

JAMES L. TRUEHEART RANCH - GOETH RANCH COMPLEX

14984 Blue Wing Road, San Antonio, Texas

The James L. Trueheart Ranch Complex, also known as the Trueheart-De La Garza Property, Casa Vieja, the Berry Ranch, or the Goeth Ranch has been recognized on the local, statewide and national levels for its significance as a historic farm and ranch in association with agriculture and conservation, a cultural landscape and as important vernacular architecture in the mid-19th century. Just as significant is its association with important historical persons such as James L. Trueheart and his father-in-law, Jose Antonio De La Garza, who were key figures in the history of the property, as well as members of the Goeth family, owners of the property during the early 20th century.

In 1924 the Texas Historic Landmark Association and the Adina De Zavala Chapter of the Daughters and Descendants of the Heroes and Pioneers of the Republic of Texas recognized the property as Casa Vieja, and awarded a plaque for the building. The plaque is placed on the south side of the house. (*San Antonio Light*, 12 Oct. 1924, "Tablet Marks Site of Trueheart Home". *San Antonio Express*, 12 Oct. 1924 "Ranch House of '48 Marked". Also see photo accompanying the Exhibit)

In 1936, the key structures on the property were documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey. The drawings, photos and descriptions are part of the permanent collection with the Library of Congress. This designation included the house, the irrigation system and kilns located on the property. (HABS No. Tex 323, Tex 324; <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?q=Casa%20Vieja&co=hh>; Also see photos accompanying this Exhibit.)

In 1956, the San Antonio Conservation Society honored Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Goeth with a Building Award for their role in preserving the historic Trueheart home.

In 1973, the property was listed on the Bexar County Historic Survey sponsored by the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) and Bexar County. This documentation was subsequently updated by the Historic Farm and Ranch Committee of the San Antonio Conservation Society.

In 2010, a National Register Nomination was submitted. However, it was not accepted by the Texas Historical Commission.

Also In 2010, the San Antonio Conservation Society obtained a Conservation and Preservation Easement on 2 tracts of the property: 1) a 5.036 acres parcel and 2) a 0.409 acre parcel. (BCDR: Vol 14547, p.379. The Easement includes protection for the Trueheart-De La Garza House, the Bunkhouse building, the brick smokehouse/kitchen and storage house, the brick utility building and the arched stone bridge. The arched stone bridge is on the 0.049 acre parcel.

The 2 story stone house, built by James L. Trueheart for his bride, Petra Margarita de la Garza, was said to be the first 2 story rock house built on a Texas ranch. It is situated on land formerly owned by Antonio de la Garza, who obtained a grant of over 8,800 acres from the King of Spain. (*San Antonio Express*, 12 Oct. 1924 "Ranch House of '48 Marked".)

James L. Trueheart (1815-1882) was born in Richmond, Henrico County, VA to George Washington Trueheart and Fanny Overton Trueheart. James Trueheart arrived in Texas in 1838 and by 1841 had been elected Clerk of the District Court in Bexar County. After being taken prisoner in 1842 by General Adrian Woll and being incarcerated for 2 years in the state of Puebla, Mexico, Trueheart escaped and returned to Texas in 1844. He was appointed on May 22, 1846 as a U.S. Postmaster and elected county tax assessor and collector in October 1846. By September 1848, he was again acting as district clerk in Bexar County. While imprisoned, Trueheart kept a diary, *The Perote Prisoner, Being the Diary of James Trueheart* which was subsequently published in 1934 edited by Frederick C. Chabot.

It is unknown to what extent Trueheart and his wife, Margarita, lived on the ranch as the San Antonio City Directories indicate that they had a residence on Travis Street between St. Mary's and Navarro. Like many successful families, the Truehearts also had a ranch. It has been reported that Trueheart placed tenants on the ranch land who engaged in farming activities. Extensive searching of Bexar County tax records have not revealed any significant livestock on the property during the Trueheart ownership so it is assumed that various crops were probably grown. In an 1860 census report, Trueheart gave his occupation as "farmer." Trueheart was also known to be a successful land and real estate agent. Advertisements in the *San Antonio Daily Express* for 1879, showed advertisements on a weekly basis listing the numerous properties offered for sale by Trueheart.

With the death of Margarita de la Garza Trueheart in 1899, the 272 ½ acres of the Trueheart property was sold in 1902 to pay the debts of Mrs. Trueheart. The purchasers were four men (Emerson Hough, C.A. Goeth, General Oscar Guessaz and Rollan Heikes) who established the San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association for the purpose of developing a "Sportsman's Paradise." After this venture was unsuccessful, the association sold the property to C.A. Goeth in 1910.

The Goeth family retained the ranch for over fifty years and during this time developed Hereford cattle and bulls as well as an extensive pecan grove. The Goeth family, who were prominent attorneys and well-known in civic and social organizations in San Antonio, utilized the ranch property for numerous social and educational events. They initiated activities to have the ranch home recognized as a valuable historic property.

It has also been reported that Emerson Hough, an author, stayed at the ranch when he wrote part of his novel, "North of '36" dealing with the overland cattle route to Abilene, Kansas. (*San Antonio Light*, 28 Sept. 1924, "Trueheart Home Will be Marked.")

After several additional changes in ownership, on January 10, 1996, the Bexar Metropolitan Water District became the owner of the property and in January 2015, the San Antonio River Authority acquired the Trueheart-De la Garza house and associated structures.

Please see "The Trueheart - de la Garza House and Ranch; the Goeth Ranch of Bexar County, Texas for additional information on the history of the Trueheart-De La Garza families and the Goeth families and their association with the Trueheart -Goeth ranch. The document is divided into three parts with part 1 focusing on the Trueheart family, part 2 focusing on the Goeth family and part 3 being the architectural descriptions of the Trueheart-de la Garza house.

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