

**HELL-HOLE ON THE BRAZOS:
A HISTORIC RESOURCES STUDY OF CENTRAL STATE FARM,
FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS**

by

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ABSTRACT

In February 2004, Newland Communities contracted with Prewitt and Associates, Inc., to prepare a study that would identify, document, and evaluate buildings and structures more than 50 years old to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. A historian performed research, fieldwork, and analysis. Research revealed that this parcel of land had once been part of early settlement and agricultural development and was acquired by the State of Texas in 1908 for use as Imperial State Farm, a prison facility, later known as Central State Farm. Reconnaissance survey identified and documented 80 historic-age properties; five of these have a high degree of integrity and also underwent intensive survey. Of the 80 documented properties, 44 are recommended as ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. These properties have a low level of integrity, and no further work is recommended. The remaining 36 properties are recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for their associations with the historical development and evolution of prison farms in Texas. Thirty properties recommended as eligible retain a medium degree of integrity. The reconnaissance survey provides sufficient photographic documentation and historical research to understand the salient information about each of these properties, thus no further work is recommended. The remaining 6 properties—five buildings and a cemetery—are recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and retain a high degree of integrity. It is recommended that these five buildings undergo HABS Level II recordation. It is recommended that the cemetery, along with a minimum 100-ft-perimeter buffer, be deeded to the county and that no development occur within the deeded area.

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

In October 2003, the Texas General Land Office (GLO) sold a 2,018-acre tract of land in Fort Bend County to private developer Newland Communities (Figure 1), which will use this land for a master-planned community of residential and commercial development with accompanying public parks and schools. This parcel of land had once been part of early settlement and agricultural development and was acquired by the State of Texas in 1908 for use as Imperial State Farm, a prison facility, which became known as Central State Farm beginning in 1932. Before the sale, the GLO suggested that low probability existed for the occurrence of prehistoric archeological resources on this tract and that intensive land modification practices over a long period of time had negated the integrity of any potential prehistoric sites. The GLO also suggested that buildings and structures on the tract would not meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The GLO further stated, however, that none of the buildings or structures had been identified, documented, or evaluated. The Texas Historical Commission concurred with these recommendations in October 2002 (Skiles 2002a).

After acquiring the property, Newland Communities, with Berg-Oliver Associates acting as agent, applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District, for a wetlands permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The developer requested permission to fill four separate headwater areas totaling 14 acres and 1.97 acres of adjacent wetlands and proposed a wetlands mitigation plan (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District 2003). Newland Communities' permit application triggered the need to identify, document, and evaluate buildings and structures more than 50 years old to fulfill the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. In February 2004, the company contracted with Prewitt and Associates, Inc., to prepare this study.

The historian executed the study in three phases. The first phase was historic research that examined existing available information to identify known historic properties within the study area. This phase began by reviewing and compiling available pertinent documents previously gathered for the GLO by Bob Skiles, the

agency's director of cultural resources management. Chain-of-title documentation that the client furnished was analyzed to understand ownership history. A literature review of primary and secondary sources available in Austin provided general information that established appropriate historic contexts for the study area. The literature review used prison records at the Texas State Library and Archives, secondary sources at the Center for American History at The University of Texas at Austin, and historic maps and archives at the GLO. Information was also obtained from the National Register of Historic Places, state marker and cemetery files at the Texas Historical Commission, and historic aerial photographs from both Tobin International and the Texas Natural Resources Information Systems (Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service 1941, 1958, 1964, 1978, 1985; Texas Natural Resources Information System 1995; Tobin International 1930).

The historic research phase was critical in determining appropriate historic contexts that support evaluations of significance for historic properties in the study area. The literature review revealed two relevant historic contexts. Agricultural development in this area of Fort Bend County involved growing and producing sugar cane from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. Out of the sugar cane industry grew convict labor leases, which evolved into prison farms. At one time Texas had as many as 14 prison farms encompassing more than 81,000 acres that grew and processed food products for their own populations, as well as that of other state institutions, along with cash crops like sugar cane and cotton.

The project's second phase was fieldwork documenting each property more than 50 years old within the study area in February 2004. The study area covers approximately 2,018 acres roughly bounded by U.S. Highway 90A and State Highway 6 on the north, State Highway 6 and First Colony Boulevard on the east, the south property line—about halfway between Alcorn Bayou and the Brazos River—on the south, and the New Territory master-planned community on the west. U.S. Highway 59 bisects the southern half of the study area, extending from southwest to northeast. New Territory Road winds through the study area, heading northward from a U.S. Highway 59 interchange and then curving westward into the New Territory

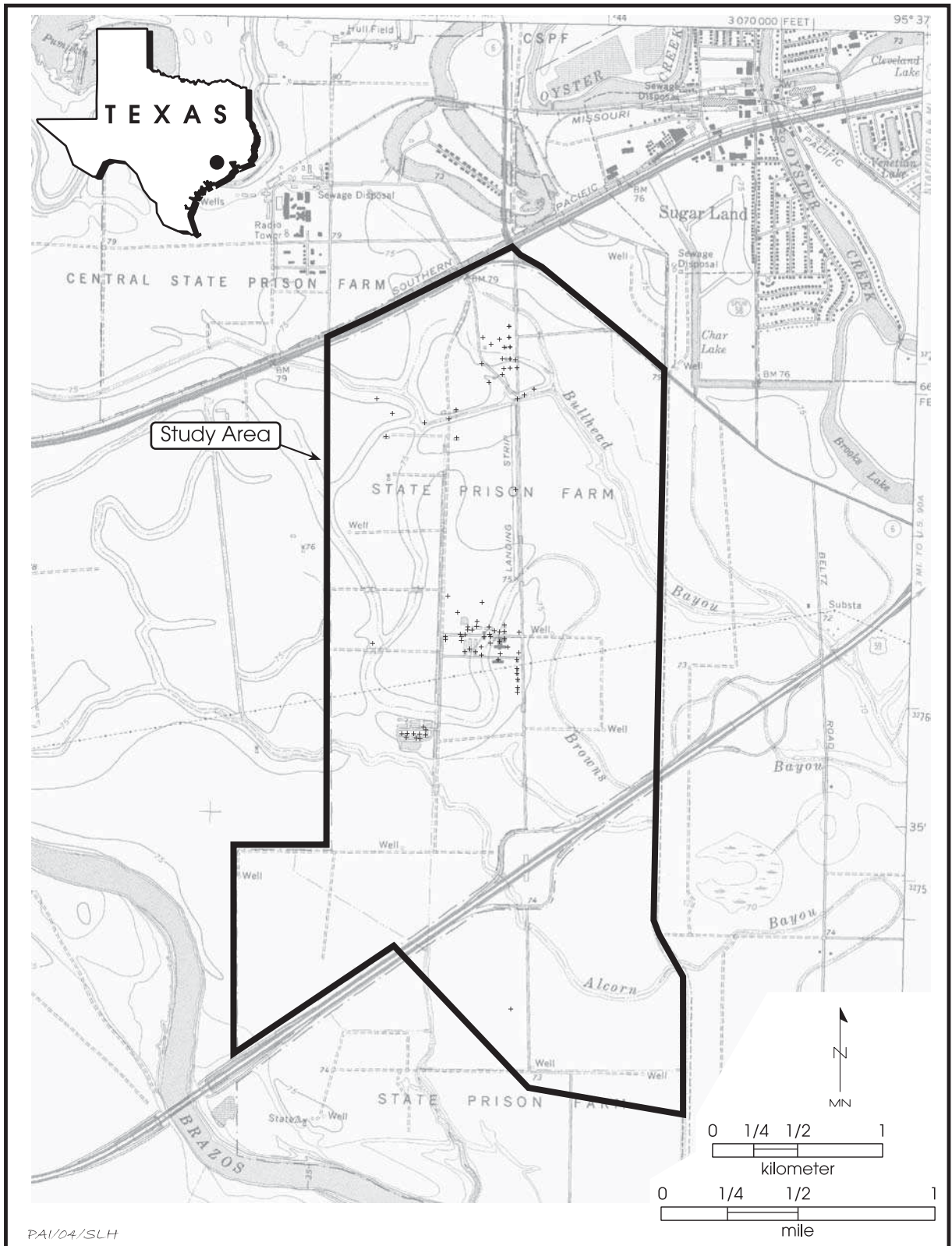


Figure 1. Project location map, showing study area and historic property locations (represented by +).

community. University Boulevard extends due south from the same U.S. Highway 59 interchange to the new University of Houston at Clear Lake campus in the southwest quadrant of the study area. Because the structural integrity of buildings on the property was considered questionable, the historian documented only building exteriors.

Reconnaissance survey identified and documented 80 historic properties. The survey required driving the study area's perimeter and the one paved road within it to identify and document potential historic properties along these routes. The perimeter yielded no historic properties. One property was documented along New Territory Boulevard (Property 27). Because most roads within the study area were too muddy to drive, the historian surveyed these areas on foot. Each road that appeared on historic maps and aerial photographs was traversed to detect historic properties. The historian photographed each historic building and structure, both extant and ruinous resources, with 35-mm color film. Appendix A provides a table listing each property by identification numbers, UTM coordinates, property types and subtypes, estimated construction dates, integrity assessments, and preliminary eligibility recommendations. Appendix B provides maps showing locations of each property listed in Appendix A, keyed by a unique number. The historian documented several property types. Intensive land use in the twentieth century has destroyed any potential historic properties that may have been associated with the context related to nineteenth-century agricultural development. Property types associated with the prison farm context include ruined buildings, agricultural buildings and structures, landscape and transportation features, industrial properties, and the main prison building.

Intensive survey was performed on six properties: the main prison building, an administrative building, three livestock barns, and a cemetery. Intensive survey consisted of completing an inventory form that details location, physical characteristics, character-defining features, modifications, integrity issues, associated outbuildings, landscape features, contextual relationships, and historic background. Additional photography provided detailed images of aspects that affect the property's integrity and illustrated the interrelationship of properties and significant landscape components. A site map

recorded these interrelationships. Comparative information for property-type analysis aided in finalizing determinations of eligibility.

The final phase involved reviewing and analyzing data gathered in the first two phases. The historic research was synthesized into a historical background that supports historic property evaluations. As a result, this technical report was prepared to present the results of the study. It includes an introduction and methodology, historical background and survey results, conclusions and recommendations, references cited, and appendixes with the inventory of properties, corresponding maps showing property locations by number on the USGS Sugar Land quadrangle topographic map using North American Datum 83, and completed site forms for the six eligible properties that underwent intensive survey.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SURVEY RESULTS

The Mexican war for independence from Spain delayed colonization, and the first permanent Anglo-American homesteads were established along the Brazos River between 1821 and 1824. Moses Austin had received a colonization grant from the Spanish government, but on his June 1821 death, his son Stephen F. Austin inherited this venture. Acting as *empresario*, the younger Austin had acquired 5 leagues of land for his own homestead with frontage along both the Brazos River and Oyster Creek. In 1827 Austin abandoned his claim to this land. The Mexican government subdivided it and patented it to five individuals, Jane Wilkins, Jesse H. Cartwright, Samuel May Williams, Mills M. Battle, and Alexander Hodge. The project area falls within two of these grants, that of Battle patented in 1827 and Hodge patented in 1828 (Texas GLO 1827, 1828).

Both Battle and Hodge held local political positions. Battle held several political offices, serving as *alcalde* of San Felipe de Austin in 1827. After moving to Fort Bend County, he served as justice of the peace, deputy clerk of the probate court, and county clerk. He was also president of elections at Stafford's Richmond in 1856. Hodge (1760–1836) had served in Francis Marion's brigade during the American Revolution as a young man and arrived in Texas by 1828, where he occupied his land grant. He

served as *comisario* and *alcalde* for his district. As late as 1850, his progeny resided on his Mexican land grant (Carpenter 2001:19; Crain 1996; Voellinger and Moore 1988:22; Wharton 1939:40).

Early settlers like Battle, Hodge, and mid-nineteenth-century successors to their land grew necessary edible and feed crops, but labor-intensive cotton cultivation was the most likely path into the market economy. As cotton ruled the South, so it ruled Fort Bend County during the antebellum years. Plantation owners and yeoman farmers alike had a ready source of labor in the slaves they held. The local climatic and soil conditions, however, prompted agriculturists to try sugar cane as another, possibly more lucrative cash crop.

Sugar cane crops processed into syrup first grew in this region in the 1820s. Samuel May Williams built the first local raw sugar mill on his Oakland Plantation, near the project area, along Oyster Creek in 1843. By 1855, sugar cane dominated the area surrounding Oakland Plantation, and by 1860, Fort Bend County had at least 1,000 acres in cultivation. Two years later antebellum sugar cane production peaked (Imperial Sugar Company n.d., 1915:67; Voellinger and Moore 1988:29; Wharton 1939:153; Wilke 1996).

During the antebellum period, many problems plagued sugar cane cultivators. Yeoman farmers were unlikely to prosper with a crop that required much capital in the forms of large landholdings, slave labor, and the wherewithal to survive fluctuations in weather and markets. Wealthy planters attempting to participate in the market economy needed ready access to transportation and skilled workers to operate equipment that converted cane to raw sugar. After the Civil War, most local farmers ceased planting sugar cane. Sugar cane plantations were unlikely to bear profit in the postbellum era, much less persist without an abundant labor force. The only way wealthy sugar cane planters could survive was if they held diverse interests in other markets (Skiles 2002b:3–4).

Two such men who already held diverse interests stood to profit from the sugar cane industry. Littleberry Ambrose Ellis (1827–1896) arrived in Jefferson, Texas, in 1859 from Mississippi. He served as a colonel in the Confederate forces during the Civil War in General John Bell Hood's brigade. Sometime after the war he pur-

chased 2,000 acres in Fort Bend County for a sugar cane plantation that he named Sartartia. The state's first railroad, the 1853 Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado, crossed the property. The local railroad depot, once known as Walker Station, became known as Sartartia. A two-story family home served as plantation headquarters. The dwelling's original location on the plantation remains unclear; sometime after about 1909 it was moved to Sugar Land and then demolished in 1963 (Armstrong 1991:xv, 71; Walker 1988:48; Wallingford and Cruver 1996:50; Werner 1996).

With his partner Ed H. Cunningham, Ellis rode out the instant postbellum labor shortage by leaning on their diverse assets and establishing a tenancy system. Cunningham (1836–1912) arrived in Bexar County, Texas, from his native Arkansas in 1856. He served Confederate forces in the Civil War, rising to colonel of his regiment, and completed his service as chief of staff and inspector-general in Hood's brigade. He became one of the wealthiest men in Texas and eventually acquired most of the Fort Bend County land that had formerly been Williams's Oakland Plantation—a spread of almost 12,500 acres that included the sugar mill. Ellis and Cunningham presumably became acquainted during their service in Hood's brigade during the Civil War and officially began their partnership in 1875. Although the partnership survived the postwar labor crisis, it would thrive when a cheap labor source would avail itself. The savvy business team found just the source by the late 1870s—the state's prison population (Armstrong 1991:25–6; Skiles 2002b:4; Wallingford and Cruver 1996:50; Walker 1988:48, 157).

From the 1850s through the Civil War, the state's entire prison population annually averaged less than 200 inmates, all housed within a single facility in Huntsville. Prison labor produced cotton and wool goods, along with other products, to meet Confederate needs during the Civil War; these sales contributed almost a million dollars to state coffers. With decreasing demand for prison products and increased incarcerations in the postbellum period, the five-member Board of Public Labor began the practice of leasing convicts to private enterprises for labor outside the prisons. The first convict-lease contract provided workers for roadbed construction along new rail lines in 1867. Other contracts had prisoners chopping and milling

wood, quarrying stone, mining coal, and farming cotton or sugar cane. A single high bidder, or multiple bidders, could receive contracts to lease and sublet prison laborers. Winning bidders had access not only to inmate labor, but prison grounds and machinery, too. Lessees were required to maintain the buildings and feed, clothe, house, and manage inmates. This requirement applied to buildings and prisoners inside the penitentiary and those outside the walls that were part of the convict-lease system. In effect, the convict-lease system constituted privatization of the prison system. The early lease system, however, was deemed ineffective based on financial defaults, political agendas, and harsh treatment of prisoners—all of which caused public outcry (Hudson 2001:1; Walker 1988:18–45).

Nevertheless, leasing inmates to private enterprises was a means to reduce the overcrowded prisons and a way to help sustain the prison population. Although the legislature looked kindly on providing funds to eleemosynary institutions, the state and the public blatantly declared that criminals should not be the recipients of charity but should provide for themselves. Those who worked outside the walls had been convicted of lesser crimes, such as theft and forgery. Murderers and other violent criminals seldom left the penitentiary. Prisoners were more humanely treated inside the penitentiary than on leased property. Texas's inmate population had more white prisoners than that of any southern state, but prejudice and resultant stereotyping saw African American prisoners as more suited to agricultural labor than their white counterparts. White prisoners were usually assigned to industrial locations, railroad construction sites, or inland farms. African American prisoners most often were placed at the Gulf Coast's swampy plantations, where cotton and cane chopping predominated (Lucko 1999:208, 211, 214).

In 1878, Cunningham and Ellis procured a 5-year state contract leasing the entire prison system and put convicts to work in their sugar cane fields. This arrangement accomplished both parties' goals. The sugar cane planters had a cheap labor supply that could be coerced much as slaves had been, and the prison system had a means of becoming self-sustaining, as it had been in previous decades. Cunningham and Ellis used the convict-lease program to their advantage

and gained additional profit by subleasing convict labor to neighboring sugar cane plantations, small industries, and railroad companies (Armstrong 1991:25; Walker 1988:46–56).

By 1882, more than one-third of the state's inmates, roughly 800 prisoners, worked on 12 of Texas's 18 sugar cane plantations through the Ellis and Cunningham contract. The combined Cunningham and Ellis properties had a workforce of more than 500 prisoners at one time. In 1880, Ellis and Cunningham had 358 convicts on their Fort Bend County lands. Usually they divided about 150 to 200 of their leased inmates among three camps. One camp was on the railroad and another on the Brazos River, both outside the study area. The third, however, was just south of U.S. Highway 90A and the railroad, in the north portion of the study area, on the Ellis plantation. The plantations in Fort Bend County were described as:

low, mosquito infested swamp and the sluggish bayous were habitats for alligators and noisome creepers. Convicts labored barelegged in wet sugar cane fields, dying like flies in the periodic epidemics of fevers. Civilian labor could not be kept on the place. In those days, a free man who stayed more than two weeks was suspected of hiding out from the sin of commission or omission.

Convict laborers in these camps were provided with minimal housing at best. Wood barracks were luxurious compared to sleeping under buildings, in abandoned slave dwellings, tents, shacks, or simply out in the sugar cane fields. Brutality by guards, who were not accountable to state authorities, was rampant at the various work camps. Sickness, disease, and lack of medical treatment led to an annual mortality rate of 3 percent. Showing their contempt, convict-lease prisoners dubbed the plantation "hell-hole on the Brazos," a descriptor that would stick with the property well into the twentieth century (Armstrong 1991:25, 34; Hudson 2001:2; Lucko 1999:214; Wilke 1996).

This steady and cheap source of labor furnished the means to make sugar cane profitable and spurred Ellis to expand his plantation. He acquired 17 additional parcels of land out of the Battle and Hodge grants between September 1881 and 1893, bringing his total holdings in the

county to approximately 5,200 acres. Ellis's plantation followed the western boundary of the Cunningham plantation. About 3,200 acres of his lands were north of the former Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railroad, which merged with the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad in 1870. This is just north of the project area and still includes the current Central Unit of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The remaining 2,000 acres were south of the railroad along the Brazos River. The land out of the Battle and Hodge Surveys south of the railroad had been subdivided into many parcels and probably had several previous improvements. At a minimum these parcels had roadways, fences, and one homestead. The known homestead was that of the Bertrand family and their house was on a 200-acre parcel on the Brazos River, which is south of the study area (Fort Bend County Deed Records I:213; J:12, 499; N:34, 581; O:14, 71, 149, 454, 511, 560; P:264, 498; R:86, 89; S:41; V:226; 6:228; Texas General Land Office 1932).

Their prosperity prompted Ellis and Cunningham to have the 600-ton Imperial Mill built on the Ellis plantation in 1883. The following year they amiably dissolved their partnership. Both continued to cultivate sugar cane on their plantations and expand their holdings to the point that the need for fresh water at their respective mills led each to have pumping stations built on the Brazos River (Armstrong 1991:26; Imperial Sugar Company n.d.).

State officials, recognizing the profitability of the convict-lease system, decided that they could apply similar principles within the prison system. They eliminated the middleman and, acting as agent, hired out inmates. Abuses continued, however, and reformers protested against mistreatment of prisoners. In response the legislature reorganized the three-member Board of Penitentiary Commissioners in 1883, retaining a position for the governor, but replacing the prison superintendent and the state treasurer with two governor-appointed positions that the state senate would confirm. This board would appoint a financial agent. To appease an outraged public and social reformers, the legislature discouraged prison labor for anything other than state purposes, which would presumably lead to less abuse. Strict requirements were instituted for private enterprises that contracted convict labor, although these reforms were not

effectively enforced. More prescient was the legislature's sanction of land purchases, which propelled the prison system's development for the next 70 years (Lucko 1996a; Walker 1988:75, 78–83).

The Board of Penitentiary Commissioners first leased and then purchased land for farming. The first land purchase was in 1883 in Walker County. The 1,900-acre Wynne State Farm, formerly part of Cunningham and Ellis lands, cost \$21,000 and offered good fencing, a prison house, work teams, and implements. Close to Huntsville headquarters, the farm incarcerated disabled and ill convicts and offered a pastoral setting and vocational opportunities for rehabilitating inmates and less demanding physical labor than that expected of healthy prisoners. The farm's harvest provided food for convicts, guards, and work teams. Any surplus food and cotton grown on the Wynne State Farm could be sold for profit to the system. The 48 convicts on the farm netted the system a \$10,648 profit between 1884 and 1886 (Lucko 1999:247; Walker 1988:96–7).

Success encouraged more land acquisition. William Guion, surviving partner of the New York firm William and Guion, conveyed 2,500 acres known as the Harlem Plantation on Oyster Creek to the state in about 1886 for \$25,000. The sale included teams, implements, a brick sugar house, a sugar mill, several tenant dwellings, and direct access to the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad. The state also purchased small adjacent tracts and equipment, ditches, and bridges. Within a year, Harlem State Farm was profitable. By 1892, it had 165 African American prisoners who netted the state more than \$230,000. The farm, just northwest of the project area, was renamed the Jester State Farm in the 1950s (Hardin 1996; Lucko 1999:248; Walker 1988:97–8; Wallingford and Cruver 1996:46; Wharton 1939:228).

Despite rapid success at the Wynne and Harlem State Farms, Texas did not add to its prison land holdings until the end of the century. In 1899 the state purchased a 5,527-acre farm along the Brazos River in Brazoria County, known as Clemens State Farm. A 900-ton sugar mill and a railway from the mill to the river were constructed. Almost 10 more years passed before the state purchased additional land (Walker 1988:99–100).

In the late nineteenth century, the region

that included Fort Bend County was known as the sugar bowl of Texas. Ranked second among states in sugar production during most of that century, Texas was bumped to third place in 1899. Even so, production never exceeded more than 5 percent of the country's genuine sugar bowl—Louisiana. Access to cheap, off-shore Caribbean raw sugar after the Spanish-American War in 1898, plummeting post-World War I prices, unpredictable weather conditions, and mosaic disease gradually made sugar cane a less desirable cash crop. Consequently, most of the state's 46 sugar mills functioning in 1882 closed before the early twentieth century, with only 10 remaining by 1909. Nevertheless, the prison system continued to work sugar cane on their farms, and the local industry remained profitable into the 1920s, when a parasite destroyed the crop (Armstrong 1991:30; Voellinger and Moore 1988:31; Wilke 1996).

Cunningham and Ellis also continued to profit from their sugar cane plantation for a time, but both left the business in the early twentieth century. Cunningham, who lived most of his life in San Antonio, played a significant role in the productivity of their respective sugar cane plantation lands. Beginning in 1896, at a cost of \$1.5 million, he established a sugar refinery in Sugar Land that could process 100,000 pounds daily. The refinery was next to his sugar mill and 50 yards north of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad, which would become the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1905. He opened a paper plant to process crushed, dried cane stalks into heavy brown paper and an acid plant for the paper-making process. His efforts met with varied success, especially after his financial situation led to credit problems and his company went into receivership. Cunningham sold his plantation and the Cunningham Sugar Company to the Kempner family of Galveston in 1907. The Kempners transferred title to the Imperial Sugar Company, which had formed in 1905 and incorporated in April 1907 with I. H. Kempner, his younger brother Dan W. Kempner, and W. T. Eldridge as its main leaders. This company, with headquarters at the site of Williams's 1843 sugar mill, would prosper and become the foremost sugar refinery in the country into the early twenty-first century (Armstrong 1991:26, 30–31, 34, 71; Imperial Sugar Company n.d.; Walker 1988:48, 157; Wallingford and Cruver 1996:50; Wharton 1939:228).

The Ellises moved to Austin in 1883 after revocation of the convict lease arrangement. He remained involved in the sugar industry, serving as vice president of the Texas Sugar Growers' Association in 1890. Before his 1896 death, Ellis transferred his business interests, including those in Fort Bend County, to his sons and, with his wife Amanda Mitchell Ellis conveyed much of Sartartia to their daughter Pink Ellis Turner and son-in-law Davis A. Turner. For several reasons including weather, bad crops, and bad management, the Ellis business interests also fell into receivership in 1904 (Armstrong 1991:42; Walker 1988:158).

Ellis's widow Amanda Mitchell Ellis of Austin, with her widowed daughters-in-law, Olive Graves Ellis of Bexar County and Leigh Ellis of Travis County, together conveyed the 5,245-acre Sartartia Plantation to the Imperial Sugar Company on April 8, 1907, for \$210,000. The property included a sugar house and mill, boilers, engines, machinery, plants, commissary, warehouse, railroad and tramroads, rail and tram cars, locomotives, harnesses, mules, horses, cattle, hogs, other livestock, crops, merchandise, and supplies. Tenant dwellings, housing for 250 convicts and guards leased from the state, and the plantation home and headquarters were also on the land. In addition, the transaction conveyed the Brazos River pumping station, and canal and creek rights of way. The sugar mill, commissary, and warehouse were all near the Cunningham west boundary where State Highway 6 crosses Oyster Creek. The locations of the other improvements remain unknown (Armstrong 1991:71; Fort Bend County Deed Records 42:575).

The Imperial Sugar Company's leadership had differing views on convict labor. Eldridge had previously used state inmates on his farm, but the Kempners were opposed to this practice. The company moved convicts from land they had purchased from the former Cunningham plantation to the former Ellis plantation, where new wood barracks were under construction in 1907 that could house 416 inmates and guards. The barracks had a kitchen and artesian water. A hospital and two concrete natatoriums for hot and cold bathing were also under construction that year on the Ellis lands. The location of this construction remains unclear. It may have been at any one of the three existing camps on the plantation, or spread among them, or in new

locations. The next year the company sold the property, except for the sugar mill and its immediate surroundings (Armstrong 1991:75).

In 1908 the state embraced land purchases for prison farms with enthusiasm. That year three farms were added to the system. Riddick farm was added to Harlem State Farm, and Ramsey and Imperial State Farms were each operated individually. The state capitalized on the Imperial Sugar Company's need to raise operating revenue. On February 17, the company conveyed approximately 5,235 acres with several buildings to the Board of Penitentiary Commissioners for \$160,000. This transaction also included a wide variety of farming implements: 49 cultivators, 16 disc cultivators, 115 turning plows, 6 disc plows, 35 sweep stocks, 7 stubble shavers, 5 stubble diggers, 8 middle busters, 13 subsoilers, 6 cane scrapers, 12 cotton planters, 2 mowing machines, 30 hoes, 6 post-hole diggers, 3 rice seeders, 12 shovels, 10 spades, 20 stubble hoes, 12 briar hooks, 30 axes, 6 scrapers, 5 pitch forks, several double and single trees, 150 cane knives, 60 sets of plow gear, 27 cane wagons, 9 road wagons, 20 good graders, 1 corn crusher, about 20 dozen trace chains for unloading cane, 6 saddles for guards, 18 wagon saddles, and 3 complete derricks.

In addition, the company conveyed train equipment (80 train cars and 75 sections of portable track), animals (134 hogs, 139 work mules, 17 saddle horses), feed (ear and crushed corn, rice bran, alfalfa, hay, field peas, cotton seed), blacksmith and wheelwright shops with repair materials, and all machinery present. Payment for the property was to come from 40 percent gross of the annual sugar cane and cotton raised on the land. A covenant required the company to purchase sugar cane raised on the land for \$3 per ton for a period of 10 years. A second covenant provided the company access to the Imperial Valley Railroad with a 100-ft right of way from their sugar mill, south to the Brazos River and northwest to a sugar mill on the adjacent Harlem State Prison. The company, in exchange, agreed to advance between \$25,000 and \$50,000 annually to finance crop production (Fort Bend County Deed Record 43:214; Hudson 2001:3).

In 1910 the legislature was compelled to re-vamp the prison system with both administrative and operational changes. The Board of Prison Commissioners' three members were all

governor-appointed and acted as financial agent, personnel manager, and convict manager. New in-house work programs were inaugurated, and the convict-lease system was abolished entirely by 1912 (Lucko 1996a; Walker 1996).

Convicts, however, were not relieved from farm work over the course of the next decade. Hard work was a means to reform criminals. Work prevented idleness and lack of moral purpose; it promoted self-respect and self-reliance. Instilling these characteristics in convicts, with the added advantage of order and discipline, remained important even though the prison farm system proved unprofitable for many years. Some prisoners sought to escape harsh field-work, and through the mid-twentieth century, a rash of self-mutilation occurred. It might take the form of falling out of bed or other "accidents" that caused enough physical damage to prevent work. *Stringing*, or intentionally cutting the Achilles tendon or foot, prevented a prisoner from working for 2 to 3 months (Hudson 2001:5; Hudson et al. n.d.).

By January 1915, the prison system owned seven farms with 19,509 acres (out of 31,639 owned) in cultivation. The system leased another eight farms with 18,996 acres (out of 26,458 acres leased) in cultivation. In 1917, the number of leased acres had grown to almost 50 percent of the total, and the state decided to shift its focus to work acreage it owned. Consequently, by 1921 the prison system leased only one 3,000-acre farm, and two years later it had ended all land leases (Lucko 1996a; Nowlin 1962:142, 144–45).

By 1921, prison farm holdings encompassed 12 units spread across 81,000 acres. New farms in the system included Goree State Farm near Huntsville, Darrington and Retrieve State Farms in Brazoria County, Blue Ridge State Farm in Fort Bend County, Eastham State Farm in Houston County, and Shaw State Farm in Bowie County. Except for 1916 through 1918, 1924, and 1927, the farms failed to be profitable and became a constant source of public criticism during the next several decades, particularly during statewide election campaigns. Financial losses, mismanagement, corruption, and poor treatment of prisoners were primary problems. Unpredictable weather and market exigencies presented other forms of failure outside the control of the prison system. These factors resulted in a protracted period of debt for the prison system (Lucko 1996a; Nowlin 1962:141).

Imperial State Farm was no exception. A Thanksgiving Day freeze in 1911 that killed \$300,000 of the sugar cane crop forced agricultural diversification. Sugar cane on the farm was transported by mule-drawn cars that traveled along moveable rails to the Imperial Mill. In 1914 the mill burned, and sugar cane had to be hauled substantially farther to the neighboring Harlem State Farm and its mill for processing (Armstrong 1991:41; Hudson 2001:6; Nowlin 1962:142).

By 1910, Camp No. 1 was the largest of Imperial State Farm's three camps. Situated just south of today's U.S. Highway 90A, the facilities were rudimentary and housed white prisoners. The main facility was called a double building and contained a center picket with two single-story, 65x30-ft flanking wings. The building housed 216 inmates in segregated quarters. Wood bunk frames were three beds high. At the south end of the double building was an indoor concrete bathtub or basin measuring 6 ft wide and 8 ft long, and it was sunk about 4.5 ft below the floor. Two showers and two commodes with running water were available. Aside from the central internal picket, security was limited to one or two outside pickets. At Camp No. 2 along the Brazos River, African American prisoners were housed in one of two main buildings, one was known as the single building and was built like a barn with a picket office at one end where the guard watched over inmates. The other was twice as large and known as the double building. It had a guard's picket office in the center with rows of sleeping quarters along both sides (Brown 2002:137; Hudson 2001:4–5; Hudson et al. n.d.:178).

One doctor stated his opinion of conditions at Imperial State Farm, "The convicts' quarters were in the worst condition imaginable; the bunks swarmed with vermin, and the use of disinfectants and antiseptics was unknown." He reported another building to be "in such deplorable shape that it was hardly fit for the stabling of hogs, much less men [and in] rainy weather the floor was flooded with water, which leaked from hundreds of places in the roof." Guard housing was only slightly better than that of the convicts. Kitchens at the camps were completely unsanitary and lacked necessary equipment. The prison farm's hospital was a 16x18-ft room. Gasoline lighting dimly illuminated the camps, windmills pumped water from artesian wells. Barns,

sheds, and various outbuildings were also on the property. Within a few years the same doctor returned to Imperial State Farm and saw that improvements ranked the unit as among "the best equipped and most sanitary camps in the system" (Hudson 2001:4–5).

In addition to these buildings and structures, Imperial State Farm Camp No. 1 also had a hospital. It probably also had kennels to house guard dogs. A cemetery (Property 25) with 33 graves due west of Camp No. 1 along Bullhead Bayou was probably founded in 1912, the date of the first grave. The last known burial occurred in 1943, although there may be several unmarked graves. By 1915, Imperial State Farm was growing more cotton than sugar cane and a gin was constructed to process the harvest. Cotton was in particular demand during World War I. Prices rose from 9 cents per pound to 30 cents in 1917, and the prison system again showed profits with this risky cash crop. Risk outweighed the benefits at war's end when cotton prices again declined and indebtedness overtook the system for three decades (Hudson et al. n.d.:179–80; Nowlin 1962:143–44; Sessums and Hudson n.d.:167).

The prison manager and his family resided in Camp No. 1 on the north end of Flanagan Road (Property 3). It appears that another guardhouse was just south of the manager's (Properties 10 and 11). The manager's two-story, wood-frame dwelling was constructed in 1919. It had a full-façade, two-story porch with a shed roof that four columns supported. A set of guard houses was southeast of Camp No. 1's dormitory. Convict labor constructed these dwellings. R. J. "Buck" Flanagan was the first prison manager to occupy the 1919 prison manager's dwelling. He began his service with the Texas prison system in 1915 at the state-leased Bassett Blakely prison farm near Navasota, where he became a manager. He was promoted to manager of the state-owned Imperial State Farm in 1919. He and his wife occupied the residence, until his 1949 retirement. Other buildings erected during the 1910s were of frame construction. It is likely that the concrete bridges (Properties 15, 18, and 19), concrete culverts (Property 9), and a corral (Property 13) were also constructed around this time (Hudson et al. n.d.:84, 98, 101, 105).

In 1924 Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter, arguably the most notorious inmate at Imperial

State Farm, probably resided at Camp No. 1 while imprisoned for murder. The following year Ledbetter wrote a song and performed for Governor Pat Neff at the prison manager's residence, securing an official pardon from Neff. Later, Ledbetter achieved acclaim when serving out a sentence at a Louisiana prison farm and again received clemency to tour with folklorists John Avery Lomax and his son Alan Lomax. Prison work songs were an inspiration for Ledbetter's music (Skiles 2002b:13–14).

Demands for penal reform led to creation of the Texas Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor. By 1924, the \$5.5 million invested in the state's prison farms was deemed a complete failure. More than a third of the land was subject to flooding. Equipment and its maintenance were expensive. In spite of relatively cheap labor that the prisoners provided, the system was not paying for itself. The committee conducted a study and called for consolidation and centralization, although this recommendation never came to fruition. The legislature passed the committee's management plan in 1927, which dissolved the previous three-person format and established a nine-person Texas Prison Board with the authority to hire a general manager. Reformers dominated the board until 1930, and the Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor largely controlled prison management from 1927 to 1930. During this time, educational and recreational opportunities for prisoners were developed, guards who mistreated inmates were fired, and nutrition at the facilities was improved. The board continued to urge consolidation into a single facility, introduction of industrial training, and curtailing of agricultural operations. The legislature did not fully back these recommendations but did provide funding to upgrade prison facilities that had been neglected throughout the 1920s (Lucko 1996b; Texas Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor 1924:13).

The legislature approved \$575,000 in expenditures to upgrade existing prison properties in 1930. The state sold the Shaw State Farm by that year but retained 11 prison farms with more than 73,000 acres. That same year Imperial State Farm, with its 5,202.88 acres, was renamed Central State Farm when it was chosen as the site of a new industrial unit. It was the closest prison farm to the major and rapidly growing city of Houston and central among the system's other 10 operating farms. With the exception of

2, the other farms were mostly southeast of Central State Farm, along the Brazos River or Oyster Creek. The portion of Central State Farm north of U.S. Highway 90A and the railroad became known as the industrial unit. A brick meat-packing plant, cannery, power house, and a main building that served both administrative and dormitory purposes were developed at the industrial unit. Brick guardhouses were constructed at Camp No. 1 in the study area as part of this construction project. Three houses (Properties 1, 4, 6), two with outbuildings (Properties 2 and 5), on the west side of Flanagan Road are now historic sites. Four guardhouses on the east side of Flanagan Road are no longer extant. The configuration of the guardhouses on the west side of Flanagan Road would not change substantially after the late 1930s (Figure 2) (Fort Bend County Deed Records 152:425; Hudson et al.:168; Hudson 2001:7; McMahan 1935).

Construction of the industrial unit began in 1930, based on the architectural plans of Giesecke and Harris, an Austin firm. The firm had a Houston office for a brief time from which they designed the new facility. Bertram Giesecke, son of prominent Texas architect Frederick Ernst Giesecke, supervised construction of the industrial unit. His father was involved as a consultant. The buildings were poured reinforced concrete using techniques the senior Giesecke had worked to perfect (Hudson 2001:7).

The new industrial unit gave Central State Farm a financial boost. Losses had been substantial until 1933. In 1929 the farm lost \$118,748. The following year showed marked improvement with a \$36,000 deficit. Losses rose again—in 1931 they were about \$65,000, and in 1932 they were about \$82,000. In 1933, however, losses fell to about \$21,000, and the following year Central State Farm actually saw a profit of just more than \$21,000. The cannery and meat-packing plant employed about 60 inmates, providing products to other state prisons and eleemosynary institutions by mid-decade. The power plant employed about 30 prisoners. Both plants used only white prisoners, except perhaps for janitorial duties (Prison Industries Reorganization Administration 1937:11; Texas Prison Board [1934]).

In the mid-1930s, Central State Farm had a population of between 600 and 800 inmates. By 1938, the prison population had decreased to

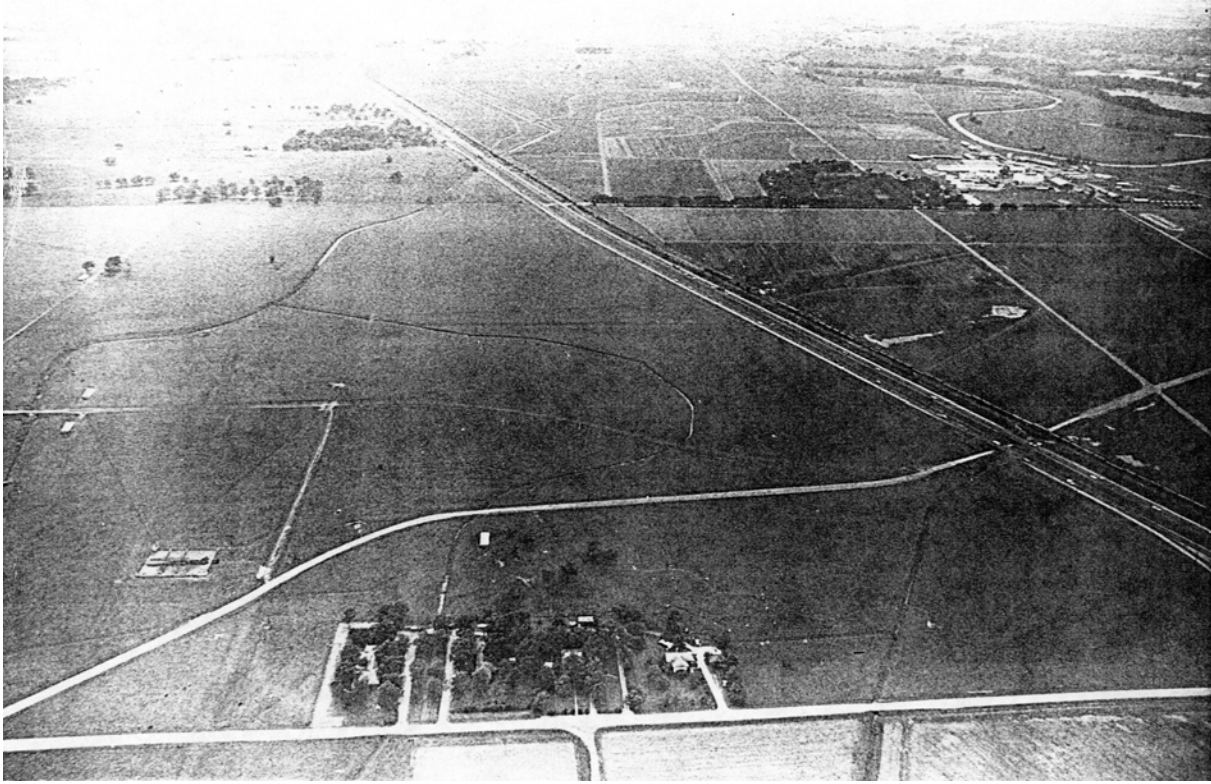


Figure 2. Central State Farm guardhouse configuration (at bottom center) along the west side of the north end of Flanagan Road, ca. 1962. A corral that dates to the 1910s is to the left (Texas Department of Criminal Justice [1962a]).

500, of whom 386 were white and 214 were African American. Two racially segregated farm camps housed inmates on Central State Farm.

In the early part of the decade, the farm had 258 mules, 46 horses, 188 dairy cows, 598 hogs, 4,303 poultry, 20 goats, 10 sheep, and 55 dogs. By 1938, some of these numbers had varied little, but others had changed dramatically. There were 259 mules, 46 horses, 243 dairy cows, and 25 goats. No poultry were counted, but the number of hogs had almost doubled to 1,165, and stock cattle—previously not present on the farm—were counted at 138 head. The packing plant slaughtered and processed enough bovine and swine each year for the state’s prison population, and excess was furnished to other state eleemosynary institutions. That year the farm had 1,500 acres each in cotton and corn, 800 acres in truck garden crops, 200 acres in alfalfa, and 500 in feed. Most vegetables were processed at the canning plant, with an annual average of 350,000 gallons of canned goods. Water on the farm was considered satisfactory, and the industrial unit supplied electric power. The

farm also had a diesel-run power plant and an ice plant (Hall 1938; Hudson et al. n.d.:186; Texas Prison Board 1932; Texas Prison Board [1938]).

At this time, white prisoners were housed at Camp No. 1 (Figure 3) just south of U.S. Highway 90A and the industrial unit. African American prisoners were housed at Camp No. 2 (Figure 4) on the Brazos River. Both units had long, one-story, rectangular, wood-frame buildings with side-gable roofs. A porch spanned the width of these long buildings. A survey of prison farms the previous year concluded that these wood dormitories were unsanitary, overcrowded, and generally deplorable. In addition, escape operations from wood buildings were uncomplicated. Prison farm convicts had access to tools and could use these to saw holes through the wood floors.

Regular escapes led local citizens to complain about the proximity of the prison farms to their own property. Often escapees hid on adjacent property, stole vehicles for getaway, damaged farmer’s crops, ruined their fences, and caused general havoc. Property in the vicinity



Figure 3. Central State Farm wood dormitory for white prisoners, 1938 (Texas Prison Board [1938]).

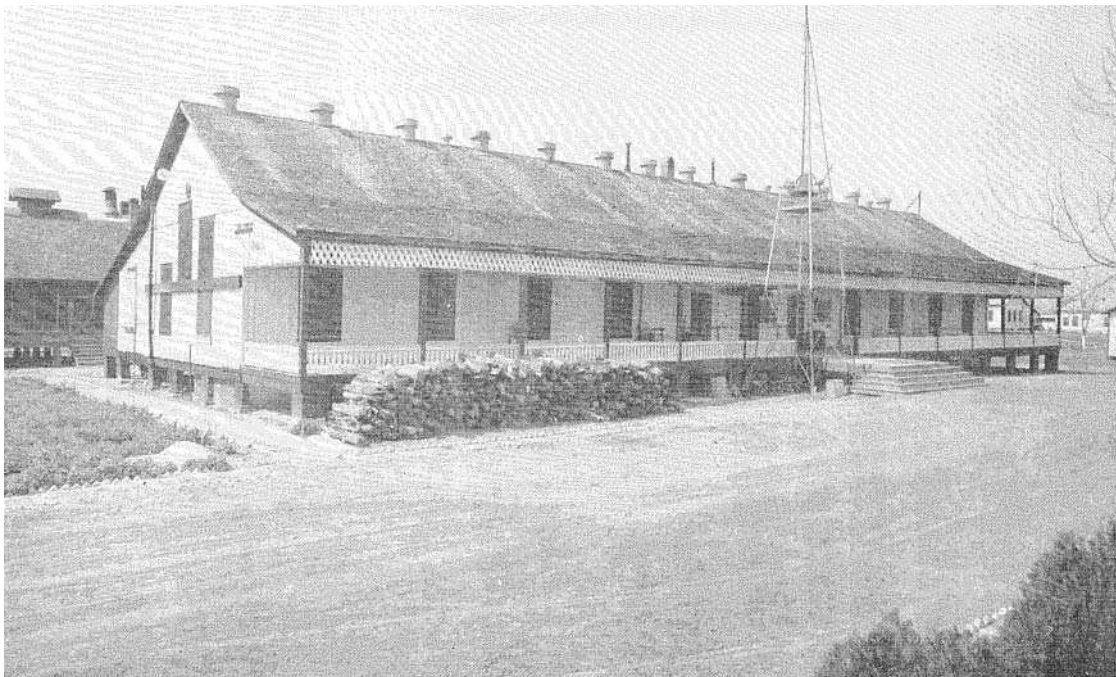


Figure 4. Central State Farm wood dormitory for African American prisoners, 1938 (Texas Prison Board [1938]).

of any prison farm had low values. With the industrial unit in place, the farm operation received considerably less attention. Still, most of the inmates worked on the farm and not in the new plants. The Prison Industries Reorganization Administration sought appropriations for improvements and new construction at the prison farms. Their proposal encouraged expanding Central State Farm's industrial unit to include cotton textile and hosiery knitting mills, in addition to completing much needed housing facilities (Hall 1938; Hudson et al. n.d.:3, 8–9; Nowlin 1962:145–46; Prison Industries Reorganization Administration 1937:3–6, 25; Texas Prison Board [1938]).

The legislature, however, favored funding housing needs over expanding industrial operations for the time being. More modern housing facilities were fireproof and provided less opportunity for escapes. The prison board planned to consolidate the two farm camps into one location with a new dormitory 1 mile south of the industrial unit on Flanagan Road. This spot was central on the prison farm and became known as Camp No. 1. Flanagan stated no appropriation would be necessary for constructing new outbuildings and barns because wood from the former dormitories, once vacated, could be recycled for this purpose. The old Camp No. 1 would become an area exclusively occupied by guards (Hall 1938; Texas Prison Board [1938]).

Construction on the two-story brick dormitory (Property 53) began in February 1938 and was funded for \$73,000. Giesecke served as architect, and his father again consulted on the project (Figure 5). By the end of August 1939, the building was nearing completion with \$46,000 of the allotted cost expended. The adjacent Harlem State Farm brick plant, constructed in 1934, and inmate labor supplied brick for the building. A row of three large brick barns (Properties 72, 73, and 74), each with an associated corral that surrounded the building, was erected near the dormitory. Only one of the corrals remains (Property 75). Oral informants stated that these were dairy farms, although other sources indicate that small dairy operations were elsewhere on the farm. Later images indicate that these may have been horse barns. In any case these brick buildings, with the dormitory, have a commanding physical presence on the property. Other properties that were probably part of farm improvements in the late 1930s include a retaining wall near the north guardhouses

(Property 12), water troughs (Properties 17, 42, 43, 47, 68, and 76), agricultural building (Property 48), brick culverts (Properties 56, 59, and 71), and a cistern to support the main building (Property 78). The prison farm still had many wood buildings in 1939, but most were demolished shortly thereafter (Carpenter 2001; Hudson 2001:7, 13; Texas Prison Board 1938; Texas Prison Board 1939).

The dormitory followed classically inspired architectural traditions, as was common for institutional properties, particularly government-operated facilities. On a cast-in-place concrete foundation, the dormitory is of structural brick construction with load-bearing brick walls and columns. The cross-gable roof that covers this massive building is cast-in-place concrete that was originally sheathed with ceramic tile. The focal point of the modified cruciform-shaped building is the main façade's protruding central bay, which is two-and-a-half stories with a front-facing gable end. The middle bay has a small one-story projecting porch with stylized brick columns on either side supporting a front-facing gable pediment with concrete boxed cornice returns. The white concrete detailing creates a striking contrast with the dominant red brick of the building. The porch's pedimented gable end has brick infill that displays the date "1939" in terra cotta. Brick stairs lead to the double-door entry with a transom above. On either side of this central porch are symmetrically placed 4/4 double-hung windows on the first two levels. On the upper story are similar but smaller windows. Equidistant engaged columns that span the building's full height separate the windows. Stylized Art Deco terra cotta medallions reminiscent of wheat heads top the two central columns. Pilasters at either end of the central bay exhibit modest relief detailing that emphasizes the building's verticality. The central bay pediment mimics the porch pediment with brick infill and front-facing gable pediment with concrete boxed cornice returns. Above the architrave, "Central State Farm" is displayed in terra cotta and above that are three wood vents that display stylized Art Deco influences. The character-defining feature of the remaining bays on the main façade as well as the other elevations are rows of rhythmically placed windows separated by equidistant engaged columns that span the building's full height. The 1893 Columbian Exposition aroused interest in

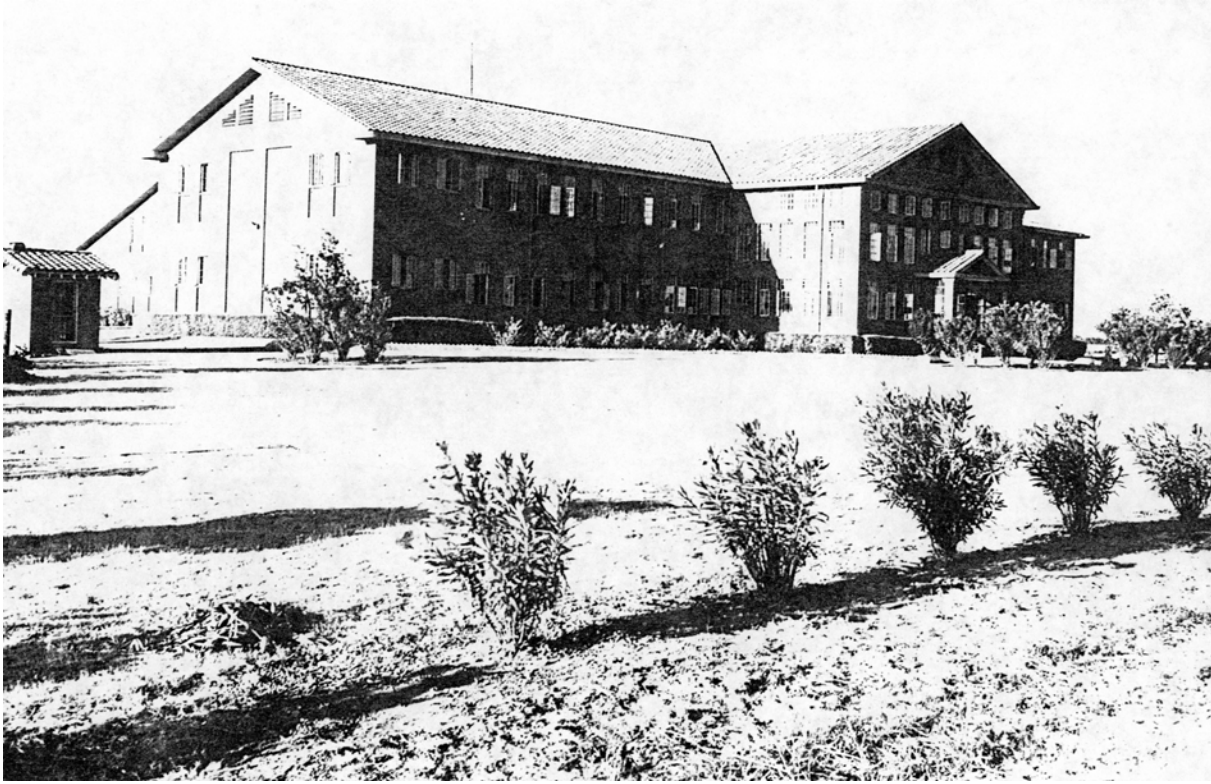


Figure 5. Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Dormitory, ca. 1940, looking northwest. The small building on the left is a picket that was demolished by 1962 (Texas Department of Criminal Justice [ca. 1940]).

reviving classical styles that became prevalent throughout the country during the first half of the twentieth century. Typical of Classical Revival design, the symmetrical plan and balanced fenestration exemplify directness and simplicity that characterize classically inspired design. Tall columns that support the cornice and imposing pediment articulate the rudimentary cubical form. Terra cotta detailing reinforces the classical theme, although the lettering and ornamentation also show Art Deco influences popular in the 1930s. Classical Revival design was particularly appropriate for institutional buildings like the prison dormitory because it intentionally recalled republican ideals and imparted monumental architecture.

The 1940s saw little change at Central State Farm, including the constant debt. Things were not as discouraging as they appeared, with agricultural and manufacturing operations showing moderate profits even though these could not overcome the need for complete self-sufficiency systemwide. The idea of compulsory purchases of prison system products, a practice many other states employed, had been intro-

duced to the legislature in 1923 and again in 1937. Nevertheless, Texas remained one of 14 states without such legislation and had no guaranteed outlet for all of its many products until 1943. That year the Texas Prison Board and the State Board of Control were authorized to accept contracts for goods they produced and manufactured, although other state entities were not required to participate, as was the case in several states. Those state institutions that did purchase items from the prison system were dissatisfied on more than one occasion, particularly with the quality of the food products. Residents at the State School for the Blind even went on strike to protest the poor quality of packaged meat and canned produce that had come from Central State Farm. The system produced automobile license plates, road signs, clothing, mattresses, printing, shoes, canned goods, brick, and abattoir products. But even with the general prosperity war brought and the ability to contract sale of their wares, Texas prison farms still operated in the red at the end of the decade (Hudson et al. n.d.:97; Nowlin 1962:143–44, 148–49; Walch 1940).

By the end of World War II, the dormitory at Camp No. 1 was considered one of the better housing examples on Texas prison farms. In 1947, it may have had room for 100 more than the 322 it housed at the time. The next year it was recognized that Camp No. 1, with African American second-time offenders, needed new bathhouses and cyclone detention fences. The industrial unit, to the north, with white first-time offenders, likely received additional facilities. Shops, including machine, welding, blacksmith, automotive and tractor repair, light sheet metal, paint, plumbing, woodworking, electrical, all with equipment and tools, were recommended at Camp No. 2 (Hudson et al. n.d.:88, 92, 96; Texas Prison Board 1947, 1948).

The number of inmates at Central State Farm as of March 1948 was 822. The land was operated as 1,000 acres of pasture, 1,250 acres of cotton, 950 in other feed crops, and 975 in produce. Also as of that date 230 mules, 51 horses, and 236 dairy cows were at the farm. Again there were no stock cattle and the number of hogs had dwindled to 285. The following year two tractors were demonstrated on Central State Farm, portending change (Cowan 1948; Texas Prison Board 1947).

A shift in management practices dramatically transformed the prison farms in the 1950s. In 1949, Flanagan retired. He had managed Central State Farm since 1919 and the state's other prison farms since 1928. At the time of his departure, inmates considered Central State Farm the most desirable in the system, and on several occasions inmates of other units tried through friends and political connections for transfer to the property. Very likely these favorable opinions were those of white prisoners working at the mechanized industrial unit where work detail was not nearly as grueling as that African Americans prisoners endured on the farm. O. B. (Oscar Byron) Ellis was chosen as general manager for the prison farm system, and he remained in that position until 1961. He immediately hired Byron Frierson as his agricultural operations manager. Frierson was the mastermind behind post-World War II innovations to agricultural programs, which Frierson directed from his office on Central State Farm. The year Frierson took over the program, it netted \$450,000 (Anonymous 1959; Hudson et al. n.d.:84, 98, 101, 105, 107-8; Lucko 1996a; Williams 1949).

On arrival, Ellis and Frierson reasoned that the finest farmer in Texas could not survive using the methods in place on state-run prison farms. Smooth-mouthed mules in shuck collars still pulled walking plows, and obsolescent tools were prevalent. They made several proposals. Walking plows were cast off. Mules were reduced from 1,110 to 400, which the Ramsey State Farm required where severe muddy conditions prevented tractor use. The focus of farming would be cash crops, particularly cotton. Feed crops for livestock and produce for feeding inmates would still be harvested. Swine production became farrow-to-finish facilities with the feed formerly used for mules now available for hogs. Ellis ordered 112 trailer chassis built in the prison shop at Huntsville that, hooked to a tractor, could haul 20 men to work sites, instead of their wasting time walking. Ellis also recommended developing industrial facilities, including one at Camp No. 2 on Central State Farm. He convinced the legislature to fund more facilities and new dormitories on existing farms, as well as establish new units. Cellblocks replaced many of the dormitories—called *tanks*—and fences, picket towers, workshops and other facilities were constructed at the 11 prison units. Ellis insisted that mechanization could make the farms profitable and that developing prison industries would benefit the state and its inmates (Hudson et al. n.d.:107-8; Lucko 1996a; Williams 1949).

The year of Ellis's arrival, the legislature approved more than \$4.1 million for many improvements to the prison system. At Central State Farm, this included guards' dormitories, laundry facilities, bathhouses, replacement of the old ice plant, and new sewage disposal plants. Systemwide it meant \$230,000 in agricultural equipment, \$158,000 for cattle breeding, and complete reworking of electrical distribution systems at most units (Hudson et al. n.d.:128).

The state prison system rose to the challenge with these expenditures in place. The year after Ellis took charge, the system fed itself for the first time in history with record-breaking \$1.5 million vegetable, grain, and cotton crops. The 1952 cotton crop alone yielded almost \$2.4 million. One year later, the first cotton bale was ginned at Central State Farm on July 3, the earliest ever in Fort Bend County. The Angleton Agricultural Experiment Station tested cotton varieties at Central State Farm. Crops were diversified with 48 different types, with

13,250 in cotton and 6,400 in maize, growing on the almost 30,000 acres in cultivation by 1953 on prison farms. Double cropping brought the total to 36,666 acres. Central State Farm had a new feed mill with a 15-carload capacity. Hog production on the farms, with almost 5,300 in 1953, was more than double that of 1948, and up to 8,000 by 1958. Much of the growth in hog production occurred at Central State Farm with a large farrow-to-finish facility constructed to the southwest of Camp No. 1 (Properties 28–37) (Figure 6). When Ellis took over there were 7,137 dairy and beef cattle; by the end of 1953 there were 14,500 total head of cattle, and 5 years later there were 16,000 head systemwide. Horses and mules vanished. Tractors, 210 of them, took the place of work teams. Mechanization also took the form of ground-spraying machines to control insects and shredders to cut stalks before pink bollworms infested the cotton. Most prisoners still worked in agricultural pursuits rather than industrial production (Anonymous 1959; Hudson et al. n.d.:117, 123, 129, 131, 132).

Ellis's plan expanded farm mechanization and increased the number of prison industries. To combat escapes, he recommended state-built cell-block units to replace dormitories, or tanks, and fences, picket towers, flood lights, and other security equipment. At Central State Farm, this plan resulted in fencing at Camp No. 1, where there had been none. Dim, gerrymandered lighting had been a problem for security, and a new light system was installed. The 1950s is probably when cyclone fences and three brick guard towers surrounding the dormitory were constructed (Figure 7). Installing hard-chilled steel bars instead of the existing softer steel was requested at all of the prison farm dormitory buildings. This may have been when some of the windows were infilled with brick. More guards had been requested to avert regular escape attempts. In 1950 alone, the 20 breakouts had all been from Central State Farm. Consequently, additional guardhouses were constructed (Figure 8) (Properties 60–65). A few agricultural properties were also constructed, such as feed

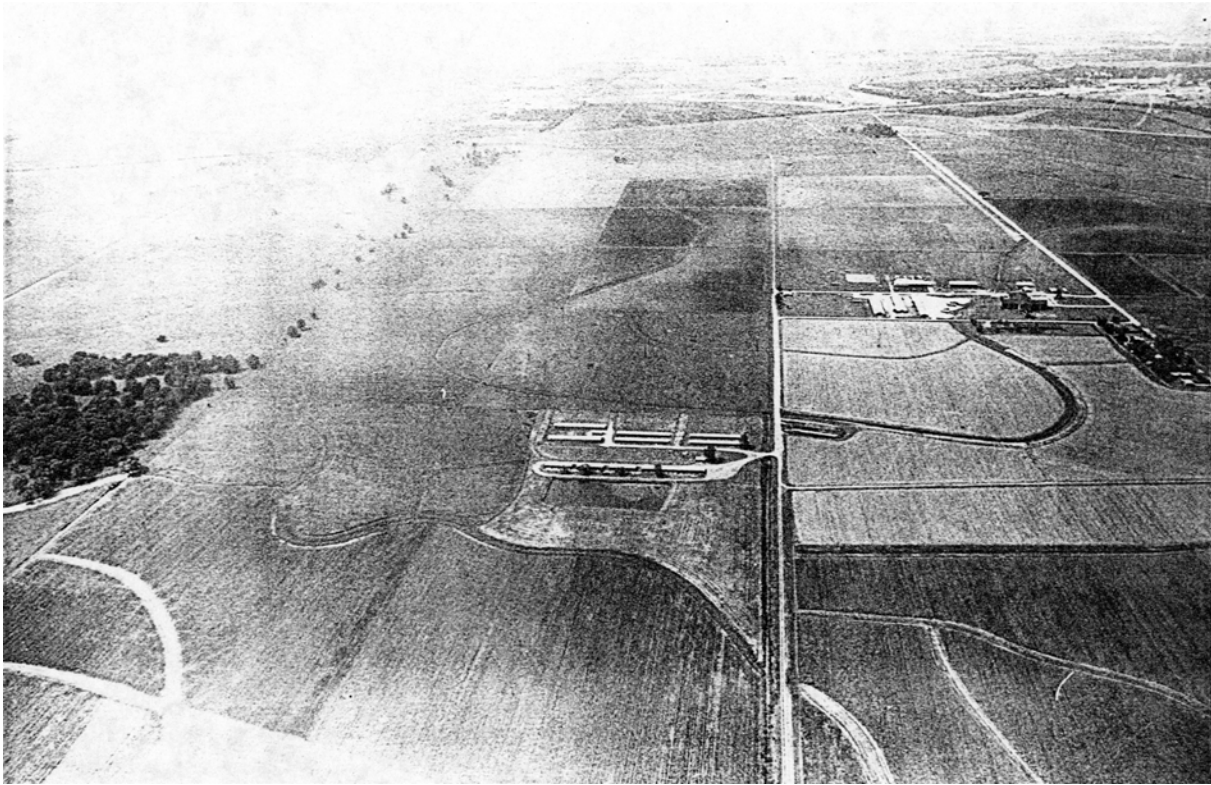


Figure 6. Central State Farm farrow-to-finish facility at center, ca. 1962, looking northwest. The finishing buildings in the foreground and cesspool are extant, but the six farrowing buildings were demolished before 1995. Buildings associated with Camp No. 1 are behind and to the right (Texas Department of Criminal Justice [1962b]).



Figure 7. Central State Farm Camp No. 1, 1962, looking west. The large building is the dormitory, and smaller buildings are the livestock barns (to right) and processing buildings (behind dormitory). Cyclone fence and three guard towers surrounded the dormitory (Texas Department of Criminal Justice 1962a).

racks and troughs (Properties 7 and 8), water troughs (Property 14), loading ramps (Properties 54 and 66), and other necessary sheds and structures (Properties 20, 21, 23, 24, 39, 40, 44, 50, 51, 56, 57, and 70). It is likely that by the late 1950s, the farm had access to natural gas. A pipeline was constructed through the farm and natural gas tanks and meters were present (Properties 41 and 49) (Hudson et al. n.d.:115; Lucko 1996a).

The prison farms were not always completely self-sustaining, but operating costs were lower. In 1957, the state prison agency became the Texas Department of Corrections, and systemwide landholdings were almost 74,000 acres, constituting the state's largest farm and netting \$2.5 million in 1958. The state sold Blue Ridge State Farm in 1958, indicating the first effort at downsizing the prison farm system (Anonymous 1959; Hudson et al. n.d.:113; Lucko 1996a; Isbell and Woodson 1996).

The 1960s brought little change to Central State Farm, although the prison system itself was under an enormous burden to adapt to an

escalating inmate population. By 1961, the prison labor force doubled from fewer than 6,000 to more than 12,000. With this burgeoning population, self-sufficiency for the farms was out of reach. In 1961, Central State Farm held 1,001 inmates. The industrial unit held first-time white or Hispanic offenders younger than 25, and those at the farm unit were African American second-time offenders younger than 25. Beside the farm, the prison had a hospital, cheese plant, cotton gin, rice and feed mills, power plant, packing plant, canning plant, ice plant, and potato storage. That year Central State Farm had 23 tractors with which to cultivate 2,831 acres with six crops: corn, cotton, oats, hybrid sugar, silage, alfalfa, and 35 types of garden produce, particularly field peas, Irish and sweet potatoes, corn, pinto beans, and peanuts. Ongoing efforts to promote drainage on this river bottom land included improvements to ditches, canals, and drainage outlets (Property 69). In the same way, crop dusting became a necessity, and a small runway was built from which to launch and land crop-dusting planes

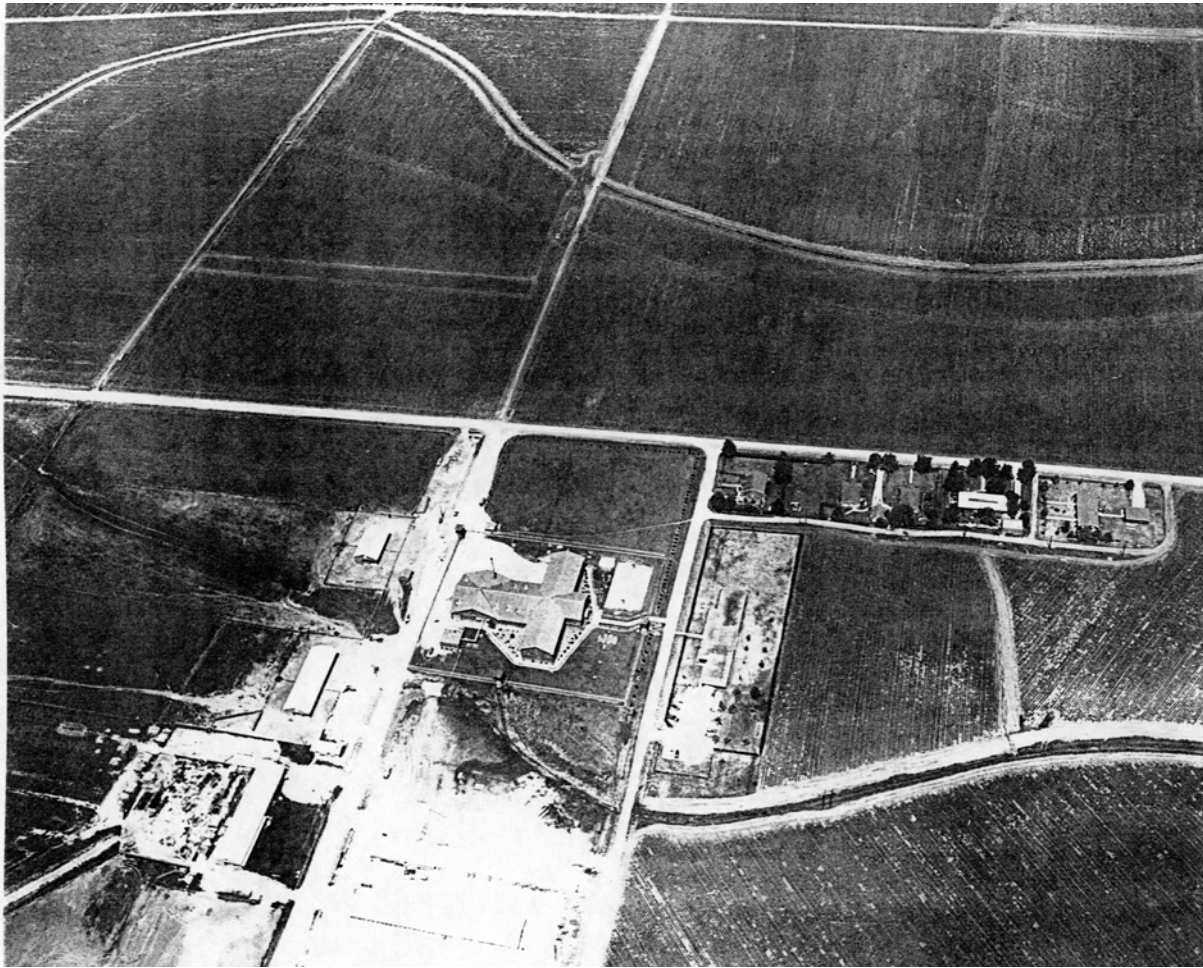


Figure 8. Central State Farm Camp No. 1, 1962, looking east. The dormitory is at the center and the 1950s guardhouses are up and to the right (Texas Department of Criminal Justice 1962b).

(Property 22) (Frierson 1967; Hudson et al. n.d.:115, 144, 146; Lucko 1996a; Nowlin 1962:Appendix A).

One attempt to help the growing cost of supporting the prison population was the legislature's 1963 enactment of a law requiring other state institutions to purchase prison industries products, which led the prison system to develop additional industries. At Central State Farm this took the form of a soap and detergent plant at the industrial unit in 1965 that could use byproducts from the packing plant (Anonymous 1959; Hudson et al. n.d.:107–8, 16; Lucko 1996a; Texas Department of Corrections [1977]:45, 49; Williams 1949).

The 1960s and beyond brought several structural changes to the prison system and to Central State Farm. Early in the decade, prison farms and penitentiaries were designated as units. In 1968, desegregation of all facilities be-

gan. The following year the prison system closed Camp No. 1 facilities at Central State Farm and transferred 300 inmates to other units. The Central Unit continued to use the Camp No. 1 dormitory for storage until 1999. The prison system purchased more property to accommodate the prison population and in the early 1970s held more than 100,000 rural acres with 14 operating prison farms. Central State Farm was a medium-security facility with 670 inmates and 2,613 acres in cultivation. The packing plant relocated in 1985, and the soap and detergent factory remained as the only industry at Central State Farm, thus farming was again a focus of prison laborers at the unit into the late twentieth century. The land continued to be farmed through 2003 (Anonymous 1972; Hudson 2001:13, 16; Hudson et al. n.d.:107–8, 150, 152; Lucko 1996a; Texas Department of Corrections [1977]:45, 49).

Sugar Land Industries, Inc., deeded three small parcels of land—less than 34 acres—to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice in exchange for land of equal acreage in 1973 (Fort Bend County Deed Records 585:778). In 1985, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice conveyed Flanagan Road, which comprised 35.627 acres extending from U.S. Highway 59 to U.S. Highway 90A, to the Texas Department of Transportation (Fort Bend County Deed Records 1821:987). Six years later, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice transferred 14 tracts of prison land in Fort Bend County totaling approximately 5,850 acres, including the 2,018.68 acres out of the Battle and Hodge Leagues under study here, to the Texas Department of Transportation (Fort Bend County Deed Records 2329:50). In December 2002, the GLO, acting for the Texas Department of Transportation, transferred 4,961.833 acres out of several surveys, including the study area, to the GLO for just more than \$52 million (Fort Bend County Deed Records 2003023371). On October 23, 2003, the GLO sold the 2,018.683 acres out of the Battle and Hodge Leagues to NNP-Keepsake, L.P., also known as Newland Communities, for almost \$37.5 million (Fort Bend County Deed Records 2003149525).

Surrounded by a sea of suburban development that radiates from Houston, 332 acres on the north side of U.S. Highway 90A still function as Central State Unit with 1,017 male inmates. Some agricultural activity still takes place on this smaller parcel of land, but operations are largely industrial in nature. The soap and detergent factory provides occupational rehabilitation for most inmates. Others participate in the mechanical shop, motor pool, or freight dispatch center. Several educational programs are available as well (Texas Department of Criminal Justice n.d.).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature review and reconnaissance and intensive survey efforts, the historian identified 80 historic-age properties. Appendix A provides a table of these properties organized by property number. The table lists UTM locations based on the Sugar Land Quadrangle USGS map (North American Datum 83), property type, subtype, estimated date of con-

struction, level of integrity, preliminary eligibility recommendations, and recommendations for further work. Appendix B includes two maps showing the location of each property.

After the research and fieldwork were synthesized, evaluations of each property were made to distinguish between those properties recommended as eligible or ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Eligible properties are buildings, structures, objects, sites, or districts that meet the criteria for evaluation. The criteria call for properties considered eligible to be significant for historical associations with events or broad patterns in history (Criterion A), persons (Criterion B), architecture (Criterion C), or archeology (Criterion D). Also, the criteria call for properties considered eligible to retain their physical and historical integrity by means of their location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The appropriate context in which to evaluate historic-age properties identified and documented in the study area is that of prison farms developed in Texas from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. As one of 14 prison farms in the state, Central State Farm encompassed just more than 5,200 acres that grew and processed food products for their own population, as well as that of other state institutions, along with cash crops like sugar cane and cotton. The major property types associated with this context were those related to government correctional facilities, agricultural storage and processing, transportation features to facilitate movement of agricultural development, and funerary practices for the prison population.

Based on the completed analysis, it is apparent that each of the historic-age properties identified in the study area has immediate historical associations with the development of Central State Farm, yet not all of the properties are recommended as eligible. Properties considered to have a low level of integrity were automatically recommended as ineligible because they did not clearly demonstrate salient aspects of the prison farm's history. In determining the level of integrity for such modest agrarian- and transportation-related buildings and structures that serve specific functions, it is important that they retain a sense of their utility. Those properties that retain character-defining features true to their historic function are considered to have a medium or high level of integrity.

Acceptable alterations would include those that allow a property to retain its function even if the changes altered the physical appearance to some degree. Properties found to have a low level of integrity are those that are ruinous, extremely dilapidated, missing a substantial amount of materials, or fewer than 50 years old.

Of the 80 identified and documented properties, 44 are recommended as ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Properties that are ruinous and therefore have a low level of integrity accounted for 43 of the ineligible properties. Of these, 24 are former buildings that have undergone demolition, and—in some cases—demolition through neglect. As historic sites, archeological remains associated with these properties are unlikely to yield information that could not be found definitively from other sources. The existence of historic buildings and structures and the research presented herein negates the need to further identify or document historic archeological sites at Central State Farm. As is typical of many twentieth-century properties, additional fieldwork related to historic archeological sites would neither substantively contribute to understanding the agricultural or prison farm contexts nor answer compelling research questions that can be readily addressed with archival or oral history research. The archival evidence presented herein, along with fieldwork, has established the physical configuration, temporal range, and history of the properties. Thus, no further work is recommended.

Other properties with a low level of integrity include those that no longer retain their character-defining features, particularly loss of roof or siding materials, or are dilapidated to the point that integrity of feeling and association are bereft. These aspects of integrity are critical to a property's ability to demonstrate its historical associations with the prison farm context. This accounts for 19 of the ineligible properties. Four properties that have a low level of integrity are also recommended as ineligible because they did not meet the 50-year minimum age guideline. A fifth property, which retains a medium level of integrity, is also recommended as ineligible because it does not meet the age guideline. In the case of each property recommended as ineligible, no further work is recommended.

Of the 36 properties recommended as eli-

gible for the National Register of Historic Places, all are related to the prison farm's development. As such they are considered eligible under Criterion A for their associations with historical development and evolution of prison farms in Texas. At least 14 other prison farms once existed in Texas during the twentieth century, some of which are extant. Portions of a few similar properties have been identified and evaluated. In 1985, the concrete main building at the 1919 Eastham State Farm in Houston County was on what had been the Eastham Plantation. This was among the first maximum security buildings constructed on a prison farm in the state. One-story wings flank the two-story central bay. One wing housed a kitchen and dining room, the other, a dormitory. The central bay provided administrative space on the first level and a recreation room on the second level. The building has a basement. Bars cover some of the openings and others were infilled with brick (Texas Historic Sites Atlas 1985, 1996). Based on available secondary materials, however, it appears that Central State Farm's Camp No. 1 may be the most intact example of this type of facility.

The six most substantial properties that represent the development of Central State Farm are the Camp No. 1 Dormitory, three livestock barns and a small building near the dormitory, and a cemetery. The 1939 dormitory (Property 53) (Figure 9) is a classically inspired massive brick building that has undergone some alterations. Most noticeable are the windows on each elevation that were infilled with brick, probably in the 1950s. The ceramic tile roof was removed between 1962 and 1970. A loading dock was added sometime in the late twentieth century. Nevertheless, the building retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity, and its associative qualities are well expressed with its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Each of the 1939 livestock barns (Properties 72, 73, and 74) (Figure 10) at Camp No. 1 is a long, two-story brick building with a side-gable roof. The first level provided space for livestock, possibly dairy cows or horses for the guards; the second level was storage for silage and tack. This series of buildings evokes a sense of the prison farm's livestock needs, along with aesthetic qualities that echo those of the dormitory. Although they have undergone some exterior



Figure 9. Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Dormitory (Property 53), 2004, looking north-northwest (photograph by author).

changes, especially enclosing some of the bays with brick, these alterations may be historic in nature. Overall the barns each retain a high degree of historic and architectural integrity that is exhibited in their respective locations, settings, materials, workmanship, design, feeling, and association.

The one-story brick building (Property 57) (Figure 11) with a side-gable roof near the dormitory was part of the 1950s construction campaign at Camp No. 1. Under the direction of O. B. Ellis and Byron Frierson, this campaign led the prison farm system into financial soundness for the first time since its formation. The building has two single-door entries on the main façade and a corresponding opening for a window, although the windows and doors themselves are missing. Even so, the building retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity that expresses the modest requirements of prison farm operations.

For each of the five buildings recommended as eligible and that retain a high degree of historic and architectural integrity, it is recommended that additional documentation and research be performed. For each of these buildings it is recommended that a historical architect who meets the Secretary of Interior’s professional qualifications prepare a HABS Level II report with photographs and drawings. HABS Level II requires measured drawings of each building on an archival medium, large-format black-and-white photographs and negatives of exterior and interior views, and a description and historical documentation. Because this report has provided most of the necessary historical documentation, it is recommended that a historian who meets the Secretary of Interior’s professional qualifications acquire oral history documentation specific to each of these five buildings.

Central State Farm Cemetery—also known



Figure 10. Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Livestock Barns (Properties 72, 73, and 74), 2004, looking northeast (photograph by author).



Figure 11. Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Administrative Building (Property 57), 2004, looking northeast (photograph by author).

as Old Imperial Farm Cemetery—(Property 25) (Figure 12) contributes an important element to the evolution of the prison farm because it constitutes a necessary element of such a facility. The cemetery is in an isolated location on the northern portion of the study area along a small bayou. Cleared of growth, with exception of closely clipped grass and one large tree, a central cross-brick planter is the focal point of the graveyard that has 33 marked graves dating from 1912 to 1943. The markers are simple, with a name, prisoner number, date of death, and, sometimes, age. Other, unmarked graves may be present, but none were identified. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice replaced the previous fencing with new materials and installed a metal gate and sign in 1997. The cemetery retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity. A program of avoidance and protection is recommended for future development likely to take place on the property. The owners have proposed that the cemetery will be part of a regional park. A 7.6-acre parcel of land for the cemetery will make up the northwest corner of the park, which will be another 78.1 acres. The cemetery will be in the southeast corner of the 7.6-acre parcel. It is recommended that the property owner deed the cemetery to Fort Bend County along with a minimum 100-ft

buffer area on each side of the existing fence line to protect any possible unmarked graves outside of the now-enclosed area.

The remaining properties recommended as eligible are related to agricultural and transportation development at Central State Farm. The 25 eligible agricultural-related properties include feed racks and troughs, water troughs, corrals, small sheds and barns, and hog production facilities. The 5 eligible transportation-related properties include bridges and culverts. All of these properties retain a medium degree of integrity. They each retain their integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Each of these properties, however, has suffered changes that mildly affect their ability to convey integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. In the case of each property with a medium level of integrity that is recommended as eligible, no further work is suggested. The reconnaissance survey provides sufficient photographic documentation and historical research to understand the salient information about each of these 30 properties.

Evaluation required analyzing two additional facets of the project area: the lack of nineteenth-century properties and the possibility of a historic district in the study area. Both pre-field and fieldwork verified the absence of



Figure 12. Central State Farm Cemetery (Property 25), 2004, looking southwest (photograph by author).

any properties associated with the early agricultural development. Fort Bend County's sugar cane industry, from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, contributed substantially to local economic health, and it is likely that related property types once existed in the study area. But intensive agricultural use of the land over time destroyed the possibility of extant buildings and structures related to this historic context.

Also, the potential for an eligible historic district focusing on the historic landscape of the prison farm was carefully scrutinized. The historic boundaries of the prison farm, encompassing about 5,200 acres, were substantially larger than those of the 2,018-acre study area. The study area includes less than half the overall area historically associated with the prison farm. Nonetheless, the study area has been the focus of prison farm operations during much of the twentieth century, but it lacks several important components to be considered as a historic district. The landscape has been altered through changes to the crops that were historically grown at the prison farm. Although much of the land was once in cotton, none was grown on these lands in recent years. Another identifying feature of the historic landscape would be edible crops, such as the fruits and vegetables once grown at Central State Farm for processing in the canning plant. Such crops or remnants thereof have not been cultivated on the prop-

erty for many years, thus the field patterns do not retain their traditional configuration as is apparent in aerial photographs that date from 1930 to 1962. The landscape has evolved over time to such a degree that its design, both conscious and unconscious, has compromised the historic functional organization of features like orchards and produce fields that are no longer extant. Some small-scale elements are extant, but many that were important to the farm have been removed. These include small outbuildings and fences.

Nor does the landscape of Central State Farm's Camp No. 1 constitute a historic district in and of itself or as part of a larger landscape. The agricultural landscape may have consumed considerably more acreage, but Camp No. 1 was the hub of the farm's agricultural activities. So many elements critical to the landscape of this confinement area are missing that it cannot convey the character-defining features necessary to understand a prison farm. Without the pickets, fencing, and security-related properties that were part of Camp No. 1, it is now difficult to ascertain that the property was once a prison facility. The demolition of many essential buildings that were part of Camp No. 1 precludes the area from having enough integrity of setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association to be considered a historic district. Therefore, it was determined that no historic district was present.

In summary, the findings recommend 44 ineligible properties and 36 eligible properties. Based on the fieldwork described herein, no further work is recommended for the 44 properties recommended as ineligible and for 30 properties recommended as eligible that have a medium degree of integrity.

Further work is recommended only for 6 properties recommended as eligible and retaining a high degree of integrity. This recommendation pertains to a cemetery (Property 25) and

5 buildings (Properties 53, 57, 72, 73, and 74) that are part of Central State Farm Camp No. 1. For the cemetery, a program of avoidance and protection is suggested. To accomplish avoidance and protection, it is recommended that the landowner deed the cemetery to Fort Bend County with a minimum 100-ft buffer area on each side of the existing fence line. For the 5 buildings recommended as eligible, it is recommended that HABS Level II recordation be performed before demolition or adaptive reuse.

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**Appendix A: Inventory of Historic Properties
at Central State Farm**

Table 1. Inventory of historic properties at Central State Farm

Property	Eastings	Northing	Property Type	Subtype	Estimated Date of Construction	Integrity	Eligibility	Recommendations
1	243414.40	3278308.00	Site	Former guardhouse	1930s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
2	243381.00	3278306.50	Site	Former outbuilding	1930s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
3	243408.60	3278364.60	Site	Former guardhouse	1919	Low	Ineligible	No further work
4	243408.60	3278428.50	Site	Former guardhouse	1930s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
5	243369.20	3278239.50	Site	Former outbuilding	1930s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
6	243414.40	3278238.20	Site	Former guardhouse	1930s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
7	243304.00	3278323.10	Agricultural	Feed racks	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
8	243255.80	3278363.00	Agricultural	Feed trough	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
9	243445.90	3278232.10	Transportation	Culvert	1910s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
10	243414.40	3278184.50	Site	Former guardhouse	1919	Low	Ineligible	No further work
11	243378.10	3278181.70	Site	Former outbuilding	1919	Low	Ineligible	No further work
12	243353.30	3278353.10	Landscape	Retaining wall	1930s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
13	243291.30	3278101.30	Agricultural	Corral	1910s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
14	243369.20	3278146.50	Agricultural	Water trough	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
15	243455.00	3278186.10	Transportation	Bridge	1910s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
16	243554.90	3278061.70	Site	Former agricultural building	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
17	243497.60	3278027.40	Agricultural	Water trough	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
18	243457.50	3278004.40	Transportation	Bridge	1910s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
19	243058.30	3277889.10	Transportation	Bridge	1910s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
20	243099.70	3277940.70	Agricultural	Livestock barn	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
21	243102.80	3277777.10	Agricultural	Livestock shed	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
22	243447.80	3277475.50	Transportation	Airplane landing strip	1961	Low	Ineligible	No further work
23	242690.50	3277786.70	Agricultural	Livestock shed	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
24	242727.40	3277919.90	Agricultural	Feed trough	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
25	242636.90	3278005.40	Funerary	Cemetery	1912-1943	High	Eligible	Avoid & protect
26	243418.70	3274443.50	Agricultural	Windmill and water tank	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
27	242612.00	3276577.40	Agricultural	Livestock shed	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
28	242922.70	3276073.30	Agricultural	Office and supply building	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
29	242887.10	3276048.90	Agricultural	Hog finishing building	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
30	242920.80	3276042.60	Agricultural	Hog loading chute	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
31	242867.70	3276024.10	Agricultural	Sewage canal	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
32	242889.20	3276021.40	Agricultural	Sewage drain	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
33	242852.30	3276050.50	Agricultural	Hog finishing building	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
34	242814.10	3276052.20	Agricultural	Hog finishing building	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
35	242808.30	3276027.70	Agricultural	Sewage canal	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
36	242782.60	3276050.60	Agricultural	Hog finishing building	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
37	242908.00	3276090.20	Agricultural	Pump and water tank	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work

Table 1, continued

Property	Easting	Northing	Property Type	Subtype	Estimated Date of Construction	Integrity	Eligibility	Recommendations
38	243150.70	3276529.40	Agricultural	Pole barn	1963	Medium	Ineligible	No further work
39	243179.20	3276545.50	Site	Former agricultural processing building?	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
40	243212.70	3276528.70	Site	Former agricultural processing building?	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
41	243246.10	3276556.30	Agricultural	Loading ramp	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
42	243167.00	3276656.10	Agricultural	Water trough	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
43	243168.00	3276674.00	Agricultural	Water trough	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
44	243108.30	3276758.70	Agricultural	Livestock shed	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
45	243251.10	3276817.50	Site	Dump	1939	Low	Ineligible	No further work
46	243131.90	3276616.00	Site	Former bulk terminal storage	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
47	243038.00	3276599.50	Agricultural	Water trough	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
48	243037.50	3276616.70	Site	Former dog kennel?	1939	Low	Ineligible	No further work
49	243300.70	3276616.20	Agricultural	Loading dock	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
50	243323.50	3276651.50	Site	Former washing area	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
51	243353.30	3276644.70	Site	Unknown	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
52	243381.60	3276647.70	Agricultural	Agricultural processing building?	1963	Low	Ineligible	No further work
53	243352.80	3276588.20	Government	Main prison building	1939	High	Eligible	HABS Level II
54	243467.70	3276642.60	Industry	Natural gas pipeline	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
55	243401.80	3276555.70	Landscape	Garden and birdhouse	1960s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
56	243247.60	3276509.50	Transportation	Culvert	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
57	243263.20	3276616.00	Government	Prison administrative building?	1950s	High	Eligible	HABS Level II
58	243345.30	3276482.80	Site	Former building	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
59	243357.20	3276516.90	Transportation	Culvert	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
60	243454.00	3276484.10	Site	Former guardhouse	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
61	243454.70	3276431.00	Site	Former guardhouse	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
62	243454.60	3276403.90	Site	Former guardhouse	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
63	243459.20	3276368.30	Site	Former guardhouse duplex	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
64	243458.50	3276320.40	Site	Former guardhouse duplex	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
65	243457.90	3276291.30	Site	Former guardhouse	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
66	243465.70	3276522.80	Industry	Natural gas tank and meter	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
67	243299.40	3276578.80	Industry	Electric transformer unit	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
68	243051.40	3276853.80	Agricultural	Water trough	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
69	242916.10	3277866.10	Transportation	Low water crossing	1960s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
70	243129.90	3276593.60	Agricultural	Agricultural building	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work

Table 1, continued

Property	Easting	Northing	Property Type	Subtype	Estimated Date of Construction	Integrity	Eligibility	Recommendations
71	243294.80	3276631.00	Transportation	Culvert	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
72	243219.70	3276677.10	Agricultural	Livestock barn	1939	High	Eligible	HABS Level II
73	243291.60	3276673.60	Agricultural	Livestock barn	1939	High	Eligible	HABS Level II
74	243381.60	3276684.60	Agricultural	Livestock barn	1939	High	Eligible	HABS Level II
75	243222.30	3276705.30	Agricultural	Corral	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
76	243192.70	3276655.30	Agricultural	Water trough	1939	Medium	Eligible	No further work
77	243151.70	3276628.40	Site	Former bulk terminal storage	1950s	Low	Ineligible	No further work
78	243382.30	3276605.70	Domestic	Cistern	1939	Low	Ineligible	No further work
79	243249.40	3278210.00	Agricultural	Water trough	1920s	Medium	Eligible	No further work
80	243123.70	3276631.30	Agricultural	Covered water trough	1950s	Medium	Eligible	No further work

Note : All coordinates taken from NAD 83.

APPENDIX B: Property Location Maps

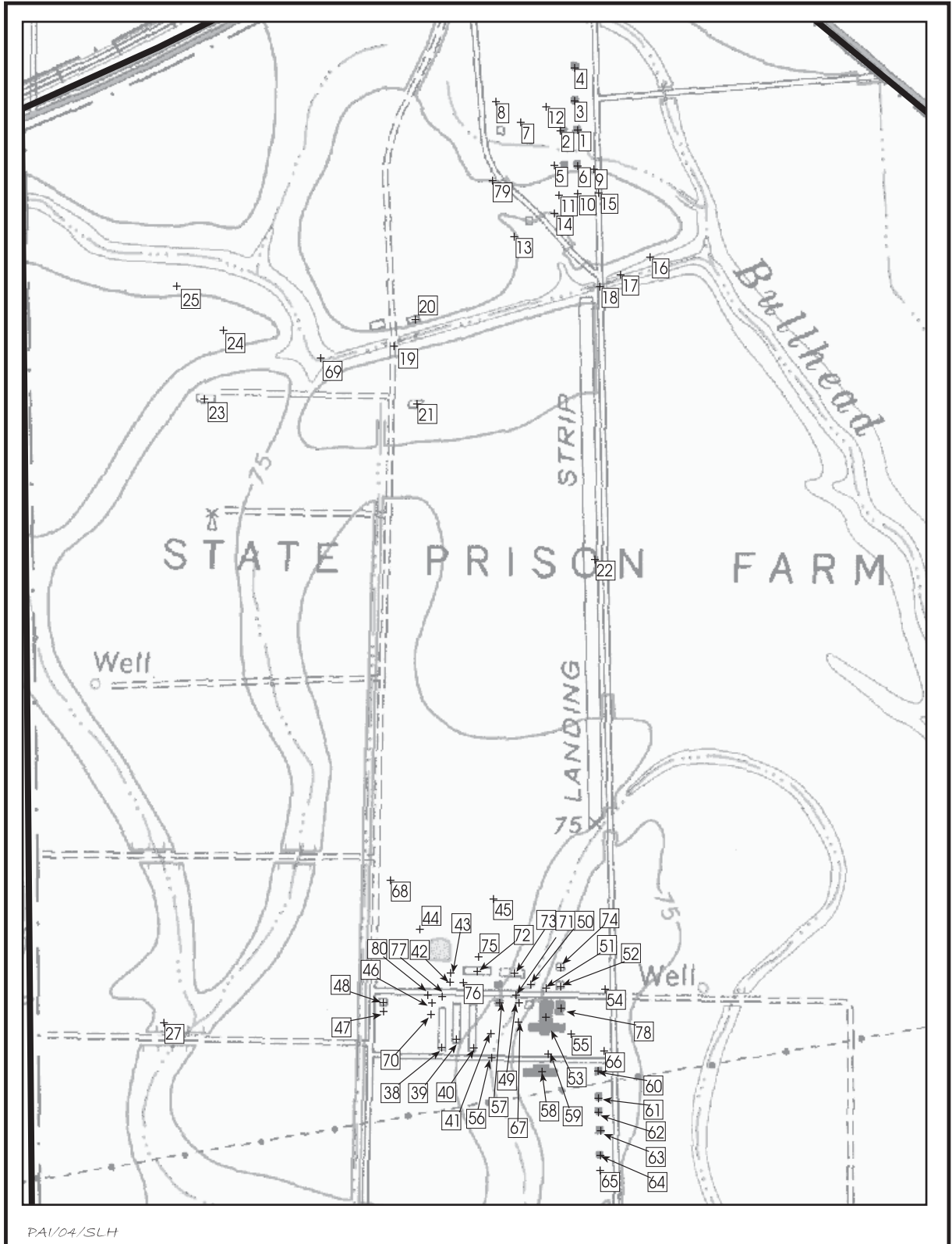


Figure 13. Property locations by number at Central State Farm (with the exception of the farrow-to-finish facility).

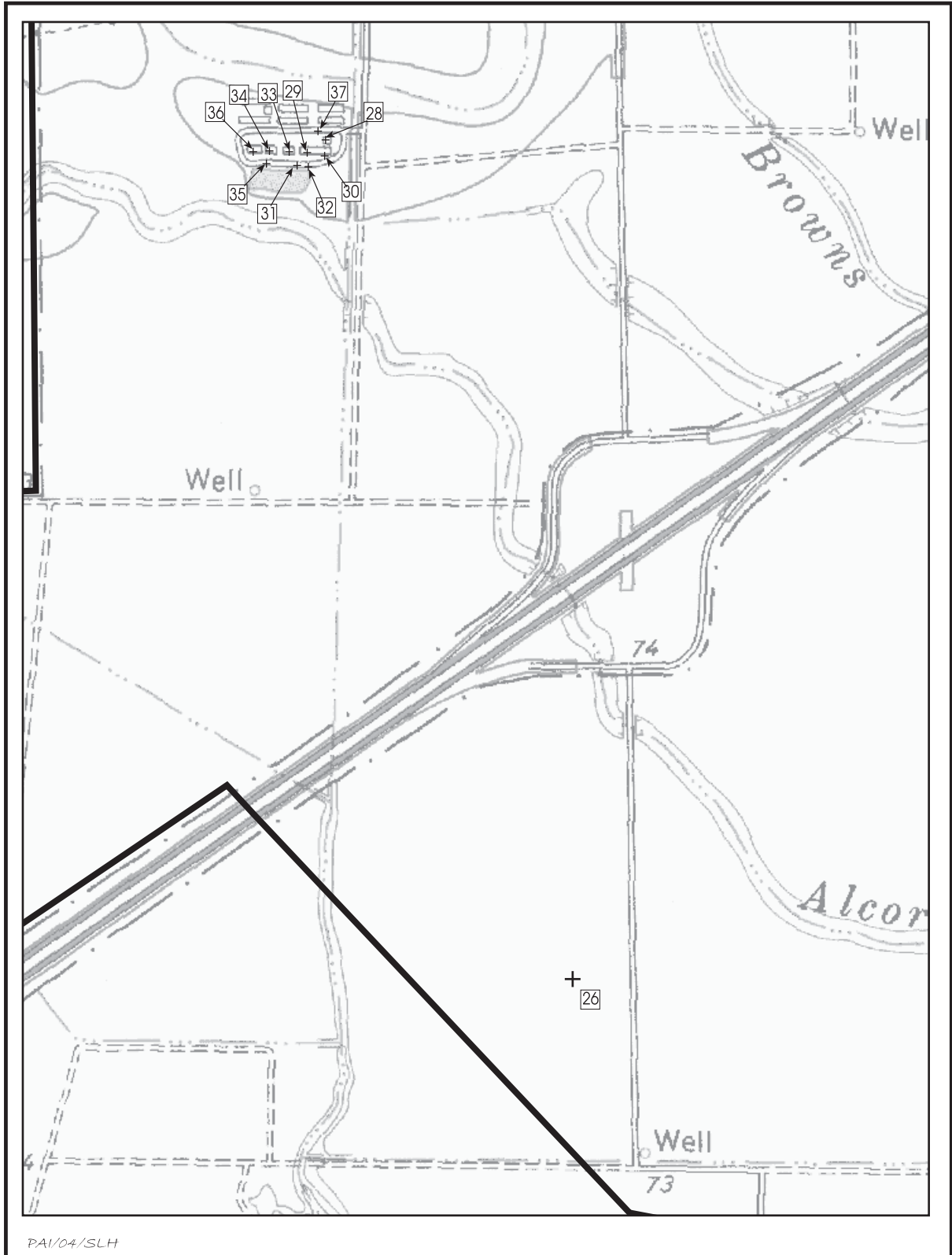


Figure 14. Property locations by number at the farrow-to-finish facility at Central State Farm.

APPENDIX C: Inventory Forms

PREWITT AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

Project #204004
Central State Farm

Property: 25
Name: Central State Farm Cemetery
Address: Just south of U.S. Highway 90A along the south side of a small bayou
Date of construction: 1912–1943
Property type: Government/Funerary
Subtype: Correctional facility/Cemetery
Retains integrity of: Location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, feeling
Photographs: 41–47, 185–186
Survey date: March 2004

Description

The Imperial State Farm Cemetery, also known as the Central State Farm Cemetery, has 33 marked burials. The first dates to 1912, and the last dates to 1943. Most of the markers include the name of deceased, date of death, and prisoner number. Some of the markers also include age at date of death. There is one large oak tree near the rear (west) side of the cemetery. The grass is mown. A barbed-wire fence surrounds the graveyard and a sign and gate mark the entry point. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice installed the fence, gate, and sign in 1997.

History of Property

The cemetery provided burial space for inmates who died while incarcerated at the prison farm. Several of the men buried in the cemetery died of disease or as the result of a failed escape efforts, and some died of natural causes.

Areas of Significance

Politics/Government—The Central State Farm Cemetery represents the institutional need to provide burial grounds at a correctional facility.

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n.d. "A Brief Sketch of Central/Imperial Farm, The Old Inmate Cemetery," in *Newspaper and Other Articles Pertaining to the Prison System in Texas*, Don Hudson, Peggy Isbell, and Virginia Scarborough, comps. On file at the George Memorial Library, Richmond.

PREWITT AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

Project #204004
Central State Farm

Property: 53
Name: Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Dormitory
Address: Between U.S. Highway 90A and U.S. 59 near Flanagan Road
Date of construction: 1939
Property type: Government
Subtype: Correctional facility
Retains integrity of: Location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, feeling
Photographs: 126, 130–141, 142–156, 159, 160, 168
Survey date: March 2004

Description

On a cast-in-place concrete foundation, the dormitory is of structural brick construction with load-bearing brick walls and columns. The cross-gable roof that covers this massive building is cast-in-place concrete that was originally sheathed with ceramic tile. The focal point of the modified cruciform-shaped building is the main façade's protruding central bay, which is two-and-a-half stories with a front-facing gable end. The middle bay has a small one-story projecting porch with stylized brick columns on either side supporting a front-facing gable pediment with concrete boxed cornice returns. The white concrete detailing creates a striking contrast with the dominant red brick of the building. The porch's pedimented gable end has brick infill that displays the date "1939" in terra cotta. Brick stairs lead to the double-door entry with a transom above. On either side of this central porch are symmetrically placed 4/4 double-hung windows on the first two levels. On the upper story are similar but smaller windows. Equidistant engaged columns that span the building's full height separate the windows. Stylized Art Deco terra cotta medallions reminiscent of wheat heads top the two central columns. Pilasters at either end of the central bay exhibit modest relief detailing that emphasizes the building's verticality. The central bay pediment mimics the porch pediment with brick infill and front-facing gable pediment with concrete boxed cornice returns. Above the architrave, "Central State Farm" is displayed in terra cotta, and above that are three wood vents that display stylized Art Deco influences. The character-defining feature of the remaining bays on the main façade as well as the other elevations are rows of rhythmically placed windows separated by equidistant engaged columns that span the building's full height.

History of Property

The consolidation of two camps on the Central State Farm required a large, new dormitory in 1939. For 30 years this building served to house inmates working on the prison farm. From 1969 to 1999, the former dormitory was used as a warehouse. It has been vacant since 1999. The dormitory follows classically inspired architectural traditions, as was common to institutional properties, particularly government-operated facilities. Classical Revival design was appropriate for institutional buildings like the prison dormitory because it intentionally recalled republican ideals and imparted monumental architecture. The 1893 Columbian Exposition aroused interest in reviving classical styles that became prevalent throughout the country during the first half of the twentieth century. Typical of Classical Revival design, the symmetrical plan and balanced fenestration exemplify directness and simplicity that characterize classically inspired design. Tall columns that support the cornice and imposing pediment articulate the rudimentary cubical form. Terra cotta detailing reinforces the classical theme, although the lettering and ornamentation also exhibit Art Deco influences popular in the 1930s.

Areas of Significance

Politics/Government—The Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Dormitory housed inmates from 1939

until 1969 who worked on the prison farm. The building represents the type of property necessary at a correctional facility that cultivated and processed agricultural products for its population and those of other state institutions.

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1938 "Cashier's Monthly Report of Receipts—Disbursements and Appropriations," February 28, 1938. Texas Prison System, 1931–1939 Folder, Box 2002/035-7, Records, State Agency Files, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin.

1939 "Cashier's Monthly Report of Receipts—Disbursements and Appropriations," August 31, 1939. Texas Prison System, 1931–1939 Folder, Box 2002/035-7, Records, State Agency Files, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin.

PREWITT AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

Project #204004
Central State Farm

Property: 57
Name: Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Administrative Building
Address: Between U.S. Highway 90A and U.S. 59 near Flanagan Road
Date of construction: 1950s
Property type: Government/Agriculture
Subtype: Correctional facility/Administrative building
Retains integrity of: Location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, feeling
Photographs: 115, 158
Survey date: March 2004

Description

On a concrete foundation, this small one-story building is of structural brick construction with load-bearing brick walls. The medium-pitched side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Horizontal wood siding in the gable ends provides the only detail on the east and west façades. The main (north) façade has two identical bays. Each bay has a window opening with a brick lintel and a single-door opening. The arrangement of this façade makes it appear that the building had two interior rooms, each with its own entrance. The windows and doors themselves are missing, but the fenestration shapes are original. The rear (south) elevation also has two bays. The east bay has a window opening with a brick lintel, and the west bay has a paired window opening with a brick lintel. Again, the windows are missing, but the fenestration shapes are original.

History of Property

The 1950s was an era of much growth for Central State Farm. This small building was part of a campaign to make prison farms both profitable and modern. It is likely that the building was used for administrative purposes.

Areas of Significance

Politics/Government—The Central State Farm Camp No. 1 administrative building was part of correctional and agricultural facilities at the prison farm. The building represents the 1950s modernization of the correctional facility that cultivated and processed agricultural products for its population and those of other state institutions.

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PREWITT AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

Project #204004
Central State Farm

Property: 72
Name: Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Livestock Barn, also known as Building #1168
Address: Between U.S. Highway 90A and U.S. 59 near Flanagan Road
Date of construction: 1939
Property type: Government/Agriculture
Subtype: Correctional facility/Livestock barn
Retains integrity of: Location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, feeling
Photographs: 91, 108–109, 111–112, 116
Survey date: March 2004

Description

This long, rectangular, two-story barn on a concrete foundation is of structural brick construction with load-bearing brick walls and columns. The exposed rafter tails reveal a wood truss system that supports the side-gable roof, which is sheathed in corrugated metal. Round brick columns divide the 20 evenly spaced bays on the main (south) façade's first level. The east 10 bays have been infilled with brick with the top four rows enclosing the bay exhibiting a stepped pattern. Each bay on this east half previously had a single window with a flat brick arch with the exception of the easternmost bay, which has a single door, also with a flat brick arch. The west 10 bays have brick lattice fence enclosing their lower portion and are open above, with the exception of the westernmost bay. It appears that a shed roof once covered this half of the building. The remaining elevations each have infilled brick bays. At the apex of each gable end is a single window or loft opening. A corral (Property 75) once surrounded the building, although at this time it is only evident on the north side.

History of Property

It is likely that this building was constructed at about the time that two camps on the Central State Farm were consolidated in 1939. Oral informants have stated that it was used as a dairy barn, but 1962 aerial photographs show horses in the corral that surrounded the building. A dairy did exist on the prison farm, but its exact location has not been positively identified. It is possible that this building originally housed a dairy and later housed horses, which were an important component of both directing prison farm laborers and providing security. The prison farm also had many work horses and mules that may have been provided with shelter. In any case, these buildings certainly housed livestock from ca. 1939 until at least 1962. The building's modest design references classically inspired architectural traditions, as was common to institutional properties, particularly government-operated facilities. Classical Revival design was particularly appropriate to institutional buildings like the barn because it intentionally recalled republican ideals and imparted monumental architecture. The 1893 Columbian Exposition aroused interest in reviving classical styles that became prevalent throughout the country during the first half of the twentieth century. Typical of Classical Revival design, the symmetrical plan and balanced fenestration exemplify directness and simplicity that characterize classically inspired design. Although ornamentation is modest, it is exhibited in the rhythmically placed columns and brick details, such as lattice, stepped patterning, and flat arches.

Areas of Significance

Politics/Government—The Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Barn was critical to protecting livestock essential to the prison farm. The building represents the type of property necessary at a correctional facility that cultivated and processed agricultural products for its population and those of other state institutions.

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2004 *Hell-hole on the Brazos: A Historic Resources Study of Central State Farm, Fort Bend County, Texas*. Technical Report No. 70. Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Austin.

PREWITT AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

Project #204004
Central State Farm

Property: 73
Name: Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Livestock Barn, also known as Building #1220
Address: Between U.S. Highway 90A and U.S. 59 near Flanagan Road
Date of construction: 1939
Property type: Government/Agriculture
Subtype: Correctional facility/Livestock barn
Retains integrity of: Location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, feeling
Photographs: 109, 114, 118
Survey date: March 2004

Description

This long, rectangular, two-story barn on a concrete foundation is of structural brick construction with load-bearing brick walls and columns. The exposed rafter tails reveal a wood truss system that supports the side-gable roof, which is sheathed in corrugated metal. Round brick columns divide the 15 evenly spaced bays on the main (south) façade's first level. Unlike Property 72, none of the bays have been infilled, nor do they have any decorative lattice fencing or stepped brick work. The remaining elevations also have open bays divided by brick columns. At the apex of each gable end is a single window or loft opening. A corral, no longer extant, once surrounded the building.

History of Property

It is likely that this building was constructed at about the time that two camps on the Central State Farm were consolidated in 1939. Oral informants have stated that it was used as a dairy barn, but 1962 aerial photographs show horses in the corral that surrounded the building. A dairy did exist on the prison farm, but its exact location has not been positively identified. It is possible that this building housed a dairy and later horses, which were an important component of both directing prison farm laborers and providing security. The prison farm also had many work horses and mules that may have been provided with shelter. In any case, these buildings certainly housed livestock from ca. 1939 until at least 1962. The building's modest design references classically inspired architectural traditions, as was common to institutional properties, particularly government-operated facilities. Classical Revival design was particularly appropriate to institutional buildings like the barn because it intentionally recalled republican ideals and imparted monumental architecture. The 1893 Columbian Exposition aroused interest in reviving classical styles that became prevalent throughout the country during the first half of the twentieth century. Typical of Classical Revival design, the symmetrical plan and balanced fenestration exemplify directness and simplicity that characterize classically inspired design. Although ornamentation is modest, it is exhibited in the rhythmically placed columns.

Areas of Significance

Politics/Government—The Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Barn was critical in protecting livestock essential to the prison farm. The building represents the type of property necessary at a correctional facility that cultivated and processed agricultural products for its population and those of other state institutions.

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2004 *Hell-hole on the Brazos: A Historic Resources Study of Central State Farm, Fort Bend County, Texas*. Technical Report No. 70. Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Austin, Texas.

PREWITT AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

Project #204004
Central State Farm

Property: 74
Name: Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Livestock Barn, also known as Building #1218
Address: Between U.S. Highway 90A and U.S. 59 near Flanagan Road
Date of construction: 1939
Property type: Government/Agriculture
Subtype: Correctional facility/Livestock barn
Retains integrity of: Location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, association, feeling
Photographs: 109, 123–125
Survey date: March 2004

Description

This rectangular, two-story barn on a concrete foundation is of structural brick construction with load-bearing brick walls and columns. The exposed rafter tails reveal a wood truss system that supports the side-gable roof, which is sheathed in corrugated metal. Round brick columns divide the seven evenly spaced bays on the main (south) façade's first level. Unlike Property 72, none of the bays have been infilled, nor do they have any decorative lattice fencing or stepped brick work. The remaining elevations also have open bays divided by brick columns. At the apex of each gable end is a single window or loft opening. A corral, no longer extant, once surrounded the building.

History of Property

It is likely that this building was constructed at about the time that two camps on the Central State Farm were consolidated in 1939. Oral informants have stated that it was used as a dairy barn, but 1962 aerial photographs show horses in the corral that surrounded the building. A dairy did exist on the prison farm, but its exact location has not been positively identified. It is possible that this building originally housed a dairy barn and later housed horses, which were an important component of both directing prison farm laborers and providing security. The prison farm also had many work horses and mules that may have been provided with shelter. In any case, these buildings certainly housed livestock from ca. 1939 until at least 1962. The modest design references classically inspired architectural traditions, as was common to institutional properties, particularly government-operated facilities. Classical Revival design was particularly appropriate to institutional buildings like the barn because it intentionally recalled republican ideals and imparted monumental architecture. The 1893 Columbian Exposition aroused interest in reviving classical styles that became prevalent throughout the country during the first half of the twentieth century. Typical of Classical Revival design, the symmetrical plan and balanced fenestration exemplify directness and simplicity that characterize classically inspired design. Although ornamentation is modest, it is exhibited in the rhythmically placed columns and brick details.

Areas of Significance

Politics/Government—The Central State Farm Camp No. 1 Barn was critical in protecting livestock essential to the prison farm. The building represents the type of property necessary at a correctional facility that cultivated and processed agricultural products for its population and those of other state institutions.

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Dase, Amy E.

2004 *Hell-hole on the Brazos: A Historic Resources Study of Central State Farm, Fort Bend County, Texas*. Technical Report No. 70. Prewitt and Associates, Inc., Austin.

**APPENDIX D: Current Site Plan of Central State
Farm No. 1 (based on Texas Natural
Resources Information Systems 1995)**

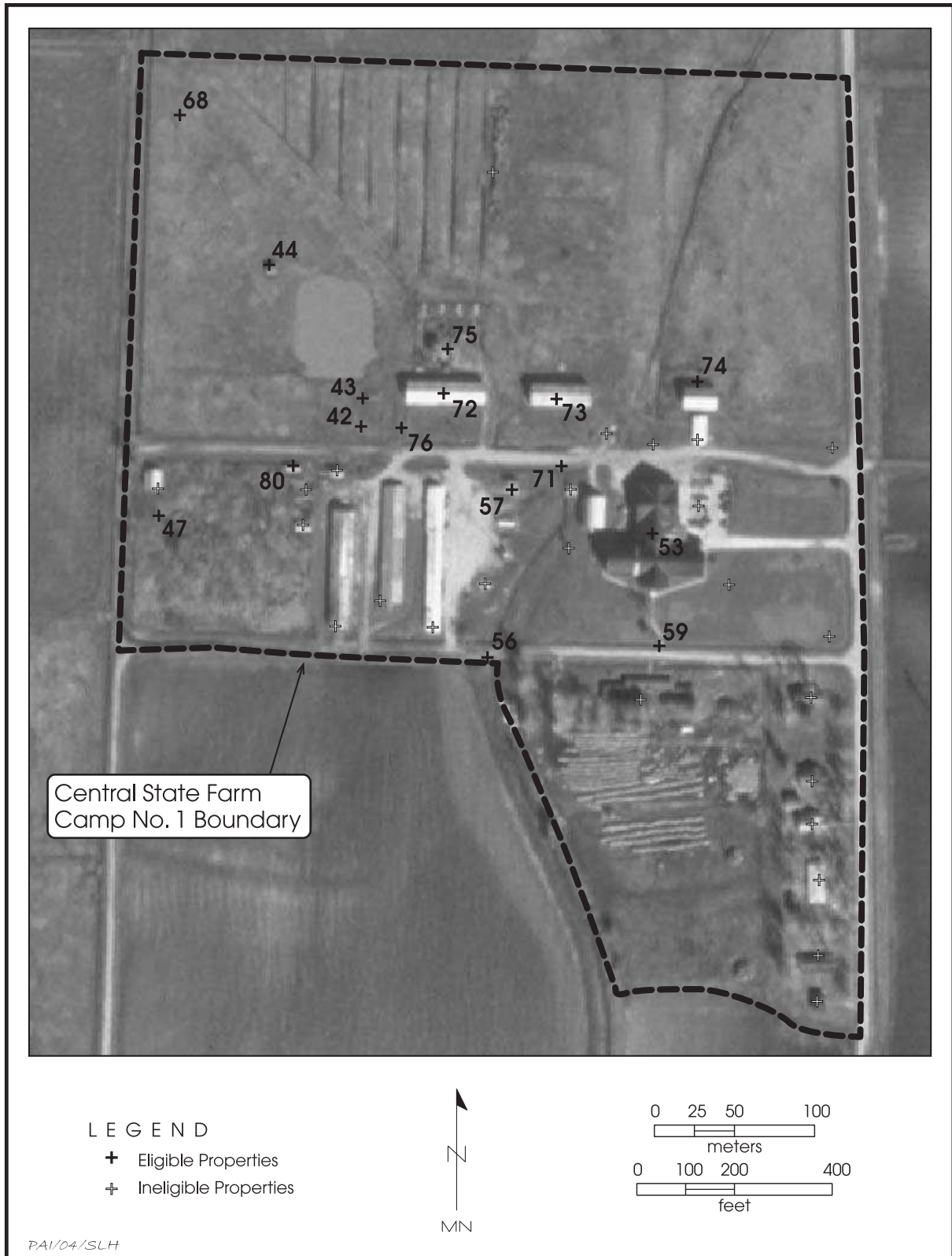


Figure 15. Current site plan, showing property numbers, of Central State Farm Camp No. 1, based on a 1995 aerial photograph.