



MILLAR DRUG STRUCTURE
GRAND PRAIRIE SIGNIFICANT LANDMARK
Site Medallion No. 45
106 West Main Street

Historical Date: 1927
and 4

Lot/Block/Survey: Original Town Grand Prairie, Block 9, Lots 3

Millar Drug Company was originally founded on December 1, 1927 by Mr. Dewey Millar as a health care amenity for the community in conjunction with a local physician, Dr. Shanks.

Mr. Millar worked for a pharmacy in Irving, Texas, and the pharmacist there encouraged Mr. Millar to study the pharmacy textbooks. Mary Jean Sterling, Dewey's sister, remembers him studying late at night before he took the state pharmacy exam. He became a pharmacist at a time when a formal education was not required for licensure. After completing the pharmacy exam, Mr. Millar began working as a pharmacist at Hancock Pharmacy which was across Main Street from the current historical location of Millar Drug Company. Mr. Millar, in one newspaper article, recalled opening the store at 6:00 a.m. and closing at 10:00 p.m., coating pills, mixing old fashioned cough syrup, and supervising something that at the time of this article no drug store was offering, "curb service". The west side of the building was occupied by the local post office in the early days, and for many years was the major ticket agent for Texas Motor Coaches. Mr. M.S. Heywood, of the bus line described Millar Drug as "one of the most pleasant business associations I know". Mr. Millar attributed most of the courtesy and efficiency of his store to its employees.

Mr. Dewey Millar and his wife, Ruby Clark Millar, earned a place in the hearts and history of Grand Prairie, Texas, as their business became an icon for health and socialization within the local community. Dewey and Ruby Millar married in 1928. Ruby was a second grade teacher. Mrs. Millar was one of the founding members of the Grand Prairie Soroptomist Club, and both Millar's were leaders in the Grand Prairie Rotary Club, the YMCA, and Boys Baseball, just to name a few. That icon of community leadership has been remembered through several generations of citizens of Grand Prairie.

Few businesses are remembered for such items as a Pimento Cheese Sandwich, a Pressed Ham Sandwich, or a Cherry-limeade. For generations key community leaders have supported their girth with these items as well as with a Malted Milk or a Cherry Coke from Millar Drug. Many even remember the historical pricing of these items such as the Pressed Ham Sandwich for \$.20.

Dorothy Brown and Millar Couch, Millar family descendants share memories of Millar Drug. Homemade ice cream was made and sold in the store. Ingersol pocket watches were sold for \$1.00 with a one year guarantee. Jew Stanley (a town character) had a “cricket fest” on the sidewalk in front of the store to see how many he could eat. And, Brown and Couch said to not forget Dewey’s 1929 or 1930 Pontiac with Indian Head radiator cap, and three tail lights on each side. It was green with a tan top, black fenders and a rumble seat.

Frequently at funerals, weddings, class reunions or other social events, reminiscences are made to Millar Drug. Many long term marriage relationships were begun with a date at Millar Drug. The walls and windows were always lined with pictures of athletes or cheerleaders as Millar Drug supported the schools in Grand Prairie. Through service to local and state organizations, the Millar provided outstanding leadership.

On December 1, 1957, the 30 year anniversary of the establishment, the Millar’s remembered the early years as they reported to a local newspaper. “The first years were the tough ones.” Dewey Millar stated that the “formula” for success is nothing complicated. “Just be willing to sacrifice and work hard” as his simple recipe for commercial achievement. The store has enjoyed a gain in business since it opened – depressions notwithstanding. In 1957, furnishings of the store included inevitable soda fountain, a cigar counter, and shelves for patent medicines and notions. The store had doubled in size, having 24 employees in 1957, including a delivery department. It was reported that Mrs. Millar exercised her own influence in the store on the efficiency and convenience displayed in the store, and she played a special role of importance while her husband was on active duty with the United States Navy during World War II. Dewey Millar was proud of his record in the prescription room, because he realized that he was in a position of trust as he compounded medicines for the sick. In 1957, the drug business kept three registered pharmacists busy compounding and mixing. Mr. Millar laughed when he stated that he occasionally would have to “get the book out” to refresh his memory on the things he used “to fix”. Millar stated that the tremendous popularity of vitamins made them one of his biggest items.

Later, in the 1960’s the store was owned by Carroll and Martha Cooper. Carroll Cooper had been a pharmacist who worked with Dewey Millar, and the Coopers continued the tradition of Millar Drug and Community Service. While the Coopers owned and operated the store, plate lunches and hamburgers were added to the cuisine in the Soda Fountain Cafe. A movie called “Bottle Rocket” was filmed partially at Millar Drug in 1998. The store has been the backdrop for politicians, War Heroes, and movie stars, including respectively President John F. Kennedy, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, General Douglas MacArthur, and vintage movie star, Martha Ray. Rumor has it that Ms. Ray was smoking a cigarette through her nose while in the store. The store has also long ago been a gathering place for local politicians and other local civic leaders.

The store is currently owned and operated by Carol A. Anderson Liggett Bell, who like many others, spent many happy moments at Millar's while shopping and having lunch. Many local teens had their first charge account opened at Millar Drug, and Millar supplied a wide range of cosmetics and toiletries to keep those accounts charged to the max. Millar Drug had rows and rows of cosmetics, greeting cards, candies, specialty products, and many other items that could not be found at other stores, including Lydia E. Pinkham's Tonic, which was made from a vegetable compound including Black Cohosh, and was believed to relieve a wide range of "women's" health problems. An annual "Farmer's Almanac Calendar" was a highlight for the community, and frequently was delivered to someone's home along with a prescription, and perhaps a sandwich or a hamburger. The goal for the store today is to restore some of the old memories of Millar Drug, and that goal is gradually being accomplished. The store now has not only become a popular lunch and breakfast place, but also hosts special events such as reunions, birthday parties, showers, and live performances by an "Elvis" impersonator and others.

The property is constructed of masonry block with a concrete slab. The one story structure is 4,250 square feet. The building is now equipped with central heat and air and is updated for accessibility. The building is also fully equipped for a soda fountain restaurant and pharmacy.

In 2001, the building, which had been closed, was reopened as a Soda Fountain Cafe by Carole Liggett Anderson Bell, the daughter of a long-time friend and employees of the store, Faucher Liggett. On May 1, 2003, a closed-door pharmacy was opened which primarily serves individuals in long term care, group homes and assisted living homes. The owner has future plans for expanding the pharmacy for public use.