



CITY OF MCKINNEY, TEXAS

Legislation Text

File #: 21-012HTM, **Version:** 1

Conduct a Public Hearing to Consider/Discuss/Act on the Request by Kevin and Melissa Mansell for Approval of a Historic Marker for the House Located at 616 N. Church Street

COUNCIL GOAL: Enhance the Quality of Life in McKinney

MEETING DATE: March 4, 2021

DEPARTMENT: Development Services - Planning

CONTACT: Mark Doty, Assistant Director of Planning

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff is recommending approval of a historic marker for 616 N. Church Street.

PRIORITY RATING: The property is listed as a high priority building according to the 2015 Update of the Historic Resource Survey. A high priority building contributes significantly to local history or broader historical patterns; is an outstanding or unique example of architecture, engineering or crafted design; retains a significant portion of its original character and contextual integrity; meets in some cases, criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and/or is eligible for a Texas Historical Marker.

ITEM SUMMARY: The purpose of the Historic Marker Program is to encourage owners of historic properties to become actively involved in the preservation of McKinney's historic past through the recognition of historic events, people, and architecture. The applicant has submitted a written narrative relating the history of the various families that have owned the property or resided at 616 N. Church Street and the role they played in McKinney's history. On January 19, 2021, the applicant submitted the necessary documentation to apply for a historic marker for the house located at 616 N. Church Street.

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. All of these design elements follow the Four Square Style with Prairie Style influences.

One of the few indigenous American styles, the Prairie style is best known as the primary style of Frank Lloyd Wright and gained popularity in the Midwest through pattern books from 1900-1920. A reaction to the ornate Victorian and other Revival styles, the most common vernacular form is called the American Four Square or simply Four Square. Usually a two-and-a-half story structure with four

large, boxy rooms, Prairie style elements would then be added to the exterior.

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. Interior original features include pocket doors, cabinets, hardwood flooring, and stained walnut door and window trim.

Beginning in 2018, the current owners added a large rear addition, along with electrical and plumbing upgrades. In addition, there are two exterior alterations that are noticeable from the North Church Street. The first is a centrally located roof dormer, which is in keeping with the architecture of the period and 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.

After the recent additions and system upgrades, the Mansells have no immediate plans for further work on the structure, they are committed to maintaining and preserving the structure as future needs arise.

HISTORICAL FIGURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOUSE:

Silas Earl Walker (1875-1926)

Silas E. Walker, also known as “Cy”, 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. In 1913, Cy hired Arthur W. Dowlen to build a two-story, twelve-room house.

Arthur Whitney Dowlen (1865-1947)

Arthur Dowlen was a successful builder in McKinney during the first two decades of the 20th Century. 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 and he is responsible for erecting some McKinney’s most expressive homes for the period.

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. In 1916, James suffered a stroke that left him unable to continue his farming activities and moved to McKinney where he purchased the Walker home. He lived in the house until he died March 31, 1924.

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. In 1949, the Hight’s purchased the house and lived there until their deaths in 1963.

ASSESSMENT: Staff believes that the applicant has met all the requirements to obtain a Historic Marker under the Historic Neighborhood Improvement Zone Program (Ordinance 2015-12-105). Therefore, Staff is recommending approval of a Historic Marker for 616 N. Church Street

Under Ordinance 2015-12-105, if the HPAB approves the Marker, the applicant will be responsible for purchasing and displaying the Historic Marker.

Also, under Ordinance 2015-12-105, if the Historic Preservation Advisory Board approves the Marker, the applicant may make application for a Level 1 tax exemption (100% exemption of the City's ad valorem taxes for a period of 7 years) providing the building has architectural integrity and has been properly rehabilitated/restored and maintained.

The building must have a residential use in order to qualify for the tax exemption.