

History of the Jenkins House

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The E. J. Jenkins house, 607 E. 27th, city of Bryan, Brazos County, Texas, was constructed between 1892 and 1893. The land was purchased by E. J. Jenkins from Mrs. George F. (Sallie A.) Payne June 6, 1892 for a sum of \$200.00. The deed* is recorded in the Deed Records of Brazos County, Volume 148, Page 531. Construction commenced shortly thereafter and was completed in 1893 according to the Brazos County Tax Assessor's records, Book 3, Page 60. These records indicate a sharp increase in the value as of January 1, 1894, thus evidencing completion of the structure during the previous year.

Charles E. Jenkins, brother of E. J. and prominent builder in Bryan at the time, supervised construction of this Queen Anne Victorian home. [See note below.] He also built the Astin-Porter home, a structure that is marked by the Texas Historical Commission, as well as many of the finest older residences still standing in Bryan today. In addition, he has to his credit two churches, First United Methodist (1906) and St. Andrews Episcopal (1914) both of which have Texas Historical Site Markers.

The home remained in the Jenkins family until 1971. E. J. Jenkins, the original owner died in 1959. At that time his daughter-in-law, Ruth Lloyd Jenkins, who had been caring for Mr. Jenkins, inherited the home. Ruth L. Jenkins sold the residence to Rose and Harry Hicks in 1971. In 1977 Bardin H. Nelson, Jr. purchased the house. The present owners, Robert S. and Elizabeth B. Foster, bought the house from Mr. Nelson in February, 1981.

When originally constructed, the house had twelve rooms. A curved porch adorns the front and side of the structure. This porch is topped by a high turret (one of only 3 high turrets still remaining in Bryan). Cypress siding was used on exterior surfaces with full 1" tongue and groove porch floor planks being also of cypress. Columns and banisters are also cypress. The present kitchen was added prior to 1919, based on an interview with Ruth Jenkins, Spring 1981. The two back porches (one upstairs, one downstairs) were removed by the Hicks but are currently being rebuilt by the Foster's. Two more balconies exist off two of the bedrooms. A cistern 8 feet in diameter and twelve feet deep is located

* Copy of deed attached.

Editor's Note: Contractor's given name of "Charlie" was learned subsequent to filing of this document.

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under what is now the library (but is assumed to have been the original kitchen). Gutters from the roof emptied into the cistern via metal downspouts. Over-flow was directed into the street by a set of ceramic pipes. The cistern remains bone dry today as the down shoots of the gutters are disconnected from the cistern. Smooth curved columns with Ionic Capitals line the front porch. The cannas brought from England in 1892 by Mrs. E. J. (Pink) Jenkins still bloom every year.

Interior features of the home include many of the original gas lights that have been converted to electric. Each of the two sitting areas downstairs has a fireplace with over-mantels. One mantel is carved pine, the other is carved oak. The woodwork and bric-a-brac trim in the dining room were a wedding present to Pink and E. J. Jenkins from his brothers. The newlyweds were offered either a surrey or the woodwork as their gift. Two stairways, one from the front entrance hall, one from the back hall, lead to the second story. A third staircase leads from the upstairs hall to the attic. The attic has a 20 foot vaulted ceiling and three sets of windows. Presumably this would allow better ventilation in the hot summers. All ceilings are 11'6". Five of the 13 rooms have five or more sides. The floors are narrow plank pine, probably from East Texas. Two large pocket doors of pine separate the entry hall from the living room. A single pocket door separates the living room and dining room. All interior woodwork is pine, including the ornate staircase. A small bench is built into the first landing. Stained glass windows were on each of the two front stair landings. The large one was stolen prior to 1977 but will be replaced by the present owners. Three semicircle stained glass windows adorn the tops of the windows in one of the front bedrooms. Several of the interior doors have the original painted wood graining. Window screens are only half screens and are installed on a wood runner on the inside of the window. These screens have decorative metal corner braces.

E. J. Jenkins arrived in Montreal, Canada with his parents and brothers and sister in January 1873 from England. He was six years old at the time (born London, England, July 11, 1867). The family moved to Chicago that June where they remained for four years. In 1877 they moved to Downers Grove, Illinois, then on to Wheelock in January 1878. Ten months later they moved to Bryan. His father

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listed his occupation as "carpenter" in the 1880 Brazos Census. E. J. attended the first public school in Bryan (presently Fannin) the first year the school was opened in 1880. The following is taken from an interview with Mr. Jenkins:

The public school was opened. I think it was September, 1880. I was just getting over a spell of chills and fever so was a week late entering, and as the children had been graded, the Superintendent, Professor Pennybacker, took me to the room of Miss Anna Hardwick, who had the fourth grade. He told her to keep me there a week and then report to him where she thought I belonged. At the end of the week she told him I should go into the fifth grade. Much to my regret, I was in Miss Hardwick's room only one week. She had a lovely personality, and I would have liked to have remained in her room. There were seven grades in the public school when it was first opened, then one grade was added each year for three years and the first graduation class was from the tenth grade. Later on, the higher grades were added.¹

In 1892, E. J. married Ella Pink Williams and had one son, Edwin Gillespie, February 21, 1895. E. J. married Ruth Lloyd in 1919. They had one daughter Elizabeth, who married a Mr. Matlock. They had one daughter, Madeline Matlock. Mrs. Ruth (Lloyd) Jenkins, her daughter, Elizabeth J. Matlock, and granddaughter, Madeline Matlock, now live in Robert Lee, Texas.

Mr. E. J. Jenkins opened his drugstore in downtown Bryan in 1892. He owned and operated it until 1942. At that time he began working for the Vick (formerly James) drugstore where he worked until 1957 (2 years before he died at the ripe old age of 91). Mr. Jenkins was a Bryan city councilman in 1912, 1921, 1923, and 1925. He was Mayor of Bryan from April 12, 1929 until April 10, 1931. Late in E. J. Jenkins' life he found out he had never obtained U.S. citizenship. His parents had started the paperwork but never finished it. He was so chagrined by the fact that he refused to vote again

¹ Wilcox, Lois; The Early History of Bryan, Aug. 1952, p. 154.

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until his citizenship was complete. He had been a city councilman, mayor of Bryan and a voting member of the community without proper citizenship. (This information was obtained in an interview with Mr. Jack Vick, August 30, 1982).

Although the Jenkins were originally Episcopalians, they attended the Methodist Church in Bryan before an Episcopal church was formed there. E. J. was on the building committee for the First United Methodist Church (1902).

Attached also is the genealogy of the Jenkins as per family records in the possession of Judy Bobbitt, Mr. Charles E. Jenkins' granddaughter.

Elizabeth S. Fost
10-13-82

Genealogy of the Jenkins Family

George Washington Jenkins was born in London, England on November 14, 1833 and lived until September 4, 1904. He married MaryAnn Newby on July 16, 1858. MaryAnn was born in Southgate, Middlesex, England on March 14, 1831 and lived until May 27, 1917.

They came to America landing in Montreal, Canada in 1873. In June of the same year they moved to Chicago, Illinois and lived there for four (4) years. They moved from Chicago to Downers Grove, Illinois, staying there for one (1) year; they moved to Wheelock, Texas in January 1878 but only lived there 10 months before moving to Bryan. All but one of their eight children were born in England, and they are as follows:

	Born	Died
George Stewart Jenkins	10/15/1859 - 05/26/1863	
Charles Eric Jenkins	10/04/1861 - 10/26/1943	
George Washington Jenkins (died of hydrophobia)	10/05/1863 - 04/20/1902	
Alice Jenkins Roman	08/18/1865 - 07/15/1954	
Edwin James Jenkins	07/11/1867 - 01/11/1959	
Harry Stewart Jenkins (remained a bachelor)	06/29/1869 - 04/29/1956	
Albert George Jenkins (Major in WW I)	08/25/1871 - 02/17/1917	
Arthur Newby Jenkins (with Mr. Joe Holic organized the A&M Band in 1894 with 13 members)	07/05/1874 - 12/19/1940	