

## *Compatriot Collin McKinney*

Collin McKinney (April 17, 1766-September 8, 1861). A pioneer leader of North Texas and signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, Collin McKinney was born in New Jersey, a son of Scottish immigrant parents. In 1780 the family moved to Kentucky and in 1824 McKinney migrated across the Red River and settled near present Texarkana. On February 10, 1794, Collin married Amy Moore. The couple had four children: Ashley, Jimmy, Emeline, and Polly. The two middle children died in infancy, and their mother passed on in 1804. Collin married again the next year to Betsy Coleman, with whom he had seven more children: William C., Amy and Margaret (twins), Anna C., Samuel Leek, Eliza S., and Younger Scott. In 1805, Collin was named a Magistrate, a post he would hold until he moved to Texas.

Collin McKinney is the second great grandfather of Benjamin Rush Milam, member of the Ephraim Daggett Chapter (Fort Worth) of the Sons of the Republic. McKinney also is the third great grandfather of Russell Warren Leavens, a member of that same chapter.

He preached, and promoted a love for truth based on Scripture. He was closely associated with B. F. Hall and J. B. Wilmeth, both of whom were preachers of the old-time gospel. So close was the bond between McKinney and Hall, that when Hall died, he was buried along side his old friend who had died some 12 years prior.

In 1818, Collin moved his family to Tennessee, where he was hired to manage the estate of Senator George Washington Campbell, when the Senator was appointed Minister to Russia. In this post, Collin began to meet and befriend influential people of the region, and in 1831, when he moved to Hickman's Prairie on the Red River, he was acknowledged as the political helmsman for his large section of the Red River District. A few years later, Collin and four other representatives to the convention meeting at Old Washington-on-the-Brazos were drafted by Judge Richard Ellis to write a declaration of separation from Mexico. That document became known as the Declaration of Independence, and it bears Collin McKinney's signature. He later went on to serve the Red River District in the First, Second, and Fourth Congresses of the Republic.

In January, 1836, he was elected a delegate to the General Convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos and there served on a committee of five that drafted Texas' Declaration of Independence from Mexico. On March 2, he signed the document. He also served on the committee which prepared the Constitution for the Republic of Texas. Later he served in the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Congress of the Republic. In private life, McKinney was leader in establishing the Church of Christ in Texas.

From 1844 to 1846, Collin served as a guide for people settling in North Texas from Kentucky and Arkansas, making the trip eleven times on horseback. Around 1846, Collin moved his family again, this time to an area near Anna, Texas. In 1846, the

county was renamed Collin County. Two years later, his legacy was further cemented when the county seat, recently moved from Buckner, was named McKinney in his honor. He served under eight different governments in his life: he was born a subject of King George III; later became a citizen of the Colonial Government of the 13 Colonies; the United States; Mexico; the Provisional Government established by the Texans in 1835; the Texas Republic until annexation; the United States again; and finally the Southern Confederacy.

In his book about the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence, *The Men Who Made Texas Free*, Samuel Houston Dixon wrote, "Mr. McKinney was a man of most admirable character. He possessed a spirit of progressiveness, which dominated his life. No one of that group of pioneers exercised a more wholesome influence over those with whom he came in contact than Mr. McKinney. He lived a life worthy of emulation and was held in high esteem."

In 1846 Collin McKinney settled near the Grayson-Collin county line; this became his permanent residence. Collin County and its seat, McKinney, were named in his honor as it was created out of Fannin County in 1846. In 1936 Texas Centennial Commission had Collin McKinney's house moved to Finch Park in McKinney.

### **Location Of Final Resting Place Of Collin McKinney**

Head north out of Dallas, Texas on State Highway 75 about 50 miles. Look for the Van Alstyne exit; then turn right on FM 121 toward town. In town, turn right on Wilmeth Road, (Hwy 5 south) and go two blocks. Turn left on East Fulton Street, then right on Preston Street. Go two blocks and turn left (south) on Austin Street. Cross the railroad tracks. The street becomes East Austin Street. The road will head straight into the Van Alstyne Cemetery (east side of town). Head straight into the cemetery. Go until you see a Texas Historical Marker on the left. The McKinney Grave Plot is about 50 feet behind the marker (north)

### **OBITUARY:**

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Grayson-Collin county line. This became his permanent residence. In 1792 he married Ann Moore; they had four children. He and his second wife, Betsy Leake (Coleman), by whom he had six children, are both buried in this cemetery. Collin County and its seat, McKinney, were named in his honor. In 1936 the Texas Centennial Commission had his house moved to Finch Park in McKinney.