

## 1896 . . . Nacogdoches, Texas

The **Banita Hotel**, a two story Victorian style structure similar to resort hotels on the East Coast, was being built in **1896** when the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company created this map. (Norvell Green Wade, who had the hotel built, also had the first ice plant in town--see map.)

The hotel, originally painted slate blue with white trim, had 32 rooms, a large lobby, dining room, kitchen, and other auxiliary rooms. The area enclosed by the front middle section and the two wings was a patio with plants and trees.

Easily accessible to the railroad station by a plank walk (see map) and the Pilar St. bridge (not on the map) the hotel was widely used by travelers between Shreveport and Houston. The rate was \$2 a day, American plan, which meant all meals were included. (If you wanted it, you could have steak for breakfast.)

Mr. Wade had his own wood lot for firewood. His garden furnished the produce for the diners.

Norvell Green Wade was born in Mississippi on 8-31-1843. According to the 1867 county census his family first settled, in the Nat community, in 1855. Mr. Wade married Mary Ann Baxter (a Texan, born 11-25-1849) on 12-31-1868. Mr. Wade died 9-19-1898 and is buried in Oak Grove.

The 1900 census shows that Mrs. Wade was the mother of 11 children, but only 9 were living at that time. She is shown as a widow and a hotel keeper. There were 7 children still in the household ranging from a 6 year old (Mattie B.) to a 28 year old (Luther). Mrs. Wade died 4-16-1913.

The second owner of the hotel was John Richard McKinney born 3-17-1876. He came to Nacogdoches from La-Grange, in 1897, to run the Wells Fargo office. He married Laura Vernetta Wade (born 1880, daughter of Norvell and Mary Ann) on 4-4-1899. Just after their marriage the couple moved to Shreveport where Mr. McKinney managed a Wells Fargo office. However, in about 2 years (1901), they returned to Nacogdoches where Mr. McKinney assumed the management of his widowed mother-in-law's hotel. After 4 years of management, he purchased the hotel. Mrs. McKinney was an excellent cook. (The hotel's dining room was a gathering place for locals. A salesman from Mississippi would come every Thanksgiving just to eat there.)

The McKinneys had 4 children. Jack R. was born at the hotel on 10-4-1911. In 1915, John McKinney built a home on Virginia Avenue and moved his family there. In 1918 he sold the hotel to Zeno Cox, his brother-in-law. During his lifetime Mr. McKinney was one of the *city fathers*, active in the fire department, member of the Grace Bible Church and manager of the Mahdeen Campany (makers of hair tonic). Mr. McKinney died 9-4-1951 and is buried in Oak Grove.

Zeno Alexander Cox, third owner of the hotel, born 8-21-1879, eldest son of William McKenzie Cox and Eliza Jane Campbell, was one of 11 children. He married Fannie Wade (born 8-17-1884, daughter of Norvell and Mary Ann) on 7-20-1910. The couple had no children. Mr. Cox dealt in real estate and was the Mobil Oil consignee of this area. He built the first strip shopping center in town on College St. between North St. and Raguet St. He owned property around Oil Springs where he laid out a town, sold some lots, but the venture never got off the ground.

Mr. Cox, had the hotel divided into two buildings. One of the buildings was moved a short distance to the east. Each building was partitioned into six apartments. Mr. and Mrs. Cox lived in the east building which is now Ford's Photography Studio (210 W. Pilar). The building remaining near the creek was destroyed by fire on Sunday evening, 4-2-1926. The fire started about 8 p.m. from an oil heater. The fire department, (Captain I.L. Sturdevant, chief) had 3 hoses operating, but not much pressure. Friends and neighbors tried to save some of the contents of the building by throwing it out the windows, but burning debris fell from the building destroying what had been thrown outside.

There were two unmarried sisters, Florence and Kate Whitton, living in a second floor apartment. They owned a millinery shop on the square. After being alerted about the fire they did not evacuate the building as did all others. They did appear in their nightclothes, in their second floor window, after the fire became intense. Everyone urged them to jump. The men intended to catch them. The two sisters appeared confused and hesitant. Kate finally jumped, or fell, with hair and clothes burning. Kate was taken to the North Street Hospital but died later as a result of her injuries. Florence (38 yrs.) died in the fire and was later buried at Swift. The apartment house, valued at \$18,000, was partially insured.

Mr. Cox died 11-16-1944 and is buried in Oak Grove. Mr. Cox is the uncle of Ann Phillips, Campbell Cox, and the late. Delbert Teutsch. Campbell's parents were living in one of the apartments, that was once the Banita Hotel, the year Campbell was born, 1934.

*Pictures courtesy of -- Mrs. Delbert (Pyrtle) Teutsch  
Map courtesy of -- Sally Batchelor (Ralph Steen Library Special Collections)*

*Historical Notes courtesy of -- Sally Batchelor (Ralph Steen Library Special Collections) The Daily Sentinel, Nacogdoches County Families, Mrs. & Mrs. Jack R. McKinney, Campbell Cox, Mrs. Delbert (Pyrtle) Teutsch*

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