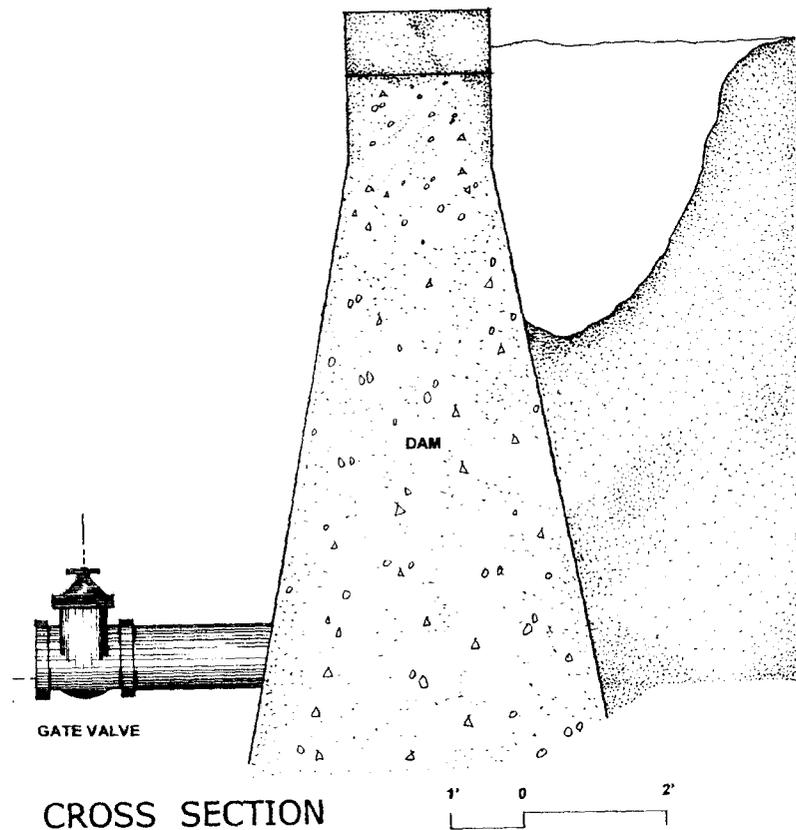


# HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION AND STRUCTURAL RECORDING OF A CONCRETE DAM ON REESE CREEK, MAYBERRY PARK (41BL165), FORT HOOD, TEXAS

by  
Thad Sitton  
and  
Douglas K. Boyd



United States Army Fort Hood  
Archeological Resource Management Series  
Research Report No. 52

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**HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION AND STRUCTURAL RECORDING  
OF A CONCRETE DAM ON REESE CREEK,  
MAYBERRY PARK (41BL165), FORT HOOD, TEXAS**

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Fort Hood

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Cultural Resources Services  
Austin, Texas

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Prewitt and Associates, Inc., of Austin, Texas, prepared this report for the Cultural Resources Management Office, Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works, United States Army, Fort Hood. Reported herein are the results of historical research pertaining to Mayberry Park (41BL165) and Historic American Engineering Record documentation of a concrete dam on Reese Creek. The work was initiated under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act because of potential damage related to a proposed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stream mitigation project. Various components of the site are described and evaluated for their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This study concludes with the following recommendations:

- the historic ranch complex (1871 to 1943) is severely disturbed and is not eligible for listing in the National Register;
- Mayberry Cemetery (1888 to early twentieth century) is eligible for listing in the National Register as a traditional cultural property;
- Mayberry Park was constructed by the U.S. Army after 1943, and none of its associated features—including the concrete dam on Reese Creek—are eligible for listing in the National Register; and,
- Camp Moonraker, used by the Boy Scouts of America in the 1950s and 1960s, is not eligible for listing in the National Register.

## **ABSTRACT**

Archival and oral history research were undertaken to provide additional documentation of a historic site—known locally as Mayberry Park (41BL165)—in West Fort Hood, Texas. This site includes a substantial concrete dam on Reese Creek, which was the major focus of this investigation because of potential disturbances from a stream mitigation project proposed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Level II Historic American Engineering Record documentation of the dam structure also was completed. Mayberry Park has a complex history, from its beginnings as a sheep ranch in 1878 to conversion to a recreational park by the army in 1943 to use as a Boy Scout camp in the 1950s and 1960s. Historic research reveals that the U.S. Army probably constructed the dam between 1943 and 1947 to create a small lake beside Mayberry Park. Of the four components on the site, only the Mayberry Cemetery is recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Dr. Cheryl Huckerby, director of the Cultural Resources Management Program at Fort Hood, oversaw this project, and historical archeologist Stephanie Nutt provided historical information pertaining to the site. Project personnel for Prewitt and Associates, Inc. (PAI), were principal investigator, Douglas K. Boyd; historical architect, Joe Freeman; and historian, Thad Sitton. PAI historian Amy E. Dase also lent her expertise and advice. PAI produced this report, with Boyd and Dase editing for historical content and Jane Sevier serving as technical editor. Sandra L. Hannum produced the illustrations. Special thanks go to two local informants who provided information about Mayberry Park: Robbie Jo Sprott Housewright and Clements W. "Speedy" Duncan.

# INTRODUCTION

# 1

The Cultural Resources Management Program at Fort Hood initiated historical investigations at Mayberry Park in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Prewitt and Associates, Inc. (PAI), Austin, Texas, conducted this study under contract with the U.S. Army. The primary goals of the study were to conduct archival and oral history research to document the construction and history of an intact concrete dam on Reese Creek and to complete Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) Level II documentation of it.

## HISTORY OF INVESTIGATIONS OF 41BL165

Mayberry Park, designated as 41BL165, is a well-known picnic and recreation spot along Reese Creek in West Fort Hood (Figure 1). The site has been visited many times, with formal investigations in 1974, 1981, and 1983 (site forms on file, Cultural Resources Management Program, Fort Hood; see Blake 2001:Appendix C). Fort Hood Archeological Society members first recorded the location as a historic archeological site in October 1974. At that time, the site was reported to be part of a small community that encompassed a mill pond, a dam, a cistern, a cemetery, and a Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) camp.<sup>1</sup> The next investigation was in November 1981 by Texas Archeological Survey (The University of Texas at Austin) archeologists, who reported several features including a well, pump house, stock tank, dam, barbecue cooking pits, concrete platforms, and cut-stone building blocks. In March 1983, Texas A&M University archeologists monitored 41BL165 but did not note any significant changes. They described the fenced cemetery, concrete slab latrine pits, recent trash

scatters, stone walkway, and a low mound that might contain structural remains.

Jack M. Jackson (1989b) wrote the most comprehensive study of Mayberry Park to provide historic contextual information to support a National Register nomination for the site. This study documented the history of the land and the features associated with four main components: the Hicks-Graves Ranch, Mayberry Cemetery, the Boy Scouts of America's Camp Moonraker, and Mayberry Park. The site probably was first occupied in 1871 and continuously used or occupied until modern times. For the ranching period, Jackson (1989b:24–25) defined the sequence of owner-occupants as:

Drury Smith	1871 to 1878
Albert F. Hicks	1878 to 1903
E. E. Graves and family	1903 to 1915
W. S. Calloway	1915 to 1926
Absentee owners and unknown tenants	1926 to 1943

This study concluded that the none of the four components were eligible for listing in the National Register (Jackson 1989b:16–19, 34–35).

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<sup>1</sup> This feature is actually an elevated water tank, a cylindrical tank on top of a square rock-walled room that probably served as a pump house. Although previous researchers called it a cistern, historical archeologists generally use the term cistern to refer to a storage container, usually built underground, for holding rainwater. Cisterns are common subsurface features on Fort Hood, and Carlson (1984) described and studied examples of these features in detail. Throughout this report, this feature is more correctly referred to as an above-ground or elevated water tank.

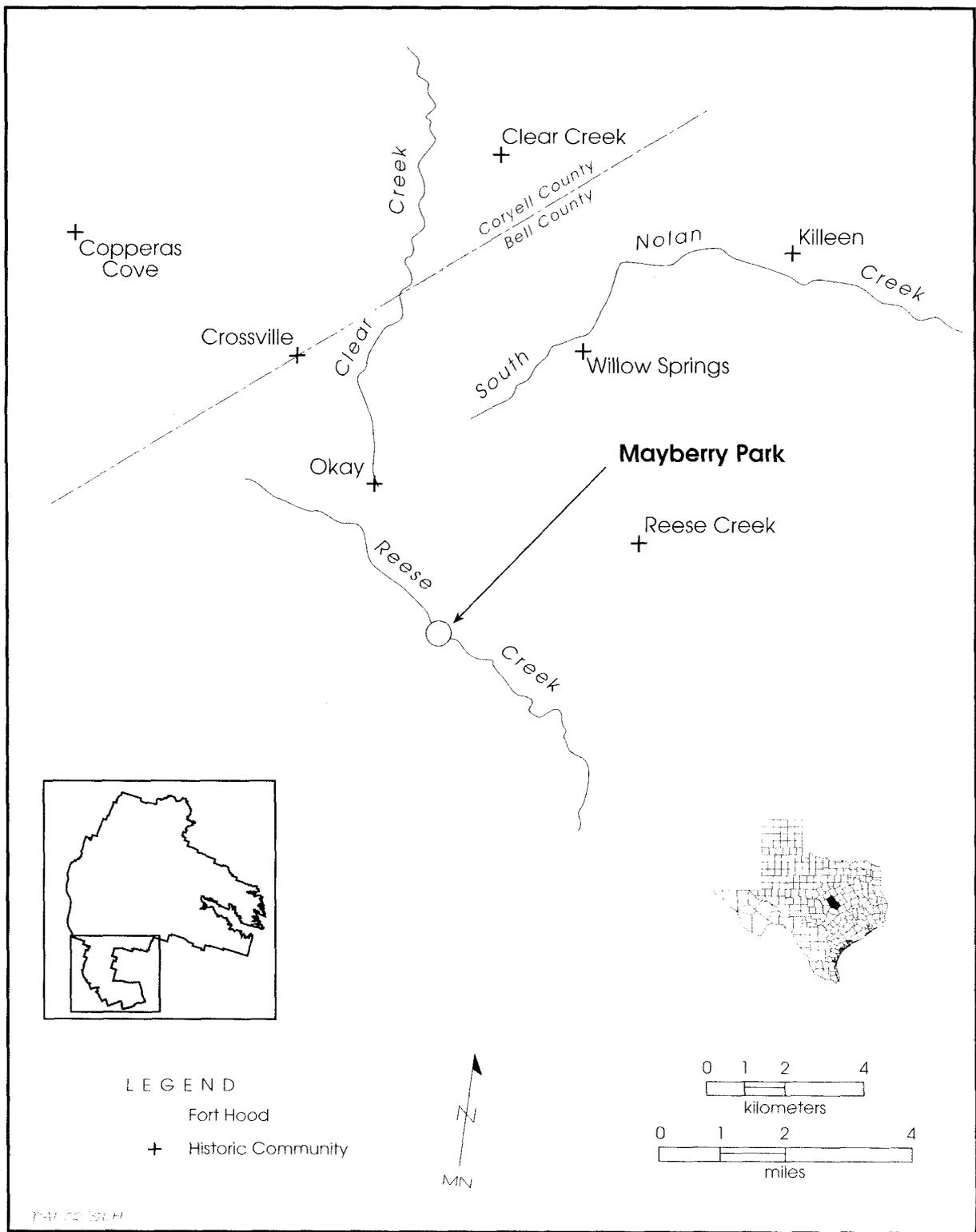


Figure 1. Location of Mayberry Park, 41BL165, in West Fort Hood.

Jackson considered the Hicks-Graves Ranch ineligible for the National Register because as an abandoned property, it no longer represented the last occupation. Its later use as a park led him to believe that the integrity of historic archeological deposits had been disrupted. Jackson based his opinion about ineligibility of Mayberry Cemetery on the general exclusion of cemeteries from listing in the National Register. He determined that neither Camp Moonraker nor Mayberry Park could be considered eligible because at the time each was less than 50 years old and therefore did not meet the minimum age guideline.

More chain-of-title research by Stabler (1999:35–37) established a detailed history of the property containing 41BL165. This study also determined that the site had four main components dating to different periods—a ranching complex, a cemetery, a Boy Scout camp, and a recreational park. Stabler suggested that the earliest occupation of the site was probably in 1871 and proposed a similar sequence of occupants:

Drury J. Smith	1871 to 1878
Albert F. Hicks	1878 to ca. 189
Uncertain	1890 to 1926
Sprott family (tenants)	1926 to 1932
Uncertain	1932 to 1943

In a study comparing the archeological integrity of 1,120 historic sites on Fort Hood, Blake (2001:Tables 13 and 14) assessed 41BL165 as having high archeological integrity. This assessment was based on the available site records that indicated there were many intact features present and that the site retained a high degree of spatial patterning of features and artifacts.

In 1999 and 2000, PAI historians conducted research and compiled historic contexts for evaluating National Register eligibility of historic sites in the 1942–1943 land-acquisition areas on Fort Hood. This work led to publication of a document (Freeman et al. 2001) that defined two historical contexts—one for agriculture and one for rural development—and provided National Register assessments of 710 historic archeological sites. The archival records indicate that the date of initial occupation of 41BL165 was 1871. This report evaluates the site as eligible under National Register Criteria A and B and potentially

eligible under National Register Criterion D (Freeman et al. 2001:Tables 15 and 16).

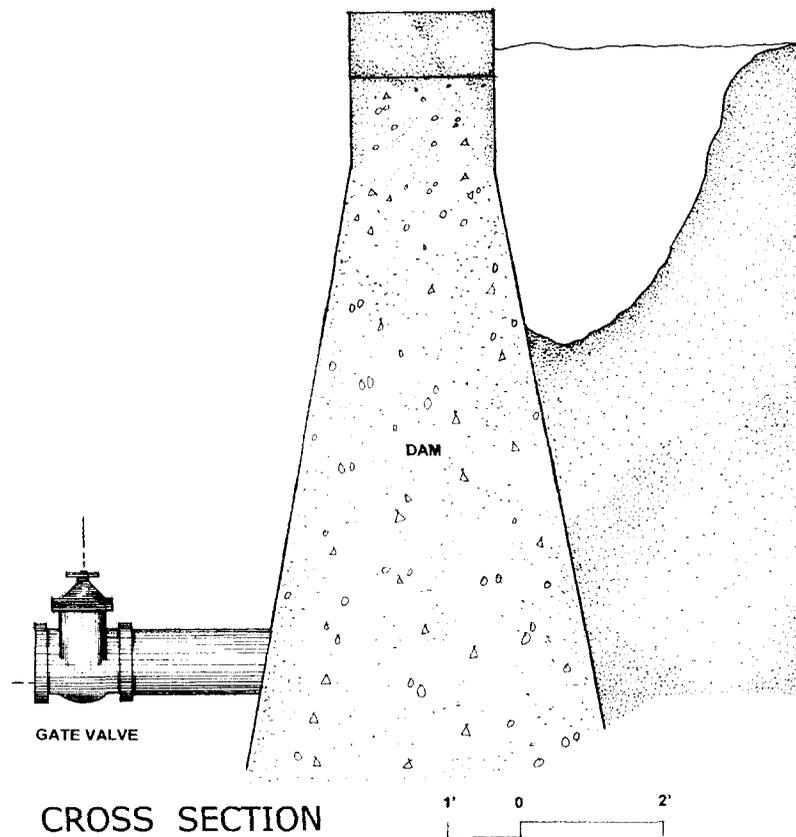
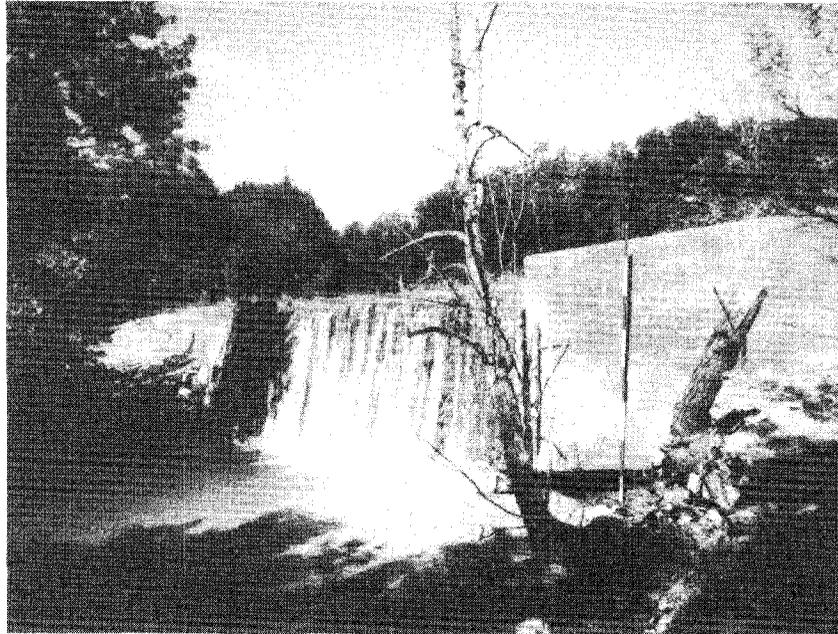
Freeman et al. (2001) determined the property eligible under Criterion A as a ranch that represents local historical patterns associated with sheep ranching. The ranch was determined eligible under Criterion B for its associations with Albert F. and Mary A. Hicks, whose flock size reflected successful ranching practices. The ranch was determined potentially eligible under Criterion D because it could yield information about material culture associated with sheep ranching. Research used in producing Freeman et al. indicated the site had a high level of integrity, such that the property could be considered potentially eligible under Criterion D. Further, Freeman et al. considered the cemetery at the site eligible under Criterion A for its historical associations with community development in this rural setting. The historical contexts on agriculture and rural development were not applicable to either Camp Moonraker or Mayberry Park, so these features were not assessed in Freeman et al.

A proposed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stream mitigation project along Reese Creek spurred the current historical research project. Because this project could damage or destroy the dam at 41BL165, it is viewed as an undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. PAI was contracted to conduct archival and oral history research to determine the origin and uses of the dam and complete HAER documentation of the dam structure (Figure 2).

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Archival and Oral History Research

The primary goal of the archival and oral history research was to document the construction and history of the intact concrete dam at 41BL165. The dam was examined during four separate site visits in September and October 2002, and the entire site was explored on foot to match up surface features with the schematic site map Jackson (1989b:Figure 4) prepared. On the last site visit, the cast iron gate valve on the dam was examined and cleaned to reveal its maker’s mark and date of manufacture. As a check on previous chain-of-title research and in



**Figure 2.** Photograph and cross section of the concrete dam on Reese Creek, 41BL165. Photograph is an overview of the downstream side of the dam, looking southwest. Photograph and drawing by Joe Freeman.

hopes of locating information about the dam, Bell County deed records were searched from army acquisition in 1943 back to the first owner-occupant of the site, Drury J. Smith in 1871. For the oral history, an exhaustive search was made of the master list of oral history informants compiled during the Fort Hood Oral History Project (Dase et al. 2002) to identify people with direct knowledge of the site during the tenures of the last three owners of the ranch: Ed Knight and his daughter Louise; John Waddell; and brothers C. W. Swope and J. L. Swope. Two eyewitnesses were found and interviewed. Robbie Jo Spratt Housewright, whose family had rented the property from Ed Knight and operated the place as a stock ranch from 1927 to 1932, was interviewed on September 3, 2002, and Clements W. “Speedy” Duncan, whose family had lived on an adjacent ranch, was interviewed on September 11, 2002. Duncan had worked as a part-time employee for owner John Waddell. Both interviews were audiotaped and full transcriptions were made. Copies of the transcripts are presented in the Appendix. The original audiotapes of the interviews are available at The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

### **HAER Recording of Dam**

In July 2002, historical architect Joe Freeman made several visits to 41BL165 to examine and record the dam on Reese Creek. Detailed recording of the dam was done to Level II standards as set forth in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Architectural and Engineering Documentation as published in the *Federal Register*, Vol. 48, No. 190 (Thursday, September 29, 1983) and described in *Recording Historic Structures & Sites for the Historic American Engineering Record* (U.S. Department of the Interior 1994). Freeman (2002) completed three recording tasks—a large (36x24 inches) engineering drawing of the concrete dam that consists of a plan, east elevation, cross section, and statement of significance; a written description of the dam; and seven black-and-white photographs of the structure taken with a large-format (4x5 inch) camera, along with a corresponding photograph index. The original HAER documentation was submitted to the Cultural Resources Management Program, Environmental Division, Department of Public Works, Fort Hood.

# HISTORY OF THE MAYBERRY PARK SITE, 41BL165

## 2

From the early days of historical research at Fort Hood, this site along Reese Creek has challenged interpreters. At 41BL165, seemingly incongruous features reside side by side—for example, the elevated rock-based water tank and the metal flagpole. Obviously, the site has had multiple uses, but just what these had been was at first confusing. The author of the 1974 site survey form (site form on file, Cultural Resources Management Program, Fort Hood) saw evidence of an older “Mayberry community” on both sides of Reese Creek, followed by a CCC camp, neither of which proved to be part of the site’s history.

During the 1980s, the research of Jack M. Jackson established the actual sequence of land use at this place along Reese Creek, just north of the Maxdale Road. From the first Anglo-American occupation during the 1870s until the U.S. government purchased the land in 1943, the site served as headquarters for what became an approximately 2,000-acre stock ranch operated by a succession of owners, resident and nonresident. During the World War II years, the army developed this scenic location along the creek as Mayberry Park, a recreational site for personnel stationed at the nearby Camp Hood air strip.<sup>2</sup> Finally, beginning probably during the 1950s and continuing through the late 1960s, the site evolved into Camp Moonraker, a summer camp for Boy Scouts (Jackson 1982; 1989b:18).

At each major transition in use—from stock ranch to recreation area to Boy Scout camp—some features were destroyed or removed, but others were recycled for new uses. Perhaps no feature epitomizes 41BL165 quite so well as the crude concrete stock drinking basin associated with the elevated water tank and long-gone windmill. The inside of the basin still shows rem-

nants of the bright aqua-blue paint most likely added to it during the 1940s when the army probably converted the stock basin into a wading pool.

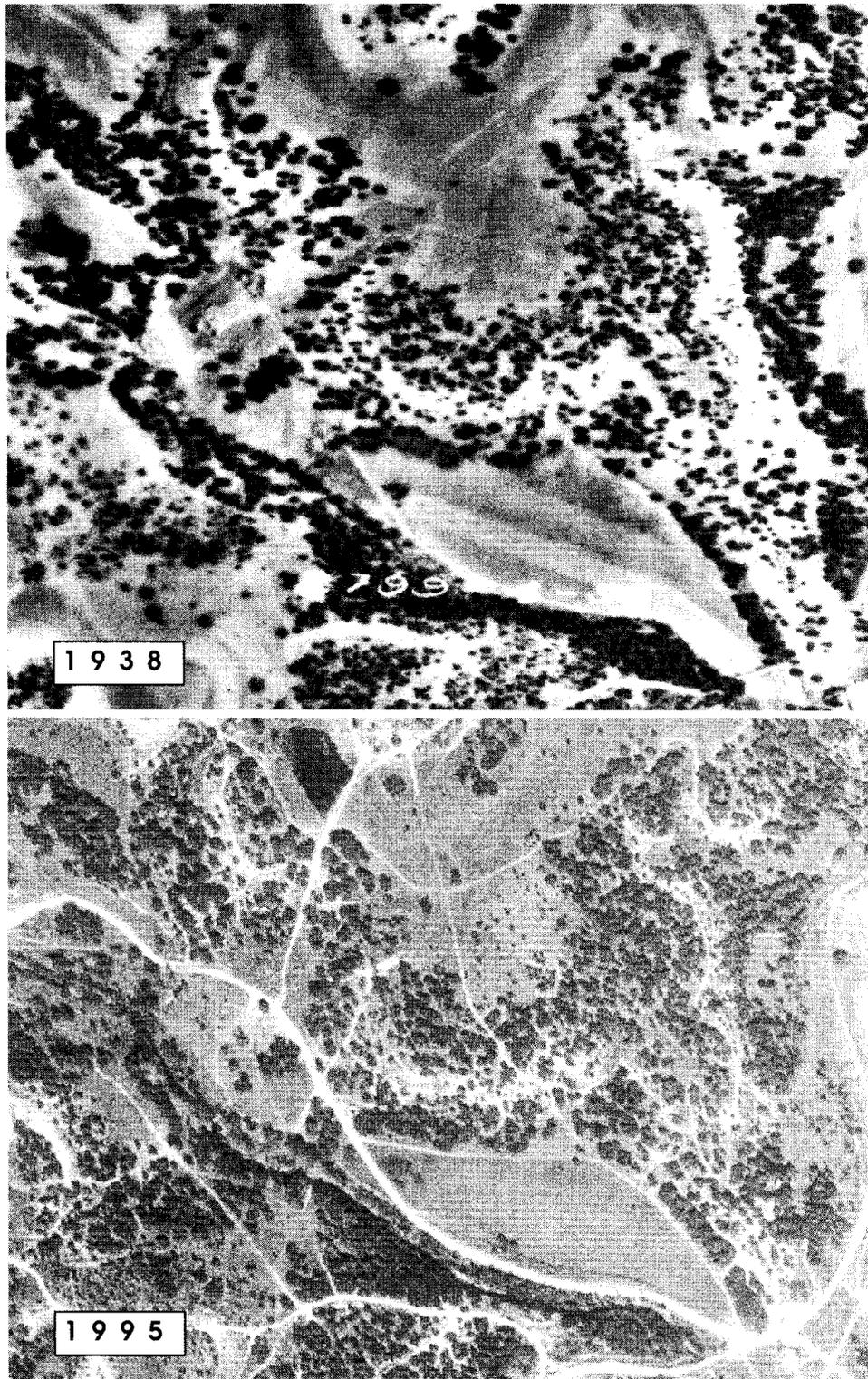
The primary subject of this report is the origin and use history of the fully intact, reinforced-concrete Reese Creek dam, the largest standing structure remaining at 41BL165. The many other features of the site must be considered, too, and what follows is a brief overview of the site and its most significant components. Comparing 1938 and 1995 aerial photographs shows the changes that have occurred and many of the features discussed below (Figures 3 and 4). The presence or absence of buildings and features in the aerial photographs provides important clues to the site’s history.

### STOCK RANCH AND CEMETERY

Jack M. Jackson (1989b:26) identified the large dam and two smaller rock-and-concrete dams upstream (one mostly intact) as remnants of the site’s 70-year history as a stock ranch. Other stock-ranch elements included the previously mentioned elevated water tank (called a cistern by some previous investigators) and concrete stock-watering basin complex, remnants of a barn foundation across the road to the north, and a “collapsed stone house” between the elevated water tank and the grove of trees marking a small private cemetery containing

---

<sup>2</sup> Camp Hood was officially created in September of 1942, and from its inception, the army had an air strip in the area that is now called West Fort Hood. In 1947, the U.S. Air Force took over the air strip, and it became Robert Gray Air Force Base. The base reverted to the army in 1963, when it was renamed Robert Gray Army Airfield (GlobalSecurity.org 2002, 2003).



**Figure 3.** Comparison of 1938 and 1995 aerial photographs of Mayberry Park, 41BL165. The 1938 photograph was taken on August 21st of that year and is from Tobin International, Ltd., San Antonio, Texas. The 1995 USGS photograph was taken on February 2nd of that year and is from Vargis LLC, Herndon, Virginia.



**Figure 4.** The 1995 aerial photograph showing historical features in and around Mayberry Park (1995 USGS photograph, February 2, 1995, Vargis LLC, Herndon, Virginia).

approximately 20 graves, which dates from the late 1870s.

Probably known as the Hood family cemetery in earlier days and now known as Mayberry Cemetery, these graves also are part of the site's ranching and farming history, at least in a general way (Jackson 1989b:16–17). Members of the Onslow Marshall Hood family claimed that the cemetery at what became Mayberry Park began as a Hood family cemetery (Elmore 1986). The exact number, names, and dates of burials in this cemetery are not known.

Historians and archeologists found other remnants of the stock-ranch days. These included surviving stretches of civilian-type wire fence, old bed springs along the creek, and other cultural scatter. Jackson (1989b:18) discovered an object he identified as a millstone in use as a picnic table top on the northwest side of the creek. He could find no firm evidence for this, but he and others conjectured that there might have been an early gristmill on the site, perhaps operated by Albert F. Hicks and his family, who ran a sheep ranch on this land from 1878 to 1903. Hicks also raised significant quantities of wheat, oats, and corn (Jackson 1989b:28). In 1974, an archeologist from the Fort Hood Archeological Society even termed the site Mayberry Mill.

#### **ARMY RECREATION SITE AND BOY SCOUT CAMP**

Site features relating to Mayberry Park and Camp Moonraker form an array of confusing remnants, and it is sometimes difficult to assign an object with certainty to one era of use or the other. Doubtless some site infrastructure was carried over from Mayberry Park to the Boy Scouts, perhaps first and foremost the “clubhouse, a long barracks-looking building” erected on the site by the army during World War II and shown on a 1959 topographic map as part of Camp Moonraker (Housewright 2002).

Jackson (1989b) attributes the barbecue pits and broken picnic tables south of Reese Creek to the Mayberry Park period and the concrete tent pads north of the road, other concrete slab work, stone paths, and the flag pole to the Boy Scouts. This information is likely to be accurate, although army records pertaining to Mayberry Park have been lost or misplaced, as have those of the Boy Scouts.

#### **THE CONCRETE DAM**

In a 1989 rewrite of his original 1982 report of the site, Jackson (1989b:26) continued to attribute the large concrete dam not only to the stock-ranch era but probably specifically to the activities of displaced Englishman and sheep-rancher Hicks, who sold out in 1903 (see Jackson 1982; 1989b). Some recent interpretations of 41BL165 have tended to agree (Bandy 2000; Stabler 1999).

Certainly, the dam is impressive. Architect Joe Freeman accurately described it as 2 ft 6 inches wide at the top and 149 ft long, with “splayed sides” for greater strength, “and terminated at each end by stone wall segments that are in alignment with the 149-foot-long central portion of the dam.” He continued, “Concrete curbs extend upstream from the dam at each side in order to divert water into the catchment. A 12” diameter pipe extends through the dam at its base below the spillway and is terminated by a large, cast-iron gate valve.” Silt has filled this dam to its top on the upstream side; hence, the dam no longer impounds any sort of reservoir. Originally, the lake behind it had been deep enough to swim in; the drop from the central spillway to the downstream water surface is approximately 9 ft (Freeman 2002).

Downstream of the dam were puzzling features, clearly subject to multiple interpretations. Freeman wrote, “On the downstream side, a collapsed concrete and stone structure remains where a road, or low-water crossing, traversed the creek immediately below the dam” (Freeman 2002). There is evidence of structural reinforcements to each end of the dam, perhaps intended to prevent the sort of demise (wash out at one end) that the second dam upstream exemplifies. It appeared that low walls of reinforced concrete had been erected on bedrock angling out perhaps 15 ft or so from each end of the dam, that rocks had been thrown in to fill the space between brace walls and dam, and that concrete then had been poured on the loose rocks from above (doubtless from the top of the dam) to fix them into place. This rip-rap brace seems more intact on the north side of the dam, although even there the low brace wall has become somewhat detached from its bedrock base and has washed a short distance downstream.

A final feature, perhaps related to some previous use of this dam, although having nothing

to do with the structure itself, is a line of drilled holes traversing the bedrock of the stream bed a few feet behind the dam.

Yet the dam is somewhat puzzling—it seems to be overkill for a simple stock dam. It was well made, though perhaps showing less than professional standards of construction. It little resembled the crude rock-and-concrete dams found just upstream, although these low-water dams (in Texas Hill Country parlance) had in their day been perfectly adequate to hold back small stock

ponds serving the needs of sheep, goats, and cattle. Finally, there was the matter of the large cast iron gate valve, designed to drain the lake deeply behind the dam. Why would any stockman ever wish to do this, at a place where recurrent seasonal droughts were a major problem? A water-release gate valve on a stock dam made little sense.

The next chapter describes the archival and oral history research intended to resolve the mystery of the dam on Reese Creek.

# LIFE ALONG REESE CREEK BEFORE 1943

## 3

The cultural context of this and earlier stock dams was sought in a review of the history of site 41BL165. As Jackson (1989b) established, this location on Reese Creek had served as the headquarters of a single stock ranch, under several owners, from the 1870s until World War II.

### EARLY LANDOWNERS

Deed records of the site began with first owner Alexander Walters, although Walters never resided on the property along Reese Creek (Stabler 1999:35). Walters sold his 160-acre survey for \$180 to Drury J. Smith in 1871 (Bell County Deed Record P:166). Smith's ad valorem tax records from 1871 to 1878 attest to his having lived on the land and probably having constructed some sort of house and barn (Jackson 1989b:23). In 1878 Smith sold 150 acres of his survey to Englishman Albert F. Hicks for \$800 at the same time that he sold 10 acres for only \$25 to Onslow Marshall Hood, part of which presumably was for use as a family cemetery (Bell County Deed Record 49:226; Elmore 1986; Stabler 1999:35).

Ad valorem tax records indicate that Hicks and his wife Mary lived on the 150 acres from 1878 to 1890, gradually buying surrounding properties and building up more than 1,900 acres for their sheep ranch. It seems possible, even probable, that the older dams date to the quarter century of Hicks's prosperous ownership. In a customary under-estimation, Hicks declared 350 sheep to the county tax man in 1879 but reported 600 to the census taker that same year. So, how many sheep did he really have in 1879? Six hundred seems a suspiciously round number. Extrapolating forward, the 650 sheep declared for taxes in 1879 may in reality have numbered many

more. Hicks told the census man that he had sheared 450 sheep and sold 1,800 pounds of wool during 1879 and that his 45 acres of cropland had produced 45 bushels of corn, 95 bushels of wheat, and 60 bushels of oats (Jackson 1989b:28). Hicks and his family operated on rich soils that were not yet depleted, where native range grasses and cultivated grains grew most abundantly. As Jackson (1989b:29) suggested, subsequent landlords on the ranch probably found fewer resources to work with.

Albert and Mary Hicks's household included their son, Henry; their daughter, Elizabeth; an older English couple, Simon and Anne Harris; and an 11-year-old boy, Henry M. Crane, who worked as a shepherd. The Hicks family lived on the site until 1890, then moved to Marble Falls and operated the ranch in absentia, perhaps with Simon Harris or Henry M. Crane as resident manager (Jackson 1989a, 1989b:24). Albert Hicks dealt in land, invested in local banks, directed his sheep ranch from afar, and continued to prosper.

In 1903, after Mary Hicks's death, Albert Hicks and his two children sold the ranch to Elisha E. Graves for \$4,700, the low sum perhaps indicating a diminished value (Bell County Deed Record 151:238). Graves was a wealthy man with extensive land holdings even before purchasing the Hicks ranch. He owned a house in Belton, the ranch, various farm lands, and interests in Belton businesses. As Jackson noted, tax records make clear "that Graves was not an owner-occupant of the ranch and that by 1912 sheep ranching was not the primary use of the land." Graves owned no sheep at the time of his death in 1912, but he did own 500 cattle. The assessed value of the property continued to decline during the years that Graves owned it,

suggesting that he was not making major improvements. Graves had four sons and three daughters, and Jackson concluded, "Either Herbert or John Graves [sons] may have been a resident ranch manager. Such matters are difficult to establish from tax and deed records" (Jackson 1989b:25).

Mattie A. Graves, widow of Elisha E. Graves, sold the stock ranch with the 150 acres that included 41BL165 to Ed Knight for \$23,500 on January 1, 1915, thus beginning a period of rapid transfers of ownership that ended when Knight re-assumed the land in 1926 (Bell County Deed Record 265:29). This seems to have been a decade of hard times, failures to pay taxes, and an unlikely period for ranch improvements, such as major stock dams. After only four months of ownership, on May 19, 1915, Knight sold the "Graves Ranch" to J. L. Whitsett for \$32,730 (Bell County Deed Record 263:89). On July 19, 1916, absorbing a \$10,000 loss, Whitsett sold the property to W. S. Callaway for \$22,000 (Bell County Deed Record 274:134). Callaway lived in Temple during the time he had the land, 1916 to 1925. Then, on February 21, 1925, W. S. Callaway sold the ranch to P. T. Callaway for the assumption of a \$10,000 loan and payment of three years of delinquent taxes (Bell County Deed Record 359:558). This Callaway also lived in Temple. Finally, unable to discharge the mortgage on the property (still held by Knight), P. T. Callaway, his wife, and W. S. Callaway conveyed all claims to the lands back to Knight for \$13,000 on September 17, 1926 (Bell County Deed Records 374:284, 600).

#### **THE HENRY ARTHUR SPROTT AND JOHN WADDELL FAMILIES**

At this point, the history of 41BL165 and the concrete dam move within the reach of the living memories of Robbie Jo Sprott Housewright and Clements W. "Speedy" Duncan and within the image of a telltale aerial photograph. Polly Peaks Elmore's 1986 interviews with the late Doris Sprott Renick, Lois Carden, and F. N. Hood provided more details about the site.

Robbie Jo Sprott Housewright was born in a wood house just north of the rock-based elevated water tank at 41BL165 on November 27, 1927. Henry Arthur Sprott and Vera Vivian Wills Sprott and their children had moved onto the Knight ranch as renters that same year. Henry Sprott

previously had owned a sheep and goat ranch near Youngsport in Bell County but had lost it to hard times. Sprott was the son of well-known Church of Christ preacher Joe Sprott, for whom he named his youngest daughter. After Jo's 1927 birth, the family numbered seven, including the parents. From eldest to youngest, the Sprott children included Doris, Bill, Vera Nell (known as Phoebe), Margie Sue, and Jo (Housewright 2002).

Henry and Vera Sprott operated the place as a sheep and goat ranch, just as several previous owners had done. To stock their rented property, the Sprotts purchased 1,000 goats in San Antonio for 10 cents a head and drove them on foot to their ranch, losing approximately 500 along the way (Elmore 1986). That some survived the journey is documented by Henry Sprott's stock notebook, now in Housewright's possession. His entry of September 1, 1930, recorded 446 goats sheared and 882 pounds of mohair produced. Housewright recalled that her family "had a big bunch of sheep and goats on that place," and her older sister Doris Sprott Renick remembered a few cows as well. Knight came over from Lampasas to visit his renters and monitor their operations two or three times a year (Elmore 1986; Housewright 2002).

Most of Housewright's earliest memories relate to the house she grew up in, the windmill and water tank, and nearby Reese Creek. The house included perhaps four rooms. It was wood frame and unpainted with wood steps. A barn was across the road nearby, as was her mother's large garden. It was what she called an "old house" that must have seemed small and cramped to the seven Sprotts. Beds stood in every room, even the long, narrow living room with the wood-burning stove in its center. Housewright recalled the house as being somewhat rundown. "These were pretty destitute days, Depression times; there wasn't anything fancy on the place," she said (Housewright 2002).

Housewright (2002) also had vivid memories of wading in Reese Creek, where her sister Margie Sue Sprott learned to walk in the shallow water. Her mother kept a big black washpot permanently stationed close to the stream, ready for the weekly washdays. "I can remember that creek as if it were yesterday. It was a beautiful stream." Housewright and her siblings were photographed around 1930 some yards from the creek standing in the circular concrete

stock-watering basin still extant near the elevated water tank. Despite her clear memories of nearby Reese Creek, she did not recall a concrete dam or small lake at the home place, and architect Freeman's photographs of the dam jogged no memories.

The Sprott family was not alone at Reese Creek. No rock house or rock-house ruin was recalled near the cemetery, but a family named Carden lived nearby in a well-made rock house that was not considered part of the Knight ranch. The Cardens lived on the edge of the hill just north of Maxdale Road immediately before the turn north onto the Knight place (that is, the turn onto the road now known as Mayberry Park Road). Others, including one of the Carden children, confirmed this rock house, now represented only by skimpy house scatter (Duncan 2002; Elmore 1986). The ranch associated with this rock house went off from the south side of Maxdale Road; only the house was to the north. A 1938 aerial photograph shows what appears to be an orchard or garden just south of the road at this point (see Figure 3).

The spot by the cemetery along Reese Creek was a pretty place and already a recreational site. Friends from Youngsport sometimes visited the Sprott family at the Knight ranch. Families would come out on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to hold informal "pasture rodeos," with bull riding and goat roping. These were simple affairs among family and friends, followed by ice cream and watermelon picnics along the banks of the creek. Housewright explained: "They'd come out there—I don't think they had any chutes or anything out there—they'd just go and pick 'em out an old bull, get on him, and ride the booger." Goats might be placed in wire transport cages, then punched out for pursuit by mounted goat ropers (Housewright 2002).

The Sprott family lived on the uncertain peripheries of three dispersed settlements—Okay to the northwest, Maxdale to the south, and Reese Creek to the east—and Jackson (1989b:27) conjectured that the primary social allegiances of people living at 41BL165 would be to Maxdale. Housewright affirmed that this was true, that the family had traded in Maxdale, but her eldest sister and brother attended the three-teacher Reese Creek School, and the family's church affiliation was with the Youngsport Church of Christ (Texas State Board of Education 1937:240–241). Housewright recalled no con-

nections whatsoever with the Okay community, to which Speedy Duncan's family, on the west side of the Sprott's fence line, gave their allegiance (Duncan 2002).

Housewright's relationship with her home on Reese Creek ended tragically in 1932, when her father died of skin cancer. Her mother tried to operate the ranch with the help of neighbors but soon gave up and moved out, just before Housewright's fifth birthday. In September 1932, immediately before her marriage at age 16, Housewright's eldest sister, Doris Sprott Renick, had put aside her childish ways by burying all her dolls in the nearby Hood family cemetery. She had 10 dolls to inter solemnly, only one or two of which were "store bought" (Elmore 1986).

Ed and Helen Ione Knight conveyed the property to their daughter Louise for \$700 on December 9, 1929 (Bell County Deed Record 400:245). No records or human memories attest to what happened at 41BL165 between late 1932, when the Sprott family left, and August 15, 1935, when Louise Knight sold her ranch to John Waddell of Gregg County for \$10,600 (Bell County Deed Record 440:275). Soon after John and May Waddell came to occupy the old wood house beside the cemetery on Reese Creek, another eyewitness showed up in the person of the teenage Duncan.

Duncan's family's land bordered what he termed "the John Waddell ranch" to the north and west, and Waddell sometimes came over to visit with Duncan's father and to see if he could employ the younger Duncan to mow or help in stock operations. The Duncans regarded Waddell as a good neighbor with greater financial resources than they or most other local people had. Soon after the Waddells moved in, Waddell employed Duncan's father, his cousins, and others to build a fine, nine-strand, goat-proof barbed wire fence around his whole ranch, with a fence post every three feet or so. This fence was the best one in the area, people thought. The Duncans and other local stockmen ran more sheep than goats on their places primarily because they could not afford goat-proof fences. Goats tested the integrity of perimeter fences. A three-wire fence might do for sheep, but "it took a lot more fence to turn a goat" (Duncan 2002).

Waddell worked hard, but he had no sons on the place and needed help. Duncan recalled him as an average-sized, active, middle-aged man,

perhaps in his 40s when he knew him. Waddell was a good roper with only the thumb and little finger of his right hand. He had lost three fingers in what Duncan always assumed was a roping accident in early life. Duncan worked mostly at odd jobs for Waddell. He did cosmetic mowing near the house with a one-mule mower, helped with roundups of sheep and goats, and once pushed an unfamiliar reel-type lawnmower around the yard, trimming grass on what May Waddell referred to as her “lawn.” No one in the countryside had heard of lawns. As Duncan recalled, “I’d never seen a push mower in my life—an old reel-type thing. And it’s rocky as heck, and you push it a foot and a rock’ll hang in it. He was a nice fellow, but his wife wanted a lawn, and last of the ’30s there wasn’t no lawns about nobody’s house” (Duncan 2002)

Pushing his lawnmower, Duncan observed the Waddell’s home site near the Hood family cemetery. Their house was the same one the Sprotts had lived in—as Duncan described, it “wasn’t nothing fancy, just a common house.” The house had a few outbuildings, maybe a small barn, and a windmill that fed the elevated water tank that in turn overflowed into the circular concrete drinking basin for stock. Duncan did not remember a dam or lake, and Freeman’s photographs were entirely unfamiliar. Duncan noted, “I’m sure the army must have did that, cause I worked on that place too many times, and there wasn’t no dam there” (Duncan 2002).

Nor could Duncan recall a stone house or stone ruin on the site, though he was perfectly aware of the Carden family’s fine stone house by the road. He referred to it as “a nice rock house there on the point of a hill.” It was the ranch house to an adjacent property that ran down the creek across the road from the house. According to Duncan, a daughter of the Carden family became “secretary to the general when Fort Hood first started,” and because of this the family got to stay in their house for some time after other houses had been destroyed. Eventually, someone complained, and the army tore down the house (Duncan 2002).

A 1938 aerial photograph offers another window on Waddell’s operations at 41BL165, midway in his tenure (see Figure 3). The image dimly reveals a house, outbuildings, and fenced yard just north of the rock-towered water tank. A barn, perhaps another outbuilding, and stock pens are across the ranch road from the house

and slightly to the north and east. A large garden (and perhaps forage crops) adjoins both barn and house to the north. Discernible between the house site and the cemetery, the stone ruin already has its still-present covering of bushes and small trees. The ranch road from the public Maxdale Road runs exactly as the modern Mayberry Park Road, except that it terminates at the house and barn and does not cross Reese Creek at the low water ford. North of the ranch road on the way in, the photograph reveals a large area of row crops, encompassing most of the area from the road’s edge along Reese Creek to the hill on the east.<sup>3</sup> Finally, corroborating the oral histories, no concrete dam shows up on the 1938 aerial photograph (see Figure 3), but a similar photograph taken in 1995 clearly reveals the dam (see Figure 4).

Waddell sold the property to C. W. Swope and J. L. Swope of Killeen on October 23, 1940, for \$20,000 (Bell County Deed Record 484:84), and the Swope brothers owned the property until they sold it to the army for \$24,250 on June 22, 1943 (Bell County Deed Record 510:104). The Swopes were businessmen with extensive land investments and probably never lived on their new property along Reese Creek. Duncan, who resided just across the fence, certainly was unaware of any owner after Waddell, suggesting that the Swopes did not make themselves much of a presence. Nor did Duncan recall the army’s subsequent development of the site along the creek as Mayberry Park. By 1943, he was in the service and overseas (Duncan 2002).

Housewright, however, was still around. Now a teenager, she often visited her sister, Doris Sprott Renick, and husband, who operated a small dairy farm south of Reese Creek toward Maxdale. As she passed on the road, Housewright observed army operations at Mayberry Park and recalled the “clubhouse, a long barracks-looking building,” resembling other buildings on early Camp Hood and squarely on the site of her former home. The army had “big parties” at this site during the war years, she thought. The dam was, in her opinion, constructed as part of the army’s development of Mayberry Park as a recreational site (Housewright 2002).

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<sup>3</sup> Later, on the 1958 topographic map, “McMillan Mountains, Texas,” this field is designated “emergency landing strip.”

# CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT

## 4

### THE DAM INTERPRETED

Housewright seems to have been correct. Until historian Thad Sitton took wire brush in hand, waded into Reese Creek, and began to remove algae and calcium accretions from the dam's cast iron gate valve in search of more data, it was still possible that John Waddell in his last year of ownership, or the Swope brothers during 1940 or 1941, might have constructed the concrete dam at 41BL165. These possibilities seemed unlikely because dam and gate valve little resembled the stock dams of the area, well known to such old timers as Speedy Duncan. On the other hand, small dams built to form swimming pools and scenic picnic ponds in Texas often included such valves—presumably, to facilitate periodic draining and cleaning out. The dam that formed the swimming pool on a creek at Camp Bullis Training Site, Fort Sam Houston, had such a gate valve, as did small dams forming early swimming pools along Shoal and Waller Creeks within the city limits of Austin (Bruns 2002).

The concrete dam on Reese Creek probably had a similar purpose. After cleaning, the gate valve revealed the following inscription, repeated on each side (Figure 5). Moving from top to bottom, it read: "8-NO-4/TRADE/LUDLOW/MARK/175W/1942." The "8" perhaps referred to the diameter of the valve, though it looked larger. The Ludlow Valve Manufacturing company was a major producer of cast iron sluice valves, foot valves, check valves, and fire hydrants that operated in Troy, New York, from the late nineteenth century until the company went out of business in 1969 (Rensselaer County Historical Society 1998). The manufacture date of 1942 firmly attributed the origins of the concrete dam

on Reese Creek to 41BL165's Mayberry Park era.

Although the army itself seems to have built the concrete dam, it did not, as Jackson (1989b) believed, knock down the stone house whose rubble now forms a low mound between the rock-based elevated water tank and cemetery. That mound was a low, brush-covered ruin by 1938 and perhaps long before that. Clearly, many building stones from this site have been recycled—perhaps to help construct the Carden family's stone house by Maxdale Road or at a later date to contribute to the rip-rap buttresses bracing the ends of the dam.

House scatter yet remains from the wood house north of the water tank, previously unsuspected on the site. The Carden home site and the orchard south of Maxdale Road (and outside of 41BL165) remain uninvestigated.

### NATIONAL REGISTER ASSESSMENT

The National Register evaluations presented here follow U.S. Department of the Interior (1992, 1994, 1997) guidelines. Table 1 summarizes the evaluations and management recommendations for each of the four major components of 41BL165. Each component is discussed separately below.

#### Ranching Complex

The ranching complex at 41BL165 contains scattered artifacts and several features that date from the site's initial occupation in 1871 to when the U.S. government acquired the land in 1943. Freeman et al. (2001:Tables 15 and 16) recommended this site as eligible for listing in the



**Figure 5.** Photographs of the cast iron gate valve on the Reese Creek dam, 41BL165. The valve was manufactured by the Ludlow Valve Manufacturing Company in 1942. Photographs by Thad Sitton.

**Table 1. Evaluation of National Register of Historic Places eligibility of historic components at Mayberry Park (41BL165)**

	National Register Criteria and Traditional Cultural Place Evaluation				Management Recommendation	
	A	B	C	D		
Component	Date of Use or Occupation	Events or Patterns	Distinctiveness of a Type	Potential to Yield Information	Functions as a Traditional Cultural Place	
Ranching complex, various owners	1871 to 1942	yes	no	no	no	no further management
Mayberry Cemetery	1888 to early 20th	yes	no	no	yes	continue to protect cemetery
Mayberry Park, U.S. Army	1942 to ?	no	no	no	no	no further management
Camp Moonraker, Boy Scouts of America	1950s and 1960s	no	no	no	no	no further management

National Register under Criteria A and B within the framework of both the agricultural and rural development contexts. The results of this study support this assessment and offer the same recommendation.

The on-site investigations and oral history interviews completed during this project confirm that this component still retains four of the seven aspects of integrity: location, setting, feeling, and association (Freeman et al. 2001:131–133; U.S. Department of the Interior 1997:44). Also concurring with the previous assessment by Freeman et al. (2001), this ranching complex is similar to many others on Fort Hood and as such has no design or construction elements that are particularly distinctive as a resource type. It is recommended that it is not eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C.

With respect to the archeological remains, Blake (2001:Table 13) had previously suggested the site as a whole had a high degree of archeological integrity, and Freeman et al. (2001:Tables 15 and 16) recommended that the archeological remains might be potentially eligible for National Register listing, pending development of a historic archeological research design. This study reveals that most of the existing features and artifacts at the site relate to post-ranching period activities and that the physical remains of the ranching component are seriously disturbed and heavily overprinted. The site has low archeological integrity and retains no viable archeological research potential. It therefore is recommended that the ranching component of 41BL165 be considered not eligible for National Register listing under Criterion D.

### **Mayberry Cemetery**

After a traditional cultural properties training seminar held on Fort Hood in May 1999, it was recommended that all of the historic cemeteries on the installation display the characteristics of traditional cultural places and are eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A (Boyd 1999; U.S. Department of the Interior 1992). The U.S. Department of the Interior (1997:2) suggests that historic cemeteries ordinarily are not eligible for listing but acknowledges that “because cemeteries may embody values beyond personal or family-specific emotions, the National Register criteria allow for listing of cemeteries under certain conditions”

(U.S. Department of the Interior 1997:34; see King 2002:122). When Camp Hood acquired the enormous chunk of land for its anti-tank training base in 1942–1943, the graves at many family and community cemeteries were exhumed and moved, but a few cemeteries were left in place.

Displacement of civilians in support of the nation’s wartime efforts is a significant event that occurred in the United States during World War II. Archival and oral history research leaves no doubt that taking land dramatically affected the people who lived on the Fort Hood lands (Dase et al. 2002; Edwards 1988; Freeman et al. 2001:118–124; Pugsley 2001:147–158). This work also leaves no doubt that the few surviving cemeteries on Fort Hood are important places to the many people who once lived on these lands and that these cemeteries still function as traditional cultural places for those whose forebears lived on the Fort Hood lands. It is recommended that the historic cemetery at 41BL165 is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A and should be considered a traditional cultural property.

### **Mayberry Park**

The U.S. Army constructed many of the existing features at 41BL165, including the concrete dam on Reese Creek, after June 1943. Jackson (1989b:19) suggested that the Army Air Corps probably built these improvements to serve as a recreational facility for troops working at the nearby Robert Gray Army Airfield that was constructed between 1943 and 1947. The research reported here supports this conclusion. The park, however, does not retain a high degree of integrity and is therefore considered ineligible for National Register listing.

### **Camp Moonraker**

Camp Moonraker, used by the Boy Scouts of America in the 1950s and 1960s, is considered not eligible for National Register listing. The camp does not retain a high degree of integrity. Also, most, if not all, of the features associated with this use do not meet the general age rule that states that “properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible” (U.S. Department of the Interior 1997:2).

**MANAGEMENT  
RECOMMENDATION**

Although the historic ranching component at 41BL165 is recommended as National Register eligible under Criteria A and B, no further management is recommended. There are many historic farming and ranching sites on Fort Hood that are considered eligible only under Criteria A and B, and these sites warrant no additional archeological work. Protection is warranted only if unusually well-preserved structures or features are present (see Freeman et al. 2001:153). This is not the case for the ranching-period fea-

tures at 41BL165, and this component does not warrant any protective measures or further management.

The historic cemetery at 41BL165 is National Register eligible and warrants protection because it is a traditional cultural place important to local people whose families once lived on Fort Hood. This cemetery—and all others on Fort Hood—also falls under other protective statutes such as the Texas Health and Safety Code. The cemetery is already protected and is fenced and maintained by the U.S. Army, which should continue to protect it in this way. No further management recommendations are necessary.

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## **APPENDIX: Oral History Interviews**

**Clements W. “Speedy” Duncan  
Interviewed by Thad Sitton  
Bell County, Texas  
September 11, 2002**

Purpose of interview was to collect information about the large concrete dam on Reese Creek, 45BL165 (Mayberry Park), at Fort Hood.

TS: What I’m doing is trying to get some information about that property—Mayberry Park—and when you told me you had [worked there]—! What can you tell me about the Waddell Ranch operation?

CWD: Well, he had sheep and goats and cows. John Waddell. Yessir, he may have sold that, but—

TS: He may have sold that right at the last—I’m going to check that—but you, did you get involved with his operation?

CWD: Well, my daddy’s place joined Waddell’s, and he’d come by and talk to my daddy, and if he could spare me, I’d go down there and work for him occasionally. Not long, just once in a while. You ain’t seen that area, have you?

TS: Yeah, I’ve seen the area right around the cemetery.

CWD: There’s a little old hill back over there, that was in his pasture, the fence line was west of it. It run north and joined my daddy’s property and circled around my daddy’s property and joined Brown’s and went on and joined Mitchell’s, then Goodnights, and then went back over to used to be a public road. It’s still open—comes down from Harden’s place.

TS: How much land do you think he had in there? Just a guess?

CWD: Just a rough guess—3,000 acres. That’s very rough.

TS: Did he live on that place?

CWD: Yessir, he lived right there by that little old— Where them graves are was where his house was.

TS: What did his house look like?

CWD: It wasn’t nothing fancy. It was just a common house. Ah, it was fair sized. That’s where we got in problems—his wife wanted the yard mowed. I had never seen a push mower in my damn life. I got on my horse and rode down there, and they put me on that push mower, an old reel type, you know. Are you familiar with them? It’s rocky as heck, and you’d push it a foot, and a rock’d hang in it. I tried that for a couple of hours and pushed it aside, and I got on my horse, and I headed home. And he was running a mule mower, a two-wheeled mower with a sickle on the side, and he’s trying to mow among a monstrous bunch of trees. You couldn’t go ten feet till you had to stop and back up. He said, “Well, here mow this.” Little old Spanish mule about half wild and wore me out in there. Then I helped him a few more times—round up something on a horse. He was a nice fellow, but his wife wanted a lawn, and last of the ’30s there wasn’t no lawns around nobody’s house.

TS: She wanted a lawn. Well, I’ve looked at that place, and it doesn’t look like a good candidate for a lawn.

CWD: (laughs) We all laughed at her wanting a lawn. We hadn't ever heard of one in the country—towns had 'em, in the '30s.

TS: Was this a board-and-batten house—like up and down boards?

CWD: Sir, I can't remember. I never was in it. Seem like it probably was. Seem like they's wooden siding around the outside of it. I never was in that house, honestly.

TS: But it just didn't look like a grand house. Is what you're saying?

CWD: Naw, naw, naw, naw. Right on down from his house—he could go out to the public road coming from Maxdale to Killeen, and there's a nice rock house on a point of a hill. It was owned by Carden, Cardinal—Cardinal, Cardinal, Cardinal, like a bird, I believe. Cardinal house.

TS: And that was not on the place?

CWD: Naw, Cardinal house wasn't on Waddell's place.

TS: Was it on another ranch?

CWD: Yeah. It joined it on the east side, and Cardinal's place then run on down that creek across the road. They built their house there, and it stayed there for years [after the army arrived].

TS: So, he got to stay in it past the time that most people had their houses knocked down.

CWD: Aw, yeah. Cardinal stayed there a good while. Everybody else had had to leave.

TS: Was there a barn by the Waddell house? Did he have a barn or any kind of outbuildings?

CWD: Had some outbuildings, but he didn't have any farming land. Yeah, yeah, I guess he had a little farming land between his house and the public road, there's some. I guess that was on his place. Some of that stuff I'm not positive about any more.

TS: Well, so you were a teenaged boy, right? And you were just being occasionally hired—"Could you come over there and help me?" He paid you a little.

CWD: Yeah, yeah, a little dab. Yeah, I guess I's 14—13—14 years old. Kids used to work. They don't no more.

TS: Now, Waddell had sheep and goats and some cattle, do you think?

CWD: Yeah, he had a good many cattle.

TS: Down there around that house there's something that kind of puzzles me, now—where the house was. It's an old concrete circle. It's a concrete drinking basin, and there's a tank next to it that looks like it was associated with a windmill, to me.

CWD: Probably, yeah. They had a windmill was set just back over from that. They pumped water in that tank, and I guess they had water in the house. Maybe plumbing, I don't remember.

TS: And didn't they run the— You know what I mean, the creek is right down there, and that

drinking pool kind of seemed—

CWD: Well, see, that creek didn't run year round. That was probably to water cattle out of—sheep and goats, whatever.

TS: Was there a low-water dam right there on that creek?

CWD: Sir, they asked me that years ago, and my friend, I told you, I'm about the last of the Mohicans, I buried him Wednesday, and the man who came first time was asking me about a dam down there. And, boy, it didn't ring no bell for me, so I asked my old lifetime buddy that was raised all around in this area. Their family worked for wages and lived in this old house and that old house, and he said, "Speedy, I been down that creek since I's a little boy hunting possums"—there didn't used to be many coons, there's just possums—and says—"I've been down that creek from the top end of it to where it runs into the river a lot of times"—and "Naw," he says, "I can't remember ever being no dam nowhere on that creek."

TS: I now think that's exactly right. Can you tell me, what did they do when they came in there with Mayberry Park? What was it? It was a recreation area, right?

CWD: Yeah. I's probably off in the army when that happened. I don't know—it's just a nice bunch of shade trees, and at one time it was clean cause he had sheep and goats. And I guess it was just somebody stopped there for lunch, and they made a little old park out of it.

TS: Yeah, you were in the war, you weren't going to— Well, they were in the war, too, but—Where were you overseas?

CWD: It was South Pacific.

TS: What were you involved in?

CWD: Engineers.

[break in the interview, then it resumes]

TS: [returning to the dam] There's no lake because the lake is completely silted up to the top of the dam. There's just a kind of a marshy, flat area, but then there's this big old concrete dam that doesn't look like any kind of a stock dam I've ever seen in my life, and at the bottom of it, there's a great big valve, that you can empty the lake with, one of those T-valve things. It's like ten inches in diameter. Like, what stockman would ever want to empty his stock pond?

CWD: Naw, naw, I'm sure the army must have did that, cause I worked on that place too many times, and the creek was there but there wasn't no dam there. To my recollection! Man, they could have been ten, but I sure can't recall one, and I believe I would've, because that'd probably been the first dam I ever saw. (laughs)

TS: (off tape) How long did you work for Waddell?

CWD: I guess into the '40s, but then after '42 I went out there and labored when they's building the barracks on Fort Hood—Camp Hood at that time—and Mr. Waddell could have built his dam on that place in the later part.

TS: He could of.

CWD: He could of, but I don't understand—

TS It's a big, expensive piece of work. Was he wealthy and well off? Nobody was too wealthy.

CWD: Well, he was better off than most of us, had more livestock. He built a nine-bobwire fence, many miles, and my daddy and a cousin and myself—Spanish oak trees, someone had cut off the timber for firewood, and it sprouted back out. They's about hoe-handle size and just real, real thick. And he come talk to my daddy to cut those stays, called 'em stays, to put in the fence, and my daddy told him, "Naw, you'll have to wait so many days, Mr. Waddell." He says, "Why wait, Mr. Duncan?" He said, "Well, Mr. Waddell, if you cut 'em now, they'll just rot." They had to wait two weeks, or something. Says, "If you cut 'em then, they'll last forever." My daddy and my cousin and I went over and cut stays, and you talking about a lot of miles around that place! He put a stay ever' three foot and hired lots of local community. That was before Mexicans was in this area. Tie a stay ever' three foot on a nine-bobwire fence. Them stays, in '43 they's just like a piece of iron. They weren't heavy, but they're just solid as could be. My daddy knew when to cut, but I didn't learn, didn't write it down, and I don't know nothing, but the old timers knew when to cut timber for whatever they wanted to use 'em for.

TS: Well, I knew people in East Texas who would do things like that by the moon and by the signs. They believed that things would rot faster if they were cut at a certain time.

CWD: They definitely will, son. They definitely will. My daddy knew when to cut them stays. It wouldn't shock me that some of 'em ain't still over there.

Yeah, speaking of getting back to the sheep and goats. In the last of the teens, my daddy showed me where the last wolf was killed. There weren't any coyotes, then. There are now, but anyway— Where he showed me was on that Waddell place, where the last wolf was killed. See, the old sheep raisers and goat raisers probably put a little in a pot and made a bounty for wolves, and I guess bounty hunters then was like now hunting for people, but my daddy showed me an area where the last wolf ever known was killed in this county.

TS: Farming cotton has got a certain round of work through the year. What's the round of work for a sheep and goat ranch? Like on your family's ranch or the Waddell ranch? And sheep are not goats. Is it different for sheep and goats? Do you have to do different things at different times? Do you shear them at different times? I don't know any of this.

CWD: Sheep, mostly we wanted to wait until it got pretty warm so the oil would come up in the wool and it'd weigh more and let the old sheep suffer a little longer. And goats, regretfully I can't remember. Seem like we sheared goats twice a year.

TS: When would sheep be sheared?

CWD: Oh, May and June—when it got so hot you had to shear 'em cause the wool on 'em would about kill 'em, you know. You'd shear sheep and turn 'em out and forget 'em, other than doctoring 'em for the damn screw worms, but goats— You sheared them on a warm day, but back then there wasn't no weather predictions like nowadays. If it turned cold, you'd have to get those goats in a shed to keep 'em from freezing to death. A goat will freeze to death pretty quick, real quick, and you had to put 'em in a shed with a fire.

TS: Okay, after it gets warm enough for them to out your ranch—and I'm in a state of total ignorance about this—I'm assuming that they feed themselves. You're not out there with

Purina Goat Chow, right?

CWD: Naw, naw, wasn't back then. Goats, the reason they was so valuable, they ate the brush, and the grass would come. Sheep eat very little or no brush, really; sheep eat weeds. They were great for killing weeds off a place, and they also got the grass, too. They had different eating habits, a sheep and a goat. No, the only problem was them old varmints like wolves and coyotes. Back in them days, very little problems with dogs. Dogs put me out of business, here, later on. Wolves and coyotes, they kill to survive. A dog, he just kills for pleasure. A dog will get in your goats, and if you're not around they'll kill 'em all night and lay down and rest a little bit and get up and go to killing 'em again. They won't quit.

TS: These are some pictures of that dam [showing him Joe Freeman's photographs]. Take a look at those. Have you ever seen a stock dam on a creek around here that had a big valve like that at the bottom of it?

CWD: Naw, naw, naw. My old friend [Johnson]—just buried him Thursday—I'd've loved to showed him them pictures. I built one on this creek for a man from Houston, but we sure didn't put no pipe on the bottom. This friend I'm telling you about—buried him Thursday down here at Maxdale—he's 80 years old, ain't no way him and I up and down that creek we wouldn't have knew about that dam.

TS: You said your father worked at Fort Hood when you were in the army?

CWD: Yeah, he used German prisoners to gather pecans out in the reservation. No guard, just my daddy, and, boy, that kept me awake—I thought them Germans was going to kill him sure as hell. Anyway, I came back out of the army, and them German prisoners was still at Fort Hood. My daddy knew they was shipping 'em out on a train. He asked me to take him out there. I drove up, and this train was across the road, and I stopped, and them prisoners was already on the train. My daddy got out, and I'll never forget it, them prisoners come off of that train. All the way up and down it, here they come. And all the hugging and crying that's taking place! I thought, well, I don't guess I had to worry about 'em killing my daddy.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**Robbie Jo Sprott Housewright**  
**Interviewed by Thad Sitton**  
**Belton, Texas**  
**September 3, 2002**

Purpose of interview was to collect information about the large concrete dam on Reese Creek, 45BL165 (Mayberry Park), at Fort Hood.

TS: What do you remember about living on the place?

RJSH: Very little. I remember that not too far from the house there's a creek, I don't know if it's Reese Creek or if it's a branch. And I can remember wading in that creek because my mother did her washing in a pot on the creek. Now, that I can remember, but outside of that, very small things. This one [referring to photograph of herself and her siblings at stock drinking basin] is the reservoir I was telling you about. It's just a cement round, it doesn't look round there, but it is. It's a round cement—I guess it was cemented because it was probably a cow trough or something like that. And we're all inside it. This is my brother, and this is my sister just older than I am. This is my sister that should fit right in there, and this is me. So, you see I could barely see over the— And I may be been kind of holding myself up, because I'm just—

This [referring to photograph of woman on a horse] would have had to been made a little further back. It doesn't say on the back when.

TS: And the photo of your mother with the horse was made in '32, you said?

RJSH: Yes. It just so happened that they had put it on the back. It's the Fourth of July, and they had a rodeo out on the place at that time. Well, they had more than one. You know, that's kind of a Sunday afternoon thing—people would gather and have just a regular pasture rodeo type thing.

TS: So, people were already coming out to this place. It became Mayberry Park, but it wasn't Mayberry Park, then, right?

RJSH: No, that was our ranch, a working ranch, then.

TS: But people were still coming out for—

RJSH: We didn't own the ranch, we just lived there. But they were friends, friends on a Sunday afternoon, like people used to get together to play baseball.

TS: But still, it was a pretty place to come, that's why they were coming there.

RJSH: It was beautiful, and people just got together like that.

TS: Who was in your family? Can you tell me? Was your father named Joe?

RJSH: No, my father's name was Arthur, Henry Arthur Sprott. And my mother was Vera Vivian Sprott. She was a Wills before she was a Sprott.

TS: How many brothers and sisters?

RJSH: There were five of us all together.

*Historical Investigation and Structural Recording, Reese Creek Dam, Fort Hood*

TS: I know this will be a question like, what did people say, how did people come to move out there to the Ed Knight place, ranch?

RJSH: Well, because my father was mostly sheep—sheep and goats—person, and we leased the place for that purpose. That's what people did, back then. I can't tell you how long we lived there, I don't have any idea.

TS: But you left in 1932. Is that correct?

RJSH: Yes.

TS: Do you remember them saying what happened to that place after you left?

RJSH: No. I wish I could remember, but I have no idea. Someone should be able to tell you that, though. There's a lot of people that may have a memory of what happened to it after we left.

TS: Well, all I know— Somebody else has done the research, the land records, I know who he sold it to, and then they had it a couple of years, and they sold it to some people, and then the army bought it. But I'm not real sure if anybody else lived there—like a family. There's people who owned it after. He and his daughter owned it, and then it was owned by people living in Lampasas and things like that. The Sprotts might have been the last family on the place.

RJSH: I wouldn't be surprised.

TS: The operation was sheep and goats.

RJSH: Sheep and goats.

TS: Did you have any crops of any kind?

RJSH: Not that I know of, but I wouldn't know that. I don't think so, I never heard anyone speak of having any kind of grain crops or anything.

TS: What about a garden?

RJSH: Oh, yes, we always had a garden. It had a little cemetery on that place, too.

TS: Yeah, yeah. I'm going out and look at it this afternoon.

RJSH: You know, I wish I could help you there, but I can't remember exactly where the cemetery was. I know it was fairly close to the house. I know that my oldest sister, this one here [referring to photograph], buried her dolls in that cemetery. (laughs)

TS: This is Doris?

RJSH: Yes.

TS: The lady—Polly Peaks Elmore, who was doing the Mayberry Park research—talked to you and talked to Doris. I found the marker file research. She was 16, and she was gonna get married, and she was putting away childish things, and she buried all of her dolls in a mass grave.

RJSH: That's right!

TS: And the cemetery—as I understand it—is still there and now is called the Mayberry Cemetery.

RJSH: Unless they've renamed it. Not that I know of have they renamed that cemetery, that place. I think it's still Mayberry Park.

TS: When she was doing the research people were saying, well, it didn't have a name. I think the old name for it was Hood Cemetery, way back when it started. There were some Hoods. But it's just one of those family cemeteries.

RJSH: Were there some Hoods buried there? Well, now, see, some of those Hoods may be able to help you, go back further. I don't know.

TS: The Hoods that go back further have all passed on. Maybe, hopefully, I'll find some people that know some more, but— What do you remember about the creek? Now, I know what you're saying, your mother kept the washpot down by the creek, so then you could add the water to the washpot and do your washing and didn't have to haul water.

RJSH: I can remember it as being shallow where that was, but there was a little falls, and I thought maybe— I don't have any memories— The place was made of quite a few acres, and I don't have any memories of being away from the place, from where the house was. But there was a little falls that the water just kind of just trickled over. You know, it wasn't very deep or anything.

TS: I think I'll show you a photo of it in a minute.

RJSH: I bet you can, and it might bring back some more memories.

TS: Do you remember a lake behind that falls? Was there a pond, or—?

RJSH: I don't—not that I remember.

TS: I'll show you this, it's not like a great secret. [handing her photocopies of Joe Freeman's photographs of the Reese Creek dam] Somebody made these photos recently.

RJSH: You see, the army might have made the— They made a park out of it, and it was much more beautiful than— [refers to photographs] No, I don't remember that. From what this looks like, it looks like it might have been further over in the pasture. This wouldn't have been close to where the house is, is it?

TS: I'm not sure at this point.

RJSH: The only little falls I remember on there would have been about this high, you know, not a deep falls like that.

TS: Yeah. What that is an old dam. The silt has filled it up behind until there's not a lake behind it, and so all the water that comes down the creek just drops over the top.

RJSH: I don't remember a big falls, but I remember talk of a falls. I didn't know it was on this place, but I guess it was. [referring to dam photograph] This is not close to the clubhouse, is it?

- TS: At this point I'm not sure how far, just a few hundred yards. But that's a long way for a kid, and you wouldn't have been—
- RJSH: No, I never saw anything that deep. We never were afraid of it, what passed by the house. This might have been way up the stream, away from the house somewhere. That even looks like the stream might've changed its course, looking at this. Naw, I don't think anyone came in later. From the way this looks, I believe it might have been there all the time. But I just don't have any memories of it.
- TS: Yeah, yeah. See, here's a side view of it that shows more— See, it's all filled in. It's just kind of a swampy place, and then this big drop. And I guess that used to've been a stock pond.
- RJSH: Yes, it could've been, but that was probably back away from the house, in the pasture way back. As you follow the creek back, it's probably way back there.
- TS: I think it was some way back, it was on that 150 acres, there, but 150 acres is a lot of room, really.
- RJSH: I thought that ranch was bigger than that, but I guess—
- TS: Well, the whole ranch was.
- RJSH: Wasn't it in the thousands? I remember that we had a big number of goats and sheep on that place.
- TS: Yeah, there were several properties, and I think it was around 1,900 acres or something like that. So, you had sheep and goats—
- RJSH: Do you remember seeing an old dipping vat there?
- TS: Uh, I haven't seen it yet.
- RJSH: Now, it might have been covered up because of everything that's been going on, but it would have been just a long narrow thing that you'd make the sheep and goats get in, practically push them in it, and they would swim through this dip water over to the other side and get out.
- TS: One of those tick dipping vats. What do you remember about the house? What was the house like that you lived in? Any memories at all?
- RJSH: Old, old house, but it was comfortable. It wasn't elaborate by any means. I remember it had a long kitchen, as most of them did back in that day. I guess the living room was probably used for a bedroom and a living room and anything else, you know. It was like "Little House on the Prairie," practically. (laughs) I remember the old wood stove that we had there. And I remember a cabinet there because my sister just older than I was climbed up on the cabinet one day—she was helping out—and she pulled the cabinet on top of her and stuck a fork in her foot. Now, that's something a four-year-old would remember because I thought she was gonna die. (laughs)
- TS: So, this is one of those standing cabinets, free standing, they didn't used to have built-in cabinets. So, the sister is clambering up to get something off the top, and it fell over on her.

RJSH: That's right. These were pretty destitute days, you know—1932 was Depression time, still, so there wasn't anything fancy on the place.

TS: What was the house made of?

RJSH: Wood, it was a wood house. Unpainted—as far as I can remember, it was unpainted. It was probably built on pier and beam, but I don't remember any underpinning or anything like that on it.

TS: I guess they built all of them as pier and beam of some sort.

RJSH: Cedar poles, posts, or whatever you want to call them—posts under there, holding it up. That's what I remember of it, and I hope my memory's right.

TS: But it definitely wasn't a rock house?

RJSH: No, it was nothing fancy, I know that.

TS: There was some talk of a rock house.

RJSH: There was a rock house, the Carden house, but it was before you ever entered the ranch. It was right before you crossed that little bridge [on Reese Creek] going towards Maxdale. Up on the hill there was a J. B. Carden house, and it was rock, back in that day.

TS: If somebody had come around and asked your family what community they lived in, what would they have said?

RJSH: Maxdale community.

TS: 'Cause sometime it's just what you choose. You're out there—Okay isn't too far.

RJSH: I know it, but Maxdale, Maxdale community.

TS: So, did your brothers and sisters, some of them, go to Maxdale School?

RJSH: No, they went to Reese Creek. It was closer. And my brother Bill rode a horse to Reese Creek School. And I think my sister started to school, right about then. But that was the closest school. Neither one of them ever went to Maxdale School. It was further away.

TS: And nobody went to Okay.

RJSH: No, Okay's too far away. Okay School was down by Ding Dong bridge. They had an Okay community.

TS: Maxdale is across the river. But where'd y'all go to church?

RJSH: We went to the Church of Christ in Youngsport. That was the closest one. They didn't have a Church of Christ in Maxdale, then.

TS: Well, so your father, he had been in sheep and goats? He had been a rancher, that's what he was, and he leased this place as a rancher. And I believe your sister said in that interview five or six years, that you were there, the total that you were there, but 1932 was the year that your father passed away. Was he ill very long?

RJSH: About a year—maybe a little longer than a year. I remember my mother told me that he died in February of '32. I don't know if they told you this or not, but he stuck a barbed wire in a mole on his leg, and that's what caused the cancer. And course back in that day and time, they did what they could, but I don't suppose there was anything like radium or chemo or anything you could do, back then. The cancer scattered.

TS: So, it began with a mole, and so it must have been melanoma.

RJSH: Yes, it wouldn't heal.

TS: So, when you went there, he was perfectly healthy, and he wouldn't have been that old.

RJSH: No. I've got a picture or two of him while he was sick but still able to function and all. Of course, we went to the Nolanville Camp Meeting, it was a Church of Christ Camp Meeting. His father was Joe Sprott the preacher, so naturally we were a religious family, and we made all the camp meetings every year, and we'd stay about two weeks at the campground revival. Of course, I was too young to remember most of that, too. We didn't stop after Dad passed away, we still went to church.

TS: The school, the critical thing is how far the kids have to walk, so you always go to the closest school.

RJSH: Well, that was Reese Creek. It wasn't too far, you know, especially— Bill rode Old Chock to school, that was the horse. I imagine it was about four or five miles, anyway, to Reese Creek School. It was a white building that looked pretty updated to me, for that long ago. (laughs)

And you know, I don't know if we ever had a car then or not. I'm supposing we did. We're bound to have had a Model T or something because Daddy went to an awful lot of places doing trading—auctions and buying goats and sheep—like Llano and Lometa, where you'd practically had to have a car. So, we're bound to've had a car back then.

TS: But the house where you lived was pretty close to Reese Creek.

RJSH: Yes, that had to be Reese Creek, and the house was real close to the creek. And, course, we were not allowed to go down there unless there was an adult with us. We didn't go to the creek because it was deep enough to drown in. But right there, it flowed over gravel, you might say. In fact, my sister learned to walk in that creek. She took her first steps in that creek.

TS: Well, if you fall down in water, it's like walking around on foam or something.

RJSH: Yes, well it wasn't much more than ankle deep. I can remember the creek, and it wasn't very deep, there, even on me.

TS: Well, I know we're getting to these childhood memories, and I was putting myself in your place. I can come up with a few things, but you're doing very well.

RJSH: Well, this is just— You've got to remember, I'm 74 and won't be long before I'll be 75, and it's hard to remember that far back. You know—and not exaggerate, I'm trying not to exaggerate on anything that happened back then because I feel like a lot of history gets exaggerated. You know, you don't know what to believe in history books. (laughs)

TS: Well, one thing that's hard to exaggerate is how people passed away for little things that would be cured in a week at Scott and White. A little tooth gets infected, and—

RJSH: Yes, it's sad, really.

TS: An every family loses a couple of children so commonly to childhood diseases, and medical care is just not that great in 1932. No penicillin.

RJSH: That's right, but you know what, I tend to lean back toward the old ways. I say give me a bottle of Vicks VapoRub and a bottle of Pepto-Bismol, and you can cure most anything. (laughs) Mama was real smart. People were smarter back then in those days when it came to horse sense. She was a brilliant lady.

TS: Well, you said she tried to continue on with the operation there?

RJSH: She tried to. She worked the ranch before Daddy died because for that year he was bedfast and couldn't do the work, you know. Of course, Mama had help. People—friends and neighbors—would come in and help do a lot of the things that she couldn't do, when it'd come time to tend to those goats and sheep. Shearing them and stuff like that. 'Course, they didn't shear sheep—sheep shearers came—but you still had to have help. There were a lot of friends and relatives that would come in and help right up to the last. People chipped in and came. People don't do that anymore, either.

TS: No, but they did do it then.

RJSH: Oh yes, you bet. I was just talking to a friend this morning about how people have grown away from one another and the closeness and everything, and I don't think it will ever be the same.

[side one ends, side two begins]

TS: I wanted to ask you, do you have any memories of this Ed Knight?

RJSH: No.

TS: Your sister told that lady that he would come over and just kind of check in four or five times a year, just kind of a social visit.

RJSH: I don't remember him. Oh, I'm sure he did, I know that he did, I remember them saying he did, but as far as myself remembering him, I don't remember.

TS: Well, in terms of just fishing around— Let me go through this [notes] and see what I've forgotten. But it was called the Ed Knight Ranch.

RJSH: Yes. We always called it the Knight Ranch. Where the clubhouse is, is mighty close to where the house was.

TS: What you're telling me is that as far back as when your family was there neighbors would come in for a pasture rodeo. So, it must have been a pretty place

RJSH: Uh huh, that's right. It was not only pretty, it was handy, and they knew that we couldn't get out because my little sister was handicapped. I don't know, we just didn't go, back then. I don't know if it was because we weren't able to go or what. I know the Rays from

Killeen—and this I'm talking families, I'm not talking about just the rodeo people—they'd come out there. And I don't think we even had any chutes or anything like that out there, they'd just get out there and pick 'em out an old bull and get on it and ride the booger, I guess. (laughs)

TS: It was a pick-me-up rodeo like a pick-me-up baseball game.

RJSH: Yes, right. They just came out and the ice cream, I can remember them talking about making ice cream, eating watermelon, and stuff like that down on the creek. It was just a Sunday afternoon or whatever day they picked— Saturday or whatever.

TS: Would they goat rope?

RJSH: Oh, yes! Yes, that was the big thing, then. I imagine they probably just had them in a portable pen. They did a lot of things with portable pens in those days, where you'd just throw up some sides and put some goats or sheep in there.

TS: You scare the goat out, and the guy rides after it and ropes it.

RJSH: Yes, I'm sure all that went on, and riding bulls and things like that. It wouldn't be like going down here and having 15 bulls penned up for people to ride. They'd probably ride the same poor old bull all the time, I don't know. But all these things happened out there.

TS: Anything else you remember about—now I'm just fishing—about the house, the inside of the house, from a kid's perspective?

RJSH: From a kid's perspective I remember the living room being, like I said, shared like a bedroom, and it was kind of a long room—long and narrow. And right in the center of the room was the old wood heater that had the caps where you pulled it back and put the wood in, you know, and pulled the top back on it. It had the old stovepipe chimney. I don't remember anything about the bedrooms. I don't think there was but two bedrooms in it.

TS: Well, people generally didn't have so many rooms, and every room was a bedroom, like you say. There were bedrooms that were nothing but bedrooms, but you had to have beds for other people, too.

RJSH: Yes, you had to, and pallets. You laid down pallets, back in that day and time, when you had company, and people's kids slept on the pallets.

TS: Absolutely.

RJSH: No, I really don't remember very much about the house. I don't remember any wallpaper. It probably had wallpaper, but I don't remember anything on the wall. It was one story, not a very big house. And I'd know if it had been a big house because even small houses were big in a child's mind.

TS: So, if it seemed little to you as a child, it was little. I know exactly what you mean.

RJSH: Yes, it was little. But I can remember that creek as if it was yesterday. It was just a stream, and it was a beautiful stream. It was flowing pretty fast, like little streams did, back in that day. At least the time that we were there, we must have had plenty of rain, because it didn't go dry.

Of course, we were there about five years, like my sister said. I guess we were there, I didn't know how long we'd been there. I know the family lived in Youngsport before we lived there. The family had a little ranch outside of Youngsport.

TS: Sheep and goats there, too?

RJSH: Uh huh. I think my dad lost that place because that was about the time when the Depression was first setting in, and I think he lost that place. And the Knight Ranch was the next place we moved to. But I was born on the Knight Ranch, November the 28th, 1927. I was not five [when we left]. Daddy died in February of '32, and I would have been five in November, and we left before I was five. And the reason I know this is because I started to school in Nolanville when I was five.

The Cardens were close friends, then, the ones that lived in the rock house.

TS: They lived in the rock house just off the—

RJSH: The one right on Maxdale Road, at the top of the hill before you cross the creek. There were a lot of people that lived in that house in latter years.

[END OF INTERVIEW]