

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Heermann Store
Other name/site number: Valmont Post Office
Name of related multiple property listing: Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas

2. Location

Street & number: 4738 W. Loop 1604
City or town: Von Ormy State: Texas County: Bexar
Not for publication: [] Vicinity: [x]

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[x] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my
opinion, the property [x] meets [] does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
[] national [] statewide [x] local

Applicable National Register Criteria: [x] A [] B [x] C [] D

Signature of certifying official / Title: Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 12/6/22
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[] entered in the National Register
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[] removed from the National Register
[] other, explain:

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	3	buildings
1	0	sites
2	1	structures
0	0	objects
4	4	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling, COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store, GOVERNMENT: Post Office, AGRICULTURE/SUBSITENCE: Processing, Agricultural Outbuilding

Current Functions: DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling, Secondary Structure; VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification: OTHER: Late 19th Century Vernacular, NO STYLE, MIDCENTURY MODERN RESIDENTIAL: Modern

Principal Exterior Materials: STONE, GLASS, METAL, WOOD, CONCRETE

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6-12)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Exploration/Settlement, Architecture (*local*)

Period of Significance: c. 1885-1939

Significant Dates: c. 1885, 1892, 1896, 1910, 1939

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 13-21)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 22-23)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on (date)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): Bexar County Historic Inventory 1973, 6-620-12-A

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: Approximately 11.28 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 29.232010°N Longitude: -98.598786°W
2. Latitude: 29.232307°N Longitude: -98.596737°W
3. Latitude: 29.230165°N Longitude: -98.596755°W
4. Latitude: 29.230241°N Longitude: -98.599070°W

Verbal Boundary Description: The historic district includes approximately 11.28 acres and follows the current legal parcel. The legal parcel is identified by the Bexar Appraisal District as CB 4203 P-9 ABS 188 (Property ID: 184545) in the vicinity of Von Ormy, Bexar County, Texas (Map 4; Data accessed July 29, 2022).

Boundary Justification: The nominated boundary reflects the current legal parcel.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Pat Ezell and Pat Castanon with Alyssa Gerszewski, THC National Register Historian
Organization: San Antonio Conservation Society
Street & number: 107 King William Street
City or Town: San Antonio State: Texas Zip Code: 78204
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Date: July 2022

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 24-28)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 29-44)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 5, 45-66)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Heermann Store

City or Vicinity: Von Ormy

County: Bexar

State: Texas

Photographer: Brianna Romero

Date: February 11-15, 2022; March 24, 2022; September 15, 2022

Photo 1: Primary (west) elevation of Heermann Store, camera facing southeast.

Photo 2: Primary (west) elevation of Heermann Store showing main entrance, camera facing southeast.

Photo 3: Primary (west) and south elevations of Heermann Store, camera facing east.

Photo 4: Rear (east) elevation of Heermann Store showing Sheds A and B, camera facing northwest.

Photo 5: North elevation of Heermann Store, camera facing southwest.

Photo 6: Primary (west) and north elevations of Heermann Store, camera facing south.

Photo 7: Heermann Store cellar.

Photo 8: Heermann Store cellar.

Photo 9: Heermann Store ground floor, camera facing southeast.

Photo 10: Replacement window in original openings, Heermann Store.

Photo 11: Heermann Store ground floor, camera facing northwest.

Photo 12: Heermann Store original rafters from Beitel Lumber Company of San Antonio. Rafters read "From Frank J. Beitel."

Photo 13: Original floor plate at main entrance of Heermann Store. Reads "Alamo Iron Works San Antonio Texas."

Photo 14: Southwest elevation of Shed A. Camera facing northeast.

Photo 15: Northeast elevation of Shed C shown at rear of Heermann Store. Camera facing southwest.

Photo 16: Northwest and northeast elevations of Shed B. Camera facing south.

Photo 17: Cotton gin ruins.

Photo 18: Cotton gin ruins.

Photo 19: Cotton gin ruins.

Photo 20: Cotton gin ruins.

Photo 21: Primary (north) elevation of house. Camera facing south.

Photo 22: Primary (north) elevation of garage. Camera facing south.

Narrative Description

The Heermann Store is a rural historic district located at 4738 W. Loop 1604 in the vicinity of Von Ormy, in southwestern Bexar County, Texas. The nominated boundary follows the legal parcel encompassing 11.28 acres. The historic district consists of the Heermann Store, three sheds, a wooden canopy, a house, a garage, and cotton gin ruins, some of which were added outside the period of significance (c. 1885-1939). The district has 8 resources total: 4 contributing and 4 non-contributing. The largest contributing resource, the Heermann Store, is a one-story vernacular stone masonry commercial building built in 1892. Over the years the building was used as a general store, post office, saloon, residence, and produce storage. The load bearing masonry building has a rectangular form and is constructed of semi-dressed sandstone block in a coursed to semi-coursed pattern with quoining at the corners. The primary (west) elevation features central double doors with windows on either side of the doors. All openings have brick arches above them. The builder is unknown. The smaller contributing resources include Shed A (c. 1900), Shed B (c. 1900), and the cotton gin ruins (c. 1885). The non-contributing house (c. 1955), garage (c. 1955), wooden canopy (c. 1990s), and Shed C (2022) were all added to the property after 1939. Some alterations occurred over the years including the removal of some historic buildings and structures at an unknown date, but the property retains historic integrity as an example of a late 19th and early 20th century settlement in southwestern Bexar County.

Location and Setting

The Heermann Store is an approximately 11.28 acre property located in rural southwestern Bexar County, Texas (Maps 1-5). The property is located 0.8 miles west of the intersection of Highway 1604 and Highway 16, approximately 8 miles southeast (in the vicinity) of Von Ormy, about 16 miles south of San Antonio, and roughly 3 miles east of Somerset. The Heermann Store is also approximately 2 miles south of the Heermann Farm site (41BX527). West Highway 1604 provides main access to the property, which is located on the south side of the highway.¹

The surrounding area is defined by a rural landscape of rolling hills dotted with heritage oak trees and much of the historic setting is intact. The only exceptions to this are Somerset Junior High School which borders the property to the east, and some scattered modern commercial and residential development. The only National Register-listed properties in the vicinity are the Presnall-Watson Homestead (NRHP 2012) to the northeast and the Herrera Ranch to the northwest (NRHP 2010).

The nominated district boundary follows the legal boundary, as defined by the Bexar County Appraisal District as CB 4203 P-9 ABS 188 (Property ID: 184545) (Map 4). A metal fence serves as the northern and eastern boundary, while a tree line serves as the western and southern boundary. The only entrance is at the north end of the property via a driveway to the garage.

Property Overview

The property is a historic district consisting of the Heermann Store, three sheds, a wooden canopy, a house, a garage, and cotton gin ruins, some of which were added outside the period of significance (c. 1885-1939) (Maps 5-6). The district has 8 resources: 4 contributing and 4 non-contributing. The contributing resources include the Heermann Store (1892), Shed A (c. 1900), Shed B (c. 1900), and the cotton gin ruins (c. 1885). A non-contributing house (c. 1955), garage (c. 1955), wooden canopy (c. 1990s), and Shed C (2022) were all added after 1939. Barbed wire, T-post, wood post range, and chain link fencing all appear on the property but are not large enough to be included in the resource count. Some of the fencing seems to separate the cotton gin ruins to the west from the rest of the resources to the east

¹ Highway 1604 was originally Rockport Road. Rockport Road was believed to have been constructed after 1884. Rockport Road and Highway 1604 are used interchangeably throughout the nomination.

but it's unclear whether that reflects the historical pattern. No other structures interrupt the view shed between the resources.

The historical spatial organization of the property appears to be intact. While set back from Highway 1604, the Heermann Store faces northwest and serves as a main anchor for the property. The sheds are concentrated to the side and rear of the historic store, surrounding a former animal pen. Historic photographs show other agricultural resources including what appear to be a barn, water tower, windmill, and two sheds, that were lost over time (Figures 10-11). The cotton gin ruins are located closer to the highway, northwest of the store. The ruins consist of a historic building that once housed a cotton gin, a stone fence, and a water well.² Both buildings historically faced Rockport Road, which is no longer visible on the landscape, because it has been realigned to form the present Highway 1604. The house and garage are situated off the highway at the northeast corner of the property accessed by a driveway. Although more recent buildings and structures exist on site, it retains much of the historic character of the rural landscape. A large grove of trees is concentrated in the center of the southern half of the property.

Resource 1: Heermann Store (Contributing Building) (Figures 2-7, 10-12, 15, Photos 1-13)³

Overview

The Heermann Store is a one-story stone masonry rural commercial building with a basement and a storefront façade parapet that faces northwest towards what was originally the Rockport Road (now realigned to form Highway 1604). The load-bearing masonry building features a large (28' X 53') rectangular one-room floor plan in both the main level and the basement. Although the store is best described as vernacular, its masonry is crafted with semi-dressed sandstone block in a coursed to semi-coursed pattern with quoining at the corners. The primary (west) elevation features central double doors with windows on either side. There are brick arches above the openings. The rear fenestration mirrors that of the primary elevation. The parapet conceals a shed roof. Exterior walls are constructed of dark reddish brown sandstone, a building material historically used in the construction of other local buildings. The historic quarry site for this stone was believed to be located on land owned by the Klemcke family.⁴ The Heermann Store is rare in that its walls still retain approximately 90% of their lime-based mortar and they have likely never been repointed, and therefore do not suffer from problems often seen when sandstone buildings are repaired with inappropriate materials. Overall, the structure and remaining historic fabric appears stable. It is currently vacant and not in use.

Exterior

Both the foundation and exterior walls are constructed of dark reddish brown semi-dressed sandstone block in a coursed to semi-coursed pattern and lime-based mortar. The stone basement walls are 24' thick from the basement floor to the water table. Foundation walls appear to be in good condition with only minor areas of eroded mortar, primarily near the ground surface. The water table is a Portland-cement-based concrete poured into a form and sloped on top to shed water. Vents between the ground surface and the water table are braced with vertical iron rounds and horizontal iron plates. The exterior stone walls above the water table are constructed of the same materials but only measure 18 inches thick. Walls are mortared with lime-based, coarse-sand-tempered mortar that extrudes out onto the stone surface. Lines indicating the centers of mortar joints were decoratively scored into the mortar with a trowel when wet.

² Ignacio Hernandez to Pat Castanon July 23, 2009.

³ Portions of Heermann Store description taken from Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store, 4308 West Loop 1604, Somerset, Bexar County, TX* (Survey Number: HABS TX-3545). Creator, Felix C. Flores, Sue Ann Pemberton, Ricardo A Alarcon, George A. Barrera, Mario A Cantu, Andy S Castillo, et al. Recorded in 2010. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx1120/>.

⁴ Janie Cadena pers. comm. June 2009.

Primary (West) and Rear (East) Elevations

The primary (west) and rear (east) elevations each have two sets of double hung replacement windows positioned at either side of the double wood doors. Brick arches are located above all windows and doors. The brick arches on the primary elevation are likely red brick painted with a buff color, while rear elevation arches appear to be red brick. A cut limestone block is centered above the main entrance on the primary façade engraved with "Heermann 1892." The primary elevation also features a single course of stone providing modest detail for the parapet. On this elevation, a vertical crack runs from the raised parapet down to the brick arch. There is evidence of a roof leak (now repaired) in the area of the crack. On the rear elevation, much of the mortar has eroded over the southeast window.

North and South (Side) Elevations

The north elevation is partially obscured by a Post Oak tree and does not appear to have any cracking. The five vents below the water table are somewhat evenly spaced along this elevation. The south elevation has four vents below the water table. Like the primary and rear elevations, conditions of the walls are good, and the majority of the mortar joints are intact.

Doors and Windows

Each of the four original doors in the building are three-panel style wood doors. The upper two panels form a removable piece above the lock rail. This removable piece fits into the top of the door with a metal pin and has a handle at the bottom of the piece. On the interiors of doors are the remnants of three-light fixed windows with two horizontal muntins, but glass has since been removed. The doors are currently painted red on the exteriors and unpainted on interiors. There are no layers of paint underlying the red paint indicating the doors were likely not painted historically. Thresholds outside both sets of doors are cast iron plates that bear the name "Alamo Iron Works."

The primary and rear elevations have two original fenestrations framing each of the doorways. The windows have sloped sills of Portland-cement-based poured concrete. Original vertical and horizontal iron bars cover each window. Window jambs and interior trim are likely original, and grooves in the side jambs for sash cords can still be seen. All original window sashes are missing. A historic photograph shows that the original windows were double hung, four-over-four light (Figure 10). Each of the sets of window sashes have been replaced with a pair of one-over-one aluminum windows, one above the other, framed with scrap lumber fastened to the original jambs. Although the sashes are missing, the remaining window elements are in good condition.

Roof

The shed roof system is constructed of plane-sawn rafters built into the stonemasonry walls and fastened to ceiling joists on the west wall (low end). The ends of the rafters sit on ledges on top the walls as well as being built into the masonry. Ceiling joists are also plane sawn, and they are braced to rafters with vertical members in addition to being fastened to the rafters at their ends at the west wall. The roof deck is constructed of shiplap plane-sawn boards of varying sizes. Most of the boards appear to be original with some replacements. The roof exterior is covered in replacement composite shingles. The top of the east (rear) elevation wall is slanted for the shed roof and has a strip of aluminum or galvanized steel flashing. Metal flashing is also visible along the north and south elevations.

Interior

Basement

The floor system is supported by posts and beams (Photos 7-8). Posts, beams, and joists are a mixture of rough-sawn and plane-sawn lumber, and much of the members of the structural system have been replaced. The basement floor is a hardened surface covered with dirt. The ceiling is roughly 10 feet high.

Main Floor

The main floor has a large open floor plan (Photos 9, 11). The wood floor planks vary in width. Most of the historic flooring is 3' wide, with other planks that are 6' and 12' wide. The flooring is nailed directly to the floor joists. Some of the flooring has been replaced with plywood. The stairway is a replacement and may not be in its original location.

Interiors walls are covered primarily with a lime-based, fine-sand-tempered plaster, with a few minor areas of repair plaster. Most of the interior plaster remains intact. When facing the primary entrance, the door on the left has a lockset, which is likely original. The lockset is opened with a skeleton key. The words "From Frank J. Bietel" are shown on the rafters, indicating the original wood was purchased Bietel Lumber Company in either San Antonio or Kerrville (Photo 12).⁵

Other Contributing and Non-contributing Resources

The last historic resources survey of Bexar County, *Bexar County Historic Inventory*, was completed in 1973. This property and the Heermann Farm were both surveyed at that time.⁶ As a result, the 1973 survey and Section F: Associated Property Types for the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas* was used to help describe and date the resources below.⁷

Resource 2: Shed A (Contributing Structure) (Photos 14-15)

Shed A is a rectangular wood framed and corrugated metal structure located directly behind the Heermann Store. Oriented southwest toward Shed B, it was likely built c. 1900. It has a slanted shed roof, a dirt floor, and four open bays in the primary (southwest) elevation. It was likely used as a barn for livestock or for machinery storage.

Resource 3: Wooden Canopy (Non-Contributing Structure) (Photos 1, 3-4)

The wooden canopy is a square wood-framed structure located directly next to the Heermann Store. Four posts support a slanted shed roof. The structure does not have any side walls and was likely constructed in the 1990s.

Resource 4: Shed B (Contributing Structure) (Photo 16)

Shed B is a small rectangular wood-framed and corrugated metal structure located to the southeast of the Heermann Store next to Shed C. The structure has open bays on the northeast and southeast elevations, a slanted shed roof, and was likely constructed c. 1900. It appears to have been a machinery or tool shed.

⁵ "Beitel Lumber Company," *San Antonio Gazette*, August 12, 1905.

⁶ Lance, Larcade, and Bechtol: Architects, *Bexar County Historic Inventory 1973*, 62-63.

⁷ Amy E. Dase, Summer Chandler, Stephanie Katauskas, and Celine Finney, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2010, 48, 52.

Resource 5: Shed C (Non-Contributing Building) (Photo 15)

Shed C is a rectangular metal building located to the southeast of Shed B. Built in 2022, it replaced an earlier non-contributing 1974 rectangular wood framed structure. It has two large vehicle doors on the northeast elevation and three pedestrian doors on the northwest elevation. The building is non-contributing due to age.

Resource 6: House (Non-Contributing Building) (Photos 21-22)

The Modern one-story wood frame house is oriented north toward Highway 1604 and located to the northeast of the Heermann Store. Constructed c. 1955, it has an irregular plan with a low sloping gabled roof, and is clad in white vinyl siding. A small front patio extends off the primary façade providing shelter for the entrance. Board and batten siding is visible in the gable on the primary elevation. Some windows and doors appear to be original, and a compatible addition was added to the rear likely in the 1990s or early 2000s. It was constructed outside the period of significance and is non-contributing due to age.

Resource 7: Garage (Non-Contributing Building) (Photo 22)

The one-story wood frame detached double garage has a hipped roof and was built c. 1955. It is located next to the house but set back further from the road. It has a rectangular plan and is clad in white vinyl siding. The driveway from Highway 1604 provides vehicle access. A small lean-to was added at the rear at an unknown date. It was constructed outside the period of significance and is non-contributing due to age.

Resource 8: Ruins of Cotton Gin (Contributing Site) (Figure 16, Photos 17-20)

The ruins of a cotton gin, stone fence, and well likely constructed c. 1885 are located to the northwest of the Heermann Store, closer to Highway 1604. A historic aerial shows the cotton gin appears to have been a rectangular structure.⁸ Currently overgrown with vegetation, there appears to be one remaining wall which is in roughly the same condition as it was when the HABS documentation was completed for the Heermann Store in 2010. The primary elevation of the ruin is roughly parallel to the front façade of the Heermann Store, and originally faced the Rockport Road to the northwest. The cotton gin was a vernacular stone masonry building constructed of similar sandstone with lime-based mortar that was used for the construction of the Heermann Store. The sandstone is rough cut and not well shaped.

Around 1970, the former owner bulldozed all but the one standing wall, and he left one rock to indicate where there was an opening in the structure. The remaining wall has fire damage providing evidence the building burned at some point. Oral histories support this, though the exact date of the fire is unknown.⁹

The existing standing wall has one opening approximately 6 feet wide, large enough to possibly fit farm equipment or a horse and carriage. There are two other openings that may have been doors or, more likely, very tall windows. Adjacent to the cotton gin ruins is a water well approximately 80 feet deep and lined with the same rock used in the construction of the cotton gin. The pond that was historically adjacent to the ruins has been filled in. The pond is visible in the 1955 historic aerial, and may have been part of the rationale to build on the site.¹⁰

⁸ 1955 Historic Aerial, *HistoricAerials.com*, accessed August 5, 2022, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>.

⁹ "Telephone Interview with Oscar Hernandez and Ignacio Hernandez on November 11, 2007," *Historic Farm & Ranch Complexes in Bexar County and Surrounding Counties*, San Antonio Conservation Society, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://farmandranch.omeka.net/exhibits/show/heermannstore/hernandezinterview>.

¹⁰ 1955 Historic Aerial, *HistoricAerials.com*, accessed August 5, 2022, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>.

This cotton gin ruins resembles a stone structure at the Heermann Site (41BX527), a recorded historic archaeological site documented c. 1981-1987, and studied further in the early to mid-1990s. It is unknown if it is extant. The Heermann Site was the Theodore Heermann family residence located on the Medina River. The stone structure at the Heermann Site was never completed and was intended to be Theodore Heermann's 1886 home. This is explored further in Section 8.¹¹

Connected to the cotton gin building is a stone fence. Because the cotton gin building and stone fence were parallel to the Rockport Road, and because it is known that the Rockport Road was likely constructed sometime after 1884, it is assumed the ruins date sometime in the mid-to-late 1880s.

The cotton gin ruins are counted as a contributing site. While no formal archaeological investigations have occurred, the presence of the 1892 Heermann Store and c. 1885 cotton gin ruins indicate there may be buried deposits associated with both resources. Any intact deposits associated with the Heermann family or subsequent owners could yield archaeological information about 19th and 20th century commercial or agricultural activity and stone masonry construction in Bexar County. While potential exists, the site has not been evaluated, and Criterion D is not claimed at this time.

Alterations

The biggest changes to the property overall were the removal what appears to have been a barn, sheds, water tower, and windmill at an unknown date (Figure 11), as well as the historic addition of Sheds A and B around 1900. A non-historic flag pole was positioned in front of the store, and has since been removed. The house and garage were added in the 1950s and Shed C was added in 2022 outside the period of significance. The pond appears to have been filled in between 2004 and 2008.¹²

The Heermann Store is remarkably intact and changes are minor. While parts of the original historic windows remain, each of the sets of window sashes have been replaced with a pair of one-over-one aluminum windows, one above the other, framed with scrap lumber fastened to the original jambs. The structural system in the basement has replacement wood, the basement stairs were replaced, and some of the main flooring was replaced. Some cracking from erosion on the exterior appears to have been repaired on the interior. The flashing on the parapet and roof appears to be replacement. These changes likely occurred in the mid-late 20th century. An electrical panel was added in 2022.

The cotton gin ruins have had alterations over the years, with the majority of changes occurring around 1970. Three of the four walls were demolished, as well as possibly part of the stone fence attached to the cotton gin. A concrete block addition has been abutted to front of the cotton gin ruins for a pump house, and a concrete slab has been placed over the well.

¹¹ A. Joachim McGraw and Kay Hines, *Chipped Stone and Adobe: A Cultural Assessment of the Proposed Applewhite Reservoir, Bexar County, Texas*, Archaeological Survey Report, No. 163 (San Antonio: Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 1987) 161-168; Cheryl Lynn Highley and V. Kay Hines, "41BX527: The History of Property Ownership With an Emphasis on the Residency of Theodore Heermann," (*La Tierra, Journal of the Southern Texas Archaeological Association*, April 1995) 5-8.

¹² 2008 Historic Aerial, *HistoricAerials.com*, accessed August 5, 2022, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>.

Inventory of Contributing and Non-Contributing Resources within Nominated Boundary

There are 8 resources, 4 contributing and 4 non-contributing. The table contains the inventory of resources within the boundaries of the historic district.

Resource	Historic Name	Property Type	Build Date / Modification	Status
1	Heermann Store	Building	1892	Contributing
2	Shed A	Structure	C. 1900	Contributing
3	Wooden Canopy	Structure	C. 1990s	Non-Contributing
4	Shed B	Structure	C. 1900	Contributing
5	Shed C	Building	2022	Non-Contributing
6	House	Building	C. 1955, 1990s	Non-Contributing
7	Garage	Building	C. 1955	Non-Contributing
8	Cotton Gin Ruins	Site	C. 1885	Contributing

Integrity

When compared to other rural historic districts in Bexar County, the Heermann Store property retains a high level of historic integrity. The property remains in the same location along Highway 1604 (formerly Rockport Road) and the historic rural setting is largely intact except for the intrusion of Somerset Junior High School which borders the property to the east, and some scattered modern commercial and residential development. The integrity has been somewhat compromised by the intrusion of non-contributing resources and the removal of some historic resources at an unknown date, but the overall spatial organization is intact. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are evident in the extant historic resources. Despite some alterations over time, the Heermann Store retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship through its intact rectangular form, masonry crafted with semi-dressed sandstone block in a coursed to semi-coursed pattern and lime-based mortar, quoining at the corners, brick arches, fenestration pattern, water table, vents, shed roof behind raised parapet, original doors, some elements of the historic windows, and floor plan—all of which reflect its intended historic function as a country store. Remarkably, it does not appear that plumbing was added to the store. Sheds A and B retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship through their intact wood frame structures, wood and corrugated metal siding, and shed roofs. While partially demolished and eroded from the elements over the years, the cotton gin ruins and fence retain integrity of materials and workmanship visible in the remaining rough-cut sandstone with lime-based mortar, as well as what appears to be the central entrance. The largely cohesive historic character of the district reinforces the feeling of a late 19th and early 20th century rural property used for agricultural and commercial purposes found in Bexar County. The property is no longer associated with the Heermann family.

Statement of Significance

The Heermann Store is a rural historic district located at 4738 W. Loop 1604 in the vicinity of Von Ormy, in southwestern Bexar County, Texas. The property was acquired by Dr. Theodore Heermann (1822-1896) in 1855 when he established a farm and ranch on the Medina River. Heermann added a cotton gin to the property c. 1885, and later the Heermann Store in 1892 along with other improvements. Upon his death in 1896 his son, Felix Heermann (1870-1941), inherited the property. During the Heermann ownership, both the cotton gin and general store served area farmers and ranchers. Between 1894 and 1896, the Heermann Store functioned as the Valmont Post Office providing mail service to local residents. In 1910 the property was sold to John Easterly (1861-1939) who continued operating the cotton gin until it was destroyed by fire. After 1910 the store was a residence for sharecroppers, a saloon, and used for the sale and storage of produce for the National Produce and Refrigeration Company. The district is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple property submission *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*. It meets the registration requirements and is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement and Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance for its association with early settlement patterns and building practices characteristic of 19th and early 20th century small agricultural communities in southwestern Bexar County. The store serves as an intact and rare surviving example of a late 19th century vernacular commercial building constructed with semi-dressed sandstone block. With further investigation, the property may be eligible under Criterion D as there is potential for intact deposits to yield archeological information and give insight into early settlement patterns and agricultural practices. The period of significance begins in c. 1885 with the construction of the cotton gin, and spans through 1939 when the property came under new ownership and changes in transportation and agriculture led to the decline of small rural settlements in the area.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The history of 19th and early 20th century settlement in rural Bexar County has been well researched and documented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas (1800-1970)*. Since this property was developed in the late 19th century, the historical context on early settlement will be quickly summarized, and the property history will remain the focus of the nomination.

Small Communities of Southwestern Bexar County

Settlement was initiated in Bexar County during the Spanish Colonial period, accelerated when the Republic of Texas was formed, and expanded further when Texas became a state in 1845. In the mid-to-late 19th century, San Antonio was an important commercial and political hub which helped encourage settlement of farms and ranches in the rural parts of the county. Land also encouraged settlement. Land for farms and ranches was often purchased from individuals with Spanish or Mexican land grants or headrights. Gradually, several communities appeared in southwestern Bexar County, some located on or near the Medina River, a tributary of the San Antonio River.¹³

The unincorporated communities of Oak Island, Senior, Valmont, and Somerset were settled between the mid-to-late 19th century and were strategically positioned near transportation networks or water sources. “These small hamlets conveyed the very essence of rural community life and pivoted with local economic, social, and political forces. Nodes along established routes were selected to establish stagecoach stops, post offices, churches, cemeteries, schools, and agricultural and commercial enterprises.”¹⁴ Commercial and agricultural enterprises often included cotton gins,

¹³ Christopher Long, “Bexar County,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bexar-county>; Amy E. Dase, Summer Chandler, Stephanie Katauskas, and Celine Finney, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2010, 7.

¹⁴ Dase, et al, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*, 23.

gristmills, general stores, and saloons. Supported by the local agricultural economy, these places were usually built on land owned by the local ranching and farming families. Von Ormy was formed c. 1886 when the International & Great Northern Railroad was expanded to reach Laredo, Thelma appeared c. 1900 when the Southern Pacific Railroad line came down from San Antonio, and Somerset was moved three miles north in 1909 to meet the Artesian Belt Railroad (Figure 14).¹⁵

Rural general stores played a vital role in these sparsely populated communities. General stores had a variety of uses often housing a store, saloon, and post office, and were short-lived businesses. The Senior (c. 1875) and Heermann (Valmont) (1892) stores were the only two known to be of sandstone construction.

HEERMANN FAMILY OWNERSHIP

Heermann Farm

Dr. Theodore Heermann (1822-1896) was born in New Orleans, Louisiana and migrated to Bexar County c. 1850, purchasing land soon upon arrival.¹⁶ The land was originally granted to hero of the Texas Revolution, Nicholas Mosby Dawson. Mosby received a first class headright, 1/3 of a league or 1,476.13 acres of land.¹⁷ He never lived on the property, and when he was killed in Dawson's Massacre in 1842, his father, George Dawson inherited the property.¹⁸ Heermann purchased 738 acres of the larger property on the south bank of the Medina River, northwest of the intersection of Noyes Road and Highway 16, from Dawson in November 1855.¹⁹

Soon after acquiring the property, Heermann signed a contract with Samuel Hall to construct his house in 1856. The contract stated that Hall agreed to quarry and deliver the stone, make the mortar-based lime, and design the 2-story house with regular coursed, rough cut sandstone, arched doors and windows, and a chimney. It's unclear when or if the house was entirely completed but Heermann lived on the property for many years.²⁰ Heermann referred to his farm

¹⁵ Fount A. Rambie, Jr., "Senior, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/senior-tx>; W.E. Stone, Jr., "Somerset, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/somerset-tx>; Christopher Long, "Valmont, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/valmont-tx>; Minnie B. Cameron, "Oak Island, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/oak-island-tx-bexar-county>; Christopher Long, "Thelma, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 1, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/thelma-tx-bexar-county>; Art Martinez de Vara, "Von Ormy," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 5, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/von-ormy-tx>; Dase, et al, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*, 23.

¹⁶ New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S. Birth Records Index, 1790-1915, "Theodore Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/424:6587?tid=&pid=&queryId=933a06a349d18743abb2f8cb918fc5c2&_phsrc=qfy77&_phstart=successSource.

¹⁷ "Land Grants for Immigration to Texas," *Texas General Land Office*, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://www.glo.texas.gov/history/archives/forms/files/glo-headright-military-land-grants.pdf>; Charles G. Davis, "Nicholas Mosby Dawson," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 5, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/dawson-nicholas-mosby>; Bexar County, Abstract Number 188, Dawson, N.M., August 12, 1844, Patent 180, Volume 2, Certificate 89, Texas General Land Office, accessed August 3, 2022, https://s3.glo.texas.gov/ncu/SCANDOCs/archives_webfiles/arcmapi/webfiles/landgrants/PDFs/1/4/9/149916.pdf.

¹⁸ "Land Grants for Immigration to Texas," *Texas General Land Office*, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://www.glo.texas.gov/history/archives/forms/files/glo-headright-military-land-grants.pdf>; Charles G. Davis, "Nicholas Mosby Dawson," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 5, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/dawson-nicholas-mosby>.

¹⁹ Bexar County Deed Record, Volume N2, Page 45.

²⁰ Cheryl Lynn Highley and V. Kay Hinds, "41BX527: The History of Property Ownership With an Emphasis on the Residency of Theodore Heermann," *La Tierra, Journal of the Southern Texas Archaeological Association*, (April 1995) 5-8; Identified as 620-11-B in Lance, Larcade, and Bechtol: Architects, *Bexar County Historic Inventory 1973*, pg 61.

property, as well as the later Heermann Store as the settlement of Valmont.²¹ The Heermann Site (41BX527) was recorded as an archaeological site c. 1981-1987, and was further studied in the early to mid-1990s.²²

In the late 1850s and 1860s Heermann practiced medicine, and was a cattle rancher and farmer with his brother Adolphus who purchased property nearby. He also formed and served in the Medina Guards, 30th Brigade, Texas Militia. He then served in the Civil War on the Balcones Escarpment.²³

The Civil War had a detrimental impact on the agricultural economy in Bexar County both during and after the war. Postbellum recovery was slow. Land values fell and crop production between 1860 and 1870 decreased significantly. In this period, Heermann had cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and farmed pecans, watermelon, and likely other crops.²⁴

In 1870 Heermann married Felipa Flores (1854-1942). Felipa was the daughter of Felix and Hilda (Parkins) Flores. Felix was a Mexican national and had been an employee of Heermann's.²⁵ Theodore and Felipa had two sons, Felix (1870-1941) and Alfred (1873-1909).²⁶ It appears that while their sons were young, they resided at the Heermann Farm property.

The introduction of agricultural machinery and fertilizer as well as railroad connectivity in the mid-to-late 19th century helped to increase productivity and make the industry more profitable.²⁷ Higher profits by the 1880s provided the opportunity to build additional structures on the Heermann Farm. An 1886 barn was constructed as well as a two-story wood frame board and batten structure. The barn, which resembled those built by German settlers in the Texas Hill Country, served as shelter for the livestock.²⁸ The wood frame structure was likely constructed c. 1886 after the arrival of the International & Great Northern Railroad through this part of the county. It's unclear how long they lived on the farm, but by the late 19th century the Heermann's also owned property in San Antonio: Lots 9-10-11-12, No. 107 SW corner of Market and Navarro; 1 lot, City Block 146 SW corner of Market and Yturria; 1 lot, City Block 900 SE corner Vittila and S. Presa Street, demonstrating the success of Theodore and Felipa's business endeavors.²⁹ Increased profits also provided an opportunity to construct the cotton gin and Heermann Store at the southern end of their property.

²¹ Valmont was named for Heermann's brother Valentine Mott Heermann. Described as a scattered neighborhood, the main ventures were agriculture and the Heermann Store, which briefly served as post office from 1894-1896. For more see, Christopher Long, "Valmont, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 6, 2022.

²² A. Joachim McGraw and Kay Hines, *Chipped Stone and Adobe: A Cultural Resources Assessment of the Proposed Applewhite Reservoir, Bexar County, Texas*, Archaeological Survey Report, No. 163 (San Antonio: Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 1987) 161-168.

²³ Adolphus died in 1865 and Theodore inherited his property. Cheryl Lynn Highley and V. Kay Hines, "41BX527: The History of Property Ownership, 9; A. Joachim McGraw and Kay Hines, *Chipped Stone and Adobe*, 164; U.S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865, "Theodore Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/2156930:1138>.

²⁴ While some area farmers had slaves, no evidence was found to suggest that Theodore Heermann was a slave owner. Cheryl Lynn Highley, "Excerpts from the Valmont Account Book as Recorded by Theodore Heermann," *La Tierra, Journal of the Southern Texas Archaeological Association*, (April 1995) 15-16.

²⁵ While little is known about this period, it's likely that several or all of the Heermann employees were Mexican nationals.

²⁶ U.S. Death Certificates 1903-1982, "Mrs. Felipa Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/23127588:2272?tid=&pid=&queryId=304a462d1a36ffe6c8927c8192663d0e&phsrc=qfy84&phstart=successSource>; Cheryl Lynn Highley and V. Kay Hines, "41BX527: The History of Property Ownership, 11; U.S. Death Certificates, 1903-1982, "Alfred Herimann," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/30318191:2272?tid=&pid=&queryId=e8d72fc8bb6a944d1c149e5c0f96bbb5&phsrc=qfy86&phstart=successSource>; U.S. Death Certificates, 1903-1982, "Mr. Felix Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/21818643:2272?tid=&pid=&queryId=2acedc0f841e94b9e415c2da458cb58c&phsrc=qfy88&phstart=successSource>; Dase, et al, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*, 25.

²⁷ Dase, et al, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*, 7-9.

²⁸ A. Joachim McGraw and Kay Hines, *Chipped Stone and Adobe*, 161-168.

²⁹ "Interview with Mrs. Jackie Falbo at her residence, January 13, 2007 by Pat Ezell and Pat Castanon," *Historic Farm & Ranch Complexes in Bexar County and Surrounding Counties, San Antonio Conservation Society*, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://farmandranch.omeka.net/exhibits/show/heermannstore/falbointerview>.

Heermann Store

At the end of Theodore Heermann's life, he built a store about two miles south of the Heermann Farm. It's likely this portion of the property was already being used for cotton ginning. The exact build date of the stone cotton gin is unknown, but it was probably c. 1885 shortly after Rockport Road (Rockport to Castroville) was established.³⁰ The Heermann Store was built in 1892 and was also oriented to Rockport Road, now Highway 1604. "The date stone is engraved 1892. Construction of the building probably began as early as 1891, as evidenced by Theodore Heermann's checkbook stubs from that year documenting the purchase of lumber, a boiler engine, and seed cotton from Beitel Lumber Company."³¹

The Heermann Store was built as a one-story stone masonry rural commercial building with a basement and a storefront parapet. It's possible that Samuel Hall, the builder of the house at the Heermann Farm, also served as builder of the store. The load-bearing masonry building was rectangular in form. It was constructed with semi-dressed dark reddish sandstone block in a coursed to semi-coursed pattern with quoining at the corners (Figure 10). The historic quarry site for the sandstone was believed to be on land owned by the Klemcke family who were known to have been business associates of the Heermanns.³² The Klemcke property was part of the Senior community, located about three miles southwest of the Heermann Store (Figure 14). The buildings rafters, and likely all the wood, came from Beitel Lumber Company, which possibly arrived by rail.³³

Between 1892 and 1896 the Heermann Store functioned as a general store serving area farmers and ranchers. The location on Rockport Road likely gave it a strategic position to draw in business. Little information is available on the store from this period, but like other late 19th century country stores in Bexar County, it likely provided a variety of goods and services. General merchandise sold at country stores included groceries, hardware supplies, and machinery. The full basement may have been used as a cold storage cellar. Since Theodore Heermann was a doctor, it's also possible he saw patients at the store as well.³⁴

The Heermann Store operated as the Valmont Post Office between 1894-1896, providing mail service to area residents. Records indicate that Felix Heermann filled out an application to open a post office in the store (Figures 8-9). The application stated that the post office was situated near the community of Oak Island 4 ½ miles northeast of the Senior Route, that the mail would come from Senior, and it would serve an area containing roughly 400 inhabitants.³⁵ Oral history suggests that either Felix or Theodore could have been living in the store at the time.³⁶

The Senior post office was housed inside the general store owned by the William Klemcke family. The community of Senior was located southwest of the Heermann Store, near the intersection of Senior and Smith Roads (Figure 14).³⁷ The Heermanns and the Klemckes had a business relationship as late as 1890, and it's possible the Heermanns purchased supplies from them to stock their store. The Klemcke property was surveyed in 1973, and the general store appeared to have extant at that time but in ruins. The store was noted as across the street from the family residences. It was described as sandstone construction, and was likely similar to that of the Heermann Store.³⁸ It has since been

³⁰ The ruins of what is believed to have been a cotton gin are located to the northwest of the Heermann Store, closer to Highway 1604. This stone structure resembles a stone structure at the Heermann Site (41BX527).

³¹ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store*, 3.

³² Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store*, 4.

³³ The closest railroad stop was the Medina Station on the International & Great Northern Railroad in nearby Von Ormy.

³⁴ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store*, 4.

³⁵ Application for Valmont Post Office with location map, page 2. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 28, Post Office Locations, 1873-1950, Roll 565, Target 6, on file at the San Antonio Conservation Society, <https://farmandranch.omeka.net/exhibits/show/heermannstore/heermannpo>.

³⁶ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store*, 2.

³⁷ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store*, 4.

³⁸ Listed in survey as 6-620-16-B, Lance, Larcade, and Bechtol: Architects, *Bexar County Historic Inventory 1973*, 64-65.

demolished. Other nearby post offices at the time were Von Ormy and Earl. The Earl post office was located to the east on the Medina River.³⁹ No information was found on these 19th century post offices. The current post office in Von Ormy does not appear to date to the 19th century. This evidence highlights that the Heermann Store is a rare surviving example of a 19th century commercial and post office building in rural Bexar County.

During the late 19th century cotton production rose in Bexar County. While the county produced less cotton than other Texas counties, cotton served as an important part of the local agricultural economy.⁴⁰ Since Heermann's Frost Bank stub showed he purchased seed cotton, it can be assumed he was growing and ginning it while running the store. It's important to note that the design of the stone cotton gin differed from the many other contemporaneous wood frame and corrugated metal examples found in Central Texas.⁴¹ It's likely that under the Heermann ownership the barn, sheds, water tower, and windmill were also added near the store and cotton gin (Figure 11).

Theodore Heermann died on April 8, 1896, not long after the construction of the Heermann Store. He was 74 years old. His obituary indicates he died at his home, the Valmont Post Office. His will states the Heermann Farm on the Medina River was his former residence, so he may have been living in the store when he died. His sons, Alfred and Felix, inherited his property upon his death. The property was split in two, and Alfred inherited the northern half with the Heermann Farm, and Felix inherited the southern half with the Heermann Store.⁴²

For the next several years, it appears both Alfred and Felix continued as farmers and ranchers, while Felipa moved to San Antonio shortly after Theodore's death. By 1900 Felix was listed with the occupation of farmer, indicating he was likely residing at the Heermann Store with his wife Dean and three children.⁴³ By 1907 it appears that Alfred was also living in San Antonio at 2302 S. Flores with his wife Ada and his daughter and step-daughter.⁴⁴ Alfred died unexpectedly in November of 1909.⁴⁵ Shortly after in February 1910, possibly prompted by the death of his brother, Felix sold the Heermann Store property totaling 168.4 acres to John Easterly for \$6,062. Felix and Felipa continued to live in San Antonio until his death in 1941 and hers in 1942.⁴⁶

³⁹ Application for Valmont Post Office with location map, page 2. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 28, Post Office Locations, 1873-1950, Roll 565, Target 6, on file at the San Antonio Conservation Society, <https://farmandranch.omeka.net/exhibits/show/heermannstore/heermannpo>.

⁴⁰ Christopher Long, "Bexar County," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bexar-county>; Dase, et al, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*, 13.

⁴¹ Dase, et al, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*, 57.

⁴² "Death of Dr. Heermann," *San Antonio Daily Express*, April 8, 1896, page 8; Texas, U.S. Wills and Probate Records 1833-1974, Probate Minutes Volume 3-4, 1895-1896, "Theodore Heermann, dated February 23, 1895," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/1984024:2115>; Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store*, 4.

⁴³ 1900 United States Federal Census, "Felix Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/78932667:7602?tid=&pid=&queryId=f742daabef6f27f79726502b878f8d2b&_phsrc=qfy90&_phstart=successSource.

⁴⁴ U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995, "Alfred Heermann," San Antonio, Texas City Directory 1907, *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/393207108:2469?tid=&pid=&queryId=ed2323114ec66146eda84a5ebdd4eb78&_phsrc=qfy93&_phstart=successSource.

⁴⁵ Texas, U.S. Death Certificates 1903-1982, "Alfred Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/30318191:2272>.

⁴⁶ Bexar County Deed Record Volume 328 page 135; 1940 United States Federal Census, "Alfred Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/159267124:2442?tid=&pid=&queryId=f742daabef6f27f79726502b878f8d2b&_phsrc=qfy96&_phstart=successSource; Texas, U.S. Death Certificates 1903-1982, "Mr. Felix Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, March 28, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/21818643:2272?tid=&pid=&queryId=f742daabef6f27f79726502b878f8d2b&_phsrc=qfy97&_phstart=successSource; Texas, U.S. Death Certificates 1903-1982, "Mrs. Felipa Heermann," *Ancestry.com*, March 28, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/23127588:2272?tid=&pid=&queryId=023146351301a2016f04e8cd845d6018&_phsrc=qfy101&_phstart=successSource.

JOHN EASTERLY OWNERSHIP

When John Easterly (1861-1939) and his wife Johanna Lohrberg Colmes Easterly (1861-1912) acquired the Heermann Store property it was largely used for agricultural and commercial purposes.⁴⁷ The store was used as residence for sharecroppers, likely as a saloon, and for produce storage, while the cotton gin remained in use. According to a historic photograph, the barn, sheds, water tower, and windmill were extant during the Easterly ownership (Figure 11). It's also likely that during this period, both Sheds A and B were added to the property.

A 1919 Map of Bexar County Oil Fields lists the property with John Easterly as owner of the National Produce and Refrigeration Company, indicating the store was likely used for storage and sale of produce during the 1910s.⁴⁸ The large storage basement may have accommodated that kind of enterprise (Figure 13).

An oral history interview with Ignacio Hernandez, who was born in the store in 1921, confirmed its use as a residence for sharecroppers. Max Hernandez, his father, worked for Easterly, and crops grown likely supported the produce and refrigeration business. "They grew cotton, blackberries, plums, all kinds of vegetables, as cucumbers and watermelons. They took the products to the market at first in wagons, then Model Ts, then Model As. Max worked for 30 years for Mr. Easterly."⁴⁹ Historic photographs show what may be the Max and Maria Hernandez family in front of the Heermann Store c. 1910 suggesting they lived there at that time (Figure 10-12).⁵⁰ Little information is available on the relationship between John Easterly and the Hernandez family, but it's important to note that generally in south-central Texas, Mexican immigrants and Mexican-American sharecroppers were often discriminated against by white farm owners. Racial and class barriers and limited options for economic mobility led to sharecroppers often living in relative poverty into the early part of the 20th century.⁵¹

Several accounts suggest the Heermann Store also operated as a saloon. Oral histories provide a range of theories including the saloon was kept in the cotton gin, and the cotton gin actually operated in the store with cotton bales stored in the basement. The 1910 Census shows Easterly as a saloon owner, suggesting use as a saloon likely occurred sometime between 1910 and 1920.

The cotton gin continued to serve as an important part of the property for about 20 more years. Between 1900 and the 1920, the agricultural economy of Bexar County grew and prospered. Demand for cotton grew and increased mechanization made it easier to produce. Local area farmers likely brought their cotton to the Heermann Store property for ginning.

Cotton production then declined significantly in the county between 1920 and 1945.⁵² "The onset of the Great Depression, falling agricultural prices, and the arrival of the boll weevil brought hardships for many farmers of Bexar County. Many were forced to leave and move to the city or to turn to other occupations. Cotton production, which

⁴⁷ "Johnna Easterly," *Findagrave.com*, accessed August 3, 2022, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/39305055/johanna-easterly?_gl=1*10uvcq2*_ga*MTUzMdC3ODI1Mi4xNjE1MzM4NDI4*_ga_4QT8FMEX30*MTY1OTkyNDYyMy4xMi4xLjE2NTk5MjU2NjUuMA..

⁴⁸ "Map of Bexar County Oil Fields, 1919," *Texas General Land Office*, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://s3.glo.texas.gov/glo/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm#item/79307>.

⁴⁹ "Telephone Interview with Oscar Hernandez and Ignacio Hernandez on November 11, 2007," *Historic Farm & Ranch Complexes in Bexar County and Surrounding Counties*, *San Antonio Conservation Society*, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://farmandranch.omeka.net/exhibits/show/heermannstore/herandezinterview>; 1930 United States Federal Census, "Ignacio Hernandez," *Ancestry.com*, accessed August 3, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/65691378:6224?tid=&pid=&queryId=e3e68d6fc7e5400dd2880b17537740cd&_phsrc=qfy111&_phstart=successSource

⁵⁰ Information about photos provided by the San Antonio Conservation Society.

⁵¹ Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997) 1-5.

⁵² Dase, et al, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*, 14-16. Oil fields were discovered nearby as indicated in the

peaked in the mid-1920s, fell dramatically during the 1930s and 1940s.”⁵³ While the exact date is unknown, it seems certain that the cotton gin burned and ceased operations before 1939 when Easterly died.

By 1930 Easterly was a widowed farmer living on Rockport Road, near Thelma.⁵⁴ Easterly died when his house caught on fire in February 1939.⁵⁵ After his death the property went into probate and the will was contested for much of 1939. Eventually the property was bequeathed to four owners, friends Victoria Clark and Mary A. Kempshall, as well as Easterly’s step-daughters Bertha Colmes Easterly Donecker and Nina Colmes Easterly Stephenson. The four owners sold the 168.4 acre property in 1945 to Robert and Lillian Koch.⁵⁶

Robert and Lillian Koch owned the property for 25 years, but little is known about this period of ownership. It appears they added the house and garage to the property c. 1955. After World War II there was a shift in the agricultural economy of Bexar County. Farms became larger, meaning there were fewer of them, and oil became more important part of the economic base. Without the population of farm and ranch families to support them, many country general stores and post offices closed, signaling the decline of the small rural communities they served. Very few survived in the decades following World War II. In 1970, the Kochs sold 11.28 acres of the larger property to Felix and Dora Flores. The current property owners, Michael and Brianna Romero, purchased the property in 2021.⁵⁷

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

As settlement expanded in 19th and early 20th century Bexar County, the buildings and structures that defined the small communities were distinctly vernacular. The buildings and structures often associated with agricultural and commercial activity, “were vernacular in their construction technique, form, and materials, as well as their relationship with each other and their surroundings. Owner-occupants often built their own dwellings and domestic and agricultural buildings and structures, although local masons and carpenters may have been employed, particularly for larger homes.”⁵⁸ Vernacular buildings often had little if any ornament, and were constructed from local materials like trees, stone, and mud.⁵⁹

Rural general stores were often characterized by a one-story, square or rectangular form, with a flat, shed, or side gabled roof, wood frame, wood or corrugated metal siding, or limestone or sandstone loadbearing masonry construction, raised parapet, multi-light windows, and were often conveniently located at a crossroads to provide easy access for customers. The vernacular design accommodated use as a store, post office, auto repair shop, saloon, and even a residence. Storage or root cellars were also common for cold food storage before refrigeration was widely accessible.⁶⁰

⁵³ Christopher Long, “Bexar County,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bexar-county>.

⁵⁴ 1930 United States Federal Census, “John Easterly,” *Ancestry.com*, accessed March 28, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/65684591:6224?tid=&pid=&queryId=914765f0a3fe1f0ee019f5e65ca48e4a&_phsrc=qfy108&_phstart=successSource; “Telephone Interview with Oscar Hernandez and Ignacio Hernandez on November 11, 2007,” *Historic Farm & Ranch Complexes in Bexar County and Surrounding Counties*, *San Antonio Conservation Society*.

⁵⁵ Texas, U.S., Death Certificates, 1903-1982, “John Easterly,” *Ancestry.com*, accessed, March 28, 2022, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/22747858:2272?tid=&pid=&queryId=914765f0a3fe1f0ee019f5e65ca48e4a&_phsrc=qfy106&_phstart=successSource.

⁵⁶ “Woman to Direct Easterly Estate,” *San Antonio Express*, March 2, 1939; “Easterly Will Under Contest,” *San Antonio Express*, March 12, 1939; “Accords End Easterly Suit,” *San Antonio Light*, November 2, 1939; Bexar County Deed Records, Volume 6, page 260, May 17, 1939; Bexar County Deed Records, Volume 2117, Page 5, February 2, 1945.

⁵⁷ Bexar County Deed Records, Volume 6331, Page 347.

⁵⁸ Dase, et al, *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*, 22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

The design of the Heermann Store reflects many of the key character defining features of a typical rural general store. It is a one-story stone masonry commercial building with a basement and a storefront parapet oriented toward what was originally Rockport Road. The load-bearing masonry building features a large rectangular one-room floor plan in both the main level and the basement. It is constructed of semi-dressed, locally sourced, dark reddish brown sandstone with lime-based mortar. Brick was not available until 1877 with the arrival of the railroad. Since it was constructed in 1892, the choice to build with sandstone may have been an economic decision, or an attempt to have the store resemble the cotton gin, as well as the Heermann Farm residence on the Medina River. Beitel Lumber Company likely provided all the lumber for the construction. This company ran by Frank J. Beitel was based on West Commerce in San Antonio close to the International & Great Northern Railroad, with a branch yard in Kerrville.⁶¹

The historic sandstone quarry was believed to be located on the land owned by the Klemcke family, in the community of Senior. The stone is reported have been historically used in the area for construction of public buildings such as schools and churches. The use of semi-dressed sandstone at the Senior store, the Heermann Farm residence, the cotton gin, and the Heermann Store all provide insight into early stone cutting and laying techniques in southwestern Bexar County.

Since there is not a recent historic resources survey, a Google reconnaissance survey was completed to evaluate the 19th century sandstone buildings identified in the small communities of southwestern Bexar County in *Bexar County Historic Inventory 1973*. It appears the only comparable examples with similar method of construction included the Senior store and post office (demolished), Heermann Farm residence (unknown if extant), cotton gin (partially demolished), and the 1872 Oak Island Methodist Church (demolished).⁶² It's possible they were all designed by stone mason Samuel Hall, who designed the Heermann Farm residence. Many other stone buildings and structures in the 1973 survey were described as limestone—some of which reflected the work of highly skilled stone masons commonly seen in the Texas Hill Country, with a few others simply identified as stone. If any other remaining examples of 19th century sandstone construction were connected to the Klemcke/Senior quarry, they are likely on private property and not visible from the road and thus cannot be evaluated.

Other extant country stores in Bexar County include c. 1887 Specht's Store (NRHP 2020) near Bulverde and the 1946 Floore County Store (NRHP 2005) in Helotes. Specht's is a one-and-a-half story wood frame building with a saltbox form, and the 1946 Floore Country Store is a post-war concrete masonry dance hall. Another possible comparison is the 1854 Presnall-Watson House at the Presnall-Watson Homestead (NRHP 2012) on the Medina River. However, the stone block building has many additions and was historically clad in wood siding, so it's hard to determine if the sandstone construction is similar to the Heermann Store.⁶³ Thus, the Heermann Store serves as a rare surviving example of a late 19th century vernacular commercial building in rural Bexar County constructed from semi-dressed sandstone block.

⁶¹ The company was possibly known as F. J. Beitel at the time the Heermann Store was constructed. Beitel Lumber Company offered lumber and builder's hardware. "Beitel Lumber Company," *San Antonio Express*, February 14, 1902; "Beitel Lumber Company," *San Antonio Gazette*, August 12, 1905.

⁶² Lance, Larcade, and Bechtol: Architects, *Bexar County Historic Inventory 1973*, 56-57.

⁶³ Alyssa Gerszewski and Karen Gardner, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, "Specht's Store and Schmidt's Gin, Bulverde, Bexar County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2020, page 7; Sue Anne Pemberton and Isabel Garcia, "Floore Country Store, Helotes, Bexar County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2005, 5; Imogen Cooper, Herbert Uecker, Rachel Leibowitz, and Gregory Smith, "Presnall-Watson Homestead, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2012, 7-8.

Conclusion

The Heermann Store is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple property submission *Historic Farms and Ranches of Bexar County, Texas*. It meets the registration requirements and is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement and Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance for its association with early settlement patterns and building practices characteristic of 19th and early 20th century small agricultural communities in southwestern Bexar County. The store serves as an intact and rare surviving example of a late 19th century vernacular commercial building built with semi-dressed sandstone block construction. Criterion D is not being pursued at this time, but the property may be eligible under Criterion D pending further investigation. The period of significance is c. 1885-1939.

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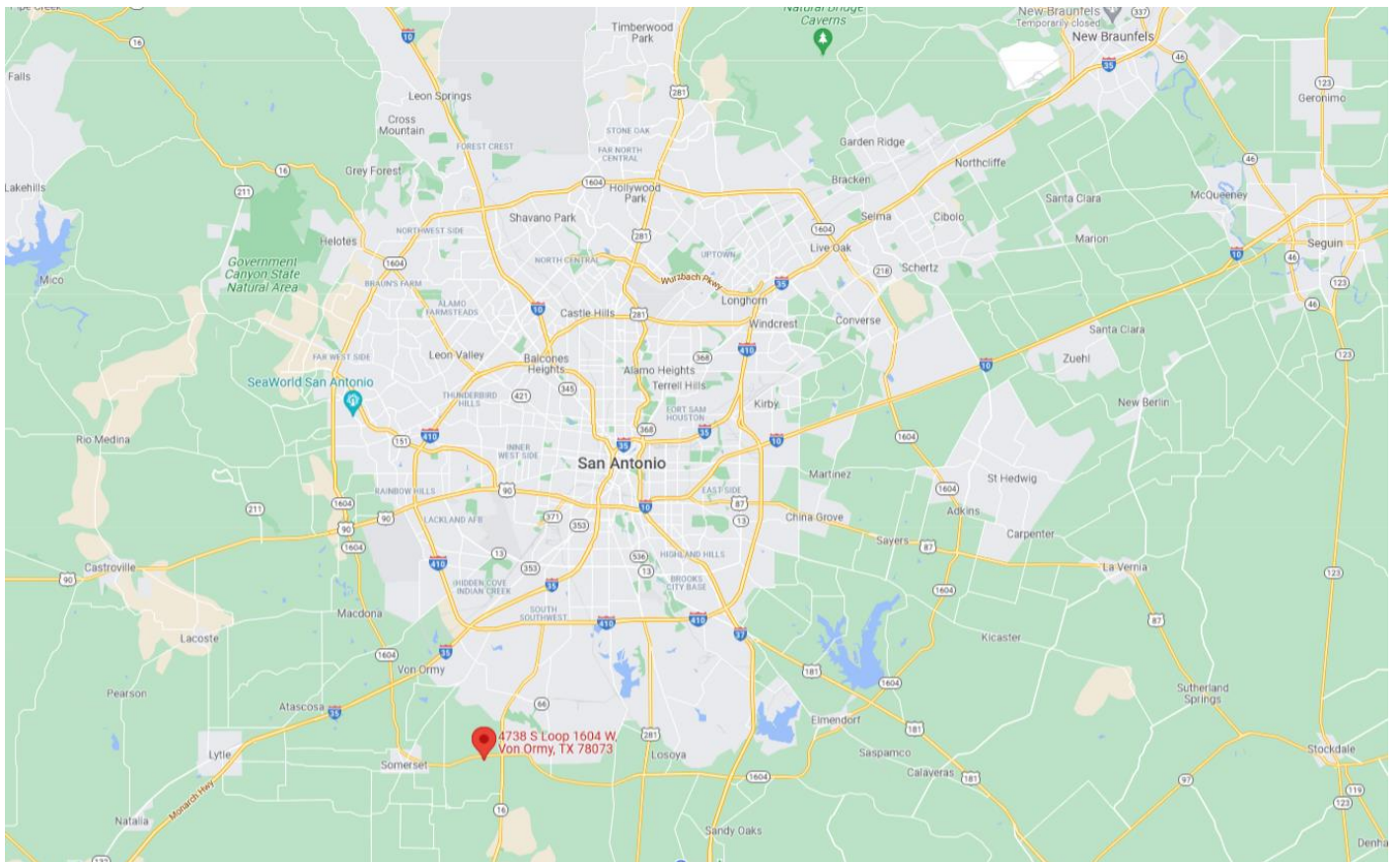
San Antonio Express
San Antonio Gazette
San Antonio Light

Maps

Map 1: Bexar County, Texas



Map 2: Google Map showing proximity to San Antonio, accessed February 10, 2022.



Map 3: Google Map showing Von Ormy, Somerset, and Oak Island in proximity to nominated property. These are the only remaining communities listed on current maps.



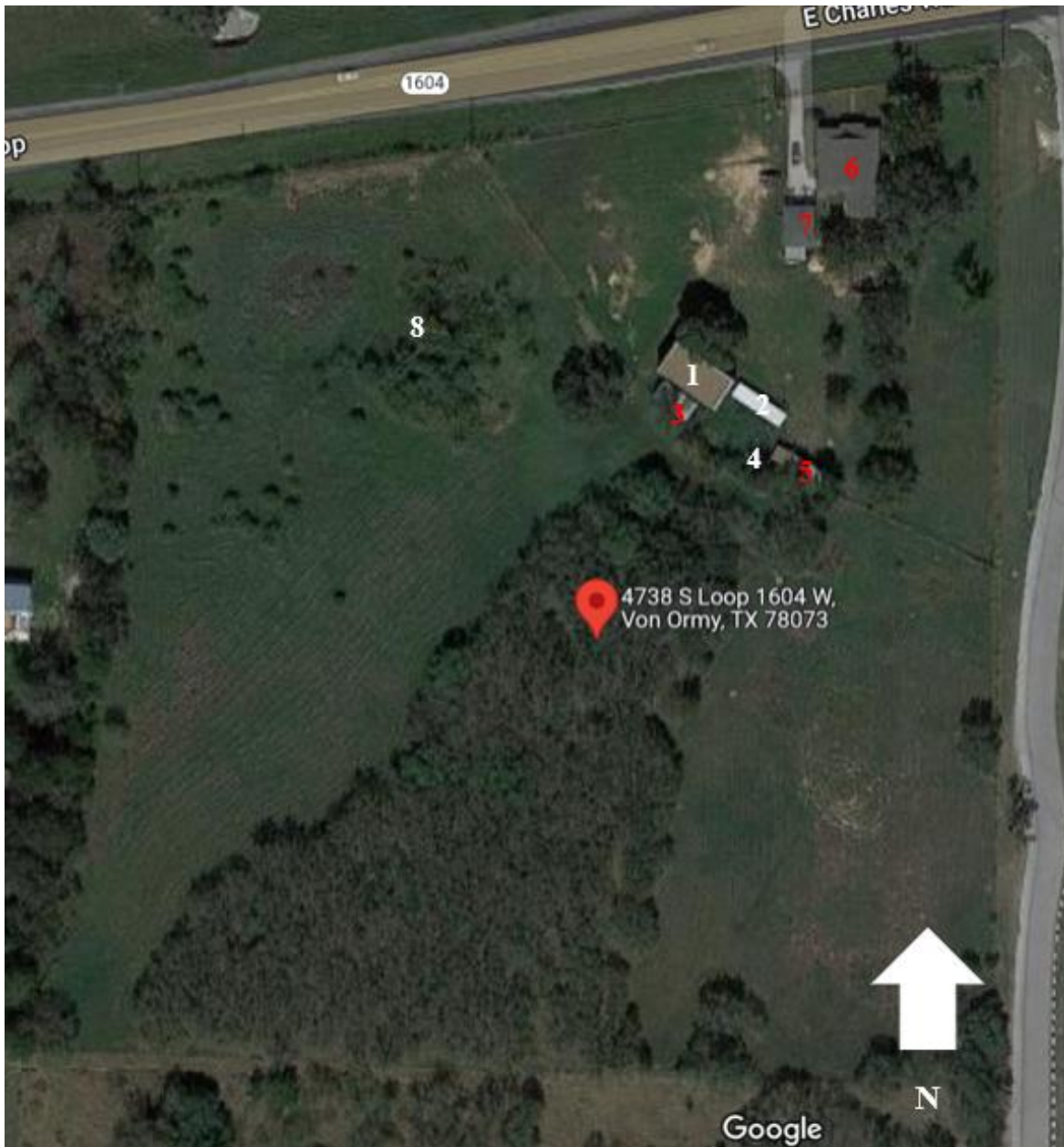
Map 4: Bexar County Appraisal District map showing boundary, accessed July 29th, 2022. The historic district includes approximately 11.28 acres and follows the current legal parcel. The legal parcel is identified by the Bexar Appraisal District as CB 4203 P-9 ABS 188 (Property ID: 184545) in the vicinity of Von Ormy, Bexar County, Texas.



Map 5: Google Earth Map, accessed February 16, 2022



Map 6: Map showing Contributing (white) and Non-Contributing Resources (red).



1. Heermann Store
2. Shed A
3. Wooden Canopy
4. Shed B
5. Shed C
6. House
7. Garage
8. Cotton Gin Ruins

Figures

Figure 1: Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store, 4308 West Loop 1604, Somerset, Bexar County, TX* (Survey Number: *HABS TX-3545*). Creator, Felix C Flores, Sue Ann Pemberton, Ricardo A Alarcon, George A Barrera, Mario A Cantu, Andy S Castillo, et al. Recorded in 2010. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx1120/>*

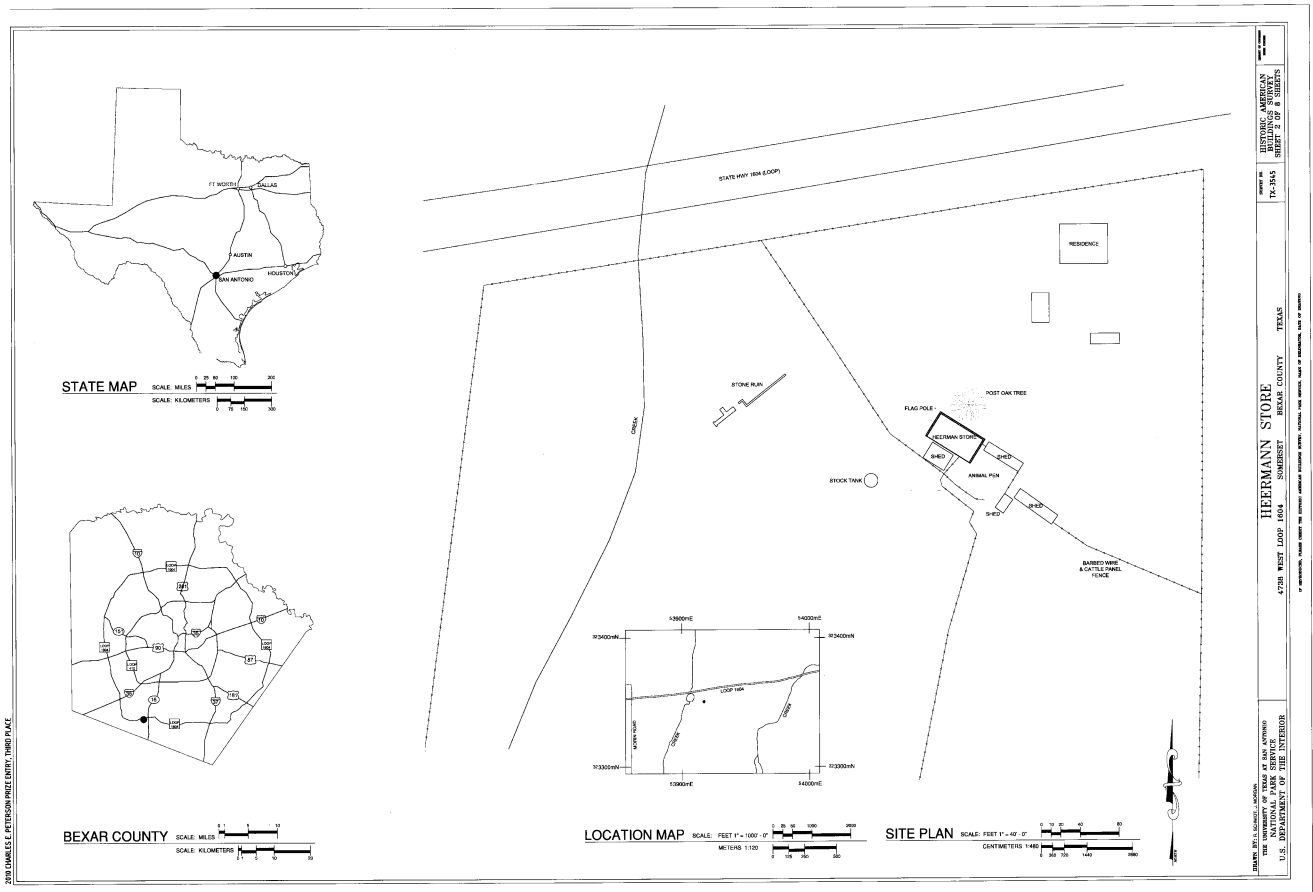


Figure 2: Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store, 4308 West Loop 1604, Somerset, Bexar County, TX* (Survey Number: *HABS TX-3545*). Creator, Felix C Flores, Sue Ann Pemberton, Ricardo A Alarcon, George A Barrera, Mario A Cantu, Andy S Castillo, et al. Recorded in 2010. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx1120/>*

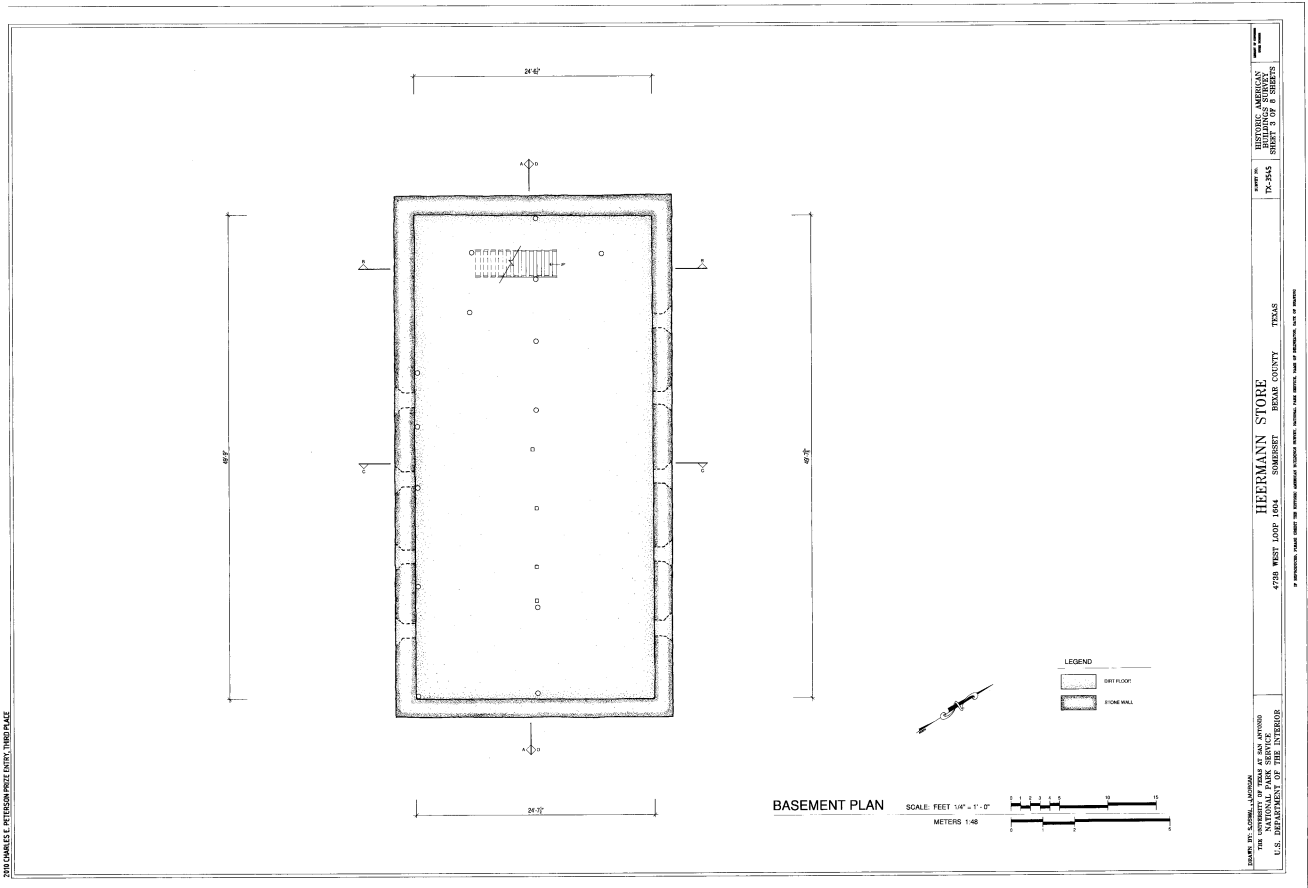


Figure 3: Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store, 4308 West Loop 1604, Somerset, Bexar County, TX* (Survey Number: *HABS TX-3545*). Creator, Felix C Flores, Sue Ann Pemberton, Ricardo A Alarcon, George A Barrera, Mario A Cantu, Andy S Castillo, et al. Recorded in 2010. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx1120/>*

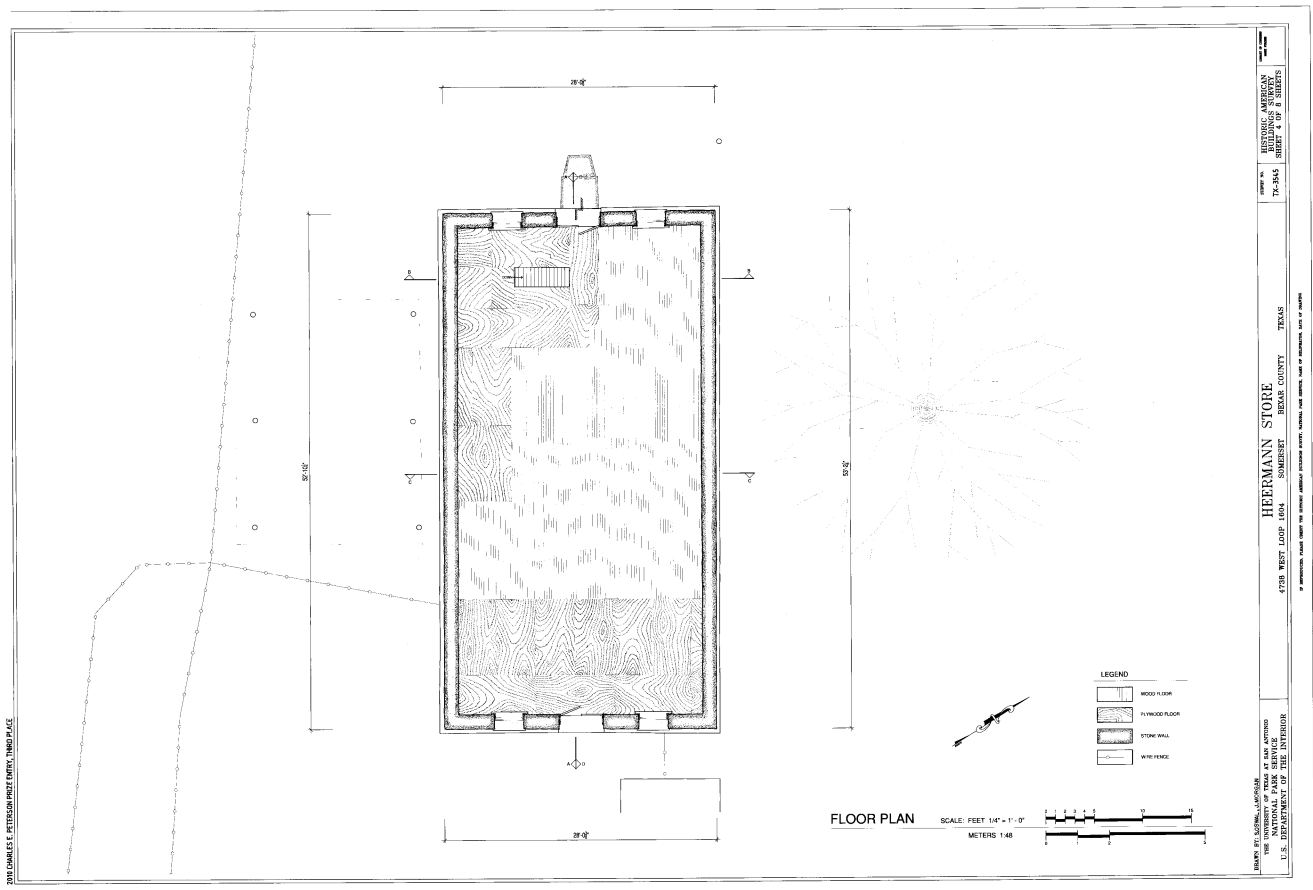


Figure 4: Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store*, 4308 West Loop 1604, Somerset, Bexar County, TX (Survey Number: HABS TX-3545). Creator, Felix C Flores, Sue Ann Pemberton, Ricardo A Alarcon, George A Barrera, Mario A Cantu, Andy S Castillo, et al. Recorded in 2010. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx1120/>

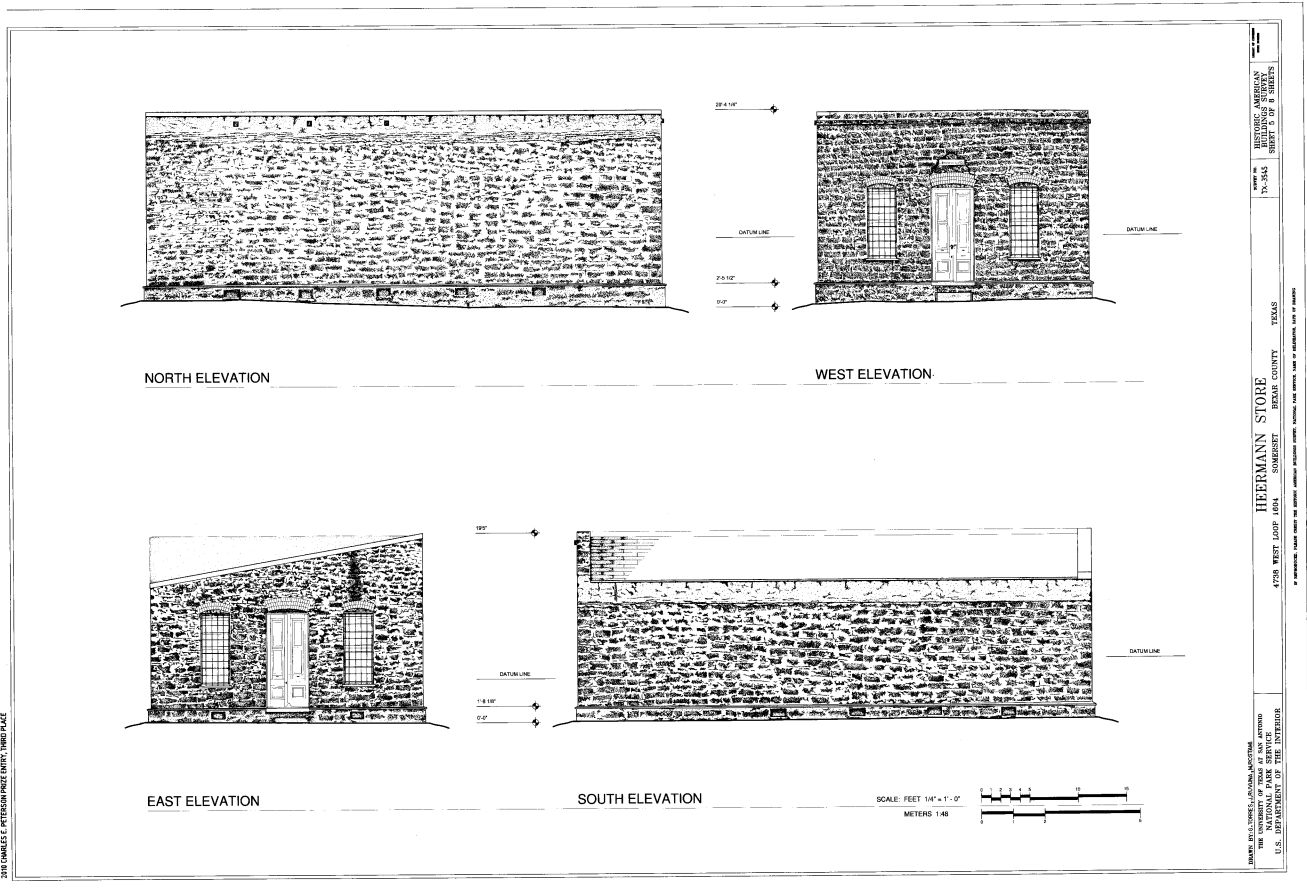


Figure 6: Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store*, 4308 West Loop 1604, Somerset, Bexar County, TX (Survey Number: *HABS TX-3545*). Creator, Felix C Flores, Sue Ann Pemberton, Ricardo A Alarcon, George A Barrera, Mario A Cantu, Andy S Castillo, et al. Recorded in 2010. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx1120/>

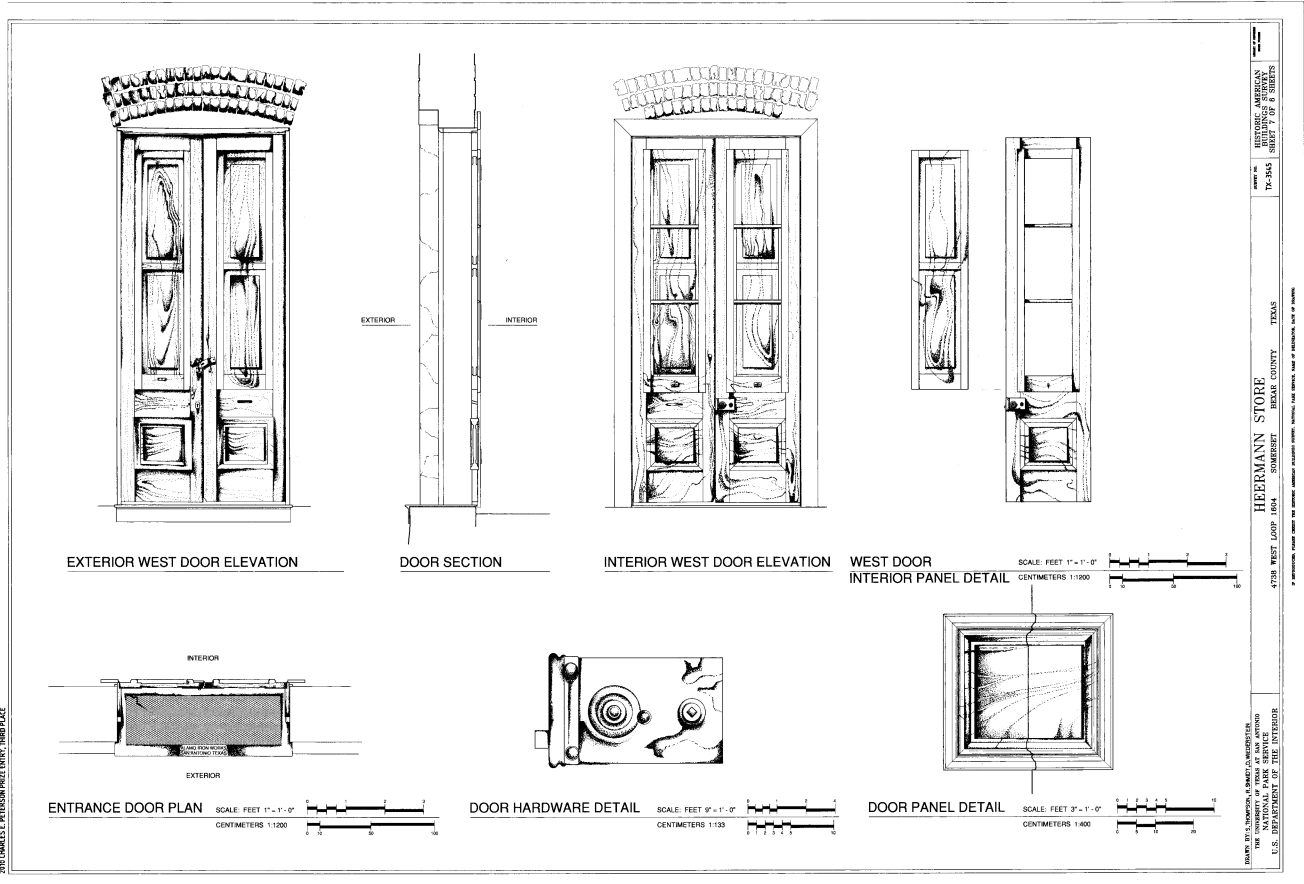


Figure 7: Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), *Heermann Store, 4308 West Loop 1604, Somerset, Bexar County, TX* (Survey Number: *HABS TX-3545*). Creator, Felix C Flores, Sue Ann Pemberton, Ricardo A Alarcon, George A Barrera, Mario A Cantu, Andy S Castillo, et al. Recorded in 2010. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx1120/>*

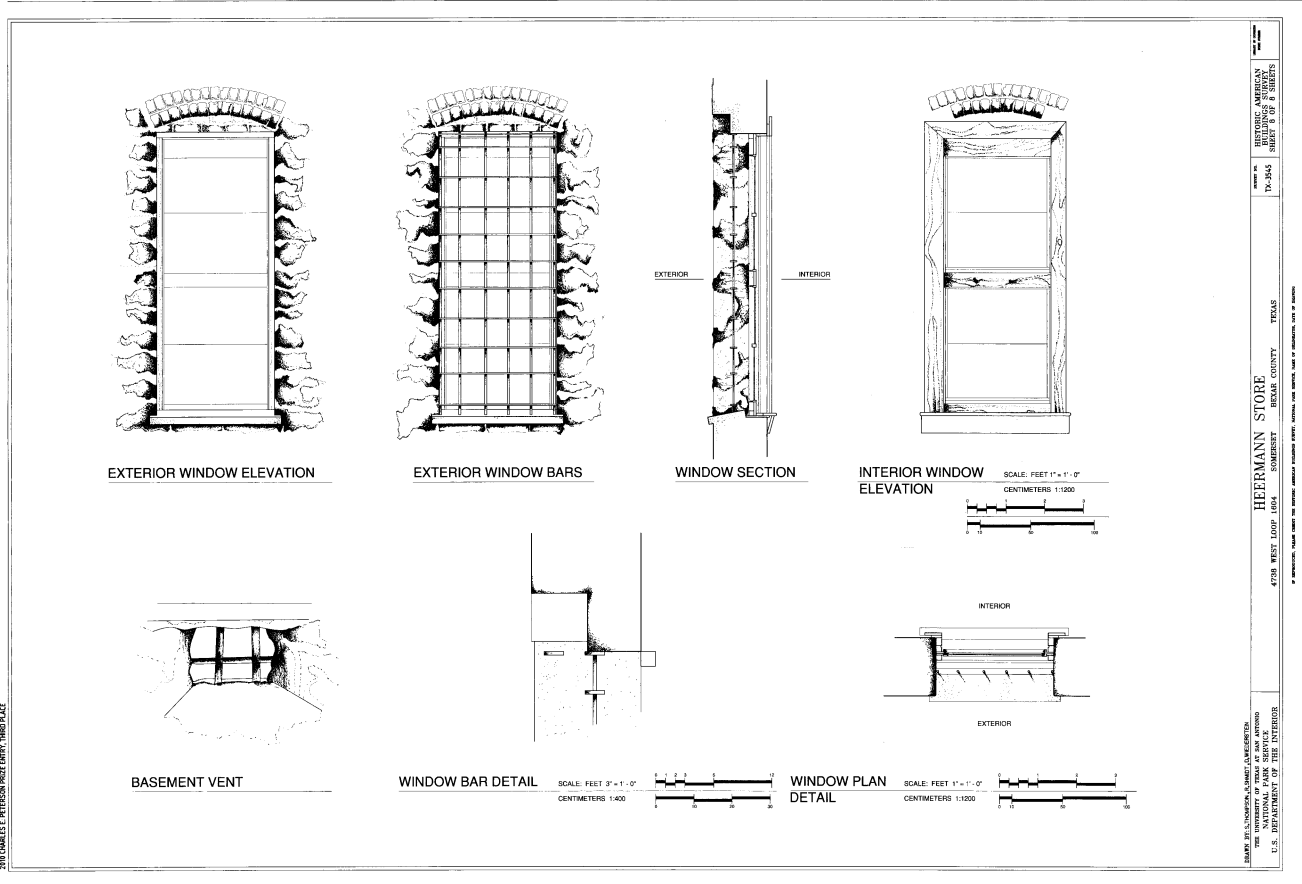


Figure 8: Application for Valmont Post Office, page 1. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 28, Post Office Locations, 1873-1950, Roll 565, Target 6, on file at the San Antonio Conservation Society.

1 of 2 - From NAKA RG 28, Post Office Locations
 1873-1950, Roll 565, Target 6


No. 1011. (LOCATION-PAPER)

Post Office Department,

OFFICE OF THE FOURTH ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL,
 APPOINTMENT DIVISION,
 WASHINGTON, D. C., 19 Oct 4, 189

Sir: Before the Postmaster General decides upon the application for the establishment of a post office at Valmont, County of Bexar, State of Texas, it will be necessary for you to carefully answer the subjoined questions, get a neighboring postmaster to certify to the correctness of the answers, and return the location paper to the Department, addressed to me. If the site selected for the proposed office should not be on any mail route now under contract, only a "Special Office" can be established there, to be supplied with mail from some convenient point on the nearest mail route by a special carrier (see section 733, Postal Laws and Regulations of 1887), for which service a sum equal to two-thirds of the amount of the salary of the postmaster at such office will be paid by the Department.

You should inform the contractor, or person performing service for him, of this application, and require him to execute the inclosed certificate as to the practicability of supplying the proposed office with mail, and return the same to the Department.

Very respectfully,

 Fourth Assistant Postmaster General.

To Mr. Felix Heermann
 care of the Postmaster of Senior who will please forward to him.

STATEMENT.

The proposed office to be called Valmont.

Select a short name for the proposed office, which, when written, will not resemble the name of any other post office in the State.

It will be situated in the Oak Island of Section 18 Township 10 N. Range 10 E. in the County of Bexar, State of Texas.

It will be 4 1/2 miles S. of Senior on the route from Senior P.O. to Senior P.O. to Senior on which the mail is now carried 6 times per week.

Will it be directly on this route, or a combination of this route? On a combination of this route.

If not, how far from it?—4 1/2 miles S. of Senior

If not on any route, is a "Special Office" wanted?—Yes To be supplied from Senior

The name of the nearest office to the proposed office, on one side, is Senior its distance is 4 1/2 miles in a South West direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest office, on the other side, is Von Ormy its distance is about 8 miles in a N. West direction from the proposed office.

The name of the other nearest office to the proposed office is Earl its distance by the most direct road is about 9 miles in a North of East direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest river near it is Medina River

The name of the nearest creek is Elm creek

The proposed office will be 2 miles from and near, on the South side of it, and will be 1/2 mile from the nearest creek, on the South side of it.

The name of the nearest railroad is International & Great Northern R.R.

If on the line of or near a railroad, on which side will the office be located? How far from the track? and what is, or will be, the name of the station?—about 5 miles S. from Medina Station (Von Ormy P.O.)

Is it to be a village, state the number of inhabitants.—Yes, a scattered neighborhood which can poll 150 votes.

Also, the population to be supplied by the proposed office.—Yes, on the basis of it to a family about 600 inhab. at times.

A diagram, or sketch from a map, showing the position of the proposed new office, with neighboring river or creek, roads, and other post offices, towns, or villages near it, will be useful, and is therefore desired. (See reverse side.)

wer the inquiries fully and accurately, or the case will not be acted upon.

Applications for post offices should be accompanied by petitions of the

Figure 9: Application for Valmont Post Office with location map, page 2. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 28, Post Office Locations, 1873-1950, Roll 565, Target 6, on file at the San Antonio Conservation Society.

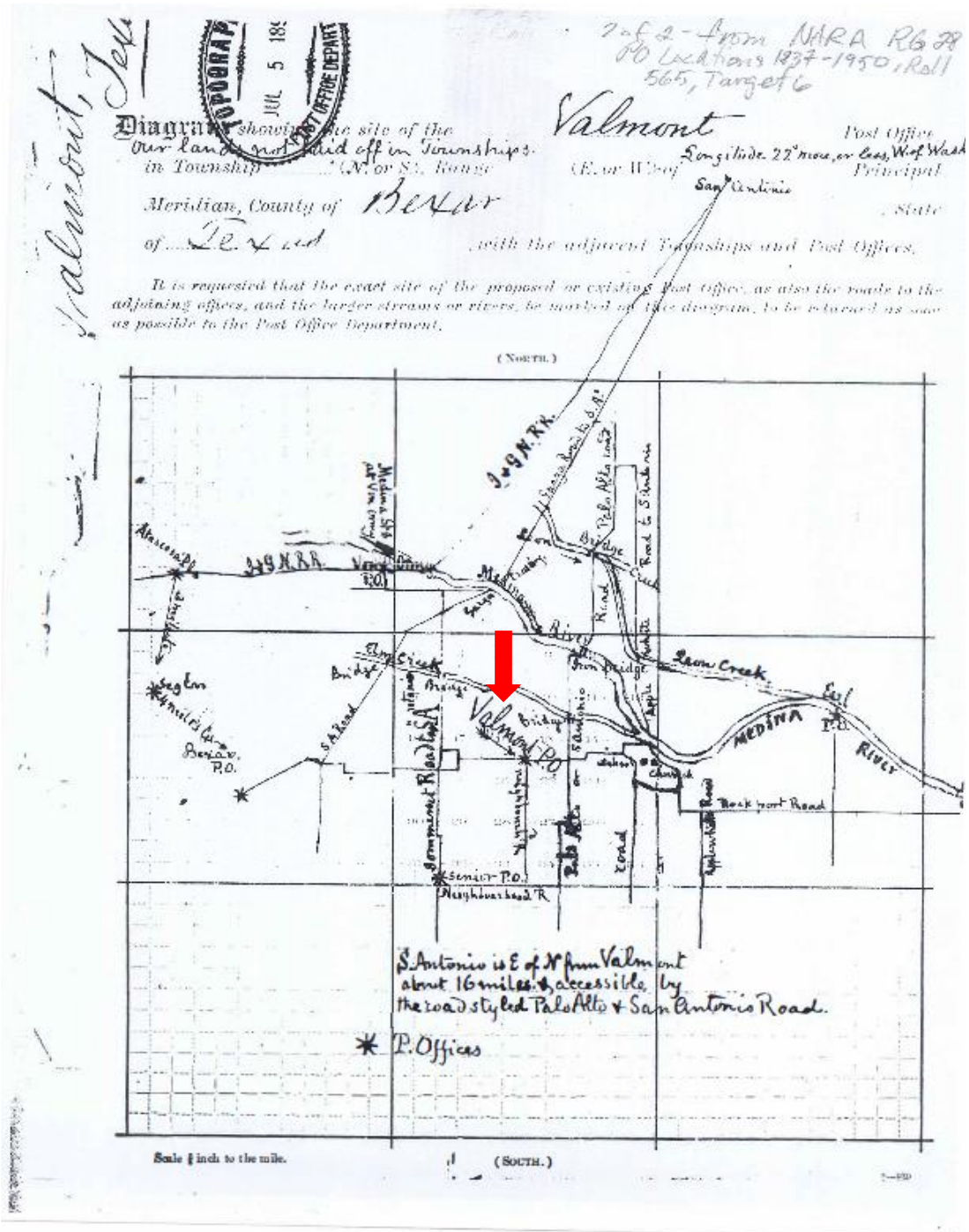


Figure 10: C. 1910 photo of what may be the Hernandez family in front of Heermann Store, courtesy San Antonio Conservation Society.



Figure 11: C. 1910 photo of what may be Hernandez family in front of barn (demolished) on Heermann Store property, courtesy San Antonio Conservation Society.



Figure 12: C. 1910 photo of what may be Hernandez family on Heermann Store property, courtesy San Antonio Conservation Society.



Figure 13: Map of Bexar County Oil Fields, 1919, showing Heermann Store property listed as John Easterly National Produce & Refrigeration Company. *Texas General Land Office*, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://s3.glo.texas.gov/glo/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm#item/79307>.



Figure 14: 1940 General Highway Map of Bexar County, Texas State Highway Department, showing Von Ormy, Somerset, Senior, and Thelma in proximity to Heermann Store. Likely location of Heermann Store identified as a “farm unit,” circled in red. Oak Island, while not labeled, is the church directly to the east of the Heermann Store. “General Highway Map, Bexar County, Texas,” *Texas General Land Office*, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://s3.glo.texas.gov/glo/history/archives/map-store/index.cfm#item/76287>

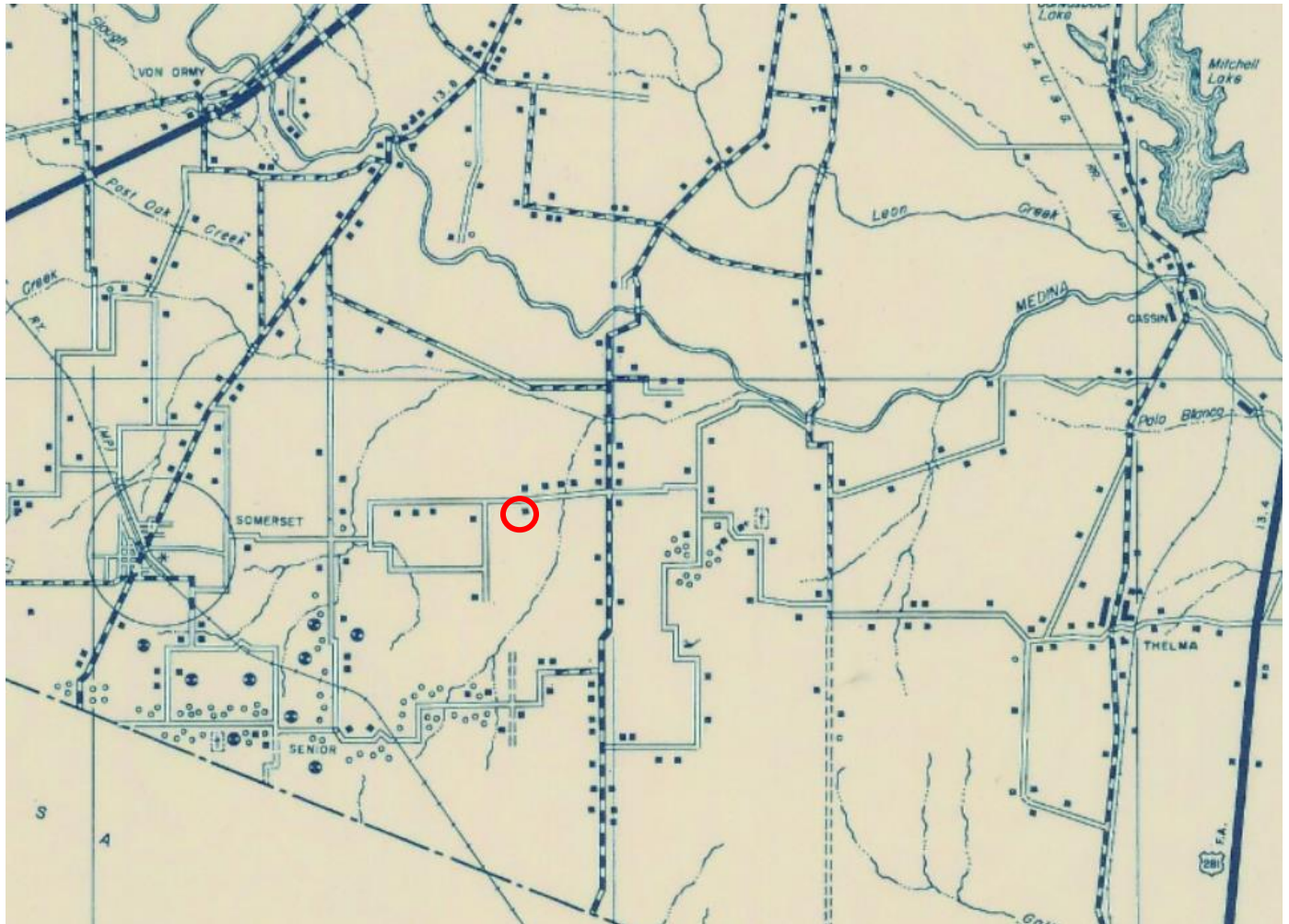


Figure 15: C. 2009 Photo of Heermann Store, courtesy San Antonio Conservation Society.



Figure 16: C. 2007 photo of ruins on Heermann Store property with vegetation removed, courtesy San Antonio Conservation Society.



Photos

Photo 1: Primary (west) elevation of Heermann Store, camera facing southeast.



Photo 2: Primary (west) elevation of Heermann Store showing main entrance, camera facing southeast.



Photo 3: Primary (west) and south elevations of Heermann Store, camera facing east.



Photo 4: Rear (east) elevation of Heermann Store showing Sheds A and B, camera facing northwest.



Photo 5: North elevation of Heermann Store, camera facing southwest.



Photo 6: Primary (west) and north elevations of Heermann Store, camera facing south.



Photo 7: Heermann Store cellar.



Photo 8: Heermann Store cellar.



Photo 9: Heermann Store ground floor, camera facing southeast.



Photo 10: Replacement window in original openings, Heermann Store.



Photo 11: Heermann Store ground floor, camera facing northwest.



Photo 12: Heermann Store original rafters from Beitel Lumber Company of San Antonio. Rafters read “From Frank J. Beitel.”



Photo 13: Original floor plate at main entrance of Heermann Store. Reads “Alamo Iron Works San Antonio Texas.”



Photo 14: Southwest elevation of Shed A. Camera facing northeast.



Photo 15: Northeast elevation of Shed C shown at rear of Heermann Store. Camera facing southwest.



Photo 16: Northwest and northeast elevations of Shed B. Camera facing south.



Photo 17: Cotton gin ruins.



Photo 18: Cotton gin ruins.



Photo 19: Cotton gin ruins.



Photo 20: Cotton gin ruins.



Photo 21: Primary (north) elevation of house. Camera facing south.



Photo 22: Primary (north) elevation of garage. Camera facing south.

