

City of McKinney  
Historic Building Marker Application  
(Supporting Documentation)

**Horace Neilson House**  
514 West Hunt Street



## **A. Alterations & Construction**

### **Construction**

The Horace Neilson House, constructed around 1917, is a two-story, wood-frame residential structure built on a pier-and-beam foundation. The home's design follows the American Foursquare Style with its boxy massing and near symmetrical front facade with a centrally located dormer on a hip roof with soffited eaves. A large porch accented with Tuscan columns atop a battered-board balustrade extends across the entire front of the house. The south-facing front door is flanked by single-pane sidelights. The rooms of the home's asymmetrical floor plan connect without the use of hallways. A combination of pine and oak flooring is used throughout the house.

## **Alterations**

Few alterations were made to the home during the five decades that the Neilson's owned the house. Toward the end of Horace Neilson's life, the eastern portion of what was once a wrap-around porch was enclosed to become a bedroom. Another porch at the rear of the house was also enclosed to accommodate Horace's wife Mave. As the home passed into later hands, the home experienced alterations without regard to preserving its architectural integrity, including replacing the original windows with build-er-grade aluminum windows and the application of vinyl siding. However, the winter storm of 2021 provided the impetus and opportunity for the current owners to restore the house to its original aesthetic.

That storm's record-breaking low temperatures caused a sewer line above the kitchen to burst flooding the downstairs. When an assessment of the immediate damage was made, it was discovered that the home's original wood siding was rotting and the decades-old aluminum windows were failing. The owners described these issues in their Certificate of Appropriateness application that they submitted to the City that year. The following description of their alterations has been excerpted from that application:

*Despite our best efforts to prevent this disaster, our home was not built to withstand this frigid assault. We immediately began remediation efforts by making timely and urgently needed repairs to our home for the last twenty-two years. The preexisting windows and siding could not withstand the elements. Large portions of the circa 1970s vinyl siding were cracked and chunks were falling off. The 1970s aluminum single-pane windows were so compromised that attempts to close them resulted in the glass falling out of the frames and the frames locking into their rails. The wood underneath the siding was rotting as well.*

*Originally, the porch wrapped around the east side of the house, but the Nielsen's converted this space into a bedroom when the judge became too infirm to climb the stairs. The back porch was also enclosed so that Mrs. Nielsen would have a bedroom downstairs. The closet under the staircase was converted into a downstairs bathroom, and the kitchen was also expanded onto the back porch. The dominating features of the interior were maintained: two exquisite fireplaces—one located in the living-room and the second in the dining room. The hardwood floors and ten-foot ceilings (first floor) and 9 foot ceilings (second floor) were also retained.*

*The Bryant family bought the home from the Nielsen's. Concerned about the extensive wood rot in the eaves and around the windows, they signed on for what they thought would be a low-maintenance solution. According to members of the family, they believed the wood siding under the vinyl would be restored and rehabilitated by the contractor. What happened*

*was that all the period trimmings around the windows, the eaves, and the soffit were removed or buried including all the counterweights for the double hung three over one windows. Along with the siding, the 1970s “modern” windows were installed. The single pane windows consisted of four horizontally aligned panes. The old sills were removed so that the siding could be rapidly fitted over the frames. Plywood sheets were placed over a windowing casing on the second floor to give one of the bedrooms additional functionalities. Even the dormer in the attic was covered in vinyl and its distinctive shingles were hidden. Later AstroTurf was applied to the front porch and all the woodwork around the fireplaces was painted over (including the tiles). A subsequent renovation, prior to our purchase, eliminated the pantry. The next homeowners went through a divorce and the house went into foreclosure in the nineties. The mortgage lender covered the shiplap walls in the interior, the beadboard ceilings, etc. with either particle board or sheetrock. On the second floor, the original wood floors were removed, and particle board installed which was covered with carpeting.*

*The Hayes family purchased the house [in 1991] in foreclosure and began restoring some of the interior decorative and architectural elements. In August 1999, we purchased the home from the Hayes and over the years repaired the windows and siding as best we could. Despite our best efforts and regular maintenance, the deterioration under the siding continued unobserved. Since we moved in, our dream was to restore the historic elements lost by prior owners and to improve the energy efficiency of our home.*

In summary, the 2021 reconstruction initiated by the current owners included:

- Removing vinyl siding and aluminum frame modern windows
- Installing new energy efficient 3 over 1 windows
- Installing roof protection over kitchen door and windows
- Installing Hardie siding, bead board, corners, and soffit
- Installing Hardie shingles on dormer, porch balustrade, and planters
- Re-Installing a window that was once covered over
- Repairing roof and gutters
- Caulking and painting

### **Anticipated Needs**

The current owners have no plans to expand or otherwise further remodel the house. Should other repairs be necessary, it is the intention of the owners to preserve the historic nature of the house.

## B. Historical Figures

### **Horace Howorth Neilson (1891-1971): First Homeowner**

Horace Neilson arrived in McKinney in 1915 to teach football at Boyd High School. He later married McKinney resident Mavet Thomas. Following World War I, Horace went on to become a prominent lawyer of the town holding public office for much of his life.

Horace Neilson was born in Ladonia, Texas in Fannin County in 1891. However, the story of Horace and his family in Texas begins in North Carolina. According to the 1840 Census, Horace's grandfather, Philip H. Neilson, had a farm in Buncombe County<sup>1</sup>, where he owned 15 slaves. The Census the following decade indicates that he was still living there, but the status of the slaves is unknown. It was not uncommon for farmers at that time to own slave, but what is unusual is that Philip was married, the father of 13 children and deaf, having lost his hearing when he was two years old.

Philip was well-educated and active in establishing a state school for the deaf in Raleigh in 1845. A newspaper article from a North Carolina newspaper describes Philip as being "considerably intelligent and able to converse freely with his fingers and by means of slate and pencil, or pen, ink and paper. He is extravagantly fond of dancing, and able to keep time to the music of the dance with wonderful precision."

In 1854, Philip and his wife Sarah opened a private school for the deaf near Warm Springs, North Carolina. The property was once owned by Philip's father, William Neilson, who built an inn on what is known as the only thermal springs in the state. William Neilson sold the springs in 1831. These springs near Asheville became a popular tourist destination and later changed its name to Hot Springs in 1886.

The fate of Philip's school for the deaf is unknown, but the 1860 Census shows Philip and his family living in Paris, Texas. Philip's net worth at the time was roughly equivalent to \$500,000 in today's dollars, four times what it was in the 1850 Census. It is likely that the Neilson's wealth came more from real estate, inheritance and farming than it did from teaching. Nevertheless, the family's arrival in Texas has been colorfully described

<sup>1</sup> *In 1820, a U.S. Congressman whose district included Buncombe County, unintentionally contributed a word to the English language. In the Sixteenth Congress, after lengthy debate on the Missouri Compromise, members of the House called for an immediate vote on that important question. Felix Walker rose to address his colleagues, insisting that his constituents expected him to make a speech "for Buncombe." It was later remarked that Walker's untimely and irrelevant oration was not just for Buncombe—it "was Buncombe." Buncombe, afterwards spelled bunkum and later shortened to bunk, became a term for empty, nonsensical talk.[9] This, in turn, is the etymology of the verb debunk. (Wikipedia.org)*

by family biographer Elizabeth (Neilson). Her story attempts to explain why the Neilsons left North Carolina and how one of Philip's sons became a doctor.

*After their home was burned by the Yankees during the Civil War, they [the Neilsons] moved to Hunt County Texas. On the way they stopped and spent the night at the home of a doctor in Hunt County. The next morning, as they prepared to leave, their host, Dr. Chapman, said, "That wagon is heavily loaded. This is a fine boy, leave him with me and I'll teach him to be a doctor". This began the small boy's medical education.*

*Dr. Chapman took Sammy on rounds each day teaching him anatomy and other medical facts along the way. Later he attended the Featherstone School in Ladonia. When he was ready, he took lectures at Missouri Medical College in St. Louis. After earning his M. D., he came back to King Community and began practicing his profession on a borrowed horse.*

This account of Philip and his son Samuel cannot be validated by available facts. First of all, the Civil War started a full year after the Neilsons were in Texas. Second, the 1870 Census shows Philip and Samuel were both living in Ladonia when Samuel was 17 years old. Two of Philip's married daughters had taken them in. Philip was living with the family of Sarah (Neilson) Jones. Meanwhile, Samuel was living with the family of Susan (Neilson) Richardson. This living arrangement may have had something to do with Samuel attending the Featherstone secondary school. It may also be related to Philip's wife Sarah leaving the large family without its primary housekeeper when she died in 1864. At any rate, Philip's older children living in Ladonia were helping to support their father and younger siblings. Thirdly, though there is a Dr. Oliver G. Chapman in Hunt County when the reported event was to have taken place, there is no evidence to suggest that Philip left any of his children there. In fact, Philip does not seem to reside in Hunt County until some time between 1870 and 1880. The 1880 Census shows Philip, at the age of 74, living there with his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, and her husband James Yates.

Though the genesis of Philip and Samuel Neilson in Ladonia is unclear, son Samuel did become a successful doctor and a prominent citizen of the town. He established a pharmacy and contributed his own money to entice the Gulf Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad Company to lay its tracts to Ladonia. He was also active in the Methodist Church, even donating a home to accommodate retired ministers.

In 1879, Samuel married Laura Little. They had 12 children, six sons and four daughters surviving to adulthood. Their surviving children all achieved a comfortable level of prom-

inence. Among his sons were two lawyers, one dentist, a teacher, an accountant and a doctor. Among the four daughters, one married a doctor, two married lawyers and one married a teacher.

Samuel and Laura's sixth child was Horace Howorth Neilson, born in Ladonia on June 12, 1891. He attended Austin College and received his law degree from the University of Texas in 1915 at the age of 24. While at U.T., Horace played fullback on the 1914 Texas Longhorn football team lead by Head Coach Dave Allerdice. The team that year achieved an undefeated season outscoring its eight opponents 358 to 21. Though there was no system in place at the time to determine a national champion, this team is often cited as such. Upon Horace's graduation, he moved to McKinney to teach civics and coach football at Boyd High School. His employment with the school district lasted less than a year. In 1917, he was living in Pilot Point, Texas working on his own behalf as a lawyer. In June of that year, he registered for the WW I draft in Precinct 2 in Denton County.

Pilot Point, in the northeast corner of Denton County, was home to the family of Elijah Emberson, a successful stockman. In 1882, Mr. Emberson's daughter Inez married Miles Thomas from neighboring Grayson County where he was sheriff. Later, records show that Miles and Inez were living in Pilot Point when Inez gave birth to daughter Mavet. However, the Census of 1900 shows Inez and Mavet living together in Pilot Point without Miles. Inez is indicated as the married head of the household. Exactly where Miles was is not documented, which suggests an estrangement between the two. When Inez died in 1905, Mavet, who was 14 years old, went to live with her aunt Edna four miles northwest of McKinney. Aunt Edna and her wealthy husband Glen Stiff were living on a farm at the time raising horses and their only child Claude.

In 1909, Edna and Glen moved the family to McKinney where they had a new house built on West Hunt Street (506 W. Hunt). Some time after 1910, Mavet attended Christian College in Missouri. This school is currently known as Columbia College. It was founded in 1851 and was the first women's college west of the Mississippi to be chartered by a state legislature. Following her education, Mavet returned to McKinney.

It is likely that soon after Mavet's return to McKinney, she met Horace Neilson when he was the newly hired civics teacher and football coach of Boyd High School. The relationship between Mavet and Horace was likely the impetus behind the purchase of a lot and construction of a house on West Hunt Street. In March of 1916 when Mavet was 25 years old, she purchased a lot and house from carpenter Arthur W. Dowlen at what

is now 514 W. Hunt Street. The original deed is in her name alone. It is likely that she was given the money for the house as a gift from Glen and Edna Stiff for her upcoming wedding.

Mavet Thomas married Horace Neilson on August 7, 1917. Eight months later Horace was a Lieutenant in the Army training at Camp Pike in Arkansas in preparation for deployment to France during WW I. Mavet moved to Little Rock to be near where her husband was training. The war had a enormous impact on the Neilson family. Four of Horace's brothers and one brother-in-law volunteered for duty. Horace was deployed around the end of August 1918, which meant he served in combat for three months before the war ended with the Treaty of Versailles on November 11, 1918. Following the armistice, Horace continued to serve another four months overseas until being discharged in March of 1919. Horace must have been eager to return home to see his infant son, who had been born in his absence in January of that year.

Upon his return, Horace was treated as a hero along with other local men that served in the war. It seemed like every organization in town wanted to hear the war experiences of these young men. This public exposure, no doubt, helped Horace land himself employment with former County Attorney Wallace Hughston. Horace soon became a partner in the firm that took on the name Hughston & Neilson. The new firm opened a third-floor office above the McKinney Dry Goods Company on the southeast corner of the Square.

In April of 1921, Horace's connections and reputation helped him get appointed to the position of McKinney City Attorney. At the end of that year, he announced his run for the office of County Attorney. He lost that 1922 election to H.G. Chandler but maintained the City Attorney position for several more years. In 1934, he ran again for the County position, this time with success. He held the position for two terms then briefly entered private practice until he was re-appointed to the position of County Attorney in June of 1941 following the death of Jewel E. Abernathy. Horace was later elected to a full two-year term in 1942. After completing his term in 1944, he returned to private practice until, once again, accepting the City Attorney position in 1947. He held the position until retiring in 1959.

In addition to being a successful attorney for city and county governments, Horace was active in the civic and religious affairs of McKinney. He joined the Rotary Club in 1928, then served as its president in 1932. Of the 50 years that he was a member, 34 of those years he served as the organization's secretary. His whole-hearted support of the Club

earned him the moniker “Mr. Rotary.” The Club established the Neilson Scholarship in his honor that assists McKinney students prepare for college. Shortly before Horace’s death, the Club honored him with the Paul Harris Fellowship Award, the highest honor the Club bestows.

In 1927, Horace was president of the Collin County Confederate Veterans and Old Settlers Picnic and Reunion. This annual event was organized in 1899 but had roots dating back to 1883. It was a showcase for agriculture, livestock and food in a carnival-like atmosphere. The Picnic concluded each year with a parade around the town Square. The last “Confederates” picnic was held in 1941. After that, since there were few living Confederate veterans, the event became known as the Old Settlers Picnic.

Horace and his wife Mavet were enthusiastic supporters of the war effort during World War II. Together they established the U.S.O. in McKinney and were frequent volunteers at the local V.A. Hospital. Their war-time contribution of time and effort earned them the McKinney Courier-Gazette’s Citizenship Award in 1951, making them the first recipients of this annual award.

Horace was a gifted speaker and often asked to speak at patriotic rallies and before civic organizations, many of which he was a member, including the McKinney Chamber of Commerce, the Texas Press Association, the Masons, and the Texas Bar Association. Horace was also a member of the board of directors of the First National Bank at Farmersville, having joined it in 1932 and remaining on it until the end of his life. Horace was also an active member of the First Methodist Church, serving as its Chairman and for a while as the Sunday School Superintendent.

Horace died of lung cancer in November of 1971 only a few months after Mavet’s death. His funeral services were held at McKinney First United Methodist Church with Reverends H.C. Hoy, Chief Warden and Foy Thomas conducting. Both Horace and Mavet are buried at the Ridgeview Memorial Park in Allen.

Horace and Mavet were each honored with Rotary Club resolutions of respect published in the *McKinney Courier-Gazette*. These resolutions demonstrate how much their community valued their generous service. It is natural for a long-standing member of a club to be honored with such resolutions. However, appreciation for Horace Neilson went beyond that with the resolution passed by the Collin County’s Commissioner’s Court. This resolution reveals how Horace’s leadership and influence was integral to Collin County’s physical and political growth.



### **Arthur Whitney Dowlen (1865-1947): Contractor**

Arthur Dowlen was a successful contractor 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 Harris Dowlen and Sarah Mathis. Arthur was educated in Springfield, Tennessee and later 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, all 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. Prince owned land between McKinney and Farmersville when the area was known as Wilson's Switch. The place got its name from 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, the Postmaster rejected it because another Texas town was already using it. The town was required to choose another name. They chose the name Princeton in honor of Prince Dowlen. In later years, Prince Dowlen became a judge in Beaumont, Texas.

Arthur's 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 running 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, who worked several years as a teacher in Tennessee, moved to Texas in 1893 at that age of 28 with his wife Ida. He continued in the teaching trade for another seven years. However, around 1900 Arthur's work interest shifted to carpentry, apparently influenced by his older brother Gideon. One of his first major contracts came his way in 1904 when he was hired to build an eight-room, two-story parsonage for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that was located at the corner of Church and Davis Streets, now the site of the Fearless House. Around that same time, Arthur and his wife purchased and built a house at the corner of North College and Midway Streets.

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 in the Victorian Style was waning and the Prairie and Craftsman Styles were becoming popular. He is responsible for erecting some of McKinney's most expressive homes of the period, including the 12-room, two-story house on North Bengé he built for real-estate-man William E. Ditto during the summer of 1913. Mr. Dowlen is not likely to have designed these homes but his skill at building them allowed him to compete with builders in larger markets. His success in McKinney led him to move to Dallas 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 led 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, in November of 1942, while on a training mission near his base in Maine, the plane he was on crashed into the St. Lawrence River. 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. Onyx 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:** 514 W. Hunt Street, McKinney, Texas 75069

**Legal Description:** W.A. Rhea Addition (CMC), Lot 12a

<b>Purchase Date</b>	<b>Seller</b>	<b>Buyer</b>	<b>Volume / Page or Instrument #</b>
Sep. 6, 1850 <sup>1</sup>	State of Texas	William Davis	J / 459
Mar. 13, 1852	William Davis <sup>2</sup>	Abner Fickle	E / 429
Apr. 14, 1853	Abner Fickle	Samuel Bogart	F / 356
May 14, 1855	Samuel Bogart	Abraham Rhine	J / 226
Sep. 9, 1891	Abraham Rhine <sup>3</sup>	William A. Rhea	50 / 303
Aug. 7, 1909	James C. Rhea <sup>4</sup>	Fred Emerson	162 / 291
Feb. 4, 1913	Fred Emerson	Cliff Emerson	199 / 419
Jun. 9, 1913	Cliff Emerson	Arthur W. Dowlen	200 / 392
Mar. 3, 1916	Arthur W. Dowlen	Mavet Thomas	192 / 673
Jul. 6, 1972	Horace H. Neilson, Jr.	Leahmon & Sandra Bryant	829 / 148
Sep. 3, 1985	Leahmon & Sandra Bryant	Donald Duncan	2204 / 256
Mar. 3, 1987	Donald Duncan	Majestic Savings	2572 / 497
Apr. 12, 1988	Centen, Inc.	Deirdre & Skylar Pulliam	2817 / 96
Aug. 6, 1991	Deirdre & Skylar Pulliam	Team Mortgage Corp.	3661 / 189
Sep. 6, 1991	Team Mortgage Corp.	Steven & Jane Hays	3731 / 45
Aug. 13, 1999	Steven & Jane Hays	Andrew & Ann Harris	4481 / 1579
Apr. 13, 2018	Andrew & Ann Harris	Harris Family Trust	20180416-000456770

<sup>1</sup> Date of patent by the State of Texas. Actual ownership of property predates this.

<sup>2</sup> Sheriff sale by County Commissioner Fitzhugh

<sup>3</sup> Estate of Abraham Rhine

<sup>4</sup> Surviving brother of William A. Rhea

## D. Tenant History

Same as owner history

## E. Narrative History

In 1841, the Republic of Texas granted William Davis over 3,000 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, it subdivided several counties into smaller units. Collin County was such a county, carved out of Fannin County.

A small town called Buckner was the seat of the new county until the 1848 State Legislature required that the seat be within three miles of the geographical center of the county. As it turned out, William Davis' tract sat within this radius and was chosen by a open election (where only 11 people voted) to be the location of the new seat of Collin County.

In March of 1849, William Davis, along with his wife Margaret, "donated" 120 acres of the southwest corner of his original tract to the county commissioners which became the new town of McKinney. 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 promptly sold. This 120 acres became known as the McKinney Original Donation and was divided into 87 blocks which were to be sold to finance the City of McKinney. As a side note, shortly after donating the land to be a new city, William Davis 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).

Real estate opportunities were plentiful in the newly minted town. Among those who were in a position to invest in McKinney's growth were brothers James and William Rhea. The brothers were successful mill owners from Rhea Mills, a town named for their father northwest of McKinney. In 1891, the brothers purchased from the estate of Abraham Rhine a 10.5-acre tract of land between North College and Benge Street. In 1892, the Rhea brothers subdivided the tract into what became known as the W.A. Rhea Addition. When William Rhea died in 1906, many of his property holdings transferred to his surviving brother James.

In 1909, banker Fred Emerson purchased a 1.13-acre parcel within the addition along Hunt Street from James Rhea. This tract included lots 11 and 12. That same year, Fred contracted with W.J. Higgins to build a ten-room, two-story house on the eastern portion of lot 11. Fred paid \$3,500 for the new home which the *Weekly Democrat Gazette* called “one of the handsomest and most attractive homes in the city.” This edifying language was commonly applied to any new home in McKinney during this period but given the home’s stately size and construction, the reporter’s description was more than merely obligatory.

In 1913, Fred Emerson sold the half-acre Lot 12 to his real-estate-dealing brother Cliff for nothing down and a \$375 one-year note. Both Fred and Cliff had wives connected to the Rhea family. Fred was married to Fannie Foote, the niece of William Rhea’s wife. Cliff had even a closer connection being married to William Rhea’s daughter Emma. Four months after purchasing Lot 12 from Fred, Cliff sold it to carpenter Arthur W. Dowlen for \$100 cash with Mr. Dowlen assuming the note. Arthur later divided the lot into two parcels.

In March of 1916, Mr. Dowlen sold the western half of Lot 12 to Mavet Thomas, who agreed to pay \$1,542 cash and assume a note for \$1,368. At the time of purchase, Mavet was 25 years old, single and apparently not employed. She was living in the nearby home of her aunt Edna and wealthy uncle Glen Stiff on West Hunt Street.

Mavet came to live with her aunt and uncle when her mother died in 1905. The home Mavet purchased was likely purchased with funds provided by the Stiffs as a wedding present. In August of 1917, Mavet married Horace Neilson, who came to McKinney in 1915 to teach civics and coach football at Boyd High School. The couple moved into the home together in September of 1917.

The house that Arthur Dowlen built for Mavet and Horace was a two-story, Foursquare Style house. The home’s generous porch spanned the entire width of the house and wrapped around the south east corner. The couple lived there for the next 54 years before they both died in 1971.

Soon after the home was completed, the couple realized that the dining room was not large enough to accommodate the social gatherings they wanted. As a result, the room was extended several feet to the east to make space for a longer table. Following that, there are no known alterations made until the couple’s senior years. When the

elder Neilsons were no longer keen on walking up and down stairs, they enclosed the eastern portion of the wrap-around porch as well as a rear porch to be used as bedrooms.

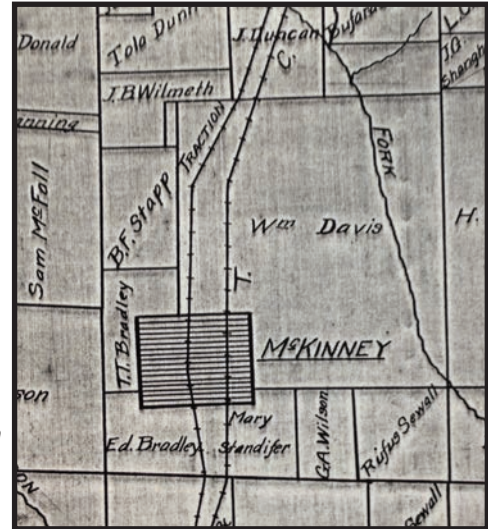
Following Horace and Mavet's death in 1971, the property was sold to a buyer that later installed aluminum-frame windows and vinyl siding to the house. The current owners have spent much time and resources toward restoring the home to its original character while balancing the need for comfort and energy efficiency. A description of the most recent alterations can be found on pages 2 and 3 of this narrative.

## 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 (1,653 acres).

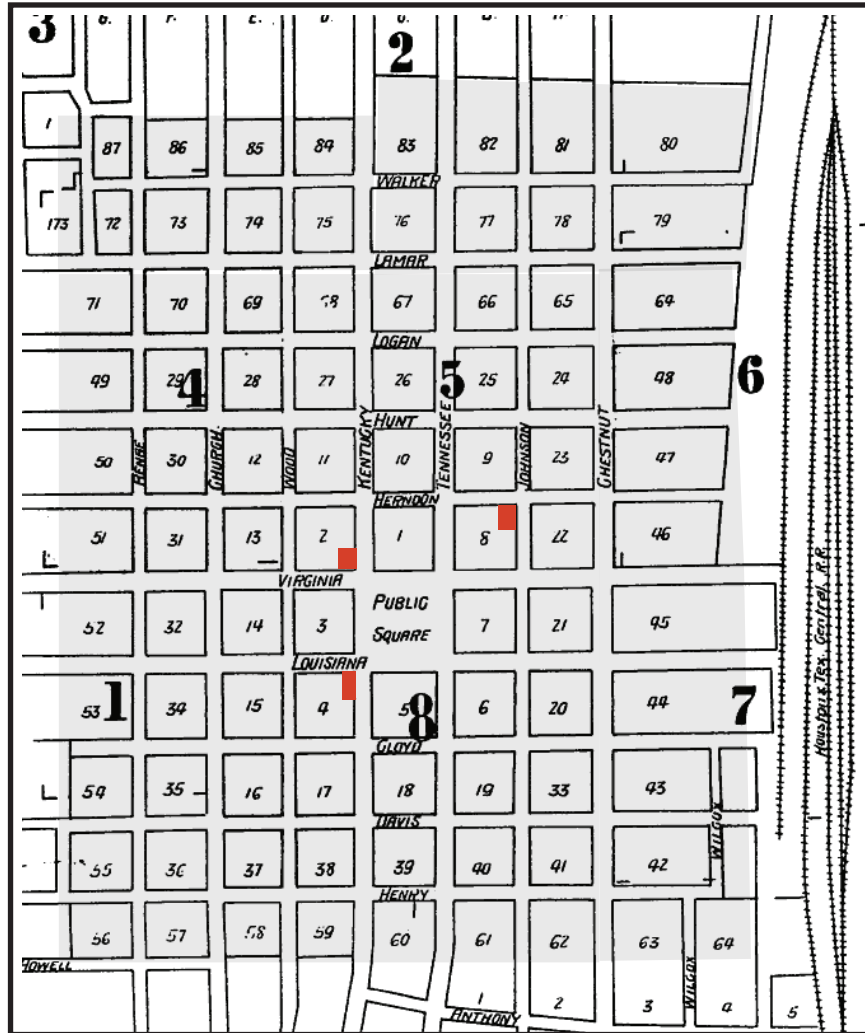
William Davis was granted 2/3 of a league and a labor of land in 1841. This type of grant did not fit any of the regular headright classes at the time and suggests that William Davis (who was single at the time) was granted an augmentation based on some unique performance associate with his contribution 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. The legal description of properties which were a part of this donation often 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.



# McKinney Original Donation









In 1849, William Davis and his wife Margaret donated 120 acres of his 3,129 acre headright to become the City of McKinney, the new Collin County seat. Commissioners J.B. Wilmeth, J.M. McReynolds, and John Fitzhugh instructed George White and Ethelred Whitely to lay out the new town. Mr. Davis' donation was divided into 87 blocks and became known as the McKinney Original Donation (shown in shaded area). The commissioners "paid" Davis by allowing him to have title to three lots within the donation. These lots are highlighted in red in the above map.



# W.A. Rhea Addition

The property that became 514 West Hunt Street was originally part of a 30.5-acre tract that William Davis sold to Abner Fickle in 1852. Mr. Fickle sold the norther portion of his tract to Sam Bogart in 1853 who, in turn sold a portion to Abe Rhine. Mr. Rhine sold a 10.5 acre portion to James and William Rhea in 1891. The Rhea brothers subdivided a portion of this tract to become the Rhea Addition in 1892.

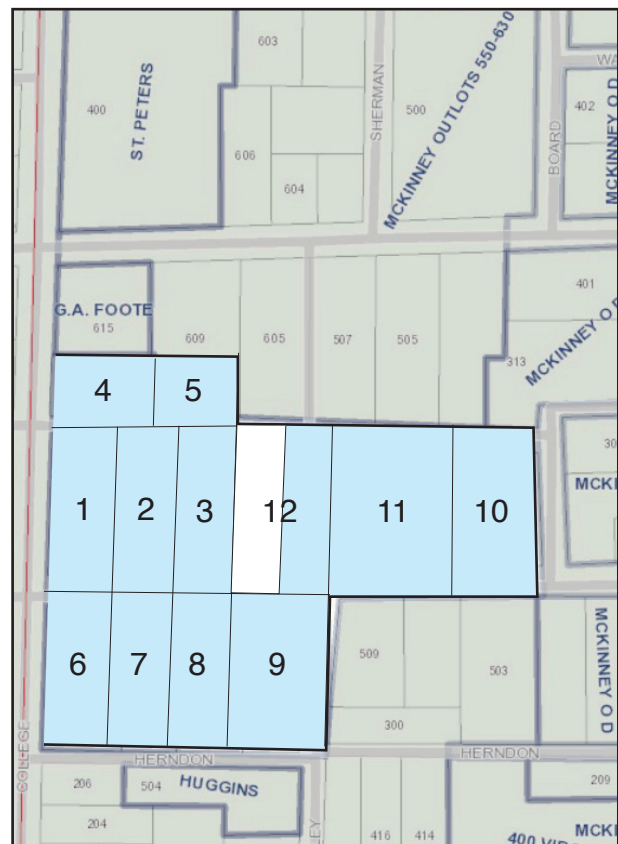
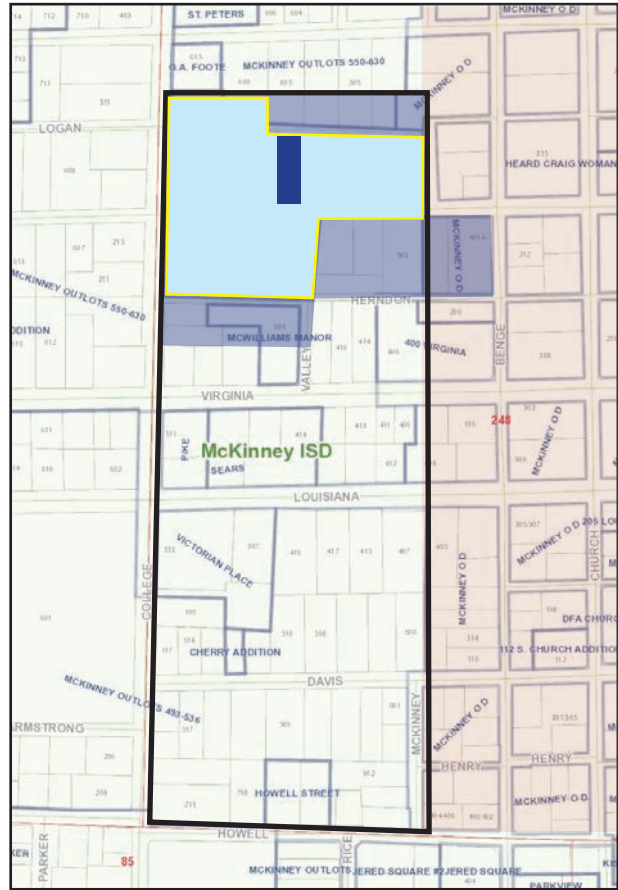
-  Southwest corner of Davis Survey
-  McKinney Original Donation, 1849
-  Davis to Fickle, 30.5 acres, 1852
-  Rhine to Rhea, 10.5 acres, 1891
-  Rhea Addition, 6 acres, 1892
-  Neilson House, (constructed 1917)

Brothers James and William Rhea were successful mill owners who purchased many tracts of land in Collin County. The brothers were responsible for creating subdivisions on both Church and Hunt Street.

In 1891, the Rhea Brothers purchased 10.5 acres from the heirs of Abraham Rhine and later subdivided a portion of it. They subdivided their tract into 12 lots. The first sale of these lots occurred in February of 1893 to Charlie P. Heard.

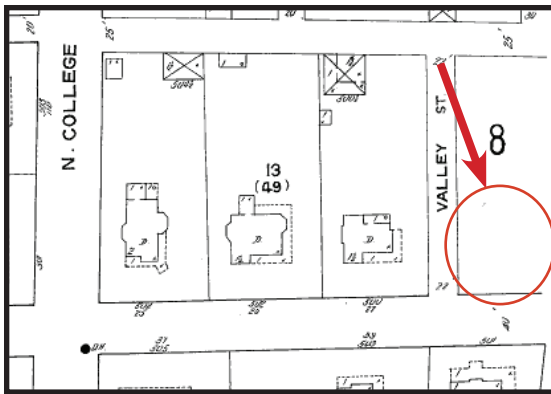
In 1909, Fred Emerson purchased lots 11 and 12 of the W.A. Rhea Addition as seen in the map at right.

In 1913, Mr. Emerson sold lot 12 to contractor A.W. Dowlen who divided it and built a house on the western portion of it (in white). In 1916, Mavet Thomas purchased the lot and house for \$3,000 (\$2,910 for the house and lot, \$90 for a sidewalk). She married Horace H. Neilson in 1917.



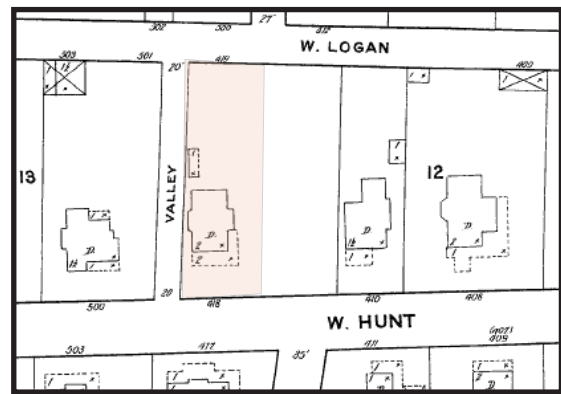
# Sanborn Maps: 1914 & 1927+

1914



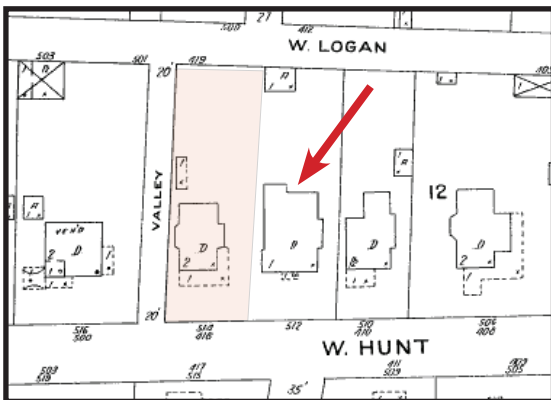
No structure appears on Sanborn maps before 1920.

1920



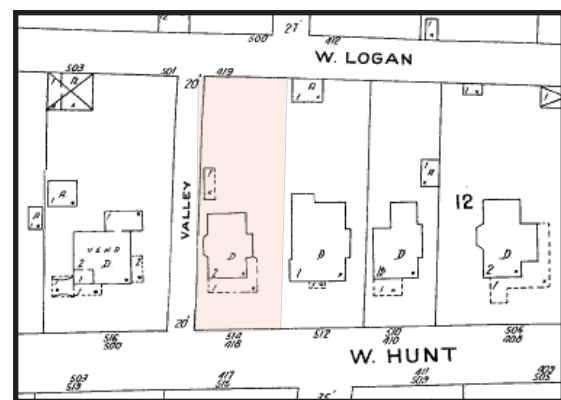
The Neilson House appears on the lot A.W. Dowlen sold to Mavet Thomas in 1916.

1927



The Lee Elliott House built in 1922 appears next door to the Neilson House.

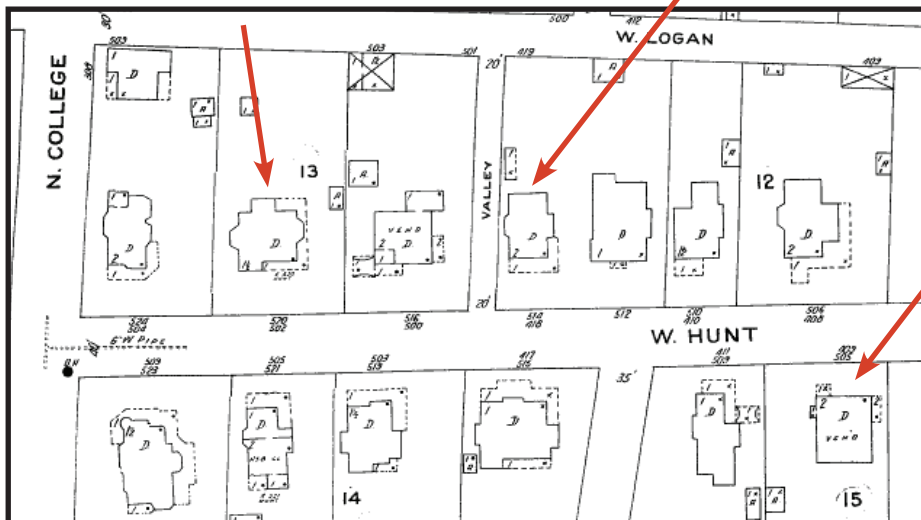
1927+



The Horace and Mavet Neilson lived in the house 54 years, from 1917 to 1971.

John D. Stiff (1893-1909)  
Edna (Stiff) Bond (1893-1970)  
Adam Bond\* (1907-1969)

Horace H. Neilson (1917-1971)  
Mavet Thomas (1917-1971)



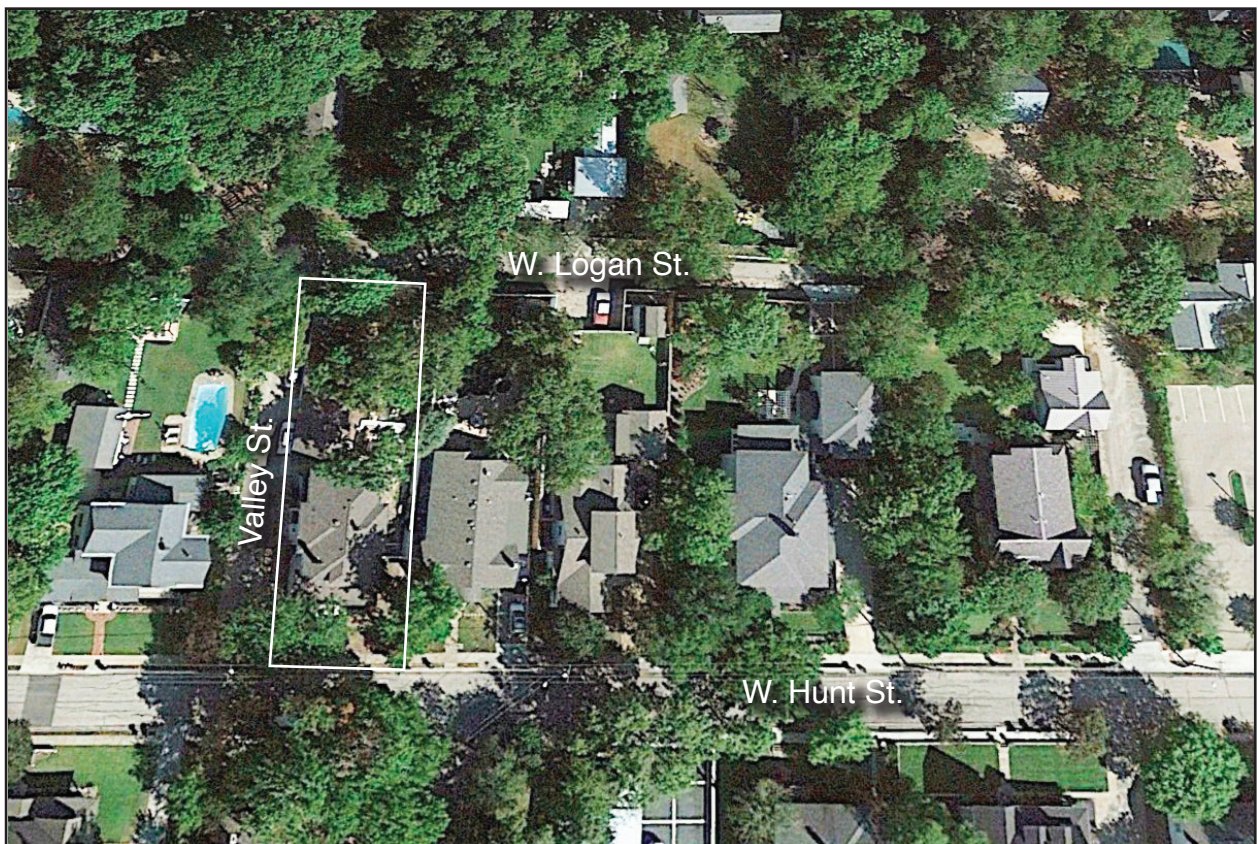
Glen Stiff (1913-1929)  
Julius Purnell (1922-1960)  
Edna Purnell (1922-1979)  
William Thedford (1978-present)

\* Adam Bond is the son-in-law of J.D. Stiff

This 1927 Sanborn Map shows the proximity to the Neilson House of homes belonging to Stiff family members and the dates they lived there.

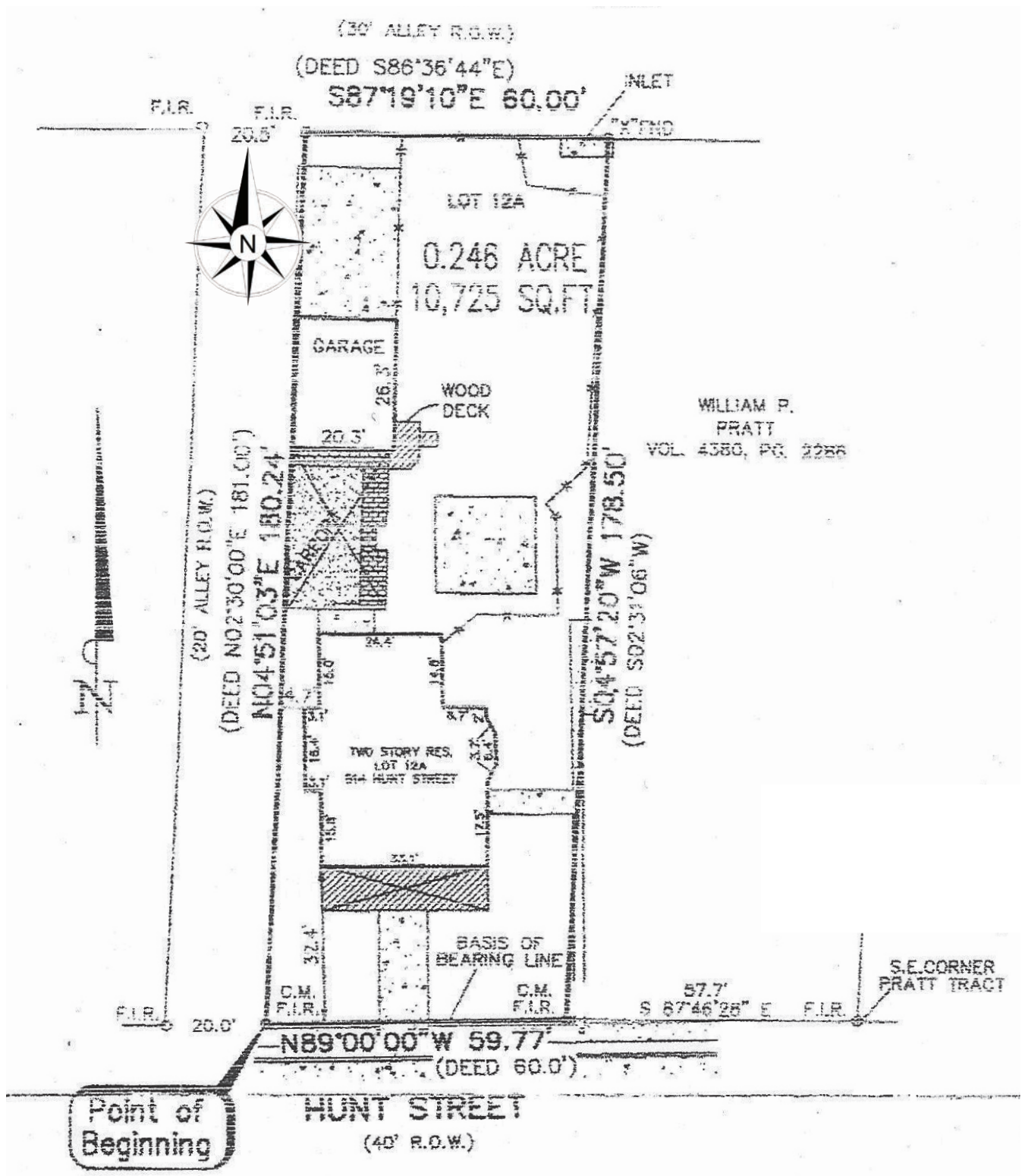


The map above shows the neighborhood around 514 West Hunt Street. The aerial photo below shows the immediate neighborhood near the intersection of West Hunt and Valley Street.



# Site Plan for 514 West Hunt Street

Owner: Andy & Ann Harris



## Legal Description for 514 West Hunt Street

Lot 12A, of W.A. Rhea Addition, an Addition to the City of McKinney, Collin County, Texas, according to the plat thereof recorded in Volume 23, Page 490, of the Deed Records of Collin County, Texas, being the same tract of land conveyed to Leahmon Foster Bryant and wife, Sandra Louis Bryant, by deed recorded in Volume 829, Page 148, Deed Records of Collin County, Texas, and more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at a 1/2 inch iron rod for corner, at the intersection of the north line of Hunt Street (a 40 foot ROW) and the east line of a twenty foot alley, being South 89 deg. 00 min. East a distance of 284 feet from the intersection of the east line of College Street and the north line of Hunt Street and being the southwest corner of said Bryant tract;

Thence North 2 deg. 30 min. East along the west line of said Bryant tract and the east line of said twenty foot alley a distance of 181 feet to the northwest corner of said Bryant tract in the south line of a thirty foot alley to a 1/2 inch iron rod for corner;

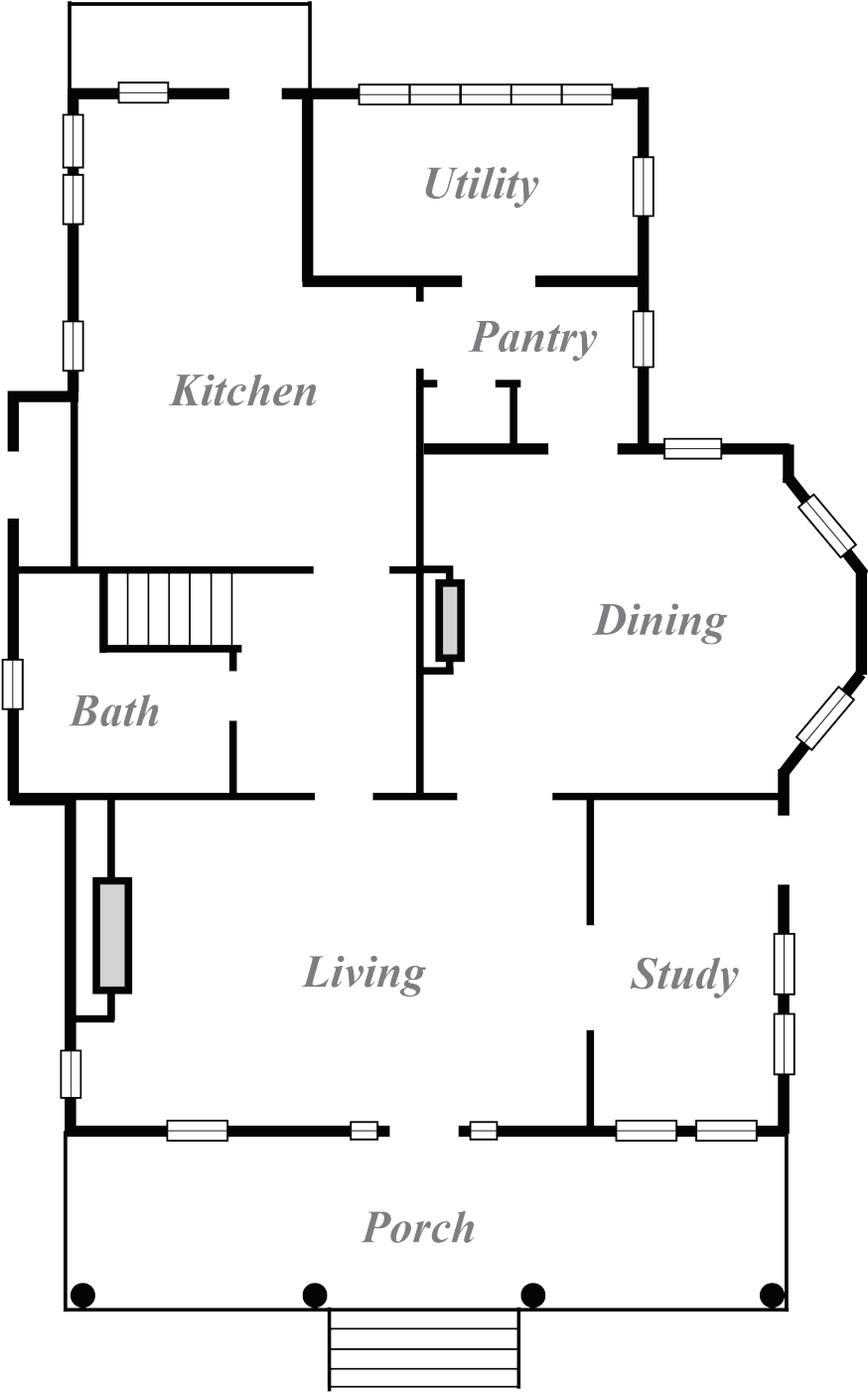
Thence South 86 degrees 36 minutes 44 seconds East along the south line of said thirty foot alley and the north of said Bryant tract, a distance of 60 feet to the northeast corner of said Bryant tract to an X cut in concrete;

Thence South 2 deg. 31 min 6 sec. West along the east line of said Bryant tract a distance of 178.5 feet to the southeast corner of said Bryant tract, being in the north line of Hunt Street, to a 1/2 inch iron rod for corner;

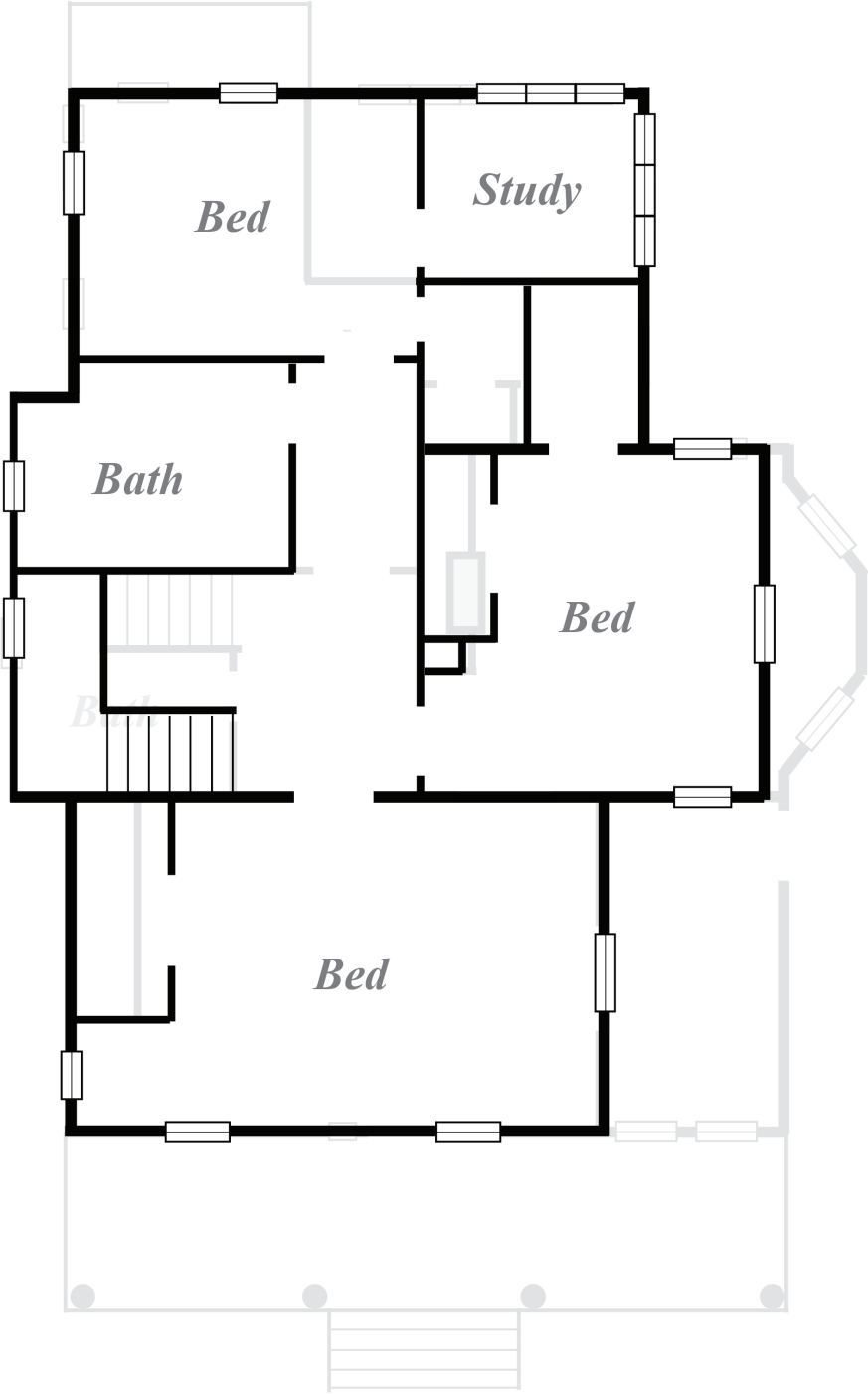
Thence North 89 deg. 00 min 00 sec. West along the north line of Hunt Street a distance of 60 feet to the place of beginning.

# Floor Plan: first floor

This plan shows the Neilson House in its current configuration.



Floor Plan: second floor



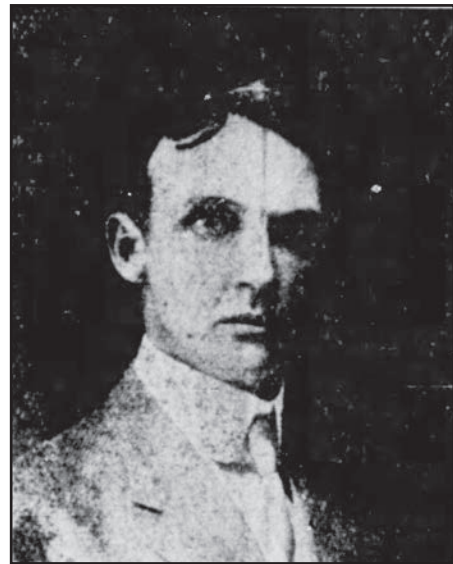
## G. Photographs

**William A. Rhea** (standing) with his brother **James C. Rhea** in this photo from 1861 were among the first to settle Collin County. The family began a mill operation in the area which became known as Rhea Mills. The Rhea brothers established two residential subdivisions near the McKinney Square, one on North Church Street, the other on West Hunt Street in which Mavet Thomas purchased a lot in 1916, before she married Horace Neilson.

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 a prominent McKinney doctor Gerald A. Foote. Ella's niece Fannie married **Fred Emerson** in 1894, making him the nephew, by marriage, of William and James Rhea.

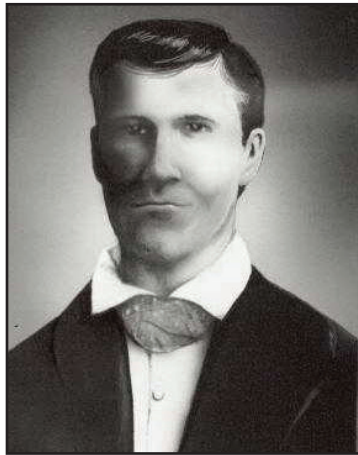


**Fred Emerson's** grandfather, Francis Emerson, founded what became the First National Bank of McKinney. Fred joined the family banking business when he was 16 years of age. From the banks founding in 1872 until 1930 the president of the bank was a member of the Emerson family, although sometimes by marriage.

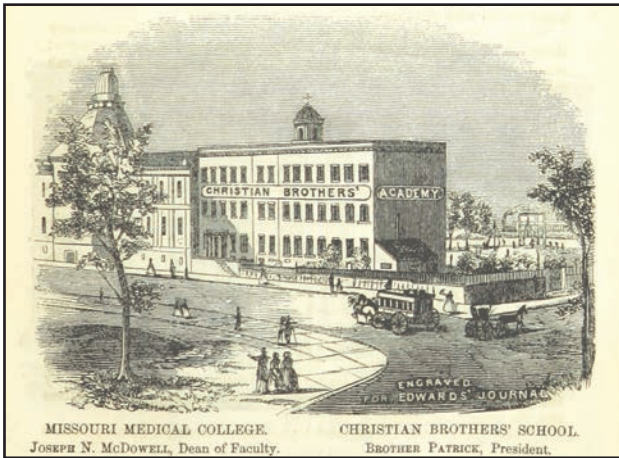


In 1916, **Fred Emerson** left the banking trade for real estate and cattle breeding. He was active in several other McKinney businesses and local society. At the age of 57 in December of 1929, Fred died of what was considered an "accidental Lysol poisoning."





The grandfather of Horace Neilson, **Philip H. Neilson**, became deaf at the age of two but later married, had 13 children, a farm and taught school. He arrived in Texas from North Carolina sometime before the 1860 Census was taken.



**Samuel B. Neilson** was the son of Philip Neilson and father of Horace. He was born in North Carolina in 1853 but raised from childhood in Ladonia, Texas. Samuel became a physician getting his degree from the Missouri Medical College in 1874.



Samuel Neilson was a prominent citizen of Ladonia. He donated considerable amount of his own money to attract a rail line to the town. He also donated a house to the Methodist Church to be used by retiring ministers. The present-day photo at left shows the Samuel Neilson House at 504 Bonham Street in Ladonia where Samuel lived until his death in 1931.

## Deaf and Dumb SCHOOL.

The subscriber, being himself a Deaf Mute, proposes, by the request of the friends of Deaf Mutes in Western Carolina, to teach about fifteen Pupils, commencing on the first Wednesday in January, 1854, at his own house, five miles below the Warm Springs.

It must be understood that the above School is not a chartered, but a private one.

The first fifteen applicants will be received.

The terms for Boarding, Tuition, and every other necessary thing, except charges for medical attendance in case of sickness, for books, paper, &c, will be One Hundred Dollars per Scholastic year of ten months. No deduction for absence, except in case of sickness.— One half of the money will be required at the commencement, and the other half at the close of the term.

If any student should come without parent or relative, he must bring a written statement of his full name, the names of his parents, brothers and sisters, the number of his marked clothes, and the name of his Post Office.

Every person applying for admission must be between the ages of eight and twenty-five years; must possess a good natural intellect, capable of forming and joining letters with a pen, legibly and correctly. Any person who has never been taught to write on paper or slate, can be made to do so in a few days or weeks, before he comes to School. This will enable him to improve with greater rapidity at School.

The branches of Education, and the principles of christianity recognised by the Bible, will be taught in the same way as in other institutions for the Deaf and Dumb in the United States.

In the interim of school hours, the female pupils will be under the care of Mrs. Neilson. If desired, she will teach them embroidery on muslin, or needle work, for three dollars per session.

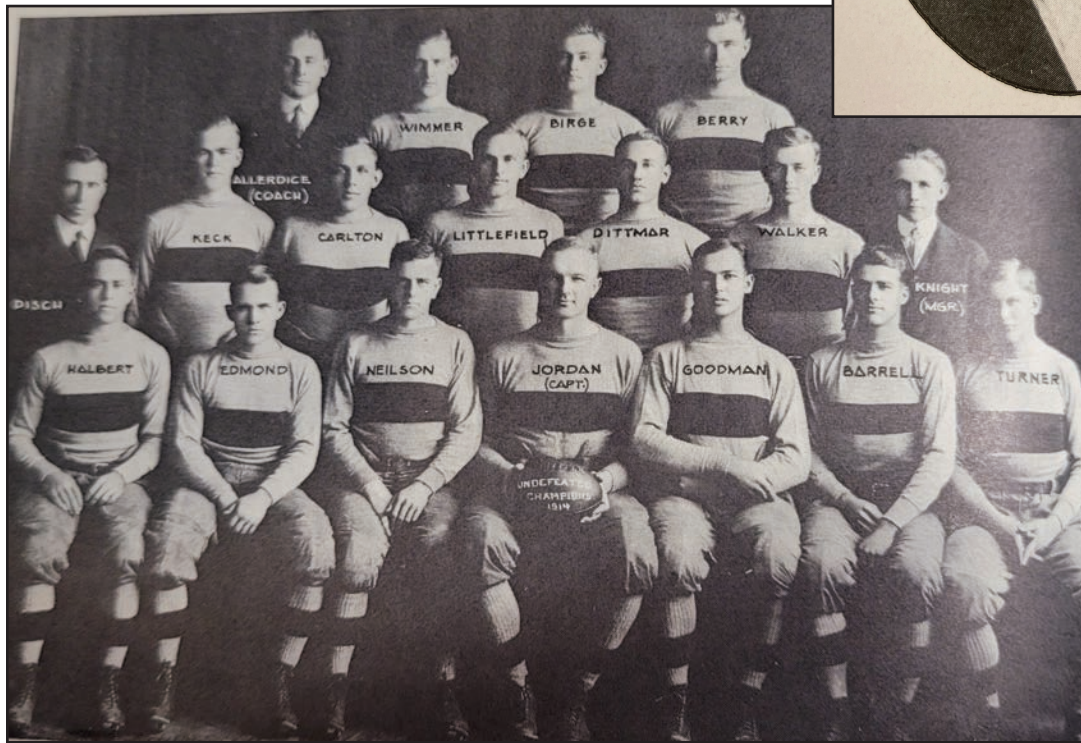
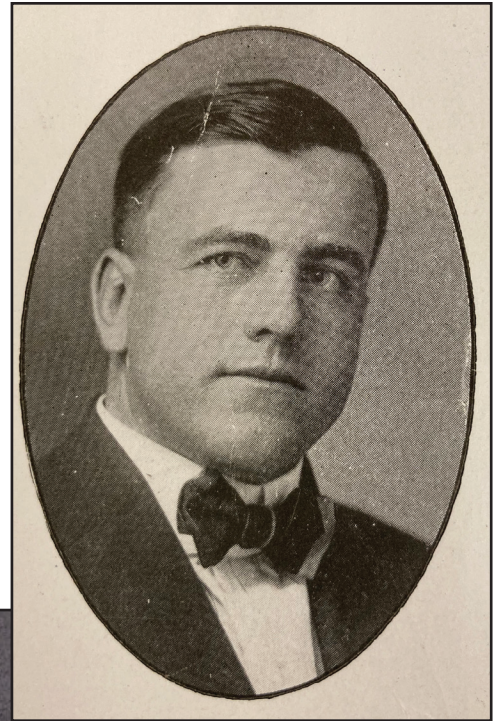
As to health, the location is as good as any in this country.

Address Post paid.

PHILIP H. NEILSON.

Warm Springs, Nov 17th, 1853—tf.

**Horace H. Neilson** attended University of Texas where he played football. After graduating in 1915, he accepted a teaching position with Boyd High School. The photo at right is from the school's 1916 yearbook.



This photo from 1915 shows the undefeated University of Texas football team. **Horace H. Neilson**, who played fullback, is seen on the front row, third from the left.



**Horace H. Neilson** was living in Pilot Point, TX when he registered for the World War I draft in June of 1917. By late summer of 1918 Horace was an Army Lieutenant stationed at Camp Pike in Little Rock, Arkansas. The photo at left shows the Camp Pike barracks. In the fall of 1918, Horace was deployed to Europe and remained there until several months after the end of the war.



**Horace H. Neilson** was an active Rotarian. He joined in 1928 and remained a member until his death in 1971. The photo at left shows Horace (far right) shaking hands with Club president Ed Slack with Congressman Ray Roberts looking at the camera at a Rotary Club banquet in 1965.

## Rotary Resolution

WHEREAS, on November 25, 1971, our Heavenly Father, in his infinite wisdom, called from his earthly labors his servant, HORACE H. NEILSON; and

WHEREAS, our hearts were saddened by the death of this most beloved member of our McKinney Rotary Club, who joined us in January, 1928. He had served the Club as President in 1932 and 1933, and had served as Secretary from 1929 to 1932, and for 30 continuous years from 1933 to 1963; and

WHEREAS, he had been a member of the Bar and practiced law for over 50 years, had served his community in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, he had given untiringly of himself to serve others and to exemplify the motto of Rotary, "Service above self". He had been responsible, together with his wife, for the operation of the U.S.O. in McKinney during World War II. He had been responsible for the Club's sponsorship of a party at the Veterans Administration Hospital monthly until said hospital closed; and

WHEREAS, he had been named during the year 1971 as a Paul Harris Fellow, and this Club had honored him by naming a scholarship after him; and

WHEREAS, he was "Mr Rotary".

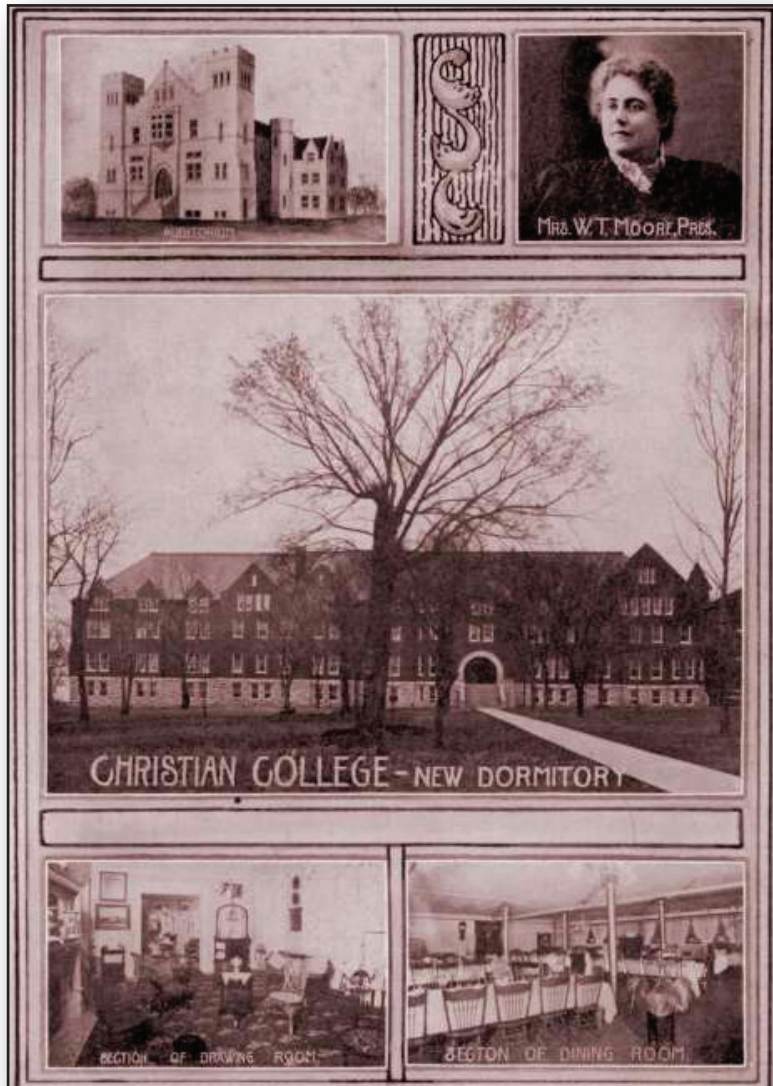
BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this recital of the qualities of an outstanding Rotarian in a useful and worthy life as demonstrated by our departed member, HORACE N. NEILSON, be filed in our records as an expression of our admiration, respect and love, and as a token of sympathy for those he has left, and a copy of this Resolution be sent to his loved ones.

SUBMITTED by the McKinney Rotary Club Resolutions Committee, and unanimously adopted by the Club this January 4, 1972.

Dwayne Howell  
President

ATTEST:  
Clyde Geer  
Secretary

At the time of **Horace H. Neilson's** death in 1971, at least two organizations he was associated with published honorary resolutions in the "McKinney Courier-Gazette." These resolutions focused on Horace's faith and his commitment to serve his community.



**Mavet Thomas** was born in Pilot Point, Texas in 1891. When her mother died in 1905, Mavet was taken in by her aunt Edna who was married to Glen Stiff. The Stiffs, who had moved to McKinney from Pilot Point in 1903, eventually settled into a house on West Hunt Street in 1909. Around this time Mavet attended school in Milford, Texas and later Christian College in Columbia, Missouri. Christian College was established in 1851. The school was the first women's college west of the Mississippi to be chartered by a state legislature

**Mavet (Thomas) Neilson** died in March of 1971, eight months prior to her husband's death. Her civic involvement and social activities engendered her popularity as a community leader. Upon her death, the Collin County Commissioner's Court issued this resolution honoring her selfless contributions to the citizens of the county.

## In Memoriam

THE STATE OF TEXAS  
THE COUNTY OF COLLIN

KNOW ALL MEN BY  
THESE PRESENTS:

THAT WHEREAS, Mavet Neilson, beloved wife of Judge H. H. Neilson, died March 6th, 1971;

AND WHEREAS, her life had been spent largely as a citizen of Collin County, Texas;

AND WHEREAS, her life had blessed not only all who knew her but her influence for good had been felt by the entire community, and extending far beyond the boundaries of her resident County;

AND WHEREAS, her example as a patriot, humanitarian, altruist, mother and wife has been an established and high landmark for the betterment of all who were and are, her host of witnesses;

AND WHEREAS, she was held, and her memory now is held, in deep respect, particularly by the entire Collin County Bar, and by the Collin County Judge and Commissioners, where her surviving husband had served as County Judge with such distinction for many years;

AND WHEREAS, W. G. Proctor, the County Judge, having appointed the undersigned Committee on Resolutions, and said Committee having penned and subscribed the within memorial to Mavet Neilson, deceased, and said Committee having moved the adoption of said memorial as a Resolution, and further having moved that same be spread upon the Minutes of the County Court of Collin County, Texas, and that a copy thereof be presented to the surviving family of Mavet Neilson, to wit, H. H. Neilson, Inez Davis and H. H. Neilson, Jr.

NOW THEREFORE, the undersigned Committee, in evidence and furtherance of same, move and resolve that the within memorial and resolution be accepted and adopted by the County Judge and Commissioner's Court of Collin County, Texas, and that same be so evidenced by spreading same upon the Court Minutes, and copies thereof delivered as above set forth.

Respectfully submitted,  
this March 10, 1971.

DON WEAVER DAVIS  
LUTHER TRUETT



*The Methodist Women's Group pose in front of the Neilson House on Valentines Day in 1929 with the Westmoreland House in the immediate background. In the distance is the J.D. Stiff House when Adam Bond was its owner.*



***Mavet Neilson** was responsible for establishing a USO chapter in McKinney. This photo shows Mavet with husband Horace (left) sitting with Corporal William H. Thedford who married Mavet's great-neice Edna in 1948. Mr. Thedford, a native Tennessean, met Edna at a USO event held at McKinney's Ashburn Army Hospital.*



**Arthur W. Dowlen**  
(1865 - 1947)

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

*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.*

*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 HOUR" IS GROWING. LET ME HELP YOU TO MAKE IT GROW FAST.  
 EE. I THANK MY FRIENDS FOR THEIR PATRONAGE AND HELP.

**A. W. DOWLIN,** The Home Contractor  
 Phone 627

The years from 1914 to 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 to be a frequently used and accepted alternative to "Dowlen." He is also known to have used the first name "Pat" and "Whit."



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*





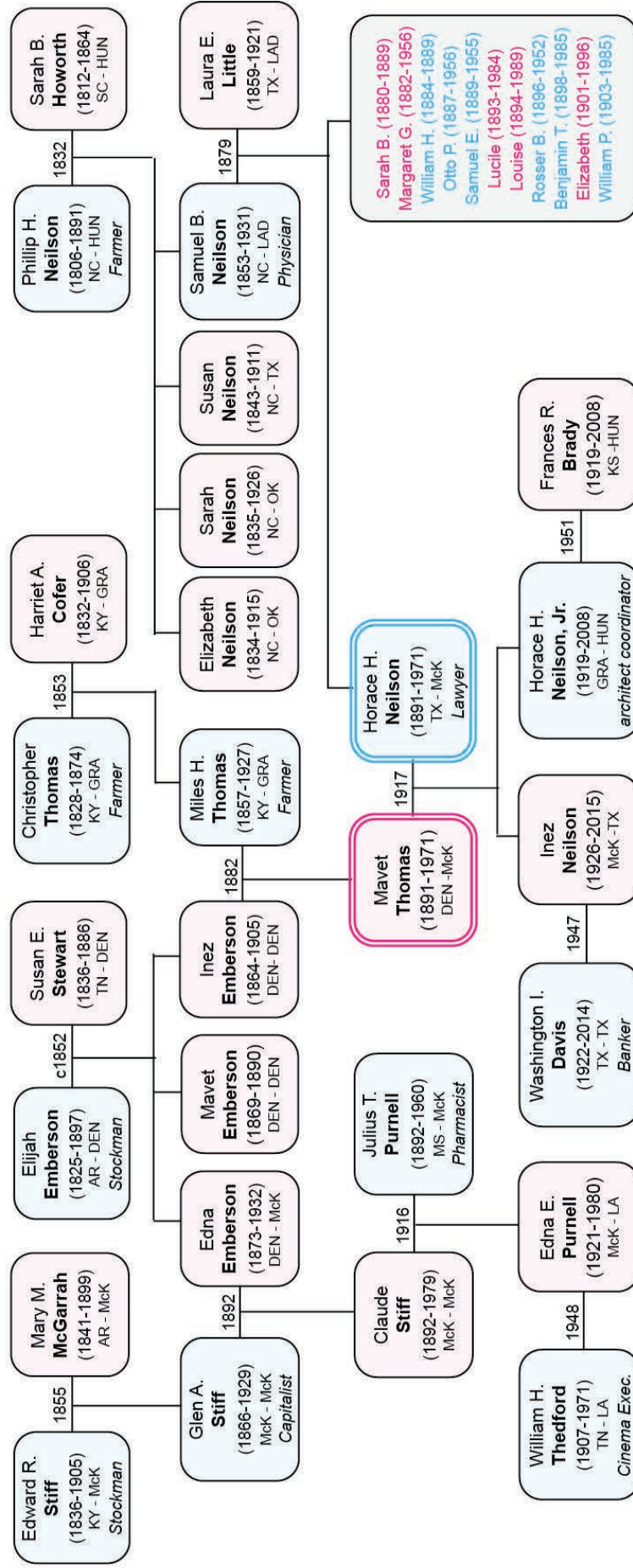
# Horace H. Neilson Genealogy\*

**Legend**

AR = Arkansas  
 CC = Collin County  
 DAL = Dallas  
 DEN = Denton, Co.  
 ELP = EL Paso  
 HUN = Hunt Co.  
 GRA = Grayson  
 KS = Kansas

KY = Kentucky  
 LA = Los Angeles  
 LAD = Ladonia  
 McK = McKinney  
 NC = North Carolina  
 OK = Oklahoma  
 SC = South Carolina  
 TX = Texas

(birth - death)  
 BORN - INTERRED

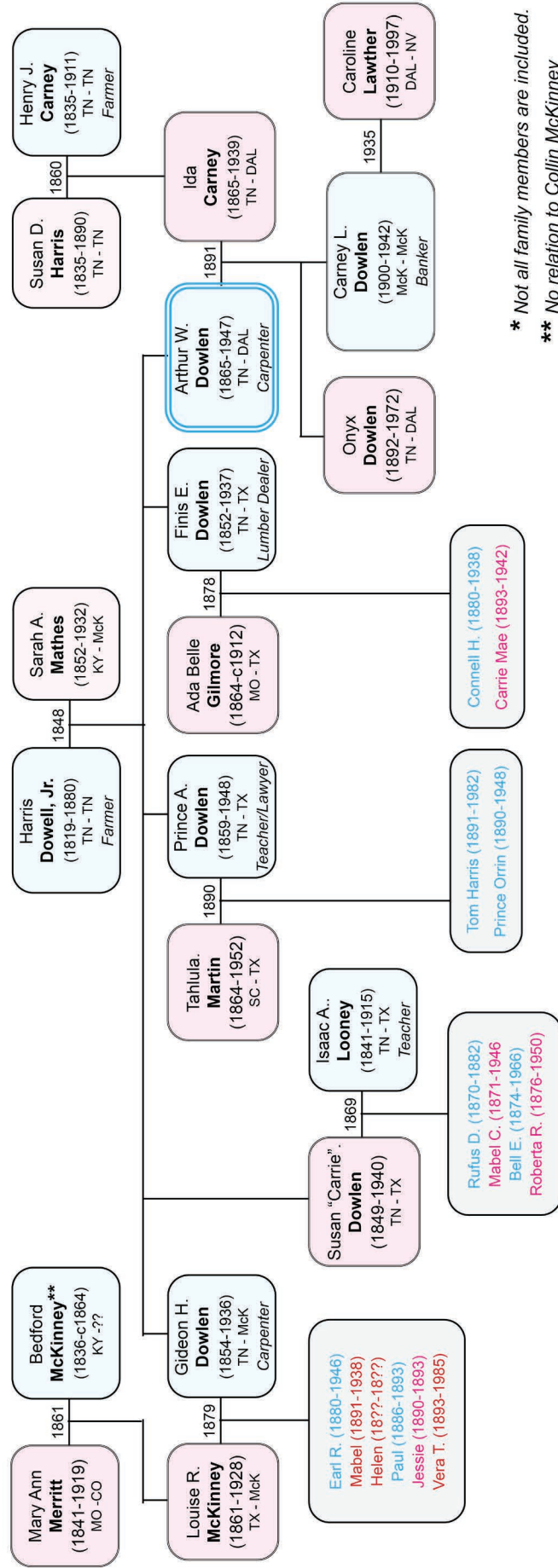


\* Not all family members are included.

# Dowlen Family of Early McKinney\*

**Legend**

- CC = Collin County
- CO = Colorado
- DAL = Dallas
- KY = Kentucky
- McK = McKinney
- MO = Missouri
- NV = Nevada
- SC = South Carolina
- TN = Tennessee
- TX = Texas
- VA = Virginia

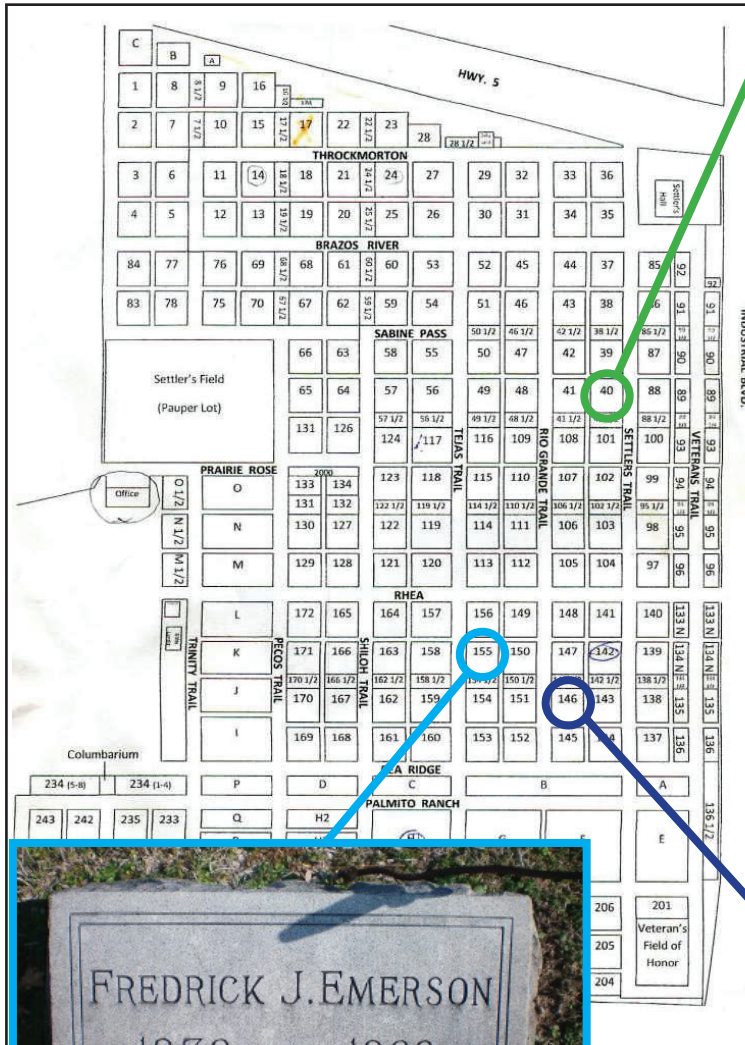


\* Not all family members are included.

\*\* No relation to Collin McKinney

# Pecan Grove Cemetery

This map of Pecan Grove Cemetery in McKinney shows the final resting place of some of the people associated with 514 W. Hunt Street.



**William A. Rhea (1833 - 1906)**  
**James C. Rhea (1837 - 1925)**

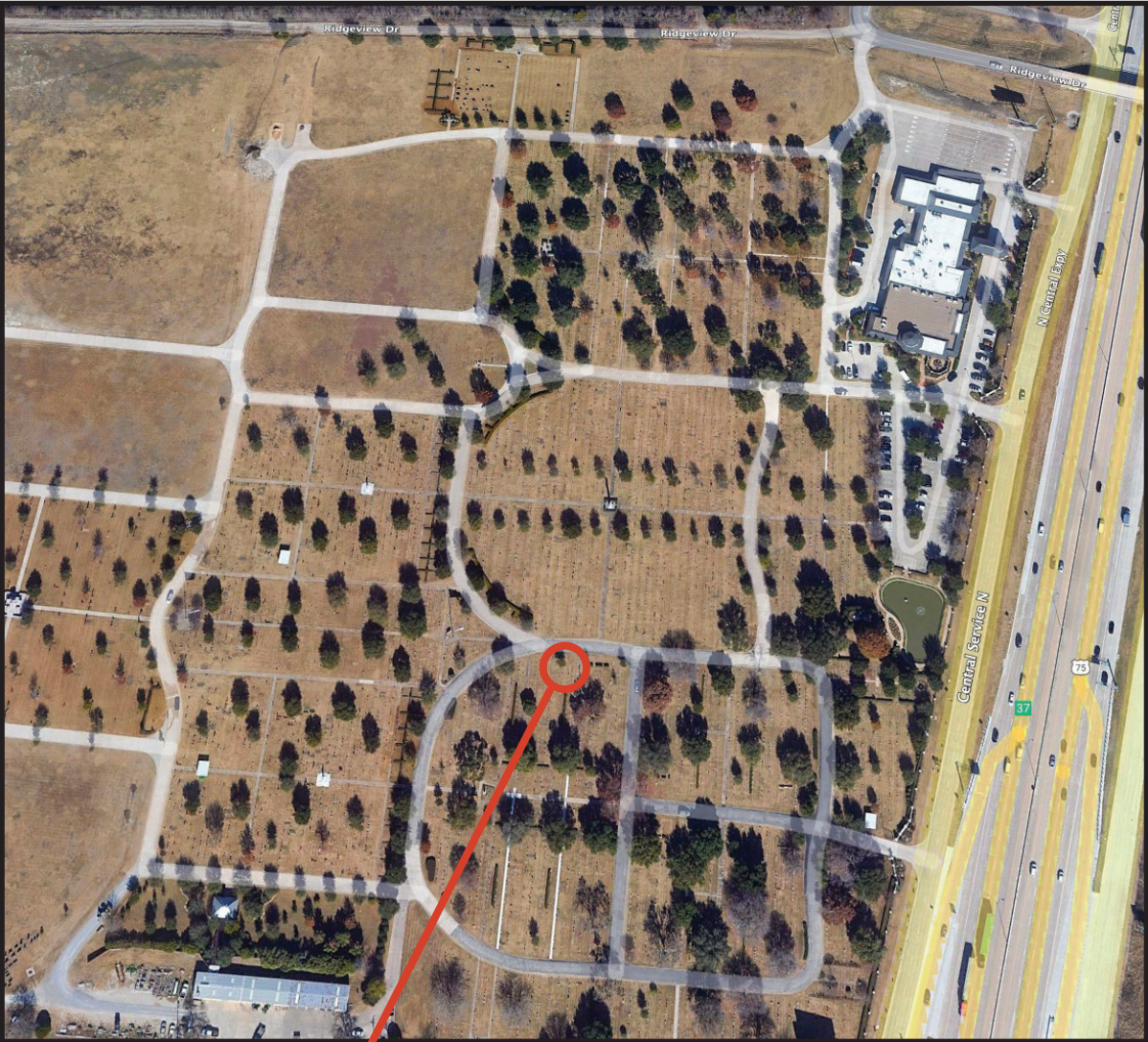


**Frederick J. Emerson (1872-1929)**

**Glen Stiff (1866 - 1929)**  
**Edna (Emberson) Stiff (1873-1932)**

# Ridgeview Cemetery

*This aerial view of Ridgeview Cemetery in Allen shows the final resting place of Horace and Mavet Neilson, the long-time residents of 514 West Hunt Street.*



***Horace H. Neilson (1891 - 1971)  
Mavet (Thomas) Neilson (1891-1971)***

**Current Photos (2022)**



# Neighborhood Context (2022)

## 514 West Hunt Street neighborhood context



*View looking West on W. Hunt Street*



*View looking East on W. Hunt Street*

## Homes near 514 West Hunt Street



*523 W. Hunt Street (Morris-Aron House)*



*516 W. Hunt Street (Westmoreland House)*



*515 W. Hunt Street (Burton House)*



*512 W. Hunt Street (L.L. Elliott House)*

# Architectural Accents



*Tuscon-style porch column*



*Front door with sidelights*



*Front porch with southern exposure*



*Sidelight detail*



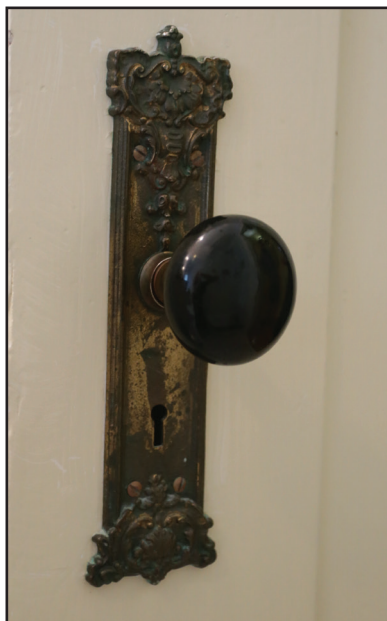
*Three-over-one windows (energy efficient)*



*Dining room fireplace*



*Living room fireplace (see page 42)*



*Various original door knobs*





*Transom above bathroom entrance*



*Original dining room fixture*



*Stairway and banister*

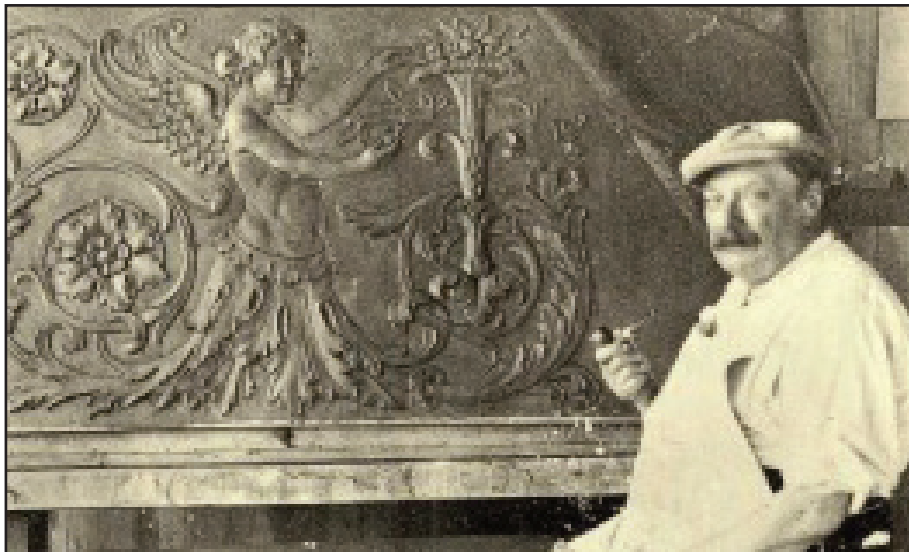


*Oak and pine flooring*



*The **American Encaustic Tiling Company** was founded in Zanesville, Ohio in 1874, later opening a showroom in New York City in 1881. The company specialized in making glazed tiles used for decorating fireplaces. The tiles in the Horace Neilson House are attributed to designer **Herman Carl Mueller** who worked for the company from 1887 to 1893. Herman Mueller was born in Rodach, Germany in 1854. He studied sculpture at the Munich Academy of Fine Art and emigrated to the United States in*

*1878, setting in Cincinnati, Ohio. Mr. Mueller worked as a sculptor until joining the American Encaustic Tiling Company where he created a process for making embossed, glazed tile which contributed greatly to the commercial success of the company. When the Great Depression forced the Zanesville plant to close in 1935, its assets were acquired by the Shawnee Pottery Company. Through later mergers and acquisitions, the company became Daltile. Herman Mueller died in Trenton, New Jersey in 1941.*



***Herman Carl Mueller** works on a mural design for a Newark, NJ schoolhouse. Museums holding his work include the New Jersey State Museum, Smithsonian Institution and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.*

## 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 design. 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 built 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, built 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 American Foursquare

The elements that characterize the American Foursquare Style are:

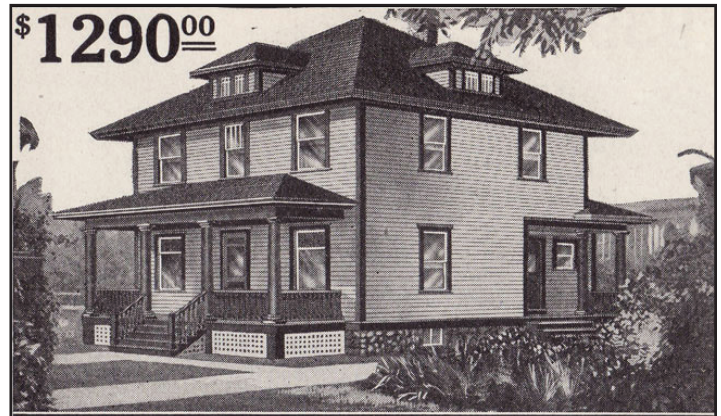
- low-pitched, hipped roof
- typically 1 to 2 stories
- spacious front porch
- symmetrical emphasis
- broad eaves
- square columns
- centrally located dormer
- rectilinear lines
- boxy footprint and massing

This style of home was a popular and economical alternative to the ornate Victorian style that originated in England in the 1830s. As the 20th Century approached, designers looked for new forms that were close to nature that incorporated artisan, handmade elements. In their search for an authentic architectural form, American designers found inspiration in the farmhouses of the Midwestern prairies. They saw them as honest expressions of form and function which eschewed excessive ornamentation.

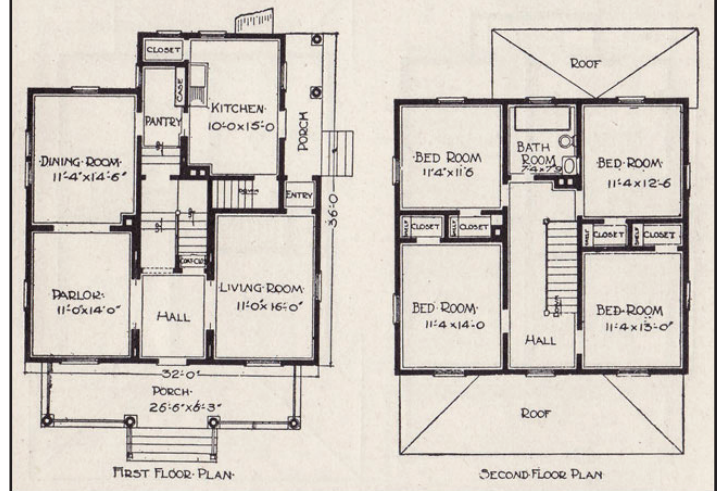
The style's simple geometry and aesthetic made it more affordable to middle-class home owners. It was especially popular between 1900 and 1920. The style is known by different names, American Foursquare and Prairie Box being the most common. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright took the style to a whole new level when he added Arts & Craft and Asian influences to it to create his "Prairie Style" homes.

The style is known for its hipped or pyramidal roofs, deep eaves, square columns and rectilinear forms. Often a dormer with a hipped roof will be placed in the middle of the front facade and, to a lesser extent, on other elevations. Large windows are applied symmetrically and occasionally grouped in pairs or triplets.

The style's popularity waned in the 1920s as people became more drawn to Craftsman bungalows, English cottage and revival styles.



MODERN HOME No. 264B102



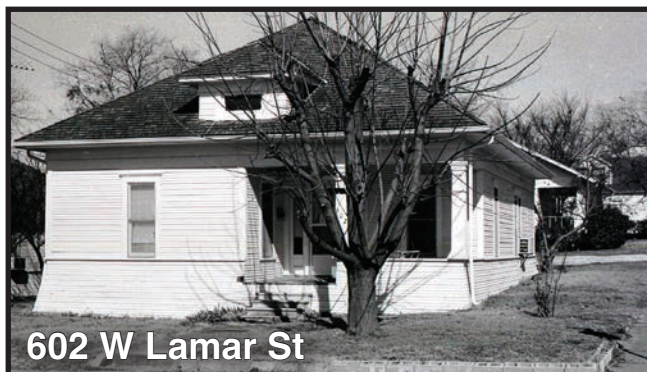
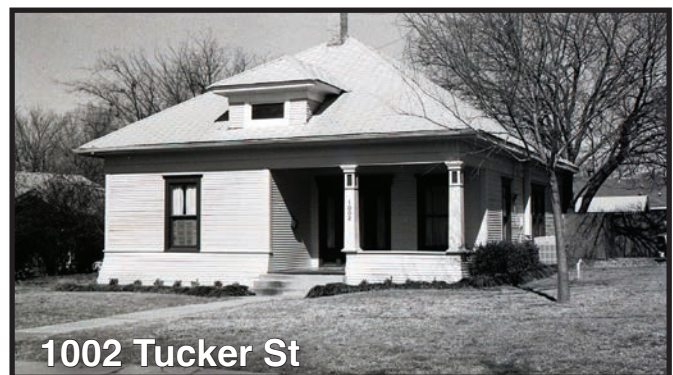
The above illustration is from a Sears pattern book of 1916 showing a typical American Four-Square design.



The centrally located dormer is a hallmark of the American Foursquare Style. While the dormer implies a living space, it was more often framing a slatted wooden vent intended to ventilate an uninhabited attic. The American Foursquare used porch space as a defining element that had the practical advantage of providing a comfortable sitting area in warmer weather.

## The American Foursquare in McKinney

The homes pictured here are all located in the McKinney Historic District. The similarity between their forms, materials, plans, and age is striking. The style was a popular mail-order item. Sears and Aladdin were among the popular suppliers of pre-cut home kits. Several publishers printed pattern books that supplied builders with blueprints. However, most carpenters would have been able to construct a Foursquare home with little trouble from even rudimentary plans.



## The American Foursquare in McKinney (cont.)

McKinney has several two-story Foursquare homes that show influences from other styles including Craftsman and Classical Revival. It is expected that a homeowner who could afford a two-story home would be able to afford more design extras as seen in these photos. The house at 514 W. Hunt, 616 N. Church and 618 N. Louisiana were all constructed by A.W. Dowlen.

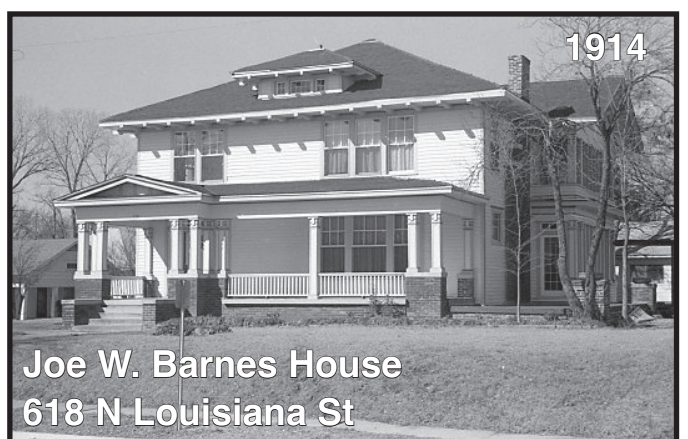
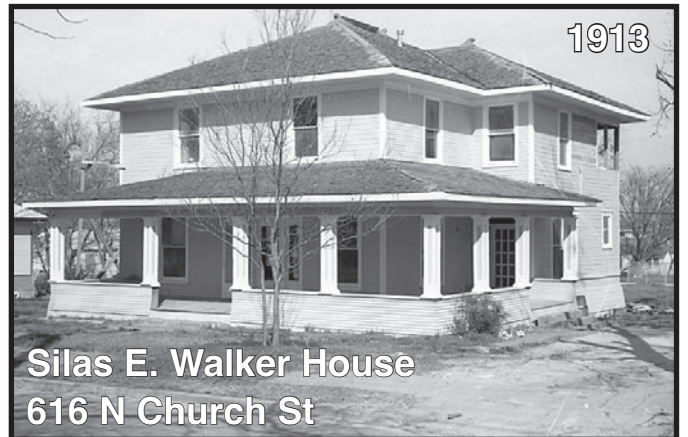




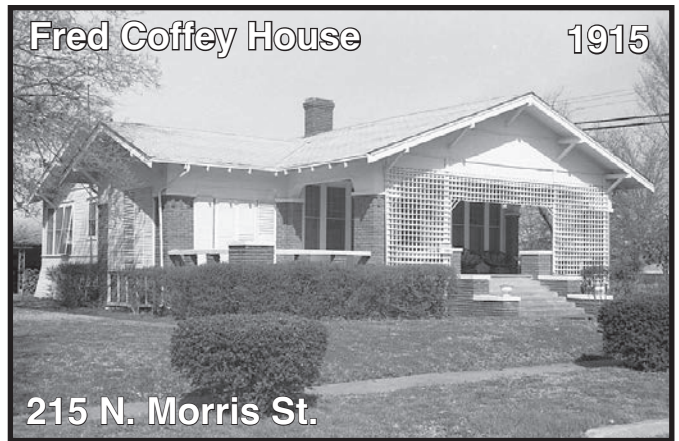
## Work of A.W. Dowlen

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 built but most of have a distinctive flourish that seems intended to catch a person's attention. Exaggerate eave returns and jerkinhead

*(continued)*



roofs are good examples of some of the attention-getting elements for which he is known. 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.



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*Research assistance provided by Tom Michero*

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