

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Presnall-Watson Homestead
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: NA

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 1349 Neal Road NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio VICINITY
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Bexar CODE: 029 ZIP CODE: 78269

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official / Title State Historic Preservation Officer _____
Date
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____
Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- other, explain
 See continuation sheet.

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY

CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING	
6	0	buildings
6	0	sites
3	4	structures
0	0	objects
15	4	total

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: DOMESTIC: single dwelling, secondary structures;
 AGRICULTURAL / SUBSISTENCE: agricultural field, agricultural outbuildings

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: WORK IN PROGRESS, NOT IN USE

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: OTHER: Modified I-plan House; NO STYLE; N/A

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION STONE/limestone, WOOD
 WALLS STONE/limestone, WOOD
 ROOF METAL
 OTHER

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-15)

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

X	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
X	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: NA

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHEOLOGY: Prehistoric/aboriginal, Historic/aboriginal and non-aboriginal; AGRICULTURE; ARCHITECTURE

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 7900 B.C. – 1400 A.D.; 1854-1962

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1854, 1884

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: Early, Middle, and Late Archaic

ARCHITECT / BUILDER: unknown

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-16 through 8-24)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-25)

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office *Texas Historical Commission, Austin*
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government *City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office*
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: 188 acres

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	14	546673	3235720
2.	14	546591	3236040
3.	14	546613	3236494
4.	14	547224	3236860
5.	14	547057	3237090
6.	14	547243	3235730

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The 188 acre property at 1349 Neal Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, also known as also known as Parcel 182440, is described by metes and bounds in the deed records of Bexar County, Vol. 04756, pp. 976-0983. The legal description is "CB 4181 P-1 ABS 465 (SOUTHSIDE STUDY AREA 3 ANNEXATION)."

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The nomination includes all property under current ownership that is historically associated with the resources. The nominated 188 acres were associated with the Presnall-Watson Homestead from 1854 to 1974 and includes the cluster of historic buildings and structures on 1.9 acres, as described in this nomination. The property is bounded by Neal Road on the south, and old fence line connecting the road on the southeast to the Medina River, the riverbank around the northern edge of the parcel to the property line at the northeast. The east property line then bisects Neal Road once more, enclosing the parcel.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Imogen Cooper, in consultation with Herbert Uecker, Director and Principal Investigator, South Texas Archeological Research Services, LLC, and Rachel Leibowitz and Gregory Smith, THC

ORGANIZATION: Preservation Matters

DATE: Sept. 1, 2011

STREET & NUMBER: 16407 Colts Bay

TELEPHONE: (210) 393-6511

CITY OR TOWN: Selma

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78154

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheets Map-26 through Map-35)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheets Photo-48 through Photo-50)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-36 through Figure-47)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Land Heritage Institute (Mark Oppelt, President)

STREET & NUMBER: 114 East Cevallos Street

TELEPHONE: (210) 829-1737

CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78204

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Presnall-Watson Homestead
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Description

The Presnall-Watson Homestead in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, is the historic headquarters for a prosperous farm and ranch complex that was owned sequentially by two locally important families. The property is in south-central Bexar County, approximately 15 miles from the city's central business district. The homestead is situated east of the Medina River on a bluff that is 262 feet above the river's southern bank, 1.2 miles west of its confluence with the Leon Creek. Historic resources at the 188-acre homestead include six buildings and three structures that are tightly clustered together. The original 2-story stone I-plan dwelling (c.1854) was modified by several wood frame additions in the mid- to late-1880s. Other contributing resources include a large metal barn, a small stone kitchen, a small water tank, a watering trough; and a large earthen stock tank/pond. Of the thirteen buildings and structures, nine are contributing due to their high level of integrity, with construction dates during the complex's historic period of significance (1854-1962). The current owner, the Land Heritage Institute, plans to restore some of the buildings and establish a living history center to demonstrate Texas farming and ranching techniques from the mid-19th to the early-20th century. The property also includes all or parts of six archaeological sites registered with the State of Texas and assigned official state trinomials (41BX537, 41BX538, 41BX539, 41BX540, 41BX831, 41BX833). Five of these sites contain prehistoric artifacts from the early, middle and late archaic periods, from the period 7900 B.C. to 1400 A.D., and historic period artifacts from the mid-19th through early 20th centuries. They are among 90 sites discovered and investigated between 1981 and 2008 in conjunction with the San Antonio Water System's proposed Applewhite Reservoir Project and the creation of a hike and bike trail along the Medina River by the City of San Antonio. They are broadly distributed across the Presnall-Watson acreage and vary in size and significance. All six recorded sites contribute to the significance of the homestead district.

Setting

Entrance to the Presnall-Watson Homestead is from Neal Road through a contemporary ranch gate at least two miles from the original gate on Old Neal Road; one first travels northeast and then due north over a paved lane surrounded by mesquite trees. Upon arrival to the homestead's original entrance at Old Neal Road, the corner of the Presnall-Watson House is already visible. Rounding the curve, the entire west side of the house comes into view, with its formal, two-story front porch spanning the length of the southeast façade. During the early twentieth century, however, the approach to the property was much more open and devoid of large trees, as shown by a family painting, so that the view included the pond (currently dry) and the property's large and small barns. The dwelling is a large, two-part Texas vernacular farmhouse that employs a double I-house plan, in which the original house (an I-plan) is constructed of tan-colored sandstone blocks; however, that house is now completely obscured by later wood frame additions that wrap it.¹ The most prominent of these additions is a two-story, I-plan house that is now the major façade of the dwelling, expressing the Watsons' continued prosperity as they farmed and ranched on the property in the early twentieth century.² A fenced yard surrounds the house, as shown by the 1991 HABS site plan, which notes several types of fencing materials and a wire loop gate.³

A complex of additional buildings is behind the house and toward the Medina River. Illustrated in a 2005 site plan, the

¹ Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, eds., *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 450. The "I" in "I-house plan" stems from the identification of this plan form in houses built in Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa.

² Fisher-Heck, Inc. Architects, *Historic Resource Condition Assessment with Preliminary Rehabilitation Recommendations for the Presnall-Watson Homestead*, (San Antonio: Land Heritage Institute, privately published, 2005), B-6.

³ HABS-documentation drawings, published with permission by Killis Almond, Almond Architects, 1991.

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complex contains the sandstone block kitchen (keyed as “C”), barns, a water trough, a collapsed pole barn, and a garage—all connected by worn dirt trails within the complex. Beyond the lane to the south and facing the house is the former stock pond, which historically was spring-fed; Watson descendants recall that the springs kept the pond full until a drought in the 1950s, after which the water tables may have dropped permanently, causing the pond to remain dry.⁴

The six archaeological sites contained within the 189-acre site are inventoried following the inventory of historic properties and shown as comments on Maps 9, 10 & 11. As required by the National Historic Preservation Act and the Antiquities Code of Texas, the sites were each investigated more than once between 1981 and 2008, first because of impending inundation in conjunction with Applewhite Reservoir Project and later because the City of San Antonio built a pedestrian trail along the Medina River through portions of the sites. Salvage archaeology was required for the reservoir project initially; however, in 1994 the project was abandoned, prior to completion, after the citizens of San Antonio voted twice to discontinue it. The hiking trail was completed by the City of San Antonio in 2009.

INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

A. Presnall-Watson House (1854; ca. 1884; ca. 1930; ca. 1944; contributing) (Photos 1-7)

Description: A modified two-story vernacular frame-and-stone house whose wood additions now completely surround and hide a small, stone house, complete with full basement and a central stone fireplace and chimney. The entire dwelling is a two-part building and could be characterized as a T-plan, but it is truly a “double” I-house, with the stone-core house as one “I,” with the T crossed by a second “I”—the earliest (ca. 1884) and most imposing addition to the house. The two-story, rectangular addition is perpendicular to and south of the stone house.

The earliest extant structure on the property is the stone house built by Harrison Presnall, with assistance from his brother-in-law Stephen Applewhite, when the Presnall and Applewhite families first settled their adjacent properties between 1852 and 1854. Constructed of soft, yellow sandstone blocks with mud mortar, this two-room masonry building contains a central chimney made of the same sandstone masonry blocks, and two fireplaces.⁵ The house is built on a two-room basement, also with a fireplace, and is now accessed by masonry stairs; a separate set of stairs leads into the main rooms of the stone house.

The Watsons prospered after they bought the 655-acre homestead from Susan Presnall in 1883, and they added the first and most impressive of the four frame additions to the house. This raised, two-story, rectangular addition—which dominates the mass of the house with its deep, double-height porches—runs the full length of the front façade.⁶ Set perpendicular to and south of the stone house, it was added sometime after 1883, perhaps as late as the 1890s. The hipped roof is clad with standing-seam metal. Formal and symmetrical, the addition has pairs of double-hung wood windows on

⁴ Author’s interview with Alma Ann Midgett, August, 2009. The pond’s mud may also have saved the life of five-year-old Ralph Watson, youngest son of John Watson, Sr., whose toe was bitten by a rattlesnake. To ease the pain while he waited for help, he stood in the cooling mud of the pond. Family members think the cold waters slowed the progress of the poison until help arrived.

⁵ “The centrally located fireplace gives credence to the thought that the earliest remaining secondary outbuilding is the stone kitchen, as the fireplace would make the entire Presnall house too warm in summer for comfort.” Fisher-Heck, Inc. Architects, B-8.

⁶ During the 1980s, after construction of the Applewhite Reservoir project was discontinued, the porches were rebuilt at the most basic level with plywood decking and safety railing. The farmhouse is entirely secured and stabilized. Painted a stark white, its doors and windows covered and bolted shut, it has a standing-seam metal roof and retains its mixture of wood and asbestos-sheet siding.

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Presnall-Watson Homestead
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either side of a wide front door. The formal approach to the house takes a wide front staircase to the raised porch, through the unadorned front door with squared sidelights and transom. Typical of the I-house floor plan, this wing of the house has a central hall and a steep interior staircase flanked by two large rooms. The second floor layout is identical to the first floor. Likely in response to the hot climate, this addition does not have chimneys, but there is a false hearth and mantel in the downstairs parlor, the walls of which are clad in richly beaded board work.⁷ The wood interior doors are in very good condition. All of the subsequent frame additions are raised on masonry piers to encourage ventilation during the hot summer months.

The second addition sits to the west of the original stone house. Its construction and materials are the same as the first addition, as are its architectural details, which include 4/4 double-hung wood sash windows. This western addition could have been built around 1900 or as late as the 1930s; its first floor now includes a kitchen, but it is not possible to confirm exactly when the addition was built or how it was used. Exploration of the foundation revealed that all the first floor framing and floor joists had been replaced with dimensional lumber.⁸ This second addition changed the massing and exterior appearance of the original house, as the Watsons raised the original roof, moving its ridgeline from the center of the original stone structure several feet over to the west, creating a large attic space and a second floor bath.⁹ The roof is standing-seam metal, laid over an earlier roof of cedar shingles. The original chimney of the stone house was extended to clear the new, higher roof. The third addition to the house was constructed on the east side of the original stone dwelling. Its floor is several inches lower than the first floor of the rest of the house. This addition may have been constructed as an open porch that was later enclosed and converted to a first floor bath and sitting area. Steel casement windows on this façade suggest that it was enclosed after 1940. The fourth and final addition was constructed after 1940, at the northeast corner of the house. It opens into the first floor room at the rear of the stone house. Also added at the rear of the house is a back porch to the west of the bathroom. It was constructed at an unknown date and is framed of irregular dimensional lumber.

Significance: Beginning with the two-room stone dwelling built by Harrison Presnall ca. 1854, the house was continuously occupied until its 1989 purchase by the San Antonio Water Systems for the Applewhite Reservoir Project. For over 100 years, the house was the center of a prosperous South Texas farm and ranch operation, and it is associated with the agricultural heritage of the San Antonio metropolitan area in South Bexar County. It is a fine example of the progressive development of a Texas vernacular farmhouse.

B. Large barn (ca. 1885; ca. 1900; ca. 1930; contributing) (Photos 8, 9, 19)

Description: The large barn reveals many different building periods and agricultural uses, encompassing at least four different building periods beginning in the 1880s.¹⁰ At the lower level, the west side—always open—faces the house in a series of open bays, with a loft above for the storage of hay; this would have allowed the family to keep an eye on the livestock from the house. The structure grew incrementally to the east until it reached its existing size.¹¹ The oldest section of the main barn has vertical wood plank cladding, while the later walls and roof are clad in corrugated metal panels.¹²

⁷ Fisher-Heck, Inc., Architects, B-10.

⁸ Ibid., B-10

⁹ Ibid, B-11. The fixtures in this second floor bath, with its footed tub, appear to date it to the early 20th century.

¹⁰ Letter to Charles John, FAIA, from Lawrence Calvetti, P.E., consulting historic Structural Engineer, July 2005.

¹¹ Fisher-Heck, Inc. Architects, C-8.

¹² Ibid.

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Significance: The barn is associated with the Watson families, who raised mules, cattle, and registered quarter horses and paint horses. The barn is associated with the day to day operation of their farm and ranch and retains its integrity as well as its original materials.

C. Kitchen (1854; contributing) (Photos 10-13, 15)

Description: Located northeast of the Presnall-Watson House, this is a simple one-story, one-room, rectangular building of sandstone block and rubble, with a pitched roof currently sheathed in corrugated metal. Exterior walls are covered with thin, white limestone stucco. On the east wall is an exterior chimney; a wood door with a heavy lintel is off-center on the north elevation; and a square 2/1 wood window is on the left side of the south elevation.

Significance: Constructed of the same yellow sandstone as the Presnalls' two-room dwelling, this simple building was likely built by them as their original kitchen or another early dwelling unit for the family; HABS drawings show the fireplace with a simple, but handsome mantle. It retains most of its original fabric, although the chimney was rebuilt sometime after 1991, as shown in the HABS-documentation drawings.

D. Outbuilding /shed (ca. 1900; contributing) (Photo 14)

Description: Located east of the kitchen building is a plank shed with corner posts holding up a standing seam metal roof. Lightweight and easy to construct, the walls of this outbuilding are thin and its door is narrow—only 32 inches wide. It likely served as a corn crib or storage structure, and did not house machinery or animals.

Significance: Associated with the early 20th-century expansion of the ranch and farming operations.

E. Garage (ca. 1945; contributing) (Photos 16 & 17)

Description: Nearly square and built with a widely spaced wood frame, this building is clad with sheets of corrugated metal and v-crimp metal panels and is roofed with the same materials. Built as a garage for two cars, it has two sets of double doors in the west wall, facing toward the private lane to the public road. On the east side, the building has a single door that faces the house.

Significance: Likely constructed after World War II, the garage is of historic age and contributes to the homestead.

F1. Elevated wood water tank (ca. 2005; noncontributing) (Photo 18)

F2. Metal water tank (ca. 1930; contributing)

Description: East of the house is an elevated water tank of wood construction supported by wood legs with a metal roof; adjacent to it, a cylindrical metal water tank sits on the ground. Historically, water was fed into the metal tank from above through a 16-inch round hole; a depression at its top suggests that the conduit used to fill the tank frequently overflowed or filled with rain.

Significance: The elevated wood tank was removed from the site but later returned at the insistence of the Texas Historical Commission. The structure is documented in the 1991 HABS drawings but labeled as a "water pump," although it is a storage tank and not a pump. It is considered to be noncontributing, as it is not in its original location. Watson

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family members recall a windmill next to the metal water tank (F2), which likely would have been used to pump water into the ground-level metal tank; the metal tank is a contributing resource for its association with the 20th-century expansion of the Watsons' ranch and farming operations.

F3. Water trough (ca. 1920; contributing)

Description: A circular concrete watering trough for stock, approximately thirteen feet in diameter. The trough sits in the middle of the corral on the west side of the barn.

Significance: Associated with the 20th-century expansion of the Watsons' ranch and farming operations.

F4. Pond / stock tank (contributing)

Description: Called the "pond" by the Watson family members, this large natural feature is on the south side of the road opposite the house and barns. It is clearly visible in older aerial photographs and is thought to have been spring fed, as written in several archaeological reports. When in use, it was lined with clay to prevent seepage.

Significance: Stock tanks are always important features to farm and ranch operations in Texas, providing a vital water source to animals; they also provide cooling breezes to dwellings located upwind from them during long, hot summers.

G. Tractor shed (ca. 1920; noncontributing)

Description: A collapsed pole barn, easily erected or dismantled and moved; it could be reassembled.

Significance: Associated with the expansion of the Watsons' ranch and farming operations, but dilapidated.

H. Small barn (ca. 1930; contributing) (Photo 19)

Description: a one-story, one-room rectangular outbuilding of wood frame construction, entirely clad in corrugated metal panels. The small barn sits on a concrete curb and has two door-sized openings—one giving access to the corral on the south, and one giving access to the barnyard to the north. It functions as a tack room.

Significance: Associated with the 20th-century expansion of the Watsons' ranch and farming operations.

W1. Large pigeon cote (1910, noncontributing)

W2. Small pigeon cote (1910, noncontributing)

Description: These two structures, originally located on the historic Walsh Ranch across the Medina River, were moved by the City of San Antonio in the 1990s, when it owned both the Presnall-Watson Homestead and the Walsh Ranch. It is not known whether these two large bird houses were used to raise pigeons for eating or for racing.

Significance: Both pigeon cotes are noncontributing, as they have been moved to the site from another property.

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Presnall-Watson Homestead
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Inventory of buildings and structures (see Map 6)

Map Key	Resource	Type	Status	Date / Date of Alterations
A	Presnall-Watson House	building	Contributing	1854 / 1884, 1930, 1944
B	Large barn	building	Contributing	1885 / 1900, 1930
C	Kitchen	building	Contributing	1854 (2000, repairs)
D	Outbuilding – shed	building	Contributing	1900
E	Garage	building	Contributing	1945
F1	Elevated wood water tank	structure	Noncontributing	moved ca. 2005
F2	Metal water tank	structure	Contributing	1920
F3	Water trough	structure	Contributing	1920
F4	Pond / stock tank	structure	Contributing	1850s
G	Tractor shed (collapsed)	structure	Noncontributing	1920
H	Small barn	building	Contributing	1930
W1	Large pigeon cote	structure	Noncontributing	1910
W2	Small pigeon cote	structure	Noncontributing	1910

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RESTRICTED: SIX ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

1. 41BX537 (Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric periods, contributing)

Description: This site was first recorded in 1981 as the prehistoric component of 41BX538 and was then described as a prehistoric lithic scatter and possible occupation extending over about 45,000 square meters.¹³ Re-visit and re-evaluation in 1990 revealed that it was definitely associated with the Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric periods.

At 500 feet above mean sea level on the south side of the Medina River arroyo and on the uppermost river terrace, the site is about 300 meters north of Neal Road. The southern part of the site is adjacent to historic site 41BX538, the Presnall-Watson building and structure complex. Past modern activities, such as plowing, at 41BX538 probably obliterated all surface traces of prehistoric activities in the vicinity. However, Initial studies in 1981 revealed that the activity area of 41BX537 might be associated with more intensively occupied prehistoric sites to the east. This observation was borne out in 1990 when significant prehistoric cultural deposits were discovered at the Richard Beene site, part of which was previously registered as 41BX833.

Significance: Information in the Atlas at the time of preparation of this nomination revealed that in 1990 investigating archeologists with Texas A & M University (TAMU) recorded 41BX537 as 50 percent intact and potentially eligible for NR listing and SAL designation. Atlas data also revealed that apparently the site was never tested for the presence or absence of prehistoric cultural evidence beneath a depth of about a meter below the surface. Since well-preserved prehistoric cultural deposits and archeological features in the nearby Richard Beene site were found to extend to depths of about 4-6 meters below average natural ground surface levels in the general vicinity, and because those deposits represented about 10,000 years of culture history, 41BX537 could contain intact archeological evidence well below the levels tested to this writing. Pending such deep testing at 41BX537, the site is deemed potentially eligible for NR listing and SAL designation as a contributing property to the proposed NRD because of its potential to yield information important in the prehistory of south central Texas.

2. 41BX538 (Presnall-Watson Site) (A.D. 1854-1962, historic component; contributing)

Description: The entire 1.9 acre Presnall-Watson Homestead Site containing the 13 historic resources described in the Inventory of Properties of Section 7 above and contained in the 188-acre nomination parcel is also regarded as historic archaeological site 41BX538.

3. 41BX539 (Early to Late Archaic, and Late Prehistoric periods [c. 8000 B.P. to A.D. 1400]; contributing) (Map 9)

Description: Based on work during an initial visit and assessment in 1981, and on that done in 1990, 41BX539 is the traces of a relatively small but intense prehistoric occupation, part of which apparently is well preserved and has significant research potential.¹⁴ On a slight rise along the upland margins of a former river terrace just north of Neal Road and about 300 meters south of the modern channel of the Medina River, the site is at 530 feet above mean sea level. In 1981, about half the site, as then inventoried, had already been severely damaged by land clearing and subsequent natural erosion. However, the site contained a moderate to intensive concentration of lithic debris and burned rock exposed in an area of about a hundred square meters. No features, such as burned rock clusters, were discovered, but proximity to

¹³ A. Joachim McGraw and Kay Hindes, Chipped Stone and Adobe: A Cultural Resources Assessment of the Proposed Applewhite Reservoir, Bexar County, Texas. Archaeological Survey Report, No. 163 (University of Texas at San Antonio: Center for Archaeological Research, 1987), 183-184.

¹⁴ McGraw and Hindes, 188-191.

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41BX537 and 41BX531 suggested that 41BX 539 might have been associated spatially and culturally with those two sites or others in the vicinity. In 1984, a survey of previously inaccessible areas west and adjacent to 41BX539 indicated that the site is on the eastern margins of an early prehistoric terrace occupation parallel to, but distinct from, sites 41BX530, 41BX531 and 41 BX669. Reassessment based on excavations of two 50-centimeter-square shovel tests and a one-meter-square test unit revealed the site area as identified in 1981 was about 150 meters west of the main location of concentrated surface materials. Thus, the site plot was enlarged from about 100 square meters to about 17,500 square meters, with the long axis of the site paralleling the terrace margins. Extensive scatters of burned rock, thick and thin bifaces, and utilized and/or retouched lithic debris were observed in the main area.

Significance: As revealed in 1984, the expanded site on a former river terrace and thought to be at about the 530-foot contour, probably represents a long period of prehistoric activities. The 1987 report of investigations in the vicinity by the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of Texas at San Antonio, suggested that the site may contain significant, and as yet unidentified, buried deposits potentially older than other sites in this portion of the former reservoir inundation area and recommended mechanical test trenching to determine potential eligibility for NR listing.¹⁵ This potential for additional information predates the discovery of the Richard Beene site (41BX831).

4. 41BX540 (A.D. 1830-1860, and Middle to Early Archaic period; contributing)

Description: The estimated extent of the prehistoric component of this site was estimated at the time of its discovery in 1981 as about 105,000 square meters. On a small knoll on Neal Road about a kilometer south of the Medina River, the site is about 530 to 550 feet above mean sea level.¹⁶ It extends for about 500 meters along the lower slopes of the remnant of a Medina River terrace where the old channel apparently flowed parallel to the modern one. The site's surface has been disturbed by cultivation, including deep plowing, but intact cultural deposits were found at least a meter below the surface. In 1981 a sub-triangular-shaped unifacial tool (Clear Fork?) and a projectile-point-proximal-fragment (Refugio) were collected at the site. In addition, burned rock fragments were noted eroding from the road cut that bisects the site. When the site was revisited in 1984, a Bell projectile point was collected along the road cut from an *in situ* context almost a meter below the surface.

Significance: The recovery of an Early Archaic projectile point in an *in situ* context suggests that this site probably contains additional well preserved deposits, some of which could be deeply buried. Therefore the site is eligible for NR listing at the contributing level because it has already yielded important information about the prehistory of the area and region and apparently has the potential to yield more information of that kind.

5a. 41BX831 (Richard Beene Site) (c. 10,000 B.P. to A.D. 1400), prehistoric component – contributing)

Description: Named for the engineering inspector who discovered it during grading work for the Applewhite Reservoir, the Richard Beene Site is the most significant prehistoric archaeological site within or near the nomination area. It is one of a small number of sites within the U. S. Gulf Coastal Plain that contains a virtually continuous record of occupation spanning the last ten thousand years.¹⁷ In 1989, archeologists began full scale excavations at a buried site then designated as 41BX833 near where the dam was to be built on the south side of the Medina River. Bulldozers removed nearly 16

¹⁵ McGraw and Hinds, 191.

¹⁶ McGraw and Hinds, 192.

¹⁷ Texas Beyond History, s.v. "Richard Beene Main" <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/beene/index.html> (accessed November 3, 2010).

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million cubic feet (about 450,000 cubic meters) of dirt for the planned spillway trench and, in doing so, exposed remains of a human encampment occupied almost 8,000 years ago and buried 18 feet (about 5.5 meters) below the surface. The site contained buried, well-preserved archaeological deposits constituting a unique record of human occupation spanning the late Pleistocene and Holocene epochs at the northern edge of the South Texas Plains.

TAMU archeologists conducted excavations there in late 1990 and early 1991 amidst active construction of the reservoir spillway. Though the initial archeological deposits were dated to about 5800 B.C., continuing archeological excavations in the spillway trench uncovered additional areas of the site with even older cultural deposits, requiring the site's boundaries to be expanded several times. The additional work revealed that the site included components that originated during the ninth millennium B.C.

The Richard Beene site yielded over 80,000 artifacts, some of which were buried under 45 feet (about 14 meters) of flood overbank sediment. In all, 20 distinct archeological components were discovered and yielded over 40 radiocarbon assays, confirming that the site is one of only a handful to yield a nearly complete record of occupation spanning the last 10,000 years.¹⁸

The riverbanks near the site were an ideal camping location for native groups during prehistory. Proximity to the river allowed ready access to fresh water and aquatic resources such as fish and mussels. The nearby uplands were rich in wild game and plant foods. For most of its long history, the site has been within a regional-scale ecotone, a transitional zone between different plant and animal communities, which is a primary reason for the repeated return of native peoples to the site for more than 10,000 years.

Those staying at the Richard Beene site during prehistory had good access to three types of landforms, each with its unique resources: uplands, river terraces, and floodplain.

The upland areas of the Blackland Prairie and Post Oak Savannah are just over a mile north and south of the site, respectively. Both of these ecological regions stretch from just south of the San Antonio River to the Red River in far north Texas. In prehistoric times the tall grasses of these upland areas were home to small animals such as rabbits as well as larger animals like deer, antelope, and occasionally bison. Though bone preservation at the Beene site was poor, there is ample evidence for the hunting of deer and small game. There are also hints of antelope hunting.

Like the uplands, the terraces were home to a variety of large and small animals hunted by the occupants of the site. The wide terrace, however, played a far more important role as the source of a variety of root foods used extensively by humans. The roots or bulbs of plants such as onions, lilies, and false-garlic would have been baked in earth ovens before being eaten. The tuna, or fruit, of prickly-pear cactus still found near the site today also would have been a sought-after food source. The earliest Europeans to visit the area documented native groups harvesting prickly-pear tuna, and there is abundant evidence for the kinds of ovens used for baking root foods at the Richard Beene site.

The site is located within the ancient floodplain of the Medina River. This resource area, which includes the river itself, was heavily utilized by the native peoples who camped nearby. Gravel bars in the river provided a source of stone for tool-making, and sandstone outcrops lining the floodplain contained cook-stone for use in baking plant foods gathered on the terrace. The Medina River not only provided water for the site's occupants, but also for trees such as pecan and hickory, which would have been a source of food and fuel. Remains of river mussels, turtles, and fish at the site attest to

¹⁸ Ibid.

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the importance of these resources in the prehistoric human diet. The propensity for large-scale overbank flooding was also important in that fine-grained flood sediments were routinely buried and thereby preserved the site's cultural materials for future generations.¹⁹

Significance: Since its discovery in 1981 during archaeological investigations for the Applewhite Reservoir in southeast Bexar County, Texas, the site has yielded a wealth of unique information about the culture history of central and south Texas. Evidence of prehistoric- and historic-era occupations and associated lifeways spanning the past 10,000 years has been unearthed there. At this writing in mid 2011 a large part of the prehistoric component of the site remains intact as a resource for future research.

Besides its outstanding contribution to regional culture history and its potential to make future contributions to our knowledge of that past, the site is important for the ground-breaking archeological research methods developed and tested during its investigation. On a regional and national scale, research at the site during the 1990s was some of the first to intensively employ a broad-spectrum, multi-disciplinary approach to prehistory focusing on paleoenvironment and human ecology during the late Pleistocene and Holocene intervals. By employing such diverse scientific sampling and analytical techniques as palynology, freshwater mollusk and gastropod analysis, geoarchaeology, faunal bone analysis, radiocarbon dating, organic residue analysis, and archaeomagnetism, researchers opened a unique window into the lives of the prehistoric hunting-gathering people who occupied the south Texas site during about ten millennia. The prehistoric component of the site is eligible for NR listing for its rich contributions to knowledge of the culture history of the central and south Texas regions and its potential to yield additional knowledge of that culture history.

5b. Site 41BX831 (Historic Components- Area A, The Pink House, and Area B) (c. A.D. 1910-1970; historic component; noncontributing, but not counted as a distinct site)

Description: The two distinct and separate historic components of 41BX831 are an early-to-late twentieth century (c. A.D. 1910-1970) tenant/field-hand domicile ruins with outbuildings and dumps (Area A), and a dismantled chimney base from a dwelling (Area B) used for a very brief period of time (c. A.D. 1900-1910).²⁰ During site preparation for the Applewhite Reservoir Project the Pink House was demolished. It was a small brick house enclosed in frame additions and had several outbuildings including a collapsed garage and elevated water tank, fence lines, two depressions and a concentrated post-1940 surface artifact scatter.

Significance: Due to the extent of additions, poor overall integrity, as well as the relatively recent age of the changes, the architecture at 41BX831 was not recommended as significant under Criterion C.²¹

6. Site 41BX833 (prehistoric component: c. 10,000 B.P. to A.D. 1400; historic component: late nineteenth to early twentieth century [c. 1885 to 1920]; contributing)

Description: The 2008 State of Texas site survey form for 41BX833 describes it as a prehistoric camp and historic chimney (THC 2011). The prehistoric component was reported as potentially extensive. The chimney was dated to the late

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Adovasio and Green, p. 140.

²¹ Ibid., p. 141

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nineteenth or early twentieth century, as reported by James Adovasio and Melissa Green in 2003. However, during a site revisit in 2008 none of the previously reported historic components were found.²²

Significance: This site is listed as a State Archaeological Landmark and is eligible as a contributing to the nominated property because it yielded information important to the cultural history of south and central Texas.

²² Figueroa, Antonia, Intensive Pedestrian Survey of Phase II of the Medina River Park Trail, Bexar County, Texas (San Antonio, Texas: Center for Archaeological Research, UTSA Press, 2008), 30.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Presnall-Watson Homestead is a good example of a prosperous farm and ranch headquarters of the late 19th and early 20th century, in southern San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. Located on Old Neal Road, high on the south bluff of the Medina River at the southern limits of metropolitan San Antonio, the headquarters once served a farm and ranch of more than 665 acres purchased and developed by Harrison Presnall in the 1850s. Sold to John Watson in 1883, the farm and ranch was subsequently and successfully worked by several generations of Watsons. Today the 188-acre site contains examples of antebellum buildings as well as late-19th and early-20th century buildings and structures, reflecting the increasing prosperity of the families that lived and worked here for nearly a century. The nominated property contains a sandstone farmhouse with later wood additions, a sandstone kitchen, a large barn and other related agricultural buildings and structures, including a stock pond. The Presnall-Watson Homestead is a rare artifact of Bexar County's farming and ranching heritage, the cornerstone of its early economy and development. The homestead property is therefore nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance, under Criterion A for Agriculture and Criterion C for Architecture. The nominated property also contains five prehistoric archaeological sites and one historic archaeological site, two of which are listed as Texas State Archaeological Landmarks. The historic site, 41BX538, is the 1.9-acre cluster of historic buildings and structures built by the Presnall and Watson families that served as the headquarters for the 189-acre farm. The five prehistoric sites, but in particular the Richard Beene site (41BX831), represent a significant record of over 10,000 years of prehistoric occupation by indigenous people of the Presnall-Watson Homestead. The Richard Beene site is a rare, vertical record of 10,000 years of prehistory dating from the late Late Holocene back to the Late Pleistocene and is nominated at the state level of significance, under Criterion D, in the area of Archeology. The other contributing sites are nominated at the local level of significance.

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Farming and ranching have formed the basis of Bexar County's economy and growth since the early 1700s, when the Spanish government established missions along the San Antonio and Medina rivers. The Spanish population in the San Antonio area was roughly 200 by the 1720s. Fifty-five civilian Canary Islanders arrived at the Villa of San Fernando de Bexar in March 1731, and the villa of Bexar became the very first municipality in the Spanish province of Texas. The five missions along the San Antonio River, together with the town's presidio, became the most important Spanish concentration in Texas, reaching a population of over 900 people by the 1730s, including 300 Spanish (civilian and military) and 600 indigenous converts.²³ This population would vary substantially with outbreaks of epidemics, frequent attacks from Lipan Apache and Comanche people, and the effects of uprising and civil war—first between Spain and Mexico, then between Mexico and the Republic of Texas, and finally during the American Civil War. Nevertheless, San Antonio remained a key settlement in Texas throughout the unrest of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The arrival of the Canary Island families created friction among civilians, the military, and the clerical factions of the settlement of San Antonio, most commonly over the fair distribution of private land as compared to mission lands, and increasingly so after the missions were secularized in the late 1790s. Each mission developed as a self-supporting community, ringed with farmlands irrigated by extensive watering systems (*acequias*) and having separate, sometimes distant, ranches for mission livestock. Private farms and ranches were often subsistent, but after the missions were secularized, their lands were acquired by the elite town descendants of the Canary Islanders and the descendants of the

²³ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Presnall, Pope A." <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pp/fpr6.html> (accessed June 10, 2009).

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presidio soldiers, who added these property to their already extensive holdings.

Ownership of the Presnall-Watson Property

The parcel that would become the Presnall-Watson property was part of an extensive land grant given in 1808 to staunch royalist Juan Ignacio Pérez (1761-1823).²⁴ Pérez received four leagues of land just below the Medina River and one adjoining league between the Medina and the Leon Creek, totaling 13,284 acres, which served as the base for his large livestock operations. By 1809 he was also *sindico* (commissioner) of all the ranches in this district.²⁵ Larger ranches, like that owned by Pérez, were able to export horses and cattle to Coahuila and Louisiana. Pérez was a leading cattleman and soldier during the unstable decade prior to the establishment of a constitution by the Mexican federal republic. Pérez died in 1823 and was buried with an honor guard after a funeral at the Mission Purisima Concepción chapel. His son José inherited his father's land, and in 1834 he petitioned the governor of Coahuila y Texas for a legal copy of title to these lands. He and his family fled south, however, in December 1836, during the great turmoil of the Texas Revolution, without his inheritance being resolved.²⁶

The Republic of Texas broke up the Pérez family's land on the southern side of the Medina River, when Bruno Martínez received a headright grant for one-third league (1,476 acres) on in June 1837; Martínez then transferred the property to John W. Smith for \$300 on the very same day. In 1838 Smith sold the land to James D. Kirkpatrick for \$350, and Kirkpatrick transferred it to John R. Cunningham on the same day.²⁷ José Pérez returned to Bexar County in the 1840s and filed a lawsuit to regain control of his father's former property, but his claims were finally denied by the Texas Supreme Court in 1851. Likely due to the lawsuit, no further exchanges for this property occurred until 1852, when Andrew Cunningham of Talladega County, Alabama, inherited the estate of John R. Cunningham; he appointed John T. Story of Caldwell County, Texas, as attorney-in-fact to survey and sell the property.

Harrison Presnall and Stephen Applewhite contracted to purchase the 1,476 acres from Story in 1852.²⁸ In February 1854, Governor J.P. Bell patented the property, and Presnall and Applewhite were deeded it on the very same day. During the nearly thirty years that the property was owned by the Presnalls, it was only verbally partitioned between the Presnall and Applewhite families; there was no written description of the internal subdivision between the joint purchasers.²⁹ Stephen Applewhite took possession of the western 755 acres and Harrison Presnall received 665 acres on the east. Only in 1883, when Presnall's widow Susan was preparing to sell the property, did an actual partition occur; she sold the 755 western

²⁴ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Perez, Ignacio," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pp/fpr6.html> (accessed June 10, 2009).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ J.M. Adovasio and Melissa M. Green, editors, *Historic Archaeological Investigations in the Applewhite Reservoir Project Area: Bexar County, Texas*. Report of Investigation, No. 6. (Texas A&M University: Center for Ecological Archaeology, 2003), 171.

²⁷ Bexar County Archives, Headrights Vol. A2:31. The history of land grants in Texas is a long and complex one. Ranching lands further from town were generally held informally in the early years of Spanish Texas. Families only petitioned for formal grants when challenged by incoming settlers. For example, in 1820, the Spanish government, in an experiment, passed a law that opened Texas to foreign settlers who would respect their laws and constitution. Established families begin to petition for their land rights. The Republic of Texas made many headright grants wherein, under the Constitution of 1836, "single men, seventeen and older, except Negroes and Indians, living in Texas on March 4, 1836" were granted first class headrights of one league of land (1,476 acres).

²⁸ Bexar County Deed Records Vol. L2:76.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 29: 592.

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acres to her brother, Stephen Applewhite, for “\$10.00 and other valuable considerations.”³⁰

In 1883 John Watson, Sr., and his wife Margaret Jane purchased 665 acres from Harrison Presnall’s estate for the sum of \$6,000.³¹ John W. DeVilbiss surveyed the property in March 1883, to establish its eastern boundary and the western boundary of William Kerr’s adjacent property.³² John Watson died in 1903 and his widow in 1930, four years after she had divided the land among her children. John Watson, Jr., inherited the house and 250.54 acres, and he lived there with his wife Cora until his death in 1944; Cora lived in the house until her death in 1971. The property was sold in 1974 by Watson descendants to Earl S. Doderer, who maintained the property until 1990, when it was sold to San Antonio Water Systems for the development of a reservoir. In 1994 the Applewhite Reservoir Project was abandoned, and the Land Heritage Institute acquired the property in 2009.

Prehistoric Peoples Associated with the Nominated Property

Since the 1930s, the construction of dams and reservoirs on Texas rivers has resulted in the discovery, excavation, and the inundation of hundreds of archeological sites. During the early 1980s, salvage archeology conducted at the proposed Applewhite Reservoir just south of San Antonio seemed to follow this trend. Archeological survey work and test excavations carried out in advance of reservoir construction identified over 90 sites that attested to 10,000 years of human occupation. Six of those 90 sites are within the nominated area. While earth-moving activities for construction of the Applewhite dam continued for many weeks, the Richard Beene site kept yielding much valuable information about regional culture history during the past 10,000 years, making it the most significant of the five prehistoric sites studied for this nomination. For nearly 10,000 years small groups of hunters and gatherers camped near the Medina River at the Richard Beene site. These people hunted deer, rabbits, and other game in the riparian and savannah areas near the site, gathered a variety of wild roots found in the area, and took fish and mussels from the river to supplement their diet. Evidence of this activity can be seen archeologically through the numerous stone tools, hearths, ovens, and animal remains found at the site. Archaeological excavations have confirmed Native American occupation of the nominated property, but evidence of permanent changes to the landscape by indigenous people is not extant above ground.³³ The earliest Spanish grantees and titleholders to this particular parcel also seem to have left no physical evidence of permanent settlement above ground. According to the historic archaeological evidence, the first permanent settlers to have developed this property were the Applewhite and Presnall families.

Applewhite Family

This family traces its origins to Jamestown, Virginia, when Henry Applewhite arrived from England in 1665.³⁴ Three Applewhite brothers—Stephen, James (or Jesse), and John—came to Texas in 1853 with their sister Susan and her husband, Harrison Presnall of Louisiana, and each settled with their families on the east side of the Medina River.³⁵ The Stephen Applewhite and Harrison Presnall families held the nominated property jointly for a number of years and may

³⁰ Ibid, Vol. 29: 590.

³¹ Ibid, Vol. 28: 166.

³² Adovasio and Green, 171.

³³ Fisher Heck, B-3

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ August Santeleben, *A Texas Pioneer: Early Staging and Overland Freighting Days on the Frontiers of Texas and Mexico* (New York and Washington: The Neal Publishing Co, 1910), 255.

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have operated the farm jointly until the death of Harrison Presnall in 1883. Stephen Applewhite sold his farmstead acreage, adjacent to the Presnall property, to John Watson, Sr., in 1884.

Presnall Family

Harrison Presnall (1813-1883), born in Alabama, was the youngest son of Absalom Presnall, a planter from South Carolina, and his first wife. Harrison Presnall left Alabama as a young man and settled first in Mississippi and then Louisiana; along the way, he married Susan Applewhite. In 1854 Presnall brought his family and his slaves to Texas, where he established a stock ranch on the nominated property. Other accounts imply that Harrison Presnall intended to continue the plantation-style farming traditions of the Lower South, raising cotton using slave labor.³⁶ Stephen Applewhite also brought slaves to Texas. Presnall's 665-acre farm was one of an estimated 700 farms in Bexar County during this period. Although not poor by most standards, neither was Presnall exceedingly wealthy. After the Civil War until 1872, his wealth was invested in horses and cattle; before the war, most of his wealth had been invested in slaves. Contemporary accounts list him as a "stockman," on the cusp of the advancing boom in the Texas cattle industry. From 1873 until his death, he seems to have divested himself from livestock and continued a much smaller ranch operation.³⁷ Other accounts state that he wrote his will in 1872 and retired from active work in the late 1870s. He died at the nominated homestead property in 1883.

Oldest son Jesse H. Presnall (1849-1916), born in Louisiana, drove cattle up the Chisholm Trail to the Kansas railhead in his early twenties, perhaps on behalf of his father or in business partnership with him.³⁸ By 1886 Jesse Presnall was the owner of the Seven-D Ranch, west of Fort Stockton, Texas, in partnership with Hart Mussey. The two were bankrupted in a disastrous cattle drive north, in which they lost much of their stock. After returning from Fort Stockton and settling in San Antonio, Jesse Presnall met with great success; he was one of the founders of the San Antonio Stockyards and had development interests throughout San Antonio and in other counties.

Youngest son Pope A. Presnall (1865-1958) worked on his parents' homestead until his father's death in 1883. He drove the first herd of cattle across the Devil's River onto the Pecos Range, and then westward to a ranch near Fort Stockton, where he worked as a cowboy; his brother Jesse later purchased this ranch—the Seven-D—and Pope helped to manage it. Pope Presnall was a successful rancher, politician, and banker. While managing his brother's ranch, he also served as treasurer of Pecos County, during Judge Roy Bean's first term. In 1890 he returned to San Antonio, attended business college, and formed the Saunders-Presnall Livestock Commission with George W. Saunders. In 1893 he sold his interest and moved to Alice, the seat of Jim Wells County, where he and S.B. Mosser organized a private bank that eventually became the Alice National Bank. Presnall became the first mayor of Alice in 1904 and served on the school board. He was a director of the Alice Cotton Oil Mill and the Alice Gin Company.³⁹

Susan Applewhite Presnall, supported by her children, lived in San Antonio until her death in 1911. Her daughters also found prosperity—one married into the Mitchell ranching family and the other into the family of Gus Mauermann, a former mayor of San Antonio.⁴⁰

³⁶ "P.A. Presnall," *The Twentieth Century History of Southwest Texas* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1907), Vol. 2, 457.

³⁷ Adovasio and Green, 175.

³⁸ J.H. Presnall Obituary, *San Antonio Light*, April 5, 1916, 2.

³⁹ *Handbook*, sv "Presnall, Pope A," op. cit.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

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Watson Family

John Watson was born in Pennsylvania in 1823, the son of an Englishman, Joseph Watson, and Elizabeth Thompson, a Quaker from Pennsylvania. At some time after their son's birth, Elizabeth and Joseph Watson returned to the Watson family hometown of Castle Carrock, England.⁴¹ Their son John was an adventurer; he traveled the world as far away as India, and to his mother's hometown in Pennsylvania. In 1864, at age 41, John Watson married a 20-year-old cousin, Margaret Jane (1844-1930), at his family's home in Castle Carrock.⁴² Several of their twelve children, including sons John, James, William and Joseph, were born there between 1868 and 1879.

Watson decided to begin a new life in the United States, and he brought his wife and children from England to Texas at an age when many are considering retirement. According to census records, the entire family entered the United States in 1881, arriving by ship through the port of Galveston. In 1883, at age 60, John Watson began his life as a farmer and rancher in Texas, settling along the Medina River in Bexar County on the 665-acre homestead he purchased from the widowed Susan Applewhite Presnall. Family lore claims that he bought the property because he fell in love with the beautiful river and the lovely bottomlands that surround it.⁴³ In 1884 Watson purchased from Stephen Applewhite the western 755 acres of the original one-third league divided between Harrison Presnall and Stephen Applewhite. Margaret Jane's and John's twelfth and last child, Ralph, was born on this large ranch and farm property in 1886.⁴⁴

Tax assessment records for John Watson between 1882 and 1901 demonstrate his continued investment and prosperity due to the raising of horses, mules, goats and a few hogs.⁴⁵ Successful farmers and ranchers, Watson and his sons raised expensive mules, paints, and registered quarter horses as well as cattle. The Watsons flourished in Texas, adding four large frame additions to the Presnalls' two-room stone house to accommodate their large family; the formal front parlor of the first wood frame addition contains beautiful beaded board work—evidence of the family's prosperity. In addition to the expansion of the house, the family constructed a large barn; according to family stories, they traded mules for surplus Army lumber from Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio to construct part of the barn, walking home after trading the mules.

John Watson died in 1903, and his widow, Margaret Jane Watson lived in the house until her death in 1930. Four years prior to her death, she divided the farmlands into equal portions between three of her sons, giving son John Watson, Jr., the homestead site on 250 acres. In 1932, he married Cora McDermott Fleming, and he continued to ranch and farm the land in partnership with his brother Ralph. John Watson, Jr., lived in the Presnall-Watson house until his death in 1944; his widow Cora remained there until her death in 1971, when it passed to John Fleming, her son by her previous marriage.

John Fleming sold the property in 1974 to Earl S. Doderer, who sold it in 1990 to the San Antonio Water Systems for the construction of the Applewhite Reservoir Project. The reservoir project was canceled in 1994, and the Land Heritage Institute acquired the property in 2009 with plans for its restoration and adaptive reuse as a living history museum and conservation area.

⁴¹ U.S. Census Record for 1890, Bexar County, Texas, Justice Precinct 5.

⁴² Correspondence with Peggy Oppelt, August 9, 2005, and interview notes with author, April 21, 2009.

⁴³ Fisher and Heck Architects Study, Correspondence with Peggy Oppelt, August 9, 2005.

⁴⁴ U.S. Census Record for 1890, Bexar County, Texas, Justice Precinct 5.

⁴⁵ Adovasio and Green, Table 26, 178.

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Significance of the Nominated Property

Cotton and corn were important crops in Texas during the 1850s. The *Texas Almanac* reported in 1857 that the products of 316, 153 cultivated acres in 42 Texas counties was valued at nearly 10 million dollars; cotton was the largest crop at 85 million pounds and a value of 1.3 million dollars, and corn was next in volume, at 3.4 million bushels valued at 1.5 million dollars. Cattle breeding became important in the state, too, and the *Almanac* reported 369,000 head of cattle valued at nearly 1.9 million dollars.⁴⁶ After the Civil War ended in 1865, the growing demand for beef in northern and eastern markets prompted the Texas cattle industry to expand.⁴⁷ Stockmen rounded up herds of cattle and drove them across the open range to railheads bound for these markets. The Panic of 1873, however, brought financial hardships to farmers and ranchers in Bexar County, so that the romanticized era of Texas cowboys and cattle drives lasted fewer than twenty years; nevertheless, it left an indelible imprint on the American conception of Texas and the West.⁴⁸

Harrison Presnall settled on the nominated property in 1854 with his brother-in-law, Stephen Applewhite, their families, and their slaves. Together they built the Presnalls' stone house on the property—a two-room dwelling of sandstone blocks on a full basement—as well as a second sandstone building, which served as a kitchen. The Applewhites built a similar stone house on their adjacent parcel. Presnall likely first tried to grow cotton using the labor of his eleven black slaves in the mode of a Southern plantation, and he farmed the property until about 1864. After the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves, Presnall switched his efforts to ranching cattle and horses on his 665 acres, which he did with his sons until the mid-1870s, when panicked markets plunged. After Presnall's death in 1883, his widow sold the property—rather than deeding it to their children—to John Watson. The successive generations of the Watson family found prosperity more consistently during their tenure on the homestead through the 1960s, raising cattle and crops, and breeding mules and horses for sale.

The cycle of good and bad economic prospects experienced by the two families on this property, evident in the physical changes to the homestead site, accurately reflects the larger pattern of the agrarian economy in south Bexar County, Texas, from the antebellum period through World War II. For its association with the history of farming and ranching during these years, the Presnall-Watson Homestead is therefore nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance, under Criterion A for Agriculture.

The Presnalls' stone house, constructed in 1854, has a configuration atypical of Lower South associations, due to the central placement of the chimney. It is possible that the house is older, but shovel-tests in the basement found no data earlier than the Presnall era.⁴⁹ The full, stone-lined basement with its own fireplace and hearth makes the Presnalls' stone house very unusual in Bexar County; it and the secondary stone building with hearth and chimney, called the kitchen, are the oldest extant resources on the homestead site.

The Watson family's contributions to the homestead site—including the large barn constructed ca. 1883 and its subsequent additions, and the wood frame additions that wrap the stone house—are also of architectural significance. The I-house is a vernacular or folk architecture type that traces its origins to 17th-century Britain, but which found early

⁴⁶ The *Texas Almanac for 1857*, 125.

⁴⁷ Pork had been the primary meat available prior to the Civil War, but when the rail heads finally reached Abilene, Kansas, after the war, and the Great Cattle Trails could meet them, the demand for beef increased.

⁴⁸ Terri Myers, "M.G. Michaelis Ranch," National Register Nomination, Hays County, Texas, 2000.

⁴⁹ Adovasio and Green, 171.

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expression in the Mid-Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States before spreading throughout the nation by the middle of the 19th century. It is particularly unusual in Bexar County, Texas, to see I-houses built as adjacent additions. Because of its relative simplicity, the I-house could be adapted to a variety of decorative styles, including the Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, or Italianate styles; the Watsons' additions, however, have virtually no decorative elements, except for the porch railings that are reminiscent of the Stick style.

The Presnall-Watson Homestead is nominated at the local level of significance under Criterion C for Architecture, as an excellent example of a vernacular dwelling and associated homestead resources that show change over time. The complex of homestead resources reveals aspects of life on a typical farm and ranch operation between the antebellum and postwar periods and conveys a strong sense of place; they retain their integrity, and they contain many of the components historically associated with farm and ranch life rarely seen in Bexar County today.

Significance of the Archaeological Sites

The 189-acre Presnall-Watson Homestead is also significant for its six archaeological sites, nominated to the National Register under Criterion D because they have yielded information important to prehistory or are likely to yield such information.

Of the six archaeological sites, the Richard Beene site is the most significant within the 189-acre area of this nomination. Along with about 90 other sites, the Richard Beene site was first found and evaluated within the proposed water impoundment area between 1981 and 1991 during a cultural resources investigation for the Applewhite Reservoir Project by the San Antonio Water System. As noted above, initial archeological survey and test excavations at the six sites were undertaken by the Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio in the 1980s. The final rounds of survey work and test excavations in the proposed impoundment area, as well as full-scale excavations at the Richard Beene site, were conducted through TAMU's Center for Ecological Archaeology (CEA) in the early 1990s.

CEA archeologists discovered and recorded the Richard Beene site in early 1990. Testing performed then determined that the site likely contained cultural evidence from the Middle Archaic and Late Archaic periods. Based on that assessment and the fact that the site was in an area where construction was about to begin, archeologists from the CEA and the THC decided that the site would be the first to be excavated when archeological work continued in November of 1990. Archeologist Alston Thoms led the excavation team and was assisted by geoarcheologist Rolfe Mandel from the University of Kansas. Given the enormity of the Applewhite Reservoir project, it was not feasible to stop work on the reservoir while archeologists excavated the site and construction on the spillway and dam continued without interruption. During the entire investigation, archeologists worked in the midst of bulldozers, trucks, and other heavy dam construction machinery. Many of the strategic decisions about where and when to dig were pragmatic accommodations to the construction requirements.⁵⁰

The Late Archaic deposits, also known as the upper Leon Creek component, originated between c. 1000 and 1830 B.C. Abundant evidence indicates that the climate during this period was probably drier and warmer than that of the present. Though evidence of hunting in the form of projectile points such as Ensor, Marcos, and Nolan was recovered from this component, there was also ample evidence, in the form of grinding slabs and sandstone earth ovens, for plant food exploitation. The presence of adzes and choppers suggest that wood-working was also in vogue.

⁵⁰Texas Beyond History, s.v. "Investigations" <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/beene/index.html> (accessed November 3, 2010).

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Middle Archaic deposits at the site, known as lower Leon Creek and upper Medina components, originated between c. 2680 B.C. and 3200 B.C., when for a relatively short term the climate apparently was cooler and wetter than during previous and subsequent intervals. Projectile points and stone knives, along with the presence within those deposits of a substantial proportion of discarded animal bones, indicate that deer were an important part of the diet during that interval.

By mid February, 1991, excavation of the Middle Archaic component at 41BX831 was nearing completion and work at other sites within the reservoir was beginning. It was then that the chief field inspector for the engineering company that designed Applewhite Reservoir, Richard Beene, made an unanticipated discovery at the site: an extensive and well-preserved campsite layer represented by concentrations of mussel shell and evidence of stone-tool production along with numerous hearths.

This campsite was discovered about 3.5 meters (11.5 feet) below the 5,300 year-old Middle Archaic component and was dated to more than 6,900 radiocarbon years ago (c. 5800 B.C.), meaning the deposits were of Early Archaic age. Within a few weeks it became evident that several other Early Archaic components were buried at the site at depths to four meters (c. 13 feet) below the Middle Archaic component, and dating as far back as 8,800 radiocarbon years ago (c. 7930 B.C.). Each major new discovery at the site required revisions of research plans by TAMU and THC archeologists, working in collaboration with the San Antonio Water System.

The Early Archaic components at the Richard Beene site were deposited during a 2,000 year interval. The youngest deposits accumulated about 5800 B.C., near the height of the Altithermal, a long-term period of generally warming climate punctuated by alternating warmer-dryer and cooler-wetter conditions. Stemmed dart points with indented bases, similar to the Bandy and Martindale types, were recovered from this component. The deposits from this interval yielded more animal bone than any other component at the Richard Beene site, with deer and rabbit being the best represented. Also well-represented were river mussels (clams).

The oldest component at the site originated c. 7700 and 7900 B.C., during the late Paleoindian period of regional culture history and some of the earliest stages of the Altithermal. Angostura points were recovered from that component, and wood-working was represented by adzes and Clear Fork tools. Few animal bones were preserved, but substantial numbers of mussel shells were recovered. Combined with evidence of plant processing in the form of an abundance of fire-cracked rocks, such items suggest that apparently the Early Archaic occupants of the site practiced a broad-based subsistence strategy which incorporated a variety of plant and animal foods.

The Early Archaic component also represents an abundance of small, family-size cooking facilities with and without fire-cracked rock (FCR). Rockless cooking features were considerably more common than those with cook stones. Overall, however, the diversity of cooking-related features was high, with 8 of 12 of the feature types represented at the site. Those found in the Early Archaic component include: (1) five large basins with some FCR; (2) one large basin without FCR; (3) two oxidized lenses without FCR; (4) three small basins with a lens of FCR; (5) nine small basins without FCR; (6) two oxidized lenses with FCR; (7) four oxidized lenses without FCR; and (8) two small FCR concentrations.⁵¹

The Richard Beene site is significant for the extensive and well-preserved campsite layers represented by concentrations of mussel shells and evidence of stone-tool production along with numerous hearths, the oldest of which originated c.

⁵¹ Texas Beyond History, s.v. "Investigations" <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/beene/index.html> (accessed November 3, 2010).

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7900 B.C. Because of such evidence and their significant potential to yield much more information about the local and regional prehistory, the Richard Beene site and adjacent sites are nominated to the National Register under Criterion D.

Summary

Typical of a long-active agricultural homestead site, the Presnall-Watson Homestead contains historic and non-historic resources. The homestead reflects the changing, generally improving fortunes of a farm and ranch operation near San Antonio, Texas, during the 19th and 20th centuries. At the heart of the nominated property is the residence, which served two families, the Presnalls and the Watsons. The two-room stone house on a two-room stone basement was completely encased in four, large wood frame additions that represent the transition from the Presnalls' initial subsistence farming, using slave labor, and later range ranching, to the Watsons' more progressive agriculture techniques, including the selective breeding of prized quarter horses, mules, hogs and goats. The Watsons constructed specialized barns and pens to accommodate these more modern ranching practices; as farmers and ranchers, they also fenced tracts of grazing land and planted their own forage. The Presnall-Watson Homestead illustrates the changes that took place in Bexar County over generations of farming and ranching, from a frontier economy of scattered settlements and subsistence farming, to cash crops and livestock breeding at the turn of the 20th century.

The period of significance for the historic components of the Presnall-Watson Homestead begins in 1854, when Harrison Presnall and his family constructed the small stone house and kitchen and began to farm the property, and extends to 1962. John Watson, Sr., purchased the Presnall homestead in 1883, and he farmed and ranched these lands until his death in 1903. During this time, the farmhouse was improved and expanded to accommodate the increasingly prosperous Watson family. Subsequently, the nominated property was inherited by his son, John Watson, Jr., who raised mules, cattle, quarter horses, cash crops, and forage crops on these lands until his death in 1944; the property was retained by his widow, Cora Fleming Watson, who continued to farm and ranch it with her brother-in-law, Ralph Watson, until his death in 1964.

Regarding the six historic and prehistoric archeological sites listed with the State of Texas and found within the proposed nomination, the site of most importance is the Richard Beene site (41BX831) because it provides evidence of regular occupation by native peoples beginning nearly 10,000 B. P. Discovery of several stone hearths that were used c. 7700 and 7900 B.C., as well as wood-working tools, make it a site of substantial importance at the state or regional levels.

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Map 1. Map of Bexar County, Texas, showing the relationship of the Land Heritage Institute (LHI) property (identified by a star) to the south of the sprawling city of San Antonio.

Source: Land Heritage Institute website, accessed on June 17, 2010 at:
<http://www.landheritageinstitute.org/gpage2.html>



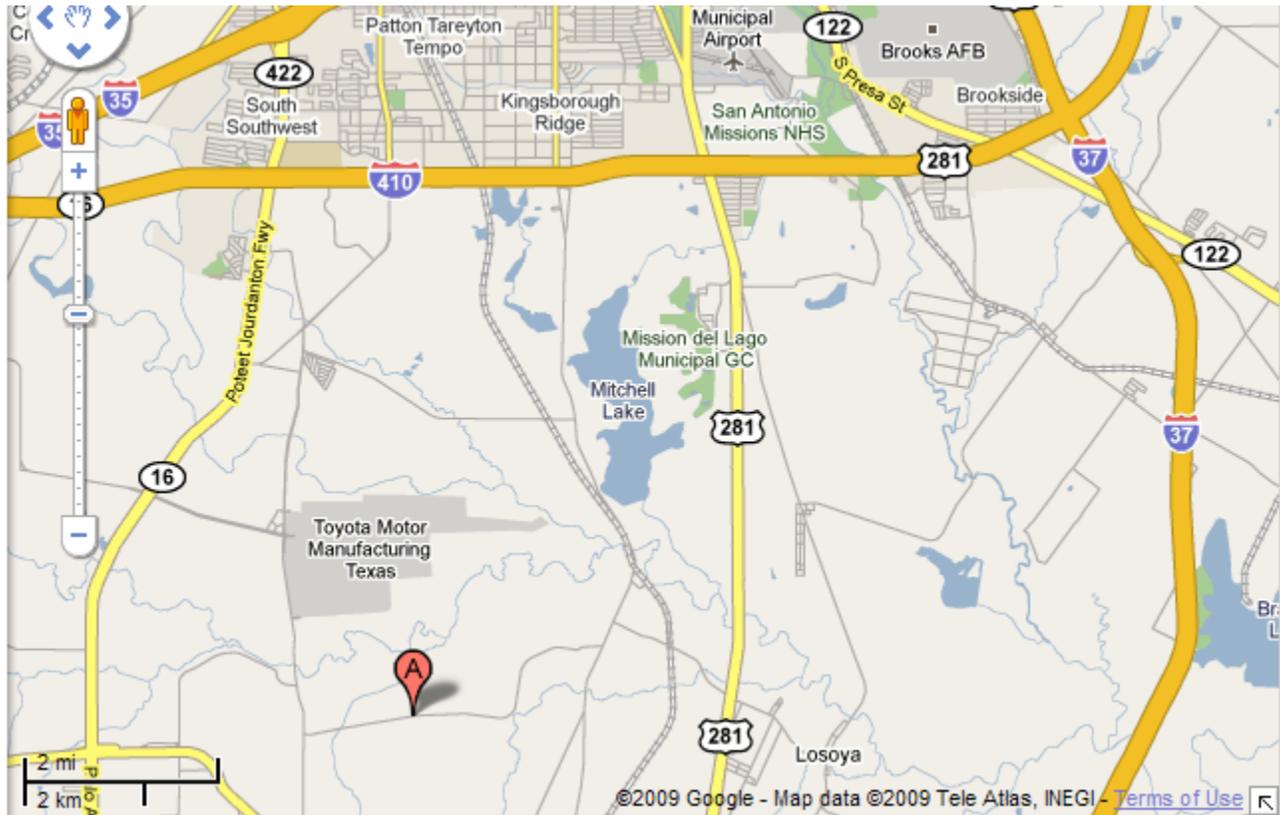
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Map 2. Presnall-Watson Homestead (entrance at "A" on Neal Road) located south of the San Antonio Toyota Plant. The Medina River is between the Toyota plant and Neal Road. *Source:* Google Maps, 2009.



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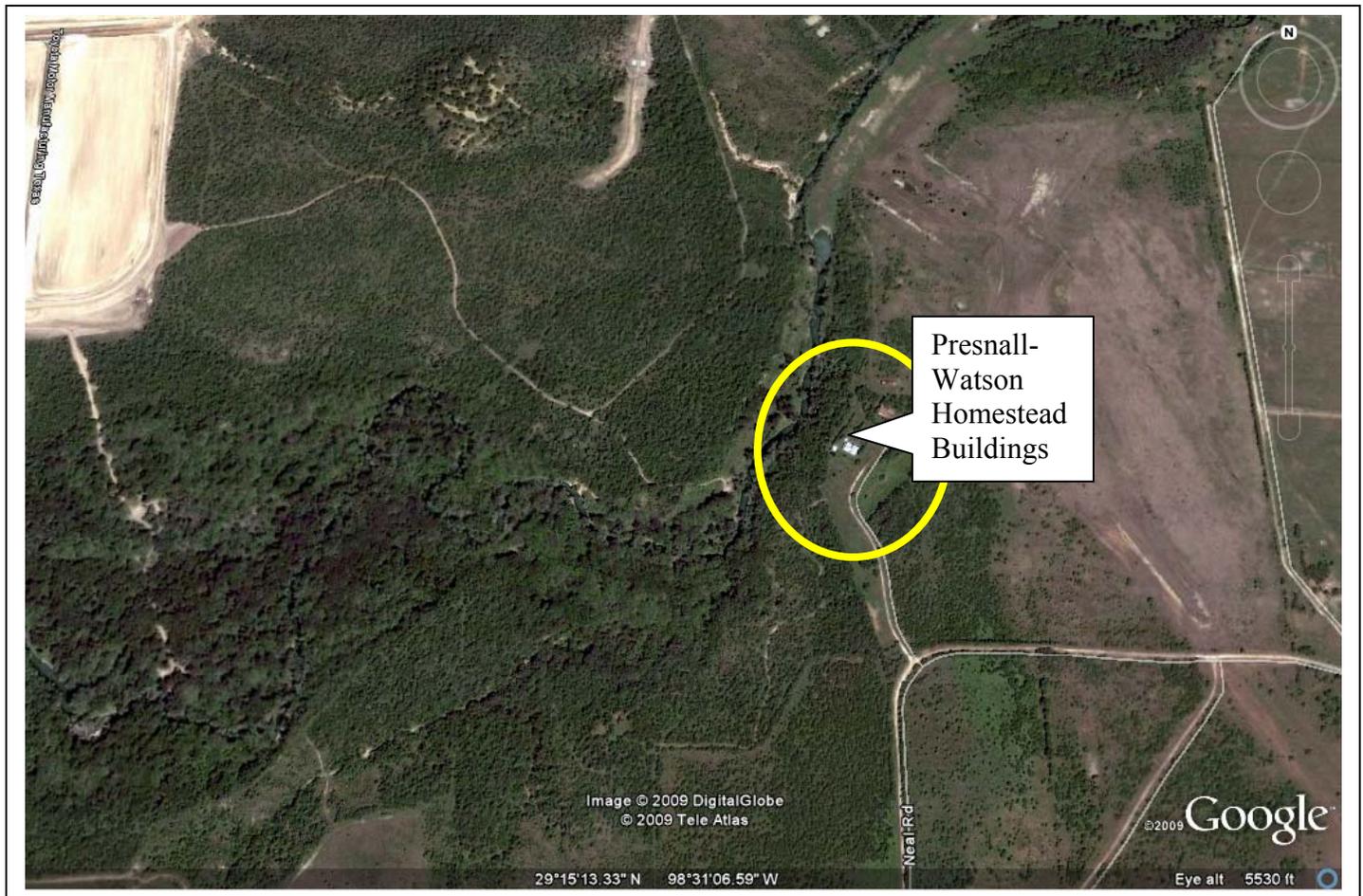
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Map 3.

Aerial of Presnall-Watson Farmstead relative to Toyota Manufacturing Plant and Medina River. Grading preparations for the canceled reservoir project are clearly evident to the east of the homestead site.

Source: Google Earth, 2009.



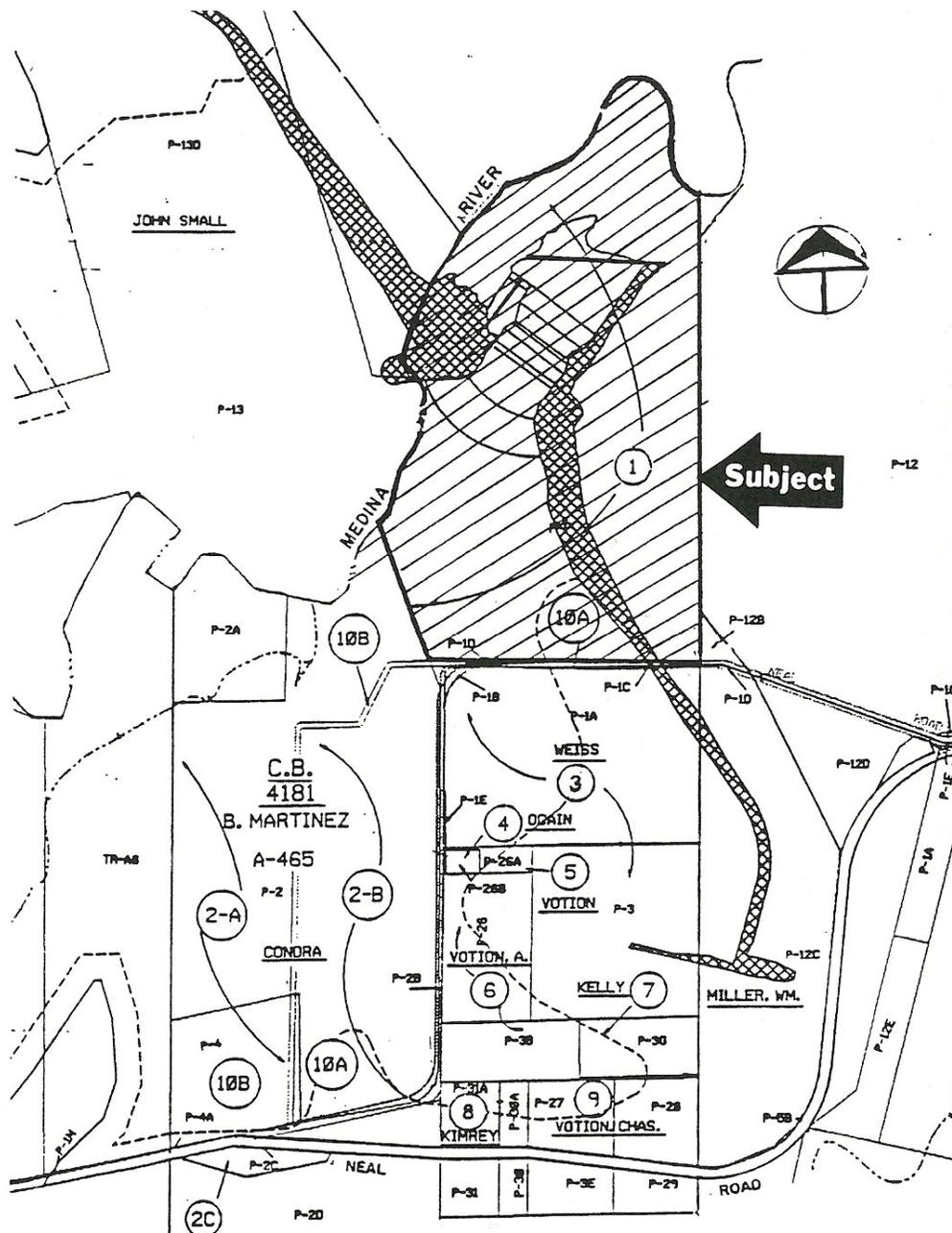
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Map 4. The 188.9-acre Presnall-Watson Homestead is bounded on the south by Neal Road, on the southwest by a fence line, on the west and north by the Medina River, and on the east by a fence line and parcel P-12. Survey from late 1980s, collection of owner.



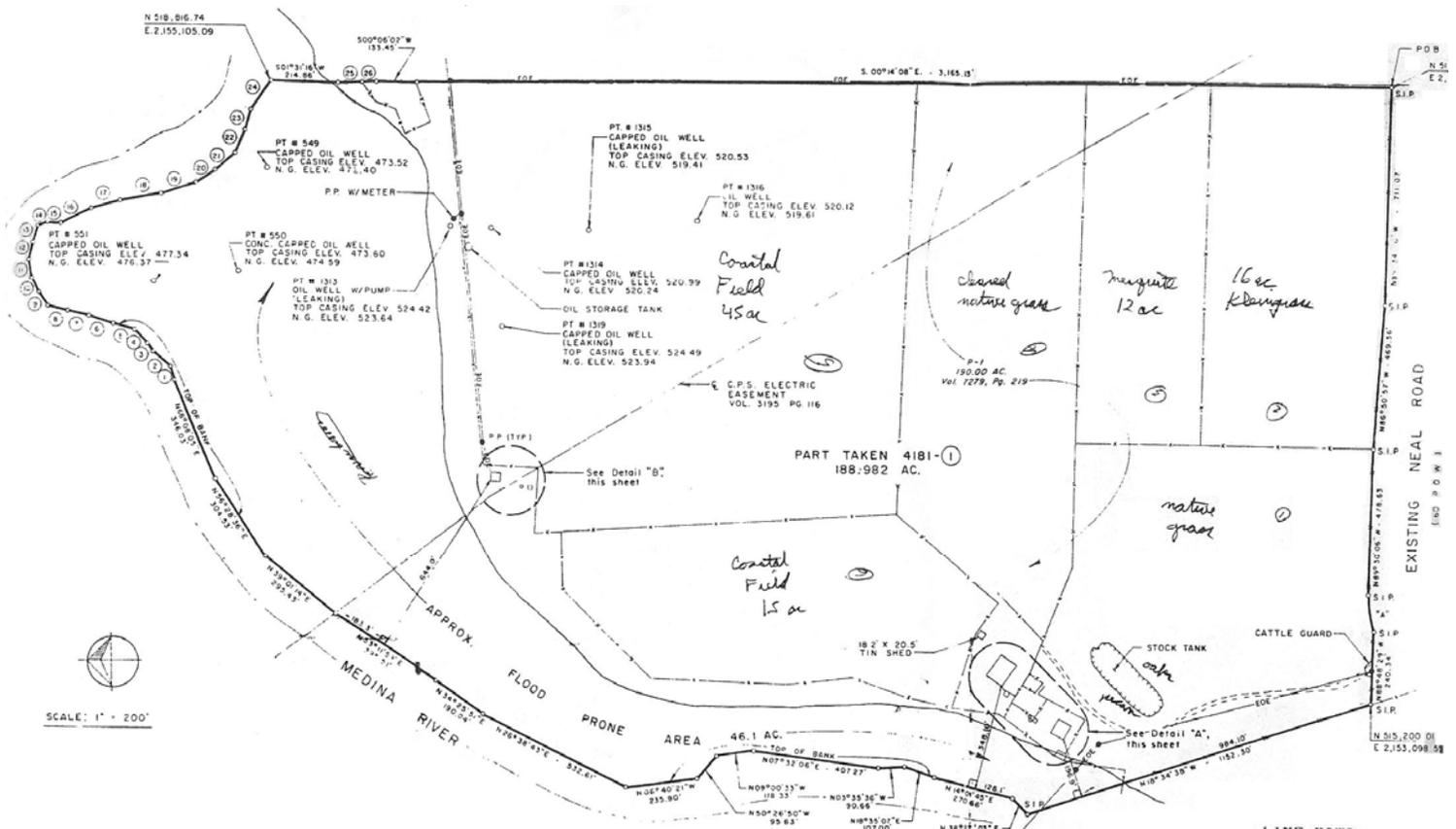
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Map 5. The nominated 188.9-acre Presnall-Watson Homestead property. Cluster of historic buildings and structures, including pond ("stock tank") at lower right. 1989 Boundary Line and Improvement Survey by Travis, Braun & Associates, Engineers, San Antonio.



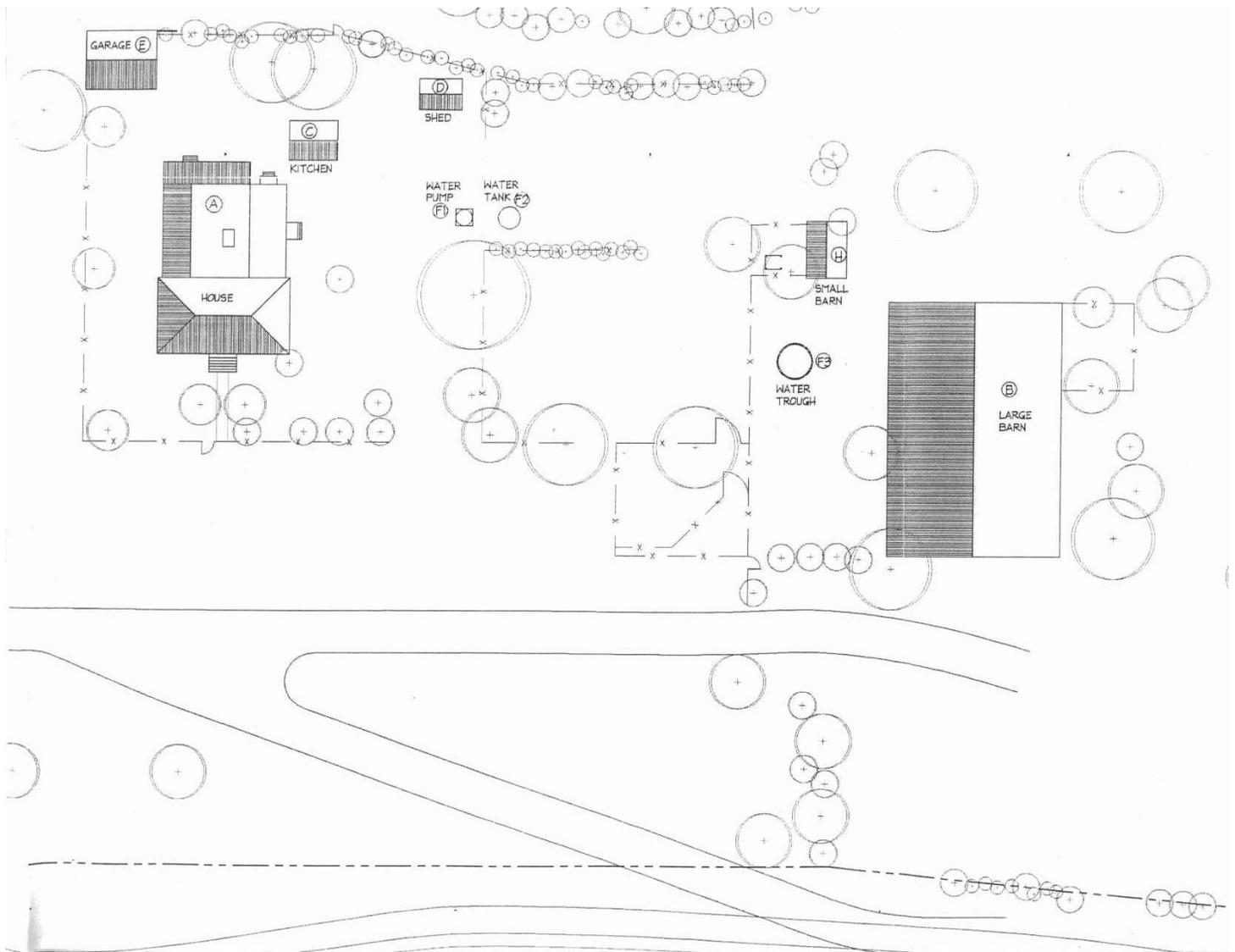
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Map 6. Site plan with property figures A-H. Pigeon cotes (W1 & W2)(noncontributing) are not shown and are located to the east (right). Stock tank or "pond" (F4) is to the south side of the lane. *Source:* Fisher Heck, Architects Study, *Historic Resource Conditions Assessment* for LHI, 2006.



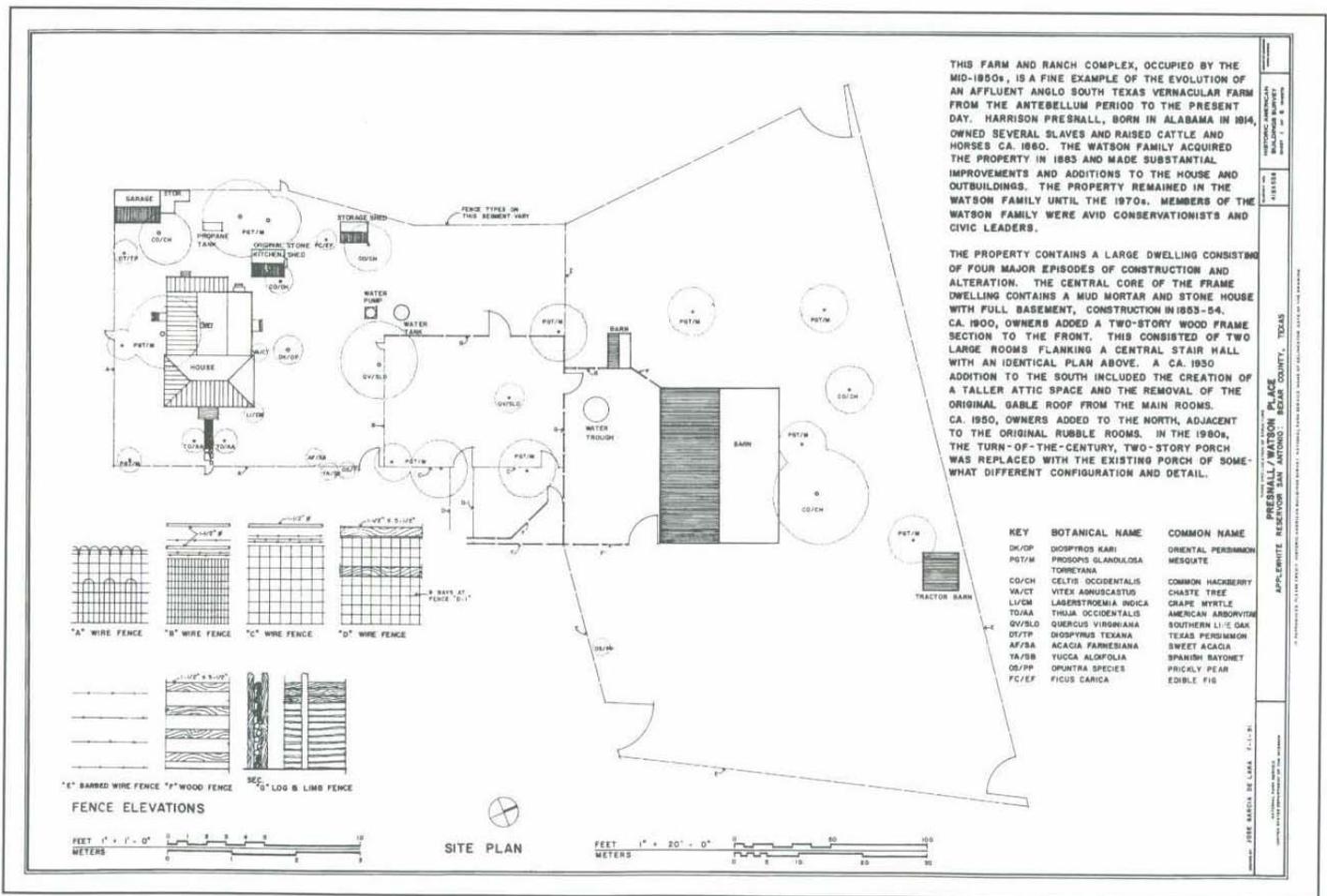
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Map 7. Site Map from HABS-documentation study, 1991, with fencing itemization
Source: Killis Almond & Associates, Inc, 1991.



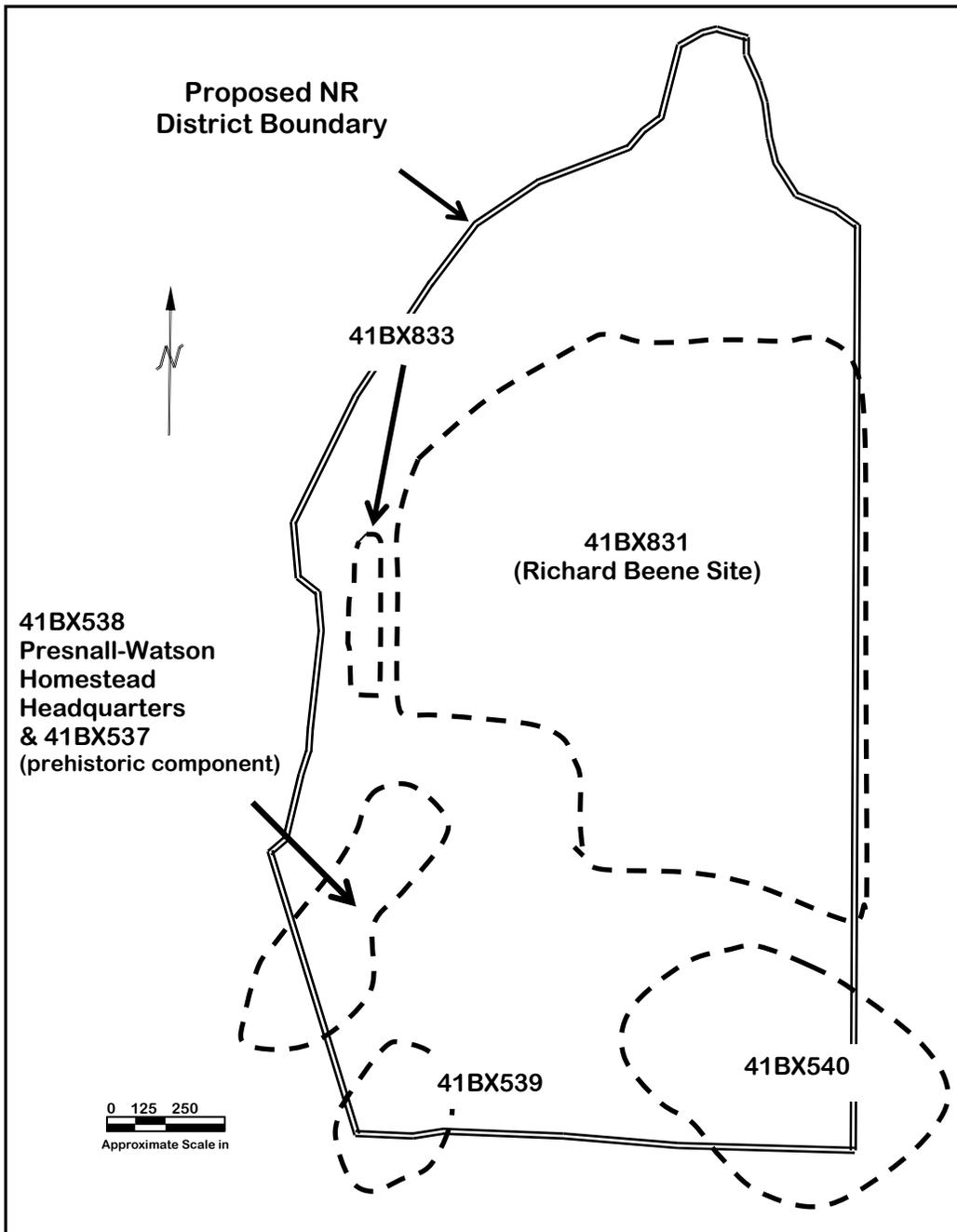
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Map 8. Site map for six archaeological sites. Source: *Texas Archeological Sites Atlas*.



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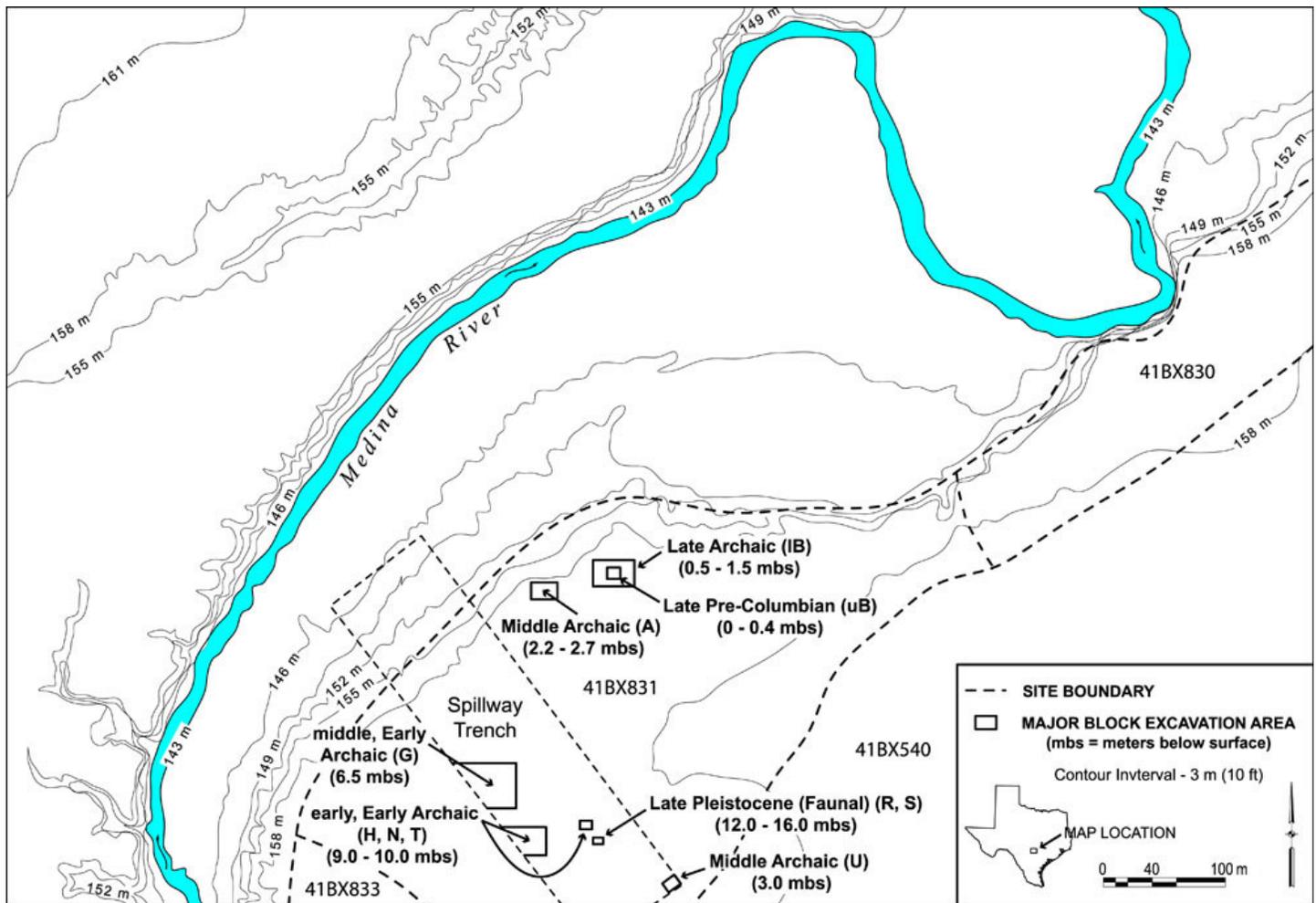
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Map 9. Site map for archaeological sites 41BX831, 41BX833 and 41BX540 at Presnall-Watson Homestead.

Source: Texas Beyond History website, accessed on October 10, 2010 at:
<<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/beene/index.html>>



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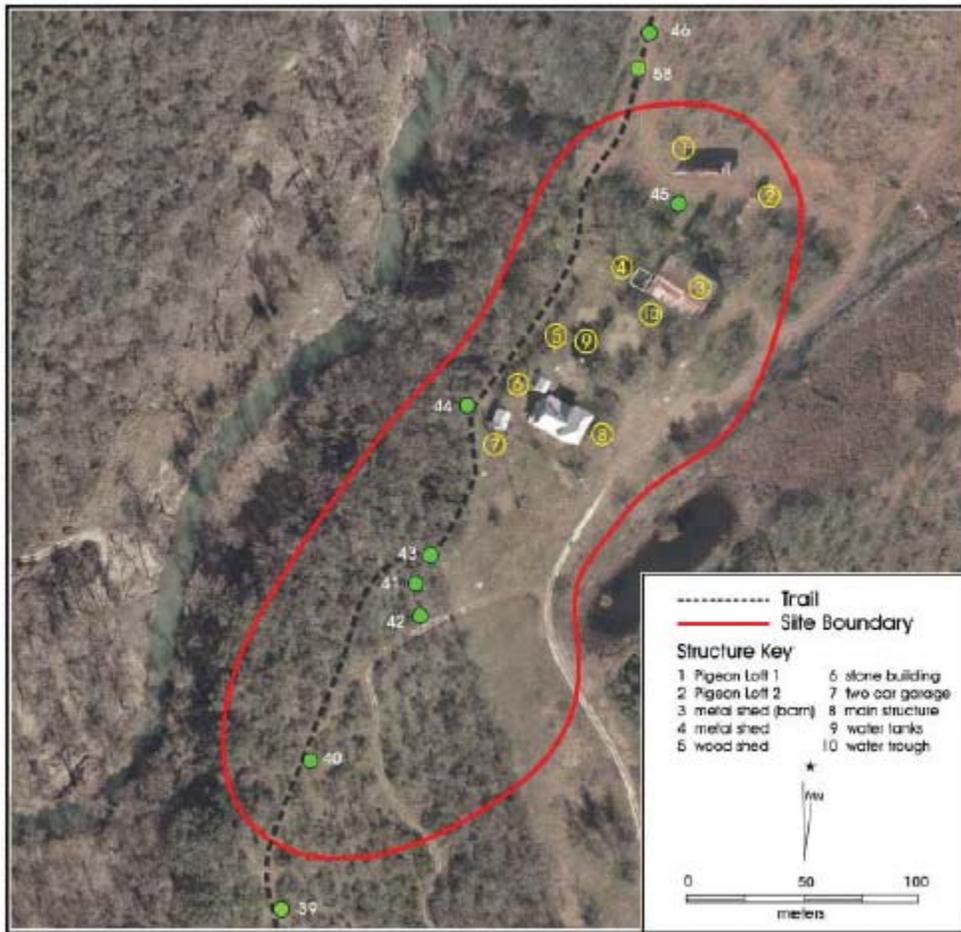
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Map 10. Site map for archaeological sites 41BX537 and 41BX538 at Presnall-Watson Homestead.

Source: Intensive Pedestrian Survey Phase II Portion of the Medina River Park Trail, UTSA Center for Archaeological Research, Report 394, accessed on October 12, 2010 at:
<<http://www.digital.utsa.edu/crdm4/browse.php?CISROOT=/p1512cool8>>



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Figure 1. Richard Beene archaeological site, ca. 1990

Source: Texas Beyond History website, accessed on November 3, 2010 at:
<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/beene/index.html>



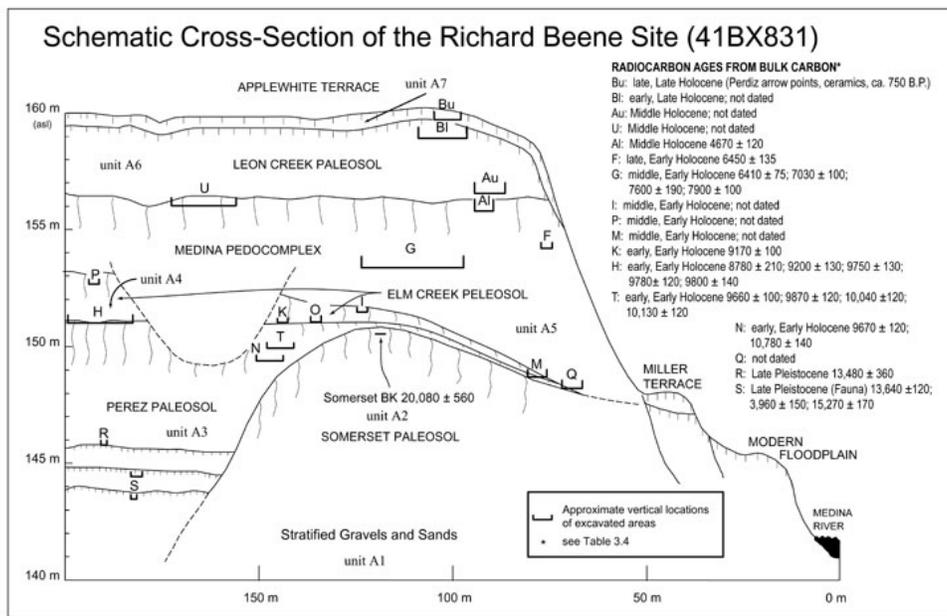
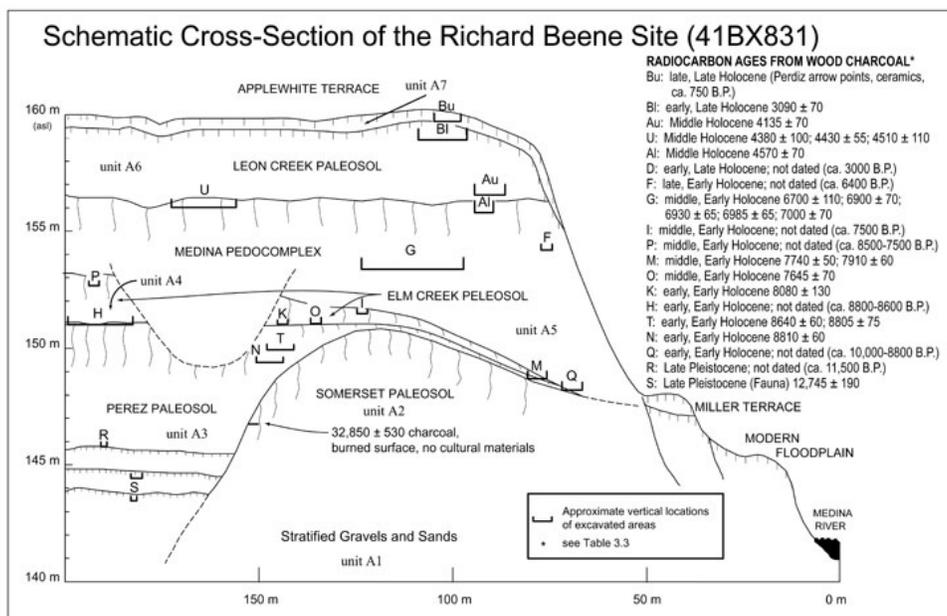
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Figure 2. Schematic Cross-Sections of Richard Been Site (41BX831)
Source: Texas Beyond History website, accessed on November 3, 2010 at:
<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/beene/index.html>



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Figure 3. Painting of Presnall-Watson Homestead, early twentieth century.
Facing northeast: the pond (foreground right), large barn (far right), the main house (center left), garage (far left).

Source: Alma Ann Midgett, personal collection



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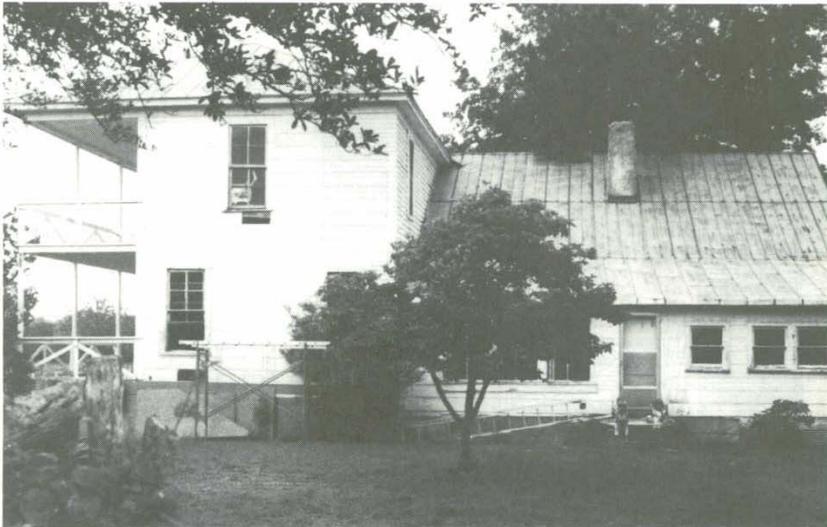
Figure 4. Presnall-Watson Homestead, ca. 1987.

Source: McGraw and Hindes, eds., *Chipped Stone and Adobe: A Cultural Resources Assessment of the Proposed Applewhite Reservoir*, 1987.

Applewhite/Site 41 BX 538



a



b

Figure 33. Structures at 41 BX 538. a, front oblique view of historic Applewhite home; b, side view showing original one-story structure and later two-story addition.

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Presnall-Watson Homestead
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Figure 5. John Watson, Jr., early 20th century (left)

Figure 6. John Watson, Sr., and Margaret Jane Watson, late 19th century (right)

Source: Alma Ann Midgett, personal collection.



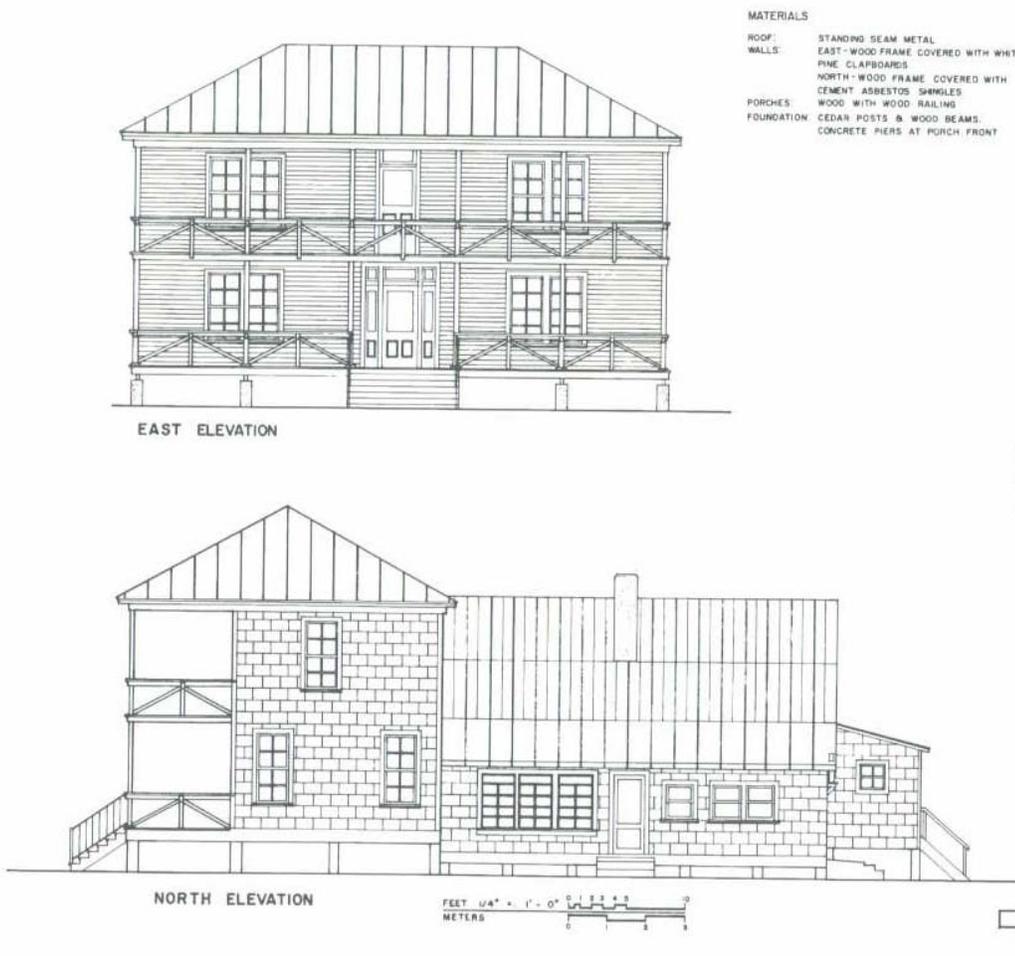
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Figure 7. East and north elevations of Main House from HABS-documentation study, 1991.
Source: Killis Almond & Associates, Inc., 1991



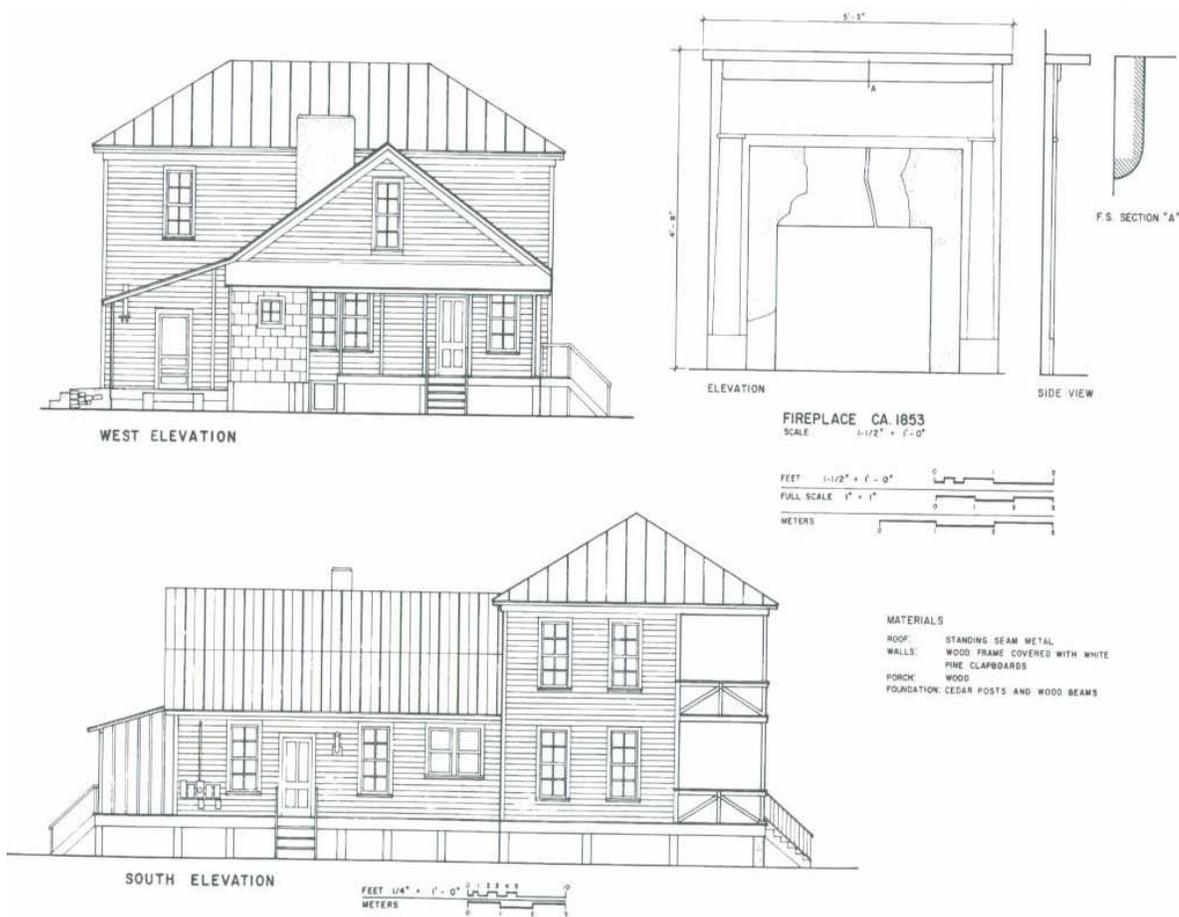
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Figure 8. West and south elevations of Main House from HABS-documentation study, 1991.
Source: Killis Almond & Associates, Inc., 1991



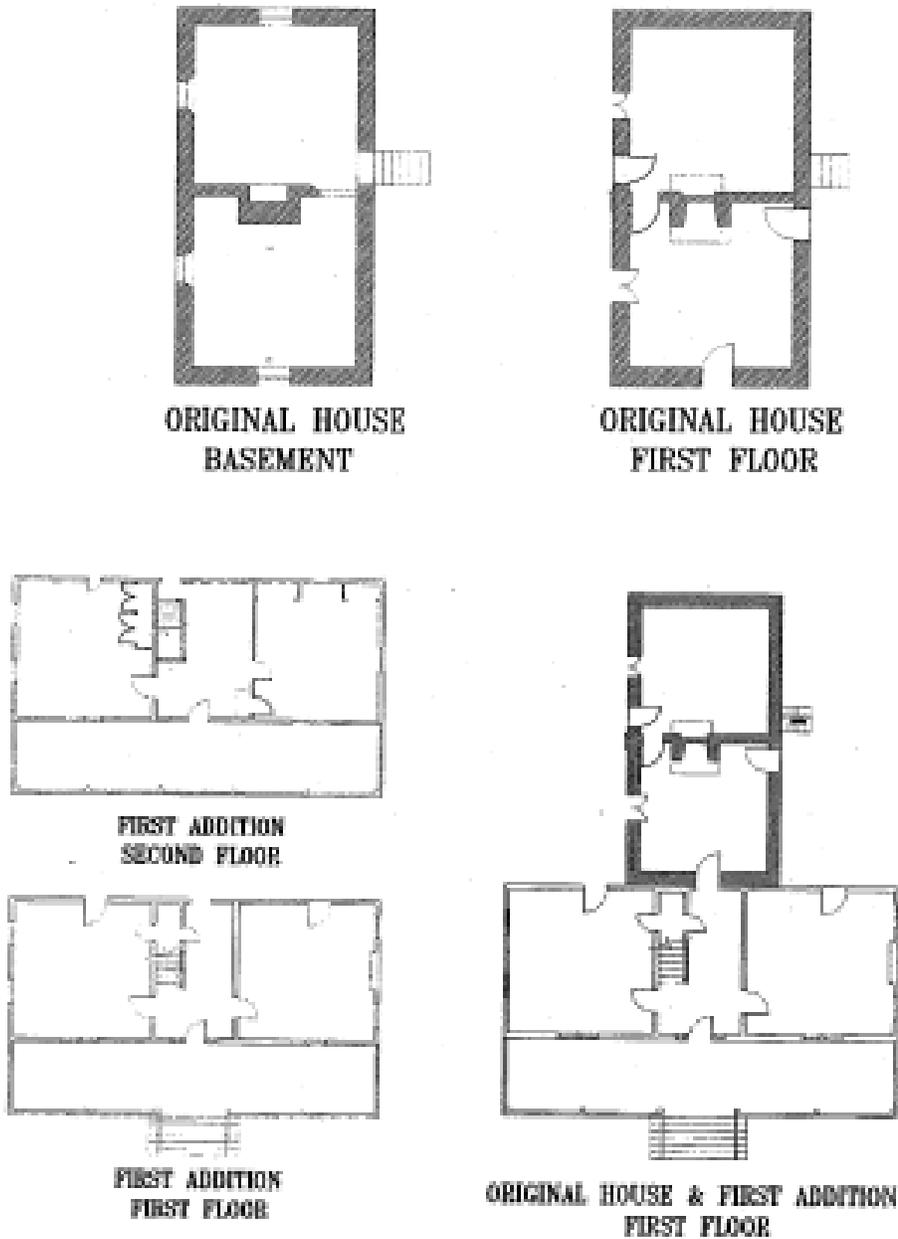
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Figure 9. Floor Plans of Main House
Presnall farmhouse built in 1854, and first addition made by Watsons in 1884.
Source: Fisher Heck, Architects Study, *Historic Resource Conditions Assessment* for LHI, 2006.



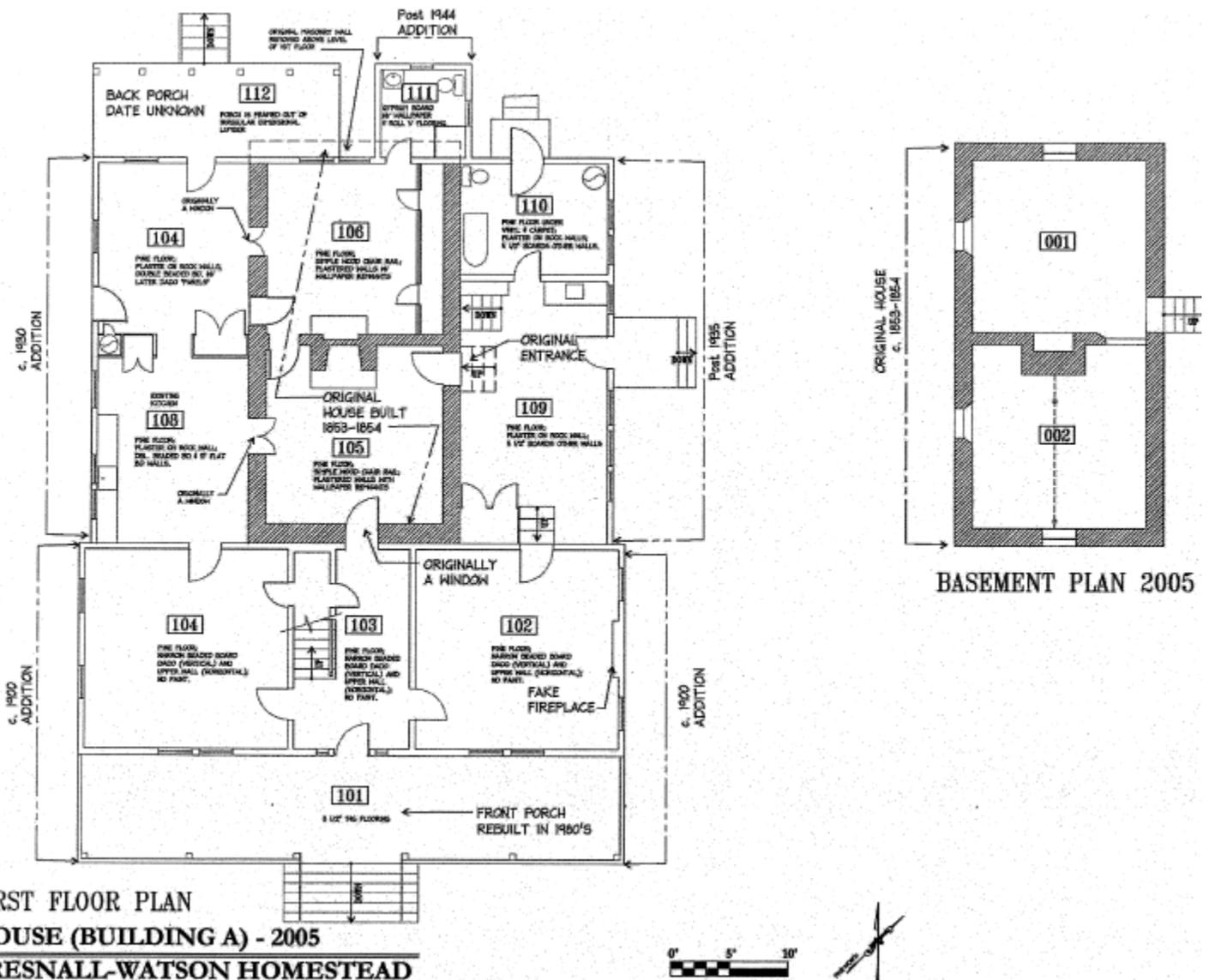
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Figure 10. First Floor Plan of Main House
Source: Fisher-Heck, Architects, *Historic Conditions Study*, 2006.



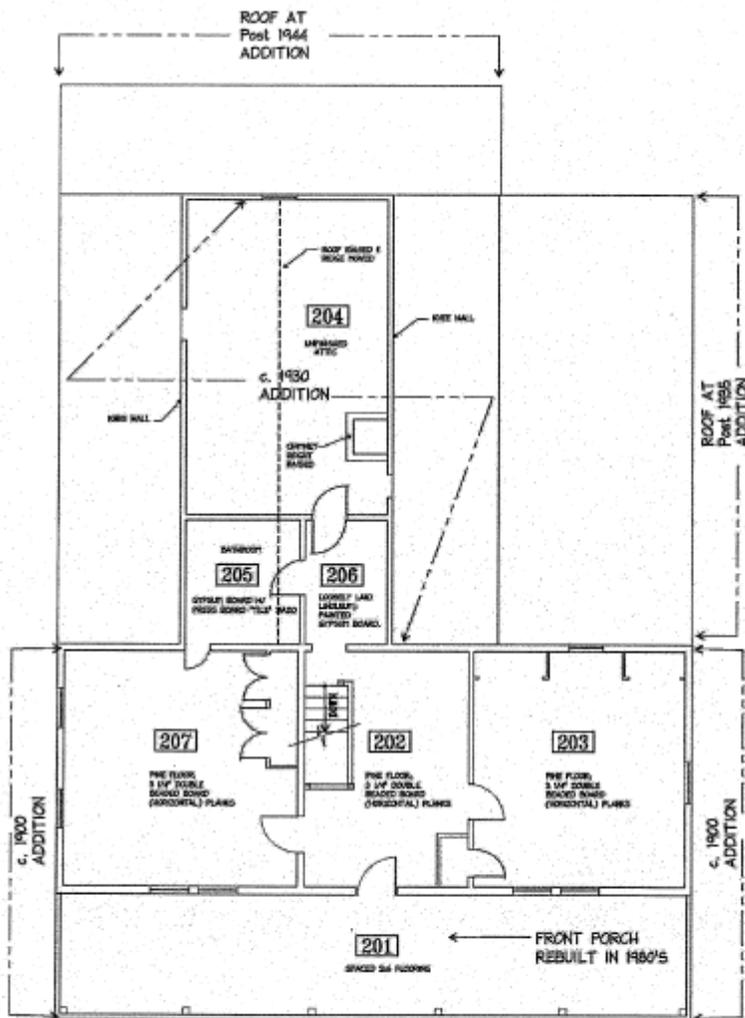
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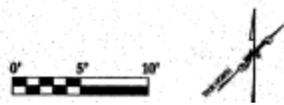
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Figure 11. Second Floor Plan of Main House
Source: Fisher Heck, Architects Study, *Historic Resource Conditions Assessment* for LHI, 2006.



**SECOND FLOOR PLAN
HOUSE (BUILDING A) - 2005
PRESNALL-WATSON HOMESTEAD**



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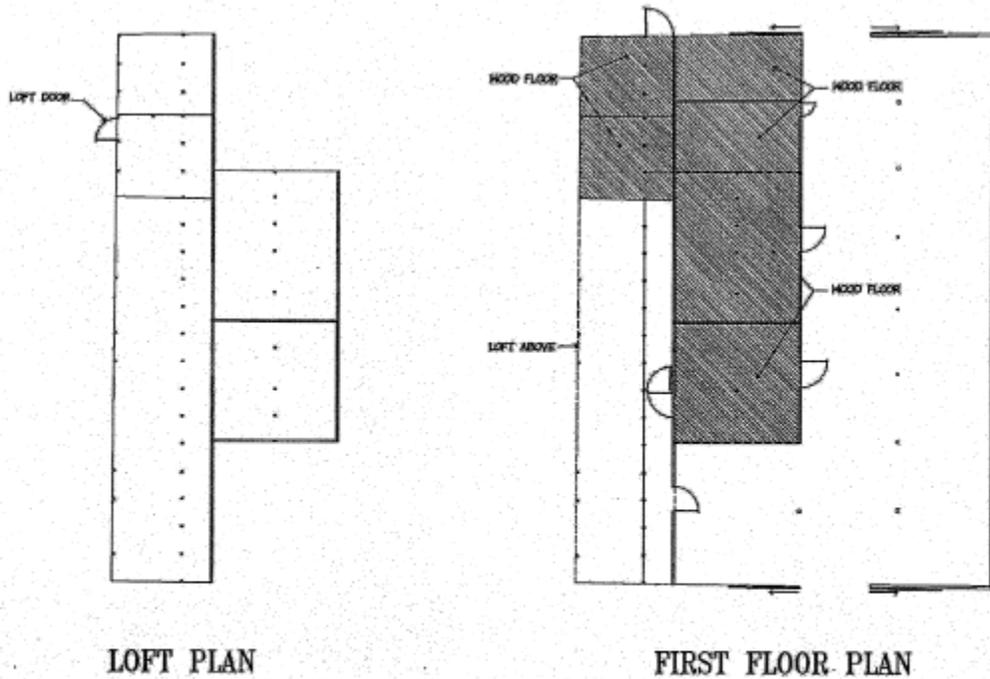
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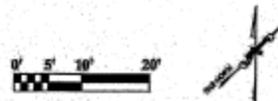
Presnall-Watson Homestead
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Figure 12. Large Barn Floor Plan

Source: Fisher Heck, Architects Study, *Historic Resource Conditions Assessment* for LHI, 2006.



LARGE BARN (BUILDING B) - 2005
PRESNALL-WATSON HOMESTEAD



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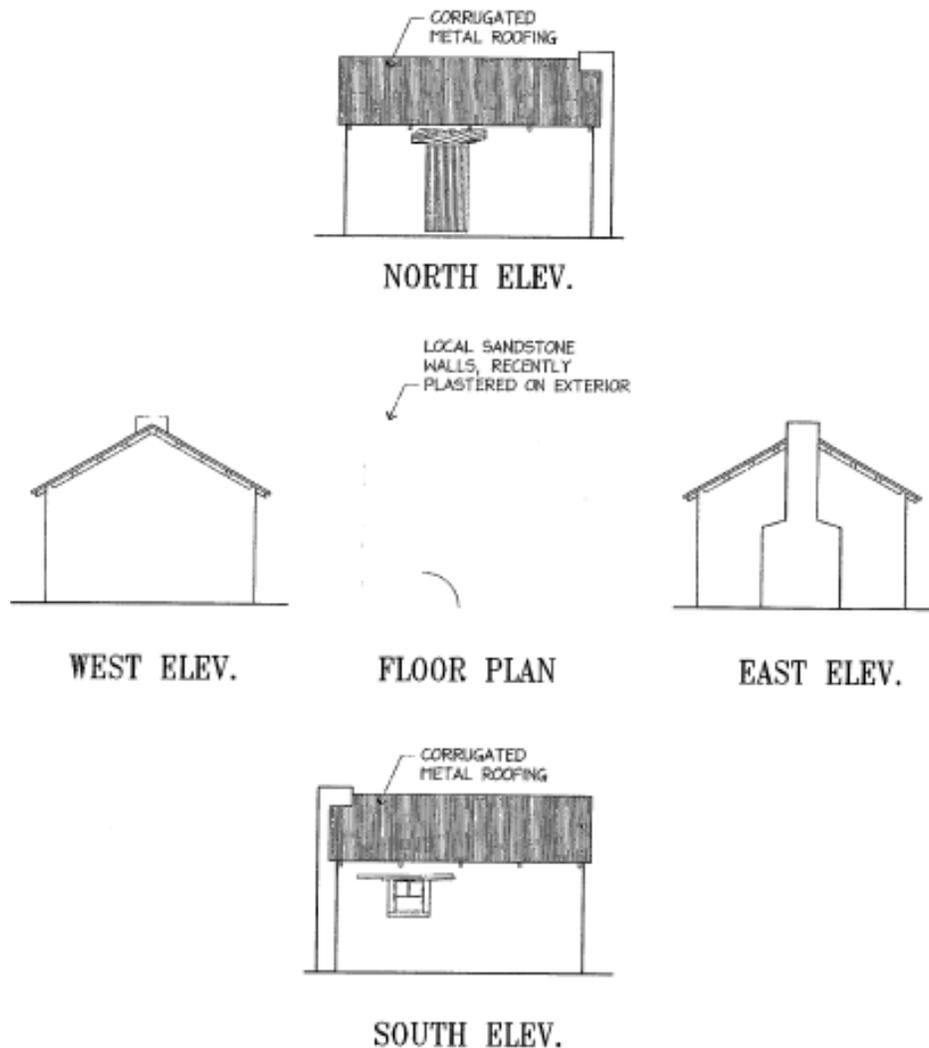
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Figure 13. Kitchen

Source: Fisher Heck, Architects Study, *Historic Resource Conditions Assessment* for LHI, 2006.



KITCHEN (BUILDING C) - 2005
PRESNALL-WATSON HOMESTEAD



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Presnall-Watson Homestead
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PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Presnall-Watson Homestead
1349 Neal Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas
Photographed by Imogen Cooper and Janet Lilius, April 2009
Digital images on file with the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office and the THC
Printed on HP Premium Plus Paper with HP Viverra ink

Photo 1 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0001.tif)
Presnall-Watson House
Southwest oblique view
Camera facing: Northeast

Photo 2 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0002.tif)
Presnall Watson House
West Elevation
Camera facing: East

Photo 3 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0003.tif)
Presnall Watson House
East Elevation
Camera facing: West

Photo 4 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0004.tif)
Presnall Watson House
North Elevation
Camera facing: South

Photo 5 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0005.tif)
Presnall Watson House
Northwest oblique view
Camera facing: Southeast

Photo 6 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0006.tif)
Presnall-Watson House
Southwest oblique view
Camera facing: Northeast

Photo 7 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0007.tif)
Presnall-Watson House
South elevation
Camera facing: North

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Presnall-Watson Homestead
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Photo 8 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0008.tif)

Large Barn
Southwest oblique view
Camera facing: Northeast

Photo 9 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0009.tif)

Large Barn
Camera facing: North

Photo 10 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0010.tif)

Presnall-Watson House and Kitchen
Northeast oblique view
Camera facing: Southwest

Photo 11 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0011.tif)

Kitchen
Camera facing: North

Photo 12 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0012.tif)

Kitchen
Camera facing: South

Photo 13 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0013.tif)

Kitchen
Camera facing: East

Photo 14 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0014.tif)

Small outbuilding
Camera facing: East

Photo 15 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0015.tif)

Kitchen East Elevation
Camera facing: West

Photo 16 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0016.tif)

Garage
Southwest Oblique
Camera facing: Southeast

Photo 17 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0017.tif)

Garage
Southeast Oblique
Camera facing: Southwest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Presnall-Watson Homestead
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Photo 18 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0018.tif)

Elevated water tank

Camera facing: East

Photo 19 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0019.tif)

Large and small barns

Camera facing: North

Photo 20 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0020.tif)

Presnall-Watson House interior with false hearth

Camera facing: Southeast

Photo 21 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0021.tif)

Presnall-Watson House interior, staircase

Camera facing: North

Photo 22 (TX_Bexar County_Presnall Watson Homestead_0022.tif)

Presnall-Watson House, original door to stone house

Camera facing: South