

Fort Sam Houston National Historic Landmark
Headquarters of the Department of Texas Commanding Officer's
Quarters (Pershing House, Building #6, Staff Post)
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3303-3

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Parks Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

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HEADQUARTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS
COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS
(Pershing House, Building #6, Staff Post)

HABS No. TX-3303-3

Location: 6 Staff Post Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Present Owner
and Occupant: United States Army

Present Use: Officer's Quarters

Significance: The First Officer's Quarters to be completed on Post, Staff Post #6 was one of fifteen quarters built during the early 1880s to house the officers and their families assigned to the Military Post at San Antonio. The residence was built as the Commander General's Quarters and has remained the residence of the Senior Commanding Officer on Post since its construction. Many of the occupants have been noted figures in United States Military History.

All fifteen residences on Staff Post were designed by local architect Alfred Giles and provide an excellent example of regional architecture during this period. While all of these quarters are similar in material and scale however, the interior and exterior detailing on Quarters #6 is decidedly more elaborate by comparison. The residence was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 30, 1974.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1881
2. Architect: Alfred Giles, San Antonio in coordination with a Colonel Owens. (Jutson, p. 35). Alfred Giles was born in 1853 in Middlesex, northwest of London. Upon graduation from public school in 1868, he apprenticed for two years with the London architectural firm of Giles and Bivens (no relationship) and attended classes on the art of construction at Kings College, University of London.

In 1873, Giles and a friend traveled to the United States to seek their fortunes. After only a short while they parted; Giles traveling to Texas and his friend returning to England. Giles arrived in San Antonio that same year and was immediately

employed by a successful local contractor, John H. Kampmann, who was a stonemason by profession. He worked with Mr. Kampmann for three years and in 1876 left to form his own firm, the Alfred Giles Company.

Giles experienced immediate success, and was reportedly one of San Antonio's leading architects by the end of the decade. This rise to prominence was due partly to the upsurge of development in San Antonio as a result of the coming of the railroad, and partly due to the professional contracts and support he received from some of the established families of San Antonio—among them the Maverick, Tross, Steves, Terrell and Groos families. Giles designed many residences but also received public contracts as well due to his influential contacts.

Mary Carolyn Jutson, Alfred Giles' biographer, describes his style as "simple and sober". "He exercised strong control over his work and preferred restraint. He had a reserved use of ornament and strong feeling for symmetry, even in asymmetrical (sic) composition". He employed native stone much more than other architects of the period. (Jutson p. 21-23) In his early years as an architect, Giles seemed to concentrate more on structure than design. However, he employed ornamental elements popularized by the Italian Villa style -- segmental and round arch windows, bracketed cornices, corner quoinage and string courses highlighting each floor. The fifteen Staff Post residences, built early in Giles' career, constitute a summary of several basic plan types employed by him. The quarters at #6, 11, and 15 each represent a variation in plan found on Post. However, all share in details that result in a unified appearance for the fifteen residences. These buildings are relatively modest, yet are definitely representative of Giles' style in his early period.

Giles' popularity slowed somewhat in the 1890s, and in 1900—seeing more opportunity to the South—he opened a second office in Monterrey, Mexico. His building in Mexico was primarily in the newly popular Beaux Arts mode. Some of his later designs reflect the innovative ideas of Frank Lloyd Wright but for the most part, Giles' success, as Ms. Jutson so aptly put it, "rested on his intelligent adaptation of traditional forms rather than an innovative departure from the norm" (Jutson p. 24).

3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. Army from date of construction to the present.
4. Contractor: Thomas W. Carrico. (Thomas W. Carrico was the contractor recorded in the Quartermaster General's correspondence. However, both Mary Handy, author of History of Ft. Sam Houston, and Mary Carolyn Jutson, author of Alfred Giles; An English Architect in Texas and Mexico, credit a "Mr. Coulter" as contractor.)
5. Original plan and construction: The two-story, limestone ashlar residence originally had a center-hall, double-pile plan. A separate kitchen wing, 16'-9" x 15'-3", with second floor bedroom was connected to the main building by a two-story breezeway porch on the rear. A two-tier attached porch ran across the front of the house and continued around the sides to meet the rear breezeway. A dressed limestone turret, located in the front south corner, has a mansard roof with iron cresting and standing seam tin cover. Cresting decorated the ridge of the hipped roof as well. The residence was built in 1881 at a cost of \$17,076.40.
6. Alterations and additions: The original rear frame breezeway connecting the kitchen wing with the main structure has been enclosed with clapboard siding and glass. The front porch has been screened on the second story and side porches have experienced a number of modifications. The northeast side porch has been glass-enclosed with the front room converted to a solarium in 1934 and a rear sleeping porch with jalosy windows off the first floor guest bedroom was completed in 1945. The second floor northeast porch and small glassed breakfast porch were completed this same year.

The interior first floor plan was altered prior to 1941 when the north corner parlor was converted to a guest bedroom. A wall was added between the front and rear rooms along the northeast side of the building.

The first floor walls have been sheetrocked and fireplaces in the dining room and guest bedroom have been removed. Numerous bathrooms have been added. Central air conditioning was installed in 1963.

B. Historical Context:

This staff Post residence has been occupied by 61 commanding officers and their families since its completion in 1881 -- many with names immediately recognizable from our country's military history: Brigadier General David S. Stanley (1884-92), Brigadier General F.D. Grant (son of President Ulysses S. Grant, 1902-04), Major General John J. Pershing (1917), Lieutenant General Walter Krueger (1941-43), Lieutenant General William H. Simpson (1944) and General Jonathan M. Wainwright (1946-48).

In 1959, Lieutenant General Guy S. Meloy, Jr., a resident of the quarters, officially named the quarters "Pershing House", after one of its more illustrious occupants, John J. Pershing. Pershing assumed command of the Post in 1917. He had recently returned from Mexico a hero, having led an army of men in the pursuit of Pancho Villa and successfully breaking Villa's longstanding power. When the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, however, Pershing's San Antonio command was short lived. He was assigned to the command of the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.), the first U.S. Army ever sent to Europe. Pershing's command grew to almost two million men during the course of his assignment. After the war, Pershing received the highest rank that had ever been given an American army officer, General of the Armies of the United States.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The residence, built of rough native limestone ashlar, is simple and elegant in its design. The house is symmetrical in plan, with the south corner tower of dressed limestone adding an asymmetrical element to the composition. Applied ornamental details such as the prominent segmental arch lintels and bracketed cornice, most commonly associated with the Italian Villa Style, are employed. The residence was designed by local architect, Alfred Giles and is representative of his work and the regional architecture at this time.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building has a rectangular, center-hall plan, approximately 50'-9" by 40'-8". A rear kitchen wing off the northwest end of the building measures 16'-9" by 29'-2". The front facade is five bays wide. A two-tier attached porch surrounds the structure.
2. Foundations: The foundations are made of limestone ashlar and rubble.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls were constructed of natural random ashlar limestone in varying surface textures; dressed margins are found at each corner. Rear clapboard breezeway enclosure painted white. The south corner turret has a dressed limestone exterior.
4. Structural system, framing: The structural system is comprised of masonry, load-bearing walls which are 22" thick in the main rectangular block with 18" thick walls in rear wing. There are also frame porches, breezeway enclosure, and roof system.
5. Porches, stoops, and bulkheads: A two-tier attached porch on front and sides of main rectangular block is approximately 10' wide. The front first floor porch is open, the second floor level has been screened. The northeast corner porch on the first floor was converted to an enclosed glass solarium, 18'-8" wide, extending back to an enclosed sleeping porch off guest bedroom, approximately 10' wide. The second floor porch above the northeast side has also been glass-enclosed.

The porch area off the dining room has been glass-enclosed, creating a breakfast porch, approximately 17'-9" by 10'-2".

The porch is supported by coupled boxed columns with chamfered corners and upper carved brackets. Coupled columns have simple pendant drops between brackets. The first and second floors are enclosed by a turned post balustrade. The center entrance is highlighted as the porch projects slightly with a centered pediment over the second tier. This pediment is echoed by a wider pediment directly behind, giving additional depth to the front porch entrance.

A simpler, one-story porch runs around the rear wing, with some portions screened, some latticed, and some left open. This porch is two stories along the northeast side.

The porch floors are painted tongue-and-groove wood decking. The solarium has been carpeted and the breakfast porch has been tiled. The second floor northeast porch has been carpeted and breakfast porch has been tiled. The second floor northeast porch has varnished wood flooring.

The porches rest on limestone piers varying from three to eight steps above grade.

6. Chimneys: Four symmetrically placed brick interior chimneys, two on each side of the front rectangular block serving each of the original four fireplaces on each floor (two fireplaces on first floor have been blocked off). Each chimney has a narrow stack with corbeled brick cap and inset panels. Metal flashing arches over stack. A second chimney in the northeast wall of kitchen wing is a massive interior chimney with corbeled bands and metal flashing stack cover.
7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Center hall entry and rear double door on the first floor have single pane segmental arch transom lights above. The front doors have heavily molded rectangular panes with clipped upper corners. Panes are broken into two lights by a center muntin. Lower square panels have raised center panels and surrounding molding. Doors have keystone segmental arch lintels of dressed limestone. Rear kitchen door has a four-pane light above and inset panels below. Doorway originally had a transom light above, which has since been altered to house the venting system for the air-conditioner.

The southwest breezeway door onto the side rear porch has a 15-pane glass door with 6-pane transom above.

French doors with 4-pane glazing vertically set are found off the first floor guest bedroom onto the porch, off the first floor dining room, and off the front four bedrooms of the second floor. Doors have keystone segmental arch lintels of dressed limestone above.

- b. Windows: Front and side windows off porch are 1/1 full length segmental arch windows with keystone segmental arched lintels of dressed limestone.

Rear windows vary from 1/1 and 2/2 segmental arch windows on main rectangular block to 4/4 rectangular windows with flat, dressed limestone lintels and lug sills.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: Shallow hipped roof over front rectangular block with green composite shingles, slightly flaring at cornice line.

Venting pediment along center front cornice line over entryway with scroll bracket design. Projecting octagonal mansard roof turret in south (front) corner with gray clapboard covered panels and wrought iron cresting.

Rear wing has an attached gable roof with composite shingles.

- b. Cornice and eaves: Simple boxed cornice with air circulation vents along soffit is supported by carved coupled brackets on front rectangular block. Rear kitchen wing roof has simple boxed cornice with no bracket supports.
- c. Dormers: Small gabled venting dormers are on three sides of main hipped roof -- there is no dormer to the front of the residence.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: An approximately 15' by 16' finished basement is below the kitchen, accessible only from outside rear bulkhead, housing the gas furnace and hot water heater. Small storage area is located off the finished space to the south.
- b. First floor: A center hall plan in double pile form has a 10' wide center hall with straight run staircase; a sitting room and dining room are on the southwest side and parlor and guest bedroom on the northeast side. A full bathroom addition is off the west corner of the guest bedroom. An enclosed porch solarium and sleeping porch are off the northeast side and an enclosed breakfast porch is off the dining room on the southwest side. A small lavatory and closet are located under the stair run. Off the rear of

the dining room is a 16'-9" by 8' pantry and a six foot wide enclosed frame porch (originally a breezeway) separating the 16'-9" by 15'-3" kitchen from the main block.

The enclosed porch/breezeway has a frame staircase to the second floor running southwest to northeast. A small porch area to the rear of the kitchen has been closed off with frame and batten, creating a utility room.

- c. Second floor: The second floor is a symmetrical plan with two bedrooms on each side of the central hallway, each with its own full bath. On the rear wing, a cedar closet is located directly above the first floor pantry. An enclosed porch area (originally a breezeway) has a stairway running from the first floor. A rear bedroom with a bath is directly over the kitchen.
2. Stairway: The center hallway has a straight run staircase four feet wide, along the southwest wall in an open well. Stairs fan slightly at the base with a turned newel post of cherry wood. The newel has a center octagonal mass with inlaid walnut burl panels on all eight sides. A railing supported by turned balusters runs along the outside of the stair and continues around the open well on the second floor. The staircase has a closed run with a closet and lavatory below.

The rear open-string frame staircase located in the enclosed porch/breezeway area has no significant detail-rubber matting along the tread and a handrail supported by rectangular posts.

3. Flooring: On the first floor, thick wall-to-wall carpeting covers the floors in the has, dining room, living room, parlor and solarium. The northeast guest bedroom and rear breezeway have three-inch, varnished wood flooring. Tile floors are found in the kitchen, pantry, breakfast porch, and sleeping porch off the guest bedroom.

Carpeting continues up the main staircase and covers the hall floor on the second story. Front bedrooms and breezeway floors are three-inch wide hardwood floors. The rear bedroom/servant quarters has wood floor boards, four inches wide. Either porcelain or linoleum tile covers all bath floors. Finished poured concrete floors are in the basement.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The first floor walls in the main block have been sheetrocked. Ceilings with cast medallions still remain plaster. The ceiling in the pantry is beaded tongue-and-groove and a dropped panel ceiling is in the kitchen. The rest of the house still retains plaster walls. All walls are painted off-white.
5. Doorways and doors: 4' wide six-panel pocket doors separate the front living room from dining area. This segmental arch passageway is also decorated with ornamental carved openwork, set in a segmental arch, typical of the period.

Most other doors are original, raised four-panel doors, or later two-panel doors (on most baths and closets).

The four-panel doors in the kitchen have transom light openings above (although the rear kitchen door onto side porch has been altered to accommodate A/C system).

The rear center hallway double doors to the enclosed porch on the second floor are similar to the first floor entrance doors but with frosted glass in the upper rectangular panes.

6. Special decorative features, trim and cabinet work: The architrave trim around door and window openings, now painted off-white, was originally varnished woodwork. 10" baseboards in all rooms are simple with 1/4" round molding at base and 2" beading at the top. Heavy decorative cornice molding is located in the four main rooms of the first floor.

Cast plaster medallions in varying floral designs are located in the center ceiling of the hall, dining room, living room, parlor, and guest bedroom of the first floor. The dining room has fruit rather than flowers in its medallion. The hall and dining room have suspended cut glass chandeliers from center medallions.

The guest bedroom has four-globe brass fixture. The front two rooms have no ceiling fixtures.

Glass-paned cupboards, appearing to be 1940s-1950s vintage, remain in the pantry.

Natural slate fireplaces are located in the front two rooms (parlor and living room) on the first floor and the four bedrooms off the center hall on the second floor.

The first-floor slate mantelpieces are identical with segmental arched openings, surrounding white incised geometric designs and pink marble mantel shelves. The southwest living room has an embossed cast-iron fireplace cover with gilding highlighting design.

Second floor slate fireplaces are also identical, with segmental arched openings and pink marble mantel shelves. The slate mantelpiece has etched white corner spandrels divided by rounded projecting blocks. The projecting blocks on the south master bedroom mantelpiece are pink marble, all others are slate. All fireplaces have rectangular openings, having been squared off with inset brick.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating/air conditioning: Original standing radiators have been replaced by wall vents, used now for both gas-fired hot air heat and the central air conditioning system. Massive exterior condensor fans for air-conditioning system are located on the southwest side of the structure, off the pantry.
- b. Lighting: Incandescent lighting throughout with the exception of florescent lights in the kitchen.
- c. Miscellaneous: Structure is equipped with a smoke alarm system.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: Structure faces southwest on Staff Post Road across from the central parade grounds. It is the most elaborately landscaped of the 15 residential structures on the street, with varying types of trees and shrubs and a stone and concrete patio and fountain on the northeast side. A circular driveway is located in the rear.
2. Outbuildings: A small one-story, three-bay, clapboard building (T-36) with hipped roof stands directly behind the residence. At one time used as a storeroom, it has an unfinished interior. A two-car garage and servants quarters built in 1917 stands to the rear of the residence between the driveway and access road (Building 6-B).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

Miscellaneous Fort Files, Record Group 77, Center for Cartographic and Architectural Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

Copies of original drawings are held in the Facilities Engineer's Office, Fort Sam Houston including eight sheets of drawings. Additional copies are located at the Fort Sam Houston Post Library.

B. Old Views:

Fort Sam Houston Military Museum, Buildings #123, San Antonio, Texas.

Views of Fort Sam Houston, Record Group 92F-56, Audio-visual Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

C. Maps:

1905 map of Fort Sam Houston, Fort Sam Houston Military Museum, Building #123, San Antonio, Texas.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Real Property Records. Directorate of Facilities Engineering, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

Buerkle, Ruth C., Pershing House. Unpublished pamphlet copied and distributed by the Fort Sam Houston Historical Society. n.d.

Beeler, Major Lynn S., Pershing House. A nomination form prepared for submission to the National Register of Historic Places, 16 August 1973.

Insall, Frances, Pershing House...Its Claim to Fame is Its People. Prepared for public release, May 3, 1973.

Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General Consolidated Correspondence File 1794-1915. Microfilm Reel from the National Archives held at the Fort Sam Houston Post Library.

2. Secondary and Published Sources:

Jutson, Mary Carolyn Hollers, Alfred Giles: An English Architect in Texas and Mexico, San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1972.

The World Book Encyclopedia. "John Joseph Pershing", Volume 15. World Book -- Childcraft International, Inc. 1979 (Chicago).

Handy, Mary Olivia. A History of Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Naylor Inc., 1951.

3. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Correspondence and other miscellaneous files relating to Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. National Archives and Records Service. Washington, D.C.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The detailed survey of eighteen (18) architecturally representative structures, and a group of streetscapes, at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, was undertaken in 1980 by the National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER) after a comprehensive inventory of the Post was conducted. Funding for the project was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Department of the Army, Fort Sam Houston, and the San Antonio Conservation Society.

This project was under the general supervision of Kenneth Anderson, Acting Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the National Architectural and Engineering Record. Sally Tompkins of the NAER staff was project supervisor. Project Historian was Kathryn A. Burns, San Antonio, Texas. Photographic records were provided by David Kaminsky, Roswell, New Mexico.

**FORT SAM HOUSTON,
HEADQUARTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS,
COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS**

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**ADDENDUM TO
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HEADQUARTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS
COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS**

(Pershing House, Building No. 6, Staff Post)
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