

Eugenio Rodriguez House and Post Office
State Highway 649
Cuevitas, Jim Hogg County, Texas

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
San Francisco, California

EUGENIO RODRIGUEZ HOUSE AND POST OFFICE

Cuevitas, Jim Hogg County, Texas

HABS
TEX.
124-CUEVI.

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ADDRESS: State Highway 649, Cuevitas, Texas

OWNER: Cleotilde Rodriguez, Alice, Texas

OCCUPANT: Abandoned. However, complex is occupied by Gifredo Muñoz, a descendent of one of the original settlers. He lives immediately across the highway from the structure.

USE: Abandoned.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Eugenio Rodriguez house is part of a typical Texas "brush country" ranch complex in the southern part of Jim Hogg County. Originally a portion of the José Escandón settlement, the site was probably not occupied much before 1850 due to the ever present menace of hostile Indians. Vaqueros from the Rio Grande settlements worked livestock seasonally prior to the 1840s in the good grazing lands in the neighborhood. It was customary to erect a small, fortified structure on a height of land as headquarters for this operation. From this vantage, the entire surrounding territory could be kept under surveillance by a lookout on constant station. Alarms would be given if Indians appeared, and the vaqueros would swarm into the fortified area. Cuevitas, or "little caves" afforded such a condition for this type of operation. Most of the buildings in the complex are flat roofed and of earlier vintage than the Rodriguez house.

Cuevitas had the advantage of being "one day's march" from the Rio Grande River settlements on journeys northward, though the nearby ranch of Randado was more frequently utilized as a camping site. There is a small, quite old, cemetery in the brush thicket northeast of the house. Dates on headstones imply occupancy before 1860. There is an inscription painted on the side of a beam in the roof of one of the nearby buildings which reads "Juan Muñoz, 13 Septiembre, 1871."

The Rodriguez house was probably built after 1870, and the frame post office probably added soon after original construction. The post office function seems to have ceased in the early nineteen thirties, and the house was possibly abandoned during this same time.

REFERENCES AND SOURCES:

de la Garza, Mike	Randado, Texas Personal interview
Muñoz, Gifredo	Cuevitas, Texas Personal interview
Lott, Virgil N. and Martinez, Mercurio	<u>The Kingdom of Zapata</u> The Naylor Company San Antonio, Texas. 1953. Page 24.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Architectural interest and merit: The complex at Cuevitas consists of a group of buildings built between 1850 and 1875. The Rodriguez house is of the pitched roof type, with lean to on the rear (west) and open gallery facing the other buildings to the east. In plan, there are four rooms, each with a door to the exterior, and the kitchen was the room on the southwest. A masonry fireplace of good proportions served as the cooking device. The condition of the fabric is fair; and in the main this is due to the preserving qualities of the arid climate, rather than by constant maintenance.
- B. Technical description of the exterior.
1. Overall dimensions: 34'-0" by 34'-0" (not including post office)
 2. Foundations. Limestone bearing wall.
 3. Wall construction: Limestone smoothly stuccoed outside and smoothly plastered inside.
 4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc. Wooden gallery running entire length of east facade probably part of original construction.
 5. Chimneys: Stuccoed chimney on south facade serving kitchen area.

6. Openings: doorways and doors. Single swinging doors with square heads supported by mesquite lintels above. Windows double hung wood, screens not original. No evidence of rejas or shutters. Doors on outbuildings old, double casement.
7. Roof: Pitched with two different slopes, covered with wooden shingles. Shingle eaves east and west; gables make small parapets north and south.
8. Dormers, cupolas: None.

C. Technical description of the interior.

1. Plan. See "Architectural interest and merit," page 2.
2. Stairway. None.
3. Flooring. Pine.
4. Wall and ceiling finish. Plaster walls; exposed wood ceiling pitched same slope as roof.
5. Doorways and doors. Square headed doors, wood.
6. Trim. Plaster.
7. Hardware. Not important.
8. Lighting. None. Used candles or kerosene lamps.
9. Heating. Fireplace in kitchen.

D. Site.

1. Orientation. Roof axis of house runs from south to north; main gallery faces east.
2. Enclosures. Numerous corrals and animal pens. Stone and wood.
3. Outbuildings. Numerous stone outbuildings.

4. Walks, driveways, etc. None extant.
5. Landscaping, gardens, etc. None extant. Entire area covered with mesquite, junco, and chaparal.

PREPARED BY W. Eugene George, Jr. 7 December 1961
W. Eugene George, Jr., A. I. A.

APPROVED Charles S Pope Date January 9, 1962
Architect, Historic Structures, WODC - NPS