

In my mind, the architecture of 5842 Llano is a peculiar blend of half-remembered features, even the very number of the house. I remember only a front bedroom which I shared with my sister Martha except when Mamie, my maternal grandmother, was staying with us. Where Martha went then, I have no idea; probably she temporarily shared a bed, or at least a bedroom, with Brother. It certainly did not concern me very much at that time. It's possible that in addition to a door into the hall, my room also had a door which opened into the living room but which was blocked by the placement of our bed. I have reached that conclusion because I remember my activity one Christmas Eve when I couldn't sleep in anticipation of the puppy I yearned for. I recall resting my four- or five-year-old toes precariously on the headboard so as to peek through a small glass window (was it a transom over the door?) into the totally dark living room to see whether Santa Claus had brought my puppy yet. I was sure I could hear it whimpering softly. But since the crying puppy evolved in the daylight of Christmas into a very quiet bowl of goldfish, I doubt the credibility of my ears. Perhaps I should also doubt the existence of that small window into the living room. Neither the period of the building of the house nor its size - quite small - would support the idea of a transomed door.

I do remember sharing the bedroom with my grandmother. We spent hours together there. I watched her knitting, her white gloves on bicycle spokes, the only needles she could find small enough for the fine thread she used to make her Sunday gloves. Though her fingers were stiffened with arthritis, she still could do intricate crocheted lace for pillowcase trim, using sewing thread.

She told me endless stories (mostly, but not exclusively, Bible stories). Most important to me, she taught me to read and listened to me read *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, the saccharine Elsie Dinsmore books, and the Bobbsey Twins books. Occasionally, she would ask me to read the Bible to her, but the King James vocabulary and the endless genealogies we seemed to get into in the book of Genesis (where we invariably started) made that my least favorite reading material. At one time, I associated that room, and her, with the Democratic convention when Al Smith was nominated, but I know now that *that* memory is false; we had left Llano long before that convention. But I'm sure those other memories about her are accurate.

I cannot remember any other rooms in the house; no kitchen, bathroom, dining room, or other bedrooms, though of course there must have been such. But I do remember an outside room attached to what must have been the garage - we must have had a car at that time. The room had a door and a window; I'm sure of that because in the days before the next Christmas I was cautioned not to venture into the back yard. Nevertheless, I did peek into that window when Daddy was not around. I couldn't recognize anything I saw in what looked like a heap of wood and tools. Since Martha and I received a beautiful doll house that Christmas, Daddy must have been building the house in that outside garage room. The doll house survived for many years; I do recall its floor plan with its tiny furniture - a wash basin, tub, and toilet; a brown sofa and chair with small cloth-covered

cushions - when did Mother cover those cushions? - as well as a tiny brown floor lamp, all made of "pot" metal which Martha and I discovered to our sorrow when our play became too rough. But those memories *could* have been the result of our play with the doll house after we moved from Llano to Morningside, where we spent the rest of our growing-up days.

Some photographs in our family album have reminded me of the Atkins children across the street. They lived in one side of a brick duplex. Margaret had golden curls which reached well down below her shoulders. She was about my age. Edward, her little brother, was just a bit older than my brother Willett, known to me at that time only as Brother. In the summertime, the five of us - two Atkins and three Hickmans - had fun playing together in the round sprays with which their parents and ours watered the front lawns. Mr. Atkins was a salesman for McCormick Tea Company (as I recall). Margaret and I found some of his supplies in the garage and undertook to make and sample some tea, a beverage which neither of us was allowed to drink. We didn't really know how to go about brewing the stuff, but we poured a quantity of tea leaves into an empty mason jar, filled the jar with water, and impatiently waited for tea to happen. After a while, the water did turn an almost acceptable tea color. We sampled it. It was awful. It simply confirmed our five-year-old judgment that grown-ups were strange people. Whether Margaret got into trouble for disturbing her father's tea supplies, I never did learn.

After we moved, Margaret and I went to the same school, and Mother and Mrs. Atkins continued their friendship for many years. I was always sure that golden blond sausage curls had to be the pinnacle of beauty. Now, I can imagine how I would have chafed under the necessity of standing still while Mother groomed my imagined lush curls at least once a day; I became impatient with the simple brushing that my short brown Dutch bob required.

Most other Llano memories have to be reconstructed after the fact. The white frame house was the second house from the corner of Delmar. At the end of the block in the other direction was Matilda, a street which appeared and reappeared on one side or the other of the streetcar tracks which ran down the middle of the street. At the Matilda end of our block, across Llano and across the streetcar track, was a mom-and-pop grocery store which I remember only from my grade school days after we left Llano, when I would rush down to spend some of my fifteen-cent lunch money for the enticing penny candy stocked in a case convenient to the entrance of the store, but I do not remember ever being in the store while we lived on the street. What a waste!

I also remember the great hail storm which occurred when we lived on Llano. The next time I'm in Dallas I intend to search in old newspaper files to find out when the storm actually took place. *That's* a very decided, three-dimensional, technicolor memory. It must have been in the spring, and we were definitely living on Llano. I remember the thunderous sound of the hailstones crashing onto our shingle roof, continuing seemingly endlessly until they covered the ground with several layers. I wanted to run out to pick up some of the large hailstones, but my terrified mother cautioned me that even an umbrella would be no protection from those baseball-sized bombs. At least one person, a

policeman, was killed in the line of duty before he could find shelter. The damage in Dallas was widespread. Most automobiles, with their cloth-covered roofs, looked like sieves, plate-glass windows were pulverized, tiled or shingled roofs were shredded. There was enough talk about the city-wide devastation and I saw enough of it that I recall that storm every time I see or hear hail; my memories were reinforced by a ride we took through the city the next day. Few trees retained any of their new, tender leaves; they were all on the ground, giving it an unnatural greenness. Mother assured me that the trees would grow more leaves, and they did, although the large branches broken off and the whole trees knocked over by the tornadic winds were permanently damaged. That's one memory that I will be able to check for accuracy.



When was all this? It had to be after we moved from Sherman some time after Brother was born when I was four and before we moved to what became our permanent home on Morningside just before I was seven. Many of these Llano memories are probably based on later family talk or derive from the visual evidence of family snapshots. But the Christmas puppy's cries, the sharing of a bed and room with my doting grandmother, and the tea-making with Margaret are my own private memories. They *are* 5842 Llano.