was particularly shallow there and the banks were not so steep as to prohibit wagons and buggies from crossing. The Bridgefarmer and Myrick families were two of the most prominent families in this small farming community. Two of the streets in the town are named for them and given the marriage between Henry and Ama, it is fitting that these two streets intersect.

Around 1920, Henry and Ama moved to McKinney to start a grocery business. The 1920 Census indicates that the couple was living in a house they owned in McKinney. However, no deed records exist showing a purchase of property in McKinney until he

purchased a 80'x200' lot on the east side of McDonald Street in 1922. The records show several Myrick family members living on Anthony Street which perhaps means that he owned property jointly with a relative.

One asset Henry did own with a relative was the grocery business he started with his wife's cousin, Daniel C. Bridgefarmer. The firm of Myrick & Bridgefarmer first advertised its operations in 1920. The *McKinney Courier-Gazette* displayed an ad announcing this "new produce house" located on East Louisiana Street near the Collin County Mill & Elevator Company, now known simply as the Four Mill.

Henry Myrick owned his grocery business throughout the decade of the 1920s and well into the early 1930s. However, his partnership change intermittently with other members of his family. Beginning in 1922, Henry teamed up with brother-in-law Wade Biggers to form Myrick & Biggers. In the beginning of 1926, the partnership changed and became Bridgefarmer & Myrick. Later in that year, it became Myrick & Biggers. In 1927, it resumed as Bridgefarmer & Myrick. In 1929, the business was back to calling itself Myrick & Biggers. This would be the last change. In November of 1929, a fire broke out in the store and destroyed much of the building and two delivery trucks.

No matter what name was being used, the Myrick business model relied on a direct connection with its varied suppliers. Henry Myrick would purchase directly from the farmer, often at the same price the farmer could get from a public city market. However, Henry did not rely solely on local produce but owned a small fleet of trucks that could haul produce from the Rio Grande Valley and deliver to customers in North Texas. In 1938, the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* recognized Henry's company to be the first in Collin County to purchase a newly designed V-8 truck being offered by Ford Motors. Henry was keen on innovation and even experimented growing spinach in Collin County versus purchasing it from afar. He also advocated for crop diversify urging farmers not to rely solely on a single crop in their fields.

Henry had a nephew Earl who worked for the *Courier-Gazette* and the *Weekly Democrat-Gazette* until taking a position with a newspaper in Lubbock in 1923. Earl's association with these McKinney newspapers seemed to have engendered a friendly relationship between the publishers (Tom W. Perkins and Walter B. Wilson) and the Myrick family at large. These newspapers were often complimentary in their frequent reporting of the Myrick family travels, visitations and personal affairs but given the lack of "society news" about the Myricks, the clan appears to have eschew local high-society in favor of family and their Lowry Crossing connections.

In the mid 1930s, Henry left the grocery business to another nephew Herman E. Crice and for a while operated a garage just to the east of his old grocery store on East Greenville Street. While operating the garage business, Henry maintained his home in McKinney and continued farming the land he owned east of town. In 1941, this garage was purchased and occupied by East End Garage with Theo Crockett and Earl Warden as proprietors.

When the grocery business experienced its greatest success during the 1920s, Henry and Ama purchased a vacant lot at 509 North Kentucky Street from Sarah Elizabeth Pharr, the widow of firewood dealer Cicero L. Pharr. The purchase was made in the fall of 1924 and by January of 1925 Henry had hired contractor Jim Pistole to build a two-story, seven-room Craftsman-style bungalow. Later that year Henry and Ama had their first and only child, Henry C. Myrick, Jr. During WWII Henry, Jr. joined the Marines and was involved in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He was among the seven Collin County residents to participate in the battle and one of the two who survived. In 1950, he received a bachelor of Business Administration degree from S.M.U. and is now a retired furniture dealer.

Henry, Sr. and Ama occupied the house together until Henry died at the age of 78 in 1953. Henry's funeral service was held at McKinney's First Methodist Church and was officiated by Rev. Joseph Connally and Rev. Floyd Doulware, past and present pastors respectively. The pallbearers were all family members indicating just how tight the Myrick family was. Henry was interred at Pecan Grove Cemetery.

Following Henry's death, Ama continued to live at 509 N. Kentucky Street but after five months subdivided the property to create a 55'x90' lot along its western boundary. This subdivided portion she sold to Henry's nephew Herman Crice, who took over the grocery business, for "\$1 plus love and affection."

As a widow, Ama joined the Good Neighbor Club, a social organization that was created in McKinney in 1951 whose missions was "helping the sick and for extending kindnesses in illness and in deaths." Mrs. Roy Holman was the club's first president. The club was known for organizing parades and holiday dinners. It met monthly and existed until the late 1960s.

Ama died in 1994 at age of 104 and is buried next to her husband Henry at the Pecan Grove Cemetery.

James Monroe Pistole (1883-1928)

James Pistole was a farmer-turned-contractor who developed and sold property during the 1920s in McKinney. He was born in Tennessee to parents Joseph Pistole and Elizabeth Adamson in 1883. His parents moved to McKinney and began farming when James was seven years old. In 1901, James married Julia F. Odle whose parents came to McKinney from Burkville, Kentucky when she was an infant.

Following their marriage, James and Julia moved to Oklahoma for several years before returning to live three miles northwest of McKinney. The 1910 Census shows James' occupation as "farmer" while a later article in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* mentions that he is part of a work crew employed by contractor C.M. Brantley. In 1912, James and Julia moved to McKinney proper to take advantage of the construction opportunities the growing town offered. Within two years, he had achieved a considerable reputation as a builder, erecting school houses, commercial buildings and houses.

In 1919, James partnered with plumber Frank F. Wiggs to purchase property along North Tennessee Street for development. In April of that year, the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* writes:

F.F. Wiggs, well-known plumber and progressive business man, and J.M. Pistole, than whom no town has a better contractor, have bought a large lot on North Tennessee Street. 360x312, pave street, and will soon commence the erection of six or seven new, modern and up-to-date home for the people. All the old buildings on this street will be torn down and modern ones will be erected. They will build the houses to suit, with the number of rooms and finish them up as desired. They will build them for sale, making a very close price on them. The deal was consummated by Tom W. Perkins of McKinney Realty Co. The first new home will be built at once. No town is growing like McKinney and we need a few more real, live, progressive builders like F.F. Wiggs and J.M. Pistole.

In the decade between 1910 and 1920, McKinney's population grew over 40% from 4,714 to 6,677. With this growth came new opportunities. The business of Messrs. Pistole and Wiggs was unique for the times in that they not only built houses but they also purchased the land to build them on making them among McKinney's first residential developers. Their business got a promotional lift from its connection with Tom W. Perkins who was both a real estate agent for McKinney Realty Company and the editor of the McKinney newspaper. Mr. Perkins was generous with his newspaper's

frequent mentions of the building accomplishments of James Pistole, especially since he received a commission on most (if not all) of those sales.

Just as James Pistole was closing out a banner year for his business and planning new projects for the following year, his wife Julia's health began declining until she died in January of 1920. Though James and his partner Frank finished several projects together in 1920, the volume and scale of their business declined. In 1922, James moved to land he owned at Aubrey, Texas (near Denton) and took up farming again. Also, in that year he married Laura Dickerson and spent some time in the Texas Panhandle at Memphis where his new wife's mother lived. The following year he declared bankruptcy, surrendering all his property to the District Court for the Eastern District of Texas. The bankruptcy lead him to look for new business opportunities back in McKinney. Around 1924, James and Laura were living in McKinney where James found construction work though family and friends. One of the homes he built during this period was for his first wife's cousin, Jimmie J. Odle. Another home he built for fellow builder Charles A. Abbott. A lucky break came at the beginning of 1925 when grocer Henry Myrick hired James to build a two-story house on Kentucky Street. Henry's wife and James' first wife were distant cousins but both from the Lowry Crossing area. This project gave James enough money to advertise in the newspaper that several years ago provided him so much free press. Between February and September of 1925 James ran 159 ads in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette*. During that time, none of James' building activity was ever reported by the newspaper.

In 1926, James, his wife Laura, and minor children left McKinney and moved to San Antonio. There, he continued to work as a carpenter until his death in 1928 due to an on-the-job accident. His body was removed for burial to the Kansas Cemetery near Oklahoma City where Laura's parents had a farm. Following James' death, Laura returned to Oklahoma. One of Laura's brothers, Leonard, was a Oklahoma City Council member from 1936 to 1957. Laura died in 1979.