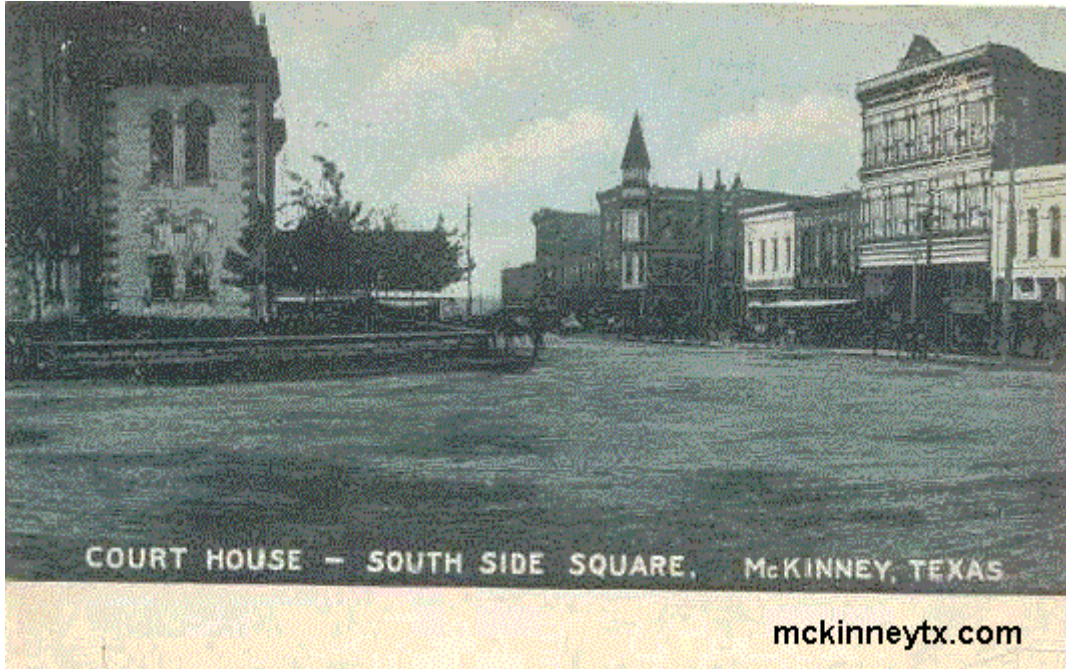


# McKinney, Texas

## A Local History



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May 2009

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## A Local History



Collaborative Project

by

Third Grade Curriculum Team

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# Introduction

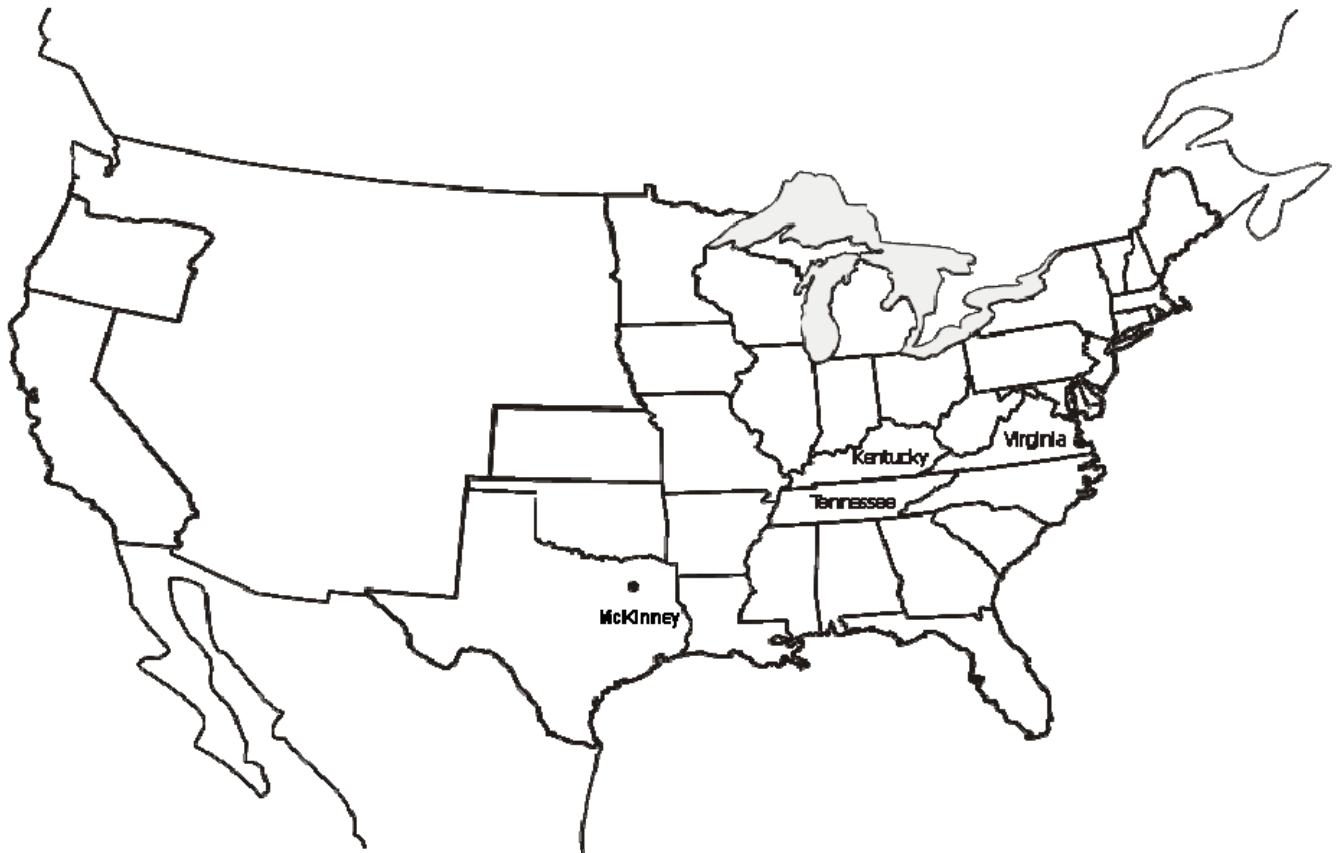
McKinney, Texas, has a rich heritage. Early settlers founded this community in the mid 1800's with hard work and determinations. Through the efforts of its citizens, McKinney has grown from an agricultural prairie town to a thriving modern city. This local history was written for the children of McKinney today to give them a sense of what it was like to have lived at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

McKinney has a heritage of *change*. This book will help readers understand important events and changes that have happened over time. McKinney also has a heritage of continuity as evidenced in the community's commitment to education and in the tradition of community involvement.

## Making of a Community

### Peters Colony

This map shows states that had been formed by the middle of the 1800s. In 1841, Texas began contracting with the Texas Emigration and Land Company in Louisville, Kentucky, to bring settlers to the area known as Peters Colony in North Texas. The land company was paid in land and the settlers were given the land free. Married men were given 640 acres and single men were given 320 acres. Many of the pioneers of McKinney came from Kentucky, Tennessee, or Arkansas to farm the rich black-land prairie. The settlers worked together through hardships such as fire, disease, and drought.



Some of the first Peters colonists were Joseph B. Wilmeth, his brother Frank Wilmeth and Jordan Straughan. They settled 2 miles north of present day McKinney. The trees which grew along Wilson Creek provided lumber for log cabins. The wildlife provided food. Wilmeth opened a blacksmith shop. His ox and plows were the first to turn soil in Collin County. The names and influences of these early settlers can be seen in McKinney today.

## **City, County, State, and Nation**

The city of McKinney is located in the central part of Collin County in the state of Texas. Collin McKinney, after whom Collin County was named, was one of the five writer of Texas' Declaration of Independence. This important document was written after Texas declared independence from Mexico in 1836 and became a republic. Collin McKinney also planned the straight boundaries of the county lines in northern Texas. In 1845, Texas joined the United States as a state.

## **Township**

In 1848, William Davis and his wife Margaret gave 120 acres of land to the county commissioners to establish the City of McKinney. This is called the "Old Donation." By 1850, the city had a population of 315 settlers. Henry Webb helped start the First Christian Church and John L. Lovejoy opened the Lovejoy Store and post office.

## **Establishing the Town of McKinney**

Buckner was chosen was the first county seat for Collin County. A county seat is the town which has the courthouse and the government for the county. Buckner was voted the county seat by seventy-five people on July 4, 1846. The settlers were wrong in having this election because they didn't follow the rules of the Texas government. The settlers were to find a place exactly in the center of the county and they were to have two choices. The election took place at John McGarrah's store. After this election John McGarrah donated 50 acres of land to build the town and the courthouse. Buckner was the count seat of Collin County for two years.

It became known to the legislature that the commissioners had not followed the law in selecting Buckner as the county seat. On January 12, 1848 the legislature passed another act appointing new commissioners to carry out the previous requests outlined in 1846. The commissioners chose George White to locate the center of the county. He found the center to be about three miles southeast of the square of present day McKinney in the Wilson Creek floodplains.

The commissioners then selected the present site of McKinney, which was not in the floodplain and Sloan's Grove which was three miles south of McKinney. At the time of the election high water flooded the East Fork and Wilson Creek and prevented settlers from the south and east parts of the county from

reaching Buckner to cast their votes. As a result, the present site of McKinney was selected by a majority of ten to one.

On March 16, 1848, the legislature passed an act naming McKinney the county seat of Collin County. On May 3, 1848 the post office at Buckner was discontinued and mail was sent to McKinney, Texas.

### **Transportation and Growth**

The ease of travel to this area helped McKinney grow in many ways. Many settlers came by horse and wagon along this route to Collin County. In the 1870's and the 1880's several railway companies built railroads through Collin County. The first was the Houston and Texas Central Railroad Company. This company built its railway north and south from Galveston, Texas, to Oklahoma. About ten years later, the Arkansas and Texas Railway Company and the Texas and St. Louis Railway Company built tracks through Collin County connecting East Texas to Fort Worth. Nothing changed McKinney more than the railroads. Many people moved to McKinney by train, and the railroad gave farmers a way to transport crops to other markets. This made McKinney a good location for businesses and trade brought the community's first growth surge.

Early McKinney roads and streets were unpaved and became impossible for the travel during rainy weather. Farmers and businessmen found it difficult to get crops to market and to move from place to place. In 1908 McKinney graveled several streets around the square to help solve these problems. In 1915, the Celina Pike Road was the first paved road out of McKinney.

An electric railway, The Interurban Express, was built through Collin County in 1908. This form of transportation made

Travel faster and easier between Sherman, McKinney, Plano and Dallas, and people chose riding the interurban train rather than traveling by wagon. By 1928, the automobile had become a more common method of transportation. Therefore, the interurban train began to be used more for the movement of materials and goods but continued to be a popular way for people to travel.



## **Business**

The area around McKinney began as an agricultural community where most families farmed and raised cattle. The Shawnee Trail, a famous cattle trail, passed through Collin County and linked it to markets in Missouri where people could sell their cattle. Without modern machinery, most work was done by hand or with the help of farm animals. Mules, which were excellent for farm work, were raised and sold by many families in or near McKinney. In 1866, Collin County was the leading mule market west of the Mississippi River. After 1872, the railroad provided an opportunity for farmers to market their crops, and cotton became an important cash crop in the McKinney area.

Business in McKinney at the turn of the century included a grocery store operated by Joseph P. Stewart. They sold grain, hay, cottonseed, groceries and live chickens. Groceries could be delivered in small wooden wagons pulled by two mules.

McKinney also had a newspaper, The McKinney Messenger, two hotels, and a wide variety of other shops around the square. Cotton grown locally was in high demand. Men from England came to line in McKinney to get the best cotton.

## **Geography of Collin County**

Collin County is located in the northeastern part of Texas. The area is known as the famous “Blackland Belt” and was one of the most highly productive agricultural counties in the United States. It is located 30 miles to the south of the Red River and the state of Oklahoma. The county is almost 30 miles square on each side. McKinney is the county seat and is found in the center of the county. The area has 878 square miles.

The Blackland Prairie Belt is called the Black-land Prairie because of the color of the black dirt. The main soil is called the Houston Clay. It is a flat prairie with some rolling hills. The soil, temperature, altitude, location and the amount of rainfall are ideal for growing many different crops. Until recently agriculture was the main industry of the county and cotton was the main crop.

When the pioneers arrived in the 1800’s the prairie was a grassy land with trees growing along the streams. The pioneers came and stayed in the area because land was plentiful and the soil was good for growing crops.

## **The Community of McKinney**

A tradition of community involvement has always existed in McKinney. The settlers of McKinney depended on each other for support and friendship.

Several clubs were formed so townspeople could socialize together and develop interests with their friends. The local churches were the center of social life for many citizens. The Owl Club was organized by women to work on school improvements.

## **Contributors to Early McKinney**

The city of McKinney, Texas, sits on land that was open prairie, roamed by buffalo, and hunted by Native Americans only two hundred years ago. The United States of America became a nation in 1776 with only thirteen states on the Atlantic coast. Gradually people moved westward wanting land of their own, and new states were added. This part of Texas was sold as farmland out of an office in Louisville, Kentucky, and was called Peters Colony. Many of the first settlers came here from Kentucky and Tennessee in the mid 1800's.

**Bryan, John Neely** \* John Neely Bryan, the first settler of Dallas, set up a trading post and ferry at one of the easiest crossings on the Trinity River in 1841. This trading post which was near the southern end of Preston Road made John Neely Bryan the first settler of Dallas. The National Central Highway was built along an old Indian trail going from Paris, Texas, to a spot near Bryan's cabin. Travelers used Bryan's ferry whether they were traveling north or south. Many travelers settled in Dallas where these two important routes of travel met. Others arrived by these roads to settle McKinney and the surrounding area.

**Abernathy, W.M.** He organized a volunteer fire department in 1887. It was called the J. W. Throckmorton Engine & Hose Co. No. 1. The Fire Company moved into Old City Hall on South Kentucky Street in 1889. Mr. Abernathy was the first fire chief.

**Dowell, J.P.** The first store in McKinney was located on Louisiana Street east of the square and owned by J.P. Dowell. Dowell Hardware sold china dishes, furniture, and other interesting things.

**Lovejoy, John L.** Twelve oxen pulled the first building into McKinney and placed it on the northwest corner of the square. The Lovejoy Store and post office was the only plank building in Collin County.

**Throckmorton, James W.** The eleventh governor of Texas made his home just north of McKinney. Throckmorton was a doctor, lawyer and confederate officer during the Civil War. He was against the war, but was loyal to the confederacy or the South.

**Wilmeth, Joseph B.** Pamphlets told about the good land in Peter's Colony. He also had free land, one square mile, to every head of a family. Wilmeth packed up his wife and ten children and joined a wagon train to Peter's Colony. He bought 320 acre claim from Moses Wilson in 1846 for \$370.00. Wilmeth helped McKinney become the county seat in Collin County. He was a founding member of First Christian Church and later built a second story on his house where he held a free school until 1887.



## Fire!

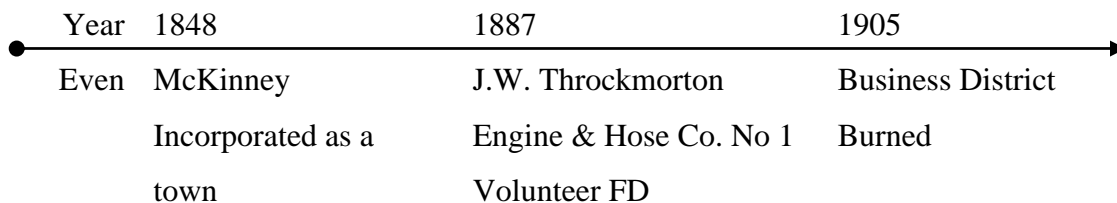
### Fire's Many Uses

There is nothing more useful or more destructive than fire. In early McKinney, many jobs were done using fire. Food was cooked over fire. Homes were lighted with oil lamps or candles. Clothes were washed in water heated over fire. Sadirons for pressing clothes were heated against the side of wood coal burning stoves. In cold weather, homes were heated using fire. Steam engines, powered by burning coal to heat the water, moved huge trains. Blacksmiths shaped iron into tools, horseshoes, and nails using fire. Even hams were cured with smoke from a smoldering fire!

### Natural Wildfires

McKinney also had problems with fire. Natural fires were started when lightening hit dry grasses. A wildfire swept across the prairie using the grass as fuel. The only way to stop a fire was to cut off its supply of oxygen or fuel. To protect their homes, some settlers kept “swept yards” where no plants were allowed to grow. When a wildfire got the “swept yard” area, the flames had no more fuel and would die out before the fire reached the house. To protect their wheat fields during times of severe drought, some farmers kept water tanks, burlap sacks, and buckets near the fields. Burlap sacks were soaked in buckets of water and used to beat out fires by cutting off its oxygen supply.

#### FIRE TIMELINE



### Fires out of Control

Man-made fires caused more problems than natural wildfires. When fires got out of control, the property damage could be severe. Homes often burned to the ground before help could get to them. In downtown McKinney the wood buildings stood side by side. Once a fire started, it could spread easily. The Johnson block on the southwest corner of the square burned to the ground in 1905 by fast moving fires.

## **Bucket Brigade**

With no running water or fire engines in McKinney, fires were difficult to fight. When a fire started, it took everyone acting quickly to get it under control. In McKinney three rapid shots from a pistol were the fire alarm. People would come running with every bucket available to form a bucket brigade! They would line up from a stream or other water source to the burning building. The first person would fill a bucket with water and pass it up the line. The last person would throw the water on the fire and run back to the water source with the bucket. Meanwhile, other buckets were relayed up the line.

## **Better Ways to Fight Fire**

The city needed better ways to fight fire. In 1887, a volunteer fire department was organized. It was called the JW Throckmorton Engine & Hose Company No. 1. In 1889 the city moved the fire station to City Hall on south Kentucky Street. W. M. Abernathy was the first fire chief. The first “fire truck” was pulled by men to and from fires. These same men dug wells in downtown McKinney to have water available for putting out fires. Next, a hook and ladder company came and the city bought its first horse drawn fire wagon. At the turn of the century, Sam Burks Hose Company joined them to form the McKinney Fire Department. Today, the McKinney Fire Department has many buildings and several hundred full-time employees!

## **All in a Day's Work**

During the turn of the century, jobs in McKinney centered on agriculture (the business of growing crops and raising animals for food and clothing). Men and boys were primarily responsible for raising the crops on the farm. In McKinney, the land was well suited for corn, cotton, and wheat. Harvested crops such as wheat and corn were sent to mills to be ground into flour and corn meal. Cotton was harvested and sent to gins where it was made into cotton bales. Businesses such as general stores sold products that were not easily produced on the farm. Other businesses provided services for the community such as banking and real estate.

### **Corn**

Preparing the ground for planting corn took two men. One man rode the mules with pulling a cultivator (plow) upon which the other man would sit. The harvested corn was taken to gristmills where it was crushed between two millstones moved by two oxen guided by a man.



## **Cotton**

It took many workers to run a cotton gin. First, one man weighed a wagon full of cotton. Another man controlled a suction tube that vacuumed up the cotton through a machine to be processed and cleaned. Several men operated machines called separators that divided the cottonseed from the cotton. The cotton was then pressed into 500-pound square bales.

## **Wheat**

The steam thresher helped speed up the cutting of the wheat crop. Two men called “feeders” stood on platforms and pushed wheat bundles into a feeder as the bundles were thrown from wagons. Two “weighers” sacked the wheat coming down from the separator. The men worked even after sundown making their workday at least fourteen hours long. The pay was \$1.50 a day plus food and a place to sleep (a straw stack).

## **In Town**

The town of McKinney was becoming the agricultural center of Central Collin County. Cotton, oats, wheat and corn were transported from McKinney. The town had a lumber mill, Corn Sheller, gristmill, cotton gin, oat-clipper plants and a flour mill. Jobs in town were found at the general store,



drug-store, railroad, furniture store, barbershop, and two restaurants. At the general store, hats were made for women, dry goods were sold, and catalog orders could be taken.

In the early 1883, Collin County National Bank was started. It employed bank tellers and loan officers. Another change that occurred around this time was the formation of the McKinney Messenger newspaper. Employee wrote stories, set type, and printed newspapers by turning large drums coated with ink over metal type.

There were many small businesses in McKinney. The ice factory made ice that was delivered to farms and houses by workers riding in wagons. There were eleven teachers working in the brick, steam-heated school building. There were workers at the two hotels. Ten frame stores housed businesses such as clock repairers, doctors, blacksmiths, and carpenters.

The police force was made up of one city marshal and one night watchman. The marshal would arrest a suspect, take him/her before the judge (usually the mayor), and then collect the fine or take the criminal to jail. McKinney continued to be an agricultural area until the 1960's. Most jobs up to that time were directly or indirectly linked to farming.

## **Putting Food on the Table**

People in McKinney had an appreciation for the foods on their tables because it took hard work and planning to provide the food they ate. Many different types of foods were eaten during the turn of the century (1890-1910). Most of the foods were grown and prepared at home. Staples such as sugar, coffee, and salt could be purchased at the general store in town.

### **Crops, Gardens, and Orchards**

Corn, a basic food for most meals, was a popular crop grown by farmers around McKinney. Corn could be served as corn meal mush, grits, hominy, corn on the cob, or cornbread. It was also important for feeding livestock. Corn shucks were even used to stuff mattresses and make hats.

Other grain crops were also grown in McKinney area. Wheat was grown and taken to a mill such as a wheat or oat mill where it was ground into flour. The flour was carried home in cloth flour sacks. Biscuits, bread, and teacakes were made with the flour. When emptied, the flour sacks were sewn into clothing.

Vegetable gardens provided the main dishes for many meals since meat wasn't always available. Cabbage, onions, tomatoes, turnips, cucumbers, green beans, and black-eyed peas were some of the vegetables grown during the warmer months. Vegetables were canned to provide a source of food for winter months. Other vegetables were pickled and served as relishes like chutney, pickled chayote, and Dixie relish. Potatoes and onions were kept in cool, dry places while beans were dried.

Some fruit trees were brought to McKinney for planting orchards. While fig, peach and pear trees were seen growing in orchards, wild fruits were also very tasty. Persimmons, plums, and dewberries were very plentiful in the area. Dewberry cobbler was considered a delicious dessert. Fruits were canned and put up for the winter. Hard fruits such as apples and pears and soft fruits such as peaches, plums, strawberries, and raspberries were canned with or without sugar. Nut bearing trees such as pecan and walnut also provided food.

Food was usually served plain with little seasoning. The only sweets served daily were syrup or molasses which were poured over biscuits and sometimes even vegetables. Other sweets such as pecan

pie, candies made with peanuts, taffy and cobblers were usually served on Sundays and other special occasions.

### **Food from Animals**

Cattle were the main livestock raised in the McKinney area. After a beef cow was butchered, several families would share the cuts of meat (hamburgers were unknown). A lack of refrigeration demanded the “quick” use of the meat. Food that was not eaten quickly had to be dried, smoked, pickled, or preserved with spices so it would not spoil.

Animals were raised and processed at home. Hogs were raised and butchered in late fall. Some cuts of meat were made into sausage by grinding, mixing with salt and spices, and stuffing into cloth sacks to hang in the smokehouse. Other cuts like ham or shoulder were left whole and cured by salting and smoking in the smokehouse. After the meat had time to cure (to preserve by salting or smoking), it was saved to be eaten by the family during the winter months.

Other sources for meat were chickens and wild game. The main animal raised on the farm for food was the chicken. Chicken was usually served as part of the Sunday meal. Eggs were gathered daily and eaten for breakfast. Extra eggs were either sold or traded to neighbors. Wild game (rabbit, squirrel, bird, deer, quail, fish, and wild turkey) also provided meat for the table.

### **Beverages**

Because of a lack of ice, cold beverages weren’t easily available. Adults and children drank milk that would quickly sour and turn into buttermilk. Adults sometimes drank coffee ground from beans bought at the general store in town. All family members could drink as much well water as they wanted.

### **Cooking the Food**

The cook stove, considered a luxury, changed the way many foods were cooked. Before the cook stove, bread had been cooked in the fireplace inside an iron skillet with hot coals heaped on the lid. With the cook stove, bread could be cooked inside the oven. The first cook stoves were wood burning stoves. The young boys in a family chopped the wood that heated the stove. When the fire started in the stove, the whole stove would get hot so other foods could be cooked in skillets, pots, or kettles on top of the stove. The heat from the stove was used for more than cooking foods. For example, sadirons were leaned against the sides of the stove to heat them for pressing clothes. The warm stove also heated the home.

## **Food Preservation**

Can you imagine life without refrigerators, microwaves, and super markets? Can you imagine living at a time when no hot dogs, hamburgers, or orange juice? Many of the foods that we enjoy today were not available because pioneers had limited means of keeping food from spoiling. Pioneers had to deal with the fact that all foods spoil due to the presence of pests, microorganisms, or germs. Therefore, it was important to utilize methods to preserve and extend the time that foods could be kept safely. Some of the earliest methods of preservation of foods included curing, canning, drying, and cooling.

### **Curing**

Curing of food was done through the use of smoke or by using spices, salt, and sugar to slow the spoiling process. Smoking would speed the evaporation of the moisture from the food and also slow the growth of germs (microscopic organisms that can cause disease). Smoking was used to cure meat and fish. Spices, salt and sugar were used to slow the growth of germs and also pull some of the water from the food which in turn kept the germs from growing.

### **Canning**

In the canning process, fresh foods were packed into glass jars with metal screw-on lids. The filled jars were placed in a large pot of boiling water and heated to kill the germs. After boiling, the jar lids were tightened, and the jars were allowed to cool. During the cooling process, a partial vacuum formed inside the jar, making it more difficult for bacteria to grow. After the jars of canned food cooled, they were stored in a cupboard or root cellar.



### **Drying**

People dried some foods such as beans and thinly sliced meats and fruits in order to preserve them. Drying used heat from the sun to remove moisture from foods. To speed up the drying process, the food was placed outside on metal screens so air could circulate around it. After most of the moisture evaporated from the food, germs could not grow and cause food to spoil.

## Freezing and Cooling

People knew that nutrients in foods were best preserved through freezing. During the winter, they would carefully place wrapped food outside so it would freeze. Freezing removed the heat from the food and slowed the growth of germs. The people of early McKinney did not have refrigerators as we have today because electricity had not been made available. One method of keeping food cool year round was to hang huge blocks of ice in a wooden box-like cabinet called an icebox. Several times a week, a new block of ice would be needed since the ice would melt. Foods kept in these early “refrigerators” stayed cool and fresh for a longer period of time than if left at room temperature. As motor vehicles became more common, ice was delivered to homes in trucks similar to the one shown in this 1929 photograph.



## Preserving Food Today

Early pioneers had to devise ways to preserve the food they had worked so hard to obtain. If pioneers could visit a home or grocery store of today, they would marvel at how food preservation has improved. Today, not only do we have refrigerators, freezers, and microwave ovens, but we also have improved food processes that prevent spoilage. For example, liquid nitrogen can be applied directly to food to speed up the freezing process. This process can cause hamburger patties to be frozen solid in a matter of seconds. Some foods are preserved by having chemicals added. These “additives” (added chemicals) are called preservatives or anti-oxidants (substances that slow down the oxidation process). Foods that cannot be canned or frozen can have these chemicals added to them to keep them fresh for a longer time. Today, milk is preserved through a method called pasteurization. Through the pasteurization process, a

liquid undergoes a rapid heat treatment that kills germs. As the methods of food preservation have improved, so has the quality of life. Pioneers would be amazed at how far food preservation has come in the last one hundred years.

## House Keeping

### Chores

About one hundred years ago, family life for folks in rural Collin County was much like farm life in other parts of North Texas. Most homes had no modern conveniences such as electricity, running water, indoor bathrooms, or wire screens on the windows. Life on the farm was hard, unending labor. Most work was done by hand and in all kinds of weather. Children and adults had many family responsibilities. Family members knew it was important to do chores well and to complete them on time if things were to run smoothly. In the late 1800's, farm life in Collin County was difficult and busy. Families knew the importance of working together.

### Adults

All family members had jobs to do in order to make a living from the land. Work and fun were blended together. Farm chores were divided between family members according to their ages and abilities. While the men worked growing crops and caring for the livestock, women and children did the jobs necessary to keep the household running smoothly.

Women had the tasks of feeding and clothing the family. They began each day by preparing breakfast before dawn. Other Responsibilities included working in their gardens, tending chickens, washing and ironing, sewing and mending, cleaning the house, putting hearty meals on the table, and nursing sick family members or neighbors. Adults worked long hours to provide for their families.



## **Children**

Families were usually large. The more children in a family, the more help there was with the house and farm chores. Girls were taught to bring wood to the kitchen so there would be fuel for the wood burning stove. After meals, they were expected to clean up the kitchen. Picking and washing fruits and vegetables, gathering eggs, raising baby chicks, and ironing were other responsibilities given to girls. While most of the girls' chores were indoors, many boys' chores included outdoor tasks. Boys learned to plow at an early age. They spent several hours guiding a plow behind a horse or mule as they helped plant the crops. Boys worked along with their fathers to care for livestock, prune trees, and hoe weeds. Both boys and girls joined in picking cotton each fall. Children were important in helping their families make a living.

## **Fine Stitches and Long Britches**

The clothing of the late 1800's and the early 1900's was designed to be useful and durable. Frontier families needed clothes that would protect them from the cold winter weather and the hot, windy summer days. People had only a few everyday outfits and one or two outfits for special occasions such as funerals, parties, and church. Unlike the bright fitted clothes of today, most of the everyday clothes of the late 1800's were loose fitting. The colors were most often dark gray, black, or white. The clothes, therefore, reflected the way people lived at that time in the south central part of the country.

## **Getting New Clothes**

There were no malls in which to shop. Mothers made most of the "homemade" clothes the



family wore, and very few clothes were "store bought". Only a few stores in McKinney sold factory made clothes. The stores did, however, sell a lot of cloth to make clothes. Few families still made their own cloth with big looms using the cotton and wool raised in their farms. New clothes were a special treat and were the result of a lot of hard work.

## **Women's Wear**

Women wore everyday clothes that made their work easier. Dresses of this time covered women's legs. Women wore dresses that were so long they touched the floor. School age girls wore shorter dresses that came just below their knees with thick stockings that covered their legs. Although most dresses were

dark in color, everyday work and school dresses were often made of gingham or calico printed material. When flour was bought from a store, it came in large cotton sacks with varieties of flower patterns. Nothing was wasted, so the flour sacks were used to make shirts, dresses, aprons, or bedsheets. School and work dresses were plain and comfortable.

Women usually wore cotton aprons to protect the fronts of their dresses from stains as the women cooked over wood burning stoves. The aprons used for chores were plain, but fancier ruffled aprons were sometimes added to party and church dresses for decoration. They bought silk or taffeta cloth instead of the usual muslin to make fancy, stylish dresses. Ruffles were added to the collar and sleeves. These soft and shiny materials made beautiful flowing dresses that girls and women wore on special occasions. Women wore full petticoats (underskirts that made dresses stand out) and pantaloons (pant-like underwear) underneath their dresses. Black shoes, which stretched above their ankles, had laces that wound around hooks on the front of each shoe. Bonnets were worn whenever women went outside. Bonnets were made of stiff cloth classed muslin. These bonnets had brims that almost covered the women's entire faces. The brims protected the women and girls from the harsh prairie winds and sun as they did their outside chores.

### **Men's Wear**

During the late 1800's, men needed clothes that would last a long time. Dark pants and white shirts with small collars or no collars at all were worn when they needed to go to town to buy supplies for their families. Sometimes men wore suspenders instead of belts. For weddings, funerals, parties, or church, men wore dork suit jackets with white shirts and short ties that crossed at their necks. Some men wore hats with brims to keep the hot Texas sun out of their eyes. For outside work, some men tied handkerchiefs also came in handy when the men needed something to wipe the perspiration from their brows or when they needed to protect their faces from the dust. Wearing the handkerchief around the neck or face gave the men the appearance of a modern day "cowboy." The men often wore boots with pointed toes or high-topped shoes with broad toes. For church or school, younger boys wore knickers which were baggy pants that buttoned below their knees. High stockings were worn to cover the rest of their legs. The wearing of long pants was a sign that a boy had become a man. The men of the late

1800's were very practical in their dress preferring plain clothes over fancier clothes that were being worn by men in other parts of the country.

## **Caring for Clothes**

Caring for clothing was time consuming. Washing clothes meant heating water in an iron pot over an open hearth. Landry was done with lye soap made from ash and pork lard. Soiled spots were rubbed with soap against a washboard. Next, laundry of the same color was boiled and then rinsed. The soapy water was used to scrub porches. The rinse water was poured into the vegetable garden. Clothes were hung on an outside clothesline to dry. If the clothes needed starching, flour was dissolved in water to make starch. Ironing clothes meant heating a heavy sadiron against the side of a cooking stove. Even the handle was hot and had to be held with a folded cloth. As an iron cooled, it was put back on the stove to heat while another was used. Caring for clothing took a lot of time.

## **Changes Over Time**

Styles changed only somewhat by the early 1900's. One thing that did change, however, was that the stores in McKinney began to carry more "ready made" clothes. Dowell Hardware, J.C. Penney, Lehman S. Sanger were stores in McKinney that sold various items. Brighter colors became popular by the early 1900's. For the women, ruffles on dresses had more lace, and big brimmed hats began to replace the plainer bonnets. Dresses remained floor length, but the shapes of the dresses changed to a more fitted blouse look. Men's dress shoes began to look more like women's high-top shoes. Men began to wear straw hats with round brims that were trimmed with ribbons. The Snapp Stables in McKinney sold dusters. These lightweight coats were worn to keep dust from the dirt roads off clothes.

As McKinney changed from being a small prairie settlement to becoming a more established town of the 1900's, the style of clothing began to slowly show signs of change to match the coming of a new age and lifestyle.



## **Will You Play With Me?**

Can you imagine using a stick as a horse? How about a fort that moves from tree to tree? Pioneer children used their imagination to make homemade toys exciting.

Children had little time for playing since their family depended on everyone. All children, even the preschool children, had certain chores to do daily. Though they had little time for playing, toys were still an important part of their childhood.

Many of the toys made or given to them were smaller versions of the tools they would use later as adults. Girls were given small irons and ironing boards. They learned to sew and knit as they made clothes for their dolls. Boys learned to use knives as they made kindling for the fire. Leftover pierces were whittled into baby toys or checker pierces. Boys made cows and other farm animals from corncobs to create model farms. When children wanted to play with toys unrelated to their futures, they chose from many homemade toys and several “store bought” toys.

### **Young Children**

Young children enjoyed playing with very simple toys. Their parents encouraged them to play with educational toys. Blocks were both simple and educational. Each block had letters of the alphabet as well as pictures of animals, so while youngsters built a fort or a bridge, they were learning the alphabet. Pull toys such as horses were also popular with younger children.

### **Girls**

Girls enjoyed playing with different kinds of toys. They played with dolls made from wood, corncobs, or rags. The girls treated their dolls like family members. They made beds for their dolls as well as several outfits for them to wear. Paper dolls became popular several decades after the wooden dolls. Girls also played with other toys. They liked spinning wooden tops and listening to whistling humming tops. Girls used their hoop-rolling skills as they raced wooden hoops around the yard guiding the hoops with sticks. Jacks and marbles were also games girls played.

### **Boys**

Boys played with many homemade toys. They blew tunes using whistles carved from sticks and willow branches. Jacob’s Ladder was a popular toy made from thin squares of wood connected with pieces of

ribbon. The squares seemed to “tumble” onto each other. The boys had contests running through obstacle courses with their wooden hoops and sticks. During recess at school, boys played jacks made from jackstones or marbles made from clay, stone, or pottery. If they were lucky, they owned some “store bought toys” such as wind-up toys or mechanical banks.

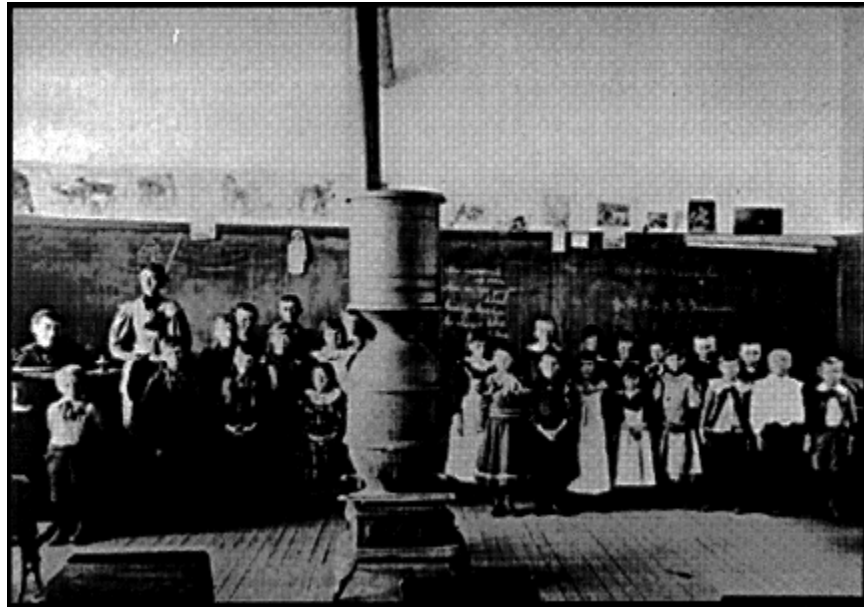


## Changes

The kinds of toys children played with changed as more people moved into rural areas. More stores were established enabling parents access to a variety of toys. Catalogs were readily available for parents to use when ordering household items and toys. Improved transportation, postal service, and newspapers allowed toy companies easier access to people living in rural areas.

## Golden Rule Days

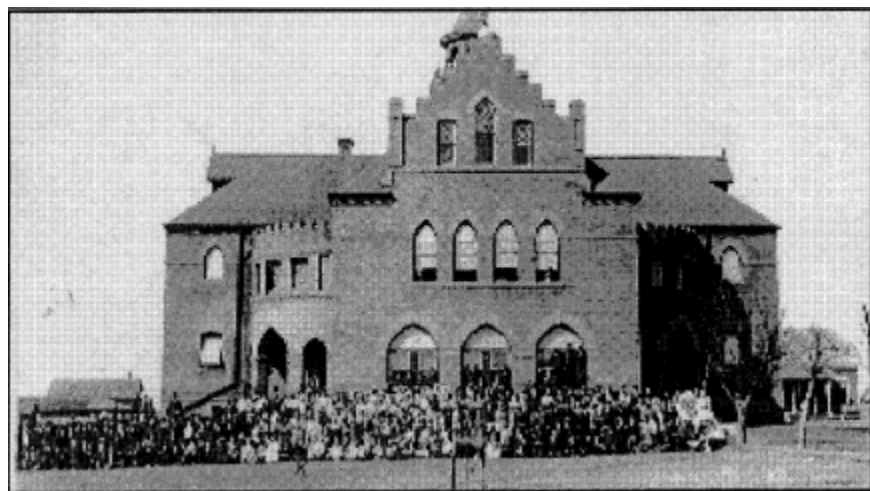
One of McKinney's first schools was started on the second floor of the Wilmeth homestead. A boxed-shaped schoolhouse was soon built in 1848 where Caldwell Elementary now stands. The building was constructed from clapboards (thin boards with one edge thicker than the other) which were cut from trees near the creek. The roof was made of oak shingles held on by wooden pegs.



Families wanted their children to get an education. They helped build schools, donated the land, and paid tuition. At one point parents paid tuition which was \$1.00 for a month of school. The tuition was used to pay the teacher salary. Most children walked to school or rode horses or mules. Since the prairie looked much the same for miles in every direction, farmers would plow trenches from their homes to school to keep the children from getting lost. When rain caused the creeks to rise, children who lived on the other side of the creeks could not get home. Townspeople would keep children in their homes until the creeks went down. The same was done when heavy snow fell during the day.

The first "free" school opened in 1872, in a four-room frame building. The walls were painted black and used for blackboards. The seats were long, hard cottonwood slabs. Books were kept on the seats next to the students, and lunch buckets were kept under the seats or in a corner of the room. In the late 1800's, the one room schoolhouse was used to teach all different age children and several grades one to ten. A potbelly stove used as a heat source was placed in the center of the room. School children stayed at home after dark, and they did their homework using the light from coal-oil lamps to help them see their lessons.

Families in McKinney shared a traditional commitment to providing a high quality of education for their children. This commitment to the education of the children of McKinney continues today.



## **How Schools are Important to Our Community of McKinney**

By: Mary Carole Strother

A free public education has long been the heart of Texas.

The Texas Constitution declared that it “shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.”

Education has also been important to the citizens of McKinney. When McKinney was established in 1848, most of the early schools were in homes and taught by a member of the family.

One of the first schools in McKinney was a log structure established 1848 by J.B. Wilmeth and his older daughters. Later the school was moved to the Wilmeth home.

In 1883, the city of McKinney purchased a two-story, four room frame building and five acres of land located on the corner of College and Louisiana Streets. They established one of the first public schools called Central Public School. Students in grades first through eleven attended this four-room wooden frame school. Teachers were paid partly by local subscription and partly by the state, but tuition was free.

In 1887 a new two-story brick building was built to replace the wooden structure.

In 1902, the eleventh grade was added.

In 1903 the classes were extended through the twelfth grade. Three students became the first graduating “seniors.”

In 1903 a small school stood near the site of where Finch Elementary stands today. The school was called Petersburg. The citizens of McKinney wrote a petition to ask for the school to become a part of the McKinney Schools. This was the second public elementary school in McKinney.

In 1907, the McKinney Schools purchased a building on Lamar and Foote Streets. The school became known as Central Ward School and later renamed Hill Elementary School. It was razed in 1963.

In 1912, McKinney tore down Petersburg school and a new building was built where Finch stands today. The new building was a two-story building with first through sixth grades. The cost of the building was \$12,500. The school was called South Ward School.

In 1924 the school was renamed Fanny Finch Elementary.

North Ward was built at the same time, in 1912, for the same cost. North Ward was later named J.L. Greer Elementary.

In 1914, Boyd High School was built on the same land where Central Ward School was previously located.

In 1916, East Ward was built and was later renamed for J.W. Webb who had been president of the school board.

In 1923 a junior high school was built on the same grounds as Boyd High School. It was named after L.A. Scott who was the school board president at the time.

In 1936 the two-story buildings of J. L. Greer and Finch Elementary were torn down and new schools were built. These two buildings are still standing today.

Finch Elementary is a Texas Historic Landmark.

West Ward School was built in 1953. It was later named Burks Elementary after Nell Burks who taught school in McKinney for 43 years.

In 1959 McKinney High School replaced Boyd High School after the old school was torn down.

McKinney High School was first located where Faubion Middle School is today.

Caldwell School was built after L.A. Scott Middle School was torn down.

It was named after Gibson Caldwell.

In 1974 Slaughter School was built. It was named after Earl Slaughter who was a principal and Business Manager in MISD.

In 1986 McKinney High School moved to a new location. The old building is called Faubion Middle School after Jack Faubion, a former school superintendent.

In 1991 Valley Creek Elementary was built.

In 1993 Glen Oaks Elementary was built.

In 1995 Dowell Middle School was built.

It was named for Miss Ruth Dowell who taught school in McKinney for 45 years.

In 1997, Reuben Johnson Elementary was built. It was named after Mr. Reuben Johnson who taught school and was a principal in McKinney for 28 years.

In 1998, Eddins Elementary was opened.

Mr. CT Eddins taught school for 52 years and was a principal and teacher at Fanny Finch Elementary for 38 years.

In 2000 two schools, Walker Elementary and Welford Elementary were opened.

McKinney North High School also opened in 2000.

In 2001 McNeil Elementary and Malvern Elementary were built.

Mr. Malvern was a teacher and assistant principal in MISD for 36 years.

Scott Johnson Middle School was also opened in 2001. For 35 years Scott Johnson was a teacher, Head Football Coach, and Athletic Director in McKinney. He was superintendent in MISD for 8 years.

In 2002 Vega Elementary and Bennett Elementary were built.

Minshew Elementary was built in 2004. Mr. Minshew was a teacher and principal and worked in McKinney for 30 years. Mrs. Minshew taught English in MISD for 26 years.

Wilmeth Elementary was built in 2005.

In 2006 McKinney opened its third high school named McKinney Boyd.

In 2007, Press Elementary and McGowen Elementary were built in McKinney.

In 2009, the Herman Lawson Early Childhood Center was built. It provides services for the preschool and early learning programs in MISD.

Can you make a timeline of the schools in McKinney?

### **Welcome to the Heritage Farmstead!**

The Heritage Farmstead is a living museum located in Plano, Texas. Its heirlooms and artifacts have been preserved for many years, but they have not always been there. As you read, pretend you are standing on the land where the Farmstead is now located.

#### **Approximately 300 Years Ago**

In 1700, three centuries ago, you would have been standing on an open prairie. Three hundred years ago present day Preston Road was a buffalo trace worn and beaten beneath the hooves of the great herds as they migrated. The only people in the area were native Americans. The land was not named the city of Plano or Collin County. The land had not been named the state of Texas. The United States had not become a country. Columbus had made his way across the Atlantic Ocean two hundred years before, but only a few colonies had been started in North America.

#### **Approximately 200 Years Ago**

In 1800, two centuries ago, you would still have seen buffalo and American Indians. You may have seen scouting groups exploring the plains. They would take stories of the fertile flatlands back to their friends and families in Kentucky and Tennessee. Many of the pioneers who settled in Plano had been farmers in Kentucky and Tennessee where trees grew in thick forests and had to be chopped down before crops could be planted. When some of the Kentucky and Tennessee farmers heard about the flat, open plains of this area, they were eager to come and settle on the rich farmland.

#### **Approximately 150 Years Ago**

In 1841, John Neely Bryan established a trading post in what was to become Dallas. In 1845, Texas joined the United States. Peters Colony eventually extended to the western half of Collin County and tracts of land were granted in what is now Plano. One hundred-fifty years ago, you would have been standing on land that looked different than it had in 1700. The land had been surveyed, measured, and

named, and people had begun to farm it. This land was sold in 1857 by a Peters Colonist to Isham Pittman.

### **Approximately 100 Years Ago**

Hunter Farrell bought the land from Mr. Pittman's widow in 1890. Things changed quickly as roads began to be paved and electricity became available. The Farrells established a farm. They raised their daughter in their beautiful Victorian home. In 1901, Ammie Farrell married Dr. Lynch and they moved to Midland, Texas. In 1914, she and Dr. Lynch divorced, and Ammie returned with her son, Hunter, to live at the farmstead. Hunter, nicknamed Man, checked the mail each day for letters from his father in Midland. Some of these letters were carefully preserved by his grandmother and are printed in the next section of this booklet.

### **Approximately 50 Years Ago**

Ammie married Mr. Dudley Wilson. When she was in her 60's she began raising Hampshire sheep on the farmstead. Her sheep won national recognition at state fair stock shows. "Miss" Ammie, as she was called, invited young people from 4-H, Future Farmers of America, and Texas A & M University to visit the farmstead to learn how to raise and judge sheep. She served as president of the Collin County Livestock Association and the Purebred Sheep Breeders Association of Texas. In 1972, Ammie Farrell Wilson died.

### **Today**

Most of the land which was part of the original farm has been sold. Stores, restaurants, and many family homes have been built on the land. Fifteenth Street has been widened. Cars, trucks, and DART busses fill the streets. Behind its hedge, the Heritage Farmstead now preserves a glimpse of life in the past. The Farrell-Wilson home and a few acres around it have been restored to serve as a living history museum. Here you can see the tools, clothing, games, furniture, and buildings of everyday life from a century ago. You can walk to the back of the property where Pittman Creek still runs.

When you visit the farmstead, look for examples of continuity and change. This is your heritage.

## Heritage Farmstead

Then . . .



Now . . .



### **Dr. Lynch's Letters to His Son**

Dr. Woods W. Lynch and Ammie Farrell Wilson married in 1901 and moved to Midland, Texas. After she and Dr. Lynch divorced, Amie and their son returned to Plano. From Midland, Dr. Lynch wrote letters to his son, Hunter, who continued living with his mother at the Farrell Farmstead (now the Heritage Farmstead Museum).

Copies of Dr. Lynch's handwritten letters are included on the following pages. They have been transcribed exactly to preserve their authenticity. The letters give glimpses of life as it was in the early 1900's.

W.W. LYNCH, M.D.  
MIDLAND, TEX.

Feb. 23, 1914

My Dear Man:--

Dad has been awfully lonesome since you left and wishes that he could you and help you with your lessons every night so that you could make a hundred every day. Have you started to school yet? You must study hard and show those Plano boys and girls just how you can lead them and beat them in your grades. You must not be satisfied with low pass grades but exercise your energies and be satisfied with only the very highest. This will make you a great big smart man.

We had a severe sandstorm all day yesterday and norther last night and today everything is frozen up hard.

Tell Grammy your Pony - Queen - will be shipped by freight tomorrow if I can get her passed inspection, as she has to be inspected fore the RR will take her. Mr. Henderson says she will do better loose in a box car than if walled up. I will wire you when she is shipped. I will send your saddle and bridle by express on the same day. You must be careful of Queen, she has been so long in the pasture without riding she will probably be mean and kick you or throw you. You had better let one of the men ride her first. Don't race or punish her man. She might slip or fall on you.

Be a nice good sweet boy and be good to and love your Mother and Grammy and remember what Dad told you about stealing and lying being the two meanest things a boy can do. If you never tell a story nor take anything that don't belong to you, you can be trusted with anything.

Write Dad when you can Son.

With all my love and kisses,

Dad

Feb 23, 1914.

My Dear Man:-

Dad has been awfully lonesome since you left and wishes that he could you and keep you with your lessons every night so that you could make a hundred every day. I hope you started to school yet? You must study hard and show those Plow boys and girls just how you can lead them and beat them in your grades. You must not be satisfied with low pass grades but increase your energies and be satisfied with only the very highest. This will make you a great big smart man.

We had a severe sandstorm all day yesterday and a rather last night and today, everything is frozen up hard.

Tell Granny your Pony Queen will be shipped by freight tomorrow if I can get her passed inspection as she has to be inspected before the R.R. will take her. Mr. Skender son says she will do better loose in a box car than if walked up. I will wire you when she is shipped. I will send your saddle & bridle by express on the same day. You must be careful of Queen, she has been so long in the pasture without riding she will probably be mean and kick you or throw you. You had better let one of the men ride her first. Don't receive from her man. She might slip or fall on you.

Be a nice good sweet boy and be good to and love your mother and Granny and remember what Dad told you about stealing and lying being the two meanest things a boy can do. If you never tell a lie or take anything that don't belong to you you can be trusted with anything.

Write Dad when you can son.

With all my love & kisses Dad

W.W. LYNCH, M.D.  
MIDLAND, TEX.

Sunday, Mch. 15, 1914

My Dear Man:--

Dad sure wishes that he could see his great big man today. It has been one long old Sunday and so warm and pretty outside and the birds are singing and the trees are putting out their buds and leaves.

I met Dick and Jay and Wiclif and some other boys darting down the street on their wheels. They seemed to be having a big time. Mr. Burns took the Grammar boy out in his auto with him for a drive. The boys here all seem to have the top spinning fever at school and during the week days. They should not spin tops or play games on Sunday.

Did you write Dad a nice letter today? I am certain that you did and that I will get a nice sweet letter from my man on tomorrow's noon train.

Are you still making those 100 grades in school Busty? Are you still leading your class? I'll bet you are and know that you are not going to let any of those boys and girls get a head of you.

Are you still getting fat man? You must take good care of yourself and don't get hurt or get sick. Watch out about racing or getting about horses heels or crossing street car or railroad tracks. Always watch and be careful and don't do anything where you have to take chances. Always be on the safe side.

And remember man to be a good boy. Don't do anything that you would not like Moma or Grammy to know.

Write Dad when you can. Dad will see you pretty soon and won't it be fine?

Lots of Hugs and Kisses.

Dad

W. W. LYNCH, M. D.  
MIDLAND, TEX.

Sunday Mch 15, 1914

Very Dear Man:-

Dad sure wishes that he could see his great big man today. It has been one long old Sunday and so warm and pretty outside and the birds are singing and the trees are putting out their buds and leaves.

I met Dick and Jay and Wilf and some other boys darting down the street on their wheel. They seemed to be having a big time. Mr Burns took the Grammar boys out in his auto with him for a drive. The boys here all seem to have the top of running fever at school and during the week days. They should not spin tops or play games on Sunday.

Did you write Dad a nice letter today? I am certain that you did and that I will get a nice sweet letter from my man on to-morrow noon time.

Are you still making those 100 grades in school Burt? Are you still leading your class? I'll bet you are and know that you are not going to let any of those boys and girls get a head of you.

Are you still getting fat man? You must take good care of yourself and don't get hurt or get sick. Watch out about racing or getting about horses heels or crossing street car or railroad tracks. Always watch and be careful and don't do anything where you have to take chances. Always be on the safe side.

And remember, man to be a good boy don't do anything that you would not like Mamma or Grandpa to know.

Write Dad to him you can. Dad will see you pretty soon and want it be fine?

Love of Hugo and Mamma

Dad

## Conclusion

McKinney continuous growth from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century reflects the vision of its citizens. For example, the people long ago established a council/manager form of government which continues to be well suited for a growing community. People continue to come to McKinney to take advantage of the opportunities that the area offers. The land use and people of McKinney have changed, but the reason for coming and staying remain the same: a hope for a better life.

Collin County is one of the most prosperous counties in the state and no part of Collin County is more prosperous than the McKinney farm area. McKinney has been successful in the past and continues to be successful because of the caliber and vision of its people, from the pioneers of the past to the families of the present.

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