

E. T. Tickle Dam

0.3 miles northwest of the Concho River, 0.5 miles south of
Highway #1929, 1.2 miles southeast of Concho townsite
Voss vicinity
Concho County
Texas

HAER No. TX-19

HAER
TEX,
42-VOS.V,
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: Located 0.3 miles northwest of the Concho River, 0.5 miles south of Highway #1929, 1.2 miles southeast of Concho townsite, Voss vicinity, Concho County, Texas

UTM: 14.424152.3487848
Quad: Concho

Date of Construction: October 1924

Present Owner: E. T. Tickle, Jr.
Concho, Texas

Present Use: Private dam on the Tickle Ranch, used to retain water on a drainage into the Concho River

Significance: This small concrete dam was erected across a small arroyo to retain water as a holding tank on the Tickle Ranch and is significant as a representative private engineering project carried out with locally available materials and expertise. The site is culturally significant as a portion of a very large ranch, put together in parcels by members of the Tickle family, beginning as early as the 1880s and continuously owned and operated by that family to the present day.

Historian: Gus Hamblett, Texas A&M University, October 1989

1. HISTORY

A. An Overview of Historical Context

For the general historical overview that places the property in the context of the development of cattle ranching at the confluence of the Colorado and Concho rivers, see HABS No. TX-3350.

B. The Site in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

The E. T. Tickle Dam was constructed in 1924 on land that had been set aside in the 1840s for the Fisher-Miller Grant. [1] The well-known Fisher-Miller Company was organized to introduce immigrants from Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark to the then-almost unsettled lands lying between the Llano and Colorado rivers. The company granted this site to Otto H. Karstendeck in 1855, the site located in the northernmost portion of the Fisher-Miller Grant, that is, in northern Concho County bordering to the south on the Concho River. [2] Indian disturbances in the region prevented settlement immediately. It was not until the 1870s that the immigrants, or their descendants, began to occupy their lands. It is not known what sort of occupation, if any, that Otto Karstendeck made on his Concho County lands. He sold the property in 1879 to W. B. Smith. An agent of Smith leased the place in 1896 to Edwin T. Tickle, Sr. and, in 1925, a Smith descendant sold the land to Edwin's son, Herbert Tickle. [4]

Edwin T. Tickle's occupation of the land brought the property into a large Tickle family ranching operation begun in the immediate vicinity in the 1880s. Edwin Tickle had immigrated to Texas from England with his father, Samuel Tickle, in 1887. [5] In 1888, Samuel settled immediately south of the dam site, on land he purchased from Fisher-Miller immigrant Henrich Hallman's grant. He began a cattle ranch on this land and constructed a house which still exists southwest of the dam. In 1894, Samuel sold this ranch to his son, Edwin Tickle, who then leased the land of the future dam site in 1896, later purchasing this site, as mentioned above. Edwin also acquired other lands to increase his holdings. For instance, in 1916, he purchased a portion of the Fisher-Miller grant that had been made to the German immigrant family of Winkle, located to the east in the vicinity of Leaday. This former Winkle land was permanently occupied by Edwin's son, Herbert Tickle, in 1927. In 1932, Herbert built the stone bungalow, which still exists on this property, presently occupied by Edwin's grandson, E. T. Tickle, Jr. (see HABS No. TX-3359). [6]

C. Construction of the Dam

The original Samuel Tickle purchase, that is, the Henrich Hallman lands, continued to be the chief residence and Tickle Ranch headquarters for many years. Edwin Tickle's acquisition of the adjacent dam site in 1896 was a further extension of this property. In the 1920s, Tickle began several improvements on this ranch and on the former Winkle lands to the east, where he constructed a large earthen water-holding tank which still exists. At the old headquarters ranch, just to the northeast of the house and outbuildings constructed in the late 1880s by his grandfather, Samuel Tickle, Edwin began construction of a small concrete holding dam to retain water on an arroyo, or gulch, which drained into the Concho River to the south. This watercourse, usually dry except after heavy rains, is a wide, shallow basin with an almost flat floor.

The dam Edwin Tickle erected has inscribed into one of its faces the inscription "Oct.20. E.T.T. 1924;" and, in another place, in much rougher lettering and script, the word "Builders," with the name "S. J.

revealed nothing relating him to this project; he might possibly be connected with the family who established the Gay Ranch in Coleman County in the 1880s. [7] The workmen Tickle engaged obviously were not professionally skilled engineers; rather, their work is representative of a typical private enterprise carried out with local materials and local skills. They may have been local ranch or farmhands. It is possible that Tickle and his building crew made use of the rock-crushing machine purchased by W. A. Miller of the Day-Miller Ranch, located to the northeast on the east bank of the Colorado River in Coleman County (see HABS No. TX-3351). Miller had purchased this machine about 1914 as part of the silo construction project being conducted on tenant farms across his ranch. He was actively engaged in fairly large-scale concrete construction projects, keeping a collection of wooden forms and the rock-crushing machine at his ranch headquarters for use by the local tenants. [8] Big concrete silos on the Day-Miller Ranch are ample testimony to the skills of enterprising landlords and local workmen for industrial projects (see HAER No. TX-15).

II. THE DAM

A. Description

This very small concrete dam was constructed at a part of the wide flat arroyo where a narrowing of stone outcroppings made a natural gap of manageable width. The dam was built in a long crescent, to a width of forty feet at the widest point of its mouth and to a height of from four to five feet. The arc of the crescent is not a continuous curve, but, rather, the entire construction seems to have been created by setting up a series of straight wooden forms with a series of at least three concrete pours, then a topmost pour, about eighteen inches thick, created a relatively level and smooth capping.

B. Subsequent History of the Site, Present Ownership and Future

The dam site land, leased in 1896 by Edwin Tickle, was formally purchased by his son, Herbert Tickle, in 1925 and passed on to his son, E. T. Tickle, Jr. in 1980. E. T. and members of his family have continued to operate the ranch, as well as the Winkle-Tickle Ranch (see HABS No. TX-3359) until the present time.

In 1979, the Texas Water Commission granted permission to the Colorado River Municipal Water District, an entity based in Big Spring, to construct a large dam on the Colorado River. The site chosen was a location several miles downstream from Leaday, sixteen miles below the confluence of the Colorado and Concho rivers. Early in the planning stages, a program was developed to address environmental concerns, including the impact of the proposed flood area on prehistoric and historic cultural resources. In 1980-1981, a survey of historic cultural resources was conducted by Freeman and Freeman, under contract to Espey, Huston and Associates, a firm of environmental consultants in Austin. Subsequently, a number of other studies and amplifications of previous studies have been conducted. In early 1988, an Albuquerque, New Mexico, firm of environmental scientists, Mariah Associates, Inc., began further assessment of the area of the flood plain, including various archaeological investigations and assessments. Mariah has also acted in the role of coordinator of related projects, including this project, the recording of nineteen endangered historic sites in the confluence area for the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record. The sites were selected from a list compiled under the guidance of the Texas Historical Commission.

Construction was finished on the dam in the late summer of 1989. Called the Stacy Dam and Reservoir, the project will inundate approximately 19,200 acres. As the Stacy Dam neared completion in the fall of 1989, the threat of inundation of the bridge was possible in the immediate future. The associated ranch house and outbuilding, begun in the late 1880s by the present owner's great-grandfather, Samuel Tickle, are outside of the project area. Only the dam site is in the flood pool. Permanent easement of the dam site will be granted to the Colorado River Municipal Water District.

III. ENDNOTES

- [1] Walter Prescott Webb and H. Bailey Carroll, eds., The Handbook of Texas, vol. 1, (Austin, Texas: Texas State Historical Association, 1952, 601. See also Freeman, 3-1 through 3.
- [2] Concho County Courthouse, Deed Record, vol. Q, 62, March 9, 1855, German Emigration Company to Otto H. Karstendeck.
- [3] Ibid., vol. A, 120, April 16, 1879, Otto H. Karstendeck to W. B. Smith.
- [4] Ibid., vol. 28, 399, August 1, 1925, F. J. Smith to H. T. Tickle.
- [5] Interview with E. T. Tickle, Jr., Tickle Ranch, July 14, 1989; interview by Gus Hamblett. See also Martha Doty Freeman and Joe C. Freeman, A Cultural Resource Inventory of the Proposed Stacy reservoir; Concho, Coleman and Runnels Counties, Texas, vol. II: Historical Cultural Resources, report prepared for the Colorado River Municipal Water District by Espey, Huston and Associates, Inc., Engineering and Environmental ConsultAnt (Austin, Texas, March 1981), 5-8, for additional Tickle family information; see also Donald R. Abbe and Joseph E. King, "A Preliminary Report: Historical resources within the Stacy Dam Project Area," draft of a report prepared for the Colorado River Municipal Water District by Mariah Associates, Inc., Environmental Consultants (Lubbock, Texas, June 1989), 92.
- [6] E. T. Tickle, Jr., informant.
- [7] See Mrs. Donald E. Mathes' essay on the Gay Ranch, published in Coleman County Historical Commission, A History of Coleman County and Its People, vol. 1., (San Angelo, Texas: Anchor Publishing Company, 1985), 640-641.
- [8] Martha Doty Freeman and others, "Cultural Resources Survey, Testing, and Assessments in the Dam Construction Zone at Stacy Reservoir, Coleman and Concho Counties, Texas," an unpublished report prepared by Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Consulting Archaeologists (Austin, Texas, March 1989), 133. Martha Freeman had access of the files of the Day Ranch Company, part of the Miller papers now in the trusteeship of the Commerce State Bank, Kansas City.

IV. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Sketch plan of site.

V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by Mariah Associates, Inc., archaeologists; recorded under the direction of Greg Kendrick, HABS regional coordinator, Denver. The project was completed during the summer of 1989 at the project field office at Houston and College Station, Texas. Project supervisor was Graham B. Luhn, A.I.A., architect; project architectural historian was Gus Hamblett, Texas A&M University; intern architects were Debbie Fernandez and Paul Neidinger; student architects were Brian Dougan, Robert Holton, Janna Johnson, Wayne Jones, and Pat Sparks, Texas A&M University; photographic processing by Laura McFarlane.

