

OLD G.H. CUNNINGHAM FARMSTEAD, MAIN HOUSE  
140' southwest of Curry Road  
Waxahachie Vicinity  
Ellis County  
Texas

HABS No. TX-3378-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY**  
**Southwest System Support Office**  
**National Park Service**  
**P.O. Box 728**  
**Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504**

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### OLD G.H. CUNNINGHAM FARMSTEAD, MAIN HOUSE

HABS NO. TX-3378-A

**Location:** 140' Southwest of Curry Road  
Waxahachie vicinity, Ellis County, Texas

**Present Owner:** Texas National Research Laboratory Commission  
(TNRLC)  
1801 N. Hampton Road, Suite 400  
DeSoto, Texas 75115

**Present Occupant:** None

**Present Use:** Vacant

**Significance:** The Cunningham Farmstead Main House is a component of the Old G. H. Cunningham Farmstead that was associated with George H. Cunningham, who owned vast amounts of land in Ellis and nearby counties. Cunningham was more interested in land acquisition than farming.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. General Statement:

1. **History:** The house was enlarged through four phases of construction. The original building form which dates to ca. 1856, was a double-pile Cumberland, 1 2/3 pile in depth (100, 101, 104, 105, 106), the limits of which are evident from the original timber frame bents erected during that period. A single room (102) and 2/3 pile (103) were added to the gable end ca. 1870. The ell addition (107), with shed porches were added ca. 1890, enlarging an existing room (105), and enclosing the east porch for storage (108). The roof was rebuilt, the front porch was fully-engaged and the bathroom (104) installed ca. 1940.

#### PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

##### A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural Character:** The main house is a one-story Cumberland with a gable end, ell, and shed porch additions. (See photographic documentation HABS No. TX-3378-A-1 through HABS No. TX-3378-A-10 and HABS drawings, Sheets 1 through 3. Room numbers on the drawings are indicated in parentheses).

**B. Description of Exterior:**

1. **Overall Dimensions:** The building, including the front porch, gable end, ell and porch additions, measures 50'-7" across and 54'-4" in depth.
2. **Foundations:** Piers are of dry-laid, undressed stone piers, located at regular intervals, and are covered with tapered 9/16" thick lapped wood siding, with a 5" exposure.
3. **Wall Construction:** Exterior walls of the earliest portion of the house range from 5 1/2" to 5 3/4" in thickness, and are covered in random-width, lapped wood siding, 9/16" in thickness and tapered, with an exposure ranging from 5 3/4" to 7 1/4". The building is trimmed at the corners with 1"x4 1/2" corner boards, and terminate into a 1"x9" friezeboard or later 1"x6" friezeboard with 1"x3 1/2" trim. The exterior walls of the gable end and ell additions are typically 5 1/2" in thickness and are covered in lapped wood siding, 1/2" in thickness and tapered, with a 4 1/2" exposure. The additions are trimmed at the corners with 3 1/2" to 4 1/2" corner boards, terminating into a 6" frieze board.
4. **Structural System, Framing:** The original house is of timber frame construction and includes hewn sills and summer beams, ranging from 6 3/4" to 7 1/2" in width and 9" in depth, with bridled joints at the corners, and lapped joints, pinned at mid-span. The frame bents consist of hewn 6"x6" corner posts which have been trenched to a 4" depth, forming an inside ell-shaped corner to reduce wall thickness, and teaze tenoned into 4"x6" tie beams. They were raised and held in place by 4"x5 1/2" tension braces, tenoned into the sills. The plates are hewn 4"x6" members, lapped and pinned at mid-span, without compression braces. Floor framing for the original house consists of log sleepers, laid north-south, ranging in caliper from 7" - 8" in caliper. They are hewn on the top face and at the ends to a 4"x4" tenon, and let into the sills with butt cog joints. Intermediate studs are circular-sawn, full-dimension 2"x4" members, tusk tenoned into sills, plates, and tie beams.

Selective demolition was concentrated on defining the limits of the original bents and cells (100, 102, 104, 105, 106) and therefore, evidence for brace frame construction in the gable end addition (102) was not confirmed. The ell addition (107,

108) is of balloon frame construction. Wall framing consists of circular-sawn full-dimension 2"x4" studs. Roof framing consists of circular-sawn, full dimension 2"x4" members.

5. Porches: The entrance porch is 50'-7" x 7'-8" with a smooth-finish concrete floor and a single concrete tread. It is covered with an engaged shed roof, supported by nominal 4"x4" posts, covered with lapped siding at the ends, and simply trimmed with a 1"x4 1/2" and 1"x8" fascia boards, with crude returns formed from nominal-sized 2"x4" wood members. The east and west ell porches, measuring 20'-3" x 6'-1", are supported by nominal sized 4"x4" posts and are floored with 3/4"x3 1/4" tongue and groove floorboards and smooth-finish concrete, respectively. They are trimmed with a 7 1/2" frieze board at the ends and a 3 3/4" fascia board, with shoe and shingle molds.
6. Chimneys: Two exterior chimneys served single fireplaces in the west and east rooms (100, 101). The chimney for the east room (101) has been removed and its stone base is located beneath the floor, while the other remains, partially dismantled. The remaining exterior chimney is constructed of red brick, laid in running bond, with a typical mortar joint thickness of 3/16", has stepped shoulders, and is built on a base of stepped brick on mortared, coarsed stone. There is evidence that it is been repointed and rebricked.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and Doors: The original front doorways have two-panelled doors, measuring 3'-1" x 7'-0". These are early door types, of board with chamfered batten construction, and feature unmolded panels with plain rails and styles. They are simply cased with 4" trim, edged with 1/2"x1 1/2" stock, and terminating into plain 4"x7" corner blocks. The ell and gable end additions feature later five-panel, and two-panel doors, 2'-6 1/4" x 6'-7" and 2'-8" x 6'-8", or 2'-7 3/4" x 6'-8 1/2", respectively.
  - b. Windows: Original windows are double-hung, six-over-six wood sash, measuring 5'-9 1/4" x 2'-10 3/4". They are simply cased with 4" trim, edged with 1/2"x1 1/2" stock, and terminating into plain 4"x7" corner blocks. Windows from the first phase addition are double-hung, four-over-four wood sash, measuring 2'-0 1/2" in width and have

heights varying from 5'-1" to 5'-8 1/2". Heads and jambs are cased with 4 1/2" trim, and do not have drip caps. Double-hung, two-over-two as well as reused six-over-six wood sash, measuring 2'-0 1/2" x 5'-1" and 2'-8" x 5'-0 1/4" respectively, are located in the ell addition and are similarly cased without drip caps.

**8. Roof:**

a. Shape, Covering: Roofs are gabled and slopes vary. There is evidence that the roof of the original house was rebuilt with a lower pitch of 6 in 12. The roofs of the ell addition and shed porches have slopes of 10 in 12 and 4 in 12, respectively.

b. Cornice: A simple boxed soffit with bed and shoe mold form the cornice.

**C. Description of Interior:**

**1. Floor Plans:**

a. First Floor: Entry is made from the front porch directly into one of three rooms; the southwest (100) and southeast (101) rooms of the original double pen, or the later parlor (102) with a related room (103), which forms the gable end addition. A bathroom (104) is entered through a doorway in the west wall, through which access is made back into the original 2/3 pile room of the house (104, 105) and an adjacent storage room (106). Access to the kitchen and ell addition (107) which is flanked by two porches, is provided by a door located in the north wall of the room (105). An enclosed porch addition is located adjacent to the east wall of the kitchen (107) and serves as a storage room.

2. Flooring: Original flooring in the rooms (100, 101, 105) of the timber frame house are laid east-west and are 3/4"x5 1/4" tongue and groove. Random width floorboards, ranging from 3 1/4" to 5 1/4" have been laid east-west in the bathroom (104). 3/4"x7" tongue and groove floorboards have been laid east-west in the storage room (106). Rooms in the gable end addition (102, 103) are finished in 3/4"x5" tongue and groove, laid in a similar direction. The flooring of the ell addition is 3/4"x3 1/4" tongue and groove, laid north-south. Replacement floor boards of similar dimension and orientation

have been laid over original floorboards in the southeast and southwest rooms (100, 101) and in a closet (102).

3. **Wall and Ceiling Finish:** Interior wall thickness varies from 3/4" and 2 3/4" for plank frame partitions to 5 1/2" for the original timber frame house and 5 3/4" for the gable end addition. Wall finishes for the southeast and southwest rooms (100, 102) are 3/4" thick, random-width, horizontally-laid boards, ranging from 7" to 12" in width, and have been covered with a layer of cheesecloth and wallpaper. The ceilings are covered in 3/4"x7 1/4" tongue and groove, and with cheesecloth and wallpaper. The southeast and northeast rooms (102, 103) of the gable end addition have a wall finish of horizontally-laid boards, 3/4" thick and 11 1/2" in width. The ceilings of both rooms are 1/2"x5" beaded wall board and all walls and ceilings are surfaced in cheesecloth and wallpaper. The bathroom (104), storage room (106), and hall (105) feature walls covered in 3/4"x9" boards with 1" batten finish, which have been painted, as well as 3/4" thick, random-width tongue and groove sheathing. The ceilings are covered in 3/4"x5 1/4" tongue and groove sheathing laid east-west, overlaid in 1/2" painted gypsum board. Kitchen (107) and porch storage room (108) walls and ceilings are covered in 5/8"x3 1/4" beaded wall board, and have been painted.
4. **Doorways and Doors:** Original doors are two and four-panel, measuring 3'-0 1/4" x 7'-0" and 2'-6 1/2" x 6'-6" or 6'-7". Two-panel doors are cased with 4" trim, edged with 1/2"x1 1/2" stock, and terminating into plain 4"x7" corner blocks. Heads and jambs of four-panel doors feature a plain 4" trim but lack the edge trim and corner blocks. Later five-panel and board and batten doors, measuring 2'-8" x 6'-8" and 3'-11" x 6'-11", respectively, are present in the ell addition. Heads and jambs are cased in similar fashion to the four-panel doors.
5. **Decorative Features:** The mantels in the southeast (100) and southwest (101) rooms have been removed. Painted outlines on the sheathing boards indicate that the mantel shelves were edged with a cornice mold. No evidence was found to indicate the shape of either pilasters or breast boards.
6. **Lighting Fixtures:** All light fixtures have been removed.

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- 7. Heating: Fireplaces provided heat for two rooms (100, 101).  
A metal flue serving a wood-burning stove was used in the  
west room (100). Open gas heaters were later used in all  
parts of the house.**