

**B.F. FORRESTER, SR. FARMSTEAD**

.2 miles northeast of the intersection of  
Bearden and Boz Roads

Waxahachie Vicinity

Ellis County

Texas

HABS No. TX-3377

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

**Intermountain Regional Office**

**National Park Service**

**P.O. Box 25287**



## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: ca. 1869
2. Architect: None
3. Original and Subsequent Owners:  
B.F. Forrester (1869-1918)  
Emma Forrester Hampton (1918-1944)  
Mary Frances Hampton Elliott (1944-1992)
4. Builders, Contractors and Suppliers: Unknown.
5. Original Plans and Construction: No original architectural plans or drawings were located during research investigations. Such drawings probably never existed for the vernacular buildings on the property.
6. Alterations and Additions: The house was enlarged through three phases of construction.

### B. Historical Context:

Benjamin F. Forrester, Sr., was born in Crawford County, Arkansas in October 1844 and came to Ellis County in May 1865 after serving in the Confederate Army. On January 28, 1868, he married Frances (Fannie) Greene, the daughter of Ellis County pioneer Ira Green, who moved with his family from Lafayette County, Missouri, in 1859 [1]. On December 30, 1869, Forrester purchased the southern half (160 acres) of the W. Estes Survey for \$280 and soon began building a dwelling that is still known locally as the B.F. Forrester, Sr., House. He reportedly hauled building materials for its construction from Nacogdoches, an early lumber center in East Texas, approximately 150 miles to the southeast[2].

Like many other pioneers who moved to Ellis County in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Forrester relied on a traditional building form that had been used for many previous generations. Now dubbed an I-house, the dwelling has a side-gabled roof over a rectangular plan that is one room deep and has a central hall with single rooms on either side [3]. This house form was brought by settlers from Upland Southern states such as Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas, who populated much of the north-central region of Texas that included Ellis County.

For most of his life, Forrester was a farmer and worked the land

that surrounds this complex of buildings. The Population Schedule of 1870 lists him as a farmer, but his name does not appear in the Agricultural Schedule of that year. His omission no doubt resulted from the fact that he had purchased land in late 1869 and had not yet begun its cultivation. By 1880, however, Forrester was a well-established farmer and grew an assortment of subsistence and cash crops. The 1880 Agricultural

Schedule notes that Forrester had 160 acres of tillable soil that, according to tax rolls, encompassed property in the W. Estes and M.B. Gray surveys. He devoted thirty-eight acres to the cultivation of Indian corn, which yielded 250 bushels in 1879, and from seven acres of land obtained 100 bushels of oats. He also secured eighty bushels of wheat from sixteen acres. He reserved the largest amount of land for cotton, which he planted on sixty acres that yielded twenty bales [4]. Although modest amounts, the cotton totals reveal Forrester's early participation in the emerging cotton trade of Ellis County, which transformed the region into one of the state's richest and most productive agricultural centers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It is not known exactly when Forrester began growing cotton, but by 1880 he and a substantial number of other local farmers harvested significant amounts of the crop. Ellis County farmers first planted cotton in the 1850s, but the lack of an adequate work force (cotton cultivation was extremely labor intensive) and the poor transportation network hindered large-scale cotton production. In 1860 Ellis County yielded a mere 359 bales of cotton, the 70th largest county-wide total in Texas [5]. Most of the state's cotton at that time was grown in East Texas which relied heavily on a plantation/slave system. Following the Civil War, a large influx of settlers from war-torn southern states moved to Ellis and other north-central Texas counties and established family-run farms in rural areas. Most families acquired land which they farmed themselves; others, however, became sharecroppers or tenant farmers [6]. The B.F. Forrester, Sr. Farmstead illustrates a good example of a family-owned and operated farm of the era.

The arrival of the Houston and Texas Central and other railroads in Ellis County during the 1870s solved the region's transportation problem, and Ellis County's cotton boom quickly began. Farmers like Forrester initially continued to grow a variety of crops, but as cotton prices soared in the late nineteenth century they increasingly devoted greater percentages of their land to the cultivation of cotton [7]. The dramatic rise in local cotton production catapulted Ellis County into a leading supplier of cotton for the state. For example, the 2,960 bales that came from the county in 1870 ranked 45th in the state,

but by 1880 local growers ginned 18,956 bales, making Ellis County the 7th highest producer in Texas [8].

Some of the more successful farmers, such as Forrester, acquired additional lands that they either farmed themselves or leased to tenants. During the 1880s, Forrester purchased an additional 611 acres in the Godard, Bullion, and Fifer Surveys, according to Ellis County Ad Valorem Tax Rolls, making him one of the largest property owners in western Ellis County. Forrester and other farmers obtained these lands largely with profits realized from the lucrative cotton trade. Labor shortages continued to plague local cotton growers, however, and many area farmers embraced the sharecropping and tenant farm system as a method to cultivate the land and grow still more cotton. Greater availability of improved farmland encouraged a population surge, and the expanding sharecropping and tenant farm system provided job opportunities for many of the new residents. Between 1880 and 1890, the number of acres planted with cotton doubled and the number of bales rose by 230 percent [9]. By 1890 Ellis County was the state's largest producer of cotton, a position it held for much of the subsequent half century.

Forrester's success as a farmer and his sound agricultural practices assured him prominence as a leader within Boz, a dispersed rural community with a school, a gin, a blacksmith and a small cluster of stores that developed near the Forrester homestead. He and his family, which included wife Fannie, Joanna (born 1869), Benjamin, Jr. (born 1873), and Emma (born 1881) were active in the community. They worshiped at the Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church, South (now the Bethel Methodist Church) where Forrester was a Sunday School supervisor for 40 years [10]. He also served on the building committee that oversaw the construction of a new church after an 1892 storm destroyed the original sanctuary [11].

Forrester initially was devoted exclusively to farming, but as he became further involved in the tenant farm system and profited from the burgeoning cotton trade, he began to diversify his business interests. In 1921 he served as president of the Boz Gin Company, where most local farmers took their cotton to be ginned [12]. He invested in a Waxahachie cotton oil mill, which pressed previously discarded cotton seeds into oil used for a variety of purposes. Forrester also purchased stock in the Waxahachie Cotton Mill, a locally owned and operated factory that opened in 1901 [13].

Despite his relative wealth (his personal property and real estate holdings of 1910 were valued at \$27,965), Forrester continued to live in the house he built on the W. Estes Survey. Census records of 1910 note, however, that he no longer listed

his occupation as farmer and instead relied on his "own income," presumably referring to earnings he derived from tenant farmers [14]. On September 4, 1918, Forrester partitioned his property among his surviving children and he and his wife conveyed land that includes the family homestead to his daughter Emma, the wife of Charles Nelson Hampton, but reserved the right to live in the house for the remainder of their lives [15]. After the deaths of Fannie Forrester in 1920 and Benjamin F. Forrester, Sr. in 1929, Emma Hampton inherited the entire family homestead [16]. She and her husband moved into the house and continued to operate the farm, as well as supervise various tenant farms on other family-owned properties. The Hamptons, like the Forresters, were members of the Bethel Methodist Church and were involved in various clubs and social groups [17]. Emma Forrester Hampton died in 1944 and bequeathed the family homestead to her daughter Mary Frances Elliott, who lived in the house through 1991.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT:

### A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural Character:** Located in the vicinity of Waxahachie, in the historic but no longer community of Boz, is one of the best examples of late-nineteenth century vernacular houses in the area. This two-story, single-pile dwelling is an excellent example of an I-house with Greek and Gothic Revival details. It features a single cross-gable at the front elevation, a full length front porch, the remains of a gable end chimney, a two-story kitchen ell and two single-story porch additions. It survives with a barn, two cisterns, and a well house.
2. **Condition of the Fabric:** The house's chimney has collapsed; the roof and walls are in fair condition. The front porch has settled and brackets have been removed and window sash have either been damaged or are deteriorated. The one-and-a-half story ell is in fair condition. The rear porch additions are in poor condition. The outbuildings are in poor condition.

### B. Site:

1. **General Setting:** The house faces south and is located on a slight promontory, 0.2 mile northeast of the intersection of Bearden and Boz Roads. The house is approached from the road by a gravel drive.
2. **Buildings:** The site includes a one-story, single-crib barn, with two shed additions, HABS No. TX-3377-B; two cisterns and a well house HABS No. TX-3377-C.

3. Landscaping, Enclosures: The site is landscaped with plant material introduced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as native varieties. An early photograph (ca. 1900) documents that the yard of this house was well-maintained, was enclosed by a picket fence which was painted, and had a centrally-located gate. It featured the use of bois d'arcs both as ornamental and shade specimens, planted on either side of the house. The trees on the east side of the house remain, but the specimens on the west side have been removed. Ornamentals such as pomegranates are obscured by the fence in the photograph, but are present at the site. No planting beds are visible from the photograph and heavy undergrowth prevented their location. Honeysuckle appears adjacent to the west side of the house and may have been planted as a sun screen in fashion with other houses of the period. A bois d'arc hedgerow was planted along a line running west from the house to the second cistern.

PART III: ENDNOTES

1. Texas Family Land Heritage Registry, Volume 4, Austin: Texas Department of Agriculture, 1978) 16.
2. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record I:301; Texas Family Land Heritage Registry, 16.
3. Fred Kniffen, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion." Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture, edited by Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1986), 3-25.
4. U.S., Bureau of the Census, "Products of Agriculture," 1880.
5. U.S., Department of the Interior, Agriculture of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Eighth Census, by Joseph C. Kennedy, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864).
6. Killis P. Almond, Jr., and Randall W. Moir, "Historic Structures Management Plan, submitted to TNRLC on behalf of the U.S. Department of Energy in Support of the Superconducting Super Collider," 1992.
7. Almond and Moir, " Historic Structures Management Plan", 48.
8. U.S., Department of the Interior, Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883).
9. Almond and Moir, " Historic Structures Management Plan", 48.

10. Texas Family Land Heritage Registry, 16.
11. Edna Davis Hawkins et al., History of Ellis County Texas (Waco: Texian Press, 1972), 32.
12. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 362:471; Ibid, 852:876.
13. Hawkins et al., History of Ellis County Texas, 79.
14. U.S., Bureau of the Census, "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas," 1910.
15. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 273:569.
16. Ellis County Genealogical Society, Volume III, (Waxahachie, Texas: Ellis County Genealogical Society), 96-113; Ellis County, Texas, Probate Records.
17. Texas Family Land Heritage Registry, 16.

PART IV: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: No original plans or drawings are known to exist.
- B. Early Views: No early photographs have been located.
- C. Interviews:

McGregor, Frances Dunaway. Interviews by Terri Myers. Written notes. Waxahachie, Texas. 20 May 1992 and 12 June 1992.

Murdock, Stanley and Yula Glenn Murdock. Interview by Terri Myers. Written notes. Waxahachie, Texas. 12 June 1992.
- D. Bibliography:
  1. Primary and unpublished sources

Ellis County, Texas. Office of the County Clerk. Deed Records.

Ellis County, Texas. Office of the County Clerk. Probate Records.

Ellis County, Texas. Office of the County Tax Assessor/Collector. Tax Abstracts of Lands.

Texas. State Comptroller Office. Ad Valorem Tax Rolls for Ellis County. On file at the Genealogical Collection at the Texas State Library.

U.S. Department of the Interior. Report on the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895.

U.S. Department of the Interior. Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Ninth Census- Volume III: The Statistics of the Wealth and Industry of the United States, by Francis A. Walker. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas." 1870. U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas." 1880.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas." 1900.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas." 1910.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Products of Agriculture." 1870.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Products of Agriculture." 1880.

2. Secondary and published sources

Almond, Killis P., Jr., and Moir Randall W. "Historic Structures Management Plan, submitted to TNRLC on behalf of the U.S. Department of Energy in Support of the Superconducting Super Collider." 1992.

Ellis County Genealogical Society. Searchers and Researchers. Volume XV. Waxahachie, Texas: Ellis County Genealogical Society, 1992.

Ellis County Genealogical Society Record, Volume III. Waxahachie, Texas: Ellis County Genealogical Society.

Hardy, Daniel, and Moore, David. "Historic Resources Survey of Ellis County: An Inventory for the U.S. Department of Energy." 1990.

Hawkins, Edna Davis, Ruth Stone, Ida M. Brookshire and Lillie Tolleson. History of Ellis County Texas. Waco: Texian Press, 1972.

Kniffen, Fred. "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion." Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture. Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, editors. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1986.

A Memorial and Biographical History of Ellis County, Texas. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1892; reprint ed., Ellis County Historical Museum and Art Gallery, Inc., Fort Worth: Historical Publishers, 1972.

Texas Family Land Heritage Registry. Volume 4. Austin: Texas Department of Agriculture, 1978.

#### PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) recording project was undertaken by the Texas National Research Laboratory Commission (TNRLC) in conjunction with the Superconducting Super Collider Project in Ellis County. The project was conducted in accordance with TNRLC's Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Energy, The Texas Historical Commission and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The MOA stipulates that a record be created of buildings to be demolished in the project area. The field work and measured drawings were prepared by ArchiTexas of Dallas. The recording team consisted of Bruce Fowler, Gary Garmon, Gilbert Hickox, Larry Irsik, Craig King, Richard Martratt, Craig Melde, Jeanie O'Brien, Ernesto Robles, Edward Sergeant, Gary Skotnicki, Stan Solamillo, and Diane Van Buren. Historical Research was conducted under the supervision of David Moore of Hardy, Heck, Moore of Austin. Architectural analysis and descriptions were prepared by Stan Solamillo of Dallas. Archival photography was by Brendan Dunnigan and Doug Hankins of Arlington.