

City of McKinney
Historic Building Marker Application
(Supporting Documentation)

The Silas E. Walker House
616 North Church Street



A. Alterations & Construction

Construction

The Silas E. Walker House, constructed in 1913, is a two-story, wood-frame residential structure built on a pier-and-beam foundation. The house has a low-pitched, cross-hip roof. The west-facing house has a porch wrapping its southwest corner. The roof above the porch is supported with thick, square columns. The floor plan is asymmetrical with rooms connecting to a central axis. The house is fenestrated with one-over-one single-hung windows. The home's design follows the Foursquare Style with Prairie Style influences. Building elements include pocket doors, cabinets, hardwood flooring, and stained walnut door and window trim.

Alterations

The Silas E. Walker House was originally constructed as a twelve-room residence. Only minor alteration occurred to the house during its first century of existence, including the removal of its two fireplaces and the enclosure of a second floor porch. However, the current owners began updating the baths and kitchen and adding square-footage to the rear of the house in 2018. Much of the original structure including windows, doors and walls remain intact. The current owners have removed sheetrock and in some cases fabric wall coverings to expose the home's shiplap construction beneath. Alterations were made to the stairs and banister to meet the demands of existing building codes. Electrical and plumbing deficiencies were also corrected throughout the house.

There are two exterior alterations that are noticeable from the North Church Street. The first is the addition of a centrally located roof dormer, which is in keeping with the architecture of the period. The second is the carport that replaced an existing garage on the south side of the house toward the rear. In each case, these additional elements were approved by the McKinney Historic Preservation Officer during the planning review process.

Anticipated Needs

The current owners have gone to great expense to update the house to modern living standards while maintaining the original architectural character of the house. Now that the remodeling of the house is complete, the owners have no plans to make further alterations. However, should repairs or additions be needed, they are committed to preserving the historic nature of the house.

B. Historical Figures

Silas Earl Walker (1875-1926)

Silas E. Walker was a civically active furniture and hardware merchant who served as City Assessor and Tax Collector in McKinney during the first decade of the 20th Century.

Cy, as he was called, was born in 1875 to parents John F. Walker and Amanda Williams. Cy's father was a farmer and a grocer in the town of Winnsboro, Texas, about 90 miles east of Dallas. Cy arrived in McKinney in 1896. Early on, he was employed by furniture merchant John T. Nale at what is now 216 E. Virginia Street (the former location of the Elcair Bistro). In 1899, Cy married Alwilda Coffey, daughter of McKinney ex-Sheriff William S. Coffey. By 1900, Cy was working with a new employer, grocer Titus Keen, on South Tennessee Street.

In 1902, Cy's career took a different direction when he ran for and won election to the office of City Assessor and Tax Collector. Even with a field of four other candidates, Cy won fifty percent of the 846 votes cast. He served a total of three two-year terms.

In 1908, Cy partnered with William "Ernest" Ditto to establish the grocery firm of Ditto & Walker, located on the east side of the McKinney Square. The partnership was not together long for in 1909, Ernest Ditto and Cy closed their business. Ernest started a real estate company and Cy left town to visit the Texas panhandle. He was so favorably impressed with it, he purchased some land near Archer City and moved there with his family.

Cy's absence from McKinney was a short one. After less than a year in the Panhandle, Cy returned to McKinney to purchase Gabe Lucas' interest in the Sam Massie Furniture Company, located the corner of North Chestnut and East Louisiana Streets in the building that Doug and Lynda's Ski Shop now occupies. At the time of the purchase, the Walker family lived on South Church Street. The household consisted of Cy, his wife Alwilda; sons Silas, Jr. and Vernon; daughter Jesse; father-in-law William S. Coffey; and nephew Orlia Moss.

In 1912 while engaged in the furniture business, Cy ran one more time for City Assessor and Tax Collector. This time he lost. Meanwhile, the furniture business expanded into hardware and undertaking. It was not uncommon for furniture business to also offer funeral services since both activities required the same hauling equipment. During this period of the firm's expansion, Cy purchased a lot on North Church Street from ginner

and property developer James C. Rhea. In 1913, Cy hired Arthur W. Dowlen to erect a two-story, twelve-room house.

Despite the success of his partnership with Sam Massey, in 1914, the company split. Cy took over the furniture and hardware business while Sam took over the funeral services. Cy and Sam operated their companies separately in the same building.

Cy's furniture and hardware business was in competition with at least six other similar firms, the largest being J.P. Dowel Hardware and the Crouch-Hartzog Company. Nevertheless, he and his business thrived. For the next few years, Cy was active in civic affairs and the First Baptist Church where he was a deacon. In 1915, Cy was elected President of the Business Men's Association which merged that year with the Chamber of Commerce. That same year Cy purchased an equity interest in one of his competitors to form the J.P. Crouch & Company. Cy's new partnership arrangement was likely in response to his health-related issues. However strong Cy's attachment to McKinney might have been, in June of 1917, he sold his house on North Church Street and moved to Paducah, Texas to engage in the coal and seed business. A later account appearing in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* attributes this move to a period of poor health. Whatever the reason, Cy returned to McKinney in October of 1918 and purchased a house on South College Street. The household members at the time included his wife, two sons, a daughter, and his father-in-law.

In December of 1918, Cy partnered with William T.G. Hight to open a furniture and hardware store near the Square in the building now occupied by the Last Art Gallery (105 W. Louisiana Street). In 1921, Cy bought out his partner. The new store proved successful enough for Cy to build a "modern," brick Craftsman-style home on North Waddill Street in 1923. Two years later, Cy moved his store across the street to the Heard Building, taking advantage of its 12,000 square feet on two floors.

Amidst Cy's business success, his health began a slow decline due to a brain tumor. He died on April 3, 1926 at the age of 51. His passing stirred the emotions of the town. The *McKinney Courier-Gazette* wrote of him:

The passing of this splendid citizen has cast a pall of gloom in our city where he was honored and loved for more than a quarter of a century and it is felt that his example of worth and esteem may well be followed and we feel like the poet, "Ideals are like stars, we may not succeed in reaching them but like the sea-faring man on the deserts of the waters, we may follow as our guides, hoping to reach our destiny."

His funeral service was conducted in the First Baptist Church by Dr. M.E. King with a graveside service at the Pecan Grove Cemetery conducted by the Knights of Pythias. Days later, the Lions Club held a memorial service in his honor.

The Silas E. Walker Store continued operation under the management of his son Silas, Jr. who graduated from Baylor University the year his father died. In 1934, Silas, Jr. sold the store to Charles Self who changed the name to Economy Cash Stores, perhaps in response to the Depression-era economic conditions. Cy's wife Alwilda died in 1968 and is buried at the Pecan Grove Cemetery next to her husband.

James Alexander Vernon (1849-1924)

James Vernon was a farmer in the Chambersville area about 8 miles northwest of McKinney during Collin County's early history. After suffering a stroke that left him partially paralyzed in 1916, he moved to McKinney for the remainder of his life.

James Vernon was born near Fayetteville, Arkansas to farmer Samuel Vernon and Elizabeth McDonough in 1849. In 1866, he married Malinda W. Alexander, also of Arkansas, and moved to Texas four years later. The couple lived briefly in several nearby towns before settling in Chambersville where they lived for 36 years.

In 1916, James suffered a stroke that left him unable to continue his farming activities and moved to McKinney where he purchased the Silas E. Walker home on North Church Street from Dr. R.L. Davis. Given that the active period of his life was spent away from McKinney and its social network, there is little printed information available about James Vernon. However, his obituary that appeared in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette* sheds some light on his character even after discounting for the edifying language often used in obituaries of the day.

His life was characterized by industry, stalwart integrity of character, thrift and good business management. He engaged successfully in farming, stock raising, ginning and threshing. He was a home loving man who never sought public office or honors. While he was a man of striking personality and much above the average intelligence, yet he was of a retiring disposition who sought to walk the path of private life and duty well done toward family, community, county, state and nation. He joined the Baptist Church in boyhood. He lived and practiced the Christian virtues in every avenue or whatever activity. He stood for those things calculated to ennoble and elevate humanity.

James and Malinda raised three sons and three daughters. It was a desire of the parents to provide for and encourage the education of their children all of which went on

to careers that require a degree of higher education. Their eldest son William became a member of the Oklahoma State Legislature and President of the First National Bank of Coweta. The two other sons Fred and Lem were directors of the bank. At the time of James's death, two of his daughters Julia and Alta were living with him. Julia was a history teacher at the Boyd High School in McKinney.

James died in his North Church Street home on March 31, 1924. Funeral services were conducted at the residence by Rev. G.O. Key and life-long friend Elder R. C. Horn. James was buried at the Chambersville Cemetery. James's widow Malinda and two daughters continued living in the home. Julia married in 1931 leaving Malinda and Alta together in the house. When Alta died in 1941, Malinda moved to Hamilton, Texas at the age of 92 to be with her daughter Julia (Vernon) Bratton. Malinda died there in 1949, eight days after her 100th birthday. She is buried in the Chambersville Cemetery next to her husband.

Robert Leslie Hight (1882-1963)

Robert L. Hight began his career in the McKinney-area mule trade around 1900 and later became engaged in Collin County real estate. During his 57-year business career, he occupied several offices on or near the McKinney Square and established two subdivisions on the east side of McKinney that bear his name.

Les, as he was called, was born in White River, Arkansas to farmer Joseph B. Hight and Mary Jane Jackson in 1882. He was the fourth of nine children, three of which died in infancy. When Les was still a child, the family moved to the Woodlawn community three miles northeast of McKinney.

In 1901 at the age of 19, Les had the good fortune to partner with mule trader and grocer William "Ernest" Ditto. The two men formed the livestock trading firm known as Hight & Ditto. The firm achieved quick success, garnering a contract to supply the U.S. Army with mules. A month later the British government purchased 75 mules to be shipped to South Africa to be used in Britain's war against the Boers.

Les's partnership with Ernest Ditto was short lived as deduced by a small ad appeared in an April of 1903 issue of *McKinney Democrat* indicating that Les was partnered with the "Russell Brothers," selling and trading real estate, horses, mules and cattle. George and Charles Russell were well-established traders at the time and would have been good business experience for the 21-year-old Les. The partnership provided Les with

more than good experience. Four months after joining the firm, Les married the Russell brother's niece, Lelia Russell. Lelia was the daughter of grocer Elijah D. Russell and Lydia Strode who came to Farmersville from Arkansas before Lelia's birth in 1885.

Not long after they were married, Les was involved in an accident that left him maimed for life. Les's granddaughter Martha Ann (Hight) Prince wrote of this event in the 1994 publication *Collin County, Texas, Families*:

Early in their marriage, Les had a terrible accident. A double team of horses drawing a buggy ran away and he was thrown out, causing one of his legs to be badly broken. He managed to get to a nearby farmhouse, where a doctor was summoned. It was determined that the only thing to be done was to amputate that leg below the knee and the surgery was performed on the kitchen table of the farmhouse.

In the 1960's his daughter-in-law, Marjorie (Allison) Hight, was driving several ladies who lived in the nursing home at Fowler Home in Dallas, Texas, to do some shopping. One of the ladies in the car recognized the Hight name and mentioned that she had known a Mr. Hight many years before. This lady had been a small child at the time of the accident, and had held the lantern so the doctor could see to amputate Les's leg.

Wheelchairs were not yet available, so Les used a rocking chair during his recovery much as wheelchairs are used today, with Lelia pulling it around for him. He was later fitted with a wooden leg, and used a "walking stick" or cane for aid.

The accident forced Les to give up the livestock trading business and devote his energies to real estate. Les stayed with the Russell brothers until 1907, forming a new partnership with McCarty Moore that focused solely on the real estate trade. Once again, Les found himself in a short-lived business relationship. Six month's after teaming up with Mr. Moore, Les was opening a new real estate office by himself on East Louisiana Street. In 1909, Les rejoined with is former partner Ernest Ditto who left his grocery business to engage in real estate full time.

Les's business and influence in McKinney quickly flourished. As President of the Collin County Real Estate Dealers' Association in 1911, Les expanded the organization's membership throughout the County. That same year, he was involved in a 20-acre land transaction in north McKinney that promised to bring an agricultural college to McKinney. That development never came to fruition despite the political efforts of Texas Senate Representative Tom Perkins. He was also an active member of the First Baptist Church.

As Les's career ascended, his personal life was beset with tragedy. In February of 1912, Les and Lelia's two-year-old daughter Linnie Lucile died of pneumonia. Not even a year passed before their eldest son Russell became one of the eight people to die when the Odd Fellows building that housed the Cheeves Brothers Department Store collapsed in January of 1913. Lelia's sister Stella took the four-year-old child shopping with her that day. As they were leaving the building, the three-story, brick structure collapsed around them. Stella, who was trapped beneath the building's iron awning, survived, Russell did not.

The partnership between Ernest Ditto and Les dissolved soon after the tragedy. After which, Les transacted business under the name R.L. Hight Land Company. His solo business arrangement thrived for several years. In 1923, Les moved his office to J.P. Crouch building on the south side of the McKinney Square, hiring his bother-in-law Eugene H. Russell as a part of the transition.

As Les's business continued to grow he continued to advertise in the McKinney newspaper. From 1923 until his death in 1963, he place over 3,500 classified ads. Despite his early success in the 1920s, the Great Depression took its toll on his business. In August of 1929, he moved with his family to Dallas in hopes of finding more business. He did not. Within a year, he was back in McKinney.

Beginning in the mid-1930s, Les partnered with James A. Lindsey of Westminster in the northeast corner of Collin County. The partnership ended with Mr. Lindsey's unexpected death in 1944. The following year, Les took on a new partner, former automobile dealer James Gabe Kerby. This business relationship would last the remaining of Les's career. In 1951, they established a new office on East Virginia Street, a location they would maintain for another 12 years.

In 1949, two years before opening the new office, Les and Lelia purchased the Silas E. Walker house at 616 North Church Street. The couple lived there until their deaths. Les died in the house on May 5, 1963 at 2:00 pm, two months after the couple's 60th wedding anniversary. He was 81 years old. Lelia died in December of the same year in the Collin Memorial Hospital. Both are buried at the Pecan Grove Cemetery.

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, Rhea Mills. 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.

Arthur Whitney Dowlen (1865-1947)

Arthur Dowlen was a successful builder in McKinney during the first two decades of the 20th Century. His portfolio of work includes at least two brick buildings near the McKinney Square and dozens of residences.

Arthur Dowlen was born in Cheatham, Tennessee on April 9, 1865, the same day General Lee surrendered to General Grant at the Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia. Arthur was one of ten children born into the farming family of parents Harris Dowlen and Sarah Mathis. He was educated in Springfield, Tennessee and afterwards taught school in four different counties in the state.

In 1891, Arthur married Ida Carney also of Cheatham. The couple lived in Tennessee for two more years before moving to McKinney to be near Arthur's four older siblings, three brothers and one sister who had moved to the area years earlier.

One of his brothers was Prince A. Dowlen, an educator, who arrived in Collin County in 1881 and owned land between McKinney and Farmersville. The area was known as Wilson's Switch because of the railroad that passed over land owned by T.B. Wilson. However, when the area residents tried to use the name to get a post office, it was rejected because the name had already been taken by another Texas town. The post office, and eventually the town, chose the name Princeton in honor of Prince Dowlen. In later years, Prince Dowlen became a judge in Beaumont, Texas.

The other siblings, Finis, Gideon and Carrie arrived in Collin County around 1872. Carrie was married to educator Issac A. Looney when she arrived. Mr. Looney established a private school in McKinney and ran it for a number of years before moving to Farmersville in 1885 to teach there. The brothers Finis and Gideon followed the building trades. Finis became a lumber dealer in Hillsboro, Texas while Gideon, the oldest of the brothers, worked as a carpenter in McKinney.

Arthur Dowlen had worked several years as a teacher back in Tennessee before moving to Texas in 1893 at that age of 28 with his wife Ida. He taught school in Texas for another seven years. However, around 1900 Arthur's work interest shifted to carpentry, apparently influenced by his brother Gideon. One of Arthur's first major contracts came to him in 1904. He was to build an eight-room, two-story parsonage for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church which was at the time located on the southwest corner of the intersection at Church and Davis Streets. Around that same time he and his wife purchased and built a house on College Street.

Arthur's influence in construction and civic affairs expanded over the next few years. By 1915, he owned the McKinney Manufacturing Company which made building components such as doors, moldings, windows as well as desks and cedar chests. He was also the Worshipful Master (president) of the St. John's Lodge of Masons, a title that he held for years. His business success and leadership abilities led some McKinney residents to urge Arthur to run for the Office of Mayor. In March of 1915, he announced his candidacy to run against the popular incumbent Henry A. Finch. Perhaps realizing his unlikely prospects for success, Arthur decided to withdraw his name from the ballot. As it turned out, Mr. Finch ran unopposed and naturally won the April election.

Arthur Dowlen was a prolific builder in McKinney between 1905 and 1915. He built at a time when interest was waning in the Victorian Style as the Prairie and Craftsman Styles were becoming popular. He is responsible for erecting some McKinney's most expressive homes for the period, including the twelve-room, two-story house on North Benge he built for real-estate-man Ernest Ditto during the summer of 1913. That same year Mr. Dowlen finished a home for Silas E. Walker on North Church Street. Mr. Ditto and Mr. Walker were at one time business partners in the grocery trade. It is not likely that Arthur Dowlen designed these homes but his skill at building them allowed him to compete in the homebuilding market of Dallas. His success lead him to move there in 1920.

The Dowlen family consisting of Arthur, wife Ida, daughter Onyx and son Carney moved into a house in the Lower Greenville area of Dallas on Victor Street. In Dallas, Arthur continued to work as a building contractor. Ida kept house. Onyx worked in the Dallas County Clerks Office. Carney began a career in banking which lead him to become the President of Highland Park State Bank.

In 1942, at the age of 42, Carney resigned his position at the bank to join the Army as the United States' participation in World War II was expanding. However, on a training mission in November of 1942, a plane he was on crashed into the St. Lawrence River near his base in Maine. Of the nine people on board, Carney was among the five who lost their lives. In 2009, the co-mingled remains of the five fallen crew members were discovered and in 2015 interred at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Three years before Carney's death, Arthur's wife Ida died of a heart attack in 1939. In the years that followed, Arthur continued to live in Dallas with his daughter Onyx. Arthur died in 1947. Both Arthur and Ida are buried at the Dallas Restland Cemetery. Onxy never married and lived in the family home in Dallas until her death in 1972. She is also interred at Restland Cemetery.

C. Property Ownership

Address: 616 North Church Street, McKinney, Texas 75069

Legal Description: McKinney Outlots (CMC) Lot 679

Purchase Date	Seller	Buyer	Book/Page
Sep. 23, 1841	Republic of Texas	William Davis	
Sep. 6, 1850	State of Texas ¹	William Davis	J / 459
Jan. 12, 1870	Collin County Court ²	J.B. Denton	
Mar. 29, 1871	A.N. Denton ³	J.F. Denton	V / 131
Jul. 23, 1872	J.F. Denton	James C. Rhea	V / 545
Mar. 24, 1913	James C. Rhea	Silas E. Walker	200 / 201
Jun. 25, 1917	Silas E. Walker	R.L. Davis	211 / 551
Nov. 15, 1917	R.L. Davis	James A. Vernon	212 / 549
May. 12, 1949	Heirs of J.A. Vernon ⁴	Robert L. Hight	403 / 127
Feb. 14, 1977	Kathryn Hight-Ware ⁵	Marion Dunn	1063 / 37
Aug. 31, 1984	Marion Dunn	Jerry Weems	1970 / 206
Sep. 17, 1985	Jerry Weems	J.B. Sanders	2216 / 677
Nov. 19, 2005	J.B. Sanders	Richard Webster	6049 / 3899
Dec. 19, 2018	Richard Webster	Kevin & Melissa Mansell	

¹ This is the date the State of Texas issued a patent reaffirming William Davis' ownership.

² Court awards 320 acres to the heirs of J.B. Denton that William Davis promised to Mr. Denton.

³ Heir to J.B. Denton

⁴ James's widow died in 1949.

⁵ Kathryn inherited the property when he parents died in 1963.

D. Tenant History

There were two periods when the Silas E. Walker House was not occupied by its owners. The first period was from 1941 to 1949. It is not known who resided in the house during this time. The second period was from 1963 to 1977. During this time, Richard C. Cloer lived in the house from 1968 to 1972.

E. Narrative History of 616 North Church Street

In 1841, the Republic of Texas granted William Davis 3,129 acres of land in return for his participation in the new nation's battle for independence. This two square-mile tract of land was situated on East Fork of the Trinity river in what was then Fannin County. After the Republic of Texas became the 28th state to enter the United States of America in 1845, several counties were split into smaller units. Collin County was such a county, carved out of Fannin County.

In 1850, Peter H. Bell, the third Governor of Texas, signed a Letter of Patent re-affirming the Republic's grant of land to William Davis. This grant was recorded and signed by Governor E.M. Pease in 1856. Even before this grant was recorded by the new State of Texas officials, William Davis and his wife at the time, Margaret, "donated" 120 acres of this tract to the Collin County Commissioners to create the new County Seat in the City of McKinney in 1849. At the time of his donation, Mr. Davis 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, which he sold as quickly as he could. This 120 acres became known as the McKinney Original Donation and was divided into 87 blocks. The blocks were subdivided into smaller lots and sold to finance the City of McKinney. As a side note, shortly after donating the land to be a new city, William abandoned his wife and child in McKinney and headed to California to search for gold. Land records indicating that William and Margaret were married for only a few years following the donation. By early 1859, William was married to a woman named Sallie (a.k.a. Sarah).

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 acre 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.

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 4.86 acre tract 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.

In April of 1913, furniture merchant Silas E. Walker purchased what was then known as Lot 4 in the Rhea Subdivision. Two months later Mr. Walker hired Arthur W. Dowlen to build a nine-room, two-story house in the Four-Square Style that was popular at the time. Mr. Walker lived in the house for only four years. In 1917, health issues, along with his desire to pursue other business interests, led Mr. Walker to sell the house to Dr. R.L. Davis before moving to Paducah, Texas. Dr. Davis owned the house for less than five months before selling it to farmer James A. Vernon, who moved his family to McKinney after a stroke left him unable to continue working on his farm five miles northwest of town. At the time of the move, the Vernon household consisted of James, wife Malinda, and two of his daughters in their 30s.

When James Vernon died in March of 1924, his wife and two daughters remained living in the house. The youngest daughter Julia, who was a history teacher at Boyd High School, left the home when she married in 1931. Malinda and daughter Alta remained until Alta died in 1941. At the age of 92, Malinda left McKinney to live with her daughter Julia in Hamilton, Texas.

The house was owned by Malinda Vernon but not occupied by her after 1941. Malinda died in 1949 leaving her heirs to settle her estate. That year the house was sold to real estate dealer Robert L. Hight. Robert and his wife Leila lived in the house until their deaths in 1963. The couple's daughter Mary Katherine and son Eugene inherited the house and rented it out for many years. One of the tenants to live in the house was Richard C. Cloer. In 1975, the Vernon heirs sold the property to Marion Dunn.

The house changed ownership four more times before the current owners, Kevin and

Melissa Mansel purchased it in 2018. The Mansels have updated the interior of the house and have added rooms to the rear of the house while preserving the original character of the house as seen from North Church Street. Their efforts have ensured that the home will continue to maintain the historical nature of the neighborhood.

F. Drawings

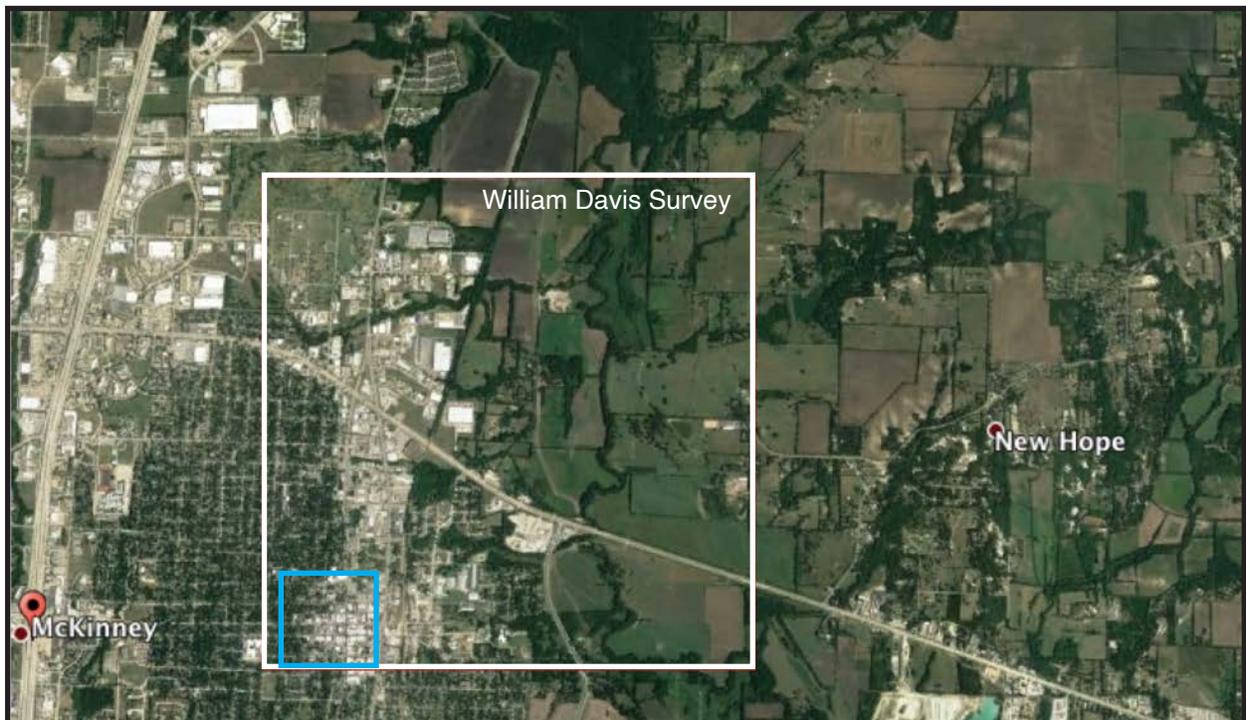
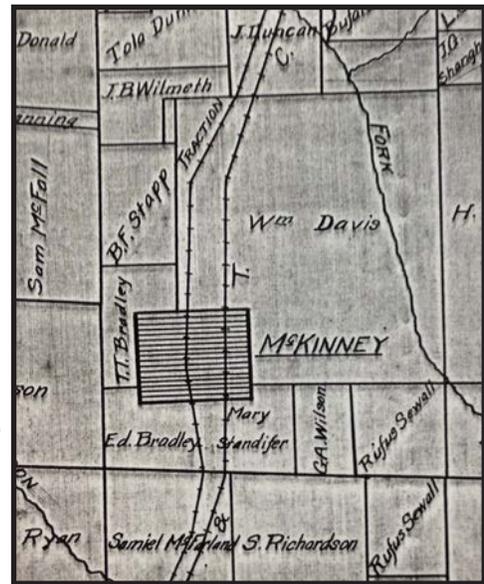
William Davis Headright

When Texas became a republic, it granted land to participants in the battle for independence. There were several classes of grants available depending on when a person arrived in Texas and if they were married. Generally, a married man who was in Texas before March 2, 1836 would be eligible for a First Class Headright grant of one league and one labor of land (4,605 acres). A single man could get 1/3 of a league and one labor.

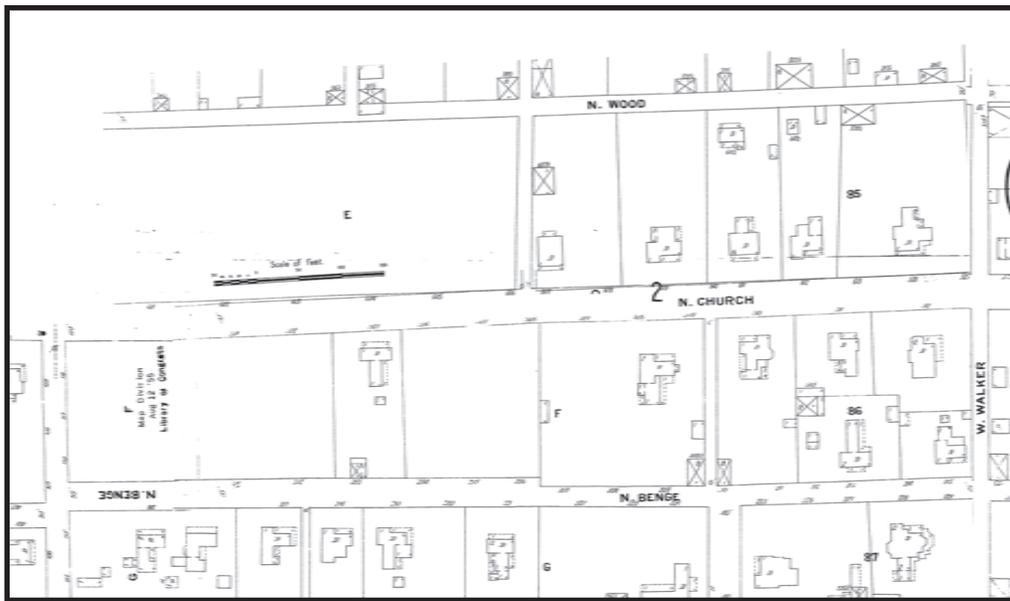
William Davis was granted 2/3 of a league and a labor of land in 1841. This type of grant did not fit any of the regular headright classes at the time and suggests that William Davis (who was single at the time) was granted an augmentation based on some unique performance associate with his contribution to Texas independence.

This grant became known as the Davis Survey and amounted to 3,129 acres which encompassed the site chosen to be the County Seat of Collin County. William Davis donated 120 acres of his land to the County Commissioners to be used to create the town of McKinney. Mr. Davis was no philanthropist, however. Shortly after he made his donation, he abandoned his wife and child and went to California in search of gold. Though Mr. Davis was one of Collin County's largest land owners, at the time of his death in 1868, his second wife and child were left destitute with only a few acres of the original tract to their name.

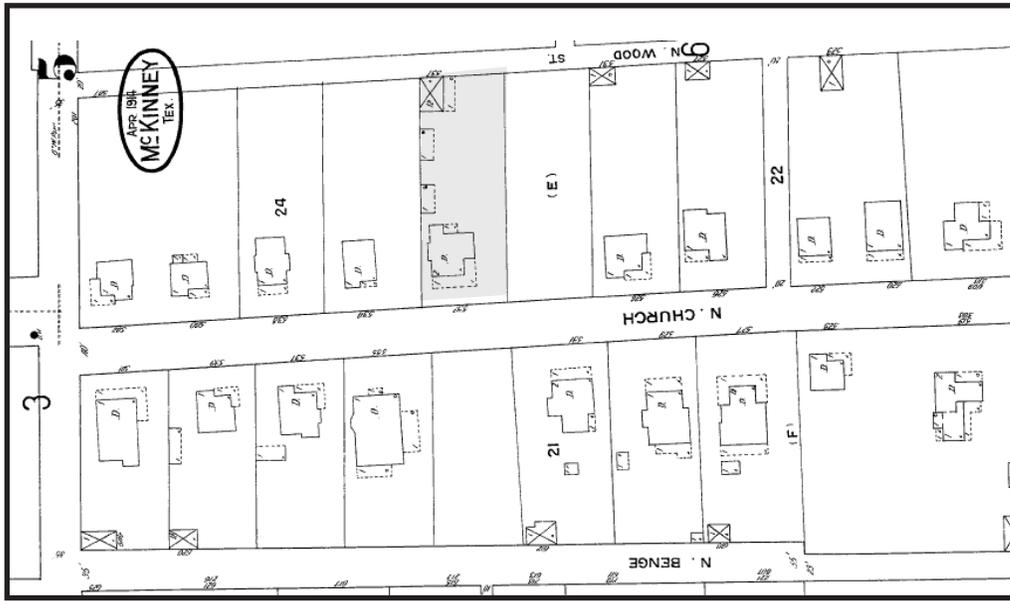
The legal description of properties which were a part of this donation include the words "McKinney Original Donation." The photo below shows the Davis Survey and the McKinney Original Donation (outlined in blue) overlaid on a map of McKinney's downtown area.



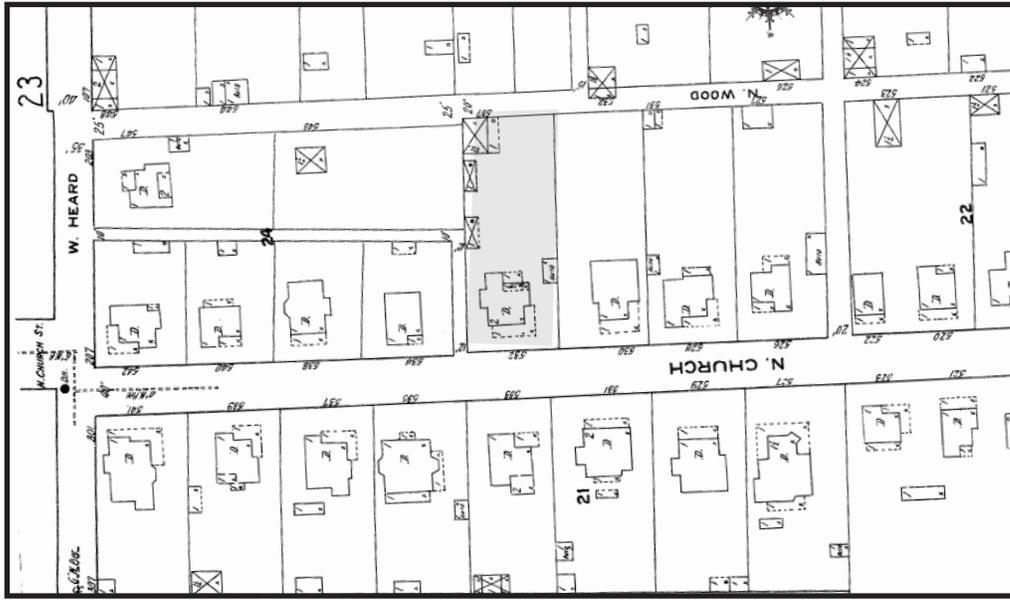
Sanborn Maps: 1908 - 1920



1908



1914

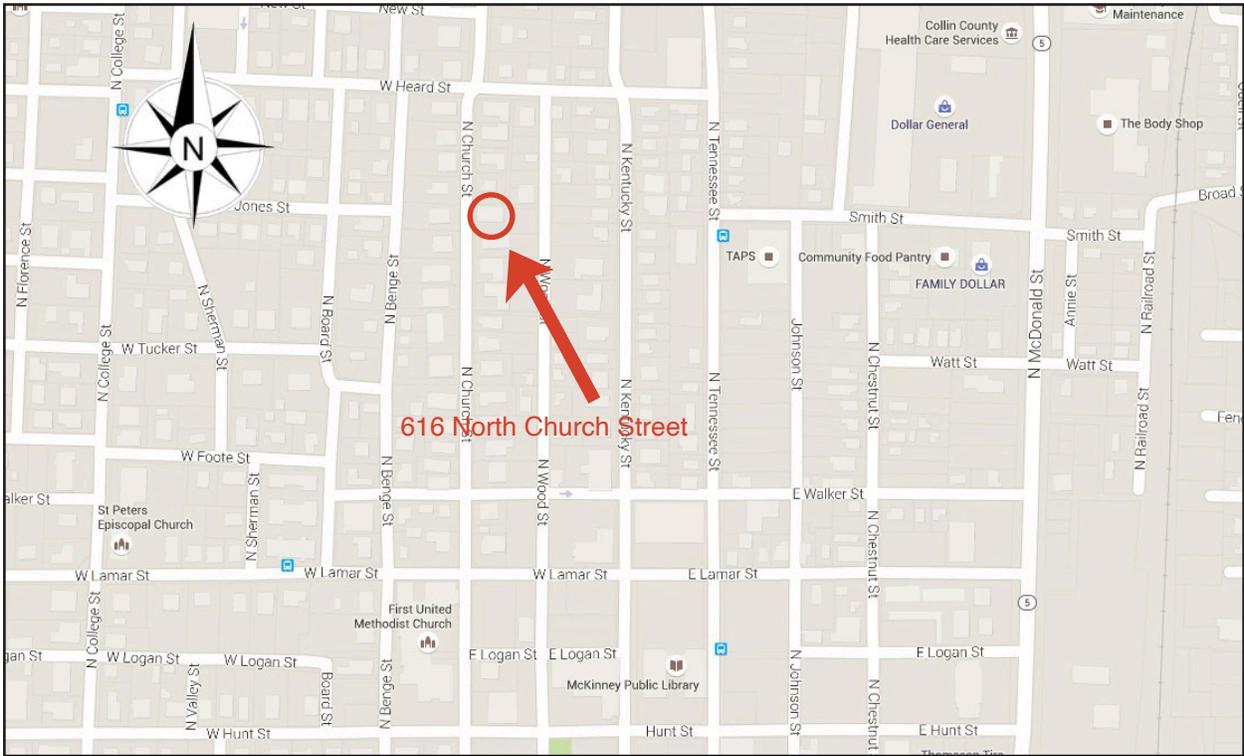


1920

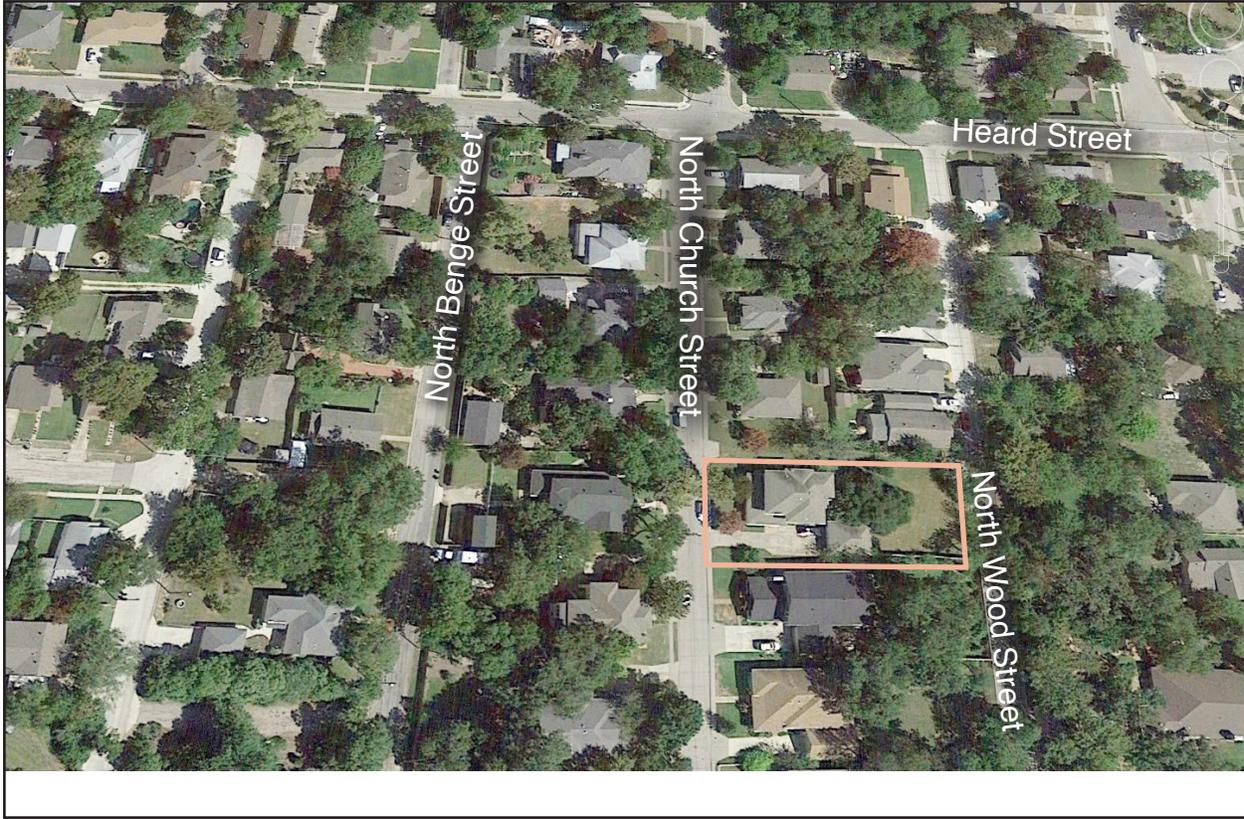
The Sanborn Maps above show that the Silas E. Waler House was one of the last to be built on Church Street.

McKinney Outlots (CMC) Lot 679



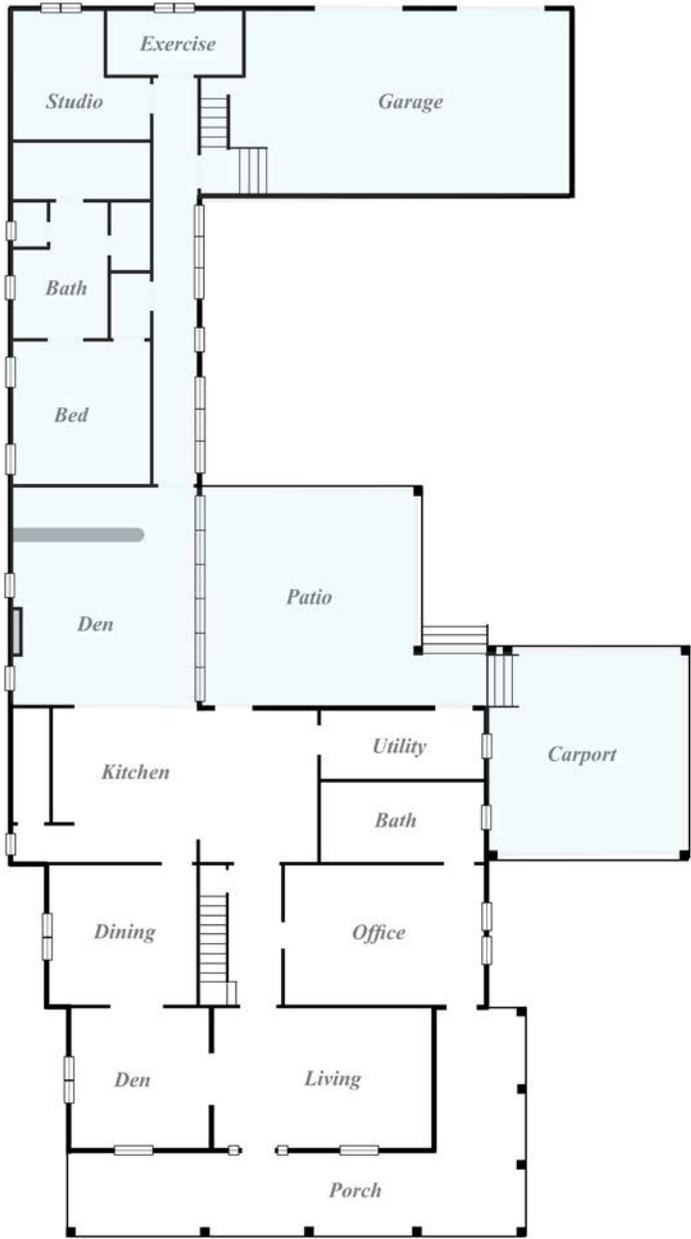


The map above shows the neighborhood around 616 North Church Street. The aerial photo below shows the immediate neighborhood near the intersection of Heard and North Church Street.

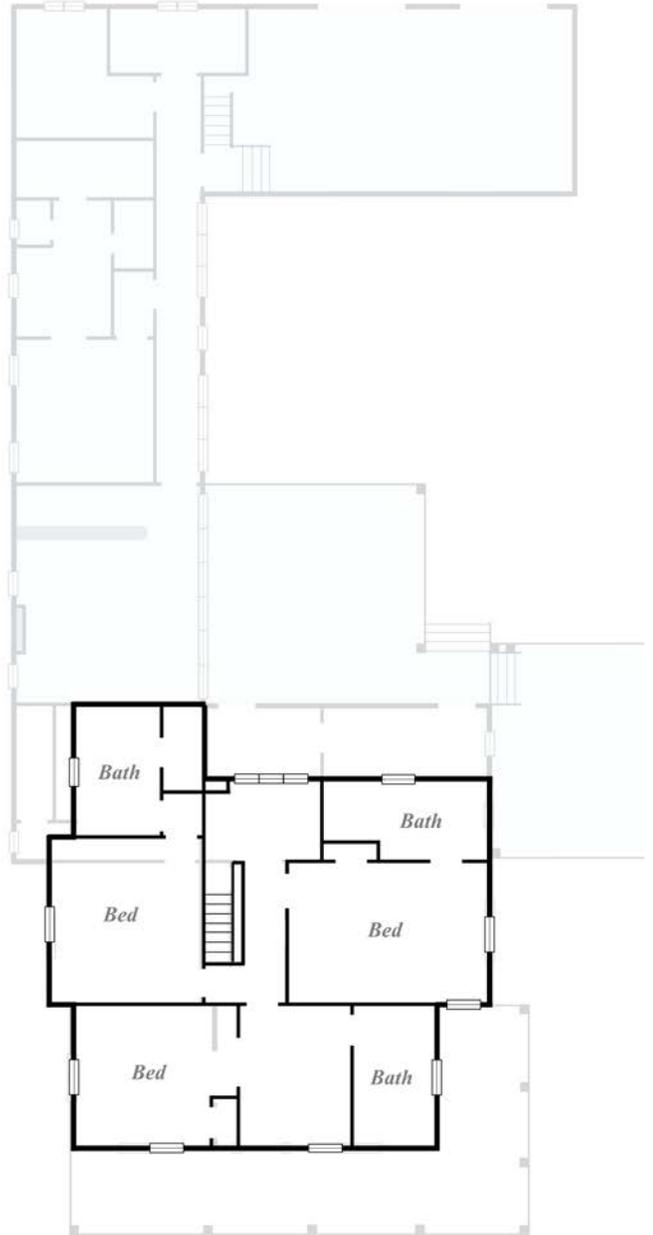


Floor Plan

These floor plans show the Silas E. Walker House in its current configuration.



First Floor

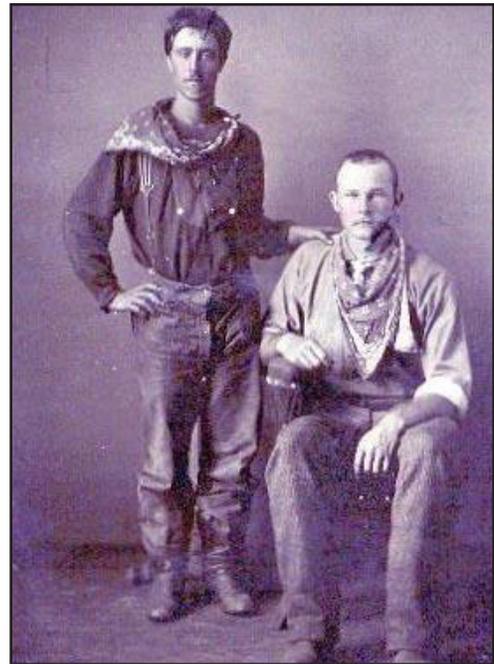


Second Floor

 *Recent construction*

G. Photographs

William and James Rhea were brothers who owned a mill in an area 10 miles northwest of McKinney which became the town of Rhea Mills. In 1872, the brothers James and William Rhea purchased 4.86 acres on North Church Street for \$379. William (standing) died in 1906. James died in 1925.



In 1911, James and William's heirs subdivided the tract into 12 lots varying in price from \$350 to \$800. The ad at left appeared in the a February 1911 edition of the "McKinney Courier-Gazette" promoting lots for sale in the Rhea Addition on North Church Street.

BENGE STREET											
			No. 12	No. 11	No. 10	No. 9					
NORTH CHURCH STREET											
No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	12-foot Alley	No. 5	No. 6	No. 7	No. 8			
					10-foot Alley						
15-foot Alley											

WE OFFER RHEA'S ADDITION ON NORTH CHURCH ST.

The only high class resident section left in McKinney, that is close in; sewerage, lights and water at the curb.

The following are prices that we think are attractive enough to interest any home builder:

West front lot No. 2, 77 1-1-1205	\$650.00	West front lot No. 8, 75 3-1-190	\$400.00
West front lot No. 3, 77 1-1-205	\$650.00	East front lot No. 9, 78 3-1-165 3-1	\$800.00
West front lot No. 4, 77 1-1-205	\$650.00	East front lot No. 10, 78 3-1-162 3-1	\$750.00
West front lot No. 5, 75 3-1-190	\$350.00	East front lot No. 11, 78 3-1-159 3-1	\$750.00
West front lot No. 6, 75 3-1-190	\$350.00	East front lot No. 12, 78 3-1-156 1-2	\$750.00

Call around to our office and let us show you—we expect to sell these lots within the next thirty days.

Scott & Emerson
PHONE 665



Silas and Alwilda Walker built their family home on North Church Street in 1913. This photo shows Vernon Walker (1908-1979) standing in front of his parent's newly built house.

Silas Walker had several careers during his 51-year lifespan, including tax collector, grocer and merchant. He often partnered with others in his many enterprises. Some he owned and managed alone.

June 1902, The Democrat

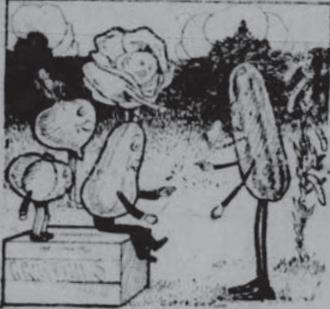
W. E. DITTO S. E. WALKER

...When You Meet a Delegation...

of smiling housekeepers on their way home you can make up your mind they have been here. Nowhere else can be had such complete satisfaction in

GROCERIES AND VEGETABLES.

It isn't our moderate pricing which is the sole attraction, though that is a great one. It is the quality and freshness of our merchandise that appeal so strongly to wise purchasers. Give our groceries and vegetables a trial and you'll go home smiling like other women.



Ditto & Walker
"The Little Better" Grocery Store.
Phone 39. If Busy, Ring 127. McKinney, Texas.

June, 1908, Courier-Gazette

Friday in each month. JOHN DECKARD J. P.

McKINNEY DIRECTORY.

J. M. Pearson	Mayor
E. H. Bowlby	Recorder
S. E. Walker	Assessor and Collector
J. Frank Smith	Treasurer
W. H. Sims	City Secretary
W. R. Abernathy	City Attorney
S. H. Cole	City Surveyor
Sam Burks	Marshal
Wallace Stiff	Night Policeman
Sam Burks	Chief Fire Dept.
W. H. Gribben	Waterworks Supt.
Dr. T. W. Wiley	City Health Officer
F. D. Shepherd	Supt. Pub. Schools
R. E. Chapman	Prin. Pub. Schools

Jonas
J. R.
J. S.
J. G.

announced, S. E. Walker is now with the Sam Massie Furniture es to assure you the same courtesy has heretofore been given you. effort to please. Low prices;

good goods; fair dealing, our motto. Wishing you a prosperous 1910. We are yours for business,

Sam Massie Furniture Company

S. E. WALKER, Mgr.

McKinney, Texas.



You C

I want you offer so m
You can buy furniture here at cash prices or on the installment—the price is the same.

S. E. WALKER
Hardware and Furniture

February 1910, Courier-Gazette

February 1914, Courier-Gazette

WE WILL BUY, SELL OR EXCHANGE NEW FURNITURE FOR OLD

Rugs, Linoleums and every article of housefurnishing goods. See us before you sell or buy.

WALKER & HIGHT
First Door West Cheeves Bros. Store.

February 1919, Courier-Gazette

James A. Vernon was a successful farmer in the Chambersville area for most of his life. At the age of 67, he suffered a stroke that left him unable to continue farming. He purchased the Silas Walker home in McKinney from Dr. R.L. Davis in 1917. Due to the paralysis caused by his stroke, James Vernon's life in McKinney was a quiet one. He died in his house in March of 1924.



James A. Vernon died at the age of 75 and is interred at the Chambersville Cemetery.

**J. A. VERNON,
DIES FOLLOWING
LONG ILLNESS**

—

— WAS FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS A
CITIZEN OF MCKINNEY.

—

J. A. Vernon, for nearly half a century an honored citizen of this county, died of paralysis at his home 532 North Church street in McKinney at 7:35 o'clock Sunday evening, March 30th. The end of this good man came not unexpectedly. He suffered a stroke of paralysis eight years ago which left him an invalid for the remainder of life. In recent months, he was a great sufferer who stood his affliction with true Christian fortitude and patience. During the past three weeks, his illness took a critical turn and his family and loved ones gathered at the old home fire-side to be with him in his last hours and to console the dear old wife and mother in her darkest sorrow of life.

James Alexander Vernon was born December 12, 1849 near Fayetteville, Arkansas. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Vernon and was reared on a farm. He was married in Arkansas fifty-three years ago to Miss Woodson Alexander and moved to Texas about four years later. After coming to the state, he and his good wife first settled in this county. But soon moved to Hamilton county, Texas, where they resided for a year or two, then moving back to Collin where they resided continuously during the remainder of his life. They lived all this period in the Chambersville and Lone Elm communities, about eight or ten miles northwest of McKinney. For thirty-six years they resided on their old home farm which they still own near the Lone Elm school house. Mr. Vernon also owns another farm in that section. His life was characterized by industry, stalwart integrity of character, thrift and good business management. He engaged successfully in farming, stock raising, ginning and threshing. He was a home loving man who never sought public office or honors. While he was a man of striking personality and much above the average intelligence, yet he was of a retiring disposition who sought to walk the path of private life and duty well done toward family, community, county, state and nation. He joined the Baptist church in boyhood. He lived and practiced the Christian virtues in every day life and with all dealings in every avenue or whatever ac-



The above photo shows **Robert L. Hight** with his bride **Lelia Russell** when they married in 1903. Robert began his career in the mule trade and grocery business when he teamed up with William "Earnest" Ditto in 1901. The partnership dissolved in 1903 only to be re-established six years later. The firm is responsible for two subdivisions in east McKinney. Ernest Ditto was previously in the grocery business with Silas Walker before joining with Robert Hight in 1909.

Free Trip!

East Texas **To Carthage** Panola County

If You Buy One of Our Panola County 40-Acre Farms,

SATURDAY

Panola County 40-Acre Farms on Easy Terms,

Price \$20 per acre. Beats the renting game 10 to 1. Ideally located, good neighbors, schools, churches and railroad facilities. The chance of a life time to make the change from a LAND RENTER to a LAND OWNER.

SOIL—The soil of the upland is a light gray, and a variety of timber grows upon it—pine, oak, ash, hickory, walnut and gum.

CLIMATE AND HEALTH CONDITIONS—The health conditions of the county are good, the death rate is low. Many of the citizens who came here in the early days lived to be 75, 80 and 90 years of age. The climate and seasons are excellent.

RAINFALL—The rainfall here is greater than in any part of the State, excepting a small area southwest of Houston. The average rainfall is 48 inches and the average temperature is 70 degrees.

COTTON—Panola County produced the finest staple in cotton that the world has ever known. It took first prize at Philadelphia, Centennial, World's Fair, Paris, France; Chicago, Ill.; St. Louis, Mo., and other points in Europe and America and it is now on exhibition at the New York Cotton Exchange New York City, wrapped in silk bagging and bound with silver ties.

PEACHES—Peaches grown in Panola County by Col. E. S. Hull took first prize at the St. Louis Exposition in competition with peaches from all sections of the country. Panola county will grow almost anything a nation eats and wears. One mule or horse will cultivate as much cotton and corn as two or three men can gather. Corn will average 20 to 40 bushels to the acre; cotton from one-fourth to one bale; sweet potatoes 200 to 300 bushels; ribbon cane from 200 to 500 gallons.

Mr. Home Seeker and Investor read our proposition to the purchaser:

40-acre tracts at 20 per acre, total	\$800
Cash or acceptable note	\$100
First year	\$60
Second year	\$60
Third year	\$60
Fourth year	\$100
Fifth year	\$100
Notes to draw 7 per cent interest	\$400

The quickest way to make up your mind what is best for you and your family is to go with us to Panola County.

Call on or write us for descriptive literature and go with us Saturday night.

R. L. HIGHT LAND COMPANY,

Office Over Collin County Nat. Bank, McKinney, Tex., Phone 302.

\$235,000 BUSINESS

Since January 1, 1909, through our combined efforts, we have sold and exchanged property to the amount of \$235,000. We consider this good, and are very thankful for this degree of success, and extend special thanks to those who have contributed to our success, either by patronage, influence or good will. After January 1, 1910, the style of our firm will be

Ditto & Hight, Real Estate Exchange

Feeling that we are better prepared than ever to handle the real estate business to the satisfaction of our clients, we respectfully solicit your business for 1910. Wishing all a happy and prosperous New Year, we remain, very respectfully,

R. L. Hight and W. E. Ditto



McKinney Shrouded in Sorrow

COLLAPSE OF BIG DEPARTMENT STORE CRUSHES MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN--EIGHT DEAD--MANY INJURED.

The Great Building Crumbles Instantly

Victims, Absolutely Without Warning Have No Time to Escape--Fire Breaks Out, Adding to Horrible Scene. Sobs of Anguish Stricken Women and Children Heard While Hundreds of Men Work Frantically to Rescue Them.

Property Loss Estimated at One Hundred Thousand Dollars

BY H. L. MARRINER
Dallas News

McKINNEY, TEXAS, Jan. 23.—The most appalling tragedy in the history of this city or county was enacted this afternoon in the collapse of two of the city's largest brick buildings, both filled with customers at the time.

Until the ruins, which caught fire, are completely cleared from the fatal spot, the exact loss of life can not be ascertained, but it is believed tonight the death list will total eight, as the number of bodies have been taken from the ruins and no others are thought to be in the wreckage. The list of injured is thirteen.

STOP RESCUE WORK AT 11 O'CLOCK

At 11 o'clock tonight rescue work was stopped by City Marshal J. S. McKinney, after a conference with the Mayor and workers. It was decided that all bodies had been removed and efforts to find more were suspended for the night.

"I believe that all bodies are now out," said the Mayor at 11 o'clock. "For a while it looked as though we would

find fifteen or twenty more bodies, but we are greatly relieved at finding many have escaped from the building and of thirteen injured persons carried to the four hospitals of been reported safe.

"The tragedy is bad enough in all conscience, but the citizenship of McKinney is gratified to know that it is so bad as it looked at first. This has been the greatest disaster in the history of the county, and there are sad hearts, not only here, but all over the State.

"I never saw such work in my life. I did not expect to see such a scene. The offers of assistance from all over the city have been fully appreciated and go to show that when real trouble there are real people to offer real help."

HUNDREDS IN RESCUE WORK

The entire city and all this section of the State were shocked to a point that was almost stupefaction. Men, willing hands by the hundreds tore apart the bricks of the fallen buildings, hurled aside smoke-enshrouded and water-soaked timbers, and four hours after the collapse the mangled and crushed bodies of eight



FIRES ADDS TO HORROR:

RUINS BECOME A CRATER.

The streets were thronged with citizens and people in town for their trading. Suddenly those in the building heard a groaning as of timbers in distress. A harsh cracking followed and clerks and customers alike broke for safety of the streets. Pressed outward by the weight of the heavy implements of the stock, the wall of the implement store swayed, sagged, and burst through into the department store, and in an instant hundreds of tons of merchandise and material tumbled into a tremendous heap of debris on the site of the ruined department store, piling thirty-five feet in the air and sending in a cloud of dust that rose like a pall above the buried bodies, while jagged timbers thrust sky heads from the mass.

After a moment of stunned amazement, of paralyzed inactivity, hundreds of willing workers pitched into the ruins. Scarcely had they mounted the heap when tongues of flame burst through it and an alarm of fire added to the confusion. From all over the city came workers, hundreds of them, and as they came they were formed into relays by Mayor Finch and those assisting him. As one relay became exhausted another took its place, and from a mound of debris the smoking, seething ruins became a crater, bricks were hurled aside, timbers torn out and cast into the streets and mangled and crushed forms were tenderly lifted from the twisted mass of wreckage and hurried to various hospitals in waiting wagons. The dead were carried to the undertaking establishment and the workers acquitted with feverish energy.

R. N. Presley was brought out alive but died from his burns. While under the wreckage he told rescuers that Leslie Bush was under the ruins as he had just been writing on him. The body of Bush was taken out of the ruins about 9:30 o'clock. Mr. Bush, who was about 25 years old, was one of the most prominent in Collin county. He was a large land owner, and the brother of Walter Bush, the banker of Greenville.

Electric Lights are Placed. As darkness fell strings of electric

lights were strung across the ruins and, lighting up the gruesome spectacle, showed to the awestruck eyes, such as those of Mayor Finch, that little or no hope could be entertained of finding living beings beneath so grim and stark a mass. On one side rose a heap of brick and debris thrown away scattered aside by the workers. In the other hung in the glare of the lights the ruined floors of the implement building, littered with dropping vehicles and implements into the solid scene below. From torn patterns, as before this scene stood on either side, of the ruined corner a crowd that numbered thousands, standing everything possible, and watched the fury of the labor that they acted join.

McKinney is a city where people are not like those elsewhere, and in McKinney relatives stick together more closely than elsewhere. A number of old and aged families have their homes here in McKinney these families, no seat soons to all of the city.

News Speds Quickly. The news of the disaster spreads like wildfire, relatives and friends of those who held the buildings, or supposed to ply be in the hands of the city, soon had arriving on every train. The phone and telegraph wires were pulled awry and cut. A coal train was run in from Greenville with 400 people from that city, pleville and Princeton, and specialists were run on the train.

THE DEAD :

- Mrs. Marie Emerson Stiff
- Miss Rosa Welch
- Miss Katie Milligan
- Miss Bessie Wade
- Russell Hight
- Miss Eva Searcy
- Norman Presley
- L. W. [Leslie] Bush

THE INJURED :

- Miss Anna Curtis
- Mrs. Hugh Kistler
- Mrs. Wick Graves
- John Thomas
- Mrs. Belle McWilliams
- Little Anna Graves Kistler
- Miss Lida Moreland
- Miss Jennie Barnett
- Miss Russell
- Mrs. Mort Shirley
- Miss Lula Searcy
- Vernie Graves
- Miss Cassie Seay
- Colored Porter, in the store

of wreckage. There were many pitiful scenes—sobbing fathers, mothers and relatives around scenes where bodies were

Watson happened at a clock that Miss Ruth Still of Temple, his niece, who had been visiting in Dallas at the

One of the worst tragedies to occur in McKinney occurred on January 23, 1913 when the three-story building housing the Cheeves Brothers department store collapsed killing eight people, including the four-year-old son of R.L. Hight. The young child was taken shopping that day by his Aunt Stella. The collapse occurred just as Stella and Russell were leaving the building. The front awning fell on the two, injuring Stella but killing Russell.

Property Loss Estimates. The collapsed building was an old structure. It was rebuilt after a fire in 1874 and had another story, making it three stories, twenty-five years later. It is variously estimated that the property loss will be from \$75,000 to \$100,000.

LEAVE FOR SCENE OF ACCIDENT. Dallas People Who Have Relatives and Friends There, Arrive. Dr. John T. Watson and son, Claude

The treasury had the first two floors used by the Mississippi River Cheeves Bros., proprietors; the third story by the Odd Fellows. It was reported that there had been no indication of any weakness to the building.

"A little after the fall a fire broke out in the wreckage from a heating stove in the store. There was gas water pressure and the Bremen of the mass under control from

(Continued on 4th page.)



Arthur W. Dowlen
(1865 - 1947)

Arthur W. Dowlen moved to McKinney in 1893 and worked a teacher until around 1900 when he followed his brother Gideon into the construction trade. One of Arthur's first major contracts involved building a manse (pastor's residence) for the Overland Presbyterian Church in McKinney.

GENERAL CONTRACTORS	
A. W. Dowlen Phone 627	R. L. Hankal Phone 304
DOWLEN & HANKAL GENERAL CONTRACTORS	
Estimates made and furnished. All work firstclass and guaranteed. No contract too large or small.	
MISCELLANEOUS	

Local and long distance telephone connections

McKinney Manufacturing Co.

We Manufacture

Sash, Doors and General Building Supplies

Mantles a Specialty **J. H. MINOR, Manager**

Around 1910, Arthur Dowlen established the McKinney Manufacturing Company that specialized in fabricating building components along with desks and chairs and other items made of wood.

CITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Election Tuesday, April 6.

For Mayor:
A. W. DOWLEN.

For City Commissioner:
WICK GRAVES.
W. S. MATHEWS.

*In March of 1915 **Arthur Dowlen** announced his candidacy for the Office of Mayor in McKinney against the popular incumbent Mayor H.A. Finch. Arthur later withdrew his name for consideration leaving Mr. Finch to run unopposed in the April election.*

A. W. DOWLIN

Home Man, Home Contractor
Patronized
By HOME PEOPLE

Make us Prove it--here it is:

Fine Two-Story Home being built for County Attorney
Sam Neathery.

Fine New Bungalow Home for Fred Coffey,
of Coffey Bros.

Fine Two-Story Home for W. L. Fitzgerald,
with J. P. Crouch & Co.

All These Homes Within A Three Minutes' Walk
Of Each Other.

NOT TOO BUSY TO FIGURE ON YOUR CONTRACT. I WORK FIRST CLASS, COMPETENT WORK-
MEN-NEVER LEAVING A JOB UNTIL ITS FINISHED. ASK ANYONE FOR WHOM I HAVE EVER
WORKED. THE "CITY OF THE MOON" IS GROWING. LET ME HELP YOU TO MAKE IT GROW FAST.
ER. I THANK MY FRIENDS FOR THEIR PATRONAGE AND HELP.

A. W. DOWLIN, The Home Contractor
Phone 627

The years 1914 and 1915 represented Arthur Dowlen's most prolific building period in McKinney. During this period he completed nearly a dozen two-story homes. The name "Dowlin" often appears appears to be a frequently used and accepted alternative to "Dowlen." He is also known to have used the first name "Pat" and "Whit."

Most Unusual Family

It is probable that there is not another family in the United States with ten children of comparative ages, all in good health and on as lovable terms, as those composing the family group pictured above. The pictures of these, his aunts and uncles, were assembled by F. S. Thomas, Nashville. They are, reading from left to right, top row: Mrs. Alice D. Izor, 62, Miami, Fla.; Mrs. Petrona D. Reading, 65, Pleasant View, Tenn.; A. W. Dowlen, 67, Dallas, Texas, and R. L. Dowlen, 70, Ashland City, Tenn. Bottom row: Miss Annie Dowlen, 72, Ashland City; F. A. Dowlen, 74, Beaumont, Texas; Mrs. Telitha Goodlett, 76, Hillsboro, Texas; F. E. Dowlen, 80, Hillsboro, and Mrs. Carrie Looney, 83, Brownsville, Texas, and G. H. Dowlen, 78, McKenzie, Texas.

The above photo exposé appeared in the January 22, 1933 issue of the "Nashville Banner." There was no additional information regarding why the Dowlen family merited this recognition as all ten children lived in nine different cities spread over three states. Also, it is curious that the author of this piece was familiar enough with the family to have pictures of them but misprinted P.A. Dowlen's name (not F.A. Dowlen) and the city where G.H. Dowlen lived (McKinney, not McKenzie).

The Officers and Directors
of the
HIGHLAND PARK STATE BANK
Announce the Election of
MR. LUTHER M. JORDAN
as President Succeeding
CAPTAIN CARNEY L. DOWLEN

who has been called to the service of our country
in the U. S. Army Air Corps at Miami Beach,
Florida.

E. B. GERMANY,
Chairman of the Board.

**HIGHLAND PARK
STATE BANK.**
HIGHLAND PARK (DALLAS), TEXAS
MEMBER FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION



Carney L. Dowlen, the son of Arthur and Ida Dowlen, was born in 1900 and attended A&M College (now Texas A&M). One of his first jobs out of college was with the Collin County State Bank in McKinney. He advanced quickly in his banking career to become the President of the Highland Park State Bank in Dallas. Soon after the U.S. involvement in WWII, Carney resigned his banking position and joined the Army.

During a training mission while stationed in Maine, an aircraft he was in crashed into the St. Lawrence River killing five of the nine crew members. Carney was one of the five men killed. It was not until 2009 that the remains of the fallen soldiers were discovered. In 2015, the mixed remains were interred and a memorial placed at Arlington National Cemetery



Evolution of Architectural Style

The first decade of the 20th Century witnessed a huge shift in architectural styles. This shift paralleled the cultural shift that saw improving labor conditions and a growing middle class that had enough money to spend on property and homes, modest though they may be. This new culture had little affinity, for the older aesthetic which valued ornamentation and grandiosity. This change is clearly apparent in the architecture of McKinney.

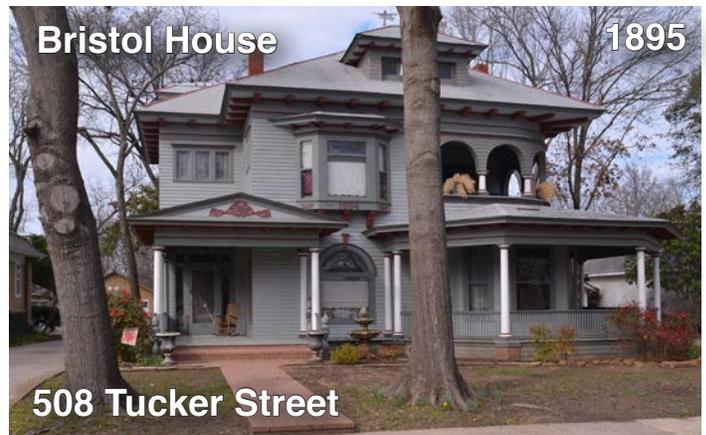
Queen Anne Style

Before 1900, the preferred style was what we now call the Queen Anne Style. This style is characterized by complex gabled roofs, asymmetry, turrets, and an abundance of elaborate ornamentation. Locally, the Aron House at 523 W. Hunt Street exhibits this architectural vocabulary.

Prairie and Foursquare Styles

Just before the 20th Century began, however, new architectural forms offered by the Prairie and Foursquare Styles began appearing in home construction. The Bristol House at 508 Tucker Street was one of the first homes in McKinney to incorporate the deep eaves, hip roofs, and the sprawling geometry these new styles offered.

The Heard-Craig House at 205 W. Hunt Street designed by Dallas architect J.E. Flanders incorporates many of these new forms into a home that is still essentially Queen Anne but mimics the symmetry of the American Foursquare Style (see 801 N. Church St.). Five years later, Flanders moved closer to creating a pure Prairie Style home when he designed the J.R. Brown House at 509 N. Church Street.



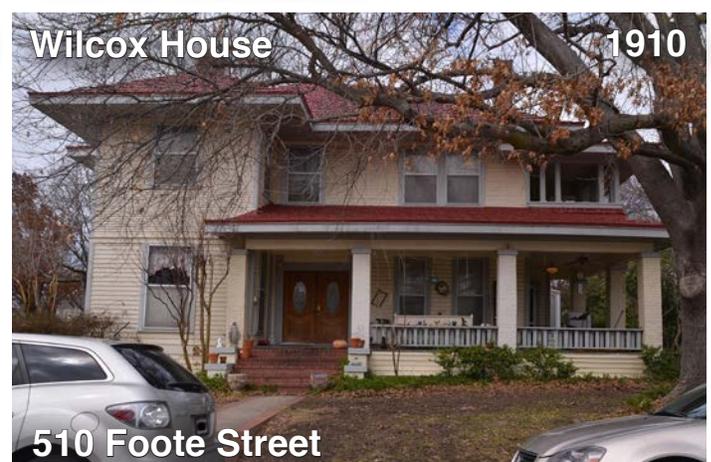
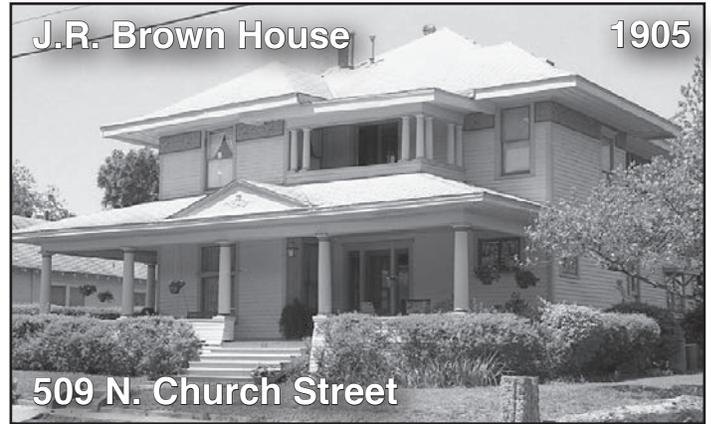
By the early 1900s, not all builders and clients were ready to abandon the old familiar style and the prestige it conveyed. This resulted in many homes becoming an eclectic mixture of new and old styles.

McKinney builder W.J. Higgins built the Brooke House at 608 W. Hunt Street in 1910. It appears that neither the builder nor the client was ready to embrace the “modernness” of Flander’s designed. Instead, the Brooke house preserves the gabled pavilions and proportions of the Queen Anne Style while adding sprawling porches on the first and second floors. The result is a marriage of two styles with a practical solution to ventilation.

The Davenport House which sits across the street at 613 W. Hunt Street was probably build by Higgins in the same year as the Brooke House. Higgins was an accomplished builder of American Foursquare homes and incorporated its boxy, pyramidal forms into many of the homes he built. The pavilion which had a gabled roof in the Brooke House now has a hip roof. Though Davenport house moves further away from the Queen Anne Style, the builder put an ornamental finial at the apex of the roof to remind us of the home’s (and the client’s) appreciation of tradition.

Elsewhere in McKinney, builders and clients were warming up to the new style. The home at 510 Foote Street build for F.E. Wilcox in 1910 is decidedly in the Prairie Style with its wide eaves, square columns, and hip roof. Still, the window treatment lacks a complete expression of the style.

Finally, in 1911 J.P. Burrus spent \$30,000 dollars on a house at 405 N. Waddill that was unabashedly in the Prairie Style. The Queen Anne vocabulary is completely gone. Thus, a new design paradigm became the mode of the day in McKinney.



Arts & Craft Movement

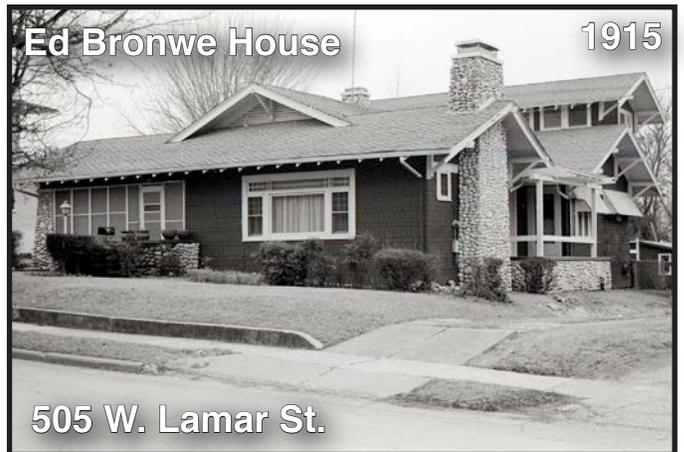
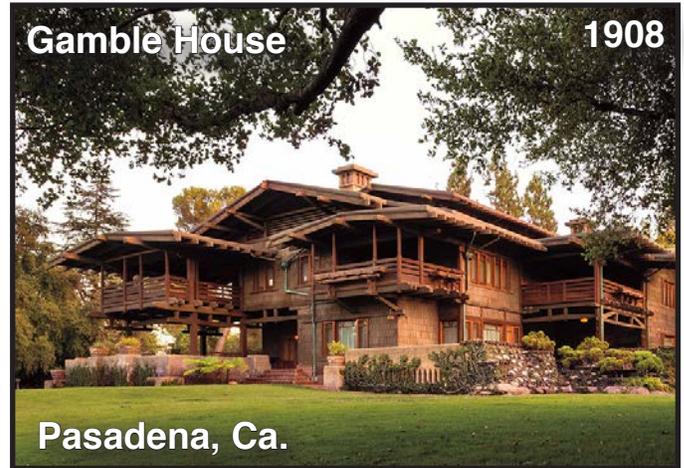
The Arts & Craft Style was another popular alternative to the Queen Anne Style. This style originated in England in the late 1880s and was espoused by social commentator John Ruskin and textile designer William Morris. The Arts & Craft movement emphasized natural, handmade elements. It was as much a style innovation as it was a social movement that regarded the craftsman as artist.

In America, the architectural firm of Greene and Greene was influential in this area, creating what is often called an American architectural masterpiece in the Gamble House in Pasadena, California in 1908. This style is characterized by broad, low-pitched roofs with extended eaves supported by exposed rafters. Stone, brick and wood were used to a natural effect.

In McKinney, the Arts & Craft aesthetic is clearly evident in a house built by Mr. L. Caruthers in 1915 for grain dealer Ed Browne at 505 W. Lamar Street. This house utilizes the same architectural vocabulary expressed in its Californian predecessor.

Other Styles

To a lesser degree, there are other early 20th Century architectural styles represented in McKinney's historic neighborhood. These styles include Classical Revival, Colonial Revival and English Cottage (see examples below). Though these homes are impressive, they did not enjoy the same popularity as the more "modern" looking Prairie and Art & Craft Styles.



The Early Prairie Style

The elements that characterize the Prairie Style are:

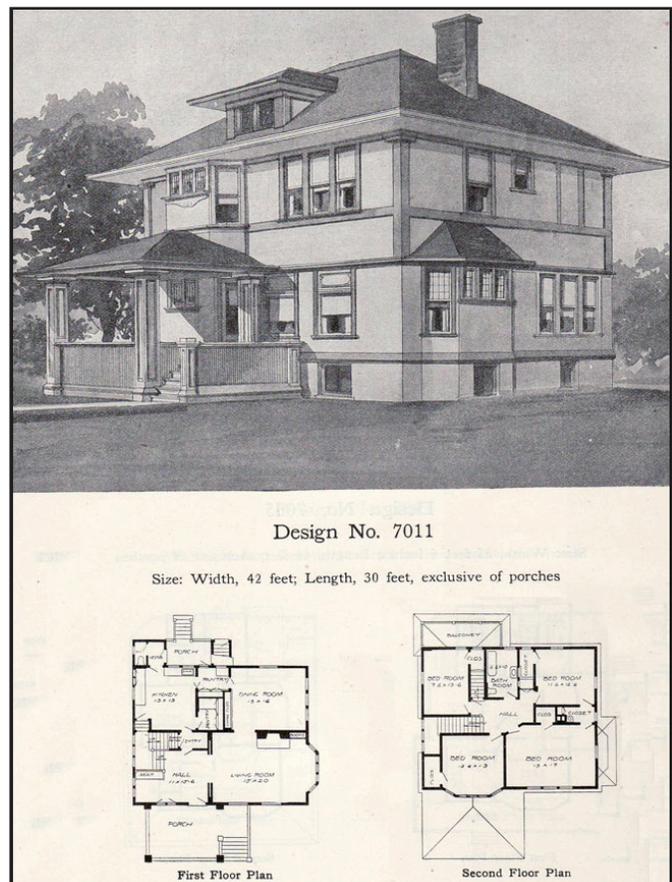
- low-pitched, hipped roof
- broad eaves with soffits
- rock or brick fireplace
- porches/balconies under overhangs
- square columns
- tall windows arranged in groups
- horizontal massing
- rectilinear lines
- 2 story (most common)

The early Prairie Style is a transitional form that combines the vernacular American Foursquare form with an Arts and Craft aesthetic. At the beginning of the 20th Century when Victorian era tastes were changing one of the most popular styles was the American Foursquare house. It was a pragmatic solution to dwelling that took its inspiration from the farmland houses of the mid-west. Sometimes called the “prairie box,” the style was essentially a cube with a pyramid on top.

As this form was developing, the Arts and Craft Movement was beginning in Europe. The Arts and Craft Movement celebrated nature, art, and hand-craftsmanship. One of the goals of the Movement was to elevate the “decorative arts” to the status that the “fine arts” enjoyed.

Many American architects began applying the Arts and Craft aesthetic to the prairie box to create a distinct looking house with hipped roofs, deep eaves, square columns and horizontal lines. This style became known as the Prairie Style with Frank Lloyd Wright being its best known proponent. The style was impressive and easy to construct and most effective in two-story structures. The more modest Craftsman Bungalow evolved along side the Prairie Style which shared many of the same elements. The Style was most popular between 1900 and the 1920s.

Early Prairie Style homes will include many of the features of the American Foursquare Style including hipped roofs, a centrally located dormer, soffit-covered eaves and a somewhat classical gabled roof at the home’s entrance. As the Prairie Style matured, these homes



The above illustration is from a 1908 William A. Radford Company pattern book showing a “Prairie Box” Style home.



began exhibiting broader, more horizontal elevations and fewer classical forms.

Popularity in the Prairie Style wained in the 1920s as people become more interested in Craftsman bungalows and revival styles. However, following World War II interest in the Prairie Style resurfaced (along with Frank Lloyd Wright's career) and was the primary influence behind the Ranch Style.

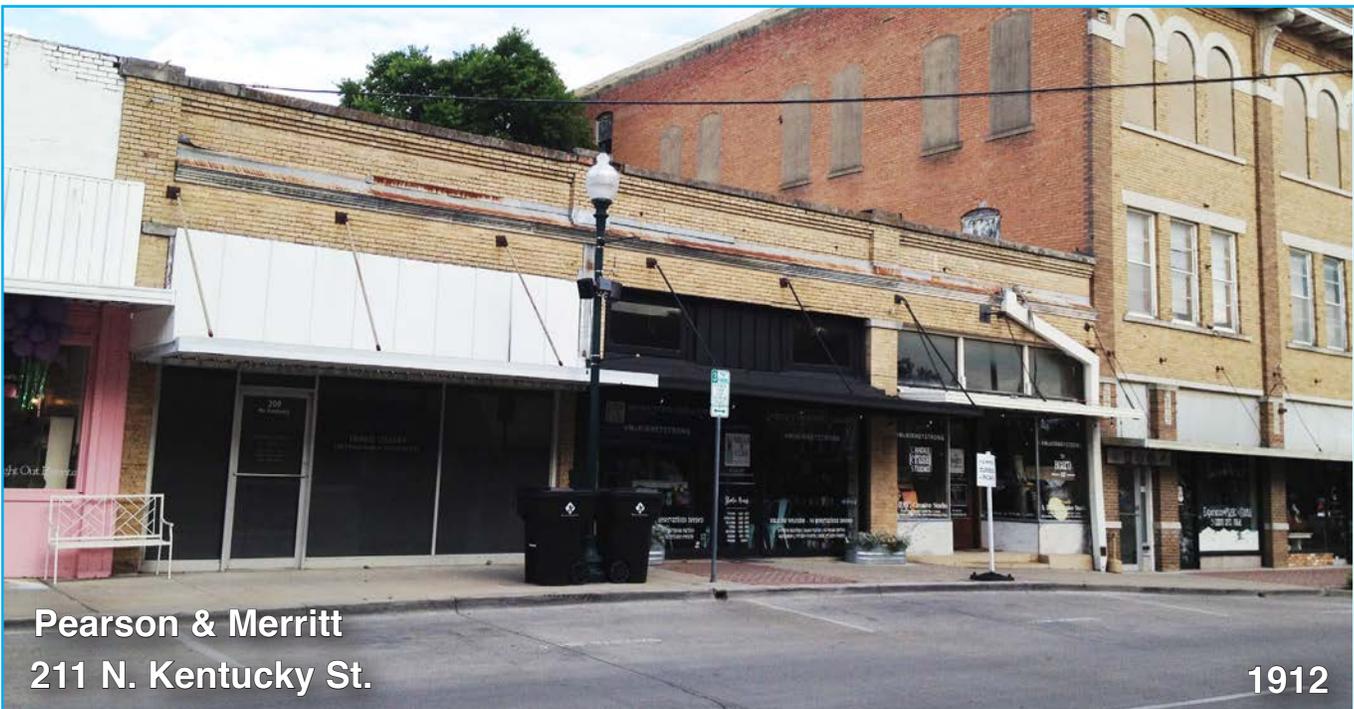


The Darwin Martin House in Buffalo, NY was built by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1905 and demonstrates the Prairie Style aesthetic.

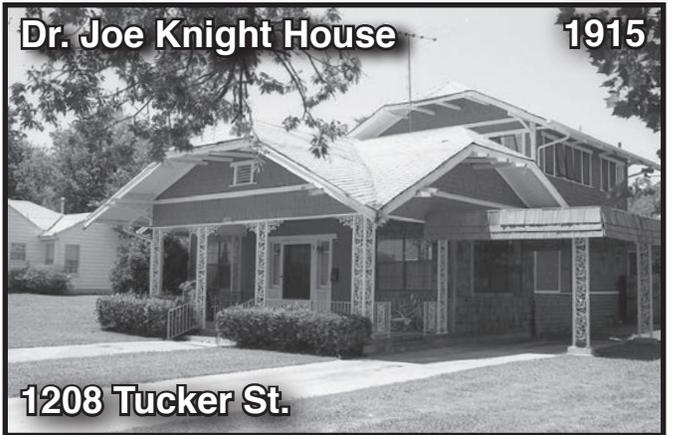
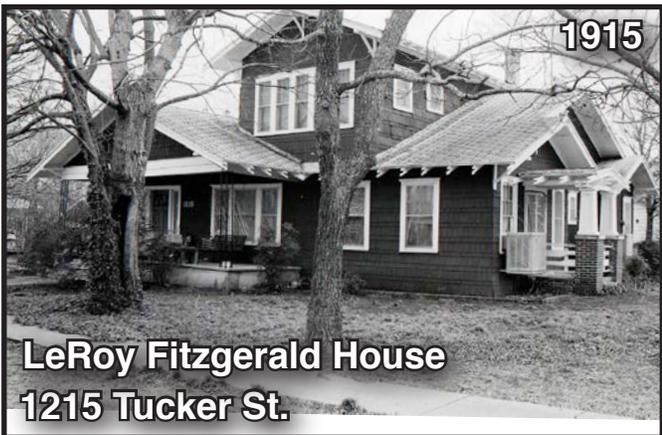
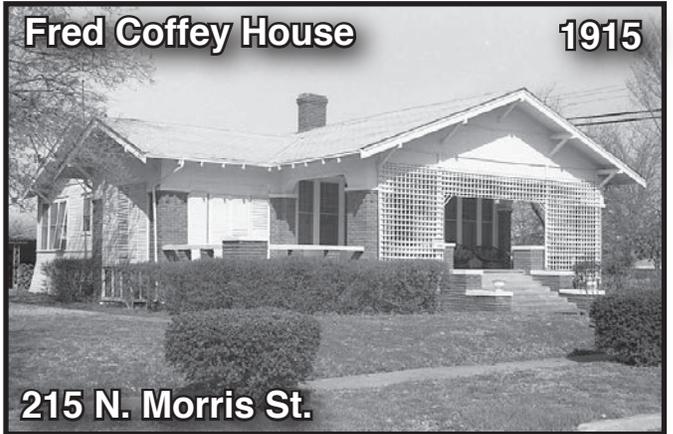
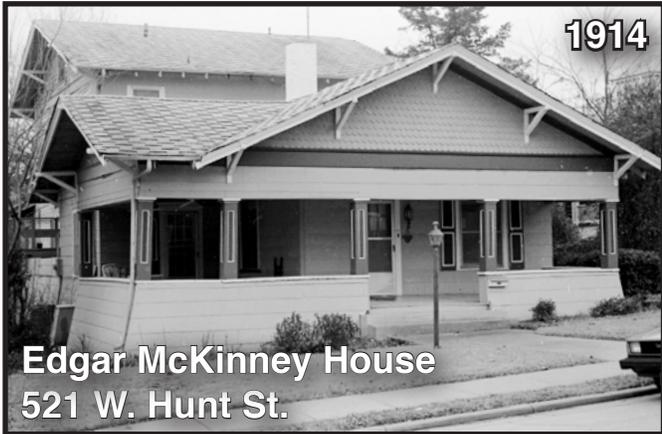
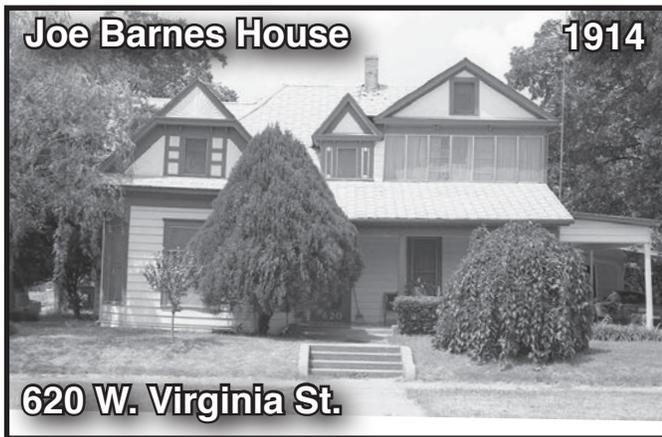
Work of A.W. Dowlen

When Arthur Dowlen came to McKinney in 1893, he spent the next seven years working as a teacher. He left that profession to become a contractor and quickly became one of McKinney's most popular builders. It is not known who designed the homes that he build but they all have a distinctive flourish that seems intended to catch a person's attention. Exaggerate eave returns and jerkinhead roofs are good examples of some of attention-getting elements he constructed.

(continued)

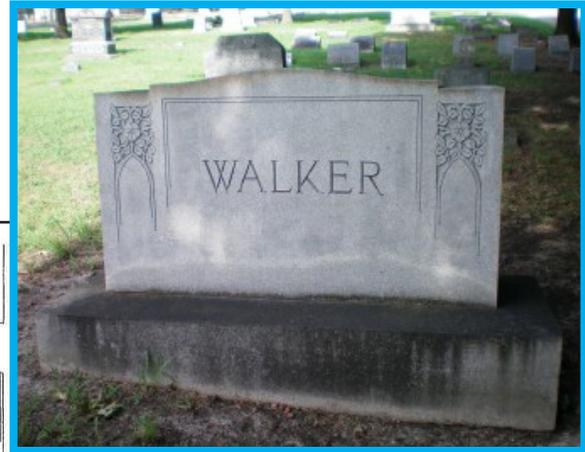


Arthur Dowlen built homes during a time when interest in the Victorian Style was nearly all but gone, replaced by the more popular Craftsman Style and the stately Prairie Style. Mr. Dowlen seemed to have no difficulty understanding how to respond to the different construction techniques each of these styles required. His success as a builder in McKinney allowed him to tap into the building market in Dallas which lead him to move there in 1920. NOTE: The house at 1215 Tucker St. is often called the Richard Bass house in many historical writings, however, it was originally built for LeRoy Fitzgerald in 1915.

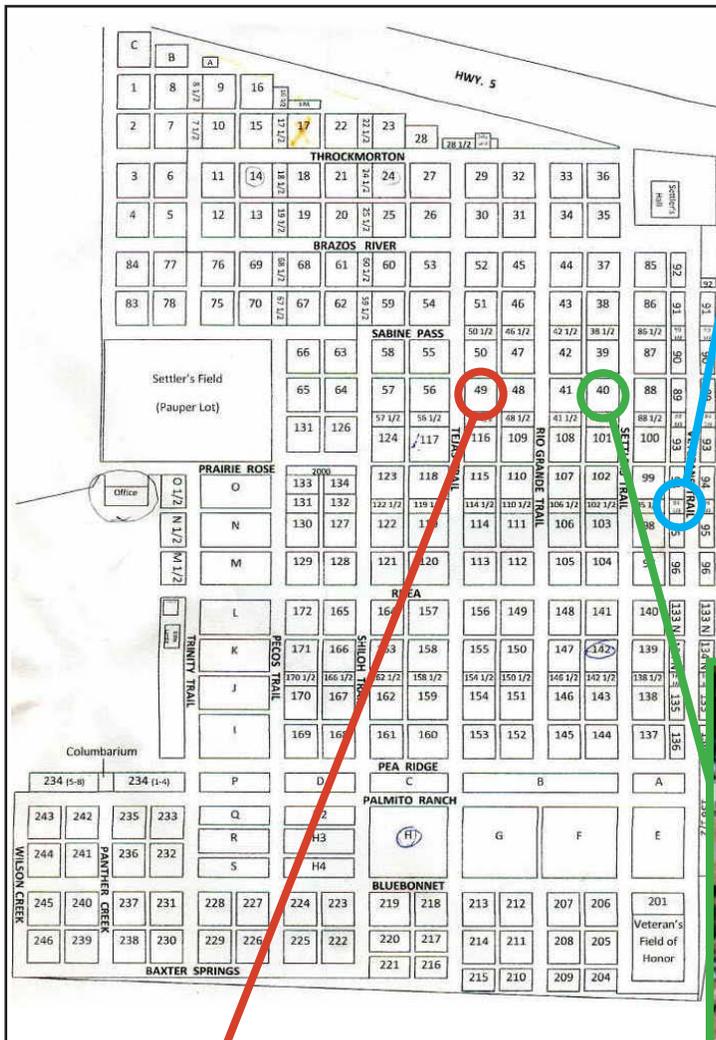


Pecan Grove Cemetery

This map of Pecan Grove Cemetery in McKinney shows the final resting places of people associated with 616 N. Church Street.



Silas E. Walker, 1875 - 1926
Alwilda (Coffey) Walker, 1878 - 1968

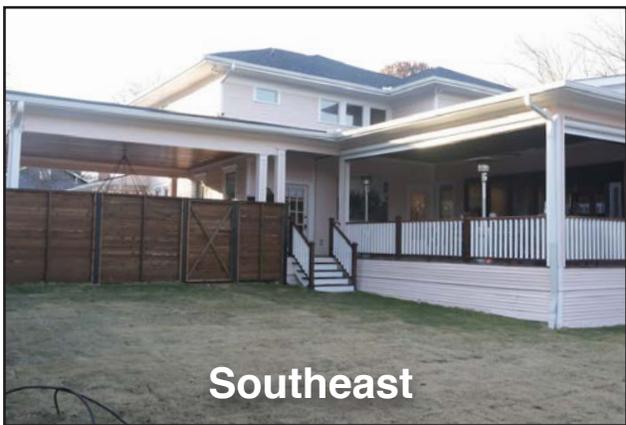


James C. Rhea, 1837 - 1925



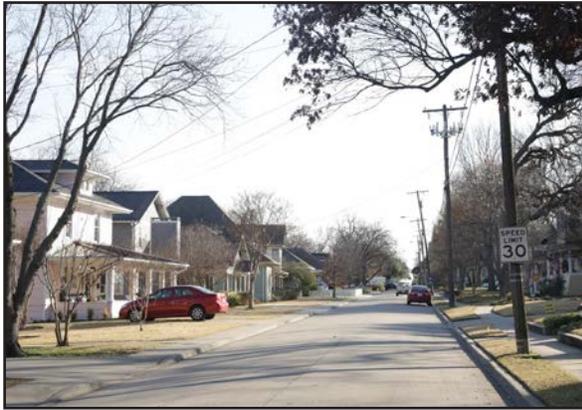
Robert L. Hight, 1882 - 1963
Lelia (Russell) Hight, 1885 - 1963

616 North Church Street



Neighborhood Context (2020)

616 North Church Street neighborhood context



View looking south on N. Church Street



View looking north on N. Church Street

Homes near 616 North Church Street



607 N. Church St.



613 N Church St.



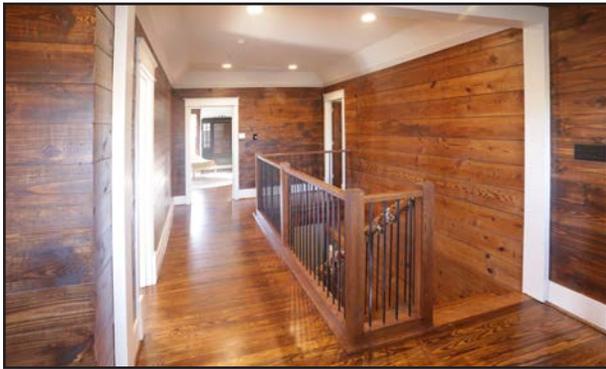
620 N. Church St.



615 N. Church St.

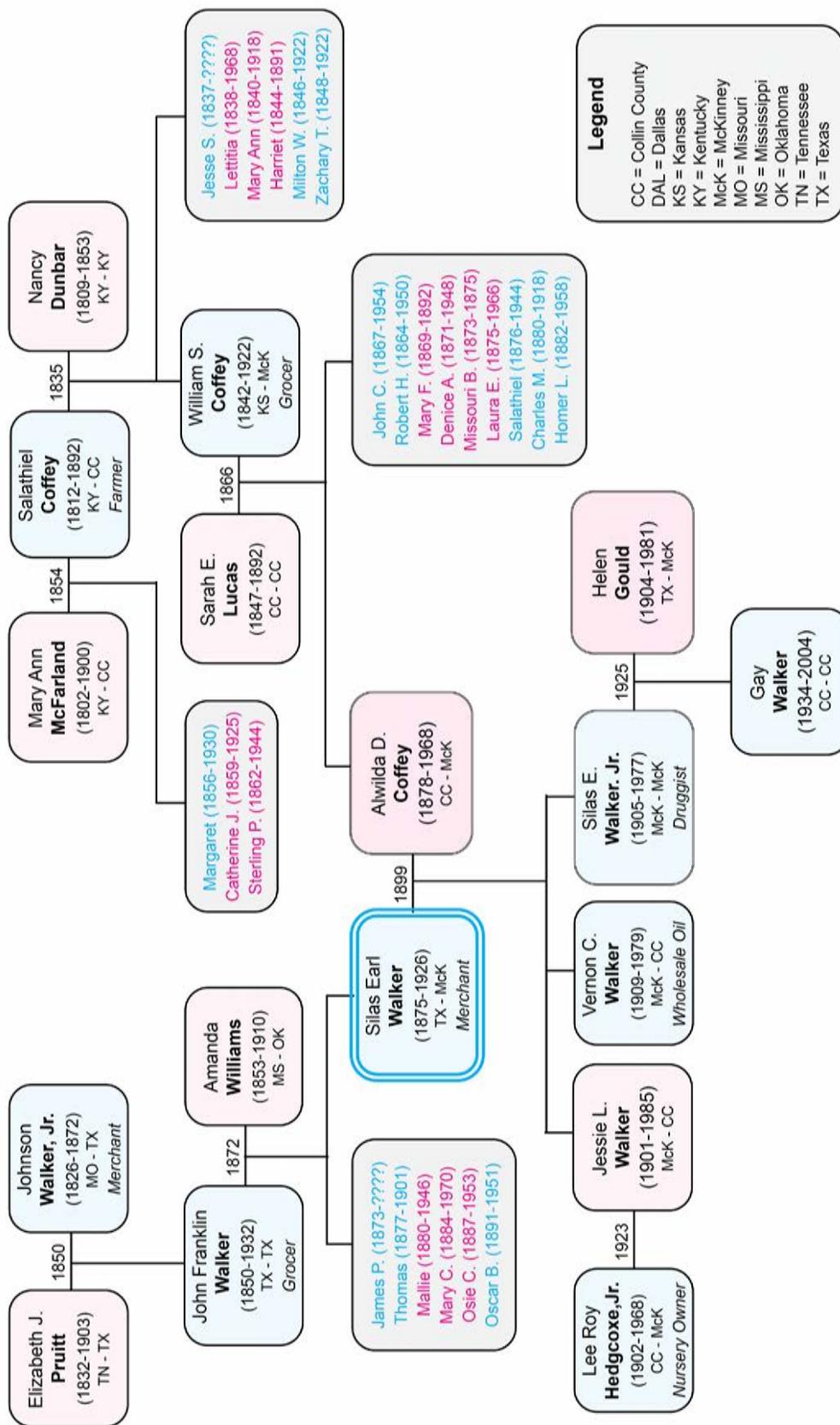
Architectural Accents





H. Additional Information

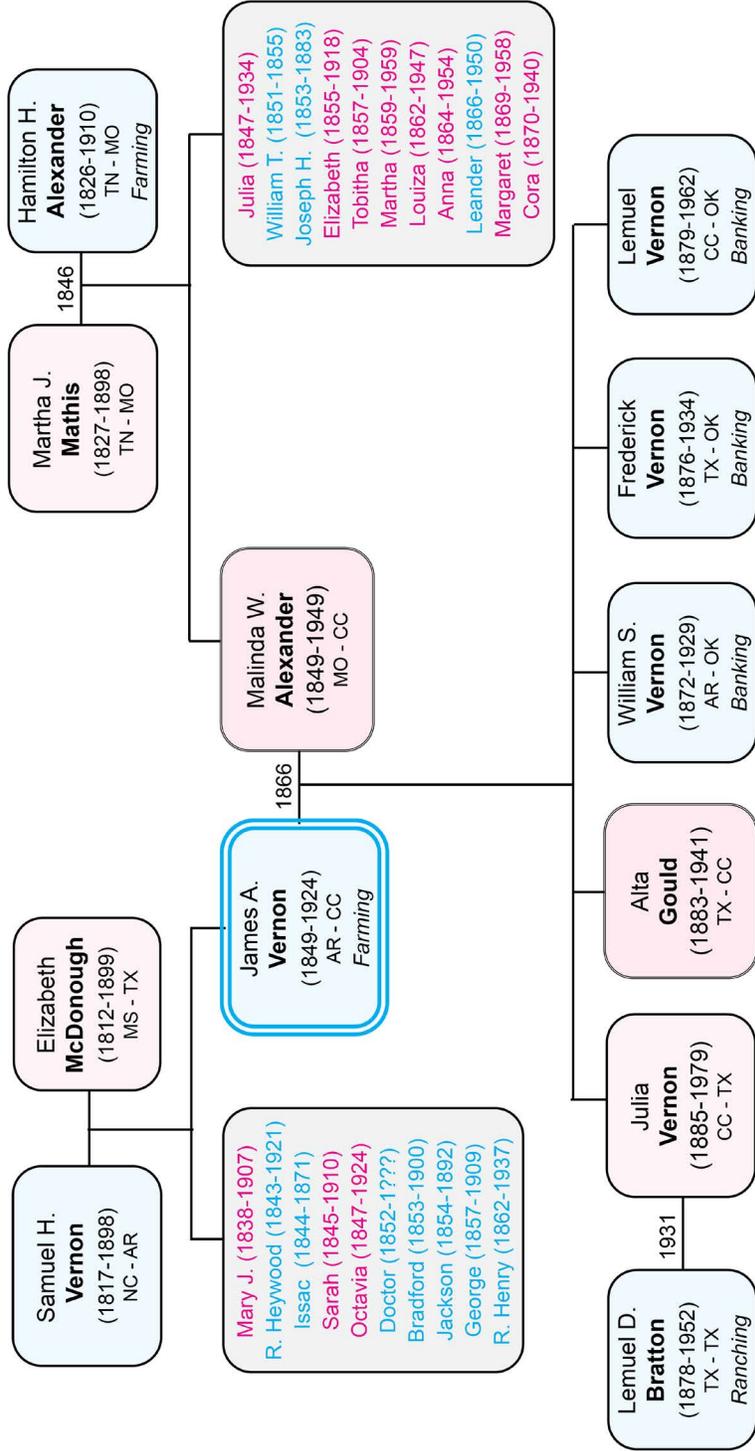
Silas E. Walker Family of Early McKinney*



* Not all family members are included.

James A. Vernon Family of Early McKinney*

Legend
 AR = Arkansas
 CC = Collin County
 DAL = Dallas
 McK = McKinney
 MI = Mississippi
 MO = Missouri
 NC = North Carolina
 OK = Oklahoma
 TN = Tennessee
 TX = Texas



I. References & Resources

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Research assistance provided by Tom Michero