

Part 3 – Trueheart-Goeth

Architectural Descriptions and Features

In 1936, a team from the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) undertook documentation of the 1848 Trueheart House (TEX-323-324) which included written architectural descriptions and photographs of the house and of the stone archway and the kilns. Members of the survey team were: Charles Bertrand, Barlette Cocke and Arthur W. Stewart, photographer.

The house was said to be in good condition and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Goeth. The following is excerpted from the HABS description:

“Limestone and stucco, 36’6”x 18’ – two stories, gable roof with boxed cornice. Walls are built of local native limestone plastered on inside and stuccoed on outside. The wood frame porch on the side is a later addition. The original pitched story shingle roof is now covered with galvanized iron. Two main rooms on each floor; living room and kitchen are on first floor and 2 bedrooms are on second floor. Both rooms on the second floor and south porch is a later addition.”

“[The] Old ranch house is typical of many built during the middle of the 19th century and its main charm lies in the simplicity of its construction. Thick walls and the boxed cornice, the latter of which is quite unique in design add to its charm and character.”

The kilns and archway were described as follows:

“There are two dome shaped rock kilns located about four hundred yards from Casa Vieja. There lime was made during the construction of the house in 1848. Lime was made here from time to time whenever additions or repairs were needed. There is also a picturesque stone archway which was built at the same time that spans a creek enabling the builders to carry lime from the kilns to the house.”

(See HABS photos in this Exhibit as well as photos of the house and of the archway.)

The following descriptions of the significant structures are taken directly from the draft National Register nomination prepared by Imogene Cooper in 2010:

1. Trueheart House (1848; Additions ca.1940)

The James L. Trueheart House (ca.1848) is a symmetrical, two-story, rectangular-shaped building with a low-pitched, side gabled roof with boxed eaves that employs an unpainted, standing-seam metal roof with three stone chimneys. In architectural style, it is Texas vernacular. Painted cream white with blue trim, the front façade with its off-set, modest front door faces north towards Blue Wing Road. The rear (south) façade of the house has a two-story, screened-in porch attached to the oldest, or stone-block, portion of the house. This porch hides two double door entryways into the house as well as a staircase leading up to the bedrooms above. The central part of the house has thick stone walls and to it have been added wood-framed wings, probably in the 1940s, but definitely after recordation in the 1936 HABS photos and drawings that show no additions. Each wing is two stories high and boasts a wide, stone-clad chimney up the end wall. Each wing has wooden siding, and is slightly narrower, thus offset from the stone portion of the house, helping to distinguish it in a sensitive way, from the oldest and white-washed, central portion of the house. Last, the two-story screened porch must date to the early part of the twentieth century. The earliest part of the house is Texas vernacular in style with its use of limestone block and rubble for walls and foundation as well as its simple two-story, block shape and metal roof. Its one unusual feature is its centrally located chimney and double hearth (or back to back), as native Texans tended to build them onto an end wall, if at all. Thus, it was probably built by James Trueheart sometime after his marriage to Margarita (Garza) Trueheart in 1848.

Typically for this part of San Antonio, the house uses native limestone for its foundation and for its walls, which are stuccoed on the outside and plastered on the inside and painted cream white. According to the 1936 HABS drawings for this building, these walls are eighteen inches thick (Figure 1). Its outside dimensions were 56' – 6" long by 18' – 1½" wide (as per the HABS drawings). In 1936, the residence consisted of four rooms, two downstairs and two upstairs, and interior access is still by a steep, but very handsome interior wooden staircase, near the front door, that cleverly crossed in front of a window (now closed). The house is also served by the outside staircase on the south façade which is now encased by the screened porch; the porches are

reported by the HABS drawings to be 9'-- 9" deep and run the full length of the south façade.

The original roof for the house was wood shingles, according to HABS, now all covered by a standing-seam metal roof. The two-story wood-frame additions are nearly identical as wings on either end of the house. Each has a wide, sandstone-clad chimney running up the end walls and both employ wooden siding. While they are painted the same white with blue trim, just as the stone portion of the house is painted, they are clearly designed to contrast with the older rock portion of the residence and distinguish themselves as additions. They were added after 1936 when the HABS drawings were completed for the Trueheart House, perhaps in the 1940s, as the small second story windows and the gables are of a style that appear to come from that time. Inside, the house is vacant but well maintained. The newer, eastern wing contains a full bath upstairs and a full kitchen downstairs, while the western wing has another bedroom upstairs and a study downstairs that is handsomely paneled in varnished, knotty pine complete with a brick fireplace and wooden mantel.

All the wooden floors of the house have been refinished and the interior staircase is well maintained although the risers have been painted white and the tall newel post of the railing has been painted blue. The older hearths in the stone part of the house are still in place, and their mantels have been painted blue and white hiding the plaster and brickwork. Double doors lead out to both the generous first and second floor screened and covered porches are in excellent condition. The first floor, screened porch is now at ground level and paved in the same irregular sandstone flagstones that are used on the chimneys. The second, wooden porch is painted gray and is also completely screened. Despite the heat of the day and because of the orientation of the house to the site, the summer breezes from the south can blow through the house from the porches. The high ceilings and thick walls of the house also help to move air and insulate from the heat. The house retains a great deal of its integrity through preservation of its original materials as well as through its rural setting and feeling.

2. Caretaker Cottage. (ca.1940)

A square, single-story, side-gabled, wood frame cottage with a standing seam metal roof and linear wooden siding located to the east of the Trueheart House. It is painted white with blue trim and in architectural style "matches" the frame additions to the main house. It has an oversized chimney in the same style and mass as those on the

wing additions to the Trueheart House. Also, it is faced with the same irregular sized and shaped pieces of sandstone as those on the wood frame additions to the main house.

3. Brick Outbuilding with Carport. (ca. 1920s)

An irregular-shaped, one story yellow brick outbuilding with a V-crimp, metal roof located to the west of the Trueheart House. It has a metal carport structure built onto it on its south façade. It also has a wooden door lintel, which might make it late 19th century or early 20th century. Careful scrutiny of the historic aerial photo from the 1920s seems to show this building to the left (south) of the Trueheart House. Perhaps it was a caretaker house from an earlier era than the building described above (No. 2), or it was a utility building of some sort. It was too close to the ranch house to be a small barn for stock and the doors are too narrow. Perhaps it was used for tools or tack.

4. Brick Shed. (ca. 1920)

Tiny, square brick shed, about the size of an outhouse but housing a hot water heater. Constructed of the same yellow brick as building described above (No.3) it also uses a wooden door lintel.

In summary, the James L. Trueheart House and its accompanying outbuildings are significant as a cultural landscape in their association in agriculture and conservation with the original builder and owner, James Lawrence Trueheart (1815-1882) as well as in their association in agriculture and conservation with the Goeth families. Both Conrad Alexander (C.A.) Goeth and his son, Fred C. Goeth, were prominent attorneys, civic leaders, and historic preservationists in San Antonio. James Trueheart was famous in early Texas history as a Perote prisoner and diarist as well as Bexar County official during the early 1840s when Texas was first a Republic and then a new state of the United States beginning in 1845. In 1848, Trueheart married Petra Margarita de la Garza and by the marriage he became the owner of a tract of land along the San Antonio River which he improved with the construction of the house as well as building an irrigation system for farming the land. Trueheart died on November 30, 1882. In 1910, C.A. Goeth, a well-known San Antonio attorney and civic leader, bought the Trueheart Ranch and house, and, appreciating its history, had it designated as an early local Texas landmark in 1924 while conserving the Trueheart ranch and ranch house. His son, Fred C. Goeth, also in law practice with his father, bought the ranch land containing the house and had it placed in the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1936. In 1956, the San Antonio Conservation Society recognized the Goeth family for their role in preserving the historic home by honoring the family with a Building Award. In 2010 the San Antonio Conservation Society obtained a Preservation and

Conservation Easement on portions of the property containing the house, the outbuildings and the stone archway.

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