

## TOLBERT'S TEXAS

# Some Notes on Ike Birthplace

By FRANK X. TOLBERT

**W**ILLIAM CLIFFORD DARBY of Denison is a healthy-looking, 73-year-old retired wholesale distributor who now works part-time at a pharmacy.

Darby is a devoted Democrat. If you pin him down, though, Darby will tell you that he was born in the same room and house as the Republican President of the United States. This is the modest, multi-gabled frame house which David Eisenhower was renting when his third son, Dwight Eisenhower, was born in Denison on Oct. 14, 1890.

"My folks lived in what was later the Eisenhower birthplace from 1874 until a few months after I was born there in 1882," said Darby. "Then we moved only a block away. I lived either in Ike's birthplace or very close to it for 28 years. At the time Ike was born my dad was firing boilers and Ike's father was an engine wiper in the same railroad yards.

"I remember playing with a little boy who prayed a lot. And I think he must have been one of Ike's two older brothers. My dad said the Eisenhowers were unusually religious folks."



**T**HE men of the Eisenhower Birthplace Foundation, who are going to restore the battered old house near the MKT tracks, are encouraging Denison old-timers to write them and tell how the place looked when the Eisenhowers lived there.

Most of the letters say that the house has changed a lot.

Darby belongs to an opposite school of thought. He thinks the house today is pretty much just as it was when Ike was born.

"Some dude from Fort Worth was up here the other day and saying a lot of changes would have to be made when the restoration is completed," said Darby. "I've been looking at that house all my life. And I say that except for paint and minor repairs it's just like it was in October, 1890."

Darby says both he and Ike were born in the only downstairs bedroom of the story-and-a-half frame.



**W**EB MADDUX of Fort Worth, an official of the Eisenhower Birthplace Foundation, wrote to Arthur Eisenhower of Kansas City, Ike's banker brother, about the house.

"I was four years old when Ike was born," replied Arthur Eisenhower, "and I just don't remember much about the Denison house. You'll have to write someone with more imagination than this banker. I do remember sitting on the front gate at Lamar and Day and waiting for the tamale man to come by. I believe the house was sort of on stilts in those days. I seem to remember getting under the steps and it was very cool there on hot days."

You probably know that Denison folks weren't even aware that the town was Ike's birthplace until World War II when the historians really got to work on the general.

"The house is really about ready to fall down," said Web Maddox. "We've engaged Joe Pelich, the Fort Worth architect who did Carter Field terminal, to work on the house. And he's very enthusiastic. The foundation is going to make a 5 or 6-acre park around the house and then turn it and some endowment money over to the state park board."



**M**RS. MONTE BALES JONES, one of the Denison Gold Star mothers who volunteer as tour conductors through the Ike birthplace, says the house is a particular attraction to out-of-state visitors.

Mrs. Jones says that she senses a wonderfully cheerful atmosphere about the shabby frame near the railroad tracks.

"I feel better when I step in the door," said she. "Some days when I'm blue over my son, who was killed in the Philippines, I go over to the Eisenhower house. And it cheers me up, somehow. There's a cheerful spirit about the place."