

BOZ GIN COMPLEX

.05 miles east of the intersection of Boz
and Great House Roads
Waxahachie Vicinity
Ellis County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3386

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Intermountain Regional Office

National Park Service

P.O. Box 25287

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BOZ GIN COMPLEX

HABS NO. TX-3386

For more information about other structures on the Boz Gin Complex, see:

HABS No. TX-3386-A Boz Gin Complex, Scales House

HABS No. TX-3386-B Boz Gin Complex, Gin Foundation

Location: .05 miles east of the intersection of Boz and Greathouse
Roads
Waxahachie vicinity, Ellis County, Texas

USGS Boz, Texas, Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates
14.695180.3576290

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 Boz Gin Scales House is the only extant structure of the old Boz Gin Complex. It is on a small parcel in the William M. Turner Survey and dates to about 1910. The Scales House weighed freshly harvested cotton and facilitated the processing and marketing of cotton grown in the Boz area. The Boz Gin was one of many such operations that dotted the rural landscape of Ellis County during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when area farms produced some of the highest yields of cotton in the nation. Henry Wilder erected a steam-powered gin near the Scales House about 1880. In 1910 the Boz Gin Company purchased the operation and probably built the Scales House soon after their acquisition of the property. Many leaders in the Boz Community, including B.F. Forrester, Sr., Ira Graves, W.B. Sims and A.E. Murdock, owned interests in or were involved with the business. About 1921 the firm erected a new electric-powered gin across the road from the old gin and the Scales House. In 1934

L.L. Mosley and F.F. Underwood acquired the business, which continued operations until about 1940 when cotton yields by local growers declined to such an extent that the gin was no longer needed. The subsequent dismantling of the gin equipment and facilities left the Scales House as the only intact building associated with the gin's operation. The Boz Gin Company Scales House illustrates the important role gins played in the local cotton trade of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: ca. 1910
2. Architect: None
3. Original and Subsequent Owners:
 - Boz Gin Co. (1910-1933)
 - Citizen's National Bank of Waxahachie (1933)
 - L.S. Mosley and R.F. Underwood (1933-1941)
 - L.S. Mosley (1941-1948)
 - N.C. Buck (1948-1978)
 - Roger W. and Nancy B. Williams (1978-1991)
 - Texas National Research Laboratory Commission (1991-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: Scales equipment was removed (ca. 1940). Random-length vee groove metal sheets have been added to the structure to prevent further deterioration (ca. 1980).

B. Historical Context:

The Boz Gin Scales House is one of the few remaining buildings associated with the non-extant community of Boz, a small rural settlement in western Ellis County. Although the Scales House

dates to ca. 1910, the building is associated with a ginning operation that began about 1880 when area farmers began to grow substantial amounts of cotton. The gin attracted people and business to the area, and the community of Boz slowly evolved.

Permanent settlement came to western Ellis County in the late 1840s and 1850s when the Sims, Brack, Turner, Dunaway and other families moved to the area. They established an agrarian-based society that initially relied on family-run farms, as well as cattle ranching [1]. Most of the farmers grew wheat, corn, oats, rye and other crops that could be used for self-sufficiency [2]. Few residents had slaves, and cotton, which became so vital to the county's subsequent development, was a relatively insignificant part of the local economy. By 1860, for example, the county produced only 359 bales of cotton, ranking seventieth in the state. Annual yields climbed slowly during the 1860s as local farmers recognized the fertility of the soil; by 1870, Ellis County was the forty-fifth largest supplier of cotton in Texas [3].

Although much of the land in western and other parts of Ellis County was conducive to cotton cultivation, a number of factors — poor means of transportation and limited availability of labor — hampered early efforts at large-scale production. However, the arrival of railroads and the almost three-fold increase in the county's population between 1870 and 1880 changed the character of Ellis County and ushered in an era of unprecedented growth. Much of this prosperity relied on cotton production, as area farmers planted more acres in cotton and increased productivity [4]. By 1880 Ellis County was the seventh largest producer in Texas [5].

The planting, growing and harvesting of cotton was fundamental to the local cotton market, but gins represented another vital component in the cotton trade, and they enabled farmers to enjoy greater prosperity during the ensuing cotton boom. Gins extracted seeds and prepared the cotton for shipment and further processing. People of varied backgrounds and professions owned gins during the nineteenth century, and they usually hired laborers to run the operations. Gin owners typically selected strategic locations near established roads which were accessible to farmers as sites to build their gins. Since the earliest gins were steam-powered, most stood near a creek or other reliable sources of water [6]. The gin at Boz was one such operation.

Henry Wilder reportedly built the gin at Boz about 1880. He came to Ellis County in 1874 and, like most of those who arrived at that time, established a farm. He married Jane Turner, a daughter of pioneer Walter M. Turner, who was a farmer and owner of a large amount of land in western Ellis county. Wilder erected his gin in the Walter M. Turner Survey adjacent to a well that provided an ample source of water for the steam-powered engine [7].

The gin quickly became an important gathering point in western Ellis County, and by 1900 a small number of houses and buildings stood near the gin. John Harwell, Joseph Smith and John Warren were blacksmiths, and John Bennett and Jasper Alexander each operated their own grocery stores [8]. Local residents also built a school. These buildings, along with the gin, a post office and the surrounding farmsteads comprised the community of Boz [9].

In 1900 Ellis County began to lead the state in cotton production. Annual yields and the number of acres planted in cotton rose from previous years, as did farm productivity. The Census Bureau reports that Ellis County ginned 91,298 bales in 1900, an increase exceeding 100 percent from a decade earlier. A proliferation of gins accompanied this rise in cotton production. In 1901 over thirty gins, including the one in Boz, operated in Ellis County, and by 1920 the county had the largest number of operating gins in the state of Texas [11].

George W. Maxwell and Ira Green jointly owned the gin when the 1900 census was taken [12]. Ten years later, they sold the operation to the Boz Gin Company, a locally organized firm that included members of some of the most successful farming families in the area. The Boz Gin Company paid \$3,500 for the land and the equipment [13]. Soon after acquiring the property, the Boz Gin Company reportedly erected the Scales House, which served as an office and also weighed the cotton before it was ginned [14].

The Boz Gin Company continued to use the old steam-powered gin, which stood behind the Scales House, throughout the 1910s. Cotton production climbed during this period and improvements in ginning equipment prompted the firm to build a new, more efficient gin. A deed of trust filed with the Waxahachie National Bank suggests that the Boz Gin Company, with B.F. Forrester, Sr. as president and W.B. Sims as manager, built the new gin in 1921 [15]. The new gin was built on the opposite side the road and used electricity, rather than steam, as a source of

power. Although it dismantled the old gin, the Boz Gin Company spared the Scales House and used it in tandem with the new gin [16].

Ellis County's cotton boom continued into the 1920s, but soil exhaustion, reduced demands for cotton during the nationwide economic depression of the very late 1920s and early 1930s, and other factors affected the operation of the gin. As cotton prices fell, the gin experienced financial difficulties, and on April 12, 1933, the Boz Gin Company conveyed the property to the Citizen's National Bank of Waxahachie. R.F. Underwood and L.S. Mosley purchased the gin the next day and operated the gin for several years [17]. In 1941 R.F. Underwood conveyed his interest in the business to L.S. Mosley, but by that time, the cotton boom had declined to such an extent that the gin was no longer in demand. It ceased operations in the early 1940s [18]. Other gins in the county experienced similar fates, as much of the state's cotton was then being grown in west and south Texas.

Although the Boz Gin was abandoned and its equipment dismantled, the Scales House was spared. It stands as a tangible link to an important era in the local history and is one of the few buildings that remains in the heart of the Boz community.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Located in the vicinity of Waxahachie, in the historic but no longer extant community of Boz, is the Boz Gin Complex, comprised of the Boz Gin Scales House and Gin. The one-story, single-pile, two-bay building features vernacular details similar to the pyramidal houses in the area and is the only remaining structure directly associated with the local cotton industry. It has an open bay or wagon way, with a scale chase below the floor boards for weighing fully-loaded seed wagons or carts, a one-room office with an interior chimney, and an engaged front porch. The building survives with the gin foundation and wheel chase.
2. Condition of the Fabric: The chimney of the scales house is sound, the roof and walls are in good condition. The interior is in fair condition; however, pieces of the original office millwork (100) have been removed. The scales and related equipment have also been removed from the chase

(001). The gin has been demolished and only a concrete foundation and a brick wheel chase remain.

B. Site:

1. General Setting: The scales house and the gin foundation are located on the south and north sides of Great House Road.
2. Landscaping Enclosures: The scales house is shaded with American Elm, with calipers ranging from 3" to 16". A hedgerow is located at the south edge of the site. The remains of the gin are heavily overgrown with trees of varying sized calipers and consists of hackberry, black locust, and green ash, ranging from 4" to 22".

PART III: ENDNOTES

1. 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.
2. U.S. Department of the Interior, Agriculture of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Eighth Census, by Joseph C. Kennedy, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864).
3. Ibid, 1870.
4. Almond and Moir, "Historic Structures Management Plan."
5. 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).
6. Raymond White, "The Texas Cotton Ginning Industry, 1860-1900," Texana 4 (Winter 1967): 344-358.
7. Ellis County Genealogical Society, Searchers and Researchers, Volume III. Waxahachie, Texas: Ellis County Genealogical Society, 1992.
8. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas," 1900.

9. Stanley Murdock and Yula Glenn Murdock, Interview by Terri Myers, written notes, Waxahachie, Texas, 12 June 1992.
10. Almond and Moir, "Historic Structures Management Plan."
11. Almond and Moir, "Historic Structures Management Plan."
12. Ellis County Deed Record 115:177; U.S., Bureau of the Census, "Population Schedule: Ellis County, Texas," 1900.
13. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 115:177.
14. Stanley Murdock and Yula Glenn Murdock.
15. Ellis County, Texas, Deed of Trust Records 93:167.
16. Stanley Murdock and Yula Glenn Murdock.
17. Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 318:214; Ellis County, Texas, Tax Abstracts of Lands; Ellis County, Texas, Deed Record 397:183.
18. Stanley Murdock and Yula Glenn Murdock.

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. Interviews:

McGregor, Frances Dunaway. Interviews by Terri Myers. Written notes. Waxahachie, Texas. 20 May 1992 and 12 June 1992.

Murdock, Stanley, and Murdock, Yula Glenn. Interview by Terri Myers. Written notes. Waxahachie, Texas. 12 June 1992.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources

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

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. Ninth Census- Volume III: The Statistics of the Wealth and Industry of the United States, by Francis A. Walker. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872.

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.

Ellis County Genealogical Society. Searchers and Researchers. Volume XV. Waxahachie, Texas: Ellis County Genealogical Society, 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.

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.