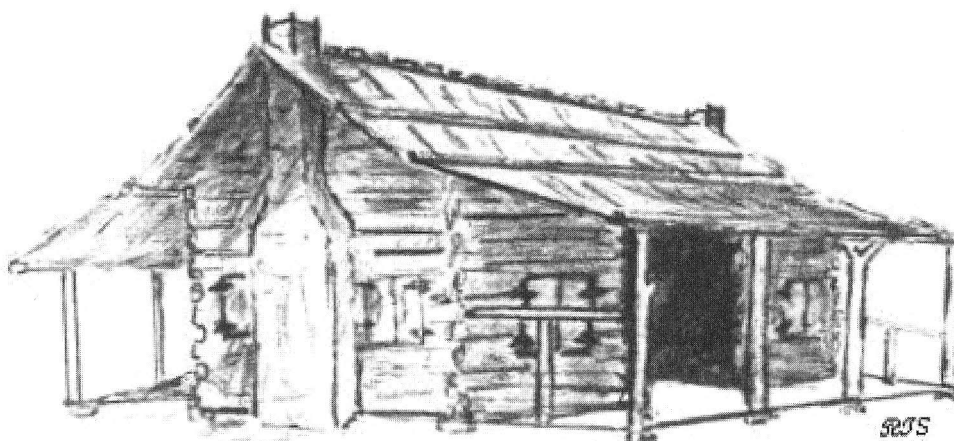


The Elizabeth Powell Site (41FB269)

Fort Bend County, Texas



**Houston Archeological Society
Report No. 25, Part 1
April, 2007**

The Elizabeth Powell Site (41FB269)

Fort Bend County, Texas

**Houston Archeological Society
Report No. 25, Part 1
April, 2007**

Part 1 Authors:
Elizabeth K. Aucoin
Pablo R. Castro
Sheldon M. Kindall
Robert T. Shelby

Editors:
Elizabeth K. Aucoin
Linda L. Swift



© Houston Archeological Society, April, 2007
Second printing January, 2008

Cover Illustration: A Typical Dogtrot Log House, by Robert T. Shelby

Dedication

This document, HAS Report No. 25, including all its parts, is dedicated to the memory of those members of the Houston Archeological Society who are no longer with us who contributed their time, talent and resources, in varying degrees, to help make the Elizabeth Powell project possible. These individuals include Frank Brezik Jr., Richey Ebersole, Bill McClure, Don McReynolds, Mary K Merriman, Bernard Naman, David Pettus, and Dudgeon Walker.

Acknowledgements

HAS acknowledges Lise Darst, landowner extraordinaire, who allowed access to the site over a 6-year period, as well as Joe Hudgins, who maintained landowner communication and arranged for access when needed, and last but certainly not least, Sheldon Kindall, who served as field site supervisor.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Environmental Setting and Site Geology	3
Chapter 3: Methodology	7
Chapter 4: Historical Summary and Biographical Information	11
Chapter 5: Log Houses in Early Texas	27

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Historic site marker	2
Figure 2.1: Approximate location of Mrs. Powell's place ca. 1836	4
Figure 2.2: Site contour map	5
Figure 3.1: West section site map	8
Figure 3.2: East section site map	9
Figure 4.1: C. Wharton and H. Darst photo	11
Figure 4.2: Borden Survey of the Elizabeth Powell league	15
Figure 4.3: Elizabeth Powell petition for war claim reimbursement	17
Figure 5.1: Dogtrot log house	27
Figure 5.2: Floor plan of dogtrot cabin	28

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Elizabeth Powell Site

By Elizabeth K. Aucoin

In 1936, as part of the Texas Centennial Celebration, the State of Texas erected an historic marker (Figure 1.1) on the grounds of the Elizabeth Powell homestead. The inscription on the marker indicates that Mrs. Powell “built [her home] sometime before March 21, 1831”, placing it near the banks of Turkey Creek in what is now Fort Bend County, Texas. The Powell home has been referred to as Mrs. Powell’s Tavern, Mrs. Powell’s place, and Madam Powell’s. The homestead later became a significant landmark due to the 1836 Texas campaign for independence.

Historic documents relate that the Mexican Army, under the command of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, stopped at the Powell property during its march from San Felipe de Austin (Moore 2004: 187). On April 25, 1836 several groups of the Mexican Army, under the command of Generals Vicente Filisola, Jose Urrea, Antonio Gaona, Joaquin Ramirez y Sesma, Adrian Woll, and Colonel Pedro Ampudia met at the Powell place for a council of war after Mexican forces were defeated and Santa Anna’s subsequent capture at San Jacinto (Castaneda 1971: 182-184, 247). The Battle of San Jacinto took place on April 21, 1836; Santa Anna was captured on the following day, April 22nd.

The Powell site was known to Joe Hudgins and other members of the Houston Archeological Society for a number of years prior to a decision by the society to begin searching for the actual location of the Powell house. The site (Mrs. Powell’s place) was reported/recorded by

Joe Hudgins in November 1998 and was designated as 41FB269 by the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory. The numeric 41 is for Texas; FB is for Fort Bend County, and 269 represents the site as being the 269th site recorded in the county. It was hoped that investigations would confirm the location of the house on this site, and it was through the courtesy of the landowner, Lise Darst, that this project was begun. During 1999, members of the society began investigations and excavations at the Elizabeth Powell site. A field school was held with participation from Houston, Fort Bend, and Brazosport Archaeological Society members, as well as students from the University of St. Thomas under the direction of Rev. Edward Bader, C.S.B., students from classes at the Houston Museum of Natural Science under the guidance of Pam Wheat, Boy Scout troops, and other interested individuals. Additional fieldwork continued during 2000.

Fieldwork at the site was completed during 2000; lab work on those artifacts was completed in 2002, and initial analysis of the artifacts recovered was begun. The site was revisited in 2004 and 2005 when additional mapping work was completed, a few additional units were excavated, and metal detector/shovel tests were done. In-depth analysis of the artifacts has been a work-in-progress since 2002. Initial work on report preparation by several society members was begun in 2004.

The following four articles are the first in a series of articles scheduled for publication in reports of the Houston Archeological Society.

Subsequent articles will record members' research on beads, buttons, ceramics, coins, faunal material, glass, militaria (items associated with guns and gun parts, gunflints and ammunition,

and uniform accessories), miscellaneous metal artifacts, and nails, as well as lithics and prehistoric pottery.

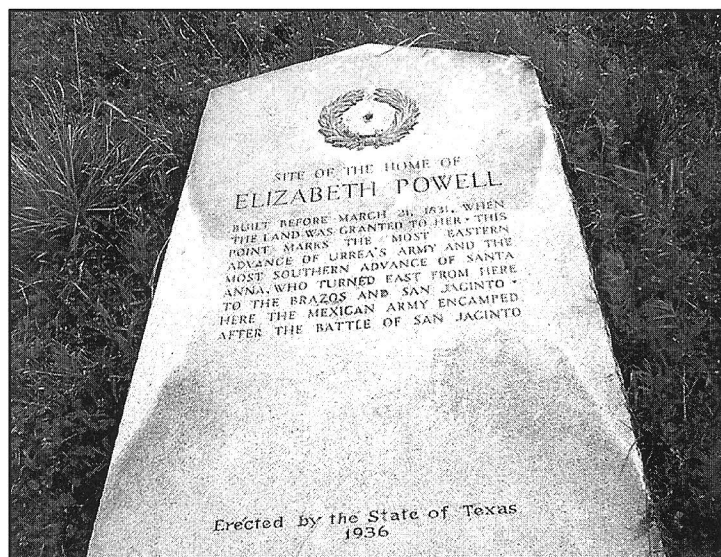


Photo courtesy Elizabeth Aucoin

The marker inscription reads: *Site of the home of ELIZABETH POWELL built before March 21, 1831, when the land was granted to her. This point marks the most eastern advance of Urrea's army and the most southern advance of Santa Anna, who turned east from here to the Brazos and San Jacinto. Here the Mexican Army encamped after the Battle of San Jacinto. Erected by the State of Texas 1936*

Figure 1.1: 1936 State of Texas marker

References:

Castaneda, C. E. (trans. and ed.)

1971 *The Mexican Side of the Texan Revolution* [1836] by the Chief Mexican.

Participants: General Antonio Lopez de Santa-Anna, D. Ramon Martinez Caro (Secretary to Santa-Anna), General Vicente Filisola, General Jose Urrea, General Jose Maria Tornel Secretary of War). Documentary Publications, Washington, D. C.

Moore, S. E.

2004 *Eighteen Minutes: The Battle of San Jacinto and the Texas Independence Campaign*. Republic of Texas Press, Austin, Texas.

Chapter 2 Environmental Setting and Site Geology

By Pablo R. Castro

Environmental Setting

This site, 41FB269, is located in the western part of inland Southeast Texas in Fort Bend County on the eastern bank of Turkey Creek. Fort Bend County is in the center of the Gulf Coastal Prairie of Texas. The geography of the general area in the early nineteenth century would have included coastal prairie and woodlands. A variety of fauna and flora would have been available for prehistoric groups. This permitted an abundant food supply for Indians of this area and for subsequent settlers. Examples of large animals would have been deer and occasionally bison. The small animals were gophers, opossum, raccoons, rats, river otters, and squirrels. Examples of flora would have been elm, cypress, oak, native grasses and wild berries. For indigenous groups, a plentiful food supply may have led to other activities, and as a result, there may have developed a greater social complexity, perhaps with structured burial and trade practices during the Late Archaic period. For Colonial-

era settlers, the area provided a fine setting with water and food resources, as well as trees for building structures (Figure 2.1).

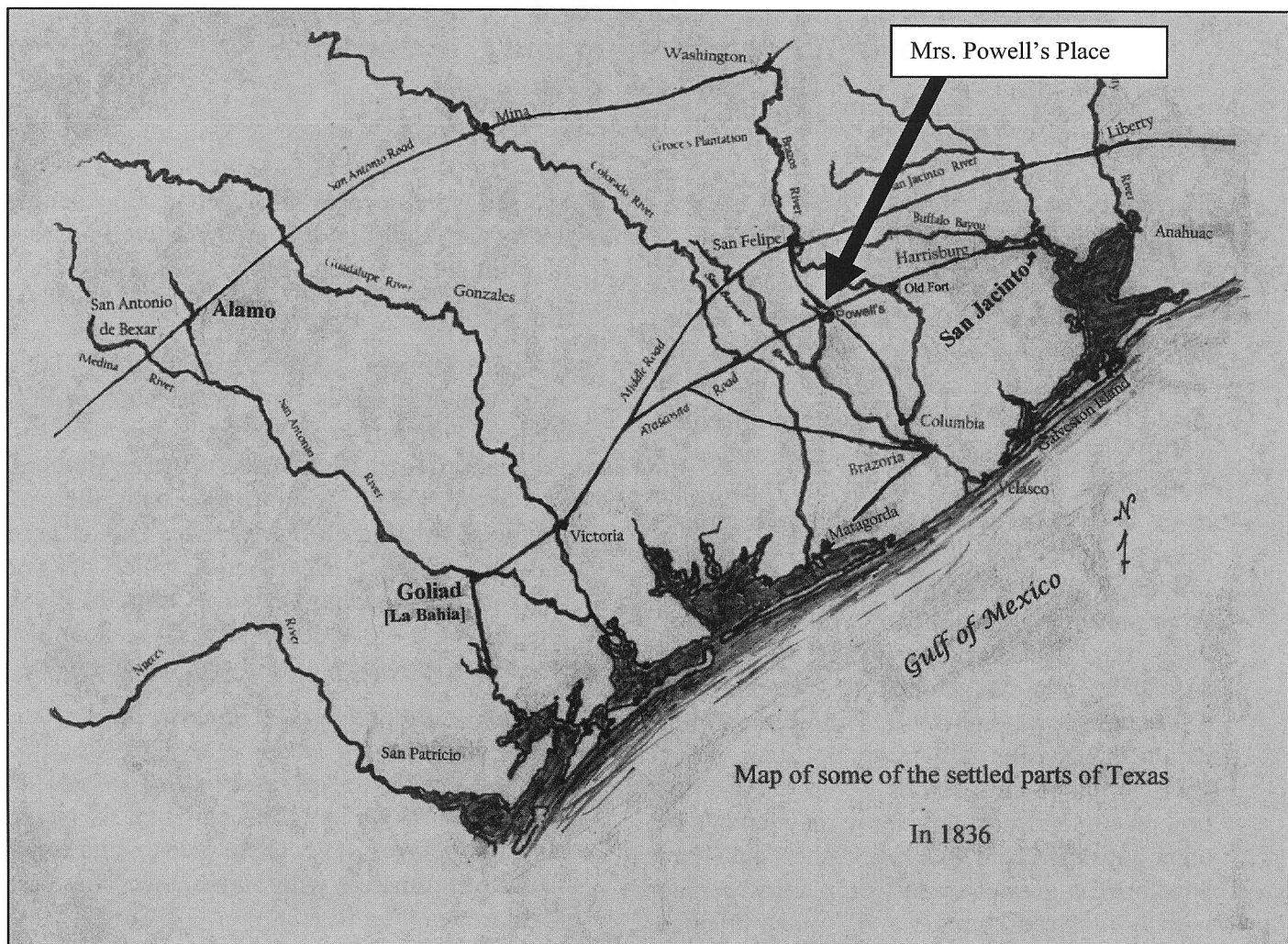
Site Geology

The formation of the area began 10,000 years ago in what is now the Beaumont Formation. One can say the classification and soil association is that of Lake Charles-Bernard. The slope ranges from 0-1%, with the soil having a dark and clayey texture. The Alluvial soils are of the Pledger Series which derived from ancient flooding from the Colorado River. The pH is 5.0-6.0 at depths of 0-24 inches. The Beaumont series is a grayish-yellowish color.

One has to take into account the sandy loam with a 1-4% slope in some areas. Also, the classification and soil association is that of Edna-Bernard-Waller. The soil type is mixed sandy and clayey soil. There is loam at a depth of 0-20 centimeters with clay below. There are slight ridges (Figure 2.2).

Reference:

Soil Survey of Fort Bend County, Texas. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. in cooperation with Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. Issued February, 1960.



Redrawn by Robert T. Shelby from S. F. Austin's 1822 and 1829 hand-drawn maps and Tanner map published by S.H. Tanner Co. of Philadelphia, 1837

Figure 2.1: Approximate Location of Mrs. Powell's Place ca. 1836

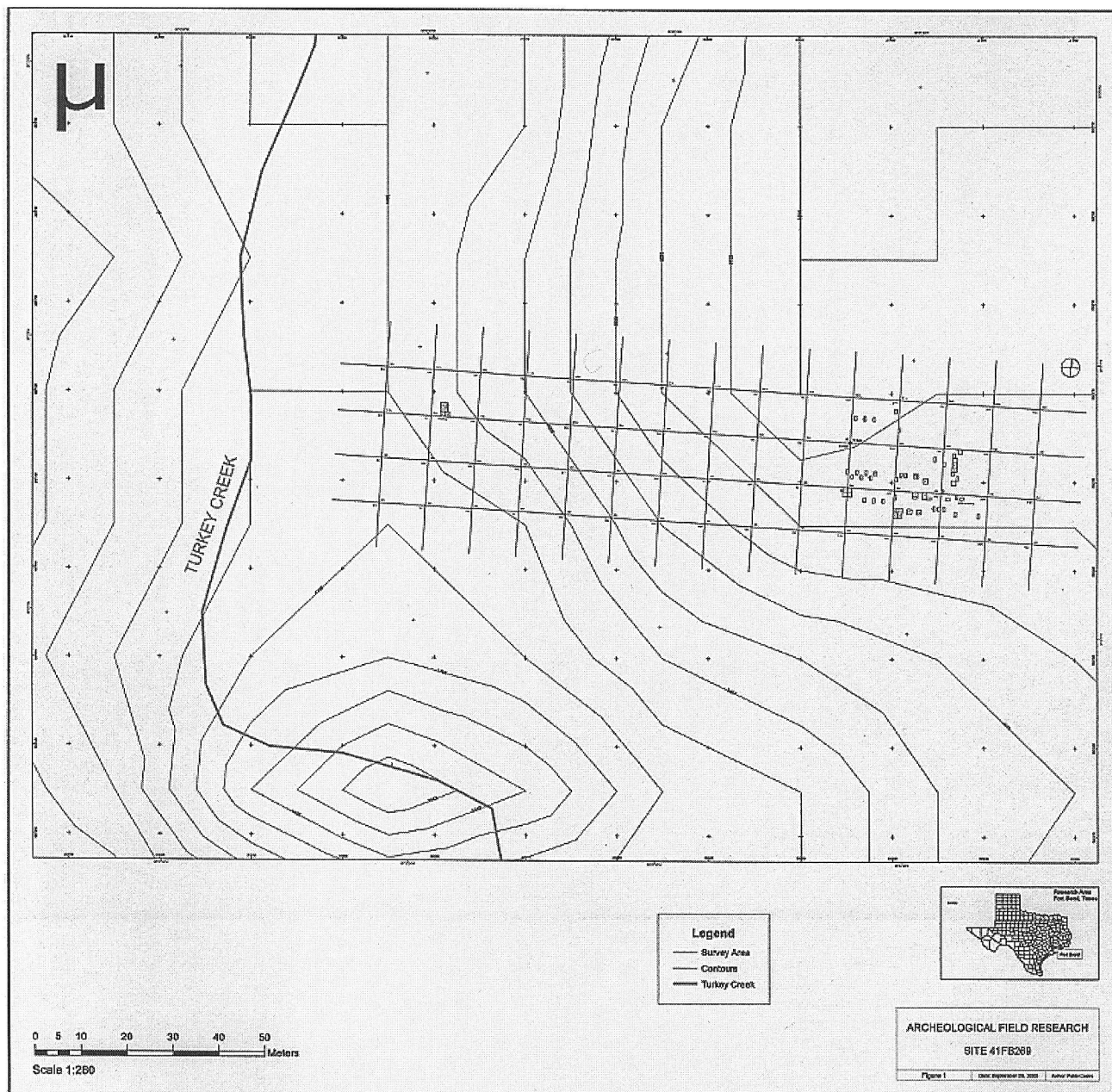


Figure 2.2: Site Contour Map

Chapter 3 Methodology

By Sheldon M. Kindall and Elizabeth K. Aucoin

This was a site where the exact location of the object of investigation, i.e., the Powell House, was not known—only its general location.

A datum was established and marked by a nail (two feet above surface) in a large Bois d'Arc tree; a metric grid was then set up and strung out in true directions so as to be readily expandable as needed. Test pits excavated one day determined where to look the next day.

Test pits were marked off as 1m x 1m pits, although a few of the pits were abbreviated in execution to only one half or one quarter of the marked-off pit. Each pit was dug in 5cm arbitrary levels, and the dirt was screened through a quarter-inch screen. All recovered artifacts were taken to the HAS lab at Rice University where they were washed, inspected (counted and weighed), and cataloged.

As the area of investigation expanded to huge dimensions, metal detection and shovel tests were used to help "home in" on the object of investigation. A site map was produced by Etta, Tom, and Jim Palmer and adapted for this report by Pablo Castro.

The initial area of investigation focused on an upland area near the historic site marker situated approximately 170 meters east of Turkey Creek. A test trench was dug, and a total of 56 units were excavated between January 1999 and October 2000. The East Section Map, Figure 3.2, covers approximately 2700 square meters. The very dark areas at the center of this map indicate bricks, possibly from a fireplace or wall fall, that were sketched and left in place.

Upon returning to the site in April 2004, it was discovered that the Bois d'Arc tree and its accompanying datum had been struck by

lightning and partially burned. The datum was reestablished and GPS readings were recorded in numerous areas across the site. Investigations were then focused down slope of the original excavations in an area closer to Turkey Creek. The excavation of four 1m x 1m pits and two 50cm x 1m pits, designated as Trash Pit #2, was begun in April 1999 and completed in September 2000. Three additional pits were excavated during 2004 and 2005. A total of nine units were excavated, and 81 metal detector/shovel tests in May 2004 were also completed. The West Section Map, Figure 3.1, also covers approximately 2700 square meters.

The area not shown on either the East or West Section Maps, and situated between those two sections, covers an additional area of approximately 2700 square meters in which no excavation was done.

Once lab work on the artifacts had been completed, the cataloged items were entered into an EXCEL spreadsheet. A total of 29,314 artifacts were recovered from the site. The following individuals undertook the task of artifact identification: Beth Aucoin, Dick Gregg, Joe Hudgins, Melissa May, Tom Nuckols, David Pettus, Sandra and Johnney Pollan, Bob Shelby, and Linda Swift. David Pettus and Beth Aucoin agreed to serve as co-editors. After the untimely passing of long-time member David Pettus, Linda Swift agreed to become co-editor. Pablo Castro undertook the adaptation of the site map originally produced by Etta, Tom and Jim Palmer, and Beth Aucoin was responsible for the spreadsheet. Additional members who spent many hours working in the lab were Pat Aucoin, Wanda and Richard Carter, Sheldon Kindall and Don McReynolds.

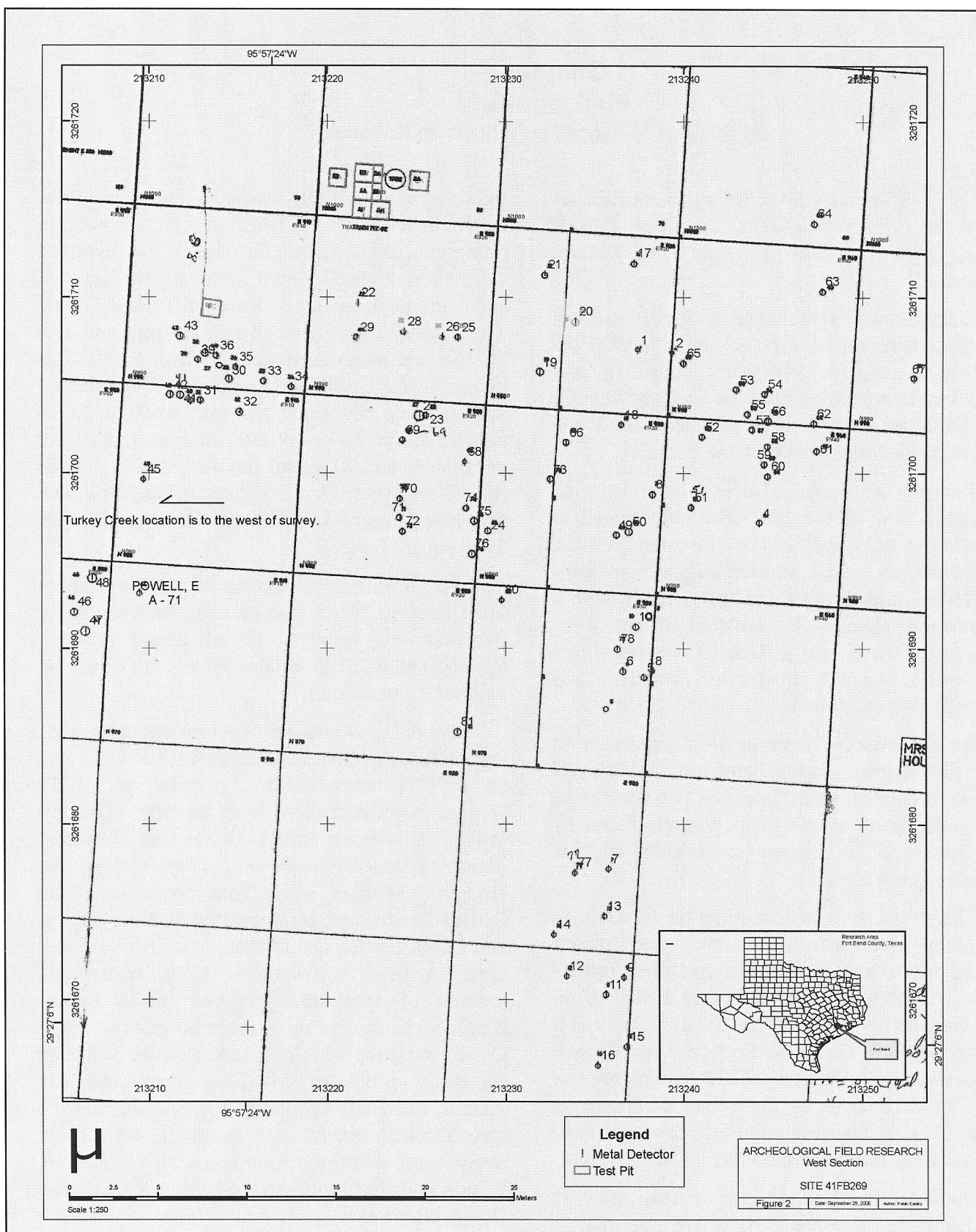


Figure 3.1: West Section Site Map

Chapter 4

Historical Summary and Biographical Information

By Robert T. Shelby

Introduction

For the 100th anniversary of independence from Mexico, the State of Texas established the Commission of Control for Centennial Celebrations to erect monuments and statues at locations of importance to the state's history up to that time. One of these was the reputed Elizabeth Powell home site where a granite marker was placed. No building existed at the site in the centennial year, 1936.

The following is a brief summary of the events leading up to and including the Mexican army's presence at the Powell site during the Texas Revolution, which was the reason for placement of the monument.

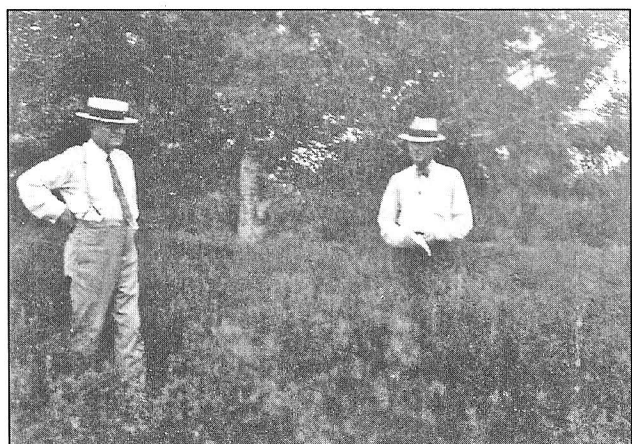


Photo courtesy of Woodson Research Center, Fondren library, Rice University

Figure 4-1: Fort Bend County historian Clarence Wharton and the landowner, Homer Darst, at the cistern at Mrs. Powell's old home site on September 8, 1935. L.W. Kemp, chairman of the board of Texas historians for the Texas Centennial, who was also present, probably took the photo.¹

Historical Summary

In the early 1800s, the expanding population of the young United States and periods of economic depression sent people westward seeking cheap land. Public land in the United States at that time was priced at \$1.25 an acre, payable in cash, often with a minimum purchase of eighty acres. Some land-hungry families, not having the purchase price, were willing to leave the U.S. to obtain land in Texas, where land was almost free. Spain, and Mexico after its independence, created several immigration schemes to lure settlers, including generous land grants. Eventually, the Mexican colonization law of 1825 allowed the head of a family to obtain 4,428.4 acres for about \$117! The Mexican law also provided that land granted in the province of Texas could not be sold to pay debts contracted by the colonists prior to immigration, nor could suits be brought for these debts for twelve years.¹

Soon Anglo-Americans were a large presence in Texas, due mostly to the work of Stephen F. Austin, who had contracted first with the Spanish and then with the Mexican governments to settle people in the province. It is estimated that the Spanish and Mexican governments granted a combined figure of 26,280,000 acres of land in Texas during the period of the 1820s and 1830s.²

When the Mexican government became worried that too many people from the U.S. were settling in Texas, they passed a law on April 6, 1830, limiting further immigration from the U.S. The Anglo settlers chafed under this law and other rules imposed by Mexico, and although the immigration law was later revoked, several violent incidents occurred in the next few years

between the colonists and Mexican officials. On March 2, 1836, after several meetings, the Anglo settlers declared independence even as open rebellion was taking place.

Several battles occurred with the Mexican armed forces in Texas, of which the main engagement was the seizure by the "Texians" (as the Anglo colonists were calling themselves) of the Alamo in San Antonio de Bexar. The president of the centralist government in Mexico, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, having acquired dictatorial power, moved north into Texas with a large force to subdue the revolt. The Mexican forces surrounded the Alamo and after thirteen days retook the old mission-turned-garrison, killing all the defenders. The victorious Santa Anna led his army east across south Texas to crush the remaining resistance.

The "Runaway Scrape," as it is known in Texas history, was the widespread panic that occurred among the Anglo populace with news of the fall of the Alamo. As hundreds of colonists abandoned their homes and fled eastward toward the safety of the U.S., the Texian army retreated slowly behind the refugees to offer some protection. Santa Anna, after finding Austin's capital town of San Felipe burned and deserted by the inhabitants, and aware that Sam Houston and what was left of the small Texian army was to his north and posed no real threat to his 4,000-man army, acted on information that the rebel government was near the coast. He divided out a command of soldiers that he thought could travel fast and with them dashed off to catch the fleeing Texian President David Burnet and his cabinet before they could escape by sea to Galveston Island.

Most of the Mexican army was left behind on the west side of the Brazos River under the second in command, General Vicente Filisola. On April 10 Santa Anna made a "...short halt at the farm of the Widow Powell, or rather a stream called Guajolote [Turkey]..." on his march eastward.³ After Santa Anna's visit,

General Jose Urrea, who had recently defeated Fannin and the U.S. volunteers at Goliad, reported that he "...encamped [at] the house of Mrs. Powell..." on the 20th before swooping down on the settlements near the coast and sacking Columbia and Brazoria.⁴ The Powell property seemingly became the hub of Mexican army operations during April of 1836.

On his march toward the coast, Santa Anna burned Harrisburg, a small settlement on Buffalo Bayou, but missed catching the rebel government by minutes as they escaped by boat. He then turned north to hunt the Texian army. In the meantime, General Sam Houston had learned that the Mexican forces had become divided, and he and his men marched toward the coast looking for the Mexicans. The two armies met on April 21, 1836, and the Texians defeated the Mexican army on the prairie near the junction of Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto River. Santa Anna was captured along with many of his men who were not slain in the battle. However, several soldiers did escape, made their way to the main army, and informed Filisola of the disaster suffered by their president-general.

Filisola sent out word to the other wings of the army to meet with him at "the dwelling-house of Madam Powell." The Mexican army began amassing at the Powell home site on the 24th for a council of war. Present on the 25th were the generals Vicente Filisola, José Urrea, Antonio Gaona, Joaquin Ramirez y Sesma, Adrian Woll, and Colonel Pedro Ampudia of the artillery, along with some 2,500 troops with about 1,500 *soldaderas* (women camp followers), boys, mule drivers, and other noncombatants. After a consultation at Madam Powell's, trying to decide whether or not to pursue the war and wondering about the fate of Santa Anna, the generals decided to fall back to the Colorado River as a defensive measure and make contact with the authorities in Mexico.⁵

On April 26 a young Mexican colonel entered these lines in his diary:

...we left Madam Powell's dwellings and our rear guard had not yet begun its march when columns of smoke were seen to rise, forerunners of the flames that were soon to consume those houses. Truly the sight of a fire is a beautiful and imposing spectacle for one who can put aside the feelings of great loss it produces.⁶

After the Mexican army marched away from the ruins of Mrs. Powell's home, word was brought to them the next day that Santa Anna was alive, had agreed to end hostilities with the Texians and had ordered the Mexican army to withdraw to Bexar (San Antonio) and Guadalupe Victoria (in Mexico).

The gathering of the Mexican army at the Powell site was one of the largest concentrations of Mexican forces during the Texas revolution, rivaling that of the siege of the Alamo. The decision of the generals not immediately to pursue the war was to have a profound effect on the future of Texas and the westward expansion of the U.S.⁷ The Mexican army's decision, made at the Powell home site, to withdraw from combat has been overshadowed in history books by the Alamo, Goliad, and San Jacinto battles.⁸ Thus, it seemed fitting after a hundred and sixty-odd years for historians and archaeologists to examine the Powell site with an eye towards understanding its place in history.⁹

Elizabeth Powell and the Powell League

In an archaeology project at a historical site, it is appropriate to inquire about the people who once lived there—in this case, Elizabeth Powell and her family. She is not named in most of the standard Texas history books, and even the rendezvous of the Mexican army at her place is seldom mentioned. Much of what little has been written about her and her kin has been speculative and not studied. The following are some of the pertinent facts about her and her family, learned through research in contemporary writings and in local, county, state, and federal records.

Elizabeth Powell was reportedly born in Pennsylvania, although diligent searching has not been able to confirm this.¹⁰ Nor has the name of her husband been found, Powell being a common name. The birthplaces of two of her children give clues to places she might have lived. Her youngest son, Samuel, is recorded in his two U.S. censuses as being born in Ohio. Her daughter and namesake, Elizabeth, was reportedly born in Kentucky or Ohio or Louisiana.¹¹ Prior to coming to Texas, Mrs. Powell had lived in New Orleans and was a widow with five children, four of whom came with her to Texas.¹² The progression from Pennsylvania through Ohio, Kentucky, down to Louisiana and finally to Texas fits the migration pattern of many pioneers. She entered Texas in 1828 as a colonist of Stephen F. Austin and in 1831 received a league of land from the Mexican government. This was grant number one in Austin's second colony, in what is now Fort Bend County. She stated in her grant application to the Mexican land commissioner, Miguel Arciniega:

...I apply to you so that as commissioner appointed for this purpose you may be pleased to admit me and put me in possession of one league of land that with prior approval of the empresario Austin I have selected and is situated on the left margin of the San Bernard on a small creek called Turkey Creek, with the understanding that I have already built my house and cleared a field...

She signed the document in the presence of Samuel May Williams, Austin's secretary, at San Felipe de Austin, on March 3, 1831, and it was approved on the 21st.¹³ As the application says, she had built her home prior to applying for the land, as was required. Since she had immigrated in 1828 and received the land in 1831, the home was built between those years.

The house (located in present Fort Bend County) was situated on the trail that ran in the south from Brazoria, Bell's Landing, and

Columbia (all in present Brazoria County), northward to Stephen F. Austin's capital town of San Felipe de Austin (in present Austin County). Also, the house was near the junction of this road and routes to San Antonio, Matagorda (Bexar and Matagorda counties respectively), and a trail that led to Old Fort (today's Richmond in Fort Bend County) and Harrisburg (in present Harris County).¹⁴ Thomas H. Borden, brother of the famous Gail Borden of condensed milk fame, was the chief surveyor for Stephen F. Austin and drew the Powell League survey plat (Figure 4.2). He also noted on the plat where two of these trails cross east of Turkey Creek on Mrs. Powell's property. Mary Austin Holley, Stephen F. Austin's cousin, wrote that early Texas roads shown on maps were not true roads but "merely routes to direct the traveller in his journeyings."¹⁵ Another early visitor commented similarly:

*...yet when a tract of country is marked with lines of roads, merely because it is in a condition to be traveled on horseback, a person is liable to form erroneous conclusions on other subjects connected with the existence of artificial roads. I was not surprised, with my knowledge of the country, when hearing that the route from Brazoria to San Felipe was more travelled than any other in the colony, I found that it was in many places indicated only by marked trees....*¹⁶

San Felipe was burned during the war, and the town never really got reestablished. Thus this road to it became redundant. It is little wonder that, today, traces of the trails have disappeared due to plowing and other agricultural pursuits. Also, the dredging of Turkey Creek in modern times may well have changed its earlier configuration, making the place where a trail once forded it hard to detect. The absence of evidence of these "roads" was one of the problems faced by the archaeology team when attempting to establish the exact location of the Powell home site.

General Vicente Filisola left the only contemporary description of Madam Powell's home, its location, and architecture.

*The position of the dwelling which takes the name of Mad. Powell's is on the left bank of one of the various creeks that form the San Bernard, which traverses at that point almost north to south. The location is picturesque: the house is wood; it has two parts each six varas square, between which is a type of corridor; and a garden in back of about 20 varas square, also, it has two or three other shacks, one of which serves as a kitchen and the others are servant quarters....*¹⁷ [Note: A vara in Texas was about 33 1/3 inches.]

Other visitors may not have felt obligated to describe the Powell house, as the construction and materials were so ubiquitous in early Texas. In 1826 Stephen F. Austin wrote his sister that in his colony, "we are still living in log cabins."¹⁸ The log cabin of choice was the type known as a "dog trot." As in Filisola's description above, the dog trot cabin or house was two log rooms covered with a common roof, separated from each other by a small hall or "breezeway" that is open to the front and rear of the house. According to Terry Jordan in his study of vernacular home construction in early Texas, "[t]he dogtrot is splendidly suited to a warm climate zone and is particularly common across the inner coastal plain of the Deep South from Georgia to East Texas."¹⁹

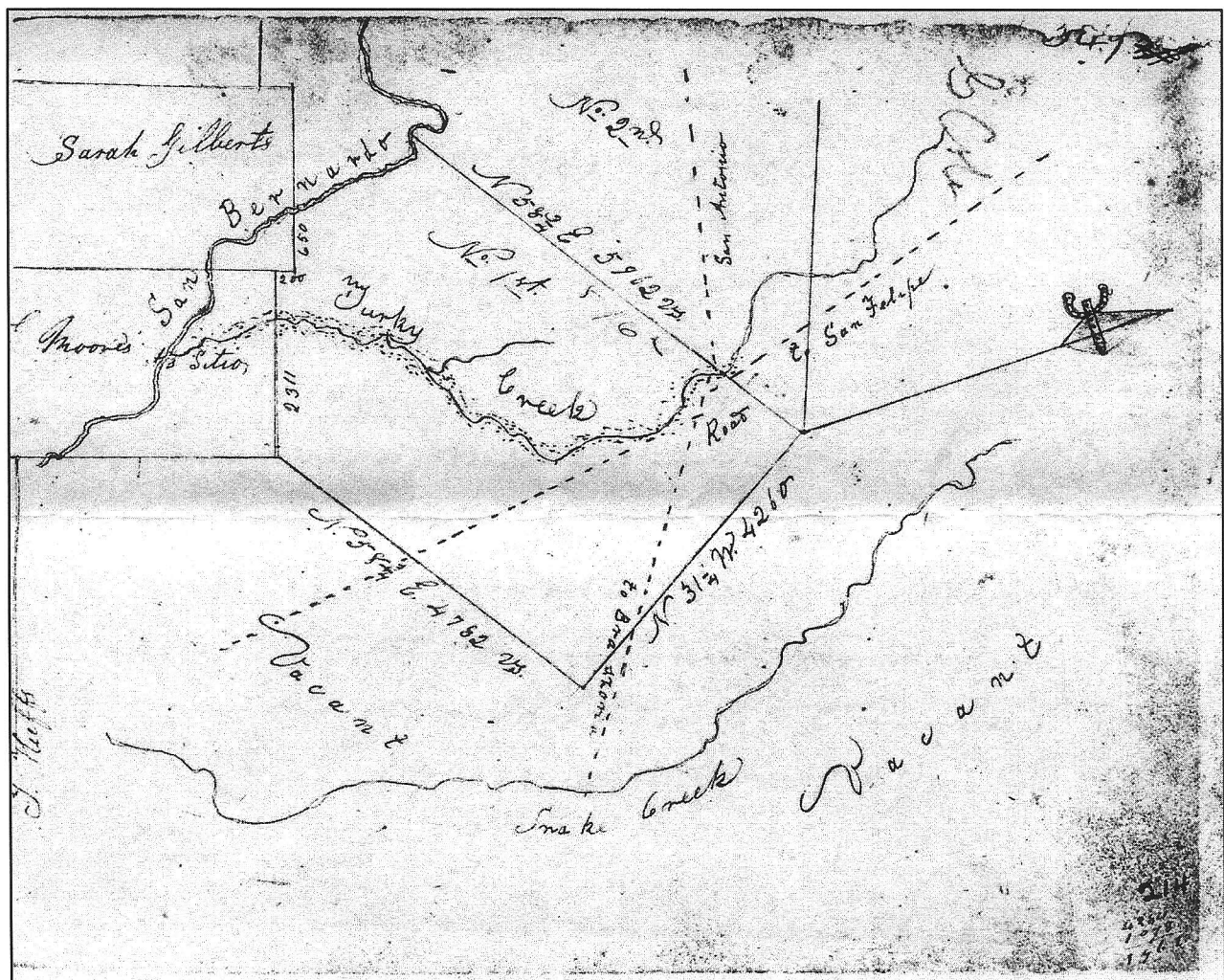
As small as Mrs. Powell's garden appears (about 50 feet by 50 feet square), she most likely grew vegetables common to gardens of the period in the southern U.S. The crop probably included, if seed were available, potatoes, both sweet and white, peas, green beans, and leafy vegetables. Of course, she had to grow corn, as it was the staple that fed the early colonists and their animals. Besides the garden, she would have had milk cows and chickens for eggs and Sunday dinner. Wild game was still abundant in

the nearby woods, and nuts and berries could be gathered in season. She would have purchased items such as coffee, salt, and sugar from merchants such as John Harris who had stores before 1829 at Harrisburg and Bell's Landing. Other merchants in the immediate area included James Knight, Walter C. White, and her son-in-law Lemon Kelcy.²⁰ Some travelers found the inns like Elizabeth Powell's were "...always well supplied with various and excellent food,... plenty of fresh bread, venison, wild turkey, beef, fowls, eggs, milk and good coffee...."²¹

Other visitors to Texas at that time found the table fare less than appetizing. Although he never reported stopping at the Powell inn,

William Fairfax Gray, who was touring the Austin Colony just prior to the revolution, complained time and again in his diary about being fed only corn meal mush, fried pork fat, and poor coffee when dining at houses on his travels.²²

Although Filisola said there were several outbuildings, one for the kitchen and the others for servants, the records do not indicate Mrs. Powell had slaves or servants of any kind. Perhaps these buildings were to accommodate guests. A kitchen detached from the main house was common in those days because of the occurrence of fire, as the cooking was probably done over an open fireplace. Also, the kitchen



Texas Land Office

Figure 4.2: Thomas Borden's survey of the Elizabeth Powell league

being apart from the main house kept the house heat down on hot Texas summer days.²³

At an early date, travelers began to stay at Mrs. Powell's new home in Texas for a small fee. People traveling the road from Brazoria, Bell's Landing, and Columbia found that her home was about halfway to San Felipe and thus a convenient place to stop over. It soon became known as an inn or tavern. William Barret Travis and Anson Jones were two of her more famous guests. Travis stayed a number of times as his lawyer business took him from Brazoria and the coast area to the court at San Felipe. After one stay at Mrs. Powell's, he recorded in his diary that he had paid 67½ cents for the night and breakfast the next morning.²⁴

Although the title of "madam" before a woman's name may sound strange to modern ears, it was a respectful form of address to older ladies in the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in areas where there were a large number of non-English speakers. Elizabeth Powell was listed as Madam Powell in the New Orleans city directory in 1824 when she operated a *pension* or boarding house in that city prior to coming to Texas. Some other ladies in the same line of business also had the same title before their names in the directories.²⁵ Some maps and writings of the period refer to Elizabeth Powell as Madam Powell. One such map and the diary that goes with it is that of Col. Eduard Harkort, a German engineer and recent immigrant, who stayed the night of February 21, 1836, at her house.²⁶ In his application for land, Leman Kelcy (who was to become Elizabeth Powell's son-in-law) asked that the land grant to him be "adjoining that of Madam Powell."²⁷ The Mexican army officers usually referred to "Madam Powell's" residence in their correspondence. It is possible she liked the term. Also, people such as Samuel May Williams and Stephen F. Austin, having lived in New Orleans, knew of her there and continued to refer to her in Texas the same way. In other records of the period, Elizabeth Powell was sometimes called Mrs. Powell or the Widow Powell.²⁸

The irrepressible Noah Smithwick wrote that he was not concerned that he had to spend a night at Madam Powell's as she "had two attractive daughters."²⁹ These daughters were Elizabeth, who first married Leman Kelcy, and Ellen, who first married a near neighbor, Isaac McGary.³⁰ Both men served in the Texian Army.³¹ Leman Kelcy owned a store at Columbia; when this small village was selected to be the first seat of government, his store was one of the buildings used for the government of the Republic of Texas.³² Isaac McGary later became a county official in Montgomery and Walker Counties and served in the U.S-Mexican War.³³ Another daughter, Julia, had married a man named Leeds and did not come to Texas.³⁴

Madam Powell's two sons were Joseph J. and Samuel Graves Powell.³⁵ Joseph gave his age as 25 when he took the required oath of allegiance to Mexico in 1830 and later was granted a single man's one-quarter league. This report of his age is interesting because his mother's age was recorded as 30 when she took the oath of allegiance in 1829. Evidently, ladies were allowed certain latitude when giving their ages in the 19th century, or else Samuel May Williams was being chivalrous to a degree when he entered her age.³⁶

In October 1835 Sam Powell had written his mother from the coast warning of a Mexican invasion. While the war was in progress, Joseph brought word to Sam Houston of the Mexican Army's advance across the Brazos.³⁷ Both sons served as spies (scouts, as the term would be today) and were in the band of men that followed the Mexican army on its retreat out of Texas.³⁸

Ammon Underwood, a resident of the town of Columbia who had been in the Runaway Scrape, took a trip in October 1836 to visit friends in what he called "the upper country." Underwood had lodged with Mrs. Powell in the past and thus knew her place. His journal entry for the 24th reads that he

...arrived at Mrs. Powell's old place. Encamped where we found a family crowded into a small tent not capacious enough to shelter us, night cold and rainy (sic)...³⁹

Apparently no new house was built at the site by the latter part of 1836. Notice that Underwood said "a" family and not "the" family was living in a tent. This notation suggests persons other than the Powells were camped on the property. He knew Mrs. Powell and would most likely have mentioned her by name if she had been camped out at her old place with her family crowded into a small tent.

In October 1836, Elizabeth Powell was one of the first to place a claim before the new Texas government for losses incurred during the war. Her claim was for \$4,454.12 (Figure 4.3). Of this amount, \$500 was for "Dwelling and out houses," "destroyed by the Mexican Army." In the last paragraph of the cover letter accompanying the claim, Elizabeth Powell or her attorney wrote the following appeal to the Congress:

In consideration of the embarrassed (sic) and deranged state of the finances of the Republic your memorialist has hitherto forborne to ask for relief, but times have changed and the prospects of our country have brightened whilst the necessities of your memorialist have accumulated to such a degree as to compel her to appeal to the justice of your Honorable bodies for relief and your memorialist will ever pray for Texas.⁴⁰

However, there is no record that the claim was ever paid. The prospects of the new Texas Republic had not improved; it was strapped for money and paid claims only for material used that had directly aided the war with Mexico. Many people had their livestock stolen and their homes burned, and Texas could not repay all

The Republic of Texas to
Elizabeth Powell Jr

1836. 4 To 140 lbs of oxen	90.00
March 2 " 4 do	120.00
3 " 1 barrel	30.00
4 " 1/2 Bbls Lard	60.00
5 " 300 lbs Bacon a 18 3/4 cts	56.25
6 " 16 " Hogs a 7	112.00
7 " 30 " Butter a 12	360.00
8 " 1 horse a	40.00
9 " 600 Bushels of corn a 1.50	900.00
10 " 3 sacks of salt a 10	30.00
11 " 5 log chains a 4	20.00
12 " 1 Bbl Vinegar	7.50
13 " 50 lbs Sugar a 18 3/4 cts	9.37
14 " 100 lbs Coffee a 25 cts	100.00
15 " 1 House & Kitchen Furniture	686.00
	<u>1734.12</u>
16 " 1000 lbs of Stock destroyed by the Mexican Army	2000.00
17 " Dwelling & out Houses	500.00
18 " Plantation & garden	230.00
Amount destroyed by the Mexican Army	<u>2730.00</u>

Collected
District of Brazos

Before me Benjamin C. Franklin
Judge in and for the District of Brazos
Affirmed Elizabeth Powell who
being duly sworn saith that the
above account of and for property destroyed during
the late campaign by the Mexican & American
Mexican troops and taken for the sake of the Mexican
Army is an account of the loss sustained by her
at a low & reasonable valuation.
Benjamin C. Franklin J. 1836.

REPRODUCED FROM THE
HOLDINGS OF THE
TEXAS STATE ARCHIVES

Figure 4.3 Elizabeth Powell petition for war claim reimbursement

these people for their losses. Mrs. Powell was among 93 citizens of the new republic who had goods lost, stolen, or destroyed by both armies and who sent to the Texas treasury petitions asking for reimbursement. The auditor of the treasury was so overburdened by these claims that the Texas Congress passed laws setting up a commission to audit all war claims; hundreds of claims followed. Of these original 93 claims, Mrs. Powell's was monetarily almost twice the amount of the next highest claim.

There is some debate as to whether Elizabeth Powell was at home when the Mexican army invaded her property. Those who say Mrs. Powell was present at that time base their belief on a tale told by Francis R. Lubbock, the Confederate governor of Texas, who wrote in his memoirs that he rode out from the town of Houston one spring day in 1838 with his wife and another lady to visit Mrs. Powell. He further wrote:

*Mrs. Powell had living with her then two sons, a widowed daughter, Mrs. Kelsey (sic), a great favorite of ours, and a single daughter. Their time was most delightfully spent at this beautiful home, for everything there was bright and cheery.*⁴¹

If Lubbock visited Mrs. Powell in the spring of 1838, she could not have had both sons living with her, since her oldest son, Joseph J. Powell, was shot to death in Columbia, Texas on June 6, 1837, by Dr. James Humpheys. The killer escaped and fled to Louisiana, where he was apprehended and returned to Texas. The news of these events appeared in Texas and New Orleans newspapers at the time.⁴² Indeed there was a widowed daughter, Elizabeth (Mrs. Kelcy), whose husband Leman had been killed in Houston on September 16, 1837.⁴³ Thus, just months before Lubbock's supposed visit, Mrs. Powell had lost a son and son-in-law. In addition, in May 1837, the first Congress of the new Republic of Texas met in Houston where it had moved from Columbia, and on the second day of the session Mrs. Powell's daughter

Eleanor (Ellen), the so-called "single daughter," had a petition presented to the Senate for divorcement from Isaac McGary, whom she had married when she was fourteen years old.⁴⁴ She did not remain single long, for she married James McClellan in April 1838.⁴⁵

The Fort Bend County historian Clarence Wharton, when writing about Lubbock's supposed visit on that spring day in 1838, where "everything was bright and cheery," had this to say:

*Other inquiries lead to the conclusion that Mrs. Powell was off with the runaways when the Mexican armies came by and that her house was destroyed; that she never saw any of the things which Governor Lubbock says she related to him. He was often free with facts and after sixty years, when he wrote his memoirs, he may have imagined that the widow Powell told him these things.*⁴⁶

In all fairness, however, Wharton did not give his sources for the "other inquiries" that led to his conclusion that Mrs. Powell "was off with the runaways."

Lubbock could not have gotten the years reversed and made his visit before the house was burned, for he had not arrived in Texas—by his own account—until October 1836, or six months after the Mexican depredations at Mrs. Powell's.⁴⁷ The present study has not found evidence to indicate where Elizabeth Powell and her daughters were during the Mexican army's encampment on her property. Whether they were "away with the runaways" as Wharton suggests, or hiding in the cane breaks as some others did, no evidence has been found of her whereabouts during that tumultuous time. It is difficult, however, to believe that lone women out on the prairie where the Powell house was located would have been safe in the face of an advancing enemy army.

It also has been suggested that the home Lubbock visited on that spring day of 1838 was

a new home the widow Powell might have built.⁴⁸ Samuel Damon purchased all the cypress timber from her land and 25 acres to build a saw mill. In the first of two agreements with Damon, Elizabeth Powell reserved 2,400 "slabs" from the mill. Was this lumber to rebuild with? If so, it would have been too late for Lubbock's visit in 1838 as the timber agreement was made in 1839.⁴⁹

The Fort Bend County court minutes add another layer of mystery. Beginning in 1839 and going on into 1843, Elizabeth Powell was involved in a number of lawsuits, only one of which she apparently won. An interesting 1843 judgment against her was in favor of the steamboat *Yellowstone* for "\$136.95 plus five percent interest from April 13, 1837, until paid" plus court costs. The total judgments against her came to around \$1,000, a lot of money in those days for a person who had just lost her home and most of her worldly possessions. It may never be known what goods or services she might have purchased to incur bills that she could not or did not pay since the actual case files from that era are missing and only the court minutes books remain.⁵⁰

During the time the court cases were going on, Mrs. Powell sold her land to her four remaining children, perhaps to shield the land from her creditors. On June 5, 1840, Mrs. Powell deeded to Samuel G. Powell, Elizabeth Kelcy, and Eleanor McClellan each 1,000 acres in one deed and an equal amount to Julia Leeds Doane in a separate deed, probably since she was in Louisiana, part of the United States and therefore a foreign country. For \$2,000 apiece, each of the four children was to receive 1,000 acres. It is doubtful any of the four had that kind of money or that Mrs. Powell received any amount near \$8,000. If so, she apparently did not use it to pay the debts or judgments she had accrued. These deeds do not mention the existence of a house on the property being sold to the children. Interestingly, one of the witnesses to the land transfer was Thomas H.

Borden, who had originally surveyed her league years before.⁵¹

Homer N. Darst, a member of the family that has possessed most of the old Powell League since the Powell family's time, wrote a magazine article in which he described a house that once was at the site in question as being the home of Elizabeth Powell and that it was "a frame house...two story, seven or eight rooms" and made of native cypress.⁵² Mr. Darst did not say that he had seen the house himself or how he knew it to be the Powell home. The recent archaeological investigations suggest that a house later than Mrs. Powell's original log structure probably was built at or near where the historical marker was placed. A number of items more recent than the 1820-1830s period of the Powell occupation have been retrieved from this area and will be among the artifacts discussed in subsequent articles.

Robert Hodges, a long-time settler in Austin's colony, had purchased a part of the Powell property known as "The old Powell Home" from Elizabeth Kelcy Belden.⁵³ He, along with the Darst family, acquired the land by purchasing the different shares from the Powell siblings separately. The Darst family finally became owners of most of the property according to a court judgment rendered on October 27, 1882.⁵⁴ The Hodges family had lived on the property, according to Homer Darst, so perhaps Robert Hodges built the later house at the site.⁵⁵

However, a second instrument signed by Elizabeth Powell, amending the sale of five acres of her headright to Samuel Damon, suggests that he built a house on that property by June 1839 when the second agreement was signed:

*...In testimony of all which[,] I have hereunto set my hand and seal at the house of Samuel Damon on the said land herein sold and conveyed and in the county aforesaid this fourteenth day of June AD 1839. E. Powell....*⁵⁶

Note in the language of the above instrument that E. Powell signed the agreement "...at the house of Samuel Damon on the said land sold and conveyed..." Damon, who was a carpenter, could have erected this house between the original April 1839 contract and the amended one of June 1839.⁵⁷ The house would have been on the 25 acres where the saw mill was to be built. This is not to rule out the possibility that the house built by Damon could have been the one occupied later by Robert Hodge.

Where Mrs. Powell lived after the destruction of her home in April of 1836 is not known. An argument could be made that she lived with her daughter Elizabeth Kelcy in Columbia. Leman Kelcy's store in Columbia went to the Texas government in October 1836, and he began anew in the Allen brothers' tent city that was springing up on Buffalo Bayou (Houston). Mrs. Powell could have stayed with her daughter and her husband briefly at Columbia and moved with them to Houston. After Kelcy's death in September 1837, Sam Powell was appointed administrator of the estate for the benefit of his sister, Leman Kelcy's heir, in Harrisburg County.⁵⁸ He was already serving the same function in Brazoria County for his mother after his brother Joe's death.⁵⁹ The Harrisburg County tax records for 1837 show Mrs. Elizabeth Kelcy had a town lot (apparently with a house), furniture, a horse, and a slave.⁶⁰ No record says definitely that she lived in this house or that her mother lived with her. Accounts submitted to the court for management of the Kelcy estate (which was large for the time and place) show Sam having dispersed various amounts of money for Elizabeth Kelcy's maintenance. As no other location reflects a place of refuge for Mrs. Powell, perhaps she lived with her now-widowed daughter in Houston. The Kelcy estate was finally settled in 1844.

One report has the two Elizabeths moving to Matagorda in 1843.⁶¹ This could be a possibility since Sam, after serving briefly as sheriff of

Harris County,⁶² moved into that area and married a girl from there.⁶³ The records show that Mrs. Powell's three remaining children and their families lived in the Matagorda area after leaving Fort Bend and Harris Counties.⁶⁴

The sum of what we have learned of Elizabeth Powell is contained mostly in the preceding paragraphs. Written records from that early period in frontier history are scarce and, at times, non-existent. We still don't know her husband's first name. We don't know for sure where she was born or married or when and where she died.

We have learned that in 1824 Elizabeth Powell was a widow with five children to rear in the large city of New Orleans. She probably did what she knew best by opening her home as a boarding house. The income from paying guests would have furnished shelter, food, and clothing for her family. During this period, Stephen F. Austin did most of his advertising for his Texas colony in that city, and she must have heard about it. To take the adventurous step of following the impresario to the wilds of Texas shows courage—a courage perhaps born from the difficulty of her situation, but courage nonetheless, to journey to a foreign land seeking a better life for her family.

While she was not among the original 300 of Austin's settlers, she had the first league granted in his Second Colony. On this land she built a home and again provided accommodations for paying guests. Her home was located by the most traveled road that ran between the settlements in the southern part of Austin's colony and San Felipe in the north. It became a well known halfway house—so well known and so strategically located near major crossroads that the Mexican army used her place as an assembly area after the Battle of San Jacinto.

Unfortunately, after several years of relative prosperity, Elizabeth Powell lost her home and livelihood to the ravages of war. This was followed by the tragedies of the deaths of her son and son-in-law and then by some as yet

unknown financial difficulties. She tried to rally her fortunes by staving off her creditors in the courts, by selling the timber from the land, and by passing on the property to the surviving children. Perhaps overwhelmed by debts and sorrow, Madam Powell left the land on Turkey Creek that had once held so much promise and disappeared from the record.

Addendum

Due to the vagaries of spelling in the early records, the names of some of the principals in this study have been standardized to agree with

the perceived preference of the individual(s) in question.

The subsequent reports in this series on archaeological site 41FB269 describe the artifacts recovered. Among the items, there are everyday objects that could have belonged to Madam Powell that may help illuminate her life and times more fully.

For those interested in the history and times of Elizabeth Powell and the Texas Revolution, the endnotes provide suggestions for further reading. The references below are especially recommended.

References:

Archaeological Site Reports

Hudgins, Joe D., and Gregg Dimmick.

1998 *A Campsite of the Retreating Mexican Army, April, 1836, 41WH91, Wharton County, Texas*. Houston, Tex.: Houston Archeological Society, Report No. 13.

Hudgins, Joe D., Terry Kieler, and Gregg Dimmick.

2000 *Tracking The Mexican Army Through The Mar De Lodo (Sea of Mud), April 29–May 9, 1836, 41WH92, 41WH93, 41WH94, 41WH95, Wharton County, Texas*. Houston, Tex.: Houston Archeological Society, Report No. 16.

Books

Dimmick, Gregg J.

2004 *Sea of Mud: The Retreat of the Mexican Army After San Jacinto, An Archeological Investigation*. Austin, Tex.: Texas State Historical Association.

Fehrenbach, T. R.

1968 *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1968. A good general history of Texas.

Jordan, Terry G.

1978 *Texas Log Buildings: A Folk Architecture*. Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press. Good explanation of Texas log construction.

Wharton, Clarence R.

1939 *Wharton's History of Fort Bend County*. San Antonio, Tex.: The Naylor Company, Reprint by Fort Bend Museum Association, 2001

Notes:

¹ Thomas Lloyd Miller, *The Public Lands of Texas, 1519–1970* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 22–23.

² Ibid., 24.

³ Juan N. Almonte, *Almonte's Texas: Juan N. Almonte's 1834 Inspection, Secret Report & Role in the 1836 Campaign*, ed. Jack Jackson, trans. John Wheat (Austin, Tex.: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 400.

⁴ Jose Urrea, "Diary of Military Operations of the Division..." (Victoria De Durango, 1838) in *The Mexican Side of the Texas Revolution, 1836, by the Chief Mexican Participants...* trans. and ed. Carlos E. Castañeda, 2d ed. (Austin, Tex.: Graphic Press, 1970), 249.

⁵ Vicente Filisola, *Evacuation of Texas: Translation of the Representation Addressed to the Supreme Government* (Columbia, Texas: G. & T.H. Borden Public Printers, 1837; reprint, Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1965), 19, 21, 26, 27, 29.

⁶ José Enrique de la Peña, trans. Carmen Perry, *With Santa Anna in Texas* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 1975), 160.

⁷ T.R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1968), 233, see the last sentence of page to get the judgment of this historian regarding the Battle of San Jacinto.

⁸ Gregg J. Dimmick, *Sea of Mud: The Retreat of the Mexican Army After San Jacinto, An Archeological Investigation* (Austin, Tex.: Texas State Historical Association, 2004), 113; his unique assessment of this phase of the Texas Revolution deserves the merit of further scholarly attention.

⁹ Unless cited otherwise, the historical facts stated in the foregoing text can be found in most Texas history books. The abbreviated account of the Texas Revolution in this study is for background information and not meant to be a complete retelling of those events.

¹⁰ U.S. Census of 1880, roll 462, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, New Orleans, ed. 58, sheet 14B, family 147, Edwin Belden household, in which Elizabeth [nee Powell] Belden's mother was reported as born in Pennsylvania.

¹¹ U.S. Census of 1850, roll 912, Matagorda County, Texas, p. 386, family 105, household of Samuel G. Powell (age 34, born in Ohio); U.S. Census of 1860, roll 1294, Galveston County, Texas, Galveston, p. 483, family 752, household of Sam Powell (age 47, born in Ohio); these two are Sam Powell's only census records, as he died before the 1870 census; U.S. Census of 1850, roll 909, Calhoun County, Texas, p. 501, family 170, household of Edwin Belding (*sic*), with Elizabeth (age 33, born in Louisiana); U.S. Census of 1860, roll 1289, Calhoun County, Texas, Lavaca, p. 221, family 305, household of E. Belden (with Elizabeth, age 37, born in Kentucky); U.S. Census of 1880, cited above, New Orleans, household of Edwin Belden (with Elizabeth, age 55, born in Ohio); Elizabeth Belden and her family apparently were missed in the 1870 census; neither Mrs. Powell's son Joseph nor daughters Julia and Eleanor lived to be enumerated in the 1850 census, which was the first to name individuals in households and report ages and birthplaces; the 1850 census was also the first U.S. census for Texas. Madam Powell has never been found in a census.

¹² Williams, Villamae, ed. and transcriber, *Stephen F. Austin's Register of Families [from the originals in the General Land Office, Austin, Texas]* (St. Louis, Mo.: distributed by Ingmire Publications, 1984), from originals in Spanish Collection, Archives and Records Division, Texas General Land Office, Book 1:47–48, Elizabeth Powell entry, showing her as a widow with four children upon arrival in Texas (this work hereafter cited as *Austin's Register of Families*); Elizabeth Powell entry, New Orleans City Directory, 1824, microfiche, Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research, Houston; this was the only year she was listed in available directories; the four Powell children who came to Texas were Joseph, Sam, Eleanor, and Elizabeth.

¹³ Elizabeth Powell land grant from Mexican government, March 21, 1831, Spanish Collection, Archives and Records Division, Texas General Land Office; among these documents is the survey by Thomas Borden which shows the Powell league located on Turkey Creek and the San Bernard River as well as the trails mentioned.

- ¹⁴ Almonte, *Almonte's Texas*, 400; Eduard Harkort, "Notes and Documents: The Journal of Col. Eduard Harkort, Captain of Engineers, Texas Army, February 8-July 17, 1836," ed. and trans. Louis E. Brister, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, CII (January, 1999): 351 (map); see also Borden's plat map.
- ¹⁵ Mary Austin Holley, *Texas* (1836; reprint, Austin, Tex.: Texas State Historical Assoc., 1990), 188.
- ¹⁶ *A Visit to Texas: Being The Journal Of A Traveller* (1834; reprint, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1966, March of America Facsimile Series, No. 70), 202-203.
- ¹⁷ Vicente Filisola, *Analisis del Diario Militar del General D. José Urrea durante la Primera Campaña de Tejas* (Matamoros, 1838), 47, in *Western Americana: Frontier History of the Trans-Mississippi West, 1550-1900* (New Haven, Conn.: Research Publications, 1975), Microfilm reel 186, #1954.
- ¹⁸ *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1919* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1924-1928), Vol. II, ed. Eugene C. Barker, *The Austin Papers*, Part 2:1359, hereafter cited as Barker, *The Austin Papers*.
- ¹⁹ Terry G. Jordan, *Texas Log Buildings: A Folk Architecture* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1978), 119.
- ²⁰ Inventory of the Succession of John R. Harris, Austin County, Texas, Succession Records, Vol. A: 226-238, County Clerk's Office, Bellville, showing that Mrs. Powell owed on account at Bell's Landing store, \$9.87 1/2 in 1829; *Handbook of Texas Online*, "James Knight," at www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/KK/fkn4.html accessed 27 December 2006; also "Walter C. White," accessed December 27, 2006 at www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/WW/fwh31.html; *Galveston Daily News*, Sunday, January 9, 1898, interview with John Adriance, long time citizen of Columbia, about Knight and White's store and Kelcy's store in Columbia being used by the new Republic government in 1836; transcription of article at the Brazoria County Museum.
- ²¹ *A Visit to Texas*, 209.
- ²² William Fairfax Gray, *From Virginia to Texas, 1835, Diary of Col. Wm. F. Gray*, (1909; reprint, Houston, Tex.: The Fletcher Young Publishing Co., 1965), 107.
- ²³ Jordan, *Texas Log Buildings*, 138-139.
- ²⁴ Robert E. Davis, ed., *Diary of William Barret Travis, August 30, 1833-June 26, 1834* (Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1966), 13 (September 19, 1833), 16 (September 28, 1833), 68 (November 5, 1833), 76 (November 30, 1833), et al.; James M. Day, comp., "Anson Jones," *The Texas Almanac, 1857-1873: A Compendium of Texas History* (originally published by the *Galveston News*; reprint, Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1967), 380.
- ²⁵ Elizabeth Powell entry, New Orleans City Directory, 1824, microfiche, cited above.
- ²⁶ Harkort, "Notes and Documents: The Journal of Col. Eduard Harkort, Captain of Engineers, Texas Army, February 8-July 17, 1836," 351 (map), 353.
- ²⁷ Leman Kelcy, application for land grant, *Austin's Register of Families*, Vol. 2: (3), Kelsey (*sic*) entry.
- ²⁸ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), IX:171-172, Fondren Library, Rice University. On the use of the term "madam," as understood in the time frame of Elizabeth Powell's life, a wide reading of the various definitions has to be undertaken, as no concise definition applies to her particular case. The term has meant many things over the centuries. *Online Etymology Dictionary* has *madam* not used for a female owner or manager of a brothel until first attested in 1871; site accessed online at www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=madam&searchmode=none on December 27, 2006.
- ²⁹ Noah Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State or Recollections of Old Texas* (Austin: H.P.N. Gammel, 1900; reprint, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983, Barker Texas History Center Series No. 5), 45-46.

³⁰ Kelcy-Powell marriage bond, December 8, 1833, and McGary-Powell marriage bond, January 14, 1830, Austin County Marriage Bonds 1824–1835, County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Bellville, Texas; also listed in Bennett Smith, *Marriage by Bond in Colonial Texas* (Fort Worth: the author, 1972), 64–65.

³¹ Daughters of the Republic of Texas, comp., *Muster Rolls of the Texas Revolution, 1835–1836 – Registers* (Austin, Tex.: the society, 1986), Leman Kelsey (*sic*), Capt. Walker's Volunteer Guards, February 28–April 9, 1836; Isaac McGary, Eighth (H) Company, Second Regiment, San Augustine Company, name inscribed on San Jacinto Monument, received bounty warrant 2083 (640 acres) for services in war, April 16–November 24, 1836.

³² *Galveston Daily News*, Sunday, January 9, 1898, interview with John Adriance, long-time citizen of Columbia about the capitol buildings in the town; transcription of article at the Brazoria County Museum.

³³ *Compiled Index to Elected and Appointed Officials of the Republic of Texas: 1835–1846*, Vol. II (Austin, Tex.: State Archives Division, Texas State Library, 1981); after Walker County was formed, McGary served as county clerk and later became chief justice of the county.

³⁴ Alfred Alder Doane, *The Doane Family and Their Descendants*, 2d ed. (Boston: 1902), 345, naming Julia Ann (Powell) Leeds Doane, wife of Charles Doane and widow of –?– Leeds; Elizabeth Powell, deed to daughter Julia Ann Doane, June 5, 1840, Fort Bend County Deed Book A:237, County Clerks Office, Courthouse, Richmond, Texas.

³⁵ Joseph J. Powell probate, file no. 394 (1837), Brazoria County, petition of S.G. Powell for letters of administration for his brother Joseph Powell “on behalf of the mother of the said Powell, who is heir,” and receipt of James G. Morrow for payment on debt of Joseph J. Powell by his “brother Samuel,” County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Angleton, Texas; *Registrar (sic) of the Parish of Christ Episcopal Church Matagorda Texas 1839–1870*, [Christ Church, Matagorda] bound transcript at Clayton Library, Houston (no transcriber, no date, no page numbers), Baptisms, giving Samuel Powell's birth date and full name.

³⁶ *Austin's Register of Families*, Elizabeth Powell entry, previously cited; Joseph Powell entry, Vol. I (97) (98), entry 570.

³⁷ Barker, *The Austin Papers*, Vol. III, p. 162, letter Samuel Powell wrote in October 1835 to his mother warning that General Urrea was to land with 2,000 troops at the mouth of the Brazos; John Jenkins, ed., *Military Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835–1836* (Austin, Tex: Presidial Press, Brig. Gen. Jay A. Matthews, publisher, 1973), Vol. 5, entries for Joseph Powell, document no. 2699, 2708, 2712; Joseph brought the word although Houston seemingly chose not to believe it.

³⁸ Discharge paper of Samuel G. Powell, signed by J. J. Powell, Captain, “Videtty” company, Audited Claims of Republic of Texas, Claim #1583, microfilm reel #84:311, Clayton Library, Houston, Texas; claim for military service, Joseph J. Powell, Audited Claims of Republic of Texas, Claim #8519, microfilm reel #84:294–297, Clayton Library.

³⁹ Ammon Underwood, *Journal of Ammon Underwood 1834–38*, (no pagination), Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas, certified copy of original at University of Texas; reprint, “Southwestern Historical Quarterly” 32 (July 1928–April, 1929): 147.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Powell petition to Congress of the Republic of Texas, October 18, 1836, Memorials and Petitions, Texas State Archives, Austin. The nearest claim was that of R. J. Mosley, “cotton destroyed,” \$2,500.

⁴¹ Francis R. Lubbock, *Six Decades in Texas: The Memoirs of Francis R. Lubbock, Confederate Governor of Texas*, ed. C.W. Rains (Austin and New York: The Pemberton Press, 1968.), 78.

⁴² *Telegraph and Texas Register*, Saturday, June 30, 1838, Houston, Texas, article on arrest of James Humphreys (*sic*), killer of J.J. Powell, reprinted from the *New Orleans Picayune*.

⁴³ *Telegraph and Texas Register*, Saturday, September 23, 1837, Houston, Texas, article on death of Leman Kelcy: “...On the evening of Saturday last [Sept. 16] Mr. L. Kelcy of this city, was killed by Mr. Z. Hubbard...the first individual in this city who has fallen a victim to the disgraceful custom of wearing deadly weapons...” Kelcy shot Hubbard in the knee with his pistol, and Hubbard killed Kelcy with ten stab wounds with his sword cane.

⁴⁴ Petition for divorcement, Ellen (Powell) McGary from Isaac McGary, First Congress of Republic of Texas, May 25, 1837, photocopy of original at Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. Apparently Congress did not act upon this petition because the marriage was a "bond marriage" peculiar to colonial Texas. The bond marriage participants "divorced" by tearing up the bond. For more information on this custom, see Bennett Smith, *Marriage By Bond In Colonial Texas* (Branch-Smith, Inc., Fort Worth, Texas. 1972).

⁴⁵ McClellan-Powell marriage, Fort Bend, Texas, County Marriage Book A:#11, County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Richmond.

⁴⁶ Clarence R. Wharton, *History of Fort Bend County* (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1939), 67-68.

⁴⁷ Lubbock, *Six Decades in Texas*, 29.

⁴⁸ Demmick, *Sea of Mud*, 90.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Powell, deed to Samuel Damon, June 14, 1839, Fort Bend County, Deed Book A:350, County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Richmond, Texas. This is the second deed; it amended the original sale from buyers Damon and Henry to only Samuel Damon.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Powell, plaintiff, vs. John Collins, defendant, Fort Bend County, Texas, Court Minutes, Book A: 93, case 184, November 27, 1839, plaintiff awarded \$325; Book B: 5, case 173, steamboat *Yellowstone* vs. Elizabeth Powell, 1843.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Powell, deed to daughter Julia Ann Doane, and separate deed to son Samuel G. Powell and daughters Eleanor McClellan and Elizabeth Kelsey (*sic*), 5 June 1840, Fort Bend County Deed Book A:237, County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Richmond, Texas; Eleanor, formerly McGary, had married James McClellan, April 26, 1838, Fort Bend County, Texas, previously cited; Julia Leeds' husband had died and she married Charles Doane in Saint Louis, Missouri, November 14, 1835, as listed in *Index of St. Louis Marriages, 1804-1876, Vol. 1* (St. Louis, Mo.: St. Louis Genealogical Society, 1973), #01-267, pages not numbered.

⁵² Homer Norwood Darst, "The Elizabeth Powell Home," *Frontier Times* 21 (October 1943): 35-36.

⁵³ Elizabeth Kelsey (*sic*) married Edwin Belden, May 24, 1850, Matagorda County, Texas, Marriage Book A:43, #127, County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Bay City, Texas..

⁵⁴ E. Belden et al vs. W.E. Kendall et al., case number 3181, Fort Bend County District Court Minutes, H:735, judgment rendered October 27, 1882, filed on November 9, 1882; Elizabeth Belden and husband vs. W. E. Kendall and S. A. Hackworth, case number 3184, Fort Bend County Court Minutes, H: 736, judgment rendered October 27, 1882, filed on November 9, 1882; E. Belden and husband vs. W.E. Kendall and S. A. Hackworth, case number 3195, Fort Bend County District Court Minutes, H:736-737, judgment rendered October 27, 1882, filed on November 9, 1882. Fort Bend County District Court Minutes at Archives, George Memorial Library, Richmond, Texas. These court cases settled the issue of ownership of the old Elizabeth Powell League in favor of Mary Darst, and the property is still in the Darst family as of this writing.

⁵⁵ Darst, "The Elizabeth Powell Home," previously cited. The Damons, Darsts, and Hodges families intermarried, and some of the land was passed by inheritance. For genealogy of these families see *Wharton's History of Fort Bend County*, 142-144.

⁵⁶ Deed of Elizabeth Powell to Samuel Damon, Fort Bend County, Texas, Deed Book A: #350, County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Richmond.

⁵⁷ *Handbook of Texas Online*, "Samuel Damon," accessed December 27, 2006 at <www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/DD/fda95.html>.

⁵⁸ Probate file of Leman Kelcy (1837), County of Harrisburg (now Harris County), Vol. A: 339, microfilm no. 1314032, Clayton Library, Houston, Texas. Harrisburg County was changed to Harris County in 1839.

⁵⁹ Probate file of Joseph J. Powell (1837), Brazoria County, Texas, probate file 394, County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Angleton.

⁶⁰ Harrisburg County (now Harris Co.) Tax Roll, 1837, p. 18, entry no. 8, for Mrs. Elizabeth Kelcy, microfilm at Clayton Library, Houston.

⁶¹ W.L. Davidson affidavit, November 5, 1915, Deed Book 70:633, Fort Bend County, Texas, copy in papers of Clarence R. Wharton, B6 (no pagination), Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

⁶² Lubbock, *Six Decades in Texas*, 100. Lubbock tells of tight race between M. T. Rodgers and Samuel G. Powell for Sheriff of Harris County in 1841; notice in *Telegraph and Texas Register*, Sam G. Powell as a candidate for the office of Harris County Sheriff, Wednesday, January 13, 1840, microfilm; same notice in several editions on same film roll; also, sheriff's sale notices in same newspaper for February and March of 1841 signed by Samuel G. Powell, sheriff.

⁶³ Marriage record of Samuel G. Powell and Elizabeth E. Sheppard, Matagorda County, Republic of Texas Marriages, Book A: No. 64, 30 October 1843, Matagorda County Courthouse, County Clerk's Office, Bay City, Texas.

⁶⁴ Affidavit of W. L. Davidson, November 5, 1915, Deed Book 70:633, Fort Bend County, Texas, previously cited; marriage record for Sam Powell to Elizabeth Sheppard, Matagorda County, cited above, and for Elizabeth Kelsey (*sic*) to Edwin Belden, Matagorda County Marriage Book A:43, #127 (1850), cited above; baptism of Eleanor (Powell) McClellan's son Joseph Powell McClellan, March 1849, with Sam and Betty Powell as sponsors, in *Registar (sic) of the Parish of Christ Episcopal Church*, [Christ Church, Matagorda], Matagorda County, cited above; Julia (Powell) Leeds Doane died in New Orleans, Louisiana, July 6, 1842, as reported in the *New Orleans Times Picayune*, July 8, 1842, p. 2, col. 5.

Chapter 5 Log Houses in Early Texas

By Robert T. Shelby

In the 18th and 19th centuries, as people migrated from the Atlantic coast to the forested interior of the US, the basics of food, clothing, and shelter were a paramount concern. Before crops could be planted and harvested, food and clothing came from the animals of the forest. Initially a family might live in a tent or brush arbor, but soon they would need a more permanent shelter. The forest supplied this need also. Without many carpenter skills and

These planks were held down with weighted poles laid at right angles to the planks.

The spaces between the logs of the walls were packed with straw, moss, blocks of wood or stone and held in place with packed clay. This fill was called chinking. Window and door openings were then cut into the walls, and to keep out bad weather, doors and shutters were hung on wooden hinges or from leather straps. Wooden pegs, called treenails, were used in the

absence of metal fasteners. Sometimes an animal skin, scraped very thin, was placed over a window. This could not be seen through, but allowed light to enter. Floors were often merely hard packed earth, or a puncheon floor was made of split logs, flat side up with the unworked or bark side down to the ground. Fireplaces were built into one gable wall; and chimneys, where stone was absent, were created from pole frames with a latticework of small sticks, which was then

packed and plastered with mud or clay. Thus, the farther from civilization, the less available were nails, bricks, glass or metal hardware, and the pioneer fashioned what was at hand to substitute for manufactured products.

Trees and most labor were free, so there was no great expense in the creation of these small rough structures. Rude homes were made in these basic one-room log cabins and were serviceable until perhaps expanded with later additions or until a better house could be built. However, when people decided that cheaper or

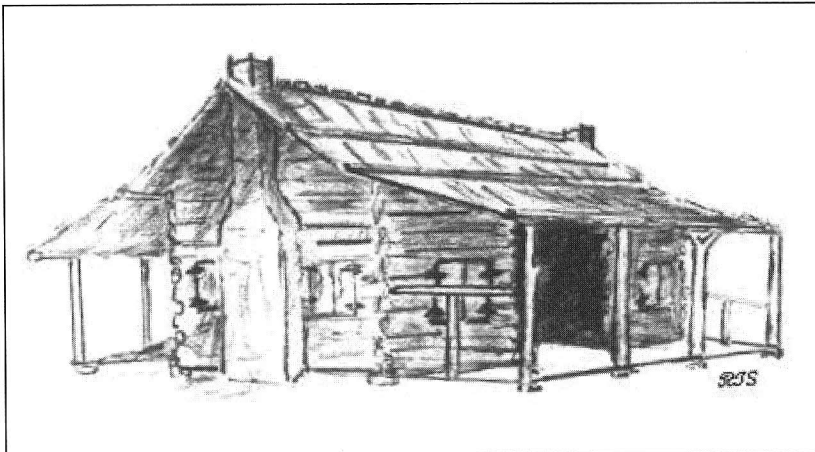


Illustration by Robert T. Shelby

Figure 5.1: Dogtrot Log House

with only axes as the main tools, pioneers cut down trees, made them into logs usually ten to twenty feet long, notched the ends, and stacked them horizontally one upon another. The notched ends were interlocked at right angles with the logs forming a hollow square or rectangle. When the walls reached a height slightly above a man's head, a simple A-frame roof support was built over the structure. The roof cover was flat planks of wood, split from logs, three feet or more in length, and an inch or so thick, laid flat on the roof supports. The roof planks ran from the ridge to the eaves.

better land could be had farther west, they often abandoned their houses and built similar ones in the new land.

The dogtrot log house, favored in the lower South, was two one-room cabins, as described above, joined together by a common roof. A space was left between the rooms to create a passageway, usually 8 to 16 feet wide. The ends of the passageway were left open and could have allowed the family dog to trot under roof from the front to the rear of the house—a possible explanation for the name of this style of house. Often a loft was built over this passageway as a sleeping space for the boys of the family. The doors to the rooms opened into this hall or “breezeway” to allow fresh air to circulate, even on rainy days.

Front and rear porches were often added to dogtrot houses to give the occupants more covered living area. Here meals and other activities could take place on hot summer days under the shade of a roof, but in the open air to

get the benefit of a breeze. The kitchen for the dogtrot house and most log houses was often in a separate small building in the back. This arrangement kept down the heat from cooking in the main house, and as cooking was done on an open hearth, a separate cookhouse reduced the chances of burning the home.

The dogtrot house, brought to Texas mostly by settlers from the lower South, is an example of adaptation to climate, geography, economics of the times, and available technology. Response to these influences made this style of home the choice for many early colonists in Texas, such as Elizabeth Powell and her family.

Addendum

Full-size replicas of dog trot cabins exist at San Felipe de Austin State Park and at Log Cabin Village, Fort Worth, as well as other locations around the state. For further reading on the subject, a list of useful references appears on the following page.

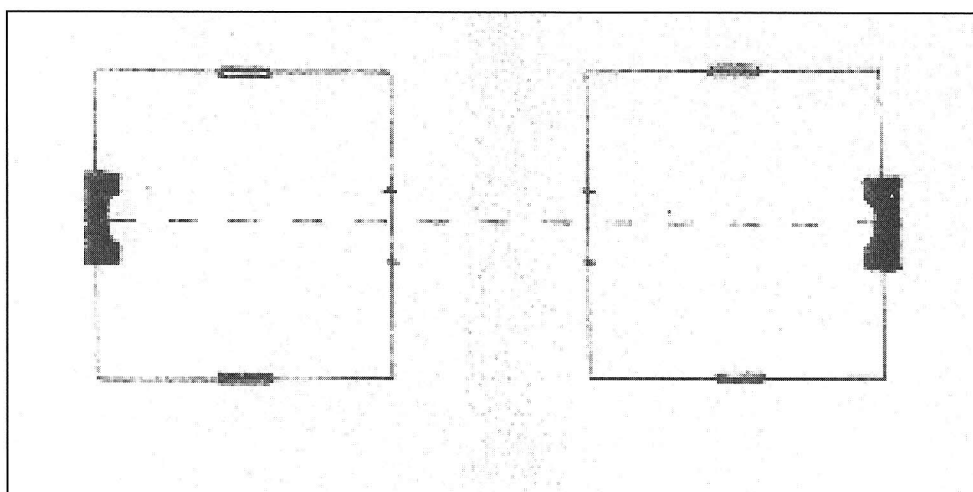


Figure 5.2: Floor Plan of a Dogtrot Cabin

References:

Jordan, Terry G., et al

1980 *Log Cabin Village: A History and Guide*. Texas State Historical Association.

Jordan, Terry G.

1978 *Texas Log Buildings: A Folk Architecture*. University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas.

McRaven, Charles

1978 *Building the Hewn Log House*. Thomas Y. Crowell Publishers, New York City, New York.

Swanson, William

1948 *Log Cabins and How to Build Them*. The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut.

Weslager, C. A.

1969 *The Log Cabin in America: From Pioneer Days to the Present*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

