

ROBERTS-DOLEZAL FARMSTEAD
75 miles northeast of the intersection
of CR 27 and FM 1722
Garrett Vicinity
Ellis County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3380

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
Southwest System Support Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 728
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROBERTS-DOLEZAL FARMSTEAD

HABS NO. TX-3380

For more information about other structures at the Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, see:

- HABS No. TX-3380-A Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Main House
- HABS No. TX-3380-B Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Garage
- HABS NO. TX-3380-C Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Shed No. 2
- HABS NO. TX-3380-D Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Barn No. 3
- HABS NO. TX-3380-E Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Work Shed
- HABS No. TX-3380-F Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Privy
- HABS No. TX-3380-G Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Barn No. 2
- HABS No. TX-3380-H Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Barn No. 1
- HABS No. TX-3380-I Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead, Storage Shed No. 1

Location: 75 miles northeast of the intersection of CR 27
and FM 1722
Garrett Vicinity, Ellis County, Texas

USGS Ennis West, Texas Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates
14.719020.3583120

Present Owner: Texas National Research Laboratory Commission
(TNRLC)
1801 N. Hampton Road, Suite 400
DeSoto, Texas 75115

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of

Significance: The Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead is symbolic of the assimilation of Eastern Europeans into early twentieth century American culture. Although the front of the house resembles a 1920s craftsman bungalow, the original building dates to the 1880s. The farmstead is named for Jefferson D. Roberts and Joseph (Joe) Dolezal, who owned the property for a combined 65 years. Jefferson D. Roberts purchased this land in 1880, which originally encompassed 100 acres in the Claibourne

Garrett Survey, and built the house soon thereafter. Like most residents of rural Ellis County during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Roberts was a cotton farmer. He operated a family-run farm that included only the 100 acres in the Garrett Survey. He sold the property in 1913. Four years later, Joe Dolezal acquired the land and the buildings on it and eventually added the existing front wing on the house. Dolezal was one of a large number of Bohemian immigrants who settled in eastern Ellis County during the early twentieth century and who today comprise a significant portion of the population in Ennis and surrounding areas. Dolezal later purchased other nearby properties, as well as a town lot in Ennis, while continuing to live in this house. He sold this property to his son, Joseph (Joe) Dolezal, Jr., who kept the land from 1949 until 1979. The Roberts-Dolezal Farmstead's significance stems principally from its association with the influx of Eastern European immigrants into Ellis County during the early twentieth century and their assimilation into the existing culture.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: ca. 1880

2. Architect: None

3. Original and Subsequent Owners:

Jefferson D. Roberts (1880-1913)

W.P. Slater (1913-1917)

Joseph Dolezal (1917-1949)

Joseph Dolezal, Jr. (1949-1976)

Robert L. Mitchell (1976-1992)

Texas National Research Laboratory Commission (1992-present)

4. Builders, Contractors and Suppliers: Unknown

5. Original Plans and Construction: No original architectural plans or drawings were located during research

investigations. Such drawings probably never existed for the vernacular buildings on the property.

6. Alterations and Additions: An ell addition was built on the east side of the main house ca. 1900, the north porch additions were built ca. 1905-10, and the bungalow porch was added ca. 1920. The outbuildings were added to at unknown times during the twentieth century.

B. Historical Context:

Jefferson D. Roberts established this farmstead in 1880 after acquiring a 100-acre parcel in the Claibourne Garrett Survey from Robert M. Wyatt for \$550 [1]. Relatively little is known about Roberts; however, census and tax data confirm that he was a farmer whose only landholding was this 100-acre parcel which he farmed for 33 years.

Roberts was born in Mississippi in February 1851. The exact date of his arrival to Texas is unknown, but he was not a taxpaying resident of Ellis County in 1879, the year before he bought this property [2]. Roberts and his wife Mary, also a native of Mississippi, married in 1883 and subsequently had three children. Susan, the eldest, was born in June 1884, and Aaron and Helen were born in February 1888 and September 1896, respectively [3].

When Roberts purchased the land in 1880, Ellis County was beginning to realize its vast potential as an agricultural center and was the state's seventh largest supplier of cotton, with 14,956 bales of ginned cotton [4]. By 1890, Ellis County surpassed all others in the state in cotton production, and it held that position for most of the next 40 years [5]. Most of this cotton came from tenant farms, but owner-operated farms, like the Roberts farmstead, also supplied significant amounts.

Increased cotton totals in Ellis County during the late nineteenth century stemmed from three major factors: abundant and fertile soils, an improved transportation network, and a rapidly expanding population. Early settlers to the area recognized the Blackland Prairies, which extend through much of Ellis County, to be conducive for farming, but the harsh pioneer conditions prevented efforts to grow cash crops on a large scale. Wheat, corn, rye and oats were the most commonly cultivated agricultural goods [6]. As they cleared and improved more land for cultivation, local farmers discovered that cotton was well suited for the Blackland Prairies, but the poor road system made it

difficult to take cotton to markets. The arrival of rail service in the 1870s eased the problem and encouraged farmers to devote more land to cotton. An influx of new settlers to the region, many of whom hailed originally from the Upland and Lowland South, came to Ellis County in the 1870s and 1880s to participate in the ensuing cotton boom. They provided the manpower necessary to harvest cotton, an extremely labor-intensive task. Most new residents who settled in rural areas became tenant farmers and typically gave one-quarter of their cotton crop to landlords. Some new settlers, however, bought and farmed their own land [7].

Jefferson D. Roberts was part of this mass migration of Southerners into Ellis and surrounding counties who contributed much to the region's cotton boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ad valorem tax rolls of the 1880s and 1890s reveal that Roberts had only a few livestock and little taxable property. His net worth remained at modest levels and his most substantial investment was the 100-acre parcel. Although he purchased the property in 1880 for \$550, the land value increased to \$1,500 by 1885. The large rise suggests improvements to the property, as well as the increased demand for fertile Ellis County lands [8].

Roberts' name does not appear in the 1880 Agricultural Schedule because he had not yet owned the land long enough to be included in the census. Since Agricultural Schedules after 1870 have not survived, the amount and kinds of crops Roberts grew are not known. He likely devoted a substantial amount of his tillable land to cotton, but probably also reserved a few acres to grow grains and other crops for family consumption. Cotton had become such a large and significant component in the local agriculture-based economy that almost all farmers grew at least some cotton on their lands.

As cotton growing became significant in the local economy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, another important trend became evident. Eastern Europeans came to Ellis County in large numbers and altered the area's demographic composition. The vast majority of these immigrants listed their birthplace as Bohemia or Moravia (most of which are in present-day Czechoslovakia). Although some moved to Ennis, most were farmers who settled in the surrounding rural areas, including land near the Roberts farm. The 1910 Population Census reflects this pattern. In Enumeration District 127, which included the Roberts Farmstead, United States-born citizens occupied the majority of the farms, but a number of Eastern Europeans had

settled in the area by that time. Six families of Eastern European descent lived near Roberts, including Joe Dolezal, who later acquired the Roberts farmstead [9].

In 1913 Roberts sold his farm to W.P. Slater for \$12,000, a substantial increase from the \$550 purchase price of 33 years earlier [10]. Slater sold it on November 28, 1917 to Joseph Dolezal for \$15,251.50 [11] and the property remained in the Dolezal family for the next sixty-nine years.

Joseph Dolezal was born on October 30, 1879 in Bechyne, about seventy-five miles south of Prague, in present day Czechoslovakia. In 1902 he immigrated to the United States by way of Bremen, Germany, and arrived in New York City on March 19, 1902. He and his wife Jose, who also came from Bechyne, were married in 1905 and lived in Ellis County by 1907 when their first child, Joseph, Jr., was born. The other four children (Rosa, Emma, Jettie and Agnes) were born in Ellis County between 1909 and 1916 [12].

By the time Dolezal bought this land, Eastern Europeans (specifically Bohemians and Moravians) comprised a significant segment of the local population. They tended to settle in clusters and formed their own social structures. Although the initial wave of settlers arrived in the late nineteenth century and some of them may have built houses that reflected traditional folk architecture of their homeland, no evidence of such buildings is known to survive in Ellis County [13]. Those who came later, such as Dolezal, built houses that conformed to the existing architectural character. The addition Dolezal built onto the house in the farm provides a vivid illustration of this trend. Dolezal added a new porch that made the small vernacular nineteenth century house appear to be larger and more fashionable. It also represented Dolezal's attempts to assimilate into American society.

In subsequent years Dolezal continued to farm the land and erected other agriculture-related outbuildings near the home. He acquired other properties in the area and by 1935 owned a total of six parcels including a town lot in nearby Ennis. However, he maintained his residence on the 100-acre tract in the Garrett Survey [14].

In 1949 Joseph Dolezal, Jr., acquired the farmstead as a gift from his father and as a settlement with his mother's estate [15]. He kept the property until 1976 when Robert and Eileen

from his father and as a settlement with his mother's estate [15]. He kept the property until 1976 when Robert and Eileen Mitchell, the last private owners, purchased the land [16].

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT:

A. General Statement:

- 1. Architectural Character:** Located in the vicinity of Garret is one of the most intact farmsteads in the area; it features buildings which were occupied from the late nineteenth to late twentieth centuries. The site includes a one-story, single-pile vernacular house with a bungalow porch, side ell and rear porch additions. (See photographic documentation HABS No. TX-3380-1 through HABS No. TX-3380-J-1 and HABS drawings, Sheets 1 through 4). The house survives with a garage, a one-and-a-half-story barn, two one-story barns, three sheds, a privy and two cisterns.
- 2. Condition of the Fabric:** The house is in fair condition, the barns are in good condition, and the sheds and privy are in fair to poor condition.

B. Site:

- 1. General Setting:** The house faces southeast and is oriented perpendicular to and is located 0.25 miles northwest of CR 27. The site is open pasture land which slopes gently to the southeast, and is approached from the road by a gravel drive.
- 2. Buildings:** The site includes a one-story, single-pile house, HABS No. TX-3380-A; a one-story garage, HABS No. TX-3380-B; three sheds, HABS Nos. TX-3380-C, 3380-E, 3380-I; two one-story barns, HABS Nos. TX-3380-D, TX-3380-G; a one-and-a-half-story barn, HABS No. TX-3380-H; a privy and two cisterns, HABS Nos. TX-3380-F, TX-3380-J, TX-3380-K.
- 3. Landscaping, Enclosures:** The site is heavily landscaped, includes plant material introduced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and consists of a diverse collection of plant specimens. Pomegranate, Mulberry, Nandina, and Lilac have been planted as ornamentals about the house. Prickly Pear cactus has been planted as an ornamental near one of the barns. Shade specimens include Vitex, Bois d'arc, Red Cedar,

American Elm, and China Berry and have been located near outbuildings. The site includes large amounts of Hackberry, with caliper sizes ranging from 5" to 18", which have grown into dense hedgerows and are interspersed with Honey Locust, Arbovitae, English Privet and Mesquite. Pear, in calipers ranging from 13" to 20", have been occasionally planted near the house.

PART III: ENDNOTES

1. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record X:464.
2. Texas. State Comptrollers Office, Ad Valorem Tax Rolls for Ellis County, 1880.
3. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas." 1900.
4. U.S. Department of the Interior, Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883).
5. U.S. Department of the Interior, Report on the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895).
6. U.S. Department of the Interior, Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883).
7. Killis P. Almond, Jr. and Randall W. Moir, "Historic Structures Management Plan, submitted to TNRLC on behalf of the U.S. Department of Energy in Support of the Superconducting Super Collider," 1992:48.
8. Texas. State Comptrollers Office, Ad Valorem Tax Rolls for Ellis County.
9. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas." 1910.
10. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 198:513.
11. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 231:316.

12. Ellis County Genealogical Society, Ellis County Naturalization Records, (Waxahachie, Texas: Ellis County Genealogical Society, 1980),8.

13. Daniel Hardy and David Moore, "Historic Resources Survey for Ellis County, Texas: An Inventory for the U.S. Department of Energy," 1990.

14. Texas. State Comptrollers Office, Ad Valorem Tax Rolls for Ellis County.

15. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 401:94.

16. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 604:527.

PART IV: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings: No original plans or drawings are known to exist.

B. Early Views: No early photographs have been located.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources

Ellis County, Texas, Naturalization Records. Waxahachie: Ellis County Genealogical Society, 1980.

Ellis County, Texas. Office of the County Clerk. Deed Records.

Ellis County, Texas. Office of the County Tax Assessor/Collector. Tax Abstracts of Lands.

Texas. State Comptrollers Office. Ad Valorem Tax Rolls for Ellis County. On file at the Genealogical Collection at the Texas State Library.

U.S. Department of the Interior. Report on the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895.

U.S. Department of the Interior. Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas." 1900.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas." 1910.

2. Secondary and published sources

Almond, Killis P., Jr., and Moir Randall W. "Historic Structures Management Plan, submitted to TNRLC on behalf of the U.S. Department of Energy in Support of the Superconducting Super Collider." 1992.

Hardy, Daniel, and Moore, David. "Historic Resources Survey of Ellis County: An Inventory for the U.S. Department of Energy." 1990.

Hawkins, Edna Davis, Ruth Stone, Ida M. Brookshire and Lillie Tolleson. History of Ellis County Texas. Waco: Texian Press, 1972.

Machann, Clinton, and Mendl, James W. Krásná Amerika: A Study of the Texas Czechs, 1851-1939. Austin: Eakin Press, 1983.

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) recording project was undertaken by the Texas National Research Laboratory Commission (TNRLC) in conjunction with the Superconducting Super Collider Project in Ellis County. The project was conducted in accordance with TNRLC's Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Energy, The Texas Historical Commission and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The MOA stipulates that a record be created of buildings to be demolished in the project area. The field work and measured drawings were prepared by ArchiTexas of Dallas. The recording team consisted of Bruce Fowler, Gary Garmon, Gilbert Hickox, Larry Irsik, Craig King, Richard Martratt, Craig Melde, Jeanie O'Brien, Ernesto Robles, Edward Sergeant, Gary Skotnicki, Stan Solamillo, and Diane Van Buren. Historical research was conducted under the supervision of David Moore of Hardy, Heck, Moore of Austin.

Architectural analysis and descriptions were prepared by Stan Solamillo of Dallas. Archival photography was by Brendan Dunnigan and Doug Hankins of Arlington.