

ROOS FARMSTEAD
875 Boot Ranch Circle
Fredericksburg vicinity
Gillespie County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3531

BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
INTERMOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
Denver, CO 80228-2838

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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A. Elizabeth Butman, photographer, January 2008

TX-3531-1	VIEW TO NORTHEAST, ROOS HOUSE, LIMESTONE SECONDARY DWELLING, AND LANDSCAPE
TX-3531-2	VIEW TO NORTHEAST, ROOS HOUSE AND LIMESTONE SECONDARY DWELLING
TX-3531-3	VIEW TO SOUTHWEST, LOG OUTBUILDING AND LIMESTONE SECONDARY DWELLING
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROOS FARMSTEAD

HABS No. TX-3531

Location: 875 Boot Ranch Circle
Fredericksburg vicinity, Gillespie County, Texas

Present Owner: Boot Ranch

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Roos farmstead, located on the bank of Palo Alto Creek, housed two generations of the Roos family and contains a 1 ½- story limestone house, a small limestone secondary dwelling, a log outbuilding that functioned as a barn and also as a dwelling during its history, and a small family cemetery. The limestone house is architecturally significant as an outstanding, exceptionally intact example of a modest immigrant farmhouse, fast disappearing from the landscape. It is also significant for its historic associations with exploration and settlement of Central Texas in the mid-19th century and for its expression of German culture. The Roos family settled in what was then called the Palo Alto community with other German immigrants, most of whom were farmers. Several stone masons in the community likely helped build the house.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: house—ca. 1853; outbuildings—ca. 1850s
2. Architect: None
3. Original and subsequent owners: Heinrich and Katharina Roos; (deeds)
4. Builders, contractors, suppliers: Not known; likely stone mason(s) from the Palo Alto community.
5. Original plans and construction: Not known
6. Alterations and additions: House—Shed-roofed rear addition, ca. 1870; shed-roofed side addition, ca. 1940. Outbuildings—the limestone secondary dwelling has a shed-roofed side addition, and the log outbuilding does not have an addition. All buildings had their roofs replaced with metal.

B. Historical Context:

Introduction

The Heinrich and Katharina Roos buildings and the Metzger house can best be understood in the context of German immigration and acculturation in Central Texas from the mid-19th to the early 20th century. The log and stone block buildings reflect German immigrant housing trends from their first appearance in the Hill Country to their gradual adoption of American construction types and methods by the late 19th century.

Germans in the Texas Hill Country

German emigration to Texas began as early as 1831 when Johann Friedrich Ernst, a professional gardener in northwestern Germany, received a 4,000-acre land grant in what is now Austin County. Ernst wrote a series of promotional letters to his friends in Germany to encourage them to join him in the new land. He stressed the warm climate, rich soil, and availability of large tracts of land—an attractive prospect for farmers cramped in the overpopulated early 19th century German countryside. Word of mouth led to a steady flow of German immigration in the 1830s and by 1840, a group of minor noblemen, inspired by Ernst's glowing letters about his new home, seized upon the idea to colonize Texas. They hoped to enrich themselves as land agents while relieving the population problem in rural Germany. Called the Adelsverein, or the German Emigration Company, the would-be colonizers were largely responsible for the introduction of more than 7,000 Germans into Texas between 1844 and 1847. While many of the immigrants stayed in the port city of Galveston, others traveled inland to San Antonio and to the western end of the "German Belt", including New Braunfels and Fredericksburg, both towns founded by the Adelsverein (Jordan, Handbook of Texas online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/GG/pnmg2.html>).

Most of the immigrants at that time came from west central Germany, including the principalities of Nassau, Hanover, Brunswick, and Hesse, where the nobles had focused their recruitment efforts. One of the leaders of the Adelsverein, John O. Meusebach, brought immigrants from thirty-four villages in his home county, the Dillkreis in Nassau. Few of these early immigrants left Germany because of abject poverty; indeed, they managed to find the substantial amount of money for passage and

settlement in the new land. Cultural geographer Terry Jordan has characterized these recruits as “solid, middle-class peasants”. Many owned small farms in Germany while others were craftsmen, carpenters and masons. A handful were disaffected intellectuals who left their home country in response to political and social ills. Only a few were professionals such as doctors and teachers (Jordan, Handbook of Texas online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/GG/pnmg2.html>). As a whole, they sought land, economic opportunities, and freedom to follow their beliefs in Texas.

Organized emigration companies ceased by 1850, possibly due to the German revolutions of 1848. However, German immigration to Texas continued through the 1850s and by 1860, more than 20,000 Germans had made Texas home. Much of the settlement was due to “chain immigration” in which early settlers influenced further emigration from the old country through letters and word of mouth. Extended families emigrated and some German villages were depopulated in this way. Immigration came to a halt during the Civil War when Federal troops blockaded southern ports, but it resumed resoundingly after the war. Between 1865 to the early 1890s, Germans poured into Texas, with about 40,000 German-born residents by U. S. Census of 1890. Most settled in the rural areas and towns of the German Belt but postbellum immigrants tended to avoid the Hill Country (Jordan, Handbook of Texas online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/GG/pnmg2.html>), possibly because the land wasn’t conducive to cotton farming, a crop that was growing in strength in the blackland prairie.

Although they shared a common language and history, German immigration in Texas nevertheless reflected the diversity of political and religious beliefs, dialects, and customs found in the different regions of Germany at that time. Lutherans, Catholics, Methodists, and even intellectual atheists, all with their own beliefs, customs and rituals – or lack thereof -- contributed to the settlement of the Texas Hill Country. Despite their differences, they followed common building traditions such as half-timber and stone, known as *fachwerk*, rock fences, and Gothic churches. The rural landscape of the Hill Country is dotted with neat farmsteads featuring compact building complexes including *fachwerk* dwellings, barns, spring houses, and smoke houses.

German communities throughout the Hill Country remained relatively isolated through much of the 19th century, and, as a result, their people retained much of their native culture including language, food, dance, music, and other customs. Second and third generation Germans, however, began to assimilate into the larger culture in the 20th century immigration to rural areas declined and non-Germans began to make inroads into the Hill Country. Public education led to the slow demise of the German language among younger people; families still spoke German at home well into the 20th century, but English increasingly became the language of education and business. Two world wars with Germany in the first half of the 20th century sparked a prejudice against all things German. The German language quickly disappeared in the cities and more slowly in rural regions and Hill Country towns like Fredericksburg. In some communities two church services were given: one in German for the older congregants and one in English, for the younger generation. Eventually, as the older folks passed on, German services were discontinued altogether. After World War II, German language newspapers in Texas shut down altogether (Jordan, Handbook of Texas online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/GG/pnmg2.html>).

Despite widespread acculturation in the postwar era, historically German communities continue to exist throughout the so-called German Belt and especially in the Hill Country where descendants of early settlers celebrate their heritage with distinctively German food, drink, and festivals. Towns like New Braunfels, Boerne, Comfort and Fredericksburg, attract tourists who eat bratwurst and German pastries, drink dark German beer, and participate in Oktoberfest celebrations. They also visit house museums that still stand in tribute to the early German settlers who built their homes and barns with available materials – typically timbers and stone – using methods and craftsmanship brought with them from their native Germany. Fredericksburg, in particular, is a showcase for *fachwerk* and other stone buildings erected by German settlers and their descendants.

Fredericksburg

Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, lies about 70 miles west of Austin in the rocky region known as the Texas Hill Country. It was founded as one of a series of German

settlements planned by the Adelsverein to extend from the Gulf coast to the Llano River. In August 1845, John O. Meusebach set out from the town of New Braunfels – the first in this projected chain of settlements – to conduct a survey for the second site. Meusebach selected a tract of land about sixty miles northwest of New Braunfels where two creeks, later named Barons Creek (for Meusebach) and Town Creek. He chose the site for its good water and abundance of stone and timber for building materials (Kohout <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/hff3.html>).

The following spring, the first group of 120 settlers, protected by eight guards, left New Braunfels for the new site. On May 8, 1846, after sixteen days on the trail, the ox cart wagon train arrived on Town Creek where the settlers erected temporary dwellings of brush covered with sheets (Gold 1981: 10). Some built palisado-type shelters of vertical post oak timbers stuck in the ground, chinked with stone and mud and covered with thatch like Mexican *jacales*. As late as July 1846, virtually all of the settlers remained in the encampment ”(*Pioneers in God’s Hills*, Vol. I: 250). By the time a second wagon train arrived that summer, the first settlers had planted gardens (Mahon 1996: 19).

The year the immigrants arrived in present Fredericksburg, the United States went to war against Mexico and supplies were diverted to the front. Food sources dwindled and many succumbed to a disease attributed to cholera or dysentery. Entire families died in their mud huts and by November 1846, more than ninety were buried in a makeshift cemetery before they could realize their dreams in the new land (Gold 1981: 10). Despite disease and privation in the Fredericksburg colony, immigrant trains continued to bring new families to the struggling community.

In 1847, Meusebach won a treaty with the Comanche Indians so that the settlers in present Gillespie County could live in peace without fear of capture or death. That same year the immigrants were granted the first lots “of the wilderness”(*Pioneers in God’s Hills*, Vol. I: 250). Surveyor Hermann Wilke modeled the town on villages along the Rhine where many of the German settlers had lived (Kohout <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/hff3.html>). It had one long, wide main street named San Saba Straße¹ (now Main Street) running parallel to Town Creek

¹ Immigrants hoped to follow the street west to a San Saba grant one day.

with long blocks divided into 100' x 200' lots. Meusebach called the town Fredericksburg after Prince Frederick of Prussia, an important member and supporter of the Adelsverein. According to some sources, heads of households and single men participated in a lottery for lots before they left Germany. In 1847, the Gillespie County deed records (Volume D) indicated that more than 600 settlers had been assigned a town lot and a ten-acre outlying plot (*Pioneers in God's Hills*, Vol. I: 250).

Immigrants continued to arrive throughout the summer and within two years of its founding, Fredericksburg had grown into a town of nearly 1,000 residents. The increased population warranted the formal organization of Gillespie County with Fredericksburg as the county seat. During this time, the settlers busied themselves with building more permanent *fachwerk* dwellings, planting corn, and constructing storage buildings for their goods. Other improvements included a wagon road to Austin and a treaty with the Comanches that effectively protected them from attack. At the same time, settlers built the Vereins-Kirche which served as a community church, school, fortress, and hall for fifty years (Kohout <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/hff3.html>).

Religion played an important role in the settlers' lives. Most of the original colonists adhered to the Evangelical Protestant faith but Lutherans, Methodists and Catholics were represented in the town, as well. At first, people of all faiths gathered in the Vereins-Kirche to worship but about 1848, the Catholics and Methodists left the community congregation to build their own churches. In 1852, a faction split off to form Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church led by Rev. Philip F. Zizelman. Theirs was the first Lutheran Church in the Hill Country. School was held in private homes until 1856 when the first public school and the first official Catholic school were established (Kohout <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/hff3.html>).

Though most Fredericksburg area settlers engaged in farming to some degree, mercantile opportunities arose soon after the colonists arrived. When the U.S. Government built Fort Martin Scott two miles west of Fredericksburg in 1848, farmers and merchants earned cash selling meat and produce, as well as whiskey and trade goods, to the soldiers. The following year, 1849, saw an increase of travelers through Fredericksburg on their way to the gold fields of California. Again, Fredericksburg merchants enriched their coffers by selling food and supplies to would-be gold miners.

These happenstances established Fredericksburg's reputation as a trade center in the Hill Country.

By this time, numerous *fachwerk* houses had sprung up on the assigned lots along Fredericksburg's streets. While still in Germany, many of the immigrants had seen plans for building log houses in America. By and large, however, they eschewed the pioneer log building for the more familiar stone and timber *fachwerk* house. German settlers built a frame of post oak half timbers and filled the spaces in between with stone. To finish the building, they typically plastered both the exterior and interior walls, leaving the half-timbering exposed. Cypress shingles covered the roof and sometimes the sides of the building to protect it from weathering. There was sufficient limestone in and around Fredericksburg, and plentiful cypress along the creeks, to build an entire town in this manner. Lumber for windows, doors, and flooring was originally obtained from the Mormon mill on the Pedernales (Mahon 1996: 48).

These houses were generally a story and a half with one or two rooms under a side-gabled roof and a rear, shed-roofed lean-to addition. The front rooms served as living quarters and public meeting space (hall and parlor), while the lean-to typically held the kitchen. Sometimes a separate stone kitchen was erected to the rear of the main building to remove heat and danger of fire from the living quarters. A swept yard prevented grass fires and provided space for laundry and outdoor dining. An exterior stair led to the upper half-floor where children often slept. Attached front porches may have been added later when the settlers realized the full effects of the Texas sun. Over the years, as families grew and multiple generations occupied the house, wings and rooms were often added behind the original dwelling.

Pioneer Settlement in the 1840s and 1850s

Despite the hardships they had already encountered and the difficulty they found in trying to cultivate the rocky land in and around Fredericksburg, most German settlers were determined to make their lives as farmers. The Metzgers and Treibs' were among the earliest, if not the first, families to move to the area that came to be known as the Palo Alto settlement, named for Palo Alto creek, north of Fredericksburg. Most of the early Fredericksburg households owned both town lots and farm lots and some may have

owned farms in the vicinity, but few actually lived in the country in the 1840s. By 1850, several families had moved to the country north of Fredericksburg, including the Frederick and John Metzger families and the Gottfried Treibs family (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1850).

By 1860, Fredericksburg was a well-established Hill Country town with many amenities including platted streets, schools, churches, a bustling commercial district and residential communities. A variety of occupations were represented including retail merchants, professionals such as teachers and ministers, and skilled laborers including stone masons, cabinet makers, wheelwrights, and gardeners. Many farmers lived within the town limits and rode wagons to their nearby fields during the day. Newcomers and second-generation immigrants who wanted their own farms had to move further from the town core – so far that it was impractical to live in town and travel to the farm every day and return every night. Thus Fredericksburg’s success spawned numerous rural satellite communities in the decades following settlement, among them Palo Alto.

Palo Alto Settlement

By 1870, Palo Alto Settlement had become a sizeable community with its own census tract. The U. S. Census for that year shows approximately 39 separate households, the great majority of them headed by a farmer who owned his own land. Other primary occupations were teacher (one), butcher (one), stone mason (one), and farm laborer (one). Virtually all of the married women were shown to be “keeping house” (U.S. Census, 1870). The lack of “merchants” and “tradesmen” in the census record reinforces Palo Alto as an exclusively farming community with no mercantile businesses whatsoever. The only non-agricultural occupations – the teacher, butcher, and stone mason – directly served the farming community. Most likely, these families traveled to nearby Fredericksburg to buy dry goods and farm equipment.

Nearly all the adults in the community were born in one or another of the German principalities with Prussia (23 adults), Hanover (14 adults), and Nassau (11 adults) being well-represented. Eight adults hailed from Wurtenburg, two from “Hessia” and one from Brunswick. In addition, one resident was born in Switzerland (the teacher), one in Denmark, and only one in America (Ohio). A majority of the children, however, were

born in Texas, indicating that their parents had been German immigrants who moved to Texas as fairly young people who started their families after they moved to the state (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1870).

Thirty-six of the 39 household owned real estate; a remarkable figure when compared to other regions of the state at that time. Fourteen householders considered their land to be worth between \$200-\$500; fourteen valued their land between \$500-\$1,000; seven owned property worth between \$1,000-\$2000, and one family owned land worth \$3,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1870). Price differences probably had to do with the size of the farm, the nature of its improvements, and its productivity.

Biographical Information – Heinrich Roos

Between 1850 and 1860, Heinrich Roos and his wife Katharina were among the relative newcomers who moved to the Palo Alto settlement and established a farm near the Metzgers. The couple and at least three children had emigrated from Prussia in 1853

In 1860, Henry Roos² was listed in the census as a 50-year old farmer from Prussia. He was married to Catherine, 54, and had three children in the household: Carl, 16, Catherine, 12, and Frederick, 8. A 22-year old farmer Henry Roos lived on the same piece of property but lived in his own house. The younger Henry was probably the son of Henry and Catherine. An unoccupied dwelling lay on or near the property (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1860).

On September 30, 1857, Heinrich Roos received a preemption certificate for 160 acres of the H. Roos Survey (No. 311)(Deed records H: 121). The land had been patented to Heinrich Roos, Jr. and was directly north of another 160 acres out of the H. Roos Survey (No. 293) (Deed records H: 120). A year later, Heinrich Sr. and wife Katharina deeded their survey No. 293 to their two youngest sons, Karl and Friedrich. It was a conditional gift in which Heinrich and Katharina retained 20 acres of land in cultivation, with houses and improvements, for the duration of their lives. Furthermore, the sons were to assist in preparing and fencing the field. This October 26, 1861 record indicates that there was more than one house on the original homestead, possibly the log house and the larger stone dwelling (Deed records H: 119).

² The census record shows the name as “Ross”.

The 1870 census shows Heinrich Roos, age 63, and wife Katharina, age 65, living in the Palo Alto settlement with their son, Friedrich. In 1880, Katharina, the mother, died and was buried in the Roos family cemetery. That year her daughter Katharine, age 30, returned home, possibly to care for Heinrich Sr.; other records note that she was divorced. Father and daughter lived on a tract adjacent to Friedrich, age 27 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1870-1880).

A deed from Heinrich Roos, Sr. and wife Catharine to Heinrich Roos, Jr. in 1873 gave the portion of both surveys south of Palo Alto Creek to their son. Heinrich and Catharine retained eight acres of land in cultivation and stipulated that the log house on the premises, “previously used as a stable” was to remain the dwelling of their daughter Catharine. Numerous deed transactions ultimately passed the land to Freidrich “Fritz” Roos who owned all the land in the Heinrich Roos, Sr. and Jr. surveys by November 8, 1900 (Deed records 7:522-523). Several deed transactions occurred between “Fritz” Roos and his son Charles occurred between 1900 and 1917.

In 1918, Fritz and his wife Martha sold the remaining land including the Roos stone house, log house, stone outbuilding, cemetery and all creek frontage to their son Charles (Deed records 25:L 367-368). When Charles and his wife Clara sold the 244 acre parcel containing the homestead to John Stehling in 1929, the property passed out of the Roos family forever (Deed records 40: 329-330).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The farmstead consists of three extant historic buildings situated on a slight rise above the bank of Palo Alto Creek. The three buildings are clustered closely together, and all are in fair to good condition, with good integrity. Across the creek and up a small hill is the Roos Cemetery, originally part of the farmstead.

1. Architectural character: Together, the three historic buildings strongly convey a sense of history. The house and stone secondary dwelling display German-immigrant craftsmanship and regional vernacular style.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair to good. The two stone buildings are structurally stable, with damage to windows and wood trim. The log outbuilding is in fair condition with chinking missing in several locations, and minor wood and structural damage. The cemetery has been restored and is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

See the following pages for descriptions of each individual building. Sheet TX-3531-A describes the house, TX-3531-B the secondary dwelling, TX-3531-C the log outbuilding, and TX-3531-D the cemetery.

C. Description of Interior:

See the following pages for descriptions of each individual building. Sheet TX-3531-A describes the house, TX-3531-B the secondary dwelling, TX-3531-C the log outbuilding, and TX-3531-D the cemetery.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south and is sited on a rise west of Palo Alto Creek. Between the house and creek bank are a small limestone outbuilding and log cabin, both of which are situated very near the house. A well adjacent to the limestone building has been filled. Further north are a ca. 1920s frame privy and the ruins of two ca. 1940 metal-clad garages. The eastern perimeter of the homestead is defined by mesquite fencing.
2. Historic landscape design: The area surrounding the house is clear grassland with a number of substantial live oak and hackberry trees clustered among the buildings and along the slope to the creek. The creek is shallow and clear.
3. Outbuildings: The limestone outbuilding appears contemporaneous with the house, and the log cabin also dates to the mid-19th century based on deed information.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Gillespie County deed records

Gillespie County Historical Society, *Pioneers in God's Hills* v. 1

Glynn Treibs interview with Terri Myers, February 23, 2008

U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900

Terry G. Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil*, 1966

Glen E. Lich, *The German Texans*, 1996.

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