

Greenville memories enrich life



REMEMBERS CHILDHOOD HOME—Mrs. Annie McDowell, a resident of Greenville for nine decades, holds a picture of her family's large house and tells about a fire which destroyed its tall cupola. (Staff photo by Steven Knowles)

By STEVEN KNOWLES
Herald Banner Staff

To Mrs. Annie Arnold McDowell, there is no better place on earth to live than Greenville, Texas.

It's not too small, not too big, and about the right distance from a big city like Dallas, she says. She knows lots of people here and never had the desire to live anywhere else.

But her judgement in Greenville's favor may also be based on a few years of experience as a local resident. She was born here 90 years ago and has never lived anywhere else.

Her life began on Oct. 23, 1891, in a small frame house on the corner of Crockett and Stonewall streets, where the Chamber of Commerce building now stands. Her father was W.M. "Billy" Arnold, who was born in Knoxville, Tenn., and moved to Greenville from Ken-

tucky.

Her mother was Mary Oldham Arnold, also of Kentucky, whose ancestors hailed from Oldham County, England.

In 1895, when Annie was four, her father had "the big house" built on the same lot. In July, 1903, he sold the lot to the city for a library site and had the house moved to 1821 Jones St.

Moving day turned out to be a three weeks long as the three-story frame building was inched along by means of a windlass operated by one horse. Their destination at the time was "a pasture full of weeds and grass."

Mr. Arnold dealt in cattle and was able to send Annie to Greenville Business College for two years beginning in 1909.

After graduation and until 1967 she worked here as a bookkeeper for various businesses.

In 1920 she was married to R.C. McDowell, a pharmacist, from Hopkins County. Since 1952 she has lived with her niece, Mrs. Katherine Ellis.

She remembers many things in vivid detail from her childhood around the turn of the century. For years streets were not paved, and when they were it was with wooden blocks just on Lee and Washington streets, for a few blocks.

Before this wagons often got bogged down in the mud, she said.

"We walked everywhere we went, and it didn't matter whether we liked it or not," she said. "I remember every evening the lamplighter, a great big man named Mr. Burke, would come down Stonewall Street and turn on the gas lights."

"We went to operas at the King Opera House," she recalled, "and there'd be three or four operas each season, during the winter. After the operas, the kids would all go down to Reb Stells' oyster bar like kids nowadays go to the drive-ins."

"We went to Sunday school and church and we had music lessons and sometimes we'd get to go dancing," she said, "but that wasn't like it is nowadays. It seems that kids now have something going on for them all the time."

The circus would come to town every fall, she said, and the circus parade was equal to anything seen today.

She was 27 when the United States entered World War I and she knew many of the men who went into the service, and some of those who were killed. A flu scare occurred at that time which killed many people she knew in Greenville.

During the winters, she and her family slept upstairs without fires in their rooms. It was considered best to sleep in the cold with plenty of quilts instead.

Times have changed, but unlike many older people Mrs. McDowell thinks living

in today's world is better than living in the world of yesterday. "I don't think the world is a worse place to live," she said. "I think it's better."

She reads a lot, she said, and especially likes the Dallas Morning News and Greenville Herald Banner. But she also likes to watch television.

Her longevity is really not surprising because she shares this tendency with others in her family. Her father died a few weeks before he was 104 and she has an older brother in Houston who is 96. She herself wants to keep on living as long as she can walk, she said.

One of her long-time friends in Greenville was the late Hunt County historian W. Walworth Harrison. And like Harrison, she respects the past because she has personally witnessed so much of it.

Mary Catherine Oldham
Born 11/2/1893
Montgomery Co. Ky
Died 2/1/1937
Greenville, Tx
daughter of