

JOHN ELIAS AND IDA MAY HERRINGTON HOUSE

I.CONTEXT

Located just 25 miles north of downtown Dallas, Collin County is currently one of the fastest growing and most prosperous counties not only in the state of Texas, but in the nation. According to 2000 US Census data, the county had the 11th fastest growing population in the nation (86.2% from 1990-2000), and the median household income of residents was at nearly twice that of the Texas average.¹ The current growth and prosperity is due in large part to a vibrant business climate with several large corporations such as Electronic Data Systems, JC Penney, and Frito Lay making the county home to their corporate headquarters. In contrast, the historical development of the county has its roots in agriculture. With the exception of a small portion of its western edge, the county's area of 851 square miles lies entirely within the Blackland Prairie, considered the richest agricultural region in the state. Between the 1840's and 1870's due to the lack of transportation facilities, limited markets, and the absence of mechanized farm equipment, the agricultural production of the county was limited. With the arrival in 1872 of the Houston and Texas Central Railway, the first to reach the county, and others such as the Missouri, Kansas, and Santa Fe in later years, farmers now had an outlet for their products, and an era of economic growth began. It was during this time that the town of Weston in the far north central part of the county developed from just a stop on the stage line between Sherman and Dallas to a prosperous farming town. By 1896, the population had increased from 150 to 400 and the town had five general stores, a cotton mill, a gristmill, a confectioner, a school, two churches, and several other enterprises such

as grocery stores and a blacksmith.² During this period of growth in 1884, just 3 miles northwest of Weston in the farming community of Lone Star, a young enterprising bachelor by the name of John Elias Herrington purchased 160 acres of rich, fertile, farmland on the waters of Honey Creek.³ After two years of farming, Herrington married in 1886 and then in 1902 began the construction of a farmhouse that was considered substantial in style and size for its community.

II. OVERVIEW

Between 1870 and 1920 the number of farms in Collin County increased dramatically from 903 to 6001.⁴ In addition to plowing, planting, and harvesting the fields people began building homes, barns, and other structures that would establish their farmsteads. In 1902 John Elias Herrington and his wife Ida May began construction of a Victorian farmhouse on their 160 acre farm. Mr. Herrington kept meticulous records of all of his business dealings and farm activities, and in one of his diaries dated September 15, 1902 is the record for the cost of the house. Titled “Cash of Dwelling”, the inventory on page 79 lists materials and their cost along with the amount paid the contractor, Milner and Clifton. The total cost to build the home was \$1716.75, paid in full with cash.⁵ The house was placed on the southeast corner of the farm facing due east, and was set back approximately 80 feet from the road that formed the eastern boundary of the farm, at that time known as Lone Star Road. In 1982, the county renamed all county roads according to a 9-1-1 numbering system and the house was assigned the address 10855 County Road 175, Celina, Texas.⁶

The method of the home's construction is wood framing on pier and beam foundation. The original piers were logs hewn from the native bois d'arc trees whose wood is impervious to rot and insects. The house is balloon framed, with the 2x4 wall studs spanning from the foundation to the roof. Both exterior and interior walls and ceilings are constructed of shiplap pine board sheathing and the floor boards throughout the house are heart pine. The exterior sheathing is covered by clapboard siding, and the interior walls and ceilings were originally covered with wallpaper applied over a base of muslin cloth.

The style and period of the nine room, 1 1/2 story farmhouse is distinctly Victorian. One important feature is the wide wrap around porch which runs the length of the house on the east and south sides. Other details include carved brackets that frame each porch post, multiple shingled/decorated gables (seven total), steep hipped main roof, and 4 inch exposure clapboard siding. The windows are double hung with many containing the original wavy glass. The original front door is typical of the Queen Anne Victorian style with decorative carvings on the bottom panels and a top glass transom crowned with turned and carved moldings. The interior retains all its original features such as the beaded board chair railing in the entry and the staircase with fancy turned posts, balusters, and finials. Both the parlor and dining room have double, five panel pocket doors, and there are fancy window and door moldings throughout the downstairs. All the interior doors have bronze hardware with raised floral detail. Remnants of original wall papers, elaborately designed in deep reds, blues, and greens, were found in the entry hall and dining room during restoration. These elements of decoration in the Victorian style

and the generous size of this farmhouse reflect the prosperity and stature in the community held by its owners, John Elias and Ida May Herrington.

J.E. Herrington was born on October 18, 1863 in Peveley, Missouri near the city of St. Louis. In 1875 at the age of 11 he moved to Texas with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elias B. Herrington, and settled in Weston. As a young man he established himself as an ambitious and hard working member of the community. His first diary dated September 12th, 1882 and titled "Account Book of John. E. Herrington" shows multiple transactions in which he bought and sold goods, harvested crops, sold livestock, and engaged as both lender and borrower with people in the community. In 1884, at the age of 21 he acquired significant resources and was able to pay in cash \$2000 of the \$3500 purchase price of a 160 acre farm.⁷ As he was establishing his farm he resided in Weston at the home of David Douglas, a prominent resident who served in the 11th Texas Calvary during the Civil War. An entry in his diary dated December 15, 1885 shows that he began his boarding at the Douglas home at a rate of \$8 per month. Later the next year, on Nov 11th, J. E. Herrington married Ida May Douglas, daughter of David Douglas, and with her had two daughters, Delta May and Bessie. The young family moved to the farm in Lone Star where they built their home, developed their farm, and made significant contributions to the community.

J. E. Herrington was a prosperous farmer who grew wheat, corn and cotton in the rich, black soil of the Texas Prairie. He also raised cattle, sheep, and chickens on his farm. His prosperity gave him the means to purchase more land in the area and throughout his life he made many real estate transactions.⁸ He was of a giving nature and in 1894, in an act of generosity and leadership, Mr. Herrington donated 1 acre of his farmland to Collin

County for the purpose of establishing Lone Star #1 school.⁹ His diary indicates that he also helped manage the building of the schoolhouse by keeping record of contributions and construction costs during 1894. During the years that he lived in Lone Star, Mr. Herrington continued his leadership at the school by boarding school teachers at his home and keeping financial records of school expenditures. Lone Star # 1 schoolhouse and the surrounding community benefited greatly from the acts of kindness, leadership, and generosity by the Herrington family. By 1938, the Lone Star School had grown to a modern, two teacher building and the area developed into a community of thrifty, thriving family farms.¹⁰

In addition to being a significant person in the development of the local school, Mr. Herrington was also a leader in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Weston where he served as a trustee. He kept records of the contributions and costs for the building of the church in 1901 and in 1910, he along with other board members purchased a house in Weston to provide housing for pastors who would travel to preach and minister at the church.¹¹ Mr. Herrington, a man of strong faith, taught Sunday School and was deeply devoted in his service to the church. Because in part to his contributions the church flourished for many years and was an important center of worship for many families until it was disbanded in 1989.

Because of his involvement and service to his community over the years, J.E. Herrington's reputation for integrity and trustworthiness grew. In 1917, he was appointed Presiding Judge of election for Collin County, precinct number 20.¹² He served a term of two years, and then in 1919 moved to Van Alstyne , 10 miles east of Lone Star. There Mr. Herrington expanded his leadership into the business community

becoming a vice president of The Continental State Bank and later up until the time of his death in 1926 served as president of the Van Alstyne Roller Mills.¹³

On June 11, 1926, following a long illness, John E. Herrington passed away in Van Alstyne at the age of 62. His legacy of service and leadership was recognized by the *McKinney Daily Courier Gazette* whose front page announced his death in an article titled “Prominent Van Alstyne Citizen Passes Away.”¹⁴ *The Van Alstyne Leader* published a lengthy obituary that praised his character and service with the following words:

“To say that John E. Herrington was a “good man,” and to have that saying given its broadest and most liberal interpretation would hardly serve to sum up the values tangible and intangible made possible through his residence in this community. “

“In the passing from life of John E. Herrington, this city and community as well as his family have suffered a loss, the effect of which is felt by all who here reside.”¹⁵

Mr. Herrington was survived by his wife, Ida May (born October 19, 1870). She passed away in Van Alstyne on November 25, 1951. As a widow, she continued to make several real estate transactions on property that her husband had acquired during his lifetime.¹⁶

Although John and Ida May Herrington left the family farm in Lone Star in 1919, ownership remained in the family passing down to their two daughters, Delta May and Bessie.¹⁷ Delta May and her husband Charles H. Hayes with their two daughters, Juanita and Mildred, occupied the home and farmed the land from 1919 until 1928. It was in 1928 that Delta died tragically of a ruptured appendix, and soon after her death her

husband Charles and their two daughters moved to Van Alstyne to live near their grandmother, Ida May Herrington. The house was leased to several families after 1928: the Burch, Hayes (cousin of Charles Hayes), and Speck families, respectively.

Ownership of the house and the farm eventually passed down in 1967 to the Herrington's two grand daughters, Juanita Hayes and Mildred Hayes Bergvall, wife of Jack Bergvall.¹⁸

After the occupancy of the Speck family in the early 1970's, the home fell into a state of disrepair and was vacant until 1979 when Ms. Hayes and Mrs. Bergvall sold the house and 4.39 acres to William O. Hammond.¹⁹ Subsequent owners of the John Elias and Ida May Herrington House include: Freddie H Sr. Doty (1980-1984)²⁰, Irving G. and Bertha Couvillion (1984-1998)²¹, and the current owners Michael D. and Cindy E. Purdy (1998-present)²².

The exterior appearance of the house has changed little from the original with the exception of an enclosure of part of the south porch to accommodate a downstairs bathroom during the C.H. Hayes family occupation. As part of the restoration of the exterior, the Purdys repaired the rotted porch floor and replaced the rotted porch post and brackets in a manner appropriate with the style and period of the home. The Purdys also added a one story, one room addition at the rear of the home which is now used as a family room. In addition to these changes, the Purdys have restored both the exterior and the interior of the house to excellent condition.

Surrounding structures include a detached 3 car garage (added in 1981), and a workshop (added in 1989). The original well that was used for household water still exists on the north side of the home and has been refurbished. In 2004, the Purdys purchased 30 acres of the original farm from Mildred Hayes Bergvall²³ and once again

made the house a part of a working farm. In 2005, a chicken house was constructed north of the home and the pasture north and west of the home was enclosed with pipe fencing to allow for the grazing of sheep.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The John Elias and Ida May Herrington House is the best intact, preserved remnant of the Lone Star farming community. It is a substantial farmhouse that retains all of its original Victorian character and is also still functioning as part of a working farm. The other remaining structures from the community are a section of the schoolhouse that was relocated to Weston, and a storm cellar on the school house site which has inscribed on its bulkhead the date “1927.” If not for these structures, there would be scant evidence that the Lone Star community ever existed. Not only is the house worthy of historical designation because of its architecture and survival, but equally because its original owners, the Herringtons, deserve recognition for their leadership, devotion, and service to the people and institutions in the area.

As the growth in Collin County continues to develop at lightning speed, and as farmland gives way to subdivisions and shopping malls, the significance of the county’s agricultural heritage and the contributions of the farming families who were the backbone of its rural communities can easily be forgotten. It is crucial that this home receives protection from those forces that could lead to its demise. With sincere desire, the current owners and the descendants of the Herrington family respectfully request that the John Elias and Ida May Herrington House receive designation as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark.

VI. DOCUMENTATION

¹ “What’s New”, Collin County Texas Official Website, <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/>.

² Stambaugh, J. Lee and Lillian J. *A History of Collin County, Texas*. Austin, Texas: Texas State Historical Association, 1958. pg 60.

³ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 25 pg 162, Office of the Collin County Clerk, McKinney, Tx.

⁴ *The Handbook of Texas Online*. Texas State Historical Association, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/cc/hcc16.html>. Last updated April 22,2004.

⁵ J.E. Herrington. Farm and Business Dairies. September 12, 1882-November 24, 1925. Courtesy of Mildred Hayes Bergvall, McKinney, Texas. Entry Dated September 15, 1902.

⁶ “History of 9-1-1 Addressing”, Collin County Texas Official Website.

⁷ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 25 pg 162.

⁸ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 9 pg 101, Vol 102 pg 315, Vol 169 pg 401, Vol 175 pg 98.

⁹ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 68 pg 256.

¹⁰ “Lone Star Jottings,” *McKinney Daily Courier Gazette*, McKinney , Texas. August 23, 1938.

¹¹ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 164 pg 332, pg 371.

¹² “Judges of Election Form”, State of Texas, Issued on May 17, 1917 by W.L. Keen, Collin County Court Clerk. Courtesy of Mildred Hayes Bergvall, McKinney, Texas.

^{13, 14} “Prominent Van Alstyne Citizen Passes Away,” *McKinney Daily Courier Gazette*, June 12, 1926, pg 1.

¹⁵ “Obituary of John E. Herrington,” *Van Alstyne Leader*, Van Alstyne, Texas. June 17, 1926.

¹⁶ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 396 pg 143, Vol 406 pg 62, pg 219.

¹⁷ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 360 pg 16.

¹⁸ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 686 pg 67.

¹⁹ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 1204 pg 37.

²⁰ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 1267 pg 76.

²¹ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 1833 pg 703.

²² Collin County Deed Records, Vol 4181 pg 1643.

²³ Collin County Deed Records, Vol 4354 pg 1726.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Comstock, William T. *Victorian Domestic Architectural Plans and Details*. Dover Publications, Inc. Mineola NY. Reprinted in 1987.

J. E. Herrington, Farm and Business Diaries, Sept 12 1882- Nov 24, 1925. Courtesy of Mildred Hayes Bergvall, McKinney Texas.

Herrington and Hayes Family Bibles, Courtesy of Mildred Hayes Bergvall.

Various articles, personal notes, and photographs, Courtesy of Mildred Hayes Bergvall.

