

PLEASANT RETREAT PLANTATION HOUSE
(Stroud Ranch House)
Groesbeck vicinity
Limestone County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3492

HABS
TEX
147-GROE.V,
1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location: Pleasant Retreat was located on the south side of the Navasota River approximately four miles northwest of the modern town of Groesbeck, in Limestone County, Texas.

A concrete dam was constructed across the river near this place by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Completed in 1939, the dam impounded the waters of Lake Springfield, which cover a portion of the Pleasant Retreat property. A portion also was included in Fort Parker State Park, created in 1935. The plantation house, however, continued to exist on privately owned land, used for farming and ranching, until it was demolished in 1944.

Date: 1855.¹

Description: Built just twenty years after the first Anglo-American settlers in the county-to-be had built their provisional cedar log cabins and a communal settlers' fort (Fort Parker). Pleasant Retreat can be counted as an informative example of the second generation of domestic building in the historical development of Limestone County and eastern central Texas. It represents the ideals of Greek Revival architecture pragmatically adapted to pioneer conditions. The house was a type that existed all across the lower South. Its ultimate extension into central Texas occurred mainly in the last decade of the ante-bellum period, when it also reached its westernmost limit. This simplified Greek Revival can thus be seen as architectural expression of antebellum Southern culture at its chronological and geographical terminus. For further on this interpretation see Ernest Allen Connally, "Architecture at the End of the South: Central Texas," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, vol. XI, no. 4 (December, 1952), pp. 8-12.

Pleasant Retreat was a one-story, wood-frame house built on a central-hall plan with an ell two rooms deep on one side. The front portion consisted of the entrance hall, and large rooms with a fireplace on each side; the ceilings were twelve feet high. The interior walls and ceilings were finished with smooth shiplap painted light grey. The ell made a file of three rooms on one side of the building. The gallery flanking the ell was in effect an extension of the central hall.

The front of the house was dominated by the central tetrastyle portico, the principal feature of the building, with its four box columns more widely spaced in the central intercolumnation provide axial emphasis. Corresponding to the columns were pilasters where the portico joined the house and at the corners of the building. The entrance portal consisted of a single-leaf door surrounded by sidelights and transom lights. The front wall under the portico was finished with tightly-jointed shiplap to read as a seamless surface, painted white. The rest of the exterior walls were covered with clapboards, painted a very light grey, as were the columns and pilasters. The windows were fitted

¹Date provided in 1942 by Mary Stroud Wilson, granddaughter of Logan Stroud.

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with nine-over-nine lights in double-hung sash. (Some later placements had six-over-six lights). The underpinning consisted of blocks of native stone. The symmetry of the front of the house was slightly comprised: The roof ridge parallel to the front wall terminated at the left end in a gable, while on the right it terminated in a hip for the extension of the roof over the ell. This is an unusual arrangement for this sort of house.

Formal landscape treatment was limited to two pairs of cedars symmetrically placed with respect to the portico, a standard arrangement in the lower South. A broad lawn on the entrance side was clipped by grazing sheep.

Condition: Pleasant Retreat was vacant but in sound condition in 1942, when it was measured and drawn by Ernest A. Connally.

Significance: Pleasant Retreat was built for Logan Stroud (1814-1911), a Georgian who came to the Republic of Texas in 1837 with his father, Ethan Stroud (1788-1846). They acquired plantations in several counties, and in 1842 Logan Stroud settled in the upper part of Robertson County that was cut out as Limestone County in 1846. He settled on the south side of the Navasota River near Bur Oak Springs and developed a cotton plantation and cattle ranch that extended at one time over about 5,000 acres. The place also produced corn, wheat, oats, hogs, and sheep. By the time of the Civil War, Logan Stroud was the largest slave holder in the county, owning more than 100 Negroes.

The Emancipation Proclamation was read in Limestone County from the portico of Pleasant Retreat, on Saturday, June 19, 1865.² (Not so late a date in Texas because General Kirby Smith did not surrender the Trans-Mississippi Department until May 26, 1865). The holiday "June 19" -- popularly called "Juneteenth" -- became a special day of celebration for the black population of Texas. Its observance has spread to other states.

Prepared By: Ernest A. Connally, July 1998.

²Ray A. Walter, A History of Limestone County (Austin, 1959), p. 54.

ADDENDUM TO:
PLEASANT RETREAT PLANTATION HOUSE
(Stroud Ranch House)
South side of Mavasota River, four miles northwest of Groesbeck
Groesbeck vicinity
Limestone County
Texas

HABS TX-3492
HABS TEX, 147-GROE.V, 1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

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These two data pages are an addendum to the two-page historical report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Below are copies of three field photographs taken by Ernest Allen Connally in 1942.



