

A.F. Combs House

HABS No. TX-3406

(Moore House) ~~4177542~~

West side of State Highway (F.M.) 2152

1-3/4 miles north of U.S. Highway 30

Mount Pleasant vicinity

Titus County

Texas

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Rocky Mountain Regional Office

National Park Service

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

A.F. COMBS HOUSE
(Moore House)

HABS NO. TX-3406

Location: West side of State Highway (F.M.) 2152, 1 3/4 miles north of U.S. Highway 30, Mount Pleasant vicinity, Titus County, Texas (Figure 1). Universal Transverse Mercator coordinates: 315,208 meters E; 3,675,262 meters N; Zone 15.

Significance: The A.F. Combs (Moore) House has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent local example of a rural vernacular, central-hall dwelling that has been progressively modified over time (Texas Historical Commission 1992).

Description: The building is a single story, wood-frame dwelling in a typical rural farmstead setting (Figure 2) which features a square, central-hall plan (Figure 3) with a pyramidal roof and centrally placed dormers facing front and rear. Although the building retains most of its original architectural materials and character (see Figure 4 and Section II - Photo-Data) the following alterations appear to have occurred in one phase during the 1960s:

- all original one-over-one wooden sashes have been replaced with aluminum sashes; some of a slightly smaller size, others of an entirely different size and configuration
- the replacement of sashes has necessitated that almost all window openings be altered in size - typically by raising the sill slightly and filling in the siding beneath
- a rear-facing dormer has been added to match the original front-dormer

The interior of the building also retains its original architectural materials and character (see Figure 5 and Section II - Photo-Data) to a remarkable extent, particularly in the central hallway and dining room. Other portions of the interior have been extensively altered in recent decades (Capel 1995) by the removal of at least one (possibly two) fireplaces), addition of a staircase to access the attic space (converted to a large bedroom with closets and bath), and renovation of the bath and kitchen areas. Notable features of the interior include original wooden door and window moldings as well as china cabinets in the dining room. The original fireplace mantles and window sashes have been salvaged and stored in a nearby barn. It is unclear whether the "original bathroom" in the northeast corner of the house is in fact an original element of the house (Capel 1995), or whether it represents an minor alteration early in the building's history.

History: The house is believed to have been built circa 1917¹ by local builder Pink Wray for Albert F. Combs, who was prominent within the county as the most prosperous peach grower in Titus County in the early twentieth century (Russel 1965:57). Mr. Combs' prosperity may account for the relatively high quality of architectural detailing in this house by comparison to most other rural homesites of the same time period in Titus County. There are no known construction plans for the house, and it is unlikely that an architect was directly involved in the building's design. It is more likely that the builder used one of many standardized building plans available at the time from local lumber companies. It is also likely that most of the building's architectural components (lumber, fasteners, hardware, doors, windows, columns, etc.) were acquired directly from a local supplier.

A.F. Combs acquired the house's surrounding seventy acre tract, located near the southwest corner of the J.J. Dew Survey (Abstract 156), in 1901 from C.T. Ludlow (Titus County Deed Records Vol. 10:63). It is unclear where Combs and his family resided at that time, although he and his brother, John Henry Combs, both owned additional property in Titus County. When Combs sold the property to N.B. Spearman in 1928, the value of the seventy acre tract, with improvements, had risen to \$6,624 from Combs' original purchase price of \$553. Since its construction the house appears to have been continuously occupied by a series of owners, including N.B. Spearman (1928-1932), John Rogers (1932-1934), E.W. Halbert (1934-1946), Marion Moore (1946 to 1963), and Larry Ward (1963 to 1993).

As noted above, Combs was a successful orchardist. No evidence of peach cultivation was observed in the vicinity of the house, suggesting that Combs used other land holdings for this purpose. It is apparent that the property surrounding the house has been used by subsequent owners for agricultural purposes, including livestock grazing in recent years. Several recent agricultural outbuildings and one older barn (circa 1950) are located on or adjacent to the 5 acre tract which currently encompasses the Combs (Moore) House.

¹ Evidence for this date of construction comes from two sources. One source, Mrs. Narlene Capel, a niece of subsequent owner Marion Moore, indicated that this house and another very similar to it had been built in the Mount Pleasant vicinity by Pink Wray in the 1910 - 1920 period. Titus County Tax Records for the A. F. Combs property support Mrs. Capel's information by indicating an increase in the rendered taxable value of the property from \$700 (in 1917) to \$875 (in 1918) to \$1,200 (in 1919) to \$1,500 (in 1920).

Sources:

Russel, Traylor

1965 "The Combs and Wray Families in Titus County, Texas," in *History of Titus County, Texas*. W.M. Morrison. Waco, Texas. On file at Mount Pleasant Public Library, Mount Pleasant, Texas.

Capel, Narlene

1995 Oral interview conducted by Eugene Foster at Tankersley Gardens, Mount Pleasant, Texas on February 8, 1995.

Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc. (EH&A)

1992 A Plan for the Treatment of Cultural Resources in the Monticello B-2 Surface Lignite Mine, Titus County, Texas. EH&A Document No. 910272, Austin, Texas.

Texas Historical Commission

1992 Letter from James W. Steely to William L. Cox of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, dated October 12, 1992.

Titus County Deed Records - various volumes and dates

Titus County Tax Records - 1917 to 1920

Wegman-French, Lysa

1995 Letter from National Parks Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, to Hector Peña, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6, dated February 21, 1995.

Historian: Eugene R. Foster, Jr., Espey, Huston & Associates, Inc., March 1995.

*FOR MAPS AND SITE PLANS SEE FIELD NOTES