

Bayless-Selby House Museum

Historical Narrative Written and Researched by Shirley Holley Denton County Historical Marker
Application, Denton County. March 3, 2005.

Narrative for Purposes of the Denton County Historical Marker

Bayless-Selby House Museum

Samuel Alexander Bayless¹ and his wife, Mary Elizabeth Robinson Bayless² came from Monroe County, Tennessee³ to Denton County and in 1884 purchased a two-room farmhouse.⁴ It was located at what we now know as 1301 Myrtle Street, Denton.⁵ Mr. Bayless built a two-story Victorian Queen-Anne-style addition to the original one-story structure between 1898 and 1902.⁶ Samuel was a nurseryman.⁷ In 1919 he was stabbed by a hired hand on the property.⁸ The tragedy of her husband's death prompted Mrs. Bayless to sell the house in 1920⁹ to R. L. Selby, Sr. and his wife, Mary.¹⁰ R. L. Selby was also a nurseryman and truck farmer, and the Selby greenhouses are still located near the Myrtle Street address.¹¹ The Selby family retained ownership of the

¹ Samuel Alexander Bayless (March 27, 1858-November 22, 1919). Barbara Ribling research document, "Ancestors of Jim Tom Bayless," emailed to Kim Cupit, January 2001. "Funeral Services for S.A. Bayless Monday." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, November 25, 1919.

² Mary Elizabeth (Robinson) Bayless (January 20, 1864-February 7, 1944). "Mrs. S.A. Bayless Dies in Denton." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, February 7, 1944. "Funeral Services for Mrs. Bayless." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, February 9, 1944.

³ George A. Saul, "Bayless Family of Tennessee," McClung Library, Knoxville, TN, date unknown.

⁴ Deed dated August 6, 1884 from M. J. Long to S. A. Bayless, Denton County document, Book Y, p. 409.

⁵ Tabitha Chancellor, "Selby Mansion Bought." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, January 13, 1998, pages 1. Also found in 1943 City of Denton, Texas tax records, Denton County Courthouse Museum archives, A. Hill Survey 209, card 1.

⁶ Mechanics Lien between J. M. Barrett and S.A. Bayless and Mollie E. Bayless, recorded Denton County Clerk's office, book 1, p. 196-200, filed September 1, 1898. Also see City of Denton 1943 Tax Records.

⁷ UNT Oral History Collection Number 1244, Interview with George and Velma Selby, conducted by Martha Len Nelson, April 16, 1998, p. 11.

⁸ For an account of the incident see "S.A. Bayless Dies from Knife Wounds, J.O. Speers is Held." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, November 24, 1919, p. 1. Follow-up accounts: "Bond Not Agreed upon for Speers." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, November 25, 1919, p. 1. "Jury Completed for J.O. Speer Trial; Hearing Testimony." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, April 2, 1920. "Argument Being Made in Joe Speers Case Saturday Afternoon; Limited to Four Hours; To Reach Jury Tonight." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, April 3, 1920, p. 1A. Note: According to Denton County Record of Indictments for Denton County, Speers was indicted and tried and found "Not Guilty," p. 2.

⁹ Denton County Deed Records, Warranty Deed #29672, vol. 176, as recorded December 29, 1920, p. 154.

¹⁰ Robert Lee Selby, Sr. (January 27, 1869-December 25, 1955). "Selby Rites are Planned." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, December 26, 1955. "Final Rites Held for R.L. Selby." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, December 27, 1955. Mary Leona Bates Selby (August 21, 1882-February 26, 1962). "Mrs. R.L. Selby Sr." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, February 26, 1962.

¹¹ UNT Oral History Collection Number 1244, Interview with George and Velma Selby, conducted by Martha Len Nelson, April 16, 1998, p. 5.

house until 1970 when it was sold to Richard A. Baria and his wife, Jo An.¹² The Barias sold the house to the City of Denton in 1997 for future expansion of the city's electrical substation.¹³

In February 1998, the City of Denton announced an auction for the house. Mildred Hawk of Denton, a member of the Denton County Historical Commission, was the successful bidder.¹⁴ In April, Mrs. Hawk donated the house to the Historical Commission for restoration as a museum.¹⁵

In June 1998, the house was moved to its present location in the newly-created Historical Park of Denton County.¹⁶ Restoration took just over three years. The house was opened as the Bayless-Selby House Museum on September 29, 2001.¹⁷

¹² Denton County Deed Records, Warranty Deed, vol. 599, p. 574, from George D. Selby and wife Velma, R. L. Selby, Jr. and wife Lewis Marie, Ila Fae King and husband T. W. King, Jr, and Florine Dickey and husband W. W. Dickey to Richard A. Baria and wife Jo An, dated March 19, 1970.

¹³ Denton County Deed Records, Cash Warranty Deed between Grantor, Richard Arlen Baria, Sr. and Jo An Baria and Grantee City of Denton, dated March 19, 1997, recorded April 1, 1997, document number 97-R0020884, p. 1-5.

¹⁴ City of Denton, Texas. Bid #2167, Bill of Sale between City of Denton, Texas and Mildred McCauley Hawk, April 1, 1998. Receipt of payment for \$12,000 dated April 2, 1998.

¹⁵ Denton County Historical Commission. Museum Gift Agreement, Mildred Hawk, donor, and Georgia Caraway, Director of the DCHC Courthouse Museum, April 13, 1998.

¹⁶ "She'll Be Comin' Down Carroll When She Comes . . ." *Denton Record-Chronicle* advertisement, June 17, 1998, p. 22A.

¹⁷ Bayless-Selby House Museum Grand Opening agenda, September 29, 2001. Also "Doors Opened to History." *Denton Record-Chronicle*, September 30, 2001, p. 1A.

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