

The land on which the current house sits was originally part of Josiah Klepper survey, purchased by Joseph Forman in 1853¹, and sold in parcels, as the Forman addition of 1877² and therefore constitutes one of the very earliest residential areas in Plano. It is also included in the Josiah Klepper survey, one of the original land grants of Collin County³. The land on which the house is currently located, lot 12-A was originally (from Forman) the property of one R.H. Brown⁴ whose son G.P. Brown was one of the very first historians of Collin County in addition to being the very first principal when the town of Plano took over the schools. Brown himself was nearly as early as settler even as Forman, widely considered Plano's first official resident; Brown was a Peters Colonist and settled at Spring Creek in early 1850⁵.

The back part of the lot, also in the possession of Aldridge as indicated on a 1926 map, was sold by Forman to T.G. Harris, one of the first professors of the Plano Institute, an important cog in the early educational machinery of the county. A certain amount of local drama is contained within the transfer of the lot from Harris to Weaver, the man from whom Aldridge gained the real estate. The records indicate that Harris bought the property in conjunction with his father-in-law, one Colonel L. Oglesby⁶, a Collin County tax collector, but his sale to Weaver is done alone⁷. The reason for this, perhaps, is that in 1882 it was discovered that Colonel Oglesby had been embezzling from the funds he had been collecting. He is said to have committed suicide, sometime later, in the St. George Hotel in Dallas⁸.

From Brown, the land passed to G.W. Jones⁹ and then rather quickly to Colonel W.M. Weaver who also purchased, at that time, the lot owned by T.G. Harris¹⁰. Weaver, who possessed the land from 1890 to his death in 1908 is almost certainly the builder, and certainly the occupier, of the first house on the property as shown in the 1901 Sanborn fire insurance map. Indeed, certain elements of the current house, including cut

¹ Plano, the Early Years, 301

² All land transactions as described by land deeds residing in the Collin County Government Building

³ Collin Chronicles, vol. VI, Number 3, cover page.

⁴ Records volume 33, pg. 287. 7/07/87

⁵ Plano: the Early Years, 11

⁶ Records vol. 33 pg. 39, 7/4/87

⁷ Records vol. 44 page 516 4/7/90

⁸ Plano: the Early Years 38

⁹ Records volume 37, pg. 374. 7/21/88

¹⁰ Records vol. 44, pg. 513 4/7/90 and vol. 44 pg. 516 4/7/90 respectively.

nails, a sprinkling of hand-cut timbers in the walls, and perhaps a few Victorian doors or windows probably derive directly from the Weaver home.

Colonel Weaver was also one of the very earliest settlers in Plano. Born in Tennessee in December 1827, he made his way to Texas in 1856 and purchased some 250 acres to live on. Throughout his life he continued to expand his property until at his death he possessed 1200 acres. In 1862, Weaver assisted in raising a company for the Confederacy and ultimately rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, one of the highest ranking officers Plano produced. He chiefly served in the Indian Territory and in Arkansas and seems to have passed through many severe engagements. His obituary indicates that at one point he had the very horn of his saddle shot away by enemy combatants. It is said of him that no man rose higher in the esteem of his contemporaries¹¹

Like many Planoans, Weaver returned to Plano to find all was not as he had left it. The story is related of John O. Hedgcoxe, a well known early settler, who, when he left for the war, had “seven hundred head of cattle, sixty-four American horses, a large flock of sheep and several slaves.” Upon his return from the war, owing to a lack of useful hands, he found “his cattle, horses, sheep, and slaves all gone, and his wife milking an old cow of her own and one she had borrowed.” What was said of Hedgcoxe then could as easily have been said of Weaver; namely that “with renewed energy and determination, he set out and soon got things started again.”

In a sense, Texas was economically lucky after the Civil War and Weaver profited by this as much as any. The cattle herds that so many had based their livelihoods on were not gone, merely running wild, and they had “multiplied unbelievably” in the intervening years. It was merely a matter of rounding them up. In terms of the post-war economy, cattle was, in many ways, a better bet than cash. W.M. Weaver’s brand was well known as early as 1867¹²

A certain amount of drama, also, pertains to the transfer of the house and lot from Weaver to C.C. Aldridge, for whom the house is now familiarly known. It came into his hands as the result of what appears to be a legacy dispute. A court document from 1910,

¹¹ W.M Weaver’s obituary in the McKinney Courier, 1/24/1908. It was front page news.

¹² Plano: The Early Years, 82.

2 years after Weaver's death, details a land dispute between one Amanda and Claude Matthews and R.E. Weaver concerning both the G.W. Jones and T.G. Harris lots. Further exploration reveals that Amanda's maiden name was in fact Weaver and that she and R.E. were siblings, W.M.'s children. The court's decision was, in a sense, Solomonic. Neither party would have the land. It would, rather, be sold to a third party and the income would be split between the brawling Weavers. This third party was none other than C.C. Aldridge¹³. Amanda and Claude seem, at this time, to have also deeded Aldridge another acre, presumably, as the deeds are concomitant, in the same area¹⁴.

The house depicted in the Sanborns for 1907, the year before Weaver's death is, with some minor additions, the same as that depicted in 1901. By 1921, the house has changed dramatically in character. It takes more or less its finished form sometime between 1921 and 1949, although the 1921 design remains evident in the center of the house. The house was, supposedly, renovated first by the Aldridges in 1918¹⁵

J.K. Aldridge, the patriarch of the family, moved to Plano in or around 1858. He settled in the area also populated by such pioneers as the Vances, Beverlys, and Rouths¹⁶. He married Miss Maria Letitia Lively on Dec. 7, 1852. He was a captain in the Confederate Army and one of the largest landowners in Plano, as well as the originator of what would come to be a long family tradition of extraordinary civic involvement. A founding member, with his wife, of the Old Cumberland Presbyterian church¹⁷ he was well known for his charity. Though, as indicated, he was a Presbyterian the record shows that of the 3,068.91 raised in 1873 for the erection of a new Baptist Church, that is First Baptist, \$50 came from the pocket of J.K.¹⁸. Moreover, his donation to the founding of the Mont Vale school, one of the very earliest schools in Collin County, was the second largest of any contributor¹⁹ He was such a large landowner that at his death his bequest

¹³ The land was temporarily transferred to Claude M. Jasper for sale as a functionary of the court. The entry in the Collin County records lists Jasper, Amanda Weaver, and R.E. Weaver as grantors. Collin County Deed Records, Volume 171, pg. 79, 12/41/10

¹⁴ Vol. 171 pg. 108, 12/41/10

¹⁵ Plano: An historic walking tour, pg. 65.

¹⁶ Plano: The Early Years reports a letter received by Jacob Routh, who arrived himself in 1851, in 1858 by J.K., declaring his intentions to move into the Spring Creek area. P. 5

¹⁷ Mrs. J.K. Aldridge's obituary, Dallas Morning News, 04/18/27

¹⁸ History of First Baptist Church in Plano, 1853-1964, by Madge Carver Barron, p. 3

¹⁹ His \$206 dollars was only exceeded by Jacob Routh's \$241. Plano: the Early Years, 169.

gave to every one of his seven children (upon their marriage) a farm of approximately 160 acres²⁰.

C.C. Aldridge was born December 18, 1873 and married Elizabeth Armstrong, a scion of another of Plano's pioneering families²¹, on November 15, 1900. Throughout his life his name appears in the founding or co-founding position of a number of civic entities, including the Plano Mutual Cemetery²², and, along with many other famous names from Plano history, appears on numerous committees for the Old Settlers Reunion Picnic and Barbecue of 1914²³. He seems to have lived in the house from 1910 until his death in November 1950, and he was very active in the cotton industry which was, at the time of his involvement, the dominant industry in Plano²⁴. The year of his purchase of the house and the lot directly behind it, in 1910, coincides with the opening of the First Guaranty State Bank of Plano, in which both he and his brothers W.P. Aldridge and J.S. Aldridge served on the board of directors. J.S. Aldridge later served as president of the bank which merged with Plano National Bank on January 2, 1917²⁵. It was with this new-found wealth, presumably (although his father was certainly, also, a wealthy man) that in 1921 he set up a cotton seed house just north of Amos Hugueley's gin and, after the death of Amos in 1925 bought into the Hugueley gin itself as did his brother Dr. H.W. Aldridge. The corporation was accordingly renamed, in 1931, as the Aldridge Hugueley Gin Co. of which Lively Hugueley was the president, C.C., with ¼ of the shares, secretary-treasurer, and H.W., with another ¼ of the shares, Vice President.²⁶

The importance of cotton to the early industry of Plano can not be understated. An 1885 Sanborn fire insurance map of the main street area, a bare five city blocks, shows no less than 3 cotton gins, all on Main street, and one large cotton yard, on Masonic. In fact, cotton was so huge that in 1880, it was said in the *McKinney Advocate* that "one half the

²⁰ From Plano City Hall records

²¹ The Armstrongs arrived in Collin County 1870, and Elizabeth's father, Francis, served as Deacon for the First Baptist Church for many years. Francis also served under Joe Wheeler in the Confederate army. The old Armstrong farm is now the location of the University of Texas at Dallas. Plano: The Early Years, 7.

²² Incorporated in 1928, he was one of the first directors, along with C.E. Hood, Jim Griffin, Guy Rice, and Pauline Thompson. Plano: The Early Years, 53.

²³ Plano: the Early Years, 328.

²⁴ This was also true, though not to as great an extent, in 1890, and cotton was overtaken by corn by 1900. By 1920, however, 176,901 acres of cotton were grown to 73,258 corn, 47,048 oats, and 63,261 wheat. Tenant Farming in Collin County, 1890-1920, Heather Brown, p.20

²⁵ Plano: The Early Years, 273

²⁶ p. 281

amount received (in trade) for cotton should pay for all goods, groceries, luxuries and taxes (for all the citizens of Plano). This is not to say that the heyday of cotton had faded by the time of C.C.'s entrance into it. Again, as the record clearly shows, by 1920 cotton was displaying a dominance in the area it had never before enjoyed²⁷. The Hugely gin was right in the middle of it. Converting to electricity in the early 1920s, it was one of the very first electrically operated gins in all of Texas²⁸, and the first in Plano²⁹. C.C. himself was an innovator, inventor of a kind of long staple cotton that was very popular throughout the southwest³⁰.

Another area where the Aldridges had an enormous effect on early Plano history was in the field of education. In addition to J.K.'s co-founding of one of the very first Collin County schools (see above) W.P., C.C.'s brother is so well known for this as to have an elementary school in Plano named after him which is, in fact, located on what was once W.P.'s farm. W.P. was also a fixture on the board of Plano schools, a capacity in which he served for 25 years, 16 of them as president³¹. C.C.'s own family had an abiding interest--C.C., too, was on the board³²-- but perhaps most notable is the role of Mrs. C.C. Aldridge, nee Armstrong, who was the very first president of the Plano P.T.A.³³ For her, as well, this was a family tradition. The Francis Marion Armstrong Middle School, in Plano, is named after her father.

In addition to C.C.'s many civic accomplishments, he also took part directly in the city's governance, appearing on the City Council twice, in 1920 and 1922³⁴. His wife was also once president of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs of which Miss Frances Aldridge was a charter member³⁵.

As for the house itself, it clearly demonstrates the advanced position in Plano society of the Aldridges, enjoying many modern conveniences indicative of their civic prominence. It is supposed to have had the very first automobile and electric refrigerator

²⁷ Tenant Farming in Collin County, p. 20.

²⁸ Plano: The Early Years, 307

²⁹ Plano City Hall records

³⁰ Plano city hall records

³¹ From the Aldridge Elementary school website: <http://k-12.pisd.edu/schools/aldridge/school.htm>

³² Plano City Hall records

³³ Plano: the Early Years, 332.

³⁴ Plano: The Early Years, 355.

³⁵ Plano: The Early Years, 333.

in south Collin County³⁶. Moreover, the house seems to have once had a tennis court in the backyard³⁷. Upon C.C.'s death, the house passed to his daughter Julia Aldridge Bragg who held the house until her death in 1980, marking 70 years in the hands of the same family.

The Aldridge family, and specifically C.C. were extremely important, influential citizens of Plano from earliest pioneer times to C.C.'s death in 1950. For his position and the position of his family, both at the center of Collin County's main industries and its civic life, specifically in the areas of finance and public education, his house is due national historic register status so that it may remain as a monument to some of Plano's greatest citizens.

³⁶ Plano City Hall records

³⁷ Plano: An historic walking tour, p.65