Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

PH0675431

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 16 1979
DATE ENTERED JUN 19 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: John Ruckman House

AND/OR COMMON: Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: Six miles north of Karnes City, east of state highway 80 (6 mi. N off TX 80)

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: ~~Helena~~ X VICINITY OF Karnes City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 23

STATE: Texas CODE: 048 COUNTY: Karnes CODE: 255

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	__OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	X UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	__YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	X YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	X OTHER: vacant

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Karnes County Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER: Box 162

CITY, TOWN: Karnes City __ VICINITY OF STATE: Texas, 78118

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER: Karnes County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN: Karnes City STATE: Texas, 78118

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Historic Sites Inventory

DATE: 1977 __FEDERAL X STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Texas Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN: Austin STATE: Texas

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	X DETERIORATED	X UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	__ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1878, the John Ruckman house is a detached 2 1/2 story dwelling exemplifying a provincial interpretation of the Greek Revival style. With the public entrance oriented to the north, the house is massed in a 2 1/2 story ell shape connected to a single story kitchen unit extending south.

The building is constructed of wood framing with clapboard siding of Florida cypress. Both the main structure (2 1/2 stories) and the single story extension are covered with separate wooden-shingled gable roofs, the main structure by intersecting gables and the extension by one. The roof of the main block is pierced by three small chimneys, the extension by one chimney and remnants of a bell tower.

The facade of the "front" or north side of the house is bilaterally symmetrical, featuring a central entrance flanked by shuttered six-over-six double hung windows. This main entrance is accentuated by a two story projecting portico, supported by octagonal columns flanked by square columns, and topped with a pediment featuring heavy cornice detail. The second floor portico is enclosed in a balustrade composed of single turned balusters. The doorway on both levels consists of a single panel door encased with transom and side light windows, and flanked by pilasters supporting a heavy cornice.

The remaining facades depart from the established symmetry in the placement of door and window openings, which relate to internal organization and function of spaces. The west facade features a side entrance accentuated by a single story projecting portico, smaller in scale though simpler in detail to the north portico. The east facade presents perhaps the most complex arrangement of architectural elements. Viewed as a whole, the elevation presents an asymmetrical composition, but for descriptive purposes, it will be broken down into three components which include the projecting east end of the north wing of the main block, the recessed "inside" of the south wing of the main block, and the "front" (main entrance) of the single story kitchen extension. The gable on both the east and west sides of the main unit is pierced with two shuttered windows. The pediment on both sides is emphasized with heavy molding which conceals the gutter system. The recessed portion of the facade consists of a two story colonnaded portico, running the full length of the main block, supported by square columns, with the first floor of the portico continuing on to connect the kitchen extension. The second floor of the portico, accessible only from the interior, is enclosed with a balustrade similar to the one enclosing the north portico. The facade of the kitchen extension is in itself symmetrical, featuring two shuttered

windows flanked by single door entrances. The south elevation, represented in both the facade of the kitchen wing and the main block, departs radically from symmetry with roof lines, doors, windows, and portico cut-outs juxtaposed in an asymmetrical composition.

The main entrance opens onto a central hallway with stairs leading to the second floor. The rear of this hall opens directly onto the east portico, and intersecting the hall near this doorway is the side or west entrance hall. This north wing of the ell shape presents an arrangement typical of Greek Revival plans, consisting of a central hallway with identical room divisions on either side of it. The first floor rooms are identified as public usage (parlor, sitting room, bed/sitting room, entry hall) while the second floor rooms are identified as private usage (bedrooms). Rooms in the southern wing of the main block are accessible from the exterior with doors opening onto the east portico. The second floor portico can be reached by way of the central hall, and the rooms opening onto it are identified as bedrooms. The first floor of the southern wing of the main block (one room) along with the entire single story extension is designated for usage in food preparation and service. Accessible from the east portico is the dining room which is connected by way of a pantry to the kitchen and storage room (single story extension), also opening onto the portico.

The central stairway continues up to the top floor which is designated as attic and storage space. Secondary stairways within the structure include a stairway connecting the dining room to the bedroom above it, and another one connecting the kitchen storeroom to the cellar (of unknown size) below it.

The interior spaces feature high ceilings and unadorned walls of horizontal planking, pierced with many windows and accentuated with architectural trim in contrasting hues and values. Many of the rooms have cornice molding around the ceiling. The floors throughout are hardwood and the central stairway is trimmed with decorative dowels

and bannisters. A decorative mantle appears in both the parlor and the dining room. Painted on the ceiling of the dining room is a star medallion from which a chandelier was hung. The original pale and neutral hues of the interior walls remain today, and research indicates that the exterior was painted a creamy white with trim and shutters in a contrasting green.

Outbuildings on the property include two brick-lined wells and a wash house located south of the main structure. A carriage house is located to the southeast . A bathroom was added onto the north wing of the main block at an undetermined date. An unpaved contemporary road provides access to the house.

The structure has experienced a substantial amount of deterioration on the porch areas which are suffering a structural breakdown as a result of rotten framing. Many decorative elements are missing and several columns are losing their position. Deterioration of the roof and missing windows has exposed the interior to weather. The southeast corner of the building is infested with termites and the sill is separated at the point where the east wall joins the east portico of the main block.

Restoration plans include returning the structure to its original physical condition, reconstructing missing elements including the open-sided, hipped roof bell tower.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1878 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1878 by a settler from Pennsylvania, the John Ruckman house is an outstanding example of 19th century Texas Greek Revival architecture. The Greek Revival theme is carried out in the floorplan, designed around a central hallway, and reinforced by the structural and decorative elements including symmetrical front facade , pediimented porticoes, supporting columns, transom and sidelights, and heavy exterior molding. It is the only home that survives from Helena's heyday as county seat of Karnes County.

As early as the 1840's, the site of Helena, then known as Alamita, was an important stop on the supply line from Indianola to San Antonio. In 1852, Thomas Ruckman and Lewis Owings opened a store and hired Charles Russell to lay out a townsite named Helena, which became the county seat of newly-formed Karnes County. Located on the Ox Cart Road (part of the Chihuahua Trail) between San Antonio and Goliad, Helena soon grew to be a bustling town of six hundred which supported many businesses including two hotels, a boot shop, harness shop, livery stable, two newspapers, a school, and a large number of saloons. During these juvenile years, Helena acquired the reputation of being a lawless place, with outlaws from other states taking refuge there. At the same time however, settlers were busy cultivating the fertile land of the San Antonio River valley, raising cotton, corn, cane, and garden vegetables. Thomas Ruckman built a sawmill, gristmill, and cotton gin which were much in demand as Helena grew and prospered.

John Ruckman joined his brother,Thomas, in Karnes County in 1857. From 1862 to 1865 John served the Confederacy as a Lieutenant, then returned to Helena where he served as the first postmaster, a banker, a merchant, as well as a prominent planter. In 1867 he married Eliza Dickson whose family came to Karnes County from Arkansas. Eliza, who was of Scottish lineage, was a direct descendant of American Revolution General Joseph Dickson. In keeping with their personal affluence, as well as the prosperity of Helena, John and Eliza constructed their elegant and accomodating home in 1878. For many years, the Ruckman home functioned as the center of social activities for Helena. Today the home is considered to be "a very fine representation of 19th century Texas residential architecture" by the architectural history

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Didear, Hedwig Krell, A History of Karnes County and Old Helena, Jenkins Publishing Company, Austin, 1969.

Old Helena Foundation publications, Ox Cart Days in Old Helena, The Life and Times of Thomas Ruckman, Robert Thonoff, ed., 1968.

Thonoff, Robert, A History of Karnes County, Master's Thesis, available in Southwest Texas State University Library.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 7.75 Map name: Helena, TX Scale: 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	14	614919	3202538	B			
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots nos. one through nine in block no. nine in ward no. two of the town of Helena.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Mrs. Thomas Ruckman, Karnes County Historical Society
Linda C. Flory, Texas Historical Commission

ORGANIZATION Texas Historical Commission DATE March 26, 1979

STREET & NUMBER Box 12276 TELEPHONE 512-476-5428

CITY OR TOWN Austin, STATE Texas

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE March 27, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 6.19.79

~~DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~ KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: Bill Lebovich DATE June 18, 1979

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

GPO 892-453

community, significant in form, construction, detailing, and finishing.

In 1884, the completion of the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway marked the decline of the economy of Helena. The railway bypassed the bustling little town for Karnes City, which became a boom town overnight, rendering Helena a "ghost town." In 1893, after a majority of Helena's businesses had migrated to Karnes City, a vote was passed to move the county seat from Helena to Karnes City. The citizens of Helena were so opposed to this transfer that the county records had to be transported at night, under secrecy and guard.

Following Ruckman's death on January 8, 1913, ownership of the house eventually passed to his four unmarried children, two of whom lived in the house until 1967, when they deeded it to the Old Helena Foundation, since merged with the Karnes County Historical Society. Currently, the Society plans to restore the home back to its original appearance including period furnishings, and then operate it as a hospitality center for area tourists and area residents, offering historical information, crafts and craft lessons, and special events. While the house stands as the last of Helena's frontier homes, it is not the last remaining structure from Helena's heyday. In close proximity to the structure is the courthouse, a two story stone structure built in 1873, the post office, the Carver-Mayfield commercial building, and the masonic building.

79002987

Property Ruckman, John, House

State Ill. (Karnes Working Number 4.16.79.830

TECHNICAL

Photos 9

Maps 1

CONTROL

pl

OK 4.16.79

HISTORIAN

Reject

B. Franden

6/15/79

Though significant for both architecture + association with prominent family of ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ Karnes Co, the ~~[illegible]~~ severe deterioration this structure ~~[illegible]~~ has suffered argues against listing in NR at present. Structure has been property of Hist. Soc nearly 10 years. ~~[illegible]~~ A significant attempt at rehabilitation/restoration should be demonstrated before listing.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

Listing at this time would not insure this structure's safety. The continuing loss of ~~[illegible]~~ integrity through neglect - negates its significant architectural qualities + historical associations.

Agree with Arch. Hist. Comment of possible district. BF 6/15/79

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Call/~~Return~~/Accept

Gale Cook

6/15/79 6/18/79

This resource, nominated for architectural significance, also has important local historical association. The extremely deteriorated condition of this Greek Revival residence presents a problem in listing the building before stabilization/restoration is begun. Other eligible buildings in the immediate vicinity indicate a district potential.

BRANCH CHIEF

Accept

Lebovich

6/18/79

(1) house is significant - see paragraph 1, section 8

(2) house is deteriorated, but because of grant application it is necessary to list now - we have reasonable assurance there is preservation commitment.

KEEPER

National Register Write-up _____ Send-back _____ Entered JUN 19 1979

Federal Register Entry 7-3-79 Re-submit _____

United States Department of the Interior - Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

SYKES S. McCLANR
RN CIT TE S

1878

JOHN RUCKMAN, HOME BUILT IN HELENA - 1878
JOHN W. RUCKMAN, "BOB" RUCKMAN,

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

Historic Photograph courtesy of Shirley Ruckman, Helena, TX

Northeast Oblique

Photo # 1 of 9

APR 16 1979

DOE
JUN 19 1979

John Ruckman House
Helena, Texas
by Diane Vinson
11-11-78
Box 162, Karnes City, 78118
front view, north
no. 2

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

Photo: Diane Vinson, Karnes City, Texas
11/11/78

North Facade

Photo # 2 of 9

APR 16 1979

DOE
JUN 19 1979

John Ruckman House
Helena, Texas
by Diane Vinson
11-1-78
Box 162, Karnes City, 78118
front porch

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

North Facade Detail

Photo: Diane Vinson, Karnes City, Texas
11/1/78

Photo # 3 of 9

John Ruckman House
Helena, Texas
by Diane Vinson
11-1-78
Box 162, Karnes City, 78118
side view, west
no. 6

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

Photo: Diane Vinson, Karnes City, Texas
11/1/78

West Facade

Photo # 4 of 9

APR 16 1979

DOE
JUN 19 1979

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

Photo: Texas Historical Commission
1977

Southwest Oblique

Photo # 5 of 9

APR 16 1979

DOE
JUN 19 1979

John Ruckman House
Helena, Texas
by Diane Vinson
11-1-78
Box 162, Karnes City, 78118
kitchen porch, facing east
no. 4

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

Photo: Diane Vinson, Karnes City, Texas
11/1/78

East Facade, Kitchen Extension

Photo # 6 of 9

DOE
JUN 19 1979

APR 16 1979

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

Photo: Texas Historical Commission

1977

East Facade, Main Block

Photo # 7 of 9

DOE

JUN 19 1979

APR 16 1979

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

Photo: Texas Historical Commission
1977

Northeast Oblique

Photo # 8 of 9

DOE
JUN 19 1979

APR 16 1979

John Ruckman House: well
Helena, Texas
by Diane Vinson
11-1-78
Box 162, Karnes City, 78118
no. 7

John Ruckman House

Helena, Karnes County, Texas

Photo: Diane Vinson, Karnes City, Texas
11-1-78

Well Detail

APR 16 1979

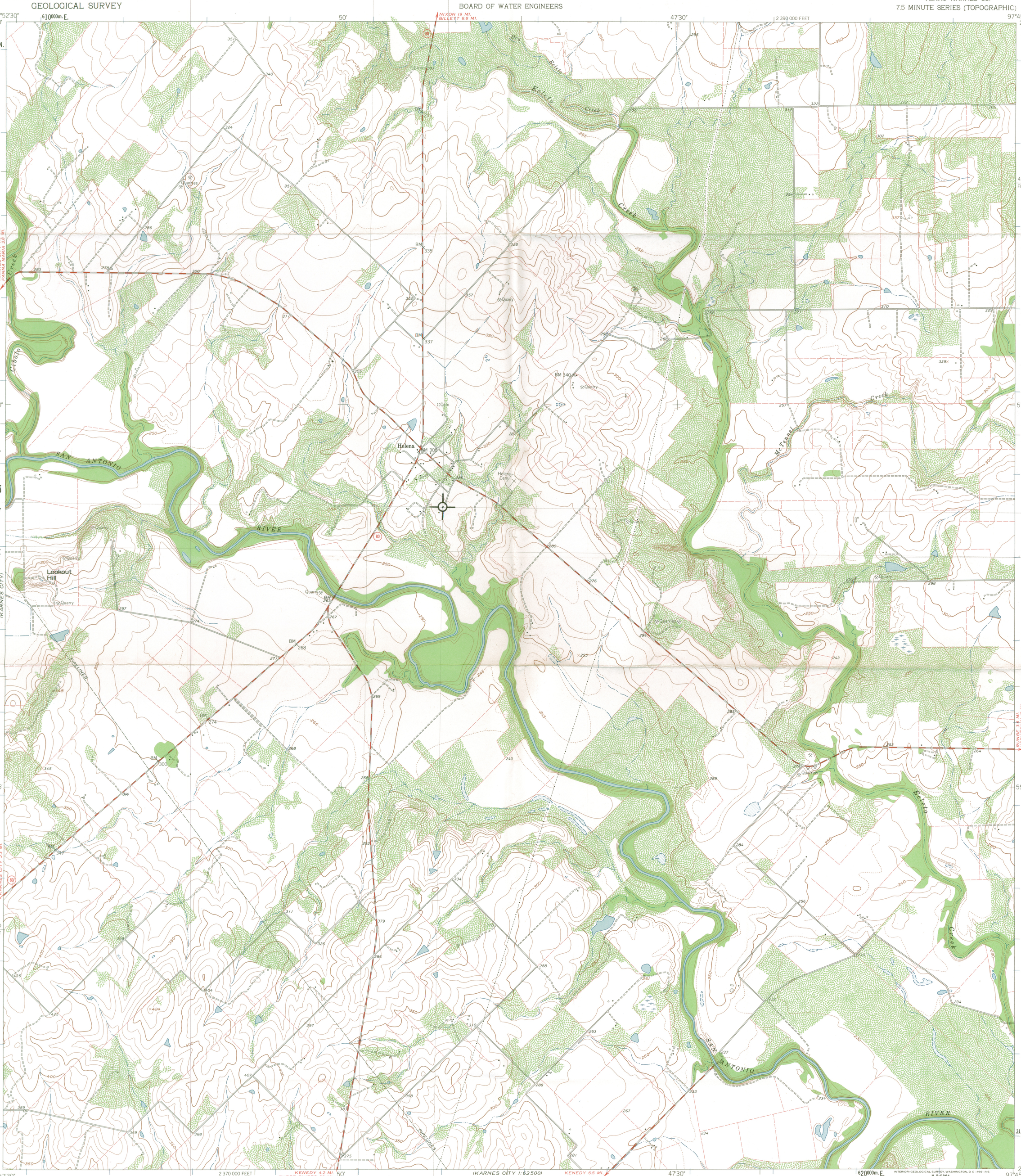
Photo # 9 of 9

DOE
JUN 19 1979

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF TEXAS
BOARD OF WATER ENGINEERS

HELENA QUADRANGLE
TEXAS-KARNES CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



JOHN RUCKMAN HOUSE
HELENA, KARNES COUNTY, TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14:614919:3202538

(KARNES CITY)
1:62500

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
Aerial photographs taken 1958. Field check 1960

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, south central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs
This information is unchecked

TRUE NORTH
MAGNETIC NORTH
9°
APPROXIMATE MEAN DECLINATION, 1960

SCALE 1:24000

1 ½ 0 1 MILE

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET

1 .5 0 1 KILOMETER

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER 25, COLORADO OR WASHINGTON 25, D.C.
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

TEXAS
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Medium-duty — Light-duty
Unimproved dirt
State Route

HELENA, TEX.
N2852.5—W9745/7.5
1960

41

Waiver letter not adequate - could not reach Puckett - called Lissa Anderson & asked her to get in touch with him
PL 5-11-79

KARNES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Karnes County Historical Society
Box 162
Karnes City, Texas 78118

Re: Ruckman, John, House

April 28, 1979

Dr. William J. Murtagh
Keeper of the National Register
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Pension Building, 440 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20243 (Attn: NOM)

Dear Mr. Murtagh:

We received your letter of April 24, 1979 concerning the listing in the National Register of Historic Places of the John Ruckman House in Helena, Texas.

We would very much like to have the house listed on the National Register, and wish to waive the 30 day waiting period for owner notification, if possible, since we are going to submit an application for a grant on June 1st.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Puckett

Thomas D. Puckett, President
Karnes County Historical Society
Box 162
Karnes City, Texas 78118

512- 780-3554

TDP/ser

KARNES COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Karnes County Historical Society
Box 162
Karnes City, Texas 78118
Re: Ruckman, John, House

May 15, 1979

Dr. William J. Murtagh
Keeper of the National Register
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Pension Building, 440 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20243 (Attn: NOM)

Dear Dr. Murtagh:

The Karnes County Historical Society is the owner of the John Ruckman House, built in 1878 in Helena, Texas, and has requested that the house be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The house, as well as 7-3/4 acres of land with mineral rights on which the house stands, were donated by Miss Margaret Ruckman, daughter of John Ruckman, in 1968. The deed is signed by Margaret Ruckman on March 22, 1968 and recorded in the Karnes County Courthouse, Karnes City, Texas.

The Karnes County Historical Society is aware of the incentives and disincentives of the Tax Reform Act of 1976, and other consequences incurred in registering the John Ruckman House on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Karnes County Historical Society would like to hereby waive any waiting period for owner notification.

Thank you for your time and attention to this nomination.

Sincerely,

Tom D. Puckett

Thomas D. Puckett
President
Karnes County Historical Society
Box 162
Karnes City, Texas 78118

KARNES COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Karnes County Historical Society
Box 162
Karnes City, Texas 78118
Re: Ruckman, John, House

May 15, 1979

Dr. William J. Murtagh
Keeper of the National Register
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Pension Building, 440 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20243 (Attn: NOM)

Dear Dr. Murtagh:

Enclosed is a letter from the Karnes County Historical Society to amend our letter of April 28, 1979.

We thought our information was sufficient at that time, but the Texas Historical Commission informs us that a statement of ownership is required. We are sorry for this delay and hope the enclosed letter is sufficient.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Tom D. Puckett

Thomas D. Puckett, President
Karnes County Historical Society
Box 162
Karnes City, Texas 78118

Enclosure

TELEPHONE REPORT

OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PROJECT: John Ruckman House

TO/FROM: Lissa Anderson DATE: June 18, 1979

ADDRESS: TX Historical Commission PHONE: 512-475-3094

STAFF MEMBER: Gale Brooks DIVISION: NR

REPORT:

According to Lissa, a reputable Texas architect has done a study of the building, and in his opinion it can be restored (and not reconstructed). Lissa is going to send us a copy of the report.

Lissa also said the Karnes County Historical Society is more active now (apparently new leadership) than it was. They have set up fund raising projects and are actively pursuing the building's restoration. The Society has requested a HPF Grant to assist with the restoration. Apparently, they are feeling the pressure of the original donation agreement which states the property will revert to the original owner in ten years if the Society doesn't do something with it.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
P.O. Box 12276
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711
512-475-3094

TO NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW STAFF
H.C.R.S., DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
18TH & C ST N.W
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

DATE 6-18-79
ATTENTION GALE BROOKS
RE: RUCKMAN HOUSE
KARNES CITY, TEXAS

GENTLEMEN:

WE ARE SENDING YOU: ☑ Attached ☐ Under separate cover

The following items:

COPIES	DATE	NO.	DESCRIPTION
1			DAVID HOFFMAN'S VISITING SPECIALIST REPORT

REMARKS

COPY TO

SIGNED: Carol Kennedy
TITLE: RESEARCH ASSISTANT

BELL, KLEIN & HOFFMAN
ARCHITECTS AND RESTORATION CONSULTANTS
920 Congress Avenue Austin, Texas 78701 512/476-3033

June 16, 1978

Mr. & Mrs. Tom Ruckman
P.O. Box 85
Karnes City, Tx. 78118

Dear Tom & Shirley,

I would like to thank you again for the hospitality extended to me during my visit to Helena. I truly enjoyed visiting the Ruckman House again and getting to meet the many people in your group that are so interested in its preservation. I do believe that the house is presently in a retrievable condition and that a concerted effort on the part of the Karnes County Historical Society could result in the preservation and use of what I consider to be a very fine representation of nineteenth-centruy Texas residential architecture.

The quality of the Ruckman House is evident in its construction, form, detailing & finishing. These are the most important architectural features of a historic home and the house rates very high in each instance. I must also emphasize the importance of the condition of the interior of the home. The fact that it has not been substantially modified or remodeled and that some of the original colors are intact is very significant. So many older homes have been diminished in historical value because of successive attempts to "improve" the finishes on the interior to satisfy the desire for current trends and styles. The Ruckman House is simply original and this is worth a great deal.

The fact that I had photographed the house five years ago made it easier for me to assess the rate of deterioration of the building fabric. A comparison of my photographs with my observations of the actual building material revealed several things. The greatest amount of deterioration has occurred at the porch areas. They are experiencing a structural breakdown from rotten framing and are losing most of their decorative elements. Several columns are losing their position and this will mean the loss of structural elements that will ultimately cause the collapse of the main house on the east side but it does not appear to have progressed very far. The interior of the main house is in a remarkable state of preservation considering its exposure to the weather due to the lack of complete roofing and missing windows. There is advancing deterioration on the interior at the southeast corner due to termite infestation. On the ell of the main house, there does exist a separation of the sill where the east wall joins the full length porch. The rear house, or kitchen, appears to be in worse condition than the main house. However, it is experiencing the same type of deterioration and only appears worse because the problems are concentrated in a smaller area and not spread out over a large mass like the main house.

We have discussed the status of the National Register designation for the building. I strongly urge you to pursue completion & submission of the application in order to qualify the structures for any possible federal funding programs. It will also aid you in obtaining further assistance from the Texas Historical Commission. It is fortunate that someone within your organization has had enough experience with the nomination form to complete it for you. I sincerely doubt if there will be any question about acceptance of the property for listing in the National Register.

We have found that the preparation of a comprehensive development plan for a project such as this is an excellent way to gain group acceptance of the program and inform all those concerned of your intentions for preservation and use of the property. The plan can include many items such as building history, historical photographs, measured drawings of the buildings, building use program, development philosophy and a phased development/restoration program. As we discussed, priorities for preservation of the building should include 1) foundation investigation and repair 2) weatherproofing by re-roofing and replacement of window sash & glass 3) porch stabilization, repair & replacement 4) miscellaneous repair & carpentry & 5) exterior protective coating.

The building is very fortunate to be encased in the cypress siding. The durability of this material is largely responsible for the continued preservation of the building. Other immediate measures I would suggest include closing the existing wood blinds to inhibit the amount of water gaining access to the interior and wiring the loose decorative elements on the porches back together so they don't fall off. Any loose smaller elements of trim or millwork that can not be wired should be photographed in place, removed, catalogued or inventoried & stored for the duration. A nicely painted sign briefly explaining the intentions of your organization to restore the home might discourage some people who might consider the abandoned building fair prey for salvage. This has helped us on local projects but of course will not prevent vandals from taking their toll.

I have enclosed several preservation plans for you to consider. As I explained, each was prepared for a specific project & each for a specific purpose. However, they all satisfy the purposes for which they were prepared and that was to guide an organization on the correct procedures for preservation of a historic structure. After you have ample time to curculate the booklets, I would appreciate their return.

Thank you again for the splendid lunch & cordiality and I do hope our meeting will be beneficial for the organization. If I can provide any further service or information on a proposal for a development plan, please advise.

Sincerely,

David Hoffman, AIA

DH/jsh
cc: Mr. Joe Williams, Texas Historical Commission
Enclosure

THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

DATE REC'D JUN 20 1979

_____ INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE (ATTACHED)

_____ INFORMATIVE MATERIAL SENT

_____ TELEPHONE CALL (ATTACHED)

DATE ACTION TAKEN _____

INITIALS _____

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE TEXAS

Date Entered JUN 19 1979

Name	Location
Ruckman, John, House	Karnes City vicinity Karnes County
Turner-White-McGee House	Roganville Jasper County

Also Notified

Honorable Lloyd M. Bentsen

Honorable John G. Tower
Honorable Abraham Kazen, Jr.
Honorable Charles Wilson

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Truett Latimer
Executive Director
Texas State Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

NR Byers/bjr 6/22/79

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.