

Roomers, a boarder and an addition

Many readers may still be trying to finish off the Thanksgiving turkey, I'll bet, and here I go once more to try to find a place to stop with the Caldwell family story.

Let's begin with what I found in the latest U.S. census that's available to the public—1930. Herbert Hoover's term as President reached its midpoint that year with the country plunging ever deeper into the Great Depression.

Bessie Caldwell had six people renting rooms in her home, five years after her husband's death and four years after she had sold two tracts of land to the Mount Pleasant School District.

An earlier column noted that Henry Willson was residing in the Caldwell home in 1920 and he was still there in 1930, at age 69. I hope I'm still around when the 1940 census becomes available so I can see if Mr. Willson lived in Miss Bessie's home until his death that year. Since Henry was a bachelor and was classified on the census record as a "roomer", it would seem reasonable to believe that he would have been a regular customer at one or more of Mount Pleasant's cafes. His occupation was shown as "retired". Miss Bessie's other "roomers" were all teachers in Mount Pleasant schools.

Miss Audrey V. Strahan taught at West Ward that school year—1929-1930. The other female teacher was Ruth Dansby, 25, who also taught at West Ward and was a 1922 graduate of Mount Pleasant High School. The youngest roomer was Waldo L. Crawford, 23, who taught at MPHS for two years—1929-31. Alvin L. Bennett was 25 and taught only that 29-30 school year at MPHS.

That brings us to the name of Harvey L. Graham, 32, who was listed as a "boarder", meaning to me that he took some or all of his meals at Miss Bessie's table. Mr. Graham, unlike the other roomers who only taught in Mount Pleasant for a year or two, was on the MPHS faculty from 1928 to 1959. He was my teacher for Algebra II and Geometry. I remember his trait of writing "H.E." on the blackboard after explaining a problem to our class, abbreviating the words, "How Easy."

Then, while we were working at our desks on similar problems, or perhaps taking a test, he would read the "Dallas Morning News". Sometimes he would read a few lines to us, often from a column by Lynn Landrum, one of his favorite staff writers of the Dallas paper. I'm not sure whether he realized that while he was absorbed with the paper "how easy" it was for some football players to get help from some of the female students who grasped math fundamentals quicker than some athletes did.

Rounding out the list of Miss Bessie's household in 1930 was her "baby son" Pearson, then 16 and most likely a pupil of H.L. Graham and the two other male roomers who were on the MPHS faculty that year.

In 1946, some 20 years after Miss Bessie sold the 9.6 acre tract of land for the "new" Booker T. Washington campus, Pearson developed the P.C. Caldwell addition. This addition lies immediately north of the BTW campus, which is now known as the Frances Corprew campus. This Caldwell addition is bounded on the north by W. Arizona Street and on the south by School Street. Its east boundary is Baker Street and its west boundary is Martin Luther King Blvd. (formerly Riley St.). It is divided into six blocks by Sheppard Street and Chambers Street, running north-south and by Cash Street, running east-west. Cash Street was named presumably to honor Caroline Amelia (Cash) Caldwell, Pearson's grandmother. In addition to the six blocks defined by the above-named streets, blocks 7 and 8 are shown to the east of Baker Street and are bounded on the east and southeast by the Cotton Belt right-of-way. W.A. Burton surveyed the addition and prepared the plat, which explains that lots 7 and 8 were not platted into individual lots and that those blocks were the property of Mrs. Margaret Caldwell, the widow of T.B. Caldwell, Jr., who had died on November 2, 1943 at age 39.

The land in the P.C. Caldwell addition was the remainder of the tract described in the 1926 deed for the BTW campus, as the tract deeded to T.B. Caldwell by Barrett many years ago.