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Baytown Historical Preservation Association
P. O. Box 1244
Baytown, Texas 77522-1244
(281) 421-2099

www.BaytownHistory.org

BROWN-MCKAY HOUSE

1910



*Republic of Texas Plaza Park
5117 North Main Street
Baytown, Texas*

Brown-McKay House 1910

This wooden farmhouse, originally located on a bluff overlooking Scott's Bay in the rural community of Wooster, Texas, was built by Walter Brown (1883–1961). Born in Soldier, Iowa, Walter came to Texas with his parents, Junius and Mary Goodrich Brown, and other family members around 1893.

In 1908, Walter began building this house on property adjacent to his parents' home. The house faced a dirt road that became known as Market Street and later Bayway Drive. The back of the house overlooked Scott's Bay. Walter built his house across the road from the Wooster School that was built in 1894 on land donated to the community by Walter's father Junius.

Using only hand tools, Walter constructed the frame and exterior of cypress, and for the interior he used pine. The 1½ story house has five main rooms, an entry hall, and a pantry downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs. All of the rooms downstairs have ceilings made of beadboard, and the dining room walls have beadboard wainscoting. Originally the house had no electricity, running water, indoor plumbing, or closets.

Walter married Maud Millican in December 1908, and upon the

completion of the house in 1910, he moved his wife and baby daughter Mary into their new home. In the years that followed, two more children were born—a son named Junius Walter and a daughter Sybil.

Walter made his living by growing rice and raising cattle. However, he was also an accomplished carpenter and boat builder. He used one of his boats to make trips to Lynchburg, Houston, Cedar Bayou, and Galveston to purchase supplies for his family and neighbors. He also delivered mail along the bay as far away as Anahuac.

Maud kept the house, took care of the children, tended a large garden, and raised chickens. She cooked on a wood-burning stove for her family as well as cooking a noon meal for the hands who worked in the rice fields, canned food from the garden, sewed clothes for her family, and quilted.

The Brown children grew up near their grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. They attended Wooster School across the road from their house. In their free time, they enjoyed swimming in the bay, fishing, crabbing, gathering shells along the shore, picking berries, and going on picnics and hayrides with their friends.

Walter and Maud Brown lived in their house until their deaths in 1961 and 1965 respectively. At that time, their

eldest daughter Mary, who was married to Harvey McKay, inherited the house. She donated it in 1988 to be used as a living history museum. The house was moved from its Wooster location to the Republic of Texas Plaza on North Main Street in Baytown where it now sits adjacent to the old Wooster School.

The Brown-McKay House, having been completely renovated and restored to its original appearance, depicts life in the rural Baytown area before the discovery of oil and the subsequent industrialization of the area. During the school year, Baytown Historical Preservation Association docents conduct tours for Baytown students. In addition, the house is open to the public for tours during yearly festivals and from 1–3 p.m. on the last Saturday of each month except for holiday weekends. Additional tours can be arranged by calling 281.421.2099.

