

"The Wilcox House"

611 North Church St, McKinney TX 75069

In a review of Sanborn maps, which were used by the fire departments in earlier years, the house was built after the 1908 map was published and prior to the 1914 map. No exact records were located to precisely date the construction of the home located at 611 North Church Street. The home was built by McKinney lumberyard owner and prominent local citizen J. M. Wilcox. The home represents an eclectic mix of home styles that were prevalent during the period. The home incorporates Craftsman, Prairie and Bungalow characteristics that contribute to its distinctiveness and historic value.

The house is just north of the "Old Donation". The land is part of the "Rhea Addition" and is noted on the 1914 Sanborn map. It's detailed on the original deed sale document, filed March 15th, 1910 and in the Collin County deed records as "The North one half of the following described lot. Situated at in Collin County Texas, North of the Old Donation of the City of McKinney, part of the Wm Davis Survey and being lot No. 1 of the Rhea Addition to said City of McKinney." (13). This is noted as lot "1b" in the tax records. The seller is listed as "Mary E. Lindemuth (formerly Mary E. Rhea) joined by my husband L Lindemuth of Denver County, Colorado." The purchaser is listed as "JM Wilcox Jr". J. M. Wilcox Jr was born in 1885 and was the son of J. M. Wilcox. The home was purchased for "\$750 dollars cash".

The Rhea name continues in Collin County as "Rhea Mills" which is an unincorporated farming community at the junction of FM 2478 and FM 1461.

The home intersects the lives of two prominent and important families in McKinney: The Throckmorton's and the Wilcox's.

The land was purchased in 1910 by Mr. J. M. Wilcox Jr. The Wilcox's were established lumber merchants, owning local lumber companies and lumber mills in East Texas. The company name being J.M. Wilcox & Son.

J.M. Wilcox (James Meredith) was born in Boone County MO on June 19th, 1828. Boone County was at the very edge of the American frontier at that time. He visited the area briefly at age 16 in 1844, which was prior to Texas being admitted to the Union. He returned to Missouri, where he went to college. He participated in the 1849 California Gold Rush. But he eventually moved to Collin County on a permanent basis in 1855. In 1856 he married Miss Nancy Throckmorton. Together they had nine children, including Bertha Wilcox King, wife of Sheppard King, known as the "Cotton King" and builder of "The Mansion on Turtle Creek" in Dallas. J.M. owned and operated mercantile businesses at various locations in Collin County until he was called to service in the Civil War, serving as a Private. After the war he continued the lumber business, eventually opening locations in McKinney, Plano, Melissa, Anna, Princeton and Allen. He finally settled in McKinney in 1881.

The McKinney Lumberyard location was at 218 E. Louisiana St, McKinney 75069. That location is currently home to the "Mellow Mushroom". Across the street is the "Wilcox Building", located at 215 E. Louisiana Street, McKinney TX 75069, currently home of the "Mom and Popcorn" store. J.M. was a prominent businessman in McKinney and passed away in 1912, just after the construction of the home. The Wilcox family was prominent in the McKinney area, and numerous Wilcox's are buried in Pecan Grove Cemetery.

His first wife Nancy Throckmorton, was the daughter of Dr. W. E. Throckmorton (making him the son-in-law of Dr. W. E. Throckmorton), who brought some of the first settlers into Collin County. His wife was the sister of James W. Throckmorton (making him the brother-in-law of James W. Throckmorton), the twelfth Governor of Texas, twice a U.S. Congressman, Confederate Brigadier General and possibly the most illustrious citizen from Collin County in Texas. Governor Throckmorton's statue stands next to the old County Courthouse in downtown McKinney.

Nancy Throckmorton Wilcox passed away in 1878. J. M. then married Sarah McCaulay of McKinney in 1882 (he was age 54 and she was age 23) with whom he had two children: James Meredith Wilcox Jr and Miss Edith "Eddie" Wilcox.

The home was built for J.M. Wilcox's daughter Miss Edith (Eddie) Wilcox. Eddie Wilcox was married on September 18th 1913 to Frederick Land Bush, of McKinney. They continued to live in McKinney, and the Bush family became prominent citizens in the area. Per the 1920 census they lived on Bradley Street in McKinney. They had two children – Sterling Price Bush and Sarah V. Bush.

J. M. Wilcox Jr purchased the land which then became this house when he was in his mid-20's. J. M. Jr continued the family lumber business, later owning and operating a lumberyard in Dallas.

The home has been continuously occupied since the purchase and construction by J. M. Wilcox. By 1920 per census records the house at 611 N. Church St. had been sold to a local farmer, James P. Watson, with his wife Pearl and daughters Elizabeth and Winnie living in the home. Later James became a salesman in a seed house and the family had added a son Jack. By 1930 per census records the home was owned by Charles and Dollie Nealy, with their children Lorene, Dorothy and Charlsie. Charles Nealy was a local McKinney barber. On November 11th, 1941 per county deed records, the property was deeded from the Neal's to Ed Blakeman. And on January 16th. 1954 the property was deeded from Ed Blakeman to R. D. Carroll and Ala Mae Carroll. The Carroll's lived in the home for twenty years, and finished out the upstairs attic area. On 02/18/1974 it was deeded from the Carroll's to Donnie L Spraberry and Kathleen E Spraberry. The Spraberry's were from the Dallas area, and purchased the home seven years after their marriage. Records indicate that they were divorced in the year after the sale of the home on June 1st, 1990. The Spraberry's sold to William A and Kathy Dunham. About four years later on November 15th 1994 it was deeded from the Dunham's to Theodore E Gebhardt Jr and Carla R Gebhardt. The Gebhardt's lived in the home for eight years and then sold to Todd and Ginger Montgomery on December 9th, 2002. The Montgomery's did extensive restoration work to the home. On February 22nd 2010 the home was deeded from the Montgomery's to James and Cynthia Joor.

In the 1950's the attic was finished out, and the stairs leading up to the attic were from a local McKinney funeral home. A sleeping porch at the back of the home was enclosed to create an indoor sun room. The exterior walls of the home were originally of wood siding, however a brick veneer was added after WWII. In the 2000's restoration took place to bring the home up to date for wiring, plumbing, air-conditioning and the roof. However no interior walls were moved and the room dimensions and style are intact from the time of the original construction.

Architectural and Design Features:

As a result of the home being built by J.M. Wilcox, a lumber merchant, only the finest hardwoods from his mill were used in the construction.

The exterior of the home exhibits features common to Prairie style homes, which were built in the period 1900 – 1920. It was built concurrent with 607 N. Church St, and has a similar exterior style, which is designated as historic by the city of McKinney. A moderate pitched roof, with straight parallel roof lines. There is a single dormer window in the front in the center of the roof. The house has large bead-board enclosed eaves, along with a porch in the front. As is typical with this style of house, the front door is off-center.

There are 4 beautiful original large leaded glass windows on the sides of the home. The home retains the original glass windows on the first floor.

The highlight of the house is in the original woodwork – all consistent with Craftsman style homes of the early part of the 20th Century. There are simple straight lines throughout. The visual connection among doors, door trim, window trim, baseboards, wall trim and the ceiling crown molding are established by repetitive millwork details. The wood is oak, original to the home, and is of the same dark rich color.

Across all floors are eight to nine inch original interior dark oak wood base boards. Around all first floor door frames and window frames are five inch wood frames. Each first floor room has large and prominent crown molding at the ceiling. In the Parlor, Living Room and Dining room there are five inch high wood side-wall panels at 8 feet high, with an additional

3 feet above to the 11 foot ceilings. The ceilings in the Living Room and Dining Room have wood “box beams” across the ceiling. Again, these type of wood features are typical of Craftsman style homes.

The home has several original light fixtures from the turn of the century period, including angular Wright-inspired fixtures, art-glass shades held in place by thin muntins, and an emerald art-glass shower chandelier.

There are four original fireplaces: the living room, both downstairs bedrooms, and the dining room. The mantles have typical arts and craft style, simple functional design, and clean lines.

In the downstairs hall are displayed eight frames that hold samples of the wallpaper in the eight rooms (foyer, living room, dining room, hallway, bedroom, office, kitchen, butler’s pantry) at the time of the restoration. The wallpaper is typical of homes from the turn of the century. The current owners have painted the interior walls in colors that befit the Craftsman style – earthy brown, muted green and cool blue.

From the original solid wood entry door throughout the formal areas, the foyer, living room and dining room, the original wood narrow strip hardwood flooring are continuous, meeting the less formal original wood pine narrow strip flooring that remains in place throughout the first floor. The doors are original 5 panel style common in Craftsman homes.

The downstairs bathroom retains the original shiplap wood walls, along with bead-board. There are two original pocket doors, six feet wide by seven and a half feet high, one solid wood between the entry and living room, and the second is solid wood and glass between the living room and dining room – each with brass and iron pull handles. The remaining doorknobs in the home are original brass or glass. In the kitchen, a beadboard surround, below a picture rail, covers the plastered walls, meeting the deep crown moulding at the 11 foot beadboard-lined ceiling. There is a lovely 1957 red-and-white Tappan stove still in use in the kitchen.

The foundation is composed of Bois d’Arc wood that has held up since the original construction.

On both sides of the large living room fireplace are built-in deep richly-stained bookcases, with a patina created by time, and attached “Inglenook” style benches. A matching bench in the foyer, topped off with a massive built-in wood-framed beveled glass mirror greets guests and family upon entry to the home.

This house and those connected to it, are a part of the history of McKinney, Collin County and the state of Texas. The structure and style are the same as when it was built, and the home looks much as it did in 1910. The current owners cherish the home for its place in McKinney’s history and for the beauty of its architectural style. And they believe it’s important to maintain this piece of our history.

Bibliography

County Records:

Collin CAD Property Search

Collin County Deed Records (microfilm) 1846-1910

Federal Records: U.S. Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930

Cemeteries: Pecan Grove Cemetery, McKinney Texas.

On-Line Resources:

Sanborn Maps: <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/m.html>

McKinney Historic Home Styles. McKinney Survey Map. Photos of home 1985, 2015 – Exterior:

<http://mck.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=b8d9a92e75534707b56764e8b7532cce>

James Throckmorton Biography: <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fth36>

The Wilcox Family: <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth61096/m1/228/>

Genealogy Friends of Plano (Texas) Libraries, Inc McKinney Democrat, March 7th 1912 (Wilcox Obituary):

http://www.lchr.org/a/35/ke/early_Settlers/people/wilcoxjm

Newspapers: McKinney Weekly Democrat-Gazette, 9/18/1913

Books: McKinney the First 150 Years. By Julia L Vargo.

Articles: When Roommates are Cut in Half, 10/24/15, Historic McKinney. Wordpress

Documents: University of North Texas Digital Library, J. M. Wilcox & Son Lumberyard Receipt