

General Barnes Plantation House
Anderson Vicinity, Grimes County
Texas

HABS No. TEX-287

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
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GENERAL BARNES PLANTATION HOUSE

Anderson Vicinity, Grimes County, Texas

ADDRESS: East of the Anderson-Plantersville Road (FM 1774)
about two and one-half miles southeast of Anderson

OWNER: Allen G. Hill, grandson of General James W. Barnes

OCCUPANT: Mr. and Mrs. Allen G. Hill

USE: Farm House

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Earlier known as Prairie Woods, it is one of the earliest and best of the plantation houses in the area. The east, two-story log portion was built in 1842; this was refinished and the major portion of the house was completed in 1858. Originally the headquarters of a nine-hundred acre plantation, the house, in its neglected state, still reflects the dignity of the period in which it was built.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Physical History

Original and subsequent owners: Land acquired by James W. Barnes in 1840, a plantation of 900 acres. Title of a portion of the original tract has remained in the family since that date. House and farm now owned by Allen G. Hill, grandson of the original owner, General James W. Barnes.

Date of erection: An original 12' x 14' log house was erected near the present site. In 1842 a two-story, two-room log house

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with fireplaces and exterior stair was built. Additions and rebuilding of this structure brought the house to its present form in 1858; these included finishing the log portion inside and out, building a large central hall and adjacent enclosed stairway, the addition of the two large west rooms, and the shed portion to the northward, and the construction of the two-story south porch. A letter of 1884 by General Barnes tells of the completion of the house: "Just before the war in 1858, we made a finish of our dwelling and it was about the best private residence in the county. It was an addition to the old two-story log house and was finished in good, but plain style from cellar to garrett." A letter of General Barnes in possession of the family.

There is no information about the designers or builders. No plans, sketches or notes of the original construction exist. No important old views are available.

Originally the kitchen and dining room were in an adjacent building. A bathing room was built in 1858. It had a large bathing tub supplied with water pumped from the cistern, and above it was a bucket with holes in the bottom and a valve operated with a string. "I wish you could see how convenient it is all fixed." (from a letter written by General Barnes' wife to her sister in 1858)

Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

James W. Barnes, born in Hancock County, Georgia, October 5, 1815, lived in Kemper County, Mississippi. Married Carolina A. Greene and moved to Polk County, Texas in 1840. In the fall of 1840 he came to Grimes County and acquired land east of Fanthrop (now called Anderson). He was commissioned a Brigadier General of the Confederacy and served throughout the War. His 17 year old son, Mark, died serving in the Confederate Army.

From 1852 to 1871 James W. Barnes was a trustee of Baylor College at Independence. For a number of years he taught Latin there. He died in 1892 and was buried on the plantation eastward of the house.

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ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

General Statement

Architectural character: Although remodelled from an earlier log structure, the finished two-story structure is a good example of the characteristic plan and form of the Classical Revival Period. While the detailing does not follow the handbooks of the skilled craftsmen of the Old South, it is a bold example of the adaptation of the wood classical forms in the frontier area. Though now neglected, the two-story south porch, with its square columns and fine side-lighted main doors, is well proportioned.

Condition of the Fabric: Poor, neglected; needs paint and repair inside and out. Only three of the seven rooms used today. Settling and leaning of the east large chimney threatens to endanger the whole structure of the house.

Technical Description of the Exterior

Overall dimensions: Two-story portion - 33'-5" x 64'-9".

Foundations: Mortared stone on the two-story section. Inadequate foundation and the proximity of the cellar apparently has caused the east large chimney to settle and lean westward, causing frame of the whole house to shift dangerously.

Wall construction: The two east rooms, first and second floors, were built of cedar logs, later refinished inside and out. Other portions of the house, built in 1858, are of heavy pine braced frame construction covered with pine siding applied with cut nails.

Chimneys: Built of local stone, plastered on exterior.

Openings:

Doorways and doors - main (south) entrance doors, double panelled doors with glazed transoms and side-lights. Doors on second floor similar without transoms.

Windows - double-hung, 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " sash; 9 lights upper, 6 lights lower usual; some have original glazing.

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Roof: Hip roof over two-story portion; gable over porch; shed roofs over additions. Probably covered with split shingles originally; now metal covered.

Cornice: An unusual design with three rows of dentils on south, east and west sides of two-story section. (not on north side)

Porch Columns: Well-formed columns and pilasters, square with moulded caps. Lower columns missing, replaced with iron pipe columns.

Technical Description of Interiors

Floor Plans: Large central hall with rooms on either side. Enclosed stairway leading to upper floor. Three rooms upstairs, used only for storage.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: Originally plaster on wood lath. Room on southwest, first floor, recently refinished in knotty pine panelling. Hall has wainscot.

Fireplace Mantels: One mantel removed from southwest room is still stored in the house; an attractive wood mantel of delicately shaped classic design.

Lighting: Electric power recently introduced; lower rooms now lighted with electricity, kitchen has electric refrigerator. Upper rooms not in use.

SITE

General Setting and Orientation: Situated on a rounded hilltop, it has an attractive view across the countryside. Trees to the southward had been cleared to give a distant vista.

Enclosures: Original fence between yard and pasture probably a picket fence painted white. Present fence, wire.

Outbuildings: There are farm outbuildings to the eastward side of the yard.

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REFERENCES

Published: Irene Taylor Allen, THE SAGA OF ANDERSON, Greenwich Book Publishers, N.Y. 1957.

Other Sources: Letters in possession of the family. Letter written by General Barnes' wife to her sister dated April 2, 1858. Letter written by General Barnes in 1884 describing the building of the house.

Interviews: With Mr. and Mrs. Allen P. Hill

Published Views: Illustration (view from south) opposite page 66, in THE SAGA OF ANDERSON (above noted).

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