

HISTORY & FOLKLORE

From the Liberty County Historical
Commmission Walking Tour –

The Allen & Kalita Hardin Smith Wheat Home 505 Bowie

This home is known as the Wheat house. It is a single-story home with hip roof, ventilation window with fish scale shingles on a single gable with front bay. The home has an inset wrapped porch supported by round columns. It features a single dormer in the roof with simple architrave on openings. It is reminiscent of the Queen Anne Style and is a fine example of large frame cottages built during this period in Texas. The house has retained its original footprint in the front, but additions have been made in the rear to modernize and enlarge.

The house was built in 1910 by Sheriff E.W. and Lizzie Sharman and in 1921 was purchased by Allen and Kalita Wheat, both descendants of pioneer Texas families.

Allen Wheat was the great grandson of Henry Jones who came to Texas in 1817 with Stephen F. Austin and his colony of the “Old Three Hundred.” His grandfather, William Jones was born in 1822 in Washington County, Texas, under a live oak tree, thus becoming the first child born in Austin’s Colony. William Jones married Mary Barnett whose father was the first signatory of the Declaration of Independence from Mexico and the first Alcalde for the area. William and Mary had a daughter, Nancy Jones, who married Steve Wheat.

Their son was Allen Wheat, who was born in Fort Bend County in 1880. He left that area as a young man, choosing to move to Liberty. There, he met and married Kalita Hardin Smith. Kalita was a descendent of the Hardin family. Her Harrier-Smith family arrived in Texas in 1852. Her grandfather, Colonel Hugh Farrier, a notorious gambler, won Ironwood Plantation in a poker game while sailing from Florida to Texas. Upon their arrival in Galveston, Mrs. Farrier had the good sense to place the land deed in her name so that

the Colonel could not gamble it away. Ironwood Plantation is located on the Trinity River in north Liberty County. The family settled at Ironwood Plantation and it remained in the Wheat family until recent years.

Allen Wheat served as Liberty County sheriff from 1919 to 1924 and was a deputy sheriff of Jefferson County for several years. He held a Texas Ranger commission for 25 years. He was a special investigator for Gulf Oil Company for 15 years prior to his retirement and was based in Liberty.

During his tenure as sheriff, Wheat sometimes used somewhat controversial methods to arrest and get convictions. One such case was the 1922 murder of Annie McShan. This crime was brutal. Her bloody bludgeoning was sensationalized in a 1923 Beaumont Enterprise newspaper article. This article later led to a libel suit by Sheriff Allen Wheat.

As the story goes, Annie’s head was almost decapitated in a brutal beating. Two men were arrested for Annie’s murder – Tinker Boyd and Sam Boyd, her lover. Tinker made bail, but Sam was held in jail awaiting trial. The newspaper article recounted the trial and how Sheriff



THE WHEAT HOUSE IN 1925

Wheat exhumed Annie’s body and retrieved the decomposing head. It was placed on a stand dressed in the bloody blouse worn by Annie at the time of her murder. It was then positioned outside the jail cell window of Sam Boyd. Applying this macabre pressure, Sheriff Wheat hoped to obtain a confession from Sam. This did not happen. At the trial, the jury acquitted Sam, after a 25-minute deliberation. During the later trial of Tinker Boyd, Sam testified that his brother had confessed to him that he had killed Annie. The jury did convict Tinker of the murder, after a 20-minute deliberation. Tinker served only two years before being pardoned. Sheriff Wheat sued the Beaumont Enterprise for libel after their headline implied negligence in his handling of the case. He

lost that case on appeal. The case became notable for examining press coverage of law enforcement.

In June 1947, 25 years after the murder. Tinker Boyd was killed when a log fell from a truck, crushing his head in a manner eerily similar to Annie McShan’s death. Some would say it was a case of “poetic justice!”

The legacy of Sheriff Allen Wheat was not defined solely by controversy. By the time of his death in 1952, he had regained his reputation as the community responded with overwhelming respect. The funeral records and newspaper articles indicate his service was one of the largest in the community with over 200 people in attendance and over 175 floral displays honoring the sheriff.

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Tom Wheat was living at his family home in 1940 when this photo of him on the courthouse steps was taken during the Big Snow of that year.



THE WHEAT HOUSE IN 2026

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