

W.P.A. Dynamite Storage Facility
Colorado-Concho Rivers Confluence Area
West of Leaday-Hill Road
South of Leaday townsite
Voss Vicinity
Coleman County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3360

HABS
TEX
42-VOS.V,
13-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION DYNAMITE STORAGE FACILITY

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TEX
42-VOS.V,
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I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Located .1 mile east of the Colorado River, .1 mile west of Leaday-Hill Road, 1.5 miles south of Leaday townsite, Voss vicinity, Coleman County, State of Texas

Quad: Leaday Quadrangle

UTM: 14.436273.3490152

Date of Construction: Circa 1936-1941

Present Owner: Commerce State Bank of Kansas City, trustee for Jo Zach Miller IV, et.al.; permanent easement granted in 1986 to the Colorado River Municipal Water District

Significance: The facility was constructed to store dynamite used during the construction of a number of W.P.A. bridges along an adjacent ranch road. The road was an old road on the Day-Miller Ranch improved during the Depression at a time when the numerous schools on this and the adjoining ranches were being consolidated.

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

II. HISTORY

A. AN OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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

B. THE SITE IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

The dynamite storage facility is situated on a bluff above the Colorado River on the present-day Day-Miller Ranch. It is located on land which was patented to the school commissioners of Fort Bend County in 1848 and sold by them to William H. Day in 1878.¹ This was part of a very large tract of Coleman County lands which would comprise Day's ranch, a total of many thousands of acres which stretched from Grape Creek to the north, Elm Creek to the east, bordering on the west and south to the Colorado River. The site is on a portion of the ranch which Day fenced and which became known as the Red Wire Pasture. This portion of the ranch passed to the Miller family in 1907 and henceforth has been known as the Day-Miller Ranch.² During a period from 1904 to shortly after World War I the ranch was subdivided into tenant farms; but when the tenant system failed, the farms were reintegrated into the ranch, and a configuration of land use and property ownership was resumed comparable to the period when William Day first began to fence the open range. The Day-Miller ranch has remained in the ownership of Miller heirs.

In a period beginning in 1936 the nearby Leaday school and other small schools on this and the adjoining ranches were being consolidated, the Day-Miller Ranch schools consolidating with the school district centered at the community of Mozelle three miles to the east.³ Children who heretofore walked to the little schools which dotted the ranches were now transported in school buses across old ranch roads improved with a series of W.P.A.-sponsored bridges constructed in the period 1936-1941.⁴ A number of these bridges were built along the Day-Miller ranch

road which crossed the Red Wire Pasture from Leaday to the Hill community; several were built only a few hundred feet from the dynamite storage facility. This small half-dugout structure was located within a little hillside west of this road and used during the road and bridge construction for the storage of the dynamite itself; the blasting caps were kept on another hill nearby. At the top of a ridge between these two storage facilities was a rough shelter for a 24-hour guard to maintain watch over these sheds.⁵ Only the ruins of the dynamite storage shed remain.

For a more comprehensive history of the Day Ranch and vicinity and biographical information on William and Mahel Day and the Miller family see HABS No. TX-3351: Mabel Doss Day Lea House; HABS No. TX-3362: Leaday Townsite; HABS No. TX-3363: Day-Padgitt Ranch Tenant House; and HAER No. TX-15: Silo. For a discussion of the consolidation of the schools and the new bridges on the Day-Miller Ranch see HABS No. TX-3353: Leaday School; HAER No. TX-16, 17, and 18: W.P.A. Bridges; also HAER No. TX-14: Lime Kiln.

III. THE DYNAMITE STORAGE SHED

A. DESCRIPTION

The facility is located against the side of a little hill which is part of a low formation rising in the direction of the Leaday-Hill Road about 500 feet to the east. The half-dugout structure was created by a slight excavation in the hillside; its earthen sides were retained on three sides with heavy 2-inch by 8-inch wood planks laid horizontally. The fourth side, or front, of the structure had been framed for a hinged plank batten door constructed of 1-inch by 8-inch members; most of this frame and the door have fallen away. The roof has also collapsed; it was composed of the same sized wooden members as the retaining walls and covered with earth. The plan of this small rough structure was

approximately 3 feet by 5 feet, with a height to the low roof of approximately 4 feet.

B. PRESENT CONDITION AND FUTURE OF THE SITE

The structure is in ruins. The timber roof has collapsed and bits of its fabric scattered across the site. Permanent easement to the site was granted to the Colorado River Municipal Water District by the Miller heirs in 1986.⁶

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 Austin environmental consultants. 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 recordation 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, and the threat of inundation of the dynamite storage shed is possible in the near future.

IV. ENDNOTES

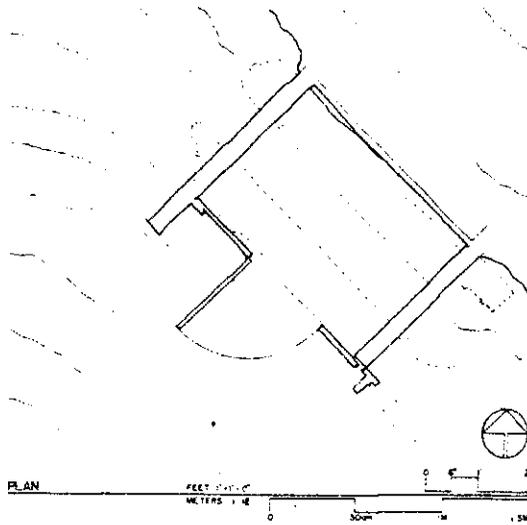
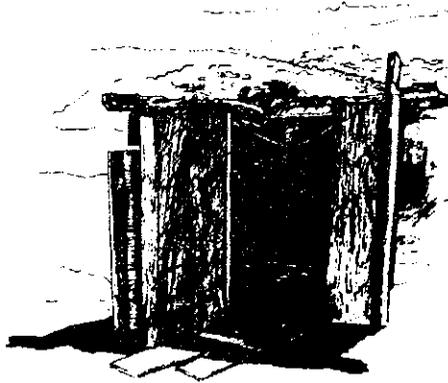
1. Reference is to Coleman County Courthouse, Deed Record vol. B, 572 and 573; Fort Bend School Lands to William H. Day, 9 April 1878.
2. Ibid., vol. 64, 7-11; Willie Mabel Day Padgitt to Jo Zach Miller, 1 October 1907.
3. For a discussion of the consolidation of the schools, see Ralph Terry's essay, "Leaday Schools," published in Coleman County Historical Commission, A History of Coleman County and Its People vol. 1, (San Angelo, Texas: Anchor Publishing Company, 1985), vol. 1, 152.
4. For a discussion of the various Coleman County relief organizations active during these years, see Glynn Mitchell's essay in Coleman County Historical Commission, vol. I., 77-80.
5. Interview with Elmo Hudson, Leaday, Texas, 14 June 1989; interview by Patrick L. O'Neill, Mariah Associates, Inc.
6. Coleman County Courthouse, District Clerk's Office; Commerce State Bank of Kansas City (trustee for Jo Zach Miller IV et.al.), grants of permanent easement to Colorado River Municipal Water District, 22 December 1986. This judgment on condemnation proceedings is not yet filed on record.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Sketch plan of site

VI. 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; project photographer was Paul Neidinger, photographic processing by Laura McFarlane.



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WPA PROJECT COLEMAN COUNTY TEXAS HABS NO. TX-3360