

BEAR CREEK: A CASE STUDY IN LOCATING HISTORIC SITE

REMAINS IN SOUTHEAST TEXAS

A Thesis

by

ANDREA RENEE STAHPMAN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2004

Major Subject: Anthropology

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December 2004

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## ABSTRACT

Bear Creek: A Case Study in Locating Historic Site

Remains in Southeast Texas. (December 2004)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Alston V. Thoms

In the Gulf Coastal Prairie and Marsh region of Texas, historic archaeological sites are often obscured by dense vegetation resulting in extremely limited surface visibility. In an environment such as this, historic sites can only be detected by the presence of above-ground features such as architectural remains and landscaping. Although not standard among cultural resource management firms, the use of historical aerial photography and informant interviews can be effective and efficient pre-field strategies for locating sites in this region. Identification of such sites is further enhanced by an in-depth understanding of the characteristic remains of pier and beam construction, which was commonly utilized in 19<sup>th</sup>-century southeast Texas farmsteads.

Four 160-acre grants located in the Addicks Reservoir, Harris County, Texas were used as a case study to test the effectiveness and efficiency of these pre-field research strategies. Each of these tracts was associated with the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century establishment of the German immigrant community of Bear Creek, and each tract contained the remnants of farmsteads where structures had often been removed or relocated leaving little above-ground remains to be discovered using standard survey

techniques. A 1915 topographical map and a 1930 aerial photograph of the area were employed together with accounts of former residents and descendants of former residents that indicated locations of former farmsteads on each of these tracts.

Additional archival research, including U.S. Army Corps of Engineers acquisition files for Addicks Reservoir, was conducted prior to a field “ground-truthing” survey of the properties. As a result, all six of the historic sites that appear on a 1930 aerial photograph of the area were located and documented. One historic site that appeared on a 1915 topographical map of the area but did not appear on the 1930 aerial photograph was not located.

*For Wilma*

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Several friends and relatives volunteered to assist in the field documentation of my research. I would like to extend my wholehearted appreciation to Betty Stahman, Virginia Snider, Scott Minchak, Myra McMinn, Katie Custer, Bobbye Jo Coke, Dawn Alexander, and Robert and Elaine Burden, for traipsing through the southeast Texas jungle and making it out alive. I further acknowledge the contributions of Phil Wise and Scott Garrett, lease holders and tour guides, and Kenneth Speckmaier for sharing the history of his grandparents' farm.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most common difficulties in conducting archaeological surveys in the Gulf Coastal Prairie and Marsh region of Texas is vegetation density. Historic sites in these areas often have extremely limited surface visibility and can only be detected by the presence of above-ground features such as architectural remains and landscaping.

Historically, pier and beam construction was common in the Gulf Coastal Prairie. Once a building of this type has been removed, however, the only clue to its former location is often the presence of the remaining foundation piers or chimney floor. Here, archaeology is at a disadvantage. Since no native stone occurs in this area, building materials, particularly early ones, were often comprised of perishable materials—piers made from wooden blocks and chimneys from sticks, mud and moss. When more durable materials, such as brick, became available these were often removed from a site to be recycled or bulldozed to make way for continuing development. As a result, very little, if any, architectural evidence is likely to remain, making site discovery more challenging.

Today, a large proportion of archaeology is conducted by cultural resource management (CRM) firms. By far, the most effective tool for locating (i.e. inventorying) historic sites within large areas has been surface survey in conjunction with pre-field historical research. While guided by federal and state guidelines, the intensity and thoroughness of historical research are usually determined by available

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This thesis follows the style and format of *Historical Archaeology*.

funds and the timeframe for completing the work. So, what are the most efficient and effective pre-field research and survey strategies to identify historic sites characterized by pier and beam construction?

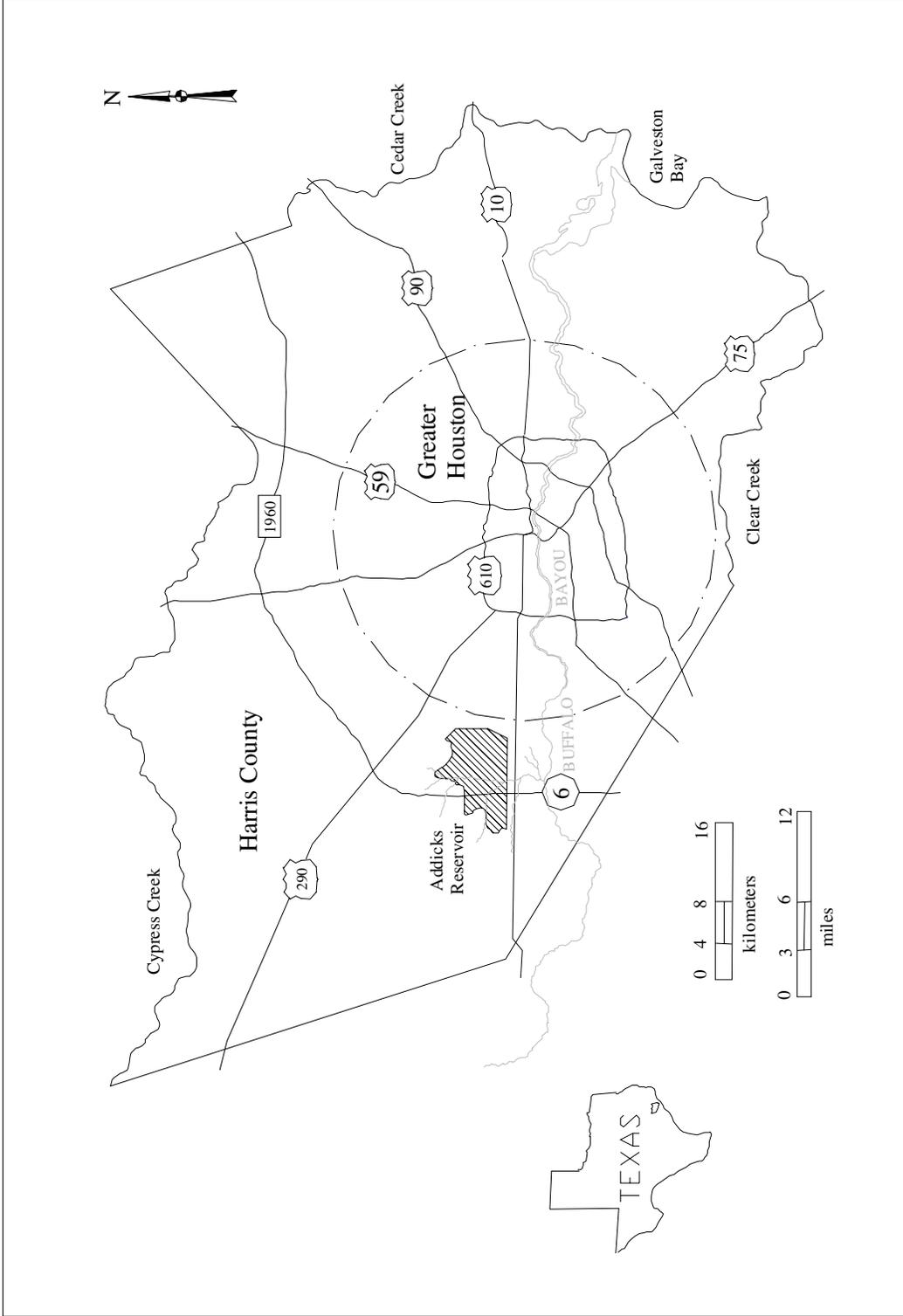
### ***Research Objective***

The objective of this thesis is to identify and refine reliable approaches to the discovery of the remains of pier and beam structures in areas undergoing thicketization in the Gulf Coastal Prairie and Marsh ecological region of Texas. Thicketization is the process by which the density of woody species in a grassland setting increases due to the suppression of intermittent fires or a decline in pasturage maintenance (Hatch et al. 1990). In addressing the effects of thicketization on the ability to locate historic sites characterized by pier and beam architecture, I examine a survey area encompassed by the Addicks Reservoir in Harris County, Texas. Archival, interview-based, and aerial photography information are compiled and “ground-truthed” in the survey area.

The study area is located in western Harris County, on the western edge of the city of Houston, on the upper Texas coast (Figure 1.1). The area lies within the drainage basins of three tributary streams of Buffalo Bayou: Langham, Bear, and South Mayde Creeks (Fields et al. 1983:4).

### ***Status of Current Research***

In CRM, pre-field and fieldwork methods (i.e. background research, inventory, assessment, and mitigation) are well established. These methods have been developed



**FIGURE 1.1. Map shows the location of the Addicks Reservoir in Harris County, Texas (adapted from Fields et al. 1983:2).**

and refined over time in both state and federal guidelines (King 1998). As part of this refinement, it has become evident that pre-field strategies often determine the effectiveness and efficiency of fieldwork. Although pre-field research tasks may be time consuming and costly to a project, the more thorough the results, the smoother the survey operates. In terms of historic resources in particular, archival research may be the most crucial approach for locating historic sites especially when ground survey is obscured by intrusive vegetation. The question then becomes: how much archival research is necessary to provide an effective and efficient means of locating historic sites?

Although archival methods have proven valuable, other sources of information for the location of sites are sometimes overlooked. In particular, historical aerial photographs, though proven effective in now forested areas of the Gulf Coastal Plain (Dering and Mason 2001; Thoms 2000, 2004), have received only minor attention in archaeological methodology literature. Of the many resources dealing with archaeological methodology, the use of such photographs in conjunction with pre-field research is only briefly mentioned in Orser and Fagan's *Historical Archaeology* (1995:132-133).

While historical aerial photographs may not be used consistently in pre-field research, they certainly can be employed as standard practice. Currently, standard pre-field research strategies entail consulting historical documents and at times conducting informant interviews (Orser and Fagan 1995:141). However, few archaeologists have much formal training in historical research or in writing history (Orser and Fagan

1995:141; Freeman 1983:232). This situation presents a challenge in the field of CRM and may result in haphazard research.

Despite issues surrounding the qualifications of CRM professionals, at some point many, if not most, will eventually be called upon to conduct some documentary or archival research. In Texas particularly, research on historic sites often concerns rural areas characterized by farmsteads with pier and beam buildings. Fortunately, useful background information is available and includes descriptions of mid-19th century building techniques utilizing piers (Solms-Braunfels 1936; Roemer 1935:57, 58). Previous research concerning this type of architecture concentrates on its origin and spread and farmstead layout (Jordan 1978; Kniffen 1965; Stanly 1979; Moss 1995).

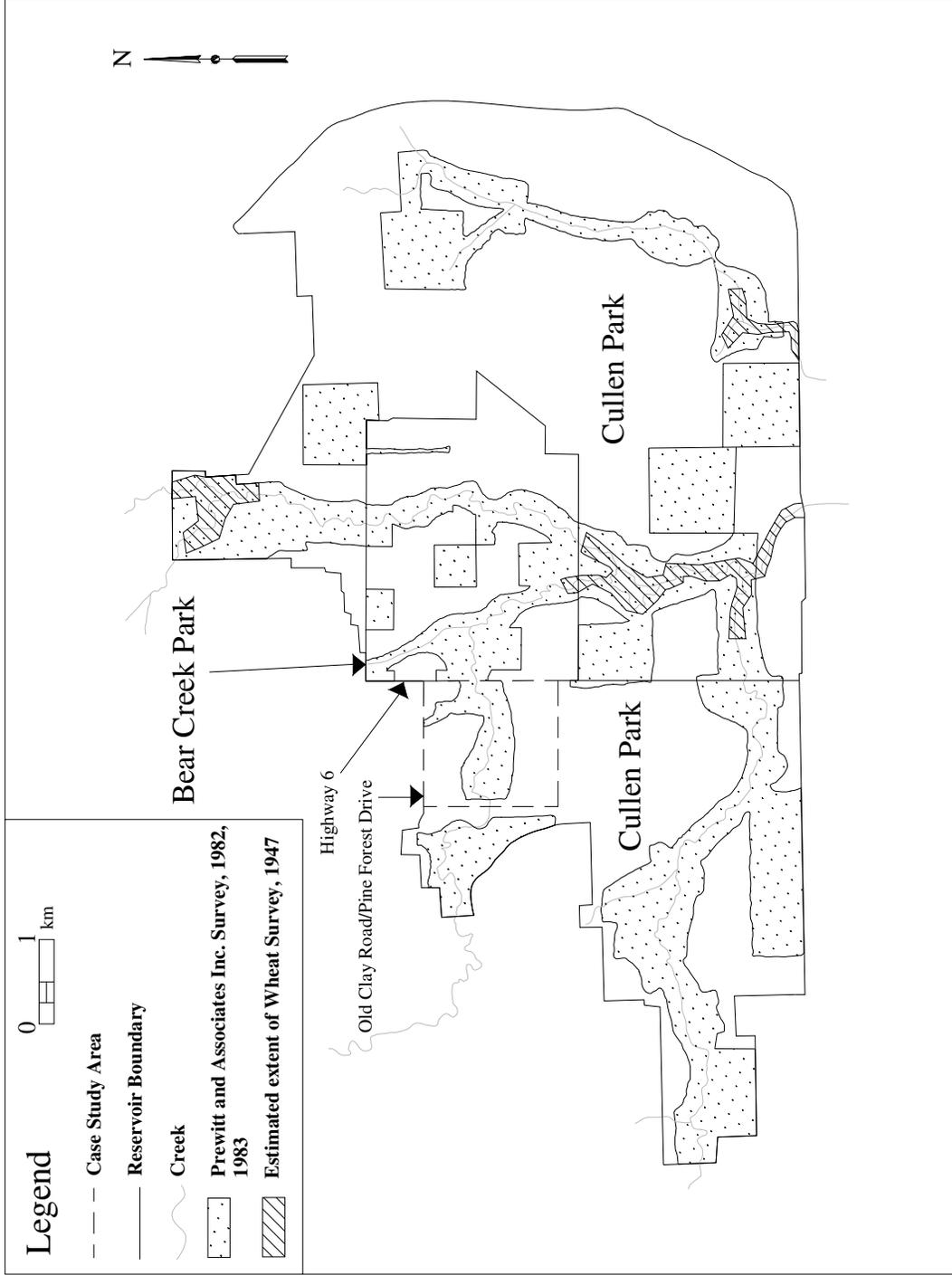
Addicks Reservoir, located in western Harris County, represents an ideal situation for the study of such farmsteads. The history of the Addicks Reservoir and the results of two CRM studies by Prewitt and Associates in 1982 and 1983 in the area constitute the bulk of current research in this region of Texas. What follows is a review of both.

In 1935, large areas of the city and port of Houston were submerged in a devastating flood. As a result, the Harris County Flood District was incorporated by approval of House Bill No. 1131, introduced to the 45<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature in 1937 (Harris County Flood Control District 1939). Over the next few years, this governmental body proposed plans for flood control and protection of the Houston Ship Channel, resulting in the construction of Addicks and Barker dams and rechannelization of Buffalo Bayou (Harris County Flood Control District 1939; Fields et al. 1983:46). In

1946, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) acquired some 11,600 acres in a low-lying area of the Katy prairie for the purpose of constructing an earthen dam to temporarily impound flood water and regulate down-stream flow. The resulting Addicks “Reservoir” serves only as a flood control facility, as opposed to a permanent impoundment.

Addicks Reservoir enveloped the site of a mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century German farming community known as Bear Creek. To complete the land acquisition, private property was condemned and financial compensation was offered to residents (Fields et al. 1983:30). By 1947, proceedings were complete and residents were directed to vacate the area. Among those were the Stahman family, comprised of Wilma and Albert Stahman and their two small children: Virginia and John, my father. Some homes were moved by their owners, but most were bulldozed. Local citizens deemed this removal process “the worst disaster to ever hit the area” (Wilson 1983:11). Addicks Dam was completed in December of 1948.

During the dam’s construction, the first archaeological project was conducted in the area now included within the reservoir. Sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, Joe Ben Wheat surveyed areas “where it seemed probable that damage from construction, silting, or indiscriminate digging might occur” and conducted salvage excavations of portions of the flood control impoundment and nearby areas along Buffalo Bayou (Figure 1.2) (Wheat and Newman 1953:162). Wheat investigated nine prehistoric sites, four of which were located within Addicks Reservoir, and devised the first chronology for the area based on his division of midden deposits (Howard and



**FIGURE 1.2.** Map shows previously surveyed areas of the Addicks Reservoir and the boundaries of the case study area (adapted from Fields et al. 1983:57; Wheat and Newman 1953).

Freeman 1983:17; Wheat and Newman 1953).

For several years, former residents were allowed to lease some tracts of land for pasturage. The area lay relatively undisturbed for nearly 17 years, and underwent considerable thicketization. In 1965, the city of Houston began a lease agreement with the Corps for 1,918 acres of land behind the Addicks Dam to be used as a public park known as Bear Creek Park (Howard and Freeman 1983:1).

Pursuant to CRM regulations, Prewitt and Associates, Inc., a CRM firm based in Austin, conducted an inventory and assessment of cultural resources in the Addicks Reservoir (Fields et al. 1983). The project, conducted in 1982, was designed to inventory and assess cultural resources prior to developing a second park known as Cullen Park, comprised of 10,534 acres. Field-survey work focused on 36% of the project area designated as having a high probability for the presence of prehistoric sites (see Figure 1.2). Discovery of these sites relied heavily upon subsurface testing. Forty-six prehistoric and 18 historic sites were identified and assessed (Fields et al. 1983:viii). The fact that fieldwork focused more attention on the discovery of prehistoric sites than historic sites did not escape the survey team's attention. "The biasing of survey efforts toward floodplains has probably resulted in a biased view of the distribution of historic resources in the project area. Archival data suggest that significant historic resources may have been missed during the survey because of the low intensity of coverage of upland areas" (Fields et al. 1983:58).

As an appendix to the 1983 report, Martha Freeman, the project historian, included an article detailing problems associated with the discovery and recording of

historic sites. She stated that although locating and accurately assessing historic sites may be difficult, the likelihood of success is enhanced by the presence of informative historic documents, including Corps acquisition files, which contained photographs of standing structures, plat maps, legal descriptions of each tract, ownership information, and detailed building inventories. Freeman stressed that these historic documents and data from interviews with former residents were particularly helpful in establishing site boundaries and dating sites. Although analysis of historic documents in general cannot solve all of the problems associated with survey work, Freeman stated that they should be aggressively and imaginatively used before and during a survey to ensure that personnel are aware of the locations of such sites. Historical documents are also useful during post-field work, especially in assessing site significance (Freeman 1983).

In 1983, Prewitt and Associates conducted another survey in the Addicks Reservoir. The project was prompted by the need to inventory and assess the significance of cultural resources in Bear Creek Park (Howard and Freeman 1983). This area totaled 1,918 acres (see Figure 1.2). Although the park had been developed in 1965, no cultural resource survey was mandated at that time. The field survey focused on 37.8% of the project area designated as having a high probability for the presence of prehistoric sites. Seven historic sites and five prehistoric sites were inventoried and assessed. Although the main effort of this survey was to locate prehistoric sites, upland areas likely to contain historic sites were also surveyed in an effort to avoid the bias against historic sites that had plagued the 1982 survey project. The upland survey was driven by the results of archival information obtained during the 1982 survey, including

extensive genealogical materials, data on file at local and non-local libraries, the Texas General Land Office and the Galveston office of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, and interviews with several former residents. Shovel testing was also employed during this survey to locate subsurface site remains (Howard and Freeman 1983).

### ***Research Methods***

To establish architectural and historical contexts, literature pertaining to regional pier and beam construction and farmstead layout is reviewed. Existing information on known sites in the survey area is synthesized to provide local historical context. To this is added the results of further archival research and interviews with former residents and their descendants, which was facilitated by my own family and related networking through the course of research. Archival research included wills, deeds and land patent records from the Harris County Archives and Texas General Land Office, maps and newspaper articles from the Texas Room of the Houston Public Library and Bear Creek branch of the Harris County Public Library, census records, Corps of Engineers acquisition files, and genealogical materials from the personal archive of Marie Gottfried.

Informants were chosen largely on the basis of their genealogical connections to former occupants of the surveyed farmsteads but also their reputations as knowledgeable individuals concerning different locations in and around Bear Creek. Informants were screened during telephone conversations to determine the depth of their knowledge concerning the seven farmsteads that are the focus of this thesis. Interviews were

conducted at the residence of the informant. Subjects were informed of the purpose of the interview and the manner in which the information was to be utilized. Interview questions were divided into three categories: 1) questions regarding the particular farmstead with which the informant was personally acquainted, 2) questions regarding neighboring farmsteads, and 3) questions pertaining to relatives and acquaintances. Questions in categories 1 and 2 were designed to fill gaps in the data gathered from primary documents, while questions in category 3 were designed to supply information on individuals from Bear Creek for which the archival record was scant and to provide additional information respecting the community as a whole. Interviews were tape recorded only if permission was granted by the informant. Those audio tapes and transcriptions of the interviews are currently located in the author's personal archive. Additionally, when permitted by the informant, historic photographs from the informant's personal collection deemed to possess value that would further aid in the assessment of the farmsteads under study were digitally scanned and copies were stored on CD-ROM. These CDs are also housed in the author's personal archive.

It is important to note that these interviews were designed to be informal-- no forms were prepared and no signatures were required. Limited by time, the questions were designed only to fill data gaps with respect to the seven farmsteads under study in this thesis, not to generate information according to broad research topics such as traditional lifeways. However, future work concerning such topics would be a valuable endeavor at Bear Creek.

In addition to the interviews, I review a 1930 aerial photograph as a means of

ascertaining farmstead locations. All expected sites identified in historic documents, through informal interviews, a 1915 topographical map and a 1930 aerial photograph are then plotted on a plan view map. Preliminary research suggested there are likely to be seven farmsteads with material remains (e.g., residential structures, wells, outbuildings) within this survey area. Once identified, these site areas were inspected for the presence of archaeological remains. Results of fieldwork are then compared to expectations. Explanation of differences between expectations and field results are offered. This process is intended to both “ground truth” the results of the non-field research and to test the efficacy of the respective strategies. Insofar as portions of the federally-owned survey area had not been previously surveyed, survey activities were coordinated with the United States Army Corps of Engineers field office at Addicks Reservoir.

### ***Significance of Proposed Research***

Results of the research presented here illustrate how the use of historical aerial photography and interviews with former residents are effective and efficient pre-field strategies for identifying historic sites. For example, aerial photographs from the early 20th century, when the area was still an open prairie, can be used to pinpoint the locations of farmstead complexes, tenant houses, etc. The resulting synthesis of pier and beam construction and farmstead layout serves as a guide to future historical archaeology work in this region. This thesis also provides for the first time a detailed and comprehensive written history of the development and demise of the Bear Creek Community and the incorporation of its space into a public use area.

### *Organization of Thesis*

Chapter II presents an overview of standard CRM methods, the shortcomings of such methods, and how such issues may be resolved. Chapter III is an in-depth examination of farmstead characteristics within the Texas Gulf Coastal Prairie and Marsh region, including patterns of farmstead layout and mid-to-late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century pier and beam construction. Chapter IV is an historical overview of the Bear Creek Community. Chapter V presents the results of the case study, survey and archival work. Chapter VI provides a summary and sets forth conclusions pertaining to the efficacy of the strategies detailed in this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### CURRENT STANDARDS FOR HISTORICAL SURVEY RESEARCH METHODS

Background research is generally conducted prior to field survey in accordance with a pre-defined research design. Most archaeologists charged with the task of background research for a particular project rely on an informal methodology that typically includes: (1) accessing an online state agency-maintained database of the state's archaeological resources, (2) checking site inventories at a state repository, and (3) reviewing previously accumulated information for the area of potential effect (APE) already on file with the contracted CRM firm. While this approach is not explicitly stipulated in national guidelines, and state guidelines vary, my experience on numerous projects indicates that it is followed by many CRM firms and academic programs. Accepted informal research methodologies should also include the use of historic aerial photographs and informant interviews as effective and efficient means to identify and locate sites. Informant interviews generated in the pre-field research stage of a project can further be used in post-field site significance evaluations.

#### ***Regulating CRM: The Compliance Process***

A large proportion of current CRM work is associated with construction projects, some of which are subject to federal, state, county and city regulations. Projects that are federally funded, licensed or permitted, or state-funded and require a permit from a federal agency are subject to regulations set forth in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). To be compliant with Section 106, a federal agency must

take into account the effects of their actions on historic properties (King 1998:59). If a project meets the previously-described conditions (e.g. building a road, pipeline etc.) and has the potential to affect historic properties, it is subject to review under Section 106 and is considered an *undertaking* (36 CFC 800.4(a)(1)).

Most states have their own laws and regulations, often similar to those of Section 106, that cover state-funded projects or projects that take place on state-managed lands. For example, the Antiquities Code of Texas, established by the state legislature in 1977, requires a review and permitting process for undertakings on non-federal public lands in the state. Under these conditions, the person responsible for the project must notify the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to determine if the undertaking may potentially impact historic properties eligible for listing as or already listed as State Archeological Landmarks (SALs). If the THC determines this to be so, an archaeological survey will be required (Texas Antiquities Code Subchapter A, Section 191.0525).

In addition to federal and state statutes, some counties and cities (e.g. San Antonio) have their own rules and regulations. Across the country, a county or city can be declared a Certified Local Government (CLG) by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and National Park Service to, among other things, enforce local historic preservation legislation. This legislation, often in the form of ordinances, is commonly applied to historic districts but may not be limited to them. For example, the city of San Antonio has enacted a Unified Development Code, which requires a party proposing construction on property within the city limits to engage a qualified professional archaeologist to study the effect of the construction on inventoried archaeological sites

(City Council of San Antonio 2001).

Regulations at all levels are designed to protect identified and as yet unidentified cultural resources under their jurisdiction. Therefore, in the interest of governmental compliance, a contractor must determine what, if any, historic properties may be affected by an undertaking. With respect to Section 106, CRM firms must make a “reasonable and good faith effort” to identify historic properties within the APE (36 CFC 800.4(b)) (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation 1966). To meet the “reasonable and good faith effort”, King (1998:72) suggests that one determine what kinds of properties are likely to be affected by relying on one’s background data or pre-field research while considering the nature of the likely effect.

### ***Getting Started: The Research Design***

Background research and survey methods should be designed to gather information necessary to meet a project-specific preservation goal. This goal is defined, along with specified methods and expected results of identification activities, in a research design (National Park Service 2002). “Even lacking a formally developed preservation planning process, the benefits of efficient, goal-oriented research may be obtained by the development of localized historic contexts, suitable in scale for the project areas, as part of the background research which customarily occurs before field survey efforts” (National Park Service 2002:2). Examples of the types of research issues addressed in a research design may include characterizing different socio-economic or ethnic groups’ responses to settling or occupying a given region, area or landscape or the

economic and social impacts of a government construction project on a particular community. Research questions should also be adapted to what is likely to be found in a given area or as part of a given project. For example, when addressing an ethnically German enclave in southeast Texas there is not much reason to pose questions about the role of African-Americans in the Civil War.

### ***Standard Methods for Pre-field Research to Identify and Evaluate Sites***

All CRM projects proceed by phases of investigation: Phase I entails the identification of sites through intensive field survey, Phase II serves to evaluate sites according to NRHP criteria through subsurface testing, archival research and photo documentation, and Phase III denotes the mitigation of adverse effects through excavation to recover a reasonable sample of cultural deposits, relocation of structures or avoidance. A large proportion of CRM projects never progress beyond Phase I due either to an absence of cultural resources in the APE or ultimate avoidance of the area by the sponsor. Because of this high number of Phase I surveys compared to subsequent phases of investigation, such surveys generate the bulk of pre-field research activities.

In some instances, standard methods defining pre-field research for Phase I surveys requiring a state antiquities permit are set forth in state guidelines, usually defined by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). However, few states have set “requirements” when it comes to background research, others only “recommendations”. States run the gambit from no explicitly stated background research standards, like Alabama and Massachusetts, to a detailed review of specific resources, like Iowa and

Louisiana (CTA Survey Standards Committee 2000).

This lack of consensus for standards in background research is considered a problem in CRM today. For example, the Survey Standards Committee of the Council of Texas Archaeologists found the organization's membership was displeased with "a lack of standards for linear projects; differences between transect intervals for west and east Texas, and no mention of requirements for background research and curation" regarding state guidelines (Marek 2000). Widely diverse research methodologies allow for significant variances in the thoroughness of CRM reports. Furthermore, since Phase I site assessments are based on information gathered during background research, they may be incomplete or entirely flawed without a checklist of archival resources to insure that a set of reasonable preliminary research avenues has been consulted.

In the absence of obligatory state-level methods, most CRM firms have their own methods for pre-field research. This usually involves undertaking a records check and literature review to reveal previously known information about local history, site types, and site locations within a particular APE. Records housed and maintained at the state SHPO or other agency (e.g. Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory (TARL)) include early editions of quadrant maps of the area, and National Register and State Inventory files. If the project occurs on lands managed and maintained by U.S. government entities such as the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, or on Tribal lands, it is necessary to review records held by that particular agency. This type of "quick and dirty" records check usually provides a sufficient overview of previous projects and sites within a given APE.

Individuals responsible for records checks must be mindful of the effectiveness of their research as well as the efficiency of their method. Firms with which I am acquainted usually allow only a few person-days to address these issues with regard to Phase I projects. Balancing effectiveness versus efficiency is not an easy proposition, particularly when it comes to historic properties. In instances where little is known about a previously recorded historic site or when no historic sites have been recorded but are expected to be present, a proper records check often requires more time than might be necessary in better documented areas.

Important sources of information that can aid in the location and assessment of sites and thus add to the efficiency and effectiveness of standard research practices are often overlooked. These include comparatively costly approaches such as interviews and examination of family photographs as well as cost effective approaches such as acquisition and study of early aerial photographs.

Historical aerial photographs, though proven effective in many instances (McCulloch 2000; Mason and Stahman 2001; Stahman et al. 2004), have received only minor attention in archaeological methodology literature. Their use can reduce time spent in survey by allowing investigators to target areas shown to have had historic buildings in the past. While the cost of such photos from private survey firms (e.g. Tobin Maps) may be rather high (up to \$50 for one 9 x 9 in. image), aerial images such as these are becoming increasingly available via the internet from government agencies such as the United States Geological Survey (USGS) for a nominal fee or free of charge.

Aerial photographs can also be used in conjunction with initial property research

and interviews with local informants. Freeman (1983:229-230) stressed that in addition to historic documents, data from interviews with former residents can be particularly helpful in establishing site boundaries and dating sites. Hardesty and Little (2000:60) go so far as to state that the assessment of historic sites is not complete without taking oral testimony into account.

One challenge of project-related informant interviews lies in quickly locating not only those who may be willing to talk, but also those knowledgeable about area history. In my own research I have found that such individuals are often active in their community in a number of ways and can be contacted via local cemetery associations, church groups, historical societies, etc. In contacting one of these groups with the appropriate request for information, opportunities for interviews often abound. Such interactions with informants also present an opportunity to collect copies of historic photographs, which further aid in the assessment of sites and provide “perhaps the most important documentary evidence of human activities that may be reflected in the archaeological record of a historic site” (Hardesty and Little 2000:60).

### ***Significance Determination***

Sites are most often evaluated according to National Register of Historic Places criteria (if not already listed in the National Register or in the process or nomination for the National Register). To be eligible for nomination to the National Register, a site has to be either (A) associated with a significant historical event, (B) associated with the life a significant person, (C) embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method

of construction, or represent the work of a master etc., or (D) have yielded or may yield information important in prehistory or history (36 CFR 60.4) (NRHP 1991). State-level significance criteria may include but is not limited to those set out by the National Register. The Texas Antiquities Code (TAC), for example, recognizes an archaeological site as a SAL if it has the potential to contribute new and important information concerning the prehistory or history of the state, possesses unique or rare attributes concerning Texas prehistory and/or history, is in danger of vandalism or relic collecting, or its study may contribute to new scientific knowledge and is preserved and intact (Texas Historical Commission nd).

Under federal and state criteria, significant sites must possess also integrity, meaning a site is intact enough to demonstrate in location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association what made it significant in the first place. Integrity is also determined by *who* thinks the resource or site is significant (King 1998:78). To paraphrase King (1998:78), people value the places that represent the character of their community and are the best judges of whether those places retain their integrity. These people, who are often valuable sources for location-specific and anecdotal information regarding sites, are also stakeholders in the management of cultural resources. Information we gather during the course of a typical CRM project should benefit them in some way. Heritage and cultural pride are powerful values attached to historic places. Effectively managing cultural resources entails preserving resources of scientific (i.e. archaeological), cultural, historical, AND heritage value.

The next chapters illustrate how analysis of historical aerial photography and

interviews with former residents are effective and efficient methods for identifying and assessing historic sites, both before and during fieldwork. These methods in particular help to satisfy three prime CRM directives: speed, cost efficiency, and the addition of meaningful information to the archaeological record. Additionally, this thesis demonstrates the importance of considering concepts such as heritage value and cultural pride during the course of CRM activities.

### CHAPTER III

#### REGIONAL FARMSTEAD CHARACTERISTICS

Throughout the 19th century, small farmsteads of the Gulf Coastal Prairie and Marsh region of Texas shared similar characteristics in building construction and inter-structure spatial organization. This chapter presents an overview of 19th-century pier and beam construction, an analysis of pier typology and placement, and an examination of the spatial arrangement of farmstead structures. It further provides an architectural context for subsequent discussion about farmsteads in the Addicks Reservoir area. Note that all construction measurements are given in non-metric units, i.e. feet and inches, consistent with vernacular usage.

#### *Regional Pier and Beam Construction*

During the Colonial Period, a building type known as pier and beam arose in the Chesapeake Tidewater Region of Virginia (Jordan 1978: 32-33; Collier 1979:22). To adapt to a coastal environment plagued by high humidity, structures in this region were raised above ground by means of piers, wooden blocks or stone pillars set directly on the ground or driven into the substrate at depths from two to 10 ft.. Wood beams and floor joists were then placed on top of the piers. By elevating the floor, a space was created between the structure and the ground surface preventing accumulation of moisture by allowing air to pass beneath the building and thereby slowing the rate of wood decay. Added incentive for such construction was found in a popular belief that the elevation deterred termite activity (Jordan 1978:32-33; Collier 1979:21; McAlester and McAlester

1998:33-34). Pier and beam construction spread south from Virginia along the coast through Georgia and then along the gulf coast of the United States. Southern Anglo immigrants spread this type of design into southeast Texas by the early half of the 19th century (Jordan 1978).

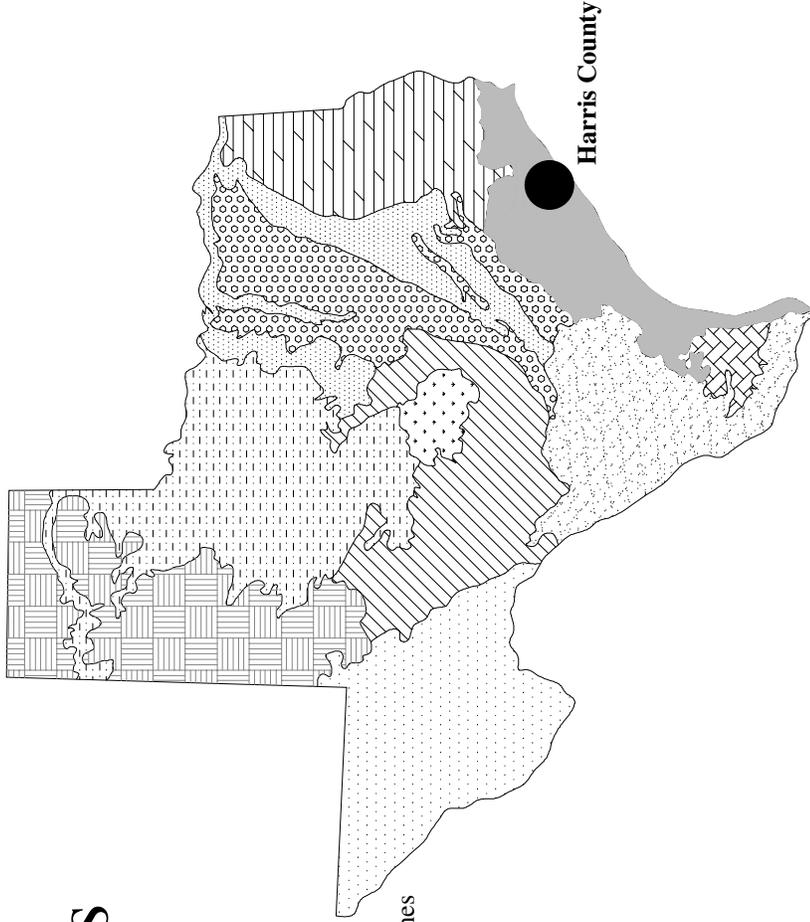
Like the Tidewater region, the climate of the Gulf Coast Prairie and Marsh region of Texas is normally humid, and like neighboring southern states, can be quite warm. Harris County, in particular, is characterized by a humid subtropical climate with yearly rainfall totals between 30 and 60 in. and average daily temperatures ranging from 66 °F in winter to 91°F in summer (Figure 3.1) (Henson 2002; Foster and Nance 2002; Moore 1998).

Southern Anglos brought log home construction into this environment. According to Jordan (1978:27), the earliest documented log buildings in southeast Texas date between 1812 and 1825, with the first major influx of these techniques occurring in Stephen F. Austin's colony between 1821 and 1824. This method utilized hand hewn logs joined together at the ends with various notching techniques (Figure 3.2 a). Two substantial logs or beams set directly on foundation piers on the eave sides served as sills. Sill ends were tied together with perpendicular members of similar size. Sills were then mortised, floor joists or sleepers were set between, and floor boards were placed on top of the sleepers. Logs were then added to the outer frame to complete the walls up to the plates which were designed to support the rafters (Jordan 1978).

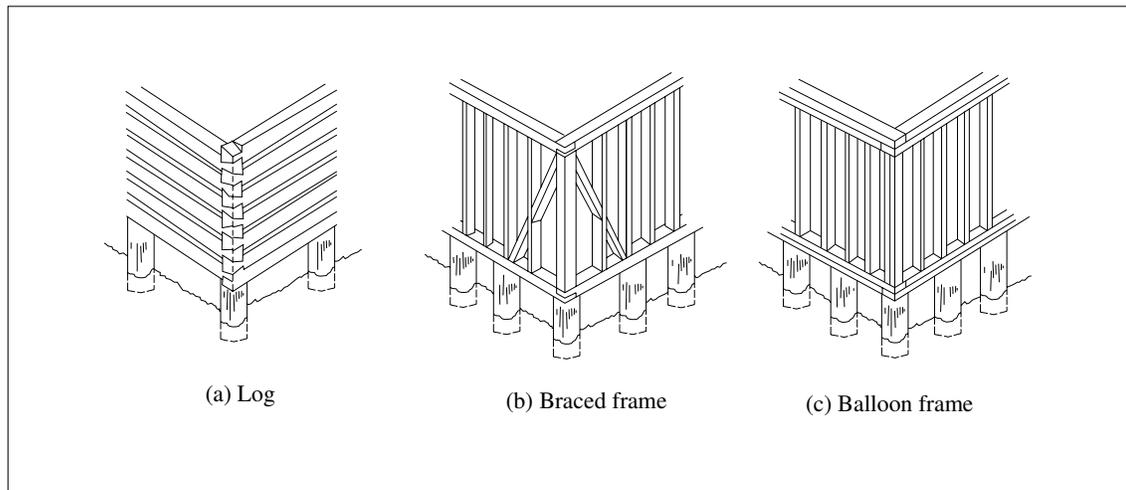
According to Journey (1987b), horizontal log construction had the benefit of rapidly clearing wooded tracts in preparation for agriculture in pre-sawmill days, but this

# Ecoregions of Texas

-  Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes
-  Piney Woods
-  Blackland Prairie
-  South Texas Brush Country
-  Coastal Sand Plain
-  Oak Woods and Prairies
-  Llano Uplift
-  Edwards Plateau
-  Rolling Plains
-  High Plains
-  Trans Pecos



**FIGURE 3.1:** Map of the subregions of Texas (adapted from an image featured on the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department- Conservation Website ([www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/endang/images/natsub2.jpg](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/endang/images/natsub2.jpg))).



**FIGURE 3.2. Log and frame construction designs (adapted from McAlester and McAlester 1998:35).**

building style was used less in prairie regions where there were fewer heavy forests. In the prairie regions of southeast Texas, frame buildings were more common, where, like log construction, the design was supported by pier foundations (Figure 3.2 b and c) (Jurney 1987b:43). However, unlike log construction, frame construction was more conservative in its use of timber, and the use of milled lumber in frame design set it apart from the self-sufficiency of the log building style. Due to this milled lumber preference in frame construction, such a technique likely did not appear outside of port cities until after a mill was opened. In 1836, the first sawmill in Texas was established at Houston (Bryant 1987:44). Such mills were widespread by 1850 and common throughout the state by 1860 (Fehrenbach 1968:29).

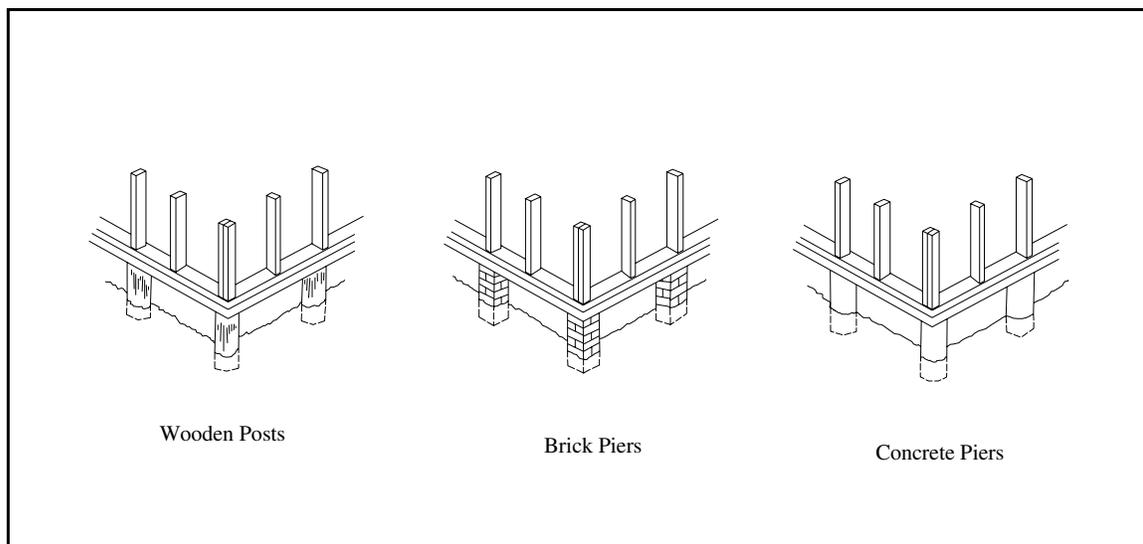
During the early to mid-19th century, a new type of design, called braced frame, became popular throughout the South, including eastern and southeastern Texas (Jurney 1987b:43). Braced frame, also known as timber framing, relied on the use of sizeable

hand hewn or sawn beams, at times more than 8 in. square, for the superstructure. Large corner and load-bearing posts were given additional support with diagonal braces attached to the sills, which were supported by piers. Lighter intermediate studs were located along the walls and base (or sill) plates and top plates were connected using mortise and tenon joinery (Figure 3.2 b) (Jurney 1987a:9; Sprague 1983; Crosby 1977:21). Jurney states that this construction technique was “the oldest European construction method in the New World, derived from English, French, Spanish, and other ethnic source areas” (1987a:9).

During the late 19th century, a building technique known as stud frame or balloon frame construction began to replace braced frame construction (Figure 3.2 c) (Jurney 1987a:9; Crosby 1977:21). Peterson states that several major factors contributed to the rise of balloon frame construction from the 1830s to the 1890s: (1) the standardization of lumber dimensions at saw mills, (2) decreased cost of machine-cut nails, (3) advances in water and overland transportation systems; and (4) the labor-saving approaches of local carpenters (Peterson 2000:3). The labor conserved via balloon framing in turn decreased construction costs. It eliminated the use of heavy beams and complex joinery that had characterized braced frame construction, instead substituting lighter 2 x 4s and 2 x 6s spaced close together and held in place by nails (Lienhard 2003). Developed in Chicago, balloon framing spread first to Midwestern states in the 1840s, then west by the 1860s, and finally east in the 1870s (Howard 1989:15).

### *Pier Typology*

Due to the effects of decay, destruction, and displacement, often the only remains of a pier and beam structure are the piers themselves. It is important to note that piers, like all building materials, evolved over time (Figure 3.3). Dating the shifts in consumer choice of pier materials may prove helpful in future archaeological investigations by



**FIGURE 3.3. Pier typology (adapted from McAlester and McAlester 1998:35).**

providing an approximate date for a building's construction. Furthermore, an analysis of pier placement can aid in determining building dimensions and perhaps shed light on the interior layout of such structures. However, piers could be, and often were, replaced during the use-life of a structure. Therefore, dates indicated by pier materials should be compared to results of archival research.

As was the case in areas south and southwest of the Chesapeake, the prevalent building material in east and southeast Texas in the 19th century was wood. With an

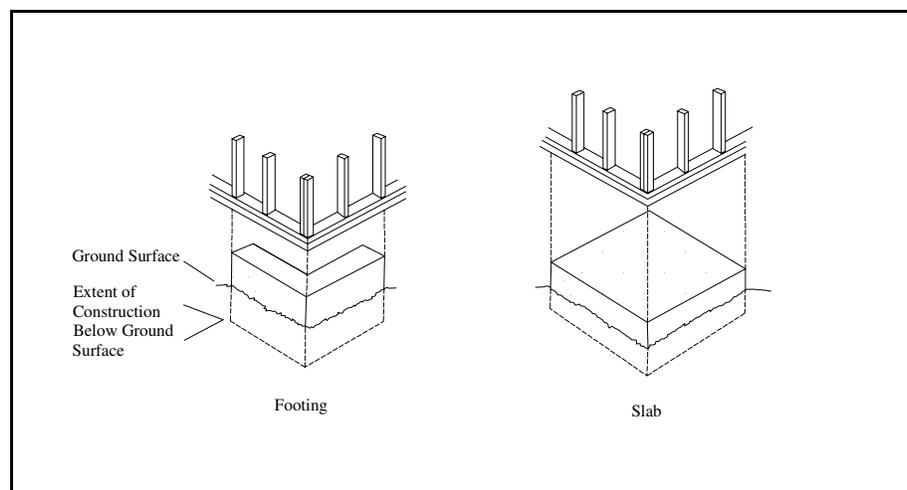
abundance of forest but scarcity of stone resources, pier material was limited to wood. Customarily, homeowners chose a rot-resistant variety of tree such as cypress, post oak, cedar, and bois d' arc. Pine was also a common pier material given its abundance in some areas, particularly north of Houston (Jordan 1978:32-33; McAlester and McAlester 1998:34; Weiman 2002; Stanly 1979).

By the 1890s, railroads brought manufactured goods to communities throughout the state. Manufactured brick became more readily available by rail transport, and many homeowners like those at Bear Creek, which witnessed the construction of the MKT Railroad in 1893, sought the material for foundations. Brick columns enjoyed an advantage over wooden piers in that they offered the same degree of support without eventually suffering a failure in structural integrity due to organic decay (McAlester and McAlester 1998:34). However, the disadvantage of brick lay in its cost. As a result, many homeowners only utilized brick columns around the perimeter of their homes where weather resistance was most beneficial, and retained wooden piers to support the interior of the structure.

Cast concrete blocks first appeared around 1900 with the mass production of Portland Cement (Simpson 1989). When compared to brick piers, concrete blocks did not suffer from failing mortar joints, required less labor to construct and were particularly attractive in the early 1900s due to cost increases in both wood and brick (McAlester and McAlester 1998:34; Weiman 2002). "In 1906 lumber prices were 64 percent above what they had been in 1898 and brick was up 59 percent. By contrast, cement prices declined 16.5 percent between 1900 and 1906. A cement block could cost

between 13 and 20 cents to make, and it cost less than brick to lay” (Simpson 1989). Most concrete blocks used in the construction as piers were 8 in. in height. In communities like Bear Creek, see Chapter V, a base block, measuring 4 in. in height, would be placed on the ground surface. To this would be added two to three 8 in. blocks stacked one atop the other to achieve the desired elevation (Weiman 2002).

By the first half of the 20th century, home construction began to evolve beyond the traditional pier and beam structure. Concrete footings (Figure 3.4), continuous concrete walls reinforced with internal steel rods, appeared in the late 19th century and had largely replaced perimeter piers by the mid-20th century. Concrete, like brick, was favored for its weather resistance, and as such, was placed around the perimeter of a house. Despite the addition of footings, the interiors of most frame construction buildings were still supported by piers of some type. By the 1950s poured concrete slabs (Figure 3.4) eliminated the need for internal piers altogether and have since become the



**FIGURE 3.4. Concrete foundations (adapted from McAlester and McAlester 1998:35).**

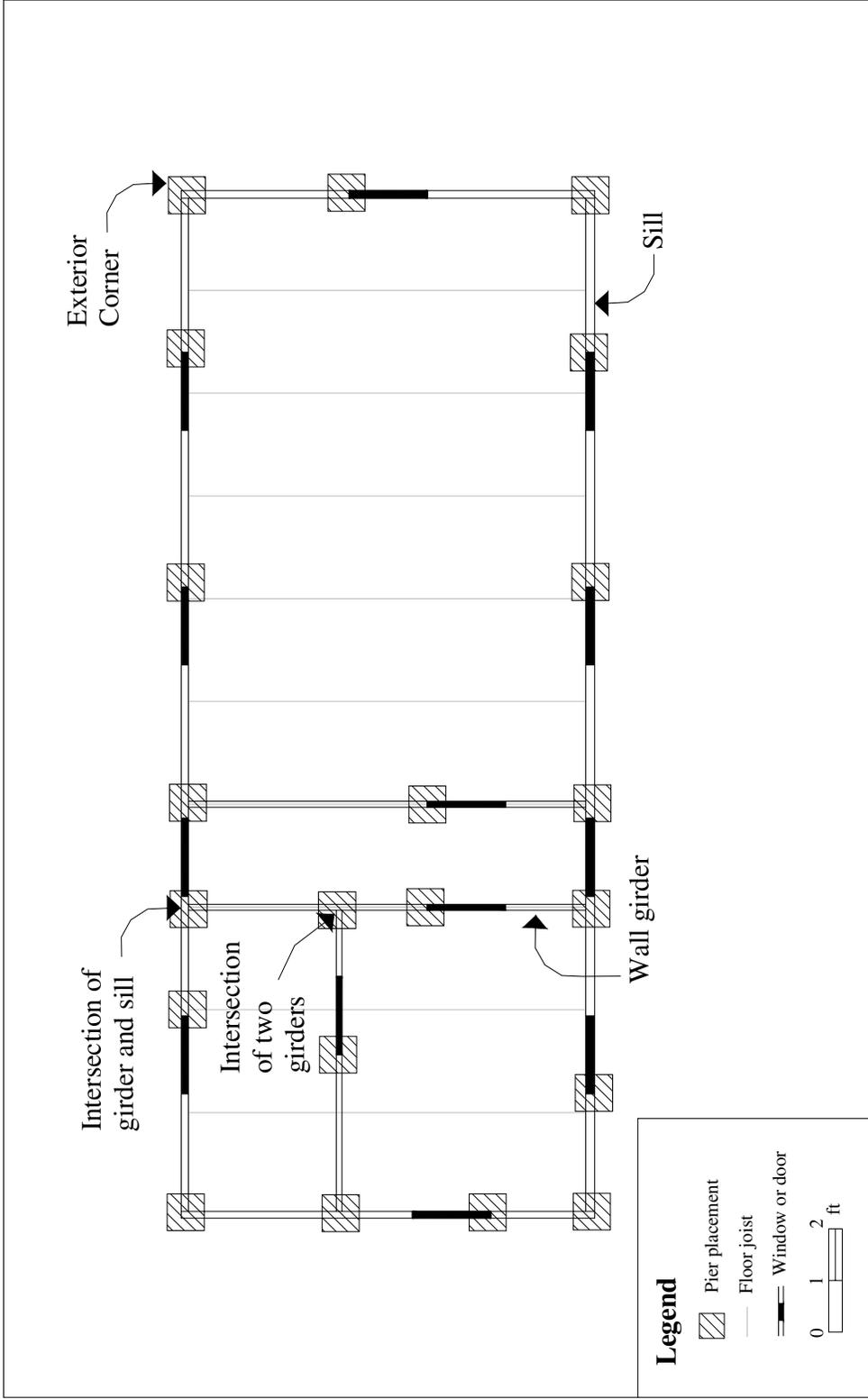
standard for foundations (McAlester and McAlester 1998:34).

### *The Importance of Piers*

Little has been written about piers, particularly in reference to their placement and types of remains encountered in the archaeological record. A pier essentially has two purposes: (1) as noted, it raises the structure above the ground to facilitate air flow and prevent moisture accumulation; and (2) it transfers structural (and other) loads from the building to the earth (Allen 1990:783). Proper load transference required a particular pier arrangement. In time, acceptable arrangements became standardized and utilized by builders at all levels of expertise. Understanding these load-stipulated pier patterns provides some insight into the nature of the overlying structure when only the underlying blocks remain.

Pier placement was directed by load-bearing fundamentals, and key placement points were those locales that would transfer the greatest structural loads directly to the ground. These points included the intersection of each exterior corner, the intersection of a girder and sill, and the intersection of two girders (Figure 3.5). Door and window headers transferred overlying loads down through the jams and onto sills or girders. Although not standard, it was often necessary to place a pier or two below these points.

Other placement locations were more discretionary. Floor joists, or sleepers, were typically spaced 24 in. on center, studs 16 in. on center (Jordan 1978:39; Sprague 1983:38). At times, a pier was placed under every other stud along an exterior wall (see Figure 3.2). Beyond these load bearing locations, piers were needed to add support to



**FIGURE 3.5.** Figure illustrates common pier placements at load-bearing intervals including exterior corners, the intersections of two girders, the intersections of girders and sills, and beneath doors and windows.

long spans. Building prescriptions of the period suggested that piers should be placed no more than 8 ft. on center under exterior wall sills or interior girders set at right angles to the floor joists, and spaced 12 ft. on center under exterior wall beams set parallel to the floor joists (Anderson and Heyer 1955).

### ***Regional Patterns in Farmstead Layout***

An analysis of the spatial organization of farmstead structures has overarching value in terms of the archaeological interpretation of farmstead context. Granted the positioning of farm buildings was and is somewhat arbitrary and almost impossible to quantify. However, certain known factors influenced how farmsteads were arranged and how those arrangements developed over time. The following section highlights these factors and expounds on how they directed the development of farmsteads in the Gulf Coastal Plain and Marsh region of Texas during the 19th century.

Not surprisingly, farmstead development was largely governed by necessity and convenience. Necessity determined the order of building construction and how well those buildings were maintained, while convenience influenced the placement of those structures. Essentially there are two categories of convenience: distance from the primary dwelling and distance from complementary-use structures or areas. In 1881, Byron D. Halsted, Harvard graduate, botanist, agriculturalist, educator and author, referred to the initial category of convenience when he wrote “the outbuildings should not be so close to the house as to appear part of it, not so far distant as to be inconvenient” (1881:xi-xii; Johnson 1904). The latter part of the statement refers to the

relationship, often one of dependence, between one outbuilding and another. This is particularly evident in the arrangement of structures related to the care and feeding of animals. For convenience sake, animal pens/shelters were often placed close to feed storage facilities such as the corn crib or barn, or were grouped together near a common water source.

Other factors influencing the placement of outbuildings had to be weighed against convenience. Odors from animal pens and outhouses dictated their placement at a reasonable distance from the main house, taking into account the prevailing wind direction. To minimize the risk of fire danger, the smokehouse, blacksmith shop and detached kitchen were placed away from significant structures. Proximity to subsurface water influenced the location of wells and associated well houses. Additionally, the positioning of all structures was largely influenced by land forms and the surrounding landscape.

Taking into account the considerations mentioned above, the development of a farmstead would follow a commonsensical plan according to necessity. Of course, sheltered living space would be first priority. Often a barn would serve as the initial residence until a house could be constructed. Barns were especially important as shelter for cattle and horses and storage of feed, particularly hay, upon which the success of the farm depended.

Once time permitted, often between crops, construction would begin on the house which was completed shortly after the harvest (Jordan 1978:161). Commonly located on a high spot in the surrounding landscape to avoid flooding, the house would

have been close enough to the barn so that noises of animal distress could be heard in or near the residence. Also, the house was often oriented facing a road or to the south, where the house would benefit from summer breezes (Jordan 1978:31).

Eventually more specialized outbuildings began to appear within what Moss (1995) referred to as the “service complex”, or the area of the farmstead associated with the main residence and barn that included the stock pens, stables, corn crib etc. Outbuildings could be numerous. In east and southeast Texas the typical farmstead contained five to 10 separate outbuildings, including the corn crib, smokehouse, cotton shed, stables, chicken coop or poultry house, springhouse and various other special-purpose structures (Jordan 1978:161). Generally, such structures were situated at various locations inside the service complex, restricted only by the previously discussed considerations.

Although the barn provided accommodations for most initial farmstead tasks, food preparation could not be safely conducted in a building that also housed livestock. Thus a small building was promptly constructed to serve as a smokehouse (Stanly 1979). Often visited daily, smokehouses were located relatively close to the main house. A comparison of four Bear Creek farmsteads revealed that most smokehouses were between five and 20 m from the primary residence.

Although personal comfort was at best a minor consideration or afterthought, outhouses were important on the prairie, especially when large thickets of trees were far from the primary residence. Outhouse placement varied due to such factors as soil conditions, proximity to domestic water supplies, prevailing wind direction, and

exposure to public view (Barlow 1992:4). A general rule was to situate the privy far enough behind the house to avoid odors but close enough to reach in case of emergencies (Stanly 1979). In Bear Creek, this often meant not more than 15 m from the main house.

As the farmer moved past his first harvest, further accommodations for his increasing livestock became his next priority. Pens and shelters were designed to protect animals from predators and to keep his investments from wandering away. The accumulation of manure in such pens or sheds stipulated a placement at a reasonable distance from the house, usually downwind especially in the heat of summer. Hog pens were commonly located near the corn crib for convenient feeding. Daily visits to the chicken house required it be placed not so far from the main house as to be inconvenient. However, poultry houses were often built to house anywhere from a dozen to a hundred barnyard fowls. Brood size was directly proportional to the degree of stench and thus determined how far from the house the structure should be located. The same logic applied to cowsheds, which were usually placed in a well-drained location on the fringe of the service complex.

Other outbuildings grew out of the increasing complexity of the farmstead. Once forge work was needed, blacksmithing duties (limited to wagon maintenance) were removed from a work bench, formerly located in the barn or wagon shed, to a small separate building to avoid fire danger (Stanly 1979:161). Weekly washing obligations increased exponentially with the size of the family. A no. 2 washtub and washboard and a comfortable spot next to the household well usually sufficed for most farm wives and

mothers. Soon advances in washing machines, often an expensive investment, required suitable housing to protect the machinery from the elements. This was normally achieved with the construction of a small building or shed near the house.

## CHAPTER IV

### A HISTORY OF THE BEAR CREEK COMMUNITY

Human occupation of western Harris County, Texas dates back to the PaleoIndian and Archaic periods, although precise early dates are in dispute. During the early historic era, the area now enveloped by Addicks Reservoir encompasses lands occupied by hunter-gatherer groups, including the Patiri and Akokisa. The French and Spanish explorers, La Salle and Joaquin Orobio Bazterra, respectively, and later other traders noted their presence from the late 17th century through much of the 18th century (Henson 2002; Campbell 2002a).

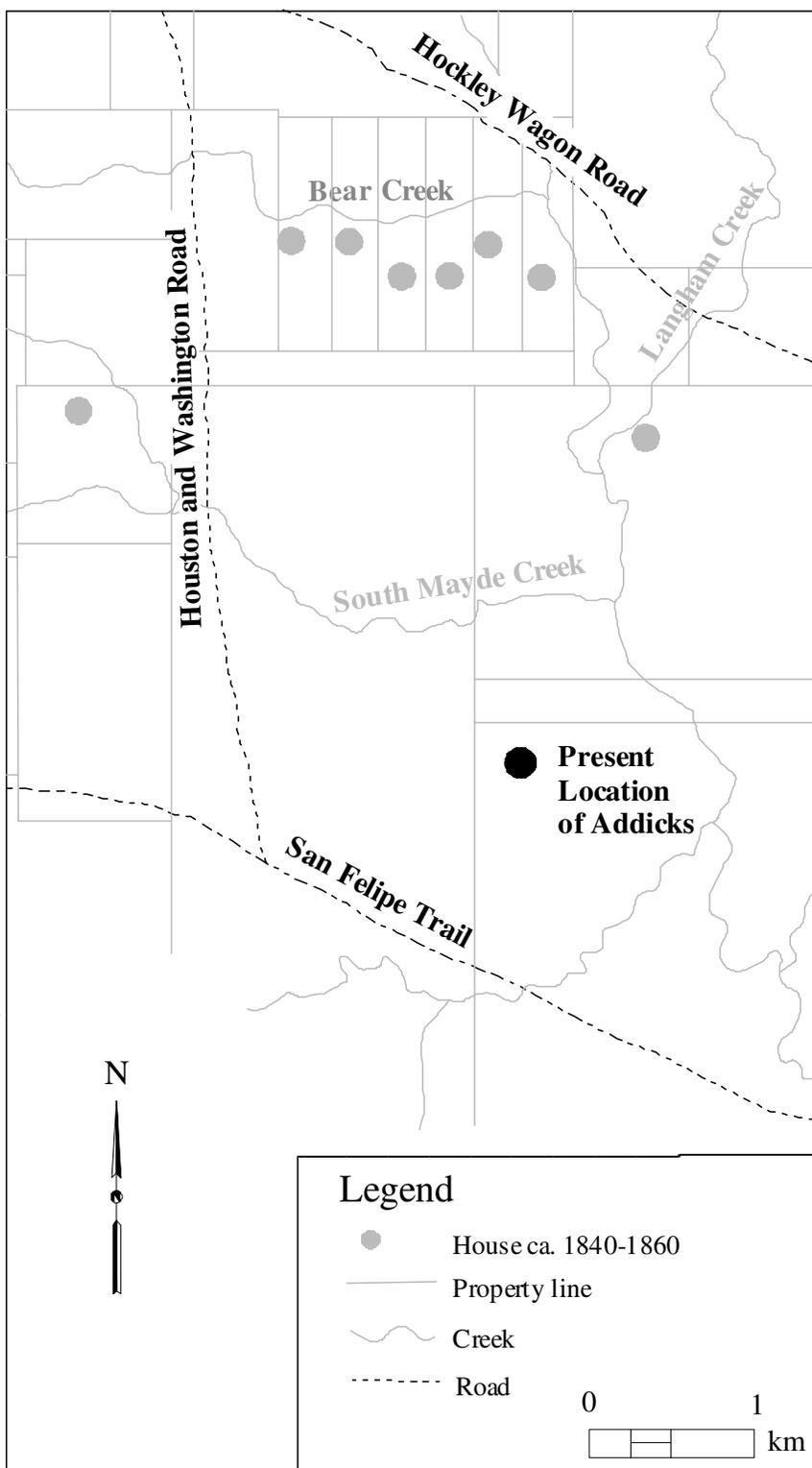
The territorial range of the Patiri tribe, which extended from Huntsville to Houston, centered on Caney Creek in Harris County (Campbell 2002b; Swanton 1952). Between 1748 and 1749, the Patiri, along with the Bidai, Akokisa, and Deadose tribes, gathered at the Franciscan mission of San Ildefonso, near the present day town of Rockdale in Milam County. Later, the majority of the Patiri tribe may have succumbed to a smallpox epidemic and the survivors may have merged with other tribes (Mooney 1908; Fenn 2001:214). Campbell (2002a) states, “they probably lost their ethnic identity among the Bidais and Akokisas, who survived into the nineteenth century.”

Despite subsequent Spanish colonial presence in the region, the area around Bear Creek remained untouched by Europeans until the early part of the 19th century. Beginning in 1830, Anglo immigrants with Stephen F. Austin’s colony under Mexican direction chartered the San Felipe Trail which transported freight between Harrisburg and the communities of San Felipe and Washington on the upper Brazos River (Henson

2002). The trail crossed Buffalo Bayou just south of today's Addicks Reservoir (Figure 4.1) and was used by such notable persons as 1) Friedrich Ernst and Charles Fordtran, founders of the town of Industry, in 1831, 2) Robert Justus Kleberg, father of Robert J. Kleberg Jr., proprietor of the King Ranch, and family during their journey to Cat Spring in 1835, 3) General Sam Houston, 4) Prince Carl Von Solms de Braunfels during his travels in Texas between 1844 and 1845, and 5) Dr. Ferdinand Roemer, the "Father of Texas Geology", between 1847 and 1848 (Lich 1996:28; Sizemore 1991:35; Von-Maszewski 2000; Beverly 1992:3-4).

François Simars de Bellisle provided a description of the region in and around Harris County in 1719. He described "a prairie which seemed endless in every direction and where numerous buffaloes were grazing ... [the soil was] almost black. Grass grows there to a prodigal height, and in abundance, which is a sure sign that the earth is good" (Folmer 1940:218-220). Euroamerican travelers who crossed the same area in the mid-19th century noted that much of western Harris County was vast grassland replete with prairie chickens, quail, wild turkey, wild geese, cranes, ducks, wild hogs, deer, buffalo, bear, prairie wolves, cougar, wild horses, and cattle (Anderson 1907:23-28; Hale and Freeman 1978:120; Golbow 1982). Local oral history dating to the latter half of the 19th century relates that the grass was so high on the prairie surrounding Bear Creek that one had to stand up in his saddle to see over it (Gottfried 2003). This pristine natural environment offered lands suitable for settlement.

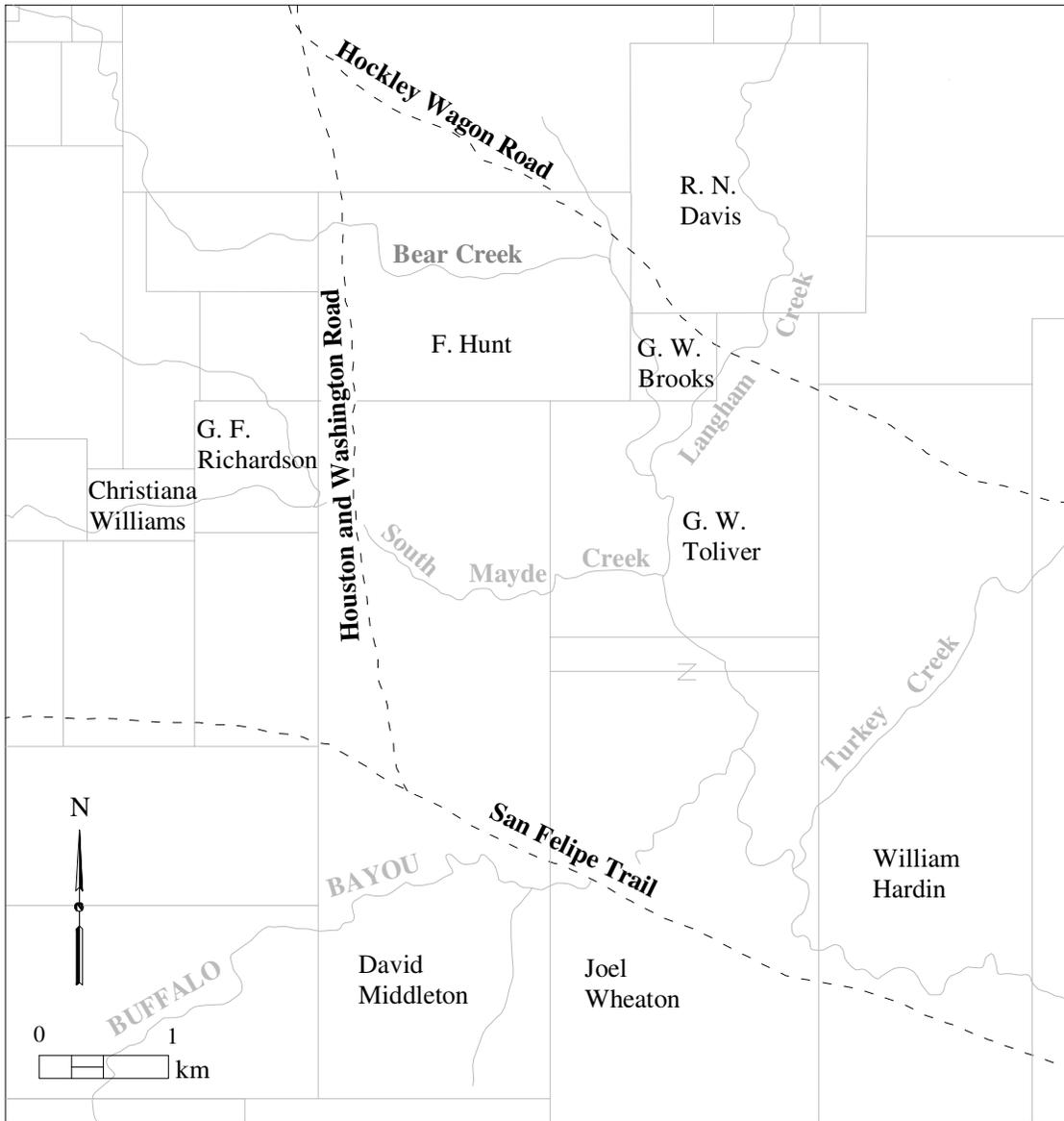
Anglo farmers and land speculators were quick to apply for grants in the area. Early land grants in the area of today's Addicks Reservoir were awarded by the Mexican



**FIGURE 4.1.** Map shows the location of the San Felipe Trail in relation to the Bear Creek Community, whose early homes are indicated by grey dots.

government to southern Anglo Americans as members of Austin's Colony. These included William Hardin (1821) and Joel Wheaton (1831). After 1836, grants were issued by the Republic of Texas to David Middleton (1838), George W. Toliver (1838), Christiana Williams (1838), Flournoy Hunt (1838), George F. Richardson (late 1830s), and R.N. Davis (1841). The State of Texas issued the last grant to George W. Brooks in 1861 (Figure 4.2) (Texas General Land Office 1861). Most of these grantees never resided on the lands they were given. For instance, Middleton lived in Liberty County and George Toliver held title for less than a year before selling his property to George Patrick. Patrick, in turn, sold it to Darius Gregg in 1838 and Gregg quickly dispersed the property to German immigrants. Additionally, Flournoy Hunt never perfected his grant, providing incoming European immigrants the opportunity to file preemption claims on portions of his one-third league (see Chapter V; Fields et al. 1983:34).

The area around Bear Creek may have been less desirable to Germans and southern Anglos alike due to the fact that it was prone to flooding. Until the late 1840s, parts of the prairie to the north, along Cypress and Spring Creeks, and to the south, along Buffalo Bayou, appear to have been more attractive for settlement (Fields et al. 1983:33). Despite Bear Creek's intermittent flooding, the first German immigrant families began to arrive around 1848. Among them were the Marks (1843), Koch (1848), Striepe (1848), Meyer (1849), Brandt (1850), and Groschke (1850) families. By 1850, these settlers were counted among the 30-40% of Harris County's German population. The majority of these homesteaders fled their homeland during the chaos created by German revolutionary movements, Prussian wars of annexation, and various



**FIGURE 4.2. Map shows early grants in the vicinity of Bear Creek.**

Polish revolutions for national independence (Hale and Freeman 1978:129).

These German farmers established land-use patterns that differed from those utilized by southern Anglo Americans in pre-1846 Texas (Hale and Freeman 1978:129). While they settled in a pattern of dispersed or loosely clustered farmsteads generally similar to Anglo farmers, German settlements tended to be more closely aggregated.

The Europeans were brought up to intensive agriculture; they worked their small plots to perfection. But the American-born had never known, and could hardly conceive, of crowding or an end to resources or land. They used land and then moved on. They thought in terms of leagues, while Germans treasured acres (Fehrenbach 1968:300).

Fehrenbach adds that Germans were not as successful in terms of expansion in Texas because of this ethic—they became trapped in their small, intensively cultivated farmsteads (1968:300).

The pace of German land acquisitions in Harris County hastened after 1846. Typically, settlers purchased plots that included creek frontage and as much upland farmland as they could afford. “Homes were built well back from the creek, while the wooded areas were used primarily as a resource for firewood ... or shelter and forage ground for the hogs and cattle which made up a large proportion of the farm stock” (Hale and Freeman 1978:129). Once in Texas, German immigrants gave up their Old World crops (e.g. wheat and rye) and began cultivating New World crops, especially

corn and cotton. “The small farmers did grow cotton when they could, for cash, but the ubiquitous crop was corn. ...The average farmer harvested between forty and eighty bushels of corn per acre, although some, in richer lands, grew as much as one hundred” (Fehrenbach 1968:298).

With their homesteads established, early community life for Bear Creek’s settlers revolved around religion. Early Lutheran settlers, such as the Meyer and Groschke families, probably attended one of the nearby Lutheran churches that continue to serve the laity today, including St. Peter’s United Church of Christ (established in 1848), the First German Evangelical Lutheran Church (established in 1851), or the Spring Creek Evangelical Lutheran Church (established in 1852, now Salem Lutheran Church of Rose Hill). Methodist settlers may have attended the Spring Creek Methodist Church located northeast of the Bear Creek Community (established in 1875, now Rose Hill Methodist Church), or conducted services in their homes (Fields et al. 1983:35). A community church was not built until local Methodists organized and constructed the Bear Creek German Methodist Church in 1890 (Edwards 1994:129).

Shortly after their arrival at Bear Creek, settlers again faced the specter of war that had once directed their emigration. Texas seceded from the Union on March 2, 1861 and by April of 1862, an estimated 12% of the population of Harris County had joined the Confederate forces (Hurley 2002). Several Bear Creek families bore the burden of having a loved one sent off to war, including the Koch (Ludwig, Joseph and Jacob Koch), Kobs (Frederich Kobs, Jr.), Marks (Godhulf, Albert, August Texas Marks), and Groschke (Carl and F. E. Groschke) families. Most, if not all, were probably

conscripted, given that their enlistment occurred after the Confederate conscription law of April 1862. Over the course of the war, Texas contributed between sixty and seventy thousand men to the service of the Confederacy (two-thirds of the state's military age population). The vast majority of these men came from small farms like those around Bear Creek (Fehrenbach 1968:354).

Texans were more fortunate than many residents of other southern states during the war. While the Union army occupied parts of the Texas coast at times, it did not control the interior of the state. The war did, however, strike a devastating blow to the state's agricultural economy. As cotton became difficult to export, food crops like corn became increasingly important (Fehrenbach 1968:356). Confederacy-enforced tithes of produce, hogs and various goods for military re-supply only added to existing economic hardships (Fehrenbach 1968:358). In the end, for larger planters outside of the Bear Creek Community, the ultimate blow to Texas' Confederate agricultural economy lay in the dissolution of its main workforce—slaves.

Before the war there were 182,000 enslaved African Americans in Texas (Fehrenbach 1968:314). Fearing the loss of valuable property during the conflict, many Anglo planters in Arkansas and Louisiana sent thousands of their slaves to Texas, increasing the state's slave population by 35% (Fehrenbach 1968:395). At the end of the war, these individuals were literally cast adrift in "one of the greatest social revolutions of all time" (Fehrenbach 1968:396). Restricted by "black codes" during Reconstruction, a large percentage of formerly enslaved African Americans became tenant farmers or "hired hands" on small, established farmsteads like those of Bear

Creek. Among the first African Americans to appear in the community were the Lucas and Jones families (United States Bureau of Census 1870).

The 1870 US Census lists Demprey Lucas as a black male farm laborer with his wife Mary, a farm hand, and a young girl, Sarah Amos, who may have been a granddaughter. At the time of the census, Demprey and his wife were in their 70s and Sarah was 10 years old. The couple was born in South Carolina and Sarah hailed from Mississippi. The Lucas family lived next to Ludwig and Sophia Koch, possibly within or north of today's Bear Creek Park (United States Bureau of Census 1870).

Benjamin Jones was listed as a mulatto farmer, with wife Amanda (listed as black) and son Lewis (listed as black). Benjamin was born in Florida, his wife and son (b. ca. 1857) in Alabama. The family was living between Friedrich Kobs and Henry Gastmann, which would likely place them along Addicks-Fairbanks Road on the eastern side of Langham Creek (United States Bureau of Census 1870). There was another Jones family, race unknown, living in or near the Bear Creek Community in 1860. Mr. and Mrs. Jones were from Georgia and North Carolina respectively, while most of their children were from Mississippi. They apparently arrived in Texas between 1850 and 1853 (United States Bureau of Census 1860). Benjamin Jones and his family may have been owned by these people.

The community of Clodine, located well southwest of the Jones and Lucas homes, was the focus of a significant amount of cotton cultivation (Figure 4.3). According to Jerry Davis (2003), a long-time local resident, a large population of African Americans toiled as sharecroppers or migrant workers in the Clodine area.

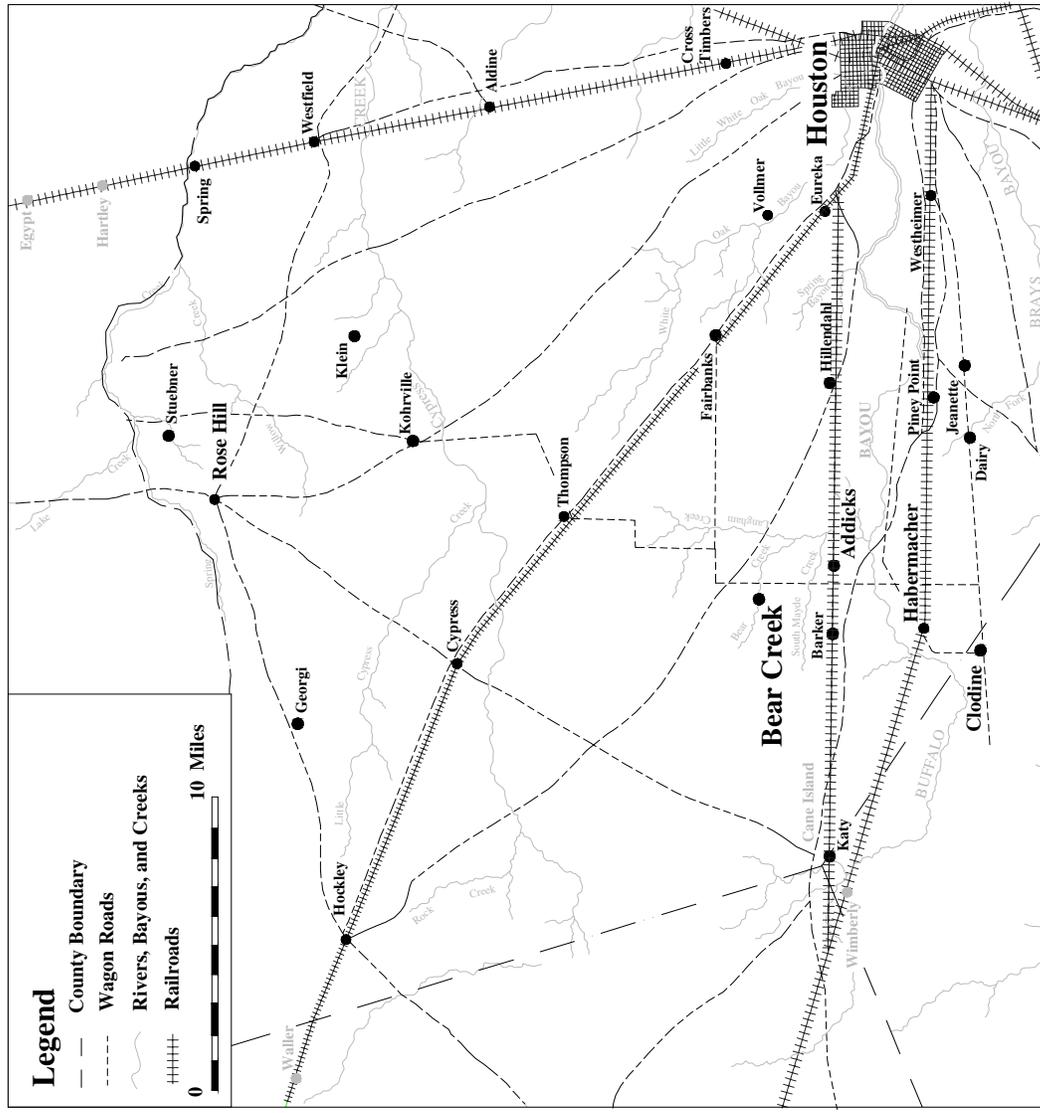
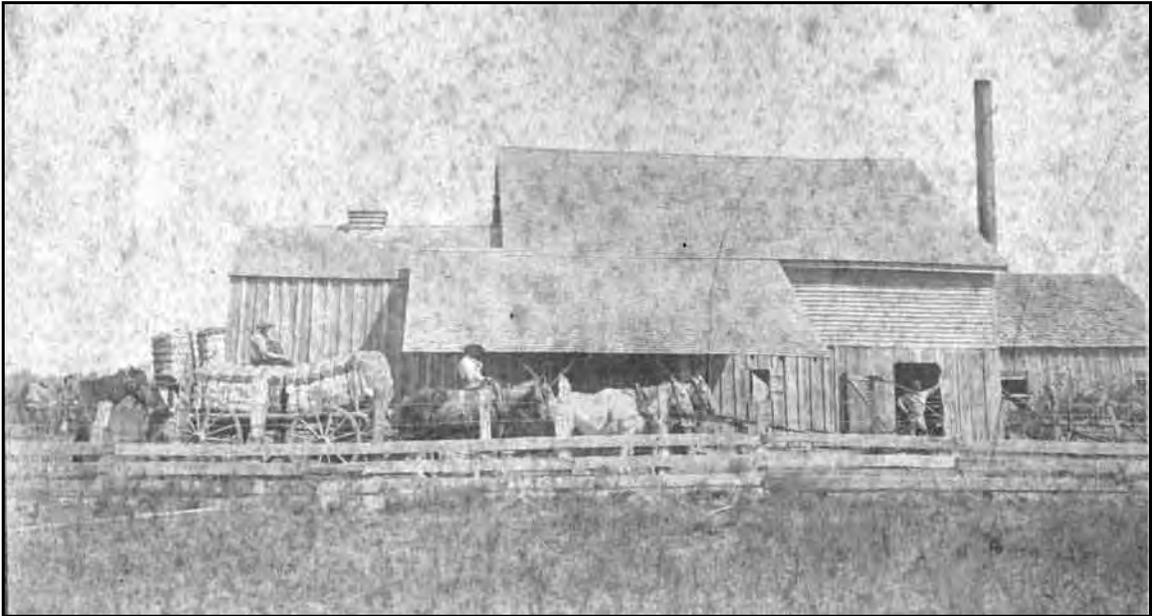


FIGURE 4.3. Map shows many late 19th and early 20th-century communities and towns in western Harris County, Texas.



**FIGURE 4.4. Photo of the Addicks Cotton Gin, ca. 1898. (Photo digitally enhanced by author; courtesy of Jerry Davis.)**

Locally produced cotton was ginned at the nearby town of Addicks from the early 1890s until the 1930s, providing economic support to area residents (Figure 4.4) (Davis 2003).

Like African Americans, oral testimony on the presence of Native Americans in the areas surrounding Bear Creek is scarce, though a few accounts do exist. Native American groups, including but not limited to the Alabama-Coushatta, regularly visited Harris County after the Civil War. In 1869, the Alabama-Coushatta habitually supplied wild game to markets in Houston (Hurley 2002). Tribal members may also have been present in the areas surrounding Bear Creek since they often worked as migrant farm laborers, filling positions like those offered in the cotton fields of Clodine during the later years of the 19th century (Hook 1997). Descendants of Dorothea Hillendahl

Groschke still recall her tales of how Indians brought wild game to her home on Bear Creek to barter for other foods (*Houston Chronicle* 1961). Nancy Artmesia McFarland Habermacher Wilson, early resident of the Addicks area, once related a story of witnessing two Indian tribes engage in combat near her home on Buffalo Bayou sometime between 1849 and 1875 (Davis 2003; Bundick 1949a; Beverly 1992).

Another account from local resident Henrietta Bleick claimed, “the Indians came in large numbers and camped near Buffalo Bayou near the Habermacher Crossing. In 1875, they suffered from a severe winter and many died. This was the last time that a large tribe ever came” (Bundick 1949a).

The same year also spelled disaster for the local population, as the community suffered the wrath of a sizeable hurricane, which killed at least two and caused \$50,000 of damage in Houston. During the reconstruction, the community’s first one-room school was built in 1876 and a post office was established in 1878 (Harris County Deed Records 1876; Bundick 1950). This initial post office was named Bear Creek thereby giving legal title to the community that it served (Bundick 1950).

By 1885, the community’s first postmaster, Henry Addicks, had died, and the post office he operated burned to the ground. The post office name was subsequently changed to Addicks in recognition of his service. The second post office was built on Addicks-Satsuma Road (modern Highway 6) north of today’s Addicks dam. “The mail was brought out from Houston once a week by horseback, or in a gig...” (Bundick 1950). William Schulz was appointed the new postmaster; a position which facilitated Schulz’ growing influence on the economic destiny of the community. Since its

inception, the post office had operated as part civil service, part social club and part general store. William “Billy” Schulz continued the tradition, but the retail portion of the post office at that time amounted to little more than “a box of cigars and a keg of beer” (Bundick 1949b).

Since the 1860s, Bear Creek settlers had traveled 17 miles by foot, ox cart and then by wagon to Houston to exchange produce, wool, hides and other items for lumber, tools and staple foods. The trip took two days and often people would either sleep on the ground or lay quilts in their wagons and sleep on the banks of Buffalo Bayou (Edwards 1988; Golbow 1982). These intrepid merchants bedded down at Allen’s Landing and later Henry Henke’s Wagon Yard, a campsite established during the 1870s, and gathered to trade wares at the bustling produce row at Market Square (Aulbach and Gorski 2001). Afterward, farmers would stop to water their horses or oxen in a pond a block away where the Rice Hotel now stands (Golbow 1982). Well into the 20th century, Bear Creek citizens continued the trip “to town” where they sold produce on Commerce Street and exchanged eggs, butter and wild game for supplies at stores. Favored establishments included J. M. Geiselman & Sons, at 417 Travis Street, the Van Zandt Egg Company Wholesale, Henke & Pilot, Lyons General Store on Washington Avenue, and Weingarten’s on the corner of Shepherd and Washington Avenue (Wilson 1983:2; Golbow 1982; Sizemore 1991:8).

Beyond the daily life of farm and field, Bear Creek citizens enjoyed a lively social scene at their local *Schuetzen Verein*, or gun club, founded in 1883 (Dimon [photo] 2002). The *Schuetzen Verein* was a place where locals gathered for meetings,

picnics, dances and traditional German shooting competitions. A photograph indicates that the first complex of buildings attributed to the Bear Creek *Schuetzen Verein* was located on Patterson Road, probably near the Bear Creek German Methodist Church and adjoining Hillendahl Cemetery (Figure 4.5). In 1889, Albert and Minna Marks leased two acres of their land to Emil Groschke, George Hillendahl, William Schulz and August Marks, trustees of the *Schuetzen Verein*, for another set of structures on Addicks-Satsuma Road just north of South Mayde Creek (Figure 4.6) (Harris County Deed Records 1889). At some point, probably around 1900, the *Schuetzen Verein* was moved to this more favorable location. Structures on this property grew to include “an



**FIGURE 4.5.** Photo of the Bear Creek *Schuetzen Verein*, ca. 1897. The back of this photo reads “on Patterson Road”. (Courtesy of Elva Weiman.)



**FIGURE 4.6.** Photo of the Bear Creek *Schuetzen Verein*, ca. 1914. (Courtesy of Marie Gottfried.)

octagonal-shaped dance hall (*turnverein*) with attached dining room, a concession stand, barbeque stand, barbeque shed and pit, a shooting stand and miscellaneous outbuildings” (Fields et al. 1983:41-42).

The Bear Creek *Schuetzen Verein* was part of a circuit of gun clubs that included Spring Branch, White Oak, and Cypress’ Tin Hall. Dances were held every Sunday night and included a live band (Freeman 1982). Each gun club sponsored one Sunday dance each month, Bear Creek had the third (Weiman 2002). The various weekly dances along the circuit offered locals opportunities to find marriage partners outside their own communities. Elva Weiman, a Bear Creek resident, offers the following testimonial:

We got to going to dances at Tin Hall and my friend Eva's daddy was president of the gun club there and he got started having Saturday night dances instead of just the Sunday night dances that the clubs had been having. And man, the people started coming to those dances. So I heard about it and I went up there around 1933, and Herman Liere and Lawrence Groschke were there by themselves, they'd come to for dancing. And that's where he met his wife, I think there at Tin Hall, and married her. My wife came from the Tin Hall area too and also Herman Liere's wife (Weiman 2002).

The coming of the Missouri Kansas Texas (MKT) Railroad in 1893 changed the area by bolstering it from a somewhat isolated rural community to a commerce-oriented way station. William Schulz, cashing in on the impending construction, purchased land in the path of the railroad and eventually moved the Addicks post office and store less than a mile south to be near the flagstop. He laid out the town of Letitia in this location. Over time it came to be known as Addicks, after the local post office. With the arrival of the railroad and relocation of the post office, locals could largely forego the 17 mile journey into Houston for necessities. Addicks soon became the area's economic center largely due to the efforts of William Schulz.

Addicks also became the seat of local government. Not only was the post office with an attached general store located there, but also the saloon and courtroom for the justice of the peace, with William Schulz presiding (Reaves 1950). Eventually, even the small rural one-room wooden schools that had served the Bear Creek Community during



**FIGURE 4.7. Photo of Addicks School, ca. 1930. (From the Victoria Hoffmann collection, in author's possession.)**

the 19th century were consolidated into a large brick school at Addicks in 1910 (Figure 4.7) (Addicks High School Roundup Reunion Committee 1985).

Addicks' growing prosperity was dealt a blow on September 9, 1900. The Great Storm of 1900 produced wind speeds in excess of 100 mph in Galveston. Although wind speeds had dropped to 60 mph by the time the storm reached Houston, citizens in the countryside to the west suffered considerable damage (Hurley 2002). At least two Addicks residents died as a result of the storm (Sullivan and Parker 1984:29-30). The Addicks post office/Schulz's store, the depot and most of the town were destroyed (Bundick 1950; Sullivan and Parker 1984:29-30, 188; *Houston Daily Post* 1900).

Despite the community's drive to recover and rebuild from the destruction of the storm of 1900, the residential trend, from farm to city, had already begun. Census

records indicate that younger generations had been leaving Bear Creek since the 1880s, abandoning the farming lifestyle to seek work in Houston and elsewhere (United States Bureau of Census 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920). This exodus was likely due to a continuing economic decline caused by decreasing agricultural prices between 1870 and 1900. Cotton prices, in particular, had been falling since the late 1890s due in large measure to initial periods of overproduction followed by devastation caused by the boll weevil, which reached Harris County in 1901. Cotton (along with cattle) had formed the foundation of the regional economy (Hadley and Strom 1992). In 1914, the cotton market collapsed completely causing the eminent demise of the Addicks cotton gin and an extended downturn for the town's other businesses (Hurley 2002; Davis 2003).

In 1901, the Spindletop well south of Beaumont struck oil and ushered in a liquid fuel age making way for mass production (Hurley 2002). During the next fifteen years, paved roads appeared in areas where once there had been little more than cow trails and automobiles began making their way into the countryside. The increased mobility allowed Houstonians to make day trips to the fields and prairies of west Harris County and before long, advertisements touted "rustic attractions" around Bear Creek (Fields et al. 1983:46).

Community improvements continued throughout the early years of the 20th century. The Bear Creek German Methodist Church was moved from its sometimes soggy position in the floodplain of Langham Creek to a more favorable location along Addicks-Satsuma Road in 1902, at the present-day intersection of State Highway 6 and Patterson Road. In 1915, telephone service arrived in Bear Creek and locals made

appropriate adaptations to the system. “Lines were strung on fence posts in lieu of regulation poles. Anytime there was trouble on the line the first place to look was the pasture to see if a cow had knocked down a post or rubbed the wires loose” (Sizemore 1991:44).

By 1922, Bear Creek cattle became the subject of a large-scale fever tick eradication program. Established by the federal government in 1906, the program required dipping cattle in an arsenic solution. Despite fervent opposition, local farmers were required to report to the local dipping vat located on Addicks-Satsuma Road every two weeks to dip their herds (Figure 4.8) (Sizemore 1991:126-127). The program successfully eradicated the fever tick within forty years and the concrete dipping vat became obsolete.

The community was devastated by another gulf hurricane in 1915, which destroyed the Bear Creek German Methodist Church. The church was the very heart of the community, with records and services in the German language (Fields et al. 1983:41). Citizens quickly organized to rebuild but larger troubles loomed on the horizon. Within two years, the U.S. declared war on Germany, affecting the lives of Bear Creek citizens in unique and profound ways.

On April 6, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson issued twelve regulations aimed at minimizing the threat from “alien enemies”, including those of German birth who had not completed the naturalization process. Before the end of the year, another eight regulations were issued, making twenty in all. Across the nation, the public was bombarded by propoganda and many individuals of German birth or ancestry were



**FIGURE 4.8. Photo of the cattle dipping vat on Addicks-Satsuma Road, 1944. (Photo digitally enhanced by author; courtesy of Martha Freeman.)**

persecuted by the public. German language services at the local Methodist church ceased. Local children were ostracized because of their German last names (Sizemore 1991:71-72; Golbow 1979). “Their kids wouldn’t talk to us because we was Germans and things like this” (Beckendorf 2002). Other local residents were forced to give up their careers because of their German heritage (Beckendorf 2002; Gottfried 1989:199). Despite the antagonism, or perhaps in spite of it, many Bear Creek men enlisted and fought in WWI, as well as WWII (Beckendorf 2002).

Around 1915, commercial dairy operations began to appear in the community. Spurred on by the development of the cream separator, Bear Creek dairy farmers began supplying cream to Houstonians. “There was no market for milk [at that time] because nearly everybody that lived in the city had a cow in the back yard” (Beckendorf 2002). With the introduction of the first milking machines on Gus Kobs’ farm in 1924 and advances in refrigeration, fluid milk became a new commodity (Beckendorf 2002). At

first, individual dairies would bottle the milk themselves, transport the bottles to Houston and sell them door-to-door. Later, a local dairy cooperative, termed “The Association”, was formed and residents were hired to drive the co-op trucks to large processing plants like Borden and Lone Star Creamery in Houston. Each day milk cans, numbered to identify the owners, were dropped off at the end of the dairy farmer’s driveway. Sometimes they were placed in specially constructed buildings designed to prevent the milk from getting hot in the sun (Figure 4.9). A co-op driver would pick up the cans and deliver them to the processing plant. On his way back, the driver would drop the cans off at the appointed farm (Kellogg 2003).

Farm activities in Harris County were periodically plagued by natural disasters over the next several years. In 1924, the area was hit by a two-week blizzard that killed thousands of cattle and horses and temporarily isolated the city of Houston (Hurley



**FIGURE 4.9.** Photo of a road side milk can storage house at the Gus Kobs dairy, Bear Creek, Texas. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.)

2002; Sizemore 1991:121-124). In 1929, a severe flood caused millions of dollars in damage and a subsequent flood in 1935 submerged large areas of downtown Houston. Buffalo Bayou rose 36 ft. above normal in the latter flood, prompting city officials to begin discussing flood control with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Hurley 2002).

The Harris County Flood Control District was organized in 1937 (Harris County Flood Control District 1939). This governmental body distributed a publication aimed at lobbying the Texas Legislature for flood control funding. The publication included photos of the flood damage caused by the 1935 flood in areas around Houston as well as rural areas outside the city. The District hoped to gain support for the passage of Senate Bill Number 6, which would declare Harris County floods to be a “public calamity” and authorize funds for their control (Fields et al. 1983:47). Soon plans were underway to build two dams to control flooding along the main branch of Buffalo Bayou as well as its smaller tributary creeks. On February 20, 1940, the Corps approved \$32,000,000 for flood control facilities in Harris County, including the construction of the Addicks Reservoir (Hurley 2002). Begun in May of 1946, the Addicks Reservoir project was slowed by America’s involvement in WWII. In the end, the reservoir’s total cost exceeded \$6,000,000 and took over two and a half years to complete construction (Fields et al. 1983:47).

By 1944, the Corps began the process of acquiring 11,600 acres of land encompassing the Bear Creek Community, but excluding the town of Addicks. Although Bear Creek had seen its share of flooding, residents had learned to cope with the conditions. Many were angered to find their lands were to be condemned by the

Corps under the power of eminent domain. Despite letters of outrage and frustration from residents to state representatives concerning suspiciously low property appraisals, condemnation proceedings were completed by 1947 and residents were directed to leave the area (Fields et al. 1983:47).

Several homes were moved away by their owners, those that remained were either sold or bulldozed and the flood control project was deemed “the worst disaster to ever hit the area” (Wilson 1983:11). Three residents committed suicide rather than leave their homes. Their passion for this area may best be described by T. R. Fehrenbach: “The one big difference between the Anglo and the German farmer was that the latter was less mobile. When the German put down roots, he did not leave” (1968:295).

Their sense of community shattered, residents of Bear Creek scattered across the Texas landscape. For the most part, fourth and fifth generation farmers were able to transplant their agricultural knowledge to nearby communities. Others abandoned the farming lifestyle entirely, opting for occupations in trades and businesses. Among those forced to move were my grandparents, Wilma Quade Stahman and Albert Stahman. The Stahmans begrudgingly sold their farm, dismantled their nearly fifty-year-old home and relocated to Waller in 1947. Grandmother and grandfather considered the construction of the Addicks Reservoir to be an injustice further aggravated in 1965 when the city of Houston began leasing 1,918 acres of land behind the Addicks Dam for a public park (Howard and Freeman 1983:1).

From the appearance of the first homestead along Bear Creek around 1848 to the completion of the Addicks Dam in 1948, forces both natural and human-made shaped

the history of the Bear Creek Community. In the end, “progress”, as defined by outsiders, determined the fate of this tightly knit group of neighbors and kin. Ironically, the project that spelled the conclusion of Bear Creek also provided, in part, for its preservation. By setting aside a large amount of land for public use, the Addicks Flood Control Reservoir saved the area surrounding Bear Creek from the development it surely would have succumbed to by the 1960s.

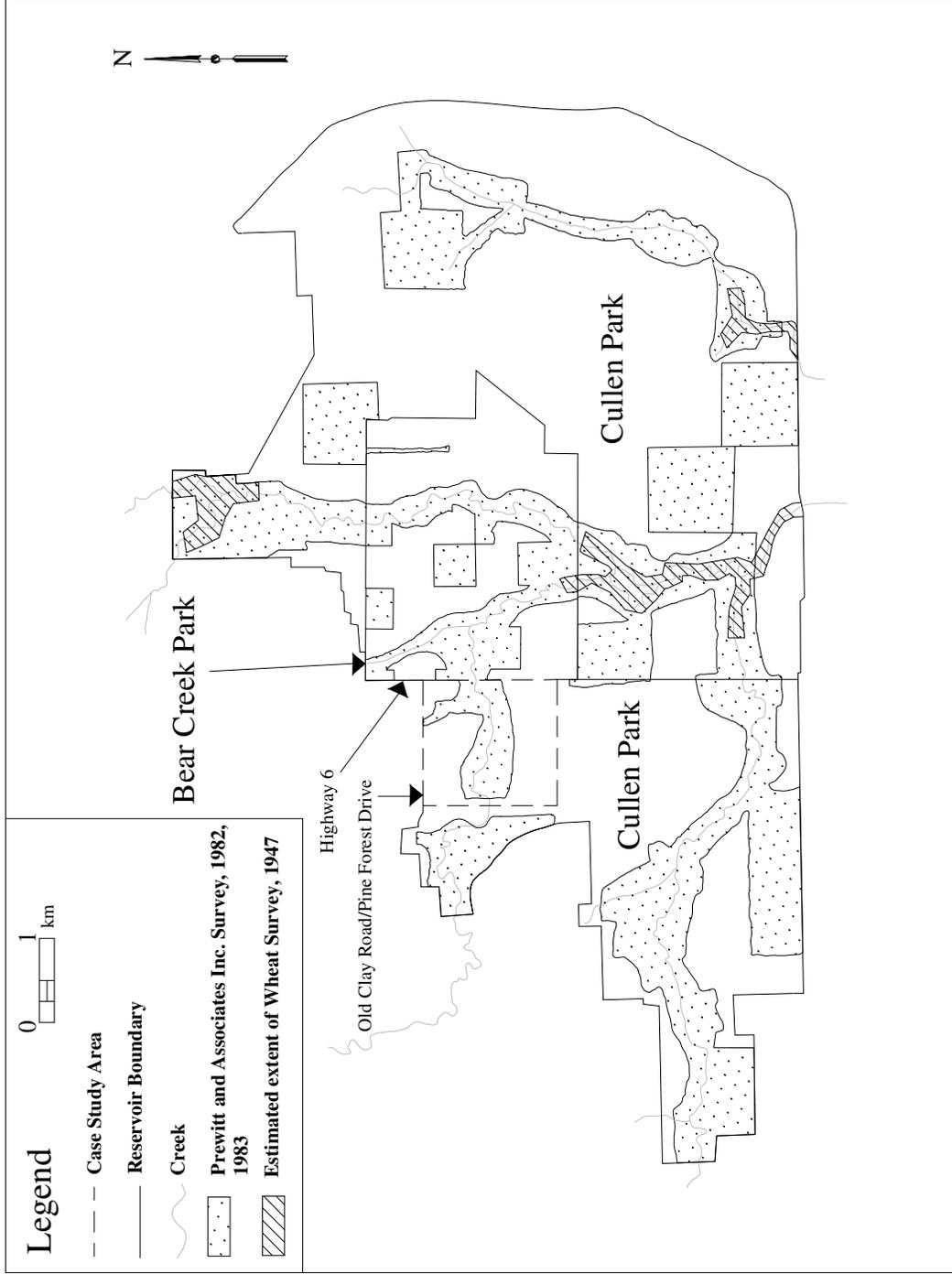
## CHAPTER V

### THE CASE STUDY

#### *The Survey Area*

The survey area is located on the west side of Highway 6, south of Pine Forest Drive, Houston, in Harris County, Texas (Figure 5.1). This area was selected because it contains four of six early land grants, each equaling approximately 160 acres, issued to German settlers who arrived in the area in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Unlike the two grants on the east side of Highway 6 within Bear Creek Park, these grants have not been subject to development and have remained relatively undisturbed since the construction of the Addicks Dam in 1948. By the end of that year, all standing structures in the survey area, with the exception of the Moers farmstead, had been dismantled by their owners, demolished by bulldozers, or moved to other locations. Former residents were allowed to lease the properties for livestock pasturage for some time afterward. However, these arrangements declined over time and portions of the tracts underwent thicketization.

Vegetation in the survey area today largely consists of intrusive secondary growth. Dominant plants include yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*), sugar-berry (*Celtis laevigata*), poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), sawtooth greenbriar (*Smilax bona-nox*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), southern dewberry (*Rubus trivialis*), cheorkee sedge (*Carex cheorkeenensis*), woods corn-salad (*Valerianella woodsiana*), catchweed bedstraw (*Galium aparine*), Carolina geranium (*Geranium carolinianum*), and annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*)



**FIGURE 5.1. Map shows previously surveyed areas of the Addicks Reservoir and the boundaries of the case study.**

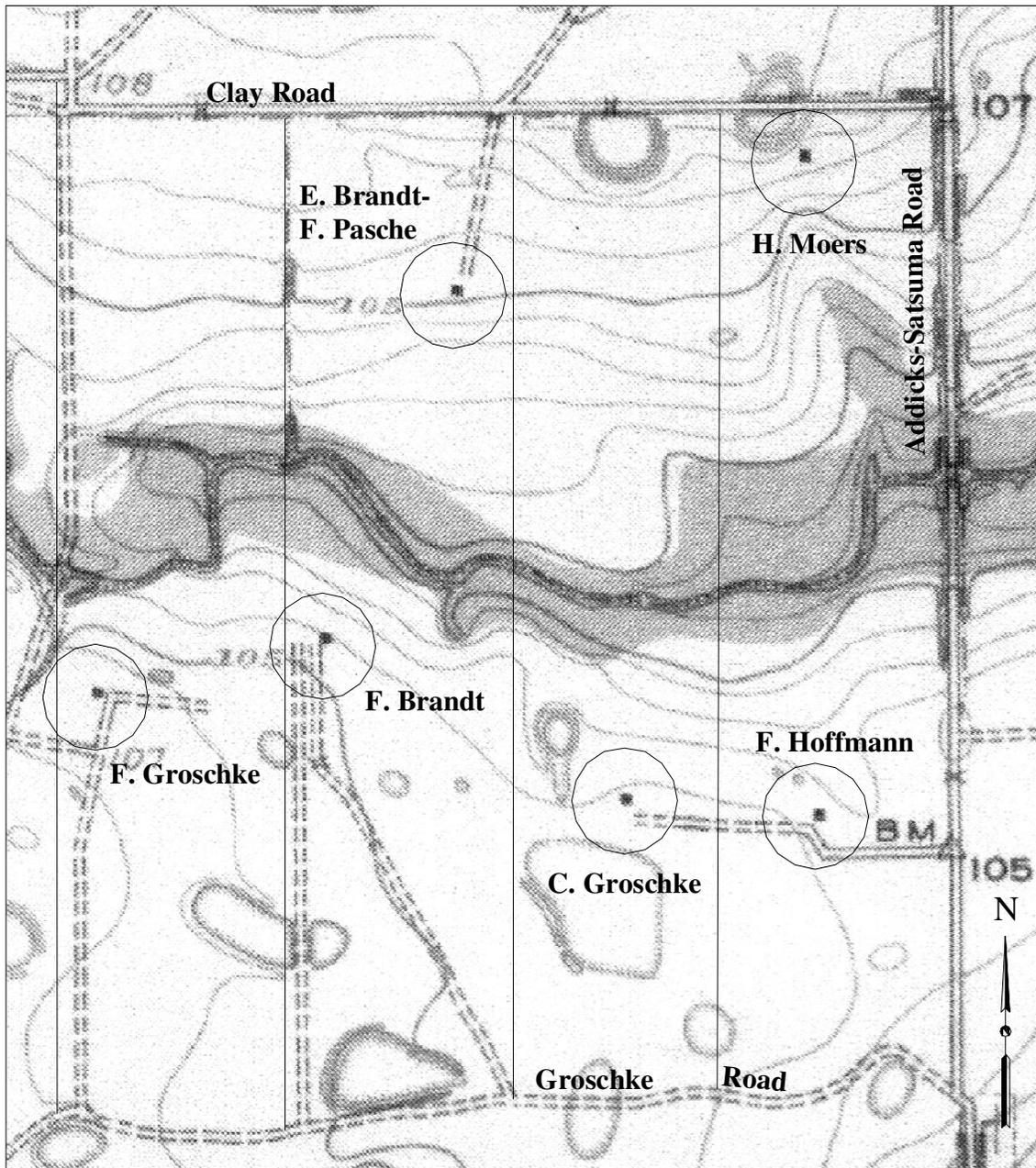
(Matthew Stahman April 5, 2003, elec. comm.).

The author consulted a 1915 topographical map (Figure 5.2) and a 1930 aerial photograph (Figure 5.3) of the four 160-acre grants, noting the locations of seven historic farmsteads. The locations were then verified and further information on the history of each farmstead was provided by former residents and descendants during a series of informal interviews. During March and April 2003, the author, accompanied by at least one field assistant, conducted a directed survey of the farmstead locations to locate and verify any and all surficial remains. Results of this “ground-truthing” are detailed in the present chapter. The area has experienced varying degrees of thicketization, evident in Figure 5.4, which were encountered and recorded during survey.

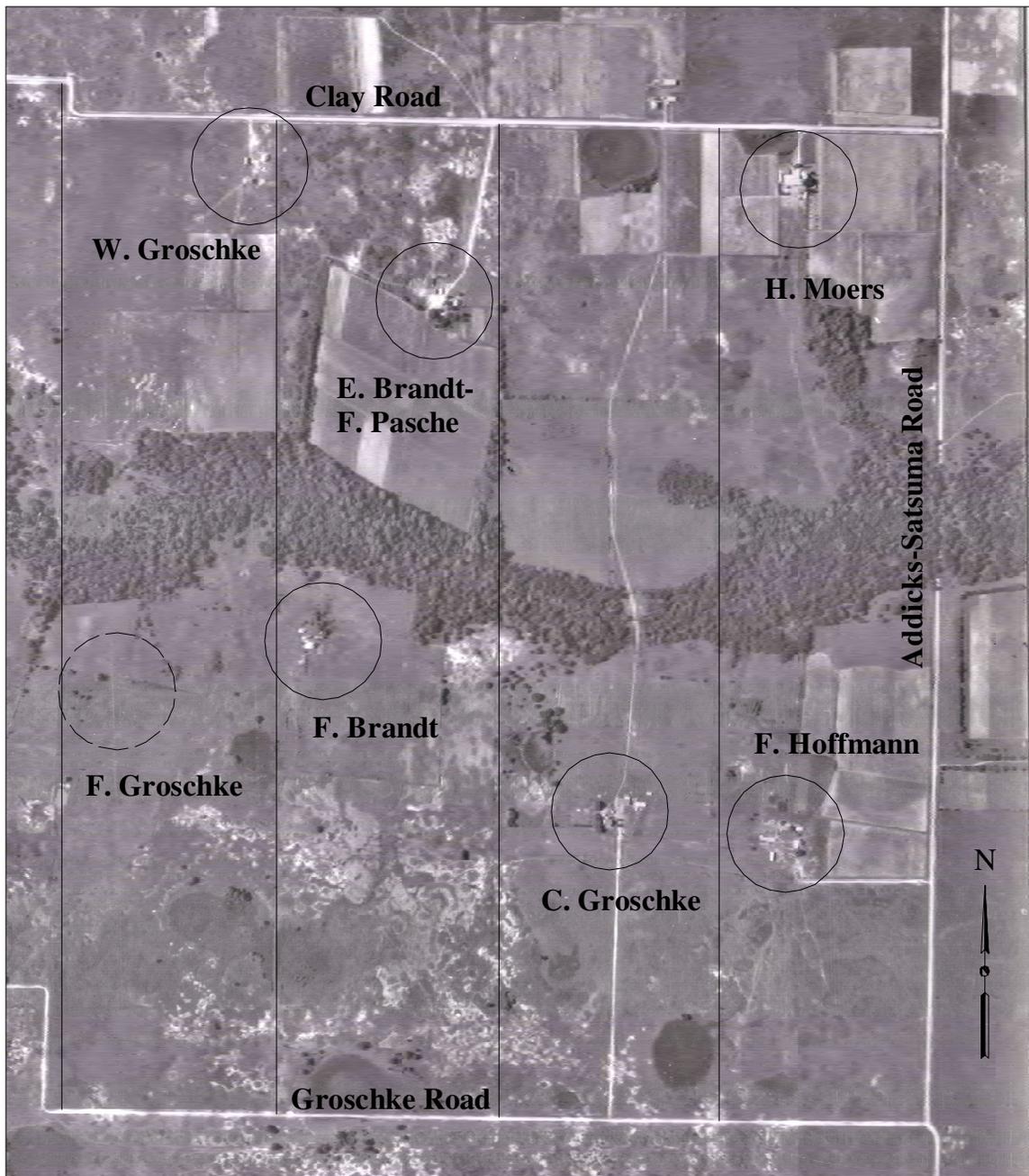
All tracts in the survey area historically lay within the Flournoy Hunt Survey, a one-third-league grant, which equaled approximately 1,476 total acres or 2.26 square miles. Results of archival research, including the history of the Flournoy Hunt Survey and the individuals who settled there, are also detailed in this chapter.

### ***Flournoy Hunt Survey***

Flournoy Nimrod Hunt was born in November of 1817, the son of Pamela Dickinson and, her first husband, a Mr. Hunt (first name unknown). His mother’s second marriage was to Samuel W. Allen around 1825, which produced Flournoy’s half brother, Samuel Ezekiel W. Allen. Mrs. Allen then married her third husband, Marshall Mann, in Missouri in 1831 (Dodd 1997). Mrs. Pamela Mann arrived in Texas by schooner from New Orleans, accompanied by her husband and her two sons, in 1834



**FIGURE 5.2.** Topographical map, dated 1915, showing the locations of historic farmsteads. Farmsteads are indicated with ellipses. Property lines have been added. Bear Creek flows through the center of the figure from east to west.



**FIGURE 5.3.** Aerial photograph of the survey area, taken 1930. (Courtesy of Tobin Maps, San Antonio, Texas.) Property boundaries have been added and farmstead complexes are indicated with ellipses. Since indications of the F. Groschke farmstead are not visible on this photograph, the location of that farmstead as it appears on the 1915 topographical map has been encircled by a dashed ellipse. Addicks-Satsuma Road is now more commonly known as Highway 6 and Clay Road has been changed to Pine Forest Drive.



**FIGURE 5.4.** Aerial photograph of the survey area, taken 1998 (Downloaded from the Texas Natural Resources Information System (TNRIS) Website, [www.tnr.is.state.tx.us/index.htm](http://www.tnr.is.state.tx.us/index.htm)). Property boundaries have been drawn in and farmstead complexes investigated by survey are indicated with ellipses.

(Harris 1901; Hogan 1935). The family initially settled near San Felipe and soon migrated to Washington-On-the-Brazos where Mrs. Mann opened an inn that served the delegation of the Convention of 1836. Caught up in the Runaway Scrape, the Mann family left Washington-On-the-Brazos and briefly settled at Lynchburg before relocating to the vicinity of Harrisburg and finally Houston by early 1837. Here they established the Mansion House Hotel, which later became a brothel, on the corner of Congress and Milam Streets (Moore 2003; Henson 2003).

As a citizen of the Republic of Texas prior to March 2, 1836 and a single man over the age of 17, Flournoy Hunt was entitled to a first-class headright of one-third league, or 1,476.1 acres of land (Texas General Land Office 2003; John Molleston November 25, 2003, pers. comm.). On February 4, 1838, Hunt applied for and was issued Certificate No. 332 for this property from the Board of Land Commissioners for Harrisburg County (White 1980:53; Harrisburg County Surveyor's Record 1838; Harris County Deed Records 1844). At Hunt's request Darius Gregg surveyed one-third of a league along Bear Creek between April 20 and May 3, 1838. Gregg described the property as being one sixth timber of post oak, pin oak and red oak and three labors arable land and the balance pasture land (Harrisburg County Surveyor's Record 1838). Hunt however, failed to send the survey notes and certificate to the General Land Office at Austin and consequently was never issued a patent (John Molleston November 25, 2003, pers. comm.).

Hunt died on May 7, 1842, intestate and in debt with two heirs: his widow, Ann Eliza R. C. Wilkinson Hunt, and his younger half-brother, Samuel E. W. Allen (Harris

County Probate Records 1842, 1844). On October 31, 1843, R. P. Boyce, administrator of Hunt's estate, sold 976 acres of the one-third league on Bear Creek to John F. Torrey (Harris County Deed Records 1844). Nevertheless, the transfer of title was temporary and Boyce bought the property back from Torrey on January 24, 1845 (Harris County Deed Records 1845). The entire survey was eventually voided, the title abandoned, and the land vacant and unimproved by the time the first settlers arrived along Bear Creek in 1850 (Harrisburg County Surveyor's Record 1838; Fields et al. 1983:34-35). By March of 1857, Boyce, probably in an attempt to end the legal entanglement of F. Hunt's probate, had filed for a lost certificate with the General Land Office (Texas General Land Office 1857). With a voided survey and a lost certificate, Robert Boyce retained claim to the one-third league legally entitled to F. Hunt, but was allowed to choose an alternate location for the property. Twenty years later, Boyce relocated the grant in Brown County situated in central Texas (Texas General Land Office 1870).

The passage of the State of Texas Homestead Act of 1854 entitled settlers to 160 acres of vacant public domain provided they were citizens of Texas as of 1854 and had resided on abandoned land for not less than three years (Lang and Long 2004). German immigrants eager for land took advantage of the opportunity presented by the act's passage and began to file preemption, i.e. right to purchase, claims on the Hunt Survey. Such immigrants included members of the Meyer, Striepe, Brandt and Groschke families. Neighbors, Christian Meyer, Sophia Striepe, Fred Brandt, Charlotte Groschke, a widow as of 1852, and her sons, Carl Ernst and Friedrich Emil Groschke, all filed for individual preemption grants for 160 acres of the F. Hunt Survey on the same day in

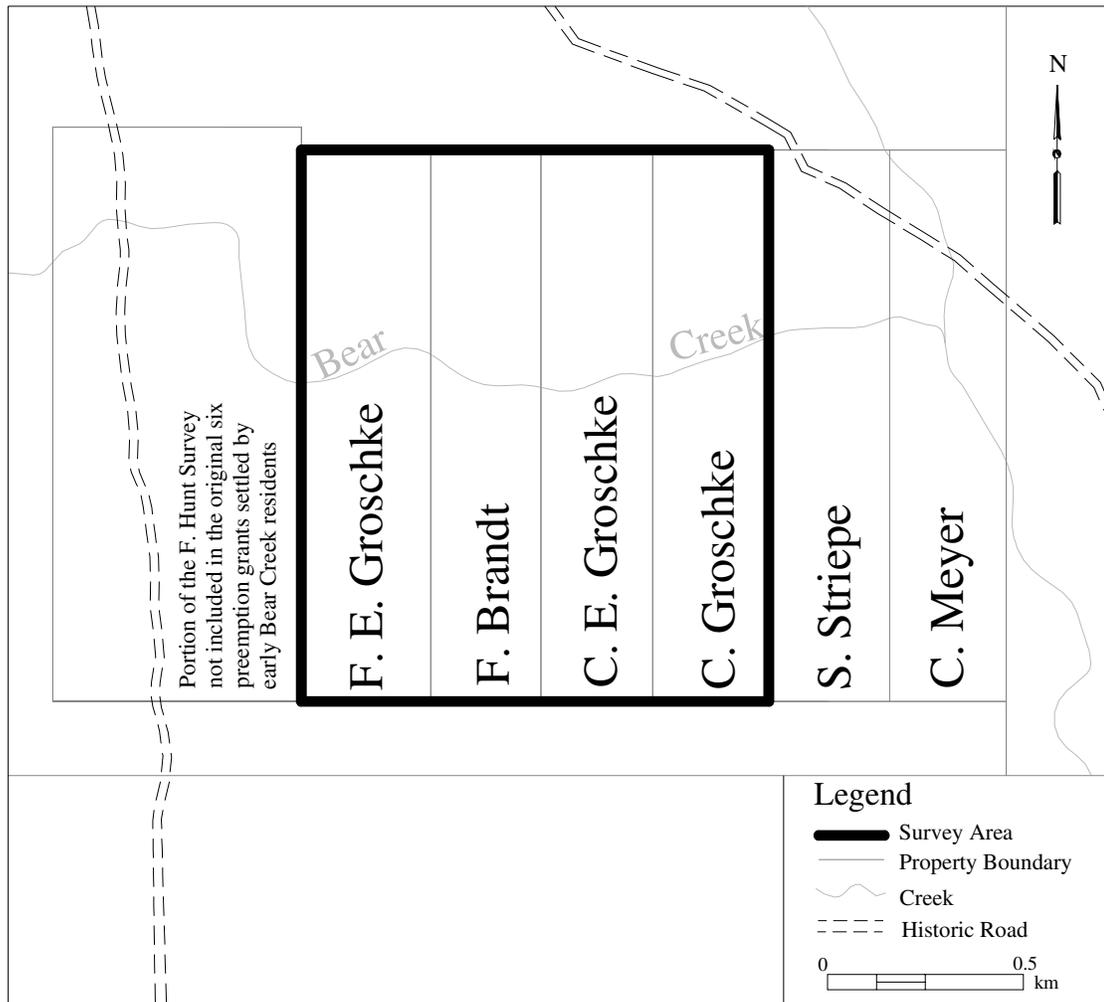
1855 and received their titles in 1861 (Figure 5.5) (Harris County Deed Records 1855).

### *The Frederick Brandt Tract*

Frederick Brandt, an accomplished woodcarver, emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1850, reportedly to avoid military service (Sparks 2001; Raschke 2003). Upon his arrival, Brandt took up residence along Bear Creek with Louis Groschke and his wife Charlotte, whom he had accompanied on board ship from the port of Bremen, Germany (United States Bureau of Census 1850; Sparks 2001). Whether or not Brandt knew the Groschke family before the voyage has not been determined. The Brandt family's oral history states that Frederick chose this area because he favored the trees that grew along Bear Creek, which he could utilize as material for his woodworking trade (Raschke 2003).

In 1854, Frederick Brandt married Catherine Suhr, a widow. A family story relates that a young Catherine Suhr "was told by some men who came to her door that her husband had been killed by mistake [hung as a horse thief] and was dead. Fred Brandt felt sorry for her and her little girl [Henrietta Suhr, b. 1853, Tx] so he married Catherine" (Edwards 1990; Edwards 1986). Fred and Catherine eventually had five children of their own: Adolph (b. 1856), Catharina (b. 1858), Emil Fritz (b. 1861), Carolina (b. ca. 1867), and Bettie (b. 1872).

Brandt had his 160-acre tract surveyed by Henry William Stamm with the help of neighbors Christian Meyer and Friedrich Emil Groschke on April 24, 1855 (Fields et al. 1983:136). The tract remained intact until 1898 when he sold the northern portion of his



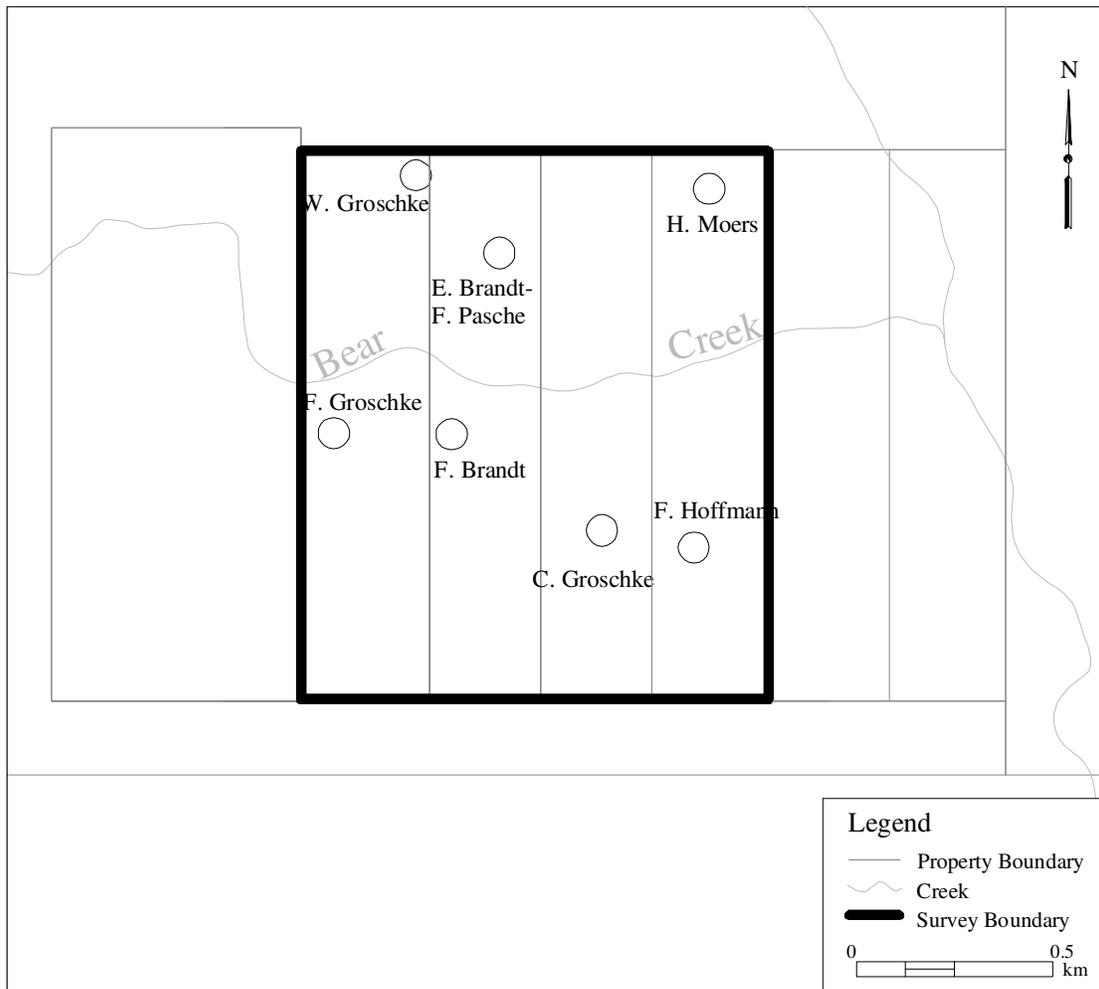
**FIGURE 5.5.** Map shows preemption grants filed by early Bear Creek settlers within the F. Hunt Survey.

grant, equaling sixty-five acres on the north side of Bear Creek, to his son, Emil Fritz Brandt (Harris County Deed Record 1898). The Brandt family controlled this portion until it was sold to Fritz Pasche and his wife Martha in 1911 (Harris County Deed Record 1911).

Frederick Brandt lived an unassuming life on Bear Creek until 1862. The outbreak of civil war in America presented him with a situation he had once already tried to escape. Despite his unwillingness to become a combatant, Brandt was conscripted into service for the Confederacy. The Confederate army, taking into account his reluctance to participate in the war effort, employed him as a wagon maker and repairer (Raschke 2003). After the war, Brandt returned to his wife and children and their residence in the Bear Creek Community (Figure 5.6).

Throughout the rest of the 19th century, Brandt continued to farm his plot of land and acquire more property. In 1902, he donated part of his land holdings for the Addicks/Bear Creek Methodist Church and cemetery. His photo adorns the wall in the current Addicks United Methodist Church (Gottfried 1989:86).

After his wife passed away and most of his children moved on, Brandt was left with his oldest adopted daughter, Henrietta. Yetta, as most people knew her, stayed on at the farm to care for her father for the rest of his life, allowing her siblings to lead independent lives (Marvin Schlechte February 22, 2003, pers. comm.). Her brother, Adolph Brandt, married Emma Groschke, daughter of the neighboring Groschke family, and established a farm near Sugarland (Raschke 2003). Sister, Catharina Brandt, married Julius Koimn around 1890 and lived not far from her father (United States



**FIGURE 5.6.** Map shows the locations of all historic farmsteads within the survey area located with the aid of oral history interviews, a 1915 topographical map and a 1930 aerial photograph.

Bureau of Census 1900). Another brother, Emil Fritz Brandt, married Hulda Kobs, another local resident, in 1884. Another sister, Carolina Brandt, married Ed Pitchman around 1898 and appears to have moved to Brenham (Raschke 2003; Haynes 1993). No further information is available for Bettie Brandt, the youngest of the Brandt siblings.

Under Yetta's care, Fred Brandt seemed secure in his way of life. One day he left the house and proceeded to saw down a large tree near his home. Unfortunately he miscalculated the direction of the tree's fall and was injured when it fell on him, crushing his pelvis. Afterwards, he was removed to a corn shuck bed in his home to convalesce. Given his bedridden condition and advanced age, Brandt quickly developed pneumonia and died in 1923 (Marvin Schlechte February 22, 2003, pers. comm.).

Daughter Yetta stayed on at the Brandt farm after the death of her father. "She was used to living out there all by herself" (Marvin Schlechte February 22, 2003, pers. comm.). Near the end of her life in 1942, she may have left the farm to be cared for by friends or relatives in Houston (Raschke 2003). After Yetta's death, the homestead fell into disrepair. Outbuildings, including a hay barn, outhouse, and three to four buildings of unknown purpose, deteriorated and collapsed and the house became derelict. What remained of the house and outbuildings (Figure 5.7) may have been bulldozed by the Corps of Engineers during acquisition proceedings between 1944 and 1947. A brick-lined well, located near the east side of the residence, may have been filled in at that time as well.

Years after the land and the house had been erased from the landscape, the Brandt family continued to make intermittent visits to the property to reminisce. They



**FIGURE 5.7. Photo of the Frederick Brandt home taken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 12, 1944. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.)**

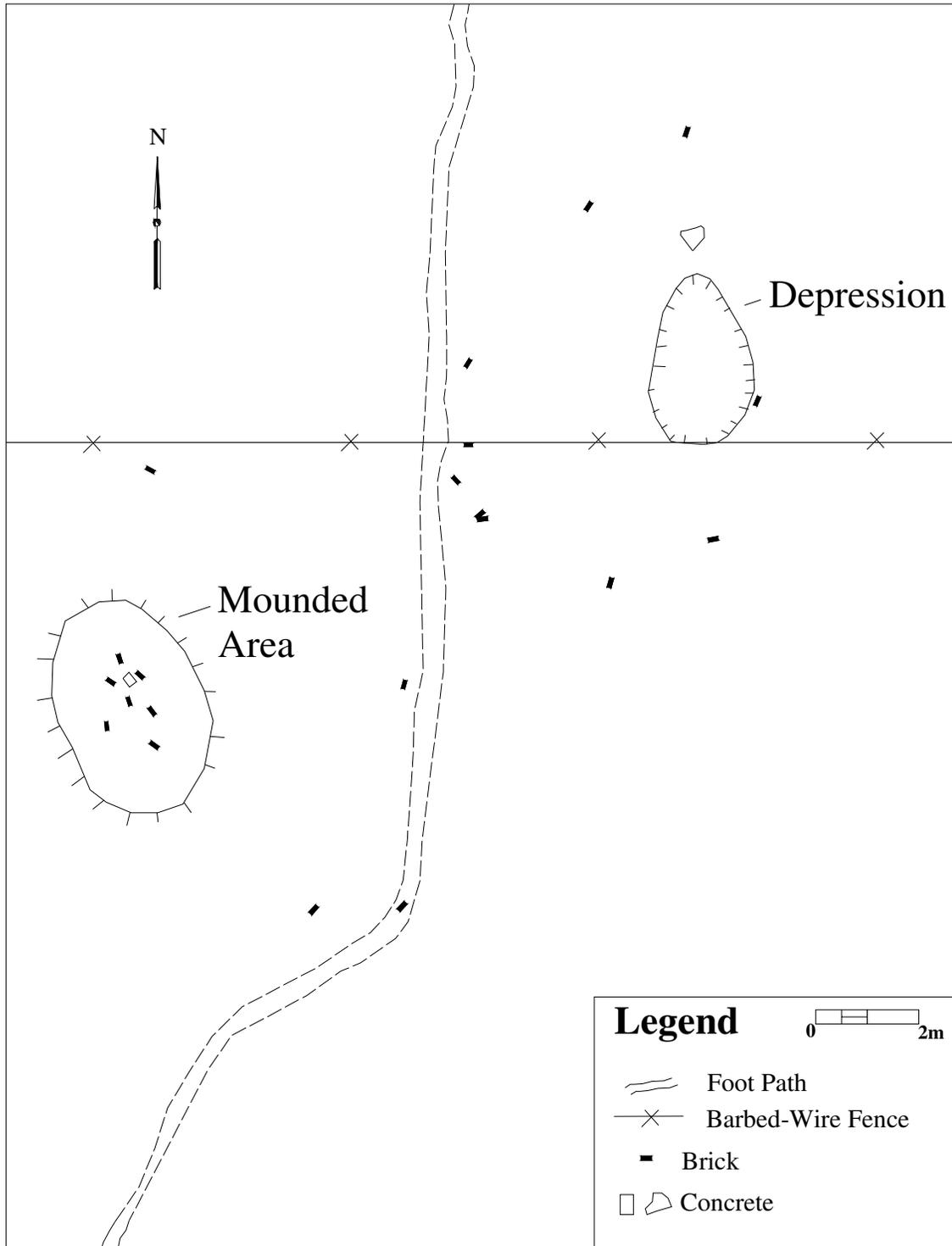
remembered that the house lacked electricity or indoor plumbing, and that fly paper was hung from the ceiling to catch intruding insects. Frederick Brandt's great-granddaughter, Eileen Schlechte Raschke remembered that the children used to visit the family patriarch every Easter Sunday and that her brother, Marvin, even used magnifying glass on one of these occasions to scorch the front porch with the sun's rays (Raschke 2003).

### *Survey Results*

At the time of the Brandt family occupation, from the mid 19th-century through 1942, this farmstead was clear of brush, with only knee-high grasses marking the boundary between the household and barnyards and the tree line along the creek. The Brandt farmstead appears on a 1915 topographical map as well as a 1930 aerial

photograph (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3) that shows the open nature of the landscape with few visual barriers between neighbors. A contrasting image of the area showing the degree of thicketization that has occurred during the latter half of the 20th century is provided in Figure 5.4.

Survey procedures conducted in 2003 revealed that very little remains of the Fred Brandt farmstead (Figure 5.8). Remnants were largely confined to a scatter of bricks and concrete fragments. A low mound of debris, possibly a bulldozer pile, was located at the southwestern edge of this scatter. A large brick and concrete block found at the apex of this mound, appeared to be the remains of a displaced house pier (Figure 5.9). Two bricks within this block were embossed with “Butler”, a Houston brick company that dates to around 1914 (Graves 2003a, b). The material in the bulldozer pile may have originated from a shallow depression located approximately 8 m northeast of this mound. Surface survey failed to locate outbuildings although their remains were likely scant and possibly obscured by dense grass cover. Also repeated attempts to locate the well were unsuccessful. In addition, no household or farmstead debris was observed due in large part to the restricted view of the ground surface.



**FIGURE 5.8.** Site map of remains at the Fred Brandt farmstead.



**FIGURE 5.9. Photo of the brick and concrete feature at the Frederick Brandt Site. Facing northeast. Photo taken by author on April 11, 2003.**

### *The Emil Brandt-Fritz Pasche Tract*

Upon his marriage in 1884, Emil Fritz Brandt, son of Frederick Brandt, set about establishing a separate household on the northern portion of his father's 160-acre preemption grant, amounting to 65 acres (see Figure 5.6). Although he did not purchase the acreage until 1898, it is evident from deed records that Brandt had already made "improvements" to the property and was likely living there with his family prior to transference of title (Harris County Deed Record 1898).

Emil Brandt was a farmer and raised chickens, hogs and cattle. His granddaughter remembered that the family regularly took produce into Houston,

spending the night on such trips encamped in what would later become World War I-era Camp Logan and eventually Houston's Memorial Park (Raschke 2003; Hazelwood 2002). While there Emil's wife, Hulda, would use 10 dollars to buy enough supplies to last the family for six months (Raschke 2003). The couple raised six children on the farm: Ella (b. 1886), Arlie (b. 1888), Charlie (b. 1892), Pearl (b. 1894), Benjamin (b. 1897), and Martha (b. 1899) (Gottfried 1989:86).

Emil died of cancer in 1901 and was buried in the Hillendahl Cemetery, one of the oldest cemeteries at Bear Creek (Gottfried 1989:87). His widow and children moved to Houston in the fall of 1910 and sold the property to Fred "Fritz" Pasche in 1911 (Marvin Schlechte February 22, 2003, pers. comm.; Raschke 2003; Gottfried 1989:87; Harris County Deed Records 1911). Emil's daughter, Ella Clara Brandt, married a Methodist minister in 1912 and the couple later accepted an appointment to the Bear Creek Methodist Church. They resided in the parsonage located near the Brandt family properties from 1919 to 1923 and again from 1940 to 1944 (Golbow 1979:44-45).

Fritz Pasche married Martha Hammerling, a recent German immigrant, in 1885. Their union produced four children: Freda, Pauline, Anita (b. 1900), and Ernest (b. 1906) (Harris County Deed Records 1938). The Pasche family assumed operation of the Emil Fritz Brandt farmstead and engaged in dairying until Fritz's death in 1940 (Figure 5.10) (Harris County Probate Records 1940).

Fritz's son, Ernest Pasche, also died sometime after 1941 from an accidental gunshot, leaving Anita the sole inhabitant of the farmstead. Anita Pasche continued to reside on the dairy farm even after it was condemned by the Corps of Engineers between



**FIGURE 5.10. Photo of the Brandt-Pasche home, ca. 1916. (Courtesy of Doris Cook.) Pictured from left to right: Anita Pasche, Martha Hammerling Pasche, Ernest Pasche and Fritz Pasche.**

1944 and 1947. At that time, the Corps paid Ms. Pasche what was considered “just compensation” for the entire farmstead in the form of a check. Legally, in order to retain her home, she was offered an option to “repurchase” the house. She exercised that option and continued to live in the home for a number of years, making her living cleaning houses until she married Allen Brown, a neighboring rice farmer (Speckmaier 2003). The Browns established a farmstead further north of the Bear Creek Community and the Brandt-Pasche home was sold to Henry Liere, a neighboring dairy farmer, who later moved the structure onto his property north across Old Clay Road/Pine Forest Drive (Kellogg 2003; Speckmaier 2003). No remains of this structure are observable today since the area of Liere’s dairy farm has been partially developed by an apartment

complex.

Prewitt and Associates recorded site 41HR439 on the Brandt-Pasche tract in 1983. In Prewitt's report, Martha Freeman stated that the site was a dump (Fields et al. 1983:136). This dump, located only a few meters north of Bear Creek, is likely connected to Brandt or Pasche family's occupation of the tract.

### *Survey Results*

No Pasche descendants were located during this study. However, photographs of the farmstead provide evidence of how the complex appeared during its occupation. The Brandt-Pasche farmstead appears on a 1915 topographical map and the 1930 aerial photograph of the area (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3). The degree of thicketization on the property can be noted in Figure 5.4.

Survey of the Brandt-Pasche farmstead revealed that the site retains much of its spatial integrity although the above ground structures are no longer present. Several surface features including concrete slabs, a concrete trough, the angle-iron anchors of a windmill, two brick-lined wells, and brick and concrete scatters were recorded (Figure 5.11). Much of the site is still ringed by crepe myrtle trees although it has become obscured by the process of thicketization (Figure 5.12). Household artifacts from this period, including enamelware, stoneware, iron, and magnesium glass litter the locality. A photograph of the farmstead as it appeared in 1946 is featured in Figure 5.13.

The most impressive features at the site were the two brick-lined wells. One appears to have served the house and nearby milk house, while the other was likely used

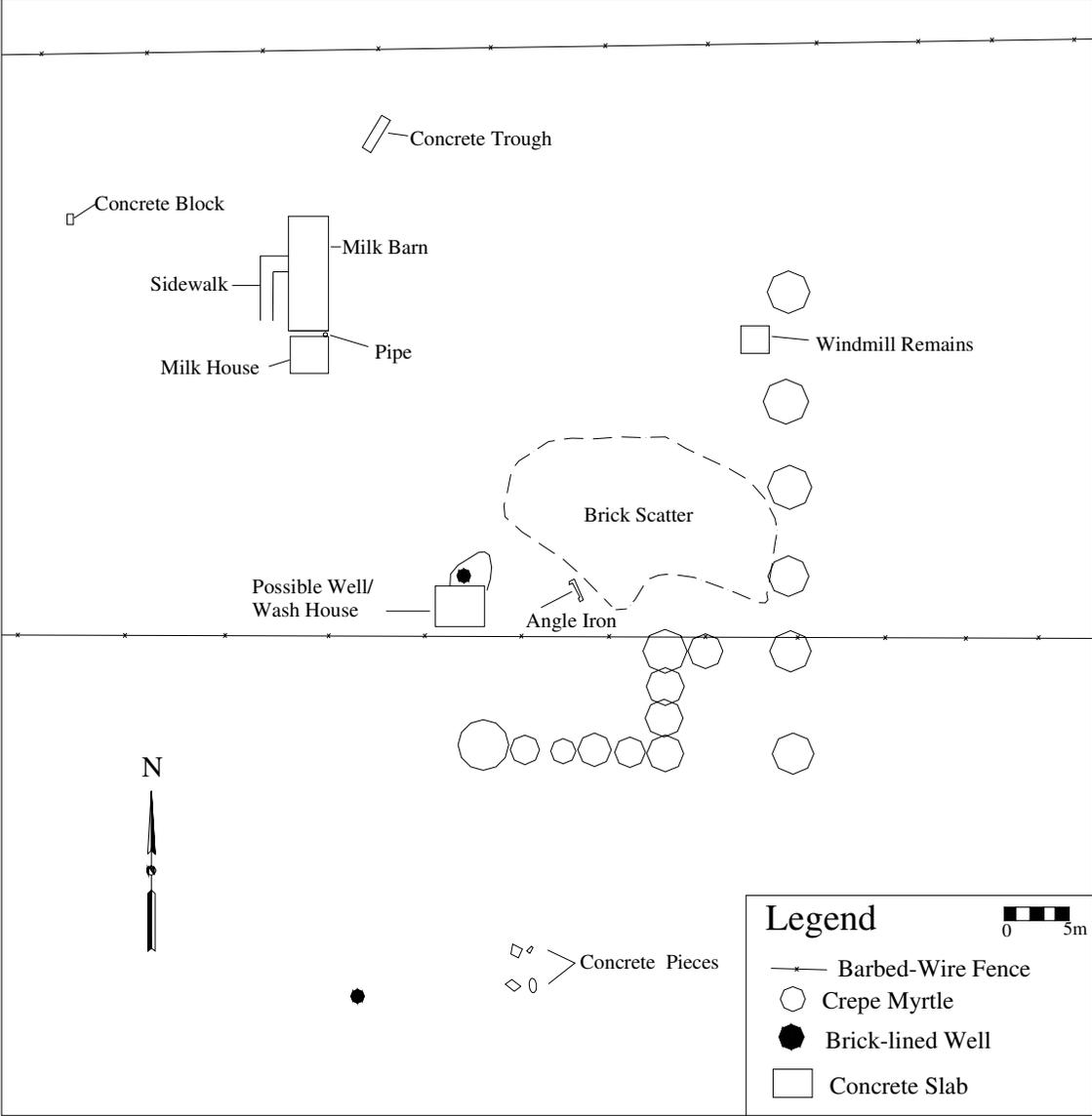


FIGURE 5.11. Site map of remains at the Brandt-Pasche farmstead.



**FIGURE 5.12.** Photo of secondary vegetative growth resulting from the process of thicketization at the Brandt-Pasche farmstead site. Facing southeast from concrete trough. Photo taken by author on April 5, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.13.** Photo of the Brandt-Pasche farmstead taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 26, 1946. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.) Facing south from the northern edge of the farmstead.

to water livestock. Neither well displays an above-ground enclosure wall like that recorded on the northern portion of the Carl Ernst Groschke tract. The current lease holder claims that these walls were pushed into the wells by teenage vandals. The use of two wells was not uncommon amongst farmsteads in the Bear Creek area. Local informants maintain that one well was often used for the household while another may have served to water livestock. In other instances, a second well was dug after the first had gone dry. Historically, the water table at Bear Creek was approximately 2.5 m below the surface in most places. However, if a well was dug in a stratigraphically unsuitable spot, the water table in that location may have been unstable, causing the well to dry up within a short period of time (Merrel Telschow September 10, 2003, pers. comm.).

A concrete water trough recorded during survey (Figure 5.14) was once located inside a fenced enclosure with the barn and feed shed (Figure 5.15). Concrete slabs are all that remain of the milk barn and milk house (Figures 5.16 and 5.17). The concrete block located west of the milk barn in Figure 5.11 was likely associated with the barn shown in Figure 5.18. Remains of the windmill consist of four angle irons protruding from the ground surface north of a large brick scatter (Figure 5.19). No surface remains of the wooden platform for the elevated cistern were observed. A large brick scatter marks the location of the Pasche home. At the southwest corner of this scatter was an open brick-lined well and concrete slab (Figure 5.20). The structure associated with this slab has not been identified; however, it probably served as a well/wash house. The second brick-lined well was located about 32 m to the south-southwest. A scatter of



**FIGURE 5.14.** Photo of concrete trough on the Brandt-Pasche tract. Facing northeast. Photo taken by author on April 5, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.15.** Photo of feed shed and barn enclosure at the Brandt-Pasche farmstead taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 26, 1946. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.) Facing northwest.



**FIGURE 5.16.** Photo of milk barn slab at the Brandt-Pasche farmstead. Facing west. Photo taken by author on April 5, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.17.** Photo of milk house and milk barn at the Brandt-Pasche farmstead taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 26, 1946. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.) Facing southwest.



**FIGURE 5.18.** Photo of barn with loft, Brandt-Pasche farmstead taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 26, 1946. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.) Facing northwest.



**FIGURE 5.19.** Photo of windmill and elevated cistern at the Brandt-Pasche farmstead taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 26, 1946. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.) Facing southwest.



**FIGURE 5.20.** Photo of two concrete slabs and an open brick-lined well, likely the remains of a well house and wash house, Brandt-Pasche farmstead. Artifacts appearing on the left side of the frame include stoneware, enamelware and iron. Facing west. Photo taken by author on April 5, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.21.** Photo of implement shed, Brandt-Pasche farmstead taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 26, 1946. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.) Facing northeast.

concrete fragments east of the second well likely marks the remains of the implement shed (Figure 5.21).

### ***The Fritz Hoffmann Tract***

This tract was originally part of a preemption grant received by Charlotte Groschke in 1861 (Harris County Deed Records 1855). Her daughter, Marianne Groschke, married John Frederick “Fritz” Hoffmann in 1869. In 1870, Charlotte Groschke sold the 160-acre grant to Hoffmann (Harris County Deed Records 1870). Census records provide evidence that Fritz and Marianne established a farmstead on the property and lived there between 1880 and 1910 (United States Bureau of Census 1880, 1900, 1910). The couple raised six children on the farm. Marianne Hoffman died in 1909 and her husband passed away in 1913, leaving the property to their son, Rudolph Hoffmann.

Rudolph married Annie Louise Baatz in 1913 and apparently built his home at that time. It is unclear what became of his parent’s former residence. The couple had one daughter, Victoria, who never married (Stahman 2003). Rudolph Hoffmann operated a dairy on this property until the Corps acquisition (see Figure 5.6; Figure 5.22). Hoffmann rejected the Corps’ offer to relocate. Distraught over the prospect of leaving his home and the affects to his livelihood, he committed suicide in 1947 (Kellogg 2003; Higgins 2002).

Although Hoffmann had already begun acquiring property elsewhere, his widow chose to live not far from the original farmstead. Annie Hoffmann acquired property



**FIGURE 5.22.** Photo of the Rudolph Hoffmann’s home and the farmstead established by his parents, ca. 1935. (From the Victoria Hoffmann Collection in author’s possession.) Rudolph Hoffmann is featured in the center of this photo.

North of Bear Creek, just outside the flood control, from her brother-in-law, neighbor, and fellow farmer, Henry Moers. She arranged to have the family home and some outbuildings moved there shortly after Rudolph’s death. These structures are still north of Bear Creek, just outside the flood control, from her brother-in-law, neighbor, and fellow farmer, Henry Moers. She arranged to have the family home and some outbuildings moved there shortly after Rudolph’s death. These structures are still standing today (Speckmaier 2003).

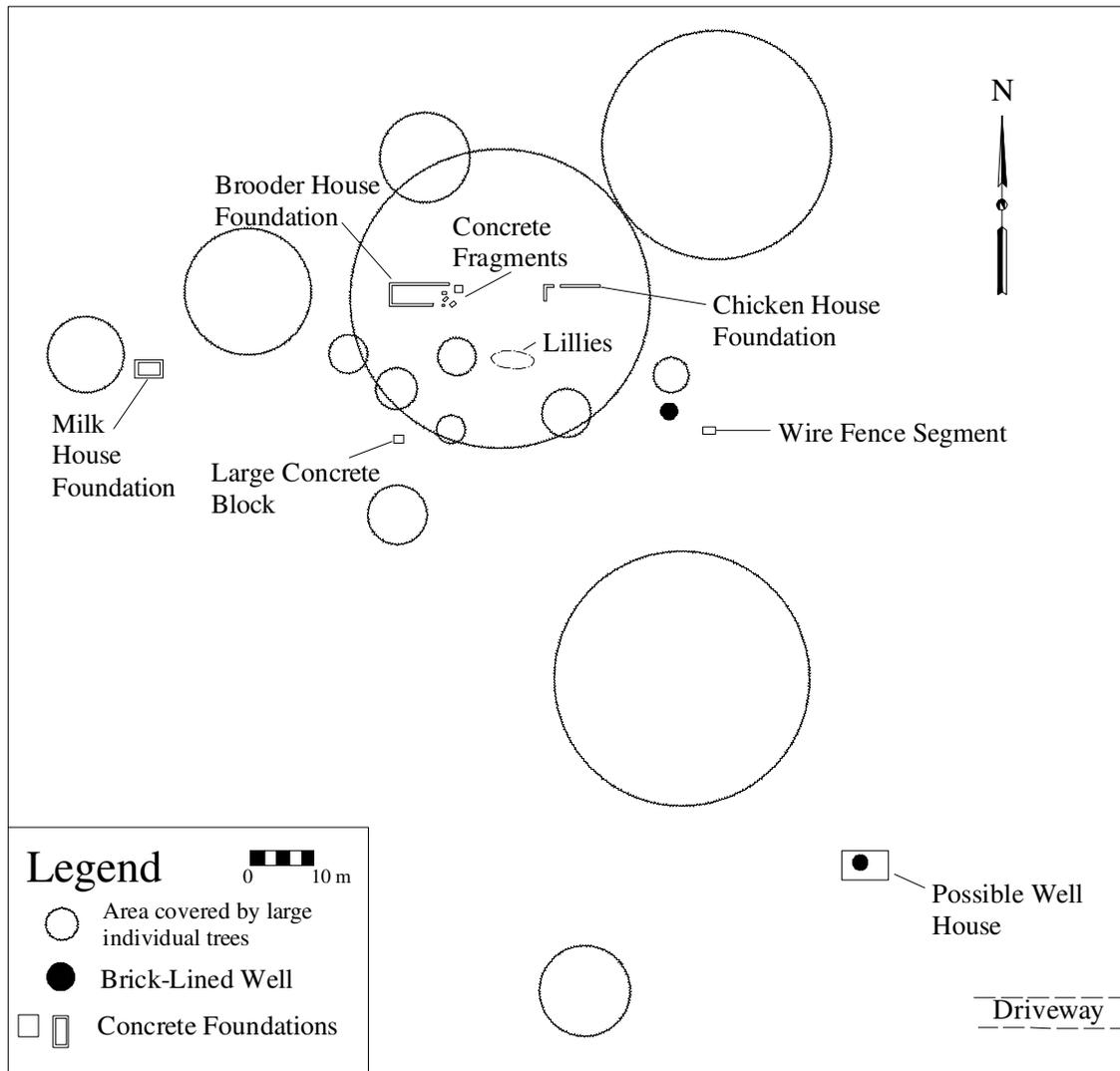
### *Survey Results*

During its occupancy, the Hoffmann farmstead appeared as did others on neighboring properties. The farmstead appears on a 1915 topographic map (see Figure

5.2) and a 1930 aerial photograph (see Figure 5.3) of the area surrounded by grazing land on the south and west and by cultivated fields on the north and east. After the Corps acquisition and the subsequent removal of all standing structures, large oak and pecan trees grew unchecked on the property (see Figure 5.4). Previously cultivated areas, however, have remained relatively free of dense vegetation and are instead covered by tall grasses.

Several surface features were identified during survey of the Rudolph Hoffmann farmstead, including two brick-lined wells similar to those identified at the Brandt-Pasche farmstead site, remnants of a well house, and several concrete footings (Figure 5.23). A single well may not have been sufficient to serve the needs of the entire farmstead, necessitating the construction of a second well. The well near the center of Figure 5.23 likely served as a reserve water supply for the household with an elevated cistern, visible in Figure 5.22, acting as the main water storage facility (Figure 5.24). A second well was recorded approximately 30 m southeast of the house. This well may have provided water for livestock. Remnants of a shed that once enclosed the well were still visible. Aside from footings and wells, the site is sparse with no house piers and few surficial artifacts. The close proximity to the family's reestablished home likely provided the opportunity to scavenge any and all useful materials from the site over several years, eventually leaving only those items which were either difficult or impossible to transport.

Other remaining features included the concrete footings of the brooder house (Figure 5.25), chicken house (Figure 5.26), and milk house (Figure 5.27). Lastly, a



**FIGURE 5.23.** Site map of remains at the Fritz Hoffmann farmstead. Trees noted date from the period of occupation and have been verified from photographs of the farmstead from the 1930s and 40s.



**FIGURE 5.24.** Photo of a brick-lined well near the Hoffmann home. Facing west. Photo taken by author on March 25, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.25.** Photo of concrete footings attributed to brooder house, Hoffmann farmstead. Facing east. Photo taken by author on March 25, 2003. Lines have been added to depict footing locations otherwise obscured by soil and vegetation.



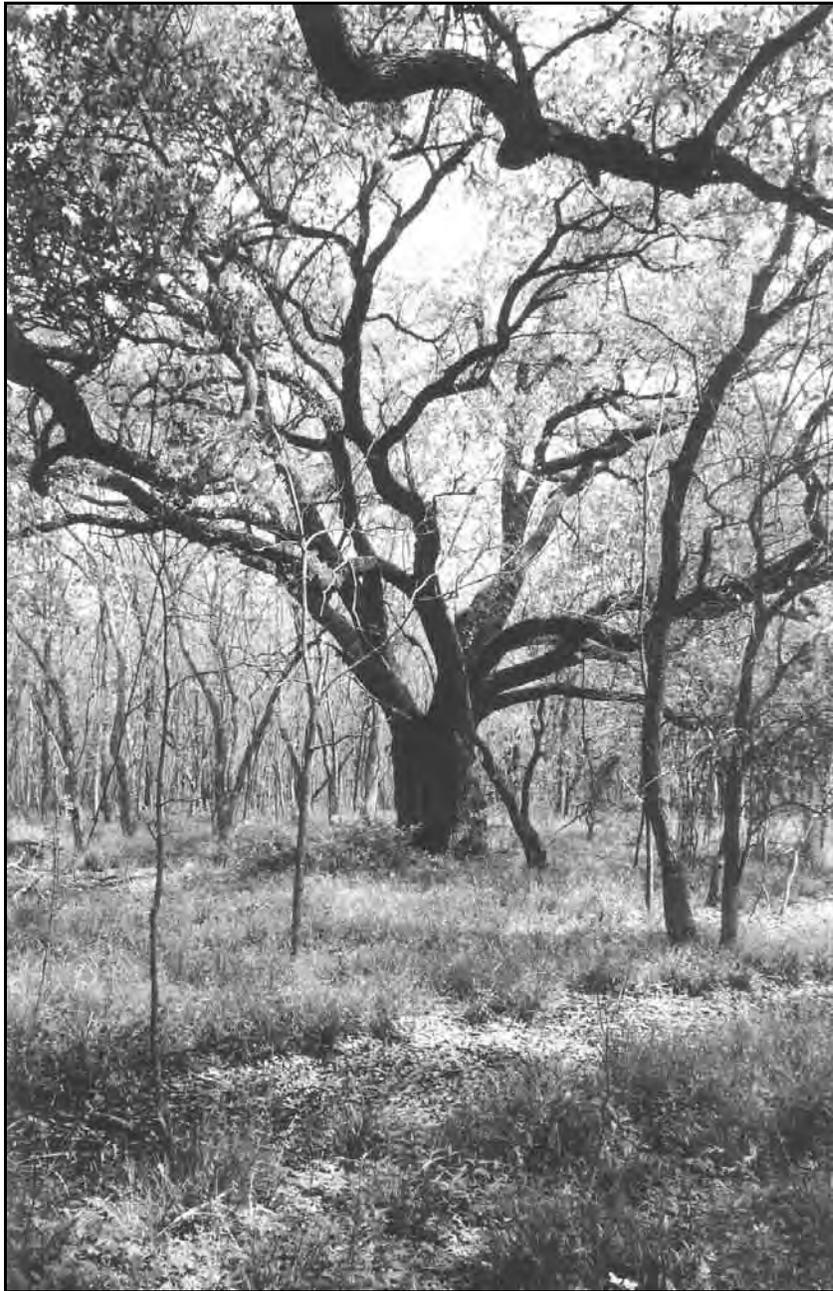
**FIGURE 5.26.** Photo of concrete footings of the chicken house, Hoffmann farmstead. Facing east. Photo taken by author on March 25, 2003. Lines have been added to depict footing locations otherwise obscured by soil and vegetation. Notice the imprints of chicken feet in the footing near the bottom of the photo.



**FIGURE 5.27. Photo of concrete footings of the milk house, Hoffmann farmstead. Facing west. Photo taken by author on March 25, 2003. Lines have been added to depict footing locations otherwise obscured by soil and vegetation.**

large irregular concrete fragment was found near the center of the site. The original function of this fragment is unknown. Part of a decorative wire fence that once surrounded the house was also identified. The only household artifact observed was a milk glass cap insert for a Ball Mason jar.

Although unoccupied for over half a century, the Hoffmann site has experienced relatively little thicketization. This is largely due to the presence of several large, broad-canopied oak trees, which have impeded the growth of underlings (Figure 5.28). Several pecans, crepe myrtles, and smaller oaks have grown as offspring of the more established



**FIGURE 5.28. Photo of an expansive oak tree at the Hoffmann farmstead illustrating the minimal degree of secondary growth. This is the same tree visible on the far right side of Figure 5.22. Photo taken by author on March 25, 2003.**

trees. Additional secondary vegetation is largely confined to moderate amounts of greenbriar, poison ivy, and southern dewberry.

### *The Walter Groschke Tract*

The Walter Groschke tract is part of a larger 160-acre preemption grant issued to Friedrich Emil Groschke in 1861. Before Groschke died in 1914, he conveyed all of his property to his wife, Dorothea Stefon Feuerschutz Groschke (Harris County Deed Records 1914). Dorothea made an agreement with her son, Walter Groschke, in 1921 whereby he would receive the entire 160-acre tract in exchange for caring for her for the duration of her life. This agreement resulted in the exclusion of the four other male Groschke children from part of their inheritance (Ray 2003).

Walter Groschke married Minnie Allie Ray in 1922 and began to construct a dairy farm on the northern end of the property (see Figure 5.6) (Ray 2003). “He built two big barns, a dairy barn and a hay barn, and then the home. ... for a while they lived in the barn while the house was still under construction” (Ray 2003). The house was built with the help of locals, Albert Weiman and Theodore Matzke (Weiman 2002).

Groschke died in 1924 and his widow was not able to keep the dairy business operational. Walter’s brother Edward lived in the house with Minnie briefly, helping with the business until she was able to sell the cattle and horses. Afterwards, her parents Thomas and Emma Ray of Waller, moved in and lived with her for a year. During that time, Minnie went back to teaching at the local Brinks School (Ray 2003).

Minnie Groschke taught at the school for a couple of years and then moved to Waller with her parents in 1928. She rented the Groschke property, including the house and barns, and struggled to pay off the \$2,000 mortgage. Over several years, Mrs. Groschke garnered enough funds from a mineral lease on the property and rental

payments to finally pay off the mortgage. Proceedings for the acquisition of the property by the Corps of Engineers began shortly thereafter, and the Corps bought the property for \$125 an acre around 1946 (Ray 2003).

Henry Liere, a neighboring dairy farmer, leased the Groschke farm for pasturage at least as early as 1929. Around 1930, he purchased the Groschke home and had it moved north to his farm on the opposite side of Clay Road (now Pine Forest Drive) (Ray 2003; Kellogg 2003). Norman Ray, Walter Groschke's only child, recalls that he and his mother often returned to visit the former home over the years, occasionally stopping to chat with neighbors like Henry Liere about better days. Liere died in 1982 and over time the Groschke home deteriorated from neglect (Kellogg 2003). The structure was torn down by 1993 (Ray 2003).

### ***Survey Results***

The Walter Groschke farmstead does not appear on a 1915 topographical map (see Figure 5.2) but does appear on a 1930 aerial photograph (see Figure 5.3) of the area. During operation of the farmstead by the Groschke family, the grounds were well maintained and brush was kept to a minimum in favor of open pasture for cattle and horses much as it remains today (see Figure 5.4).

Several features were recorded during survey of the Walter Groschke farmstead (Figure 5.29). Among these were the foundations of the Groschke home (Figure 5.30), which consisted of scattered pieces of concrete, brick column fragments, and the remnants of a concrete slab (Figures 5.31 and 5.32). Clear and green glass fragments

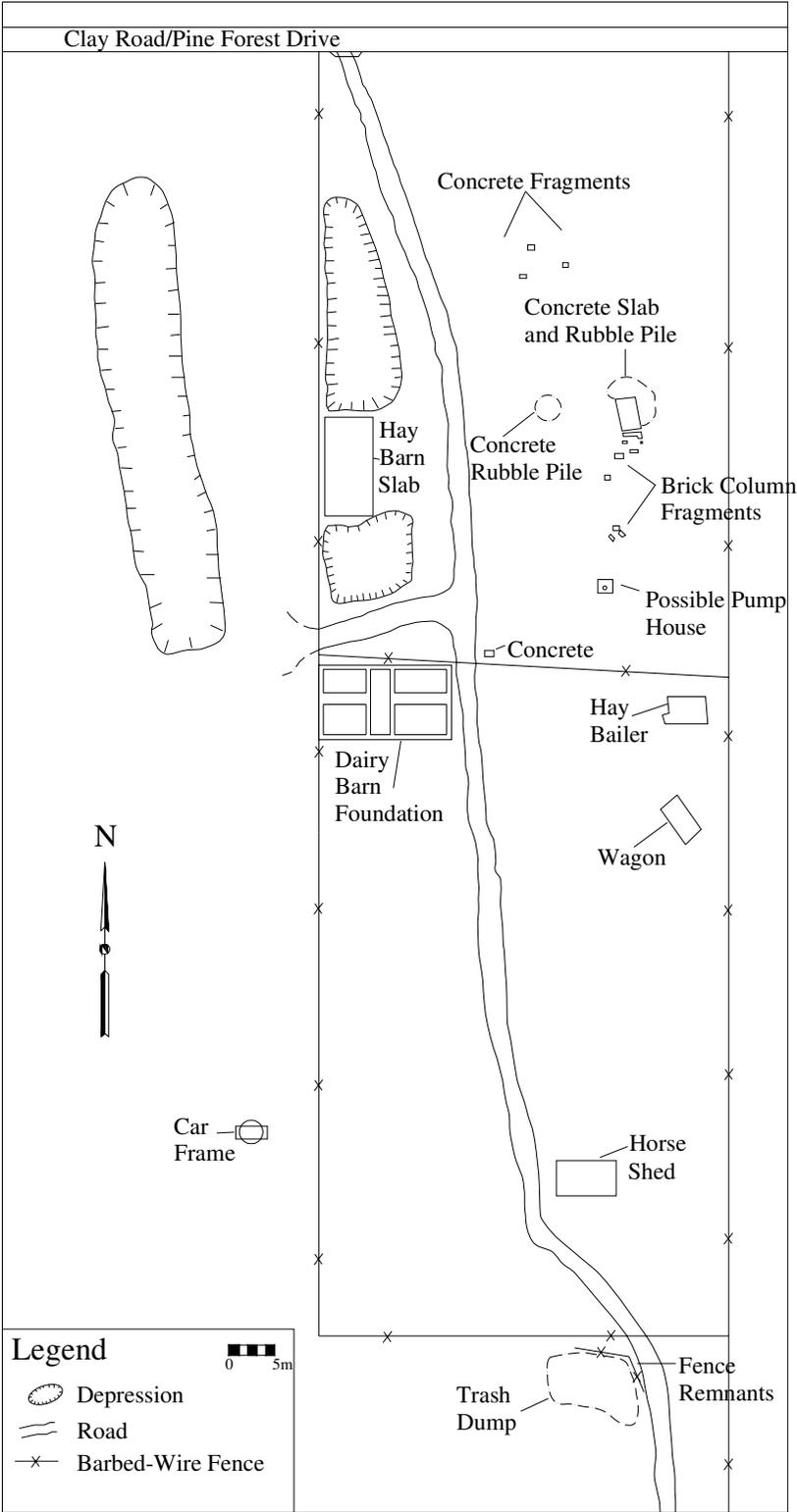


FIGURE 5.29. Site map of remains at the Walter Groschke farmstead.



**FIGURE 5.30.** Photo comparison of the Walter Groschke home. Top photograph was taken by Minnie Groschke in 1925. (Courtesy of Norman Ray.) Bottom photograph was taken of the same location by the author on April 3, 2003. Facing south.



**FIGURE 5.31.** Photo of remains of the original concrete house slab, Walter Groschke farmstead. Facing south. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003. Lines have been added to enhance edges of slab otherwise obscured by soil and vegetation.



**FIGURE 5.32.** Photo of brick column fragments from the Walter Groschke home. Facing west. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.

and bits of unidentified metal were scattered over the surface of the concrete slab. A 4-in. diameter well pipe framed by a concrete slab found south of the original house location probably represented the remains of a pump house.

Remnants of the farming operation are also evident at the site. Pieces of discarded farm equipment, including a stationary hay bailer and wagon, were noted during survey (Figure 5.33 and 5.34). In addition, several large depressions measuring 10 to 55 m north-south and 10 m east-west were observed at the site. All were in close proximity to the hay barn (now marked by a large concrete slab) and may have been used to store silage, a green fodder (Phil Wise March 19, 2003, pers. comm.). Unidentified metal fragments were scattered across the hay barn concrete slab. The foundations of the dairy barn were recorded nearby (Figure 5.35). The only standing structures on the property were a horse shed and pen (Figure 5.36). These structures were attributed to the Groschke family's occupation of the farmstead and were located at the southern end of the property (Phil Wise March 19, 2003, pers. comm.).

A dump site was recorded south of the horse shed and pen (Figure 5.37). Items found here indicate that the area has been used primarily as an equipment dump since the early 20th century. Objects included a tractor, two corn pickers, an International Harvester truck ca. 1930 (Figure 5.38), a 1940s era car, several electric light poles, and a modern Honda generator deposited by the current lease holder.

In addition to the discarded machinery at the dump, the frame and wheel hubs of a mid-1930s automobile were found in another location at the southern end of the property. Trees and underbrush have grown up within the frame of the abandoned



**FIGURE 5.33.** Photo of hay baler, Walter Groschke farmstead. Facing southeast. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.34.** Photo of wagon, Walter Groschke farmstead. The front wheels have been removed and the front end is now resting on two 50-gallon drums. The wheels of this wagon had wood spokes and treaded rubber tires. Facing southeast. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.35.** Photo of dairy barn concrete foundations, Walter Groschke farmstead. Facing west. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003. Lines have been added to depict footing locations otherwise obscured by soil and vegetation.



**FIGURE 5.36.** Photo of horse shed and pen, Walter Groschke farmstead. Facing east. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.37.** Photo of dump, Walter Groschke farmstead. Facing southwest. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.38.** Photo of International Harvester truck from dump, Walter Groschke farmstead. Facing west. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.

vehicle. A large hackberry tree has enveloped much of the automobile's back end (Figures 5.39 and 5.40).



**FIGURE 5.39.** Photo of trees growing through car, Walter Groschke farmstead. Facing south. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.40.** Photo shows the degree to which this hackberry tree has consumed the frame of this vehicle. Facing south. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.

### *The Henry Moers Tract*

Henry William Moers immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1881 and married Rudolph Hoffmann's sister, Katie, in 1893. Around this time Henry and Katie established a farm on the north end of a 160-acre preemption grant issued to Katie's grandmother, Charlotte Groschke in 1861 (see Figures 5.6 and 5.41). The Moers home was probably built by Henry, with the aid of his neighbors. The house was set on large concrete piers standing about 3-3 ½ ft. tall allowing enough space for the storage of winter foods (e.g. potatoes) below the structure (Speckmaier 2003).



**FIGURE 5.41. Photo of the Henry Moers farmstead, ca. 1915. (Courtesy of Virginia Snider.) Facing northeast from the southern end of the farmstead.**

Between 1915 and 1920 Moers began expanding his farming operation to include a dairy. According to his granddaughter, Henry “started from scratch” and added buildings to his operation one at a time. These buildings included a dairy barn, hay barn, smoke house, wash house, outhouse, garage, implement shed, and blacksmith shop.

Moers established the blacksmith shop to supplement his income from the dairy. “He fixed different things for different people. ...he would make wagon wheels and different things like that” (Speckmaier 2003). Moers later added a gas pump to his growing business. Since it was the only local pump, drivers for the community dairy co-op filled their tanks at the Moers farm (Kellogg 2003).

The Moers' had two sons: Henry Jr. (b. 1893) and John (birth date unknown), who died as an infant. Henry Jr. grew up on the farm and enlisted in the army near the end of WWI. After his military service, he married Winefred Ardella Kunze in 1921 and brought his new bride home to the family farm. This second generation of Moers' continued to manage the dairy business as well as raise crops, including sweet potatoes, corn, and black-eyed peas. He plowed the fields with the help of two mules while Winnie managed the poultry business (Speckmaier 2003). Henry Jr. and Winnie raised three children on the farm: Kathryn (b. 1924), Evelyn (b. 1925) and Andrew (b. 1929). Katie Moers died in 1950 and Henry Sr. passed away in 1956 leaving the business to their son and daughter-in-law.

The northwestern portion of the Moers property that contained the farmstead structures was never condemned by the Corps of Engineers due to the fact that land acquisitions for the Addicks Reservoir were based on elevations and this part of the property was above the suggested Addicks acquisition level of 104.4 M.S.L. (Kristine Brown May 25, 2004, elec. comm.). This provision allowed Henry Jr. and Winnie to stay on and live out their days on the farm. Henry Jr. died in 1973 and Winnie in 1979. After their deaths, the farmstead stood vacant, used only as pasture for a few cattle

(Speckmaier 2003).

The Moers home suspiciously caught fire and burned to the ground in the late 1980s. The blaze also consumed the blacksmith shop, the wash house and everything adjacent to the house (Speckmaier 2003). Other outbuildings were still standing as of 2003.

### *Survey Results*

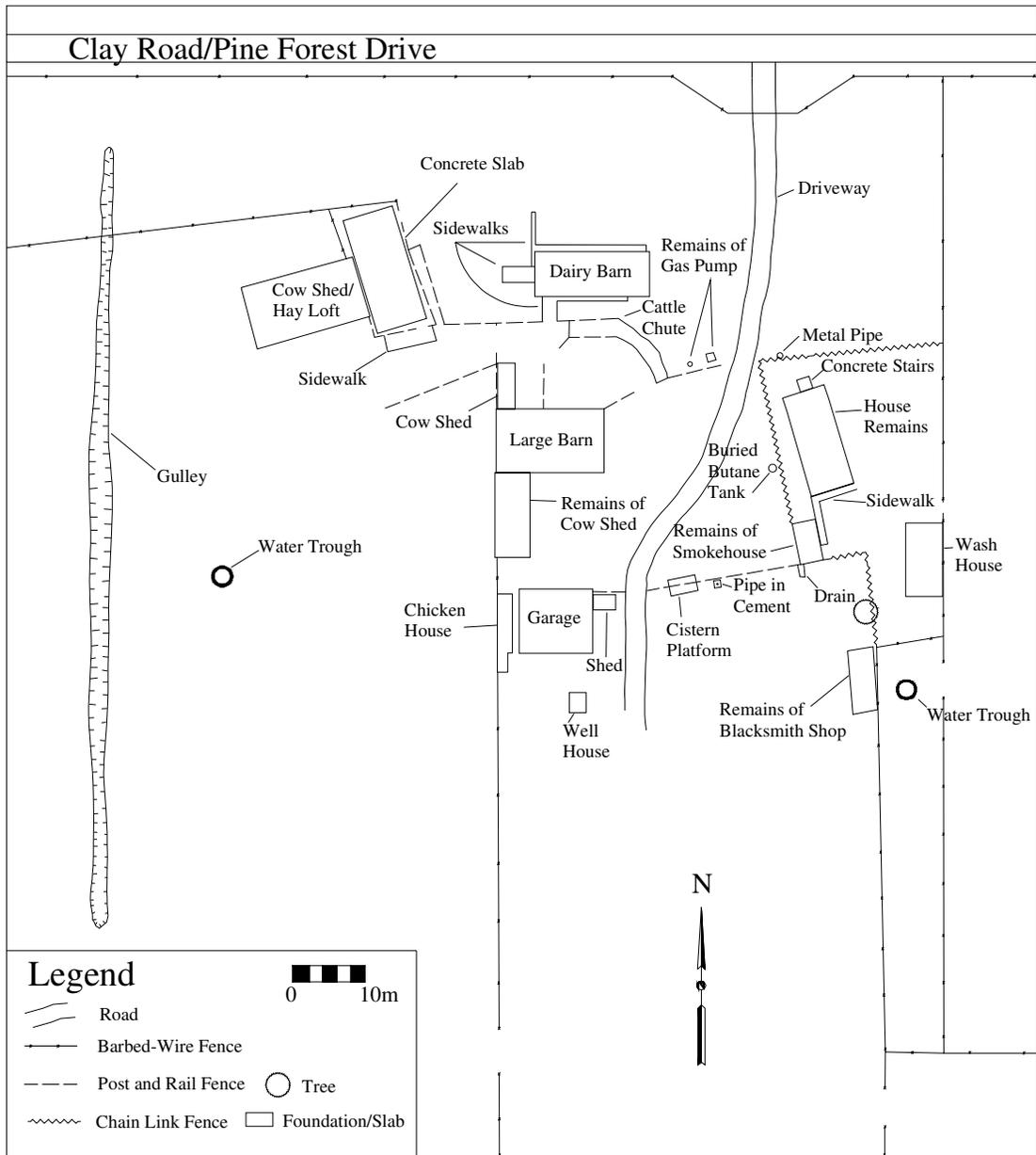
The Moers farm appears on both a 1915 topographical map (see Figure 5.2) and 1930 aerial photograph of the area (see Figure 5.3). Comparison of farmstead as it appears in the 1930 aerial photograph with the same area identified on a 1998 aerial photograph (see Figure 5.4) shows little variation over time. A ground-level view of the same comparison is provided in Figure 5.42.

Outbuildings that remain at the Moers farmstead were recorded during survey (Figure 5.43). Of these, the large barn and hay loft/cow shed exhibit bracing techniques possibly attributable to German ethnic influence (Figure 5.44). The barn, the largest structure on the Moers farm, also features evidence of a previous wood shingle roof and the use of scavenged items in its construction (Figures 5.45 and 5.46). The later is indicative of the ingenuity and thrift exemplified by many of the citizens of the rural Bear Creek community.

The history of the Moers farmstead illustrates a shifting pattern of maintenance and neglect for its outbuildings. For example, Winnie Moers probably devoted less and less time to the farming operations around her home toward the end of her life. The



**FIGURE 5.42.** Photo comparison of the Moers farmstead. Top photograph was taken by Victoria Hoffmann in 1931. Bottom photograph was taken by the author of the same location on April 18, 2003. Facing southeast.



**FIGURE 5.43. Site map of the Henry Moers farmstead.**



**FIGURE 5.44.** Photo of bracing technique in Hay Loft/Cow Shed, Moers farmstead. Photo taken by the author on April 18, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.45.** Photo of the large barn, Moers farmstead, 2003. Facing northwest. Photo taken by the author on April 18, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.46.** Photo of recycled materials in construction of a door at the large barn, Moers farmstead. Notice the use of an old hinge and a scrap of angle iron as brace for this door. Photo taken by the author on April 18, 2003.

chicken house was probably the first structure allowed to fall into disrepair, resulting in its present poor condition. No other Moers descendants maintained a residence on the property after Winnie passed away. Consequently, house-associated outbuildings such as the wash house were neglected. The present condition of the wash house is characterized as between poor and fair. Winnie's death precipitated the cessation of farming activities on the Moers property and ushered in a less labor intensive cattle ranching operation which favored structures for hay storage and shelter for cattle such as the cow shed/hay loft, large barn and dairy barn. Over time, agricultural technology led to a preference of round hay bales over square bales, which in turn lead to a preference for spaces large enough for round hay bale storage after 1980. Thus the dairy barn (Figure 5.47), the only structure large enough to hold such bales, has been maintained and is currently in good condition, as opposed to the cow shed/hay loft and large barn which are both in fair condition. The garage has been maintained throughout these changes largely due to its use as a storage facility.

Another interesting aspect of the Moers farmstead is the range of foundation types represented in its many structures (see Chapter III). For instance, concrete blocks support the walls of the cow shed/hay loft (Figure 5.48) while another, now collapsed, cow shed displays concrete footings. The foundations of the dairy barn (Figure 5.49) and the former smokehouse are both comprised of concrete slabs whereas the foundation of the former blacksmith shop is comprised of concrete footings. The wash house is supported by brick footings (Figure 5.50), while half of the house foundation was supported by piers and a later section was comprised of substantial concrete footings.



**FIGURE 5.47.** Photo of the dairy barn at the Moers farmstead showing vandalism. Facing south. Photo taken by the author on April 18, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.48.** Photo of a concrete pier supporting cow shed, Moers farmstead. Facing east. Photo taken by the author on April 18, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.49.** Photo of concrete footings and slab at the dairy barn, Moers farmstead. Facing south. Photo taken by the author on April 18, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.50.** Photo of brick footings at the wash house, Moers farmstead. Facing east. Photo taken by the author on April 18, 2003.

The type of foundation used in each of these building is directly related to that building's function and age (see Chapter III).

This continues to be a working farmstead for the Moers family. As such, family property, some could consider artifacts, are confined and secured inside the outbuildings. Beyond this, a few artifacts, including shards of magnesium glass, milk glass, clear glass, aqua glass, tin cans, etc. remain as debris from the fire that consumed the house and several outbuildings.

### ***The Carl Ernst Groschke Tract***

Carl Ernst Groschke was born in 1835 in Konigsburg, Hannover, Prussia and immigrated to Texas in 1850 with his parents, Louis and Charlotte Groschke, and two younger siblings, Friedrich Emil and Marianne Groschke (Severance 2004). His family settled near Bear Creek soon after their arrival and like the other members of his family, Carl Ernst (C. E.) Groschke applied for and received a 160-acre preemption grant within the F. Hunt Survey in 1861 (see Figure 5.6).

C. E. Groschke married Dorothea "Doris" Hillendahl in 1858. The couple had twelve children, eleven of whom survived to adulthood. The family operated a farmstead on the property where they would sometimes receive interesting visitors. Daughter Ida Wilhelmina Groschke Grisbee Hoehman often related a tale from her mother of Indians who brought wild game to her home to barter for other foods in the mid to late 19th century (*Houston Chronicle* 1961).

During the Civil War, Groschke enlisted alongside his brother, Friedrich Emil

Groschke, as a private in the 4<sup>th</sup> Texas Field Battery, otherwise known as Captain Mechling's or Captain Horace Haldeman's Battery, a light artillery unit assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of General Walker's Texas Division. While in this unit, he and his brother may have served in Missouri and Arkansas and participated in the battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill (Texas State Library and Archives 1911; Severance 2004). In 1864, Groschke and his brother were transferred to Company C of the 1<sup>st</sup> Texas Heavy Artillery Regiment, also known as Cook's Regiment, where he rose to the rank of sergeant. C. E. was likely discharged from service in April of 1865 and resumed operation of his farm at Bear Creek, which would continue until the end of his life (Texas State Library and Archives 1911).

After his death in 1917, the "old homestead", as he referred to it, was deeded to his son George in accordance with his will (Harris County Deed Records 1917). Born in 1873, George Groschke lived with his parents until 1903 when he married Katie Gruber. The couple appears to have remained in George's parent's home and likely continued to occupy that residence after the deaths of both his mother (1915) and father (1917).

Katie and George had two sons: Clarence (b. 1908) and Lawrence (b. 1910). Both children attended the newly constructed Addicks School south of Bear Creek in the town of Addicks. Family stories recount how the boys drove a horse and buggy to school, picking up neighboring children along the way (Raschke 2003). It wasn't until the boys were grown that George opted for more modern accommodations. He built a new Bungalow-style residence, complete with indoor plumbing, around 1930 and may have demolished his parents' old home at that time.

George Groschke, like many Bear Creek residents, became involved in the dairy business in the late 1910s or early 1920s. He passed his knowledge of the business on to his son Lawrence who became a driver for the local dairy co-op. “[Lawrence] would milk in the mornings, load up his truck, go around the neighborhood and pick up all the milk and take it to Houston for everybody” (Rayburn 2003). Lawrence’s brother, Clarence, did not join him in the family business, opting to live in Houston where he operated McGowen Cleaners (Stahman 2003).

Lawrence married Laverne Mueller in 1935 and the family built a second home on the Groschke family farm (Weiman 2002). Their house was constructed like that of Lawrence’s father, on piers with indoor plumbing (Rayburn 2003). Lawrence and Laverne also built a tenant house, which was occupied by the farm’s hired help. “We always had a couple of men to do all the milking. They’d come and go” (Ties 2003).

By 1940, the farmstead had grown to include two homes, a brick subterranean cistern, a wash house, a combination smokehouse and workshop, garage, milk house, milk barn, tenant house, poultry house, a combination calf and machinery shed, a large stock barn, a smaller stock barn with a feed bin, and at least two outhouses. Those outbuildings specifically designed for farm activities were located in a pasture east across the main driveway from the Groschke homes, all others were located on the west side of the driveway near the residences except for the tenant house and associated outhouse, which was built even farther east of the residences than the barns.

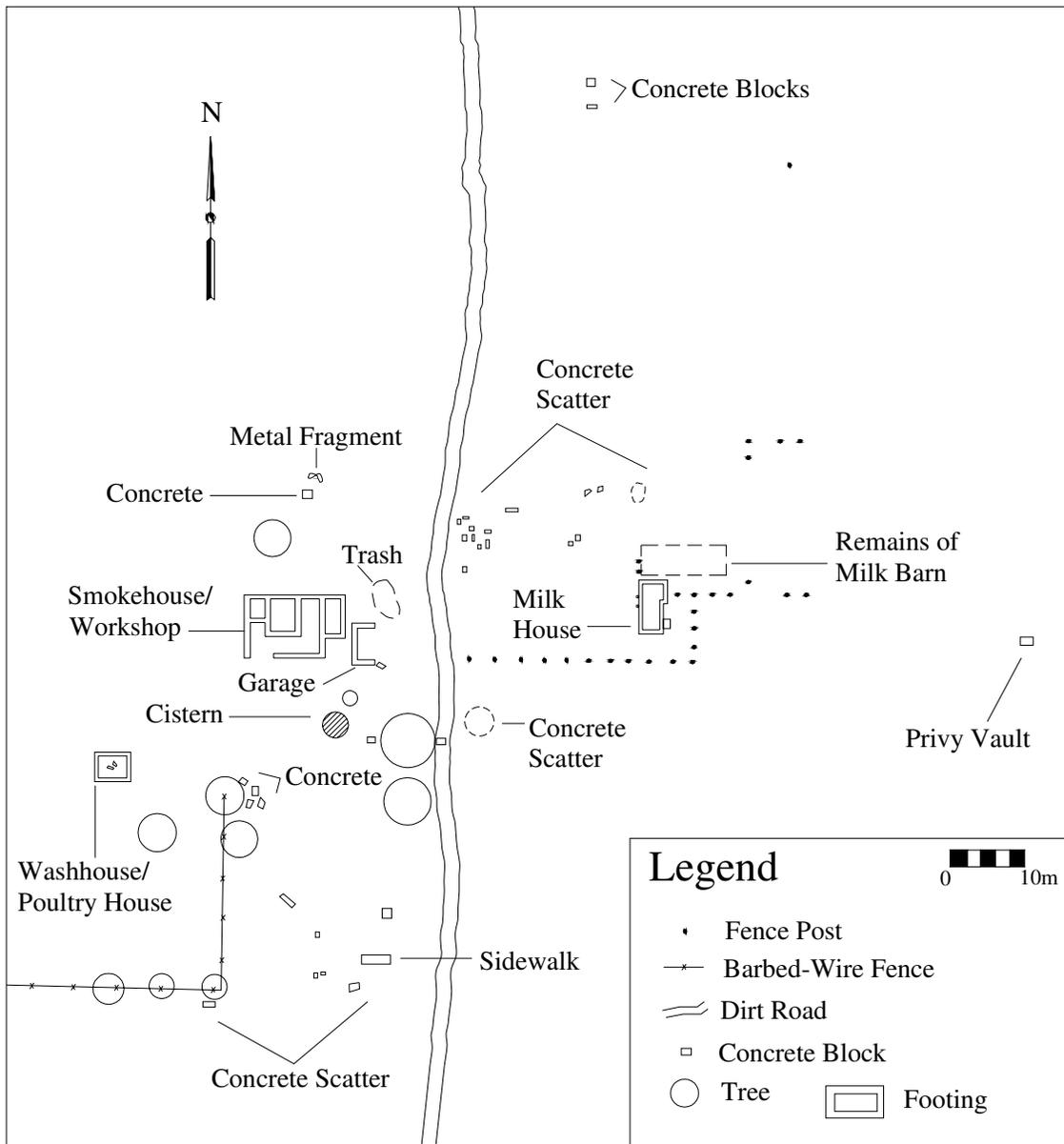
The two families operated the dairy together for a number of years until George’s wife, Katie, passed away in 1941 (Stahman 2003). Despondent about the death of his

companion and pressured by the impending construction of the Addicks Dam, George Groschke committed suicide in 1945 (Edwards 1986). His home was eventually sold and moved to Spring Branch (Ties 2003).

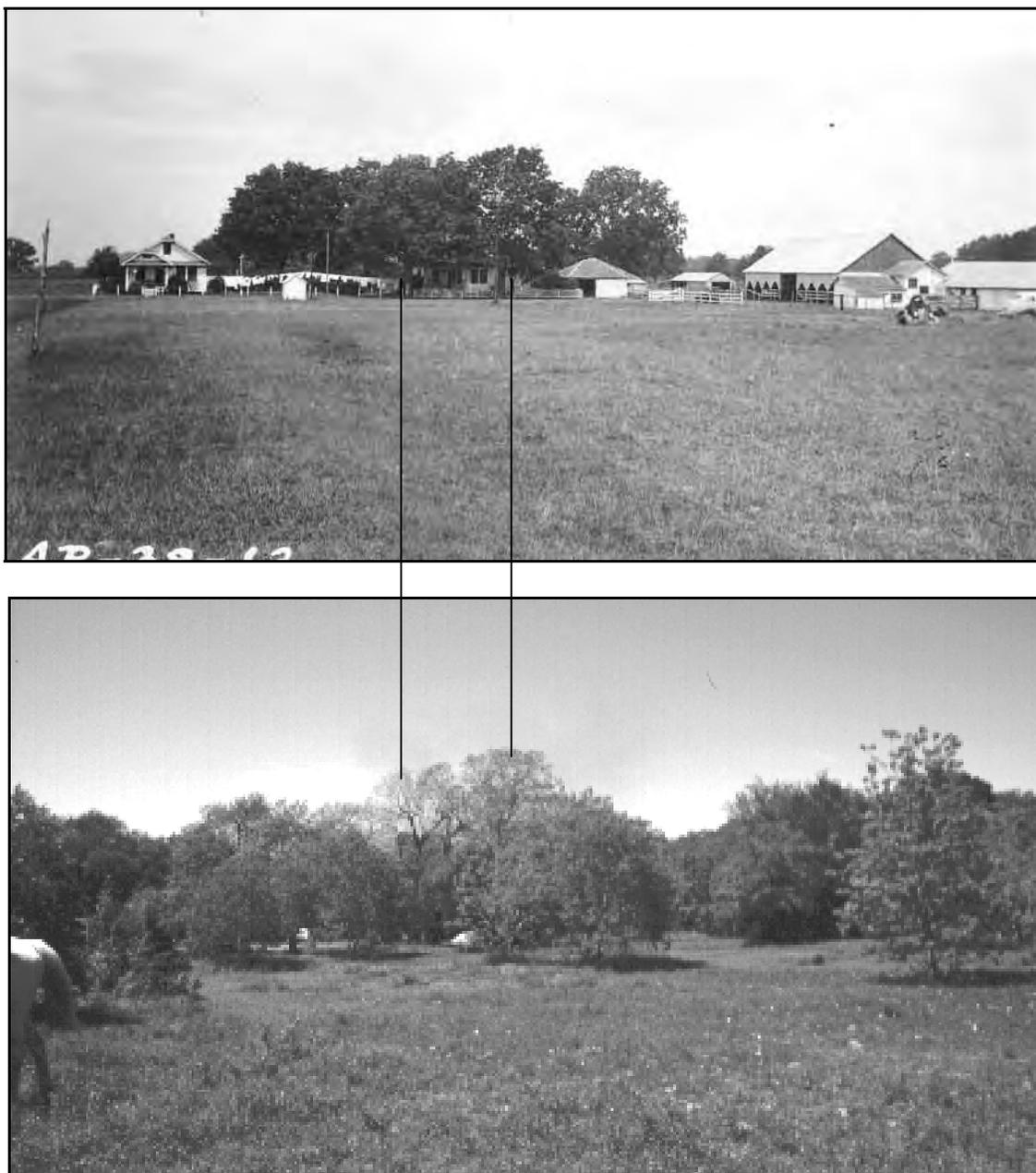
After the death of his father, and the apparent inevitability that his property would eventually be condemned, Lawrence Groschke sold his dairy herd around 1946, leased the property to Henry Liere, and moved his home to Campbell Road in Spring Branch. The family continued to live in Spring Branch for one to two years after which time they sold the house and moved to the northwest side of Houston where Lawrence established a hardware business. After two years the family moved to Hockley where Groschke established another dairy in 1949 (Rayburn 2003; Ties 2003).

### ***Survey Results***

The Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead appears on a 1915 topographical map (see Figure 5.2) and a 1930 aerial photograph of the area (see Figure 5.3). Based on a visual comparison of the 1930 aerial photograph and another aerial photograph taken in 1998 (see Figure 5.4), the Groschke farmstead has undergone a striking degree of thicketization particularly in the west and southern portions of the property. Survey located the remains of several structures on the Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead (Figure 5.51). Figures 5.52, 5.53 and 5.54 illustrate the difference between how several of these structures appeared during occupation versus how they appear today. A few concrete fragments and a remnant sidewalk are all that remain of the two Groschke homes. However, a large concrete and brick cistern (Figure 5.55), once located adjacent



**FIGURE 5.51. Site map of remains at the Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead.**



**FIGURE 5.52.** Photo comparison of the Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead. Top photograph was taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 12, 1944 (Courtesy of Martha Freeman). Bottom photograph was taken by the author of the same location on April 12, 2003. Lines were added to indicate the locations of historic trees. Facing west.



**FIGURE 5.53.** Photo comparison of the George Groschke home. Top photograph was taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 12, 1944. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.) Bottom photograph was taken by the author of the same location on April 12, 2003. Facing west.



**FIGURE 5.54.** Photo comparison of the Lawrence Groschke home. Top photograph was taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 12, 1944. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.) Bottom photograph was taken by the author of the same location on April 12, 2003. Facing northwest.



**FIGURE 5.55. Photo of the cistern at the Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead. Facing south. Photo taken by Robert Burden on March 18, 2003.**

to George Groschke's residence, is largely intact and is partially filled with modern trash.

Remains of structures near the house included a series of concrete footings likely attributed to a combination chicken house and wash house, and the concrete footings of the combination smokehouse and workshop, and the garage, all identified in photographs taken by the Corps of Engineers during the appraisal proceedings (Figure 5.56). Survey also documented that a large portion of the garage footings have been displaced. In addition, a child's tricycle, no doubt belonging to Larnette Groschke, the only child of Lawrence Groschke, lies rusting along with a pile of discarded cans and bottles north of the garage. The last feature observed on the west side of the main driveway was a



**FIGURE 5.56. Photo of the concrete footings of the smokehouse, Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead. Facing northwest. Photo taken by author on April 12, 2003.**

concrete fragment and metal piece, which appear to indicate the location of the combination calf and machinery shed.

On the east side of driveway were a series of concrete blocks that likely served as footings for the stock barn. Nearby, the former locations of the milk barn and milk house were indicated by a concrete scatter and concrete footings and slab, respectively (Figure 5.57). A series of cedar fence posts which once separated the barns from the grassy expanse of the Groschke's south pasture, zigzag around the milk house and continue north and east of the concrete remains.

Several meters east of the milk barn and house lay the remains of a subterranean



**FIGURE 5.57. Photo of concrete footings and slab of milk house, Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead. Facing south. Photo taken by author on April 12, 2003.**

concrete box (Figure 5.58). This last feature of the Groschke farmstead was no doubt the privy vault for the tenant outhouse (Figure 5.59). The vault was filled with 15 cm of humic matter and below this were several bottles, including soda bottles and bleach bottles.

There is also evidence of a modern presence at the site of the George Groschke farmstead. The area near the tree line between the remains of George Groschke's home and the smokehouse/workshop and garage has become a place where modern items, property of the current lease holder, have accumulated. The current lease holder has also constructed a horse barn approximately 30 m south of what remains of the Lawrence Groschke home. Surplus lumber, possibly from this event, has been placed on top of the



**FIGURE 5.58.** Photo of concrete privy vault with bottles, Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead. Photo taken by author on April 12, 2003.



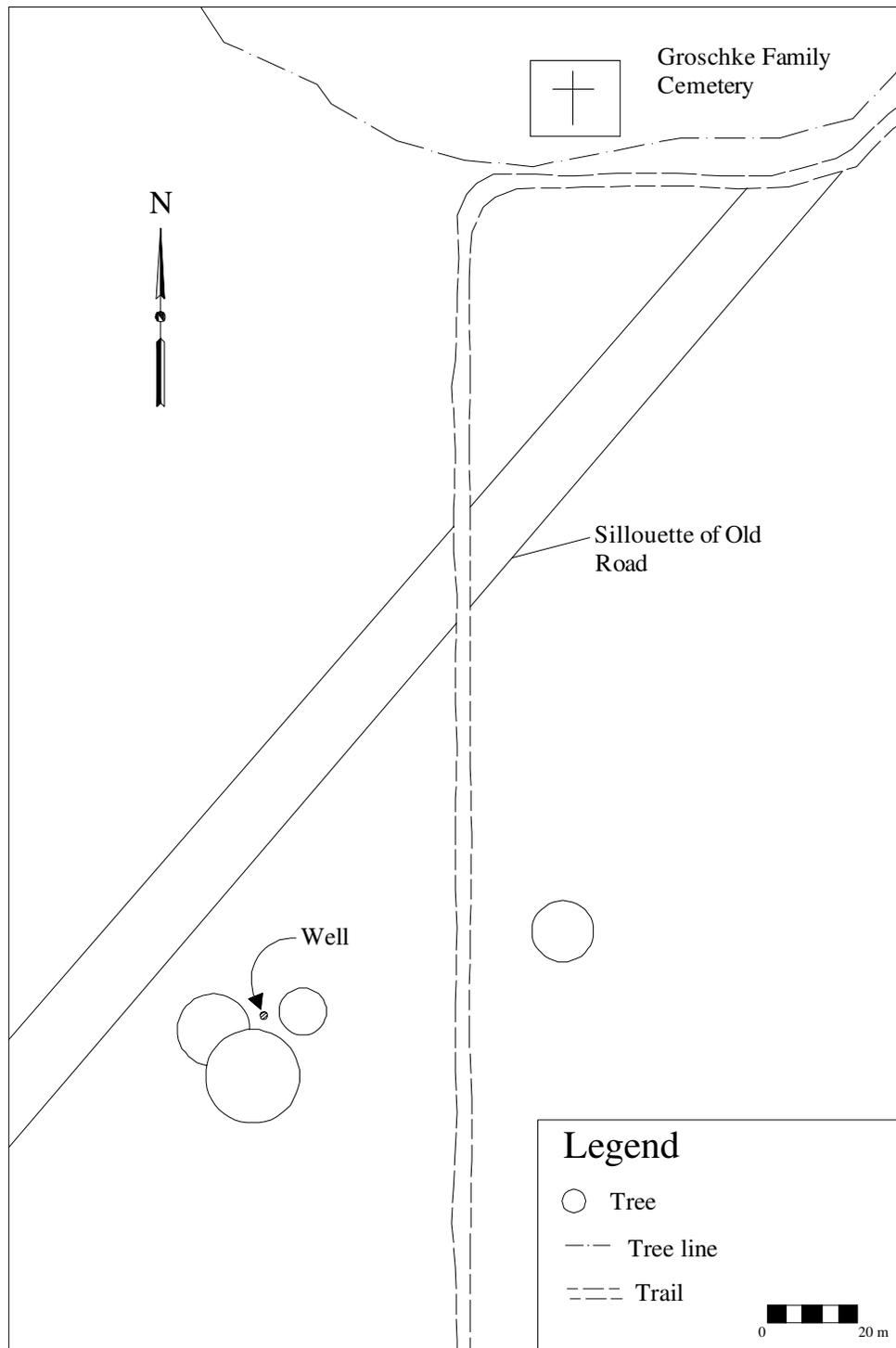
**FIGURE 5.59.** Photo of the tenant house and outhouse on the Carl Ernst Groschke farmstead, taken by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on July 12, 1944. (Courtesy of Martha Freeman.)

cistern and around the former site of George Groschke's home. Other items associated with the boarding of horses, including a moveable metal pen, appear on the property in this area. Additional items include two flatbed trailers and a discarded gate.

Other related farm features were located on the northern end of the 160-acre preemption grant. These features include a brick-lined well and the Groschke Family Cemetery (Figure 5.60, Figure 5.61). This well is exceptional in that unlike similar wells on surrounding properties, it has retained its above-ground enclosure wall (Figure 5.62). The well was filled with sediment at some point in the past and is currently utilized as a fire pit by the property lease holder. No household or farmstead debris was observed on the surface.

Another feature of the property is the Groschke Family Cemetery (Figure 5.63). The cemetery was recorded as site 41HR441 by Prewitt and Associates in 1983 (Fields et al. 1983:140). Marked interments include those of Carl Ernst Groschke (b. January 17, 1835, d. July 23, 1917), his wife Doris Hillendahl Groschke (b. February 14, 1838, d. May 26, 1915), and their sons Gustav Groschke (b. December 23, 1877, d. March 14, 1903) and H. Ernst Groschke (b. February 18, 1860, d. 1922). One rusted metal marker indicates the presence of a fifth grave, name unknown. Groschke family descendants have made references to unmarked graves in the cemetery belonging to members of the Koch and Gastmann families and a Groschke infant (Edwards nd.).

A road between the farmstead and this northern portion of the property does not appear on a 1915 topographical map but does appear on the 1930 aerial photograph. It seems apparent that George Groschke may have increased his cattle and utilized the



**FIGURE 5.60.** Features identified on the northern end of the 160-acre Carl Ernst Groschke tract.



**FIGURE 5.61.** Photo of additional features of the C. E. Groschke property. Facing south. Well is in center of frame. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.62.** Well on the northern end of the C. E. Groschke property. Facing west. Photo taken by author on April 3, 2003.



**FIGURE 5.63.** Photo of the Groschke Family Cemetery taken by the author on September 1, 2002. Facing west.

portion of the property more intensively. He may have excavated the well between 1915 and 1930 and constructed the road between his home and this feature for ease of access.

### *The Friedrich Emil Groschke Tract*

Friedrich Emil (F. E.) Groschke was born in 1836 in Prussia and immigrated to Texas with his parents and two siblings in 1850. He became a naturalized citizen in 1857, married and had started a family by the summer of 1861. By the time of his death, F. E. Groschke had fathered a total of ten children (Stahman 2003).

As mentioned above, Groschke, like his neighbors, received 160 acres by

preemption grant on Bear Creek in 1861 (Harris County Deed Records 1855). It is likely that he had already established his farmstead by that time since he is listed here on the 1860 census as the head of a household that included his wife, Catherine, his older brother, Carl Ernst Groschke, his sister-in-law, Doris, and nephews, Ludwig and Ernst. Groschke and his brother are listed as “laborers” on this census (United States Bureau of Census 1860).

During the Civil War, F. E. Groschke enlisted and served with his brother, Carl Ernst Groschke, as a private in the 4<sup>th</sup> Texas Field Battery (Texas State Library and Archives 1911; Severance 2004). Also alongside his brother, Groschke was transferred in the fall of 1864 to Company C of the 1<sup>st</sup> Texas Heavy Artillery Regiment. He was discharged from service in April of 1865 and resumed operation of his farm at Bear Creek (Texas State Library and Archives 1911).

Groschke began to suffer from inflammatory rheumatism in both knees in 1899 and had experienced a “rupture” before 1911 that led to the amputation of one of his feet, which subsequently impaired his ability to make a living (Texas State Library and Archives 1911). By 1912, disabled and denied his military pension by the government, Groschke’s farmstead likely began a steady decline. Shortly after his death in 1914, his widow, Dora, left the farmstead and moved in with her daughter’s family in Houston. The Groschke home may have been torn down at some point after 1915 (Alma Matzke Bloecher 2003).

Groschke’s livestock included 20 head of cattle, an unknown number of chickens, one mule, and at least one milk cow (Harris County Deed Records 1914; Alma

Matzke Bloecher 2003). There was a barn on the property, an outhouse, a brick-lined well and possibly chicken houses and cow sheds (Alma Matzke Bloecher 2003; Scott Garrett April 11, 2003, pers. comm.). The Groschke family residence was typical of the area with wooden siding, possibly clapboard. It had three bedrooms, a central hall, a wrap-around porch and a kitchen in the rear (Alma Matzke Bloecher 2003).

Unfortunately, photographs of this farmstead have not yet been located.

### *Survey Results*

The F. E. Groschke farmstead appears on the 1915 topographical map of the area (see Figure 5.2) but does not appear on the 1930 aerial photograph (see Figure 5.3).

Scott Garrett, the current lease holder of an adjacent property, reported that he had seen a brick-lined, hand-dug, well in the area. Guided by Garrett, a dashboard survey of the suspected farmstead location was made. No remains of the farmstead could be identified given extremely low site visibility due to a dense stand of tall grasses. Even without the presence of substantial vegetation, the remains of the F. E. Groschke farmstead are likely to be slight, given the fact that all structures appear to have been removed prior to 1930.

### *Summary*

In April of 2003, the author conducted a ground-truthing survey of four 160-acre grants to locate and verify the remains of seven historic sites previously identified with the aid of a 1915 topographical map, a 1930 aerial photograph, and interviews with former residents and their descendants. The remains of six farmsteads that appear on the

1930 aerial photograph of the area have been located and described. One additional farmstead, which appears on the 1915 topographical map but not on the 1930 aerial photograph was indicated through personal communication with a nearby lease holder. All but one of the expected sites was located.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the Gulf Coastal Prairie and Marsh region of Texas sites are often obscured by dense vegetation. Here, historic sites often have extremely limited surface visibility and can only be detected by the presence of above-ground features such as architectural remains and landscaping. Certain research methods coupled with knowledge of pier-and-beam construction can enhance the chances of locating sites in environments such as these.

Although there are no national guidelines and state guidelines vary, most archaeologists in CRM today rely on an informal methodology for background research prior to Phase I field survey projects. Keeping compliance issues with federal, state, and even some county and city regulations in mind, CRM archaeologists conduct their background research according to pre-defined preservation goals outlined in a research design. Further constrained by time and budget issues, archaeologists seek efficient as well as effective research methods to quickly identify and assess sites.

Two often overlooked sources of information for the location and assessment of sites are historical aerial photographs and informant interviews. The use of historical aerial photographs allows investigators to target areas shown to have had historic buildings in the past, thereby reducing time spent in survey. Informants include residents and descendants of pioneer and immigrant families knowledgeable about the history of a certain area. Project-related informant interviews can generate information leading to the location of sites as well and provide further data such as names of past

occupants, which may have required added time at local courthouses. Informant interviews also provide opportunities for acquiring copies of historic photographs. Sites determined significant according to criteria outlined in federal (i.e. the National Register of Historic Places) and state (i.e. State Archeological Landmarks) guidelines must also possess integrity, which King (1998) points out is also determined by *who* considers the site significant. Here again, informants play a major role as the best judges of a site's heritage value in their community. Locating informants takes time but in rural settings such individuals can often be found and the effort usually results in cost-effective information retrieval.

The use of historical aerial photographs and informant interviews in conjunction with an understanding of the characteristic remains of pier and beam construction further enhances the likelihood of site discovery. Small 19<sup>th</sup>-century farmsteads of the Gulf Coastal Prairie and Marsh region of Texas shared similar characteristics in building construction, i.e. pier and beam, and inter-structure spatial organization. Understanding the vernacular rules surrounding this type of construction and how farmstead structures developed over time leads to a greater appreciation for farmstead contexts in the archaeological record.

Pier and beam construction, historically common on southeast Texas farmsteads, arose in the Tidewater Region of Virginia during the Colonial period in response to a humid coastal environment. The method of raising the structure above ground with the use of piers slowed the rate of wood decay in a damp environment thus prolonging the use-life of the structure. This construction method spread along the southern coast of the

United States and entered east Texas in the form of log construction with southern Anglos before 1825 (Jordan 1978:27).

In the prairie regions of southeast Texas, log construction was less common before the establishment of sawmills due to limited presence of heavy forests. Here, frame buildings were more common, where, like log construction, the design was supported by pier foundations (Jurney 1987b:43). Frame construction required milled lumber and as such likely did not appear outside of port cities until after a mill was opened. At Houston, the first sawmill in the Texas was opened in 1836. By 1850, mills were widespread and by 1860 they were common throughout the state (Bryant 1987:44; Fehrenbach 1968:29). During the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, frame construction developed with advances in structural engineering leading to braced frame and balloon frame construction.

A typology of pier materials utilized in pier and beam construction provides clues to date of construction, while piers themselves offer evidence of a structure's interior layout. Pier materials evolved from wooden logs (1820-1890) to manufactured brick columns (1890-early 1900s) and eventually concrete blocks (early 1900s-1950). Proper load transference required a particular pier arrangement. To properly transfer structural loads, piers were placed at the intersection of each exterior corner, the intersection of a girder and sill, and the intersection of two girders, and at times under the intersections of door and window jams and sills or girders. Piers were also placed under every other stud, or every 32 in., along an exterior wall. To support long spans, piers were also placed every 8 ft. under exterior wall sills or interior girders set at right

angles to the floor joists and every 12 ft. under exterior wall beams set parallel to the floor joists (Anderson and Heyer 1955).

The patterned arrangement of foundation piers echoes the spatial arrangement of farmstead structures. Though difficult to quantify given the variances in individual preference, certain known factors influenced how farmsteads were arranged and how those arrangements developed over time. Two of the most important of these factors were necessity and convenience. Necessity determined the order of building construction from house and barn to outbuildings, and how well those buildings were maintained. Convenience, on the other hand, influenced the distance from the primary dwelling and distance from complementary-use structures or areas. Other factors weighed against convenience included odors from livestock, fire danger, proximity to subsurface water, and features of the natural landscape. Understanding this pattern among the structures of a farmstead complex provides insight into the archaeological context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century life.

The area now enveloped by Addicks Reservoir in southeast Texas was once a community characterized by such farmsteads. German immigrants settled the area around Bear Creek beginning in the late 1840s. This rural farming enclave reached its peak in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Remaining residents were forced out by the construction of the Addicks Flood Control Reservoir in 1948. Over time the abandoned farm tracts underwent thicketization. The establishment of two parks in the reservoir led to the documentation of several historic and prehistoric sites by Prewitt and Associates, Inc. in 1982 and 1983.

The initial settlement of the Bear Creek Community encompassed six 160-acre preemption grants. Four of these grants are as yet undeveloped today. In 1982, Prewitt and Associates conducted literature and archival research pertaining to the area and intensive survey of portions of these four grants. This survey resulted in the documentation of two sites: the Groschke Family Cemetery (41HR441) and a historic dump (41HR429) associated with either the Brandt or Pasche farmsteads. Prewitt's archival research and a reliance on local genealogist and descendant of a former resident, Marie Neuman Gottfried, revealed information about the Brandt, Pasche, and Groschke families and land records regarding these sites.

The Prewitt and Associates survey focused attention on floodplain areas where prehistoric sites were likely to be present and largely ignored upland areas where the incidence of historic sites would be higher. As a result, several historic sites went unnoticed. Historic aerial photographs, which would have identified these sites, were not used during this survey and only one informant interview was conducted, although the information provided did not pertain to the properties in question.

In the spring to 2003, the author engaged in a project to locate, verify and document the remains of a series of additional historic farmstead sites within the four 160-acre grants. Pre-field research methods included the acquisition of a 1915 topographical map, a 1930 aerial photograph, and six informal interviews with former residents and their descendants. Informants were chosen for their connections to the properties under investigation and their potential to generate new information regarding the properties. These individuals identified the farmsteads visible in the 1930 aerial

photograph and provided additional information regarding the farmstead owners, their families, and anecdotal stories of the workings of each farm. The interviews also allowed the author to gather photographs of the historic structures that once existed on those properties. Additional information regarding the farmsteads was obtained through U. S. Army Corps of Engineers acquisition files and photographs, and limited archival research.

Field verification or “ground truthing” of the information obtained from the interviews and archival research, commenced over the course of six Saturdays during the months of March and April, 2003. The only field members included myself and a maximum of two volunteer assistants. This exercise resulted in the identification of all six of the historic sites that appear on a 1930 aerial photograph of the area. One historic site that appeared on a 1915 topographical map of the area but did not appear on the 1930 aerial photograph was not located. All of the sites were historic farmsteads attributed to German immigrants and their descendants dating from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to 1946. The identification of these new historic sites in Addicks Reservoir adds to the area’s archaeological data set by providing more detailed historical information concerning the initial settlement, development and demise, of the Bear Creek Community. These new sites also give insight into the distribution of farmsteads and agricultural economy of the area.

The approach to locating historic sites employed in this case study is not without room for improvement. Reliance on informant interviews, especially regarding facts that cannot be independently verified, is a risky issue. On occasion, I found certain facts

given by informants to be in error, which is expected given the depth of time and the unreliability of memory. However, I believe that the majority of the information provided by informants was accurate and was proven so when compared to deed records and other historic documents. In hindsight, the use of a Global Positioning System (GPS) to map the sites would also have enabled me to overlay the features identified in the field with the aerial photographs, resulting in swifter farmstead structure identification. Future research in this area might focus on the use of GPS coupled with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the results of an ongoing regional historic map overlay project by PBS&J Inc. for more accurate and efficient historic site identification.

Through the case study outline above, this thesis has illustrated how the use of historical aerial photography and interviews with former residents are effective and efficient pre-field strategies for identifying historic sites. By presenting an in-depth examination of pier and beam construction, this thesis will aid researchers in field documentation of the remains of 19<sup>th</sup>-century dwellings in the Coastal Prairie and Marsh region of Texas. This work also stands as a historical chronicle of the community of Bear Creek. This historical overview and field study provides useful information that facilitates well-informed management of historic cultural resources in the Addicks Reservoir for generations to come.

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