

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



1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Cotulla Ranch
Other name/site number: Town Ranch
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 1 mile west of the intersection of I-35 and Crockett St., on private road
City or town: Cotulla State: Texas County: La Salle
Not for publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Mark R. [Signature] State Historic Preservation Officer 4/24/14
Signature of certifying official / Title Date
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: _____

David Edson K. Beall 6.13.14
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: DOMESTIC/single dwelling = house
 DOMESTIC/secondary structure = cistern, smokehouse, carport
 AGRICULTURE/stock pond

Current Functions: DOMESTIC/single dwelling = house
 DOMESTIC/secondary structure = storage
 VACANT/Not in use
 AGRICULTURE/stock pond

7. Description

Architectural Classification: MID-19th CENTURY: Other

Principal Exterior Materials: Stone, Wood, Metal

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-6 through 7-11)

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: N/A

Areas of Significance: Exploration/Settlement; Agriculture; Architecture

Period of Significance: 1865-1963

Significant Dates: 1865

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): Joseph Cotulla

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked):

Architect/Builder:

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-12 through 8-18)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 9-19 through 9-20)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- 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): N/A

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 5.89 acres

Coordinates (either UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 28.440277 Longitude: -99.267650

Verbal Boundary Description: 5.89 acres of land out of the McMullen & McGloin Survey 10 ½, Abst. 569, La Salle County, Texas and being described by metes and bounds as follows:

Begin at a fence corner post in the north line of that certain 732.38 acre tract allotted to Paul Cotulla by partition deed recorded in Volume 134, page 47, Deed Records, said La Salle County, and being located 83.40 feet from a concrete monument for its northwest corner; said fence corner post also being a corner of a 750.13 acre tract; Thence with line of said 750.13 acre tract N11 degrees 11'43"W 354.70 feet to a stake; Thence with line of said 750.13 acre tract N75 degrees 32'57"E 582.01 feet to a stake; Thence due west 621.83 feet to the place of beginning.

Boundary Justification: This 5.89 acre homestead tract contains the original Cotulla Ranch House and several buildings and structures associated with the traditional residential section of the historic Joseph Cotulla Ranch. It contains the oldest and largest concentration of historic resources associated with the ranch and is the only portion that retains the level of integrity necessary for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Terri Myers, Historian
Organization: Preservation Central, Inc.
Street & number: 823 Harris Avenue
City or Town: Austin State: Texas Zip Code: 78705
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Date: August 23, 2013

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheet Map-21 through Map-24)

Additional items (see continuation sheets Figure-25 through Figure-29)

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Photographs

Name of Property: Cotulla Ranch
City or Vicinity: Cotulla (vicinity)
County, State: La Salle County, Texas
Photographer: Terri Myers
Date Photographed: March 2013
Number of Photos: 7

Photograph 1

Joseph Cotulla Ranch House (Resource 1, contributing), East (primary) and North facades
Camera facing Southwest

Photograph 2

Joseph Cotulla Ranch House (Resource 1, contributing), East (primary) and South facades
Camera facing North/Northwest

Photograph 3

Joseph Cotulla Ranch House (Resource 1, contributing), South and West (rear) facades
Showing chimney, stone construction, and rear door to kitchen addition
Camera facing Northeast

Photograph 4

Cistern (Resource 3, contributing), West side
Camera facing East

Photograph 5

Smoke House, East Façade
Camera facing West

Photograph 6

Ranch Hand House (Resource 5, contributing), East (primary) facade
Camera facing approximately West

Photograph 7

Carport (Resource 4, noncontributing), South and East facades
Camera facing Northwest

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.

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Narrative Description

The 5.89-acre Joseph Cotulla Ranch headquarters lies on the west side of IH-35, one mile west of the town of Cotulla, La Salle County. Joseph Cotulla, a Polish immigrant who served on the side of the Union during the Civil War, came to the brush country of South Texas in the mid-1860s to try his luck at ranching in the untamed and nearly barren land. He first leased, then purchased more than 12,000 acres of undeveloped land near the banks of the Nueces River in the brushland country of La Salle County, South Texas. There he established a vast cattle ranching operation. Even before he purchased the land, Cotulla erected a one-room stone shelter about 1865. Over the years, he added rooms until it became a long, linear, side-gabled house with a full façade front porch and a row of shed-roofed additions at the rear. The house and associated outbuildings served as the ranch headquarters for five generations of Cotullas. At one time, the site contained several barns, a goat herder's shack, vegetable pens, a carriage house and a privy. Those features either burned, collapsed, or were demolished. The ranch house, however, looks very much like it did about 1910 when the front porch was screened. Other resources on the property include a ca. 1880 stone cistern, a ca. 1880 stone smokehouse, a ca. 1943 frame cottage, a stock pond, ca. 1960 carport, and a ca. 1975 trailer house.

Introduction

Joseph Cotulla arrived in La Salle County as early as 1865 when he leased land from the Maverick brothers and built a small stone fortress/house near the Nueces River. There he was one of only two or three Anglos who pioneered ranching in the county. By 1880, he owned 25,000 acres of pasture land and 5,000 head of cattle in the county (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Agricultural Schedule, La Salle County). About that time, rumors of a railroad to La Salle County excited the populace. Cotulla platted a townsite – not coincidentally called Cotulla – on part of his land and enticed the railroad to lay their tracks through his town by giving them choice town lots in the bargain. The move sealed Cotulla's selection as the county seat which attracted numerous businesses and families to its boundaries almost overnight. Cotulla then served his community as a county commissioner for many years. His legacy is reflected in his ranch house and scattered resources about a mile west of Cotulla on the west side of I-35. The house reflects the greater part of Cotulla's life from his frontier settlement, through the development of several area farms and ranches, including this, the "Town" Ranch. Through the years he added on to his original house to accommodate his nine children. He died in 1922.

At the heart of the former ranching complex is a one-story, side-gabled, stucco-covered stone dwelling still occupied by Cotulla's great-grandson, Bill Cotulla. Now a long, white ranch house, it lies in the center of a fenced compound containing auxiliary resources. Begun as a one-room shelter about 1865, the house dominates the site of what was once a 25,000+ acre ranching empire. Cotulla added rooms to the house as his family grew and various alterations such as the screened porch were made by his children. The house achieved its long, low appearance with full façade porch by about 1910. The porch was screened by the late 1920s. During the early period of development, auxiliary resources were installed near the house including a stone cistern and a stone smoke house. Behind the house and next to the smoke house lies a ca. 1943 frame Japanese internment dwelling moved to the site and used to house ranch workers after World War II. A wood picket fence originally encircled the home site; it was replaced in the historic period by a wire and post fence. A ca. 1960 carport (noncontributing) with natural wood posts and exposed rafter ends is incorporated in the fence. Just outside the fenced compound, but within the nominated boundary, lies a ca. 1975 noncontributing trailer house and a 1990s stock pond, also noncontributing. The 5.89-acre parcel is surrounded by adjacent ranchland, including a 640-

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

acre tract still owned by Bill Cotulla, and natural gas mining sites. Together the collection of historic ranch resources evokes a strong sense of South Texas ranching history and reflects the pioneer heritage of the Cotulla family and La Salle County.

Location

The 5.89-acre Joseph Cotulla Ranch headquarters lies in the northwest section of La Salle County, in the brushland region of South Texas. It is located one mile west of the city of Cotulla, on the west side of Interstate 35 and the path of the International and Great Northern Railroad. The ranch headquarters is approximately 800 feet east/northeast of the Nueces River's north bank. The Nueces flows through the original ranch property and once provided clean water to the people and livestock who depended on it in this dry, drought-prone section of Texas. Land around the building complex is generally flat and primarily dedicated to ranching, though natural gas exploration and mining encroaches on the former ranch land. Native vegetation includes mesquite, scrub brush, cacti, grasses, and small live oak and post oak trees. The ranch buildings are located within, or open onto, a rectangular half-acre fenced yard. The yard is flat and primarily consists of dirt and grass with shade trees around the perimeter. The ranch can be accessed via a 0.8 mile dirt road originating at FM 468 to the north, or via a one-mile long dirt road originating at Interstate 35 to the east. Its main driveway extends from the latter and widens to become a teardrop-shaped circular drive that encircles a tree. South of the fenced building cluster, immediately west of the turnaround, is a grass and dirt parking area.

The Joseph and Mary Cotulla Ranch

Joseph Cotulla was a Polish immigrant who lived in Atascosa County with his wife, Mary, and father-in-law, Simon Reider, in the 1860s. La Salle County, to the south, was part of the Wild Horse Desert, barren and subject to Indian raids and outlaws as late as the 1870s. Cotulla worked for his father-in-law and leased land from the famous Maverick family in the mid-1860s. In 1877, he bought the land on which he had been ranching for more than ten years.

Resource 1: Cotulla House (contributing)

Cotulla first built a one-room, side-gabled stone house near the Nueces River and used it as a shelter and fortress against attack. Everything about the house – its form, design, and materials – spoke to its use as protection. The shelter featured 2' thick limestone walls, with mortar made of ashes and goats milk (Bill Cotulla, personal communication, August 23, 2013), and sheathed in fire-resistant lime stucco. The site was cluttered with natural stones, and rocks of varying size were gathered and stacked in random courses and bound with lime mortar. Steeply pitched end walls formed the basis for the side-gabled roof. Original roofing material is unknown; it could have had wood shingles but it may have had a fireproof *chipichil* (lime cement) roof. It had no windows to give intruders access to the interior, but it did have *troneras*, or gun ports cut into the walls. The holes were wider inside the walls than out so that a defender could easily shoot a rifle through the opening without danger of being hit himself. Cotulla built a shed-roofed addition to the rear of the original dwelling about 1867. It was used as a kitchen.

Reportedly, Cotulla would not allow his family to join him until the region was more civilized. The railroad represented the advent of civilization in South Texas and when the first train pulled into the depot at the newly platted townsite of Cotulla, in 1882, Joseph Cotulla's wife and children were on board. Cotulla used the two-room fort-like shelter as the foundation for his family's home; he added rooms to the original structure as the family grew. Subsequent rooms were added to the side of the original house and kitchen as the family grew.

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

The first added room may have been built to accommodate Mary Cotulla, in the 1880s. As the children grew, more rooms followed. The second main room appears to have been built about 1890. By the turn of the 20th century, the simple stone house was no longer a rudimentary shelter but home to the large Cotulla family. Because the main additions appeared as extensions of the original room, the house has a long, linear appearance. Shed-roofed rear additions were eventually added to each of the rooms in the main row and a long screened porch ran the length of the front façade. Today, the building appears as a long, linear, side-gabled center unit sandwiched between a row of shed-roofed additions along the back and a full-façade porch across the front.

The Cotulla House measures approximately 52 by 25 feet, with its attached shed-roofed front porch adding an additional seven feet to the width. The thick limestone walls are coursed rubble covered by a smooth stucco coating. The side-gabled roof has a high central pitch flanked by lower-pitched shed roofs over the front porch and rear additions. The roof is clad in painted corrugated metal and has virtually no roof overhang. On the rear roof plane are two small turbine-style roof vents. The building has a rectangular footprint save for two small projecting volumes. On the rear elevation, an entry volume extends about four feet past the façade and has a small cantilevered stoop roof, two concrete steps, and a single wood entry door with wood screen. On the south side elevation is a large attached chimney. At ground level, the first five feet of chimney consist of a blocky shape measuring approximately three feet wide by three feet deep. Above the five-foot mark the chimney tapers to about a foot square in width. The chimney is stuccoed to match the house and extends a short distance above the ridgeline. It is capped by metal flashing and a metal chimney pipe.

The long porch spans the entire front façade and is covered by a shed roof. It was screened by the late 1920s. The porch has eight bays delineated by 4x4 wood posts. Non-historic screening stretches between each post, and a tall wood-framed single screened entry door is located in the second bay from the south. Wood planking found just under the roof level provides additional support for the screening. Behind the screened porch, the house's front façade has five historic windows and two entry doors organized into three distinct bays. In the center is a 6/6 wood window. On either side of the central bay are two longer bays, each with a single entry door flanked by 6/6 wood windows that appear to be original to the house or, at least, early replacements. The house's south elevation has one small window opening directly behind, or west of, the chimney. It has a non-historic window sash. The north side elevation is windowless. Along the rear elevation, the building additions contain four windows in an asymmetrical arrangement. Three of these rear windows have non-historic sash, and one is boarded. Though these windows feature non-historic sash, the openings have not been changed in size.

The Cotulla House's overall appearance is much like it was throughout history, and its thick limestone walls demonstrate the construction techniques and utilization of local materials inherent in its design. All of the additions are of historic age, and the front elevation retains all of its historic windows. While windows on the rear elevation have been replaced, they are set in their original openings. The house has excellent integrity of location, feeling, association, setting, and workmanship. Despite the metal roofing material and nonhistoric window sash in the south and rear elevations, the house has good integrity of materials and design.

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Resource 2: Smoke House (contributing)

The ca. 1880 Smoke House is a side-gabled building located 60 feet behind the house, at the rear of the fenced yard. It is thought to have been built when Mrs. Cotulla joined her husband at the ranch. Its footprint measures 18 feet on its front and rear gable end elevations, and 20 feet along the side elevations. The building has thick coursed-rubble walls of rust-colored sandstone and no window openings. Its foundation was originally stone, but later repairs added concrete at foundation level for reinforcement. The roof is corrugated metal, and the gable ends are enclosed with painted plywood. The front of the building is the eastern gable end that faces the house. This has one centrally placed single entry door framed in wood, with no header. The wood door is historic, and a non-historic glass storm door has been installed on its exterior. To the right of the door, a small section of stone has been cut away for installation of a window-type air conditioning unit. The remaining three windowless walls are unaltered save for some incompatible mortar joint repair on the east and west elevations. On the west side elevation, a shed-roofed porch was added ca. 1930. The porch roof, which extends approximately five feet from the building, is supported by 4x4 inch posts atop a low rubble porch wall. The porch floor is a concrete slab. The Smoke House partially collapsed in the 1970s; Bill Cotulla, owner, had it rebuilt with its original stones in 1990. It has seen minor alterations such as the side porch, the plywood gable ends, the concrete foundation, and the air conditioner installation. However, the building is remarkably intact and in good condition. It has excellent integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. It has good integrity of design, workmanship, and materials.

Resource 3: Cistern (contributing)

The cistern is located a few feet from the house's north side elevation, in the center of a mound of earth. The cistern likely dates to the completion of the adjacent house addition, ca. 1890. Below ground, the cistern is bell-shaped and is approximately 75 feet deep. The above-ground portion of the cistern is a cylindrical stuccoed sandstone structure approximately four feet in height. At its base atop the earthen mound, the cistern measures approximately five feet across. About one foot up the base, the cistern steps back to a diameter of 3 ½ feet with an interior diameter of approximately three feet. A small stone and stucco reinforcing buttress extends a few inches from one side of the cistern. The stucco coating is missing in places, exposing the rust-colored sandstone beneath. Despite this, the cistern is remarkably unaltered and retains all seven aspects of integrity.

Site 4: Carport (noncontributing)

The carport is a freestanding side-gabled open structure supported by circular wood posts similar to telephone poles and reinforced by slatted wood boards along the sides. The gabled roof consists of narrowly spaced rafters with exposed tails. The framing is entirely visible under the horizontal sheet metal roof. The gable ends are infilled with vertical board skirting below which it is open for access by vehicles. The carport was originally built about 1960 and is one of the most recent resources on the ranch. Though it may date from the last years of the period of significance, it is not of architectural or agricultural significance and is considered a minor resource.

Resource 5: Ranch Hand House (former Japanese Internment House) (contributing)

A small shelter originally built to house Japanese citizens interned at Crystal City during World War II was moved to the ranch and installed on a concrete slab foundation after the war. The simple wood-framed building has a low-pitched side-gabled roof and a footprint measuring 18 feet on the front and rear elevations, and 15 feet on the side, gable-end elevations. The building is located at the southwest corner of the fenced yard, a few feet southeast of the Smoke House. Its front elevation faces east toward the house.

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The Ranch Hand House (former Internment House) is notable for its exceptional integrity. Such houses were built from standard military housing plans developed just before and throughout the war. This particular dwelling would have been classified as “semi-permanent” construction and intended to last about ten years. Having survived 70 years since its wartime installation, this dwelling has long surpassed its potential. It is clad in wood siding and has a number of small horizontal rectangular windows placed about two-thirds of the way up the wall and grouped near the building corners. The windows lack trim pieces and are recessed slightly so that when their wood screens are attached, the screens are flush with the siding. The overall fenestration pattern recalls ribbon windows found in Modern architecture, with a narrow band of horizontal windows flush with the siding, “wrapping” around the corners. A narrow wood sill beneath each window is the only trimwork. The windows are original 4-light wood casement, and many of the original wood screens are intact. The wood screen door is also original. The building’s roof is supported by exposed wood rafters and is clad in corrugated metal roofing material.

Overall, the Ranch Hand House has exceptional integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. Since it was moved from the internment camp, its original integrity of feeling, association, location, and setting have been compromised. However, it provided housing for ranch hands at the Cotulla Ranch and throughout South Texas from the 1940s, during the period of significance. Its current location, setting, feeling, and association reflect that phase of its history.

Resource 6: Stock Pond (noncontributing)

A shallow stock pond is located 150 yards southwest of the house near the property’s southwestern border. It measures approximately 1000 square feet and is ovoid in shape. It is accessed by a short dirt drive extending from the adjacent grass and dirt parking area. Though it strongly recalls the ranch’s agricultural history, it was constructed well after the period of significance.

Resource 7: Non-Historic Trailer House (noncontributing)

A metal single-wide trailer house measuring about 12 x 55 feet is located about 175 feet south-southeast of the house, near where the dirt driveway branches to become a circular turnaround. It has a public area with a living room, breakfast nook, and kitchen clustered at the front, or east side of the dwelling, and two bedrooms and a bath grouped at the rear, or west side of the trailer. Aluminum sliding windows punctuate the metal walls and give light to the bedrooms, bathroom, and living spaces. It features two aluminum doors, both on the south side of the elongated dwelling. One opens into the living area and one opens into the hall near the bedrooms at the rear of the building. It is set on a concrete block foundation. Flat dirt parking spots are located to either side of the trailer. The trailer house dates to about 1975, after the period of significance. It is therefore a noncontributing resource on the ranch.

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INVENTORY OF RESOURCES (see Map 5, page 24, for location of each resource)

Resource Number	Name	Date	Description	Status
1	Cotulla House	c. 1865 w/ multiple additions	Stone & stucco house	Contributing
2	Smoke House	c. 1880	Sandstone; windowless	Contributing
3	Cistern	c. 1890	Sandstone cylinder	Contributing
4	Carport	c. 1960	Rustic wood, metal	Noncontributing
5	Ranch Hand House	1940s	Frame; "ribbon" windows	Contributing
6	Stock Pond	1990s	Ovoid, 1000 square feet	Noncontributing
7	Non-historic Trailer	c. 1975	Single-wide, metal	Noncontributing

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Statement of Significance

The 5.89-acre Joseph and Mary Cotulla Ranch complex represents the foundation of the Cotulla family ranching empire that once covered more than 25,000 acres and supported more than 5,000 head of cattle in La Salle County, South Texas. He began leasing his ranch lands and constructed his home in around 1865¹ and was one of only a handful of Anglo ranchers residing in the county. At that time, the inhospitable territory was still home to Apaches as well as bands of outlaws, all of whom raided solitary ranch settlements with chilling frequency. His one-room, stone, side-gabled ranch shelter served as a fortification against potential attack. Defensive features included two foot thick walls and troñeras – openings for rifles – through which he and his workers might shoot marauders. Shortly after the main room was built, he added a shed-roofed kitchen, also made of stone, to the rear of the original building. Over time, he added rooms along the north side of the original one-room building for his growing family.

Because Cotulla's ranch house is the oldest known extant resource in La Salle County, it is significant under Criterion A for its associations with exploration and settlement as well as for its association with agriculture, namely cattle ranching, in South Texas. It is also significant as the headquarters of the "Town Ranch" and principal house of Joseph Cotulla, pioneer settler, stock raiser, town builder, and visionary. During his lifetime, Joseph Cotulla was the one of the leading citizens of Cotulla and his property, therefore, is eligible under Criterion B. Finally, the ranch is significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of a frontier fortress/dwelling which sheltered Cotulla in the early, dangerous years of ranching in the Wild Horse Desert and which, as it was enlarged, became home to his large family who carried on their father's ranching traditions in La Salle County. The Cotulla homestead is a rare architectural remnant of La Salle County's early frontier history and, as it grew, it represented the type of vernacular architecture that responded to necessity rather than design and sheltered the pioneer families who sought to make a life in a hostile region.

Narrative History

Joseph Cotulla was born in Poland on January 19, 1844, and died on July 17, 1923. Little is known about his youth. His father died when Cotulla was young. The remaining family members feared that young Joseph would be drafted into the Prussian Army and their local church sponsored the young man's emmigration to America. An aunt, Mrs. Josephine Schwartz, had already come to Panna Maria, a Polish settlement in nearby Karnes County, Texas, in 1854. The Cotullas endeavored to send their son to join his aunt in America to avoid conscription when he came of age. Accompanied by his widowed mother, young Joseph Cotulla sailed to the port of Galveston and arrived on January 6, 1857.²

He may have fled conscription in Europe but after the Civil War broke out, young Cotulla enlisted in the Union Army in 1863. Germans and Poles alike abhorred slavery and this may have influenced his decision to join the Union and enlist with six friends in the 1st Texas Cavalry (USA). Toward the end of the war, Cotulla also served in Butler's Army of Occupation in Louisiana from 1864 to 1865.³

¹ Some sources state that Cotulla bought his land in 1874 and others claim he didn't buy it until 1877 (Texas Historical Commission).

² Ludeman, 1975: 151; Bill Cotulla correspondence August 22, 2013.

³ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2012.

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After the war, Cotulla landed a job working as a cowhand on Simon Reider's ranch in Atascosa County, Texas. Reider was a native of Switzerland who had settled near Pleasanton, Atascosa County, in South Central Texas. He lived in a region settled by other immigrants including Swiss, Prussian, and Polish settlers and owned a stock ranch in the area. Cotulla had already shown his penchant for ranching, having registered a cattle brand, the JF, in 1863.⁴ Soon, however, Cotulla made his way to La Salle County, in South Texas. He leased a ranch from the Maverick brothers and began building a cattle operation on the land. To protect himself from the elements, Apaches, and bands of outlaws who roamed across the newly designated county, he built a shelter near the Nueces River. It was a one-room side-gabled house with two foot stone walls and *troneras*, or gun ports, to be able to shoot at adversaries from the relative safety of the little house. After a few years, he added a shed-roofed stone kitchen onto the rear of the original shelter.

During these years, Cotulla continued to work with and for Simon Reider near Pleasanton, in Atascosa County. He was counted in both the 1870 and 1880 population censuses as a resident of Atascosa County, living with Reider but employed as an independent stock raiser. The 1880 agricultural census, however, indicates that he was living in La Salle County where he owned a "farm" valued at \$10,000, a considerable amount of money compared with other ranchers in the vicinity at the time.⁵ From these differing census records, it appears that Cotulla divided his time between Atascosa County and his ranch in La Salle County. Family members confirm that Cotulla spent part of his time in Atascosa County and the rest in La Salle County until the early 1880s.⁶

One of the attractions that kept Cotulla's attention in Atascosa County may have been Reider's daughter, Mary, who was 17 years old in 1870. Twenty-five year old Joseph Cotulla was listed as a member of the household, though it wouldn't be until the following year that he solidified his relationship with the Reider family by marrying their daughter.⁷ It is a testament to the good relationship held between Reider and Cotulla that the couple remained in Mary's girlhood home after they wed. In fact, the first four Cotulla children were born under Simon Reider's roof.⁸ This is at least partly due to the fact that Cotulla had begun ranching further south, in present La Salle County, a notoriously dangerous territory. Joseph Cotulla traveled back and forth from Reider's home to his stake near present Cotulla for a decade before bringing his wife and children to the Wild Horse Desert.

During his time with Reider, Cotulla drove five herds of their combined cattle to market in Kansas, thus lending his skills to one of the great iconic events of Western lore, braving heat, cold, dust storms, high water, loneliness, and cattle thieves. It is nothing short of amazing that Cotulla returned unscathed each time to South Texas. His successful cattle sales may have allowed him to finally buy the land he had leased from the Mavericks since 1865. The bargain was made in 1877 but Cotulla had already made substantial improvements on the property. The following year, he was taxed on one horse, one mule, and 230 hogs. No mention of cattle was made in the tax records and he may have recently disposed of them in one of his cattle drives. He likely had some sheep and goats that were not enumerated by the tax collector. According to *La Salle County: South Texas Brush Country* Cotulla was the first to grow crops in the county, though the crops were not identified.⁹

⁴ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Agricultural Census, 1870, 1880.

⁶ Cotulla personal communication, August 23, 2013.

⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1870 (Kotulla).

⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1880.

⁹ Ludeman, 1975: 152.

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Over the next few years, Cotulla accumulated considerable wealth in horses, cattle, and land. According to the 1880 Agricultural Census, Cotulla owned 12,000 acres of meadow land and \$5,000 worth of livestock, considerable sums when compared with others in the county. At \$10,000, his “farm” was worth more than any other in his vicinity. Furthermore, he appeared to be the only one who was experimenting with crop production in the county. In 1880, Cotulla had 60 acres in tilled land, though his crops were not identified.¹⁰

Cotulla continued to buy range land and develop his stock business until he owned more than 25,000 acres in La Salle County. All the while, his wife and children lived with his father-in-law near Pleasanton. In the early 1880s, Cotulla learned news that would change his and his family’s lives. Word came down to South Texas that the International and Great Northern (I & GN) Railroad Company planned to run a railroad line through the region. To increase the value of his land and business ventures, Cotulla offered the company 120 acres out of his ranch for a townsite in exchange for building the track through his property.¹¹ The railroad took the deal – receiving $\frac{3}{4}$ of the town with Cotulla retaining $\frac{1}{4}$ of it – and the town of Cotulla was platted around a makeshift depot on Front Street.¹² When the first train steamed into the empty townsite in 1882, Mary Cotulla and her four children, Caroline, Edward, Louisa, and Simon, a toddler of two, were all aboard.¹³ The Cotullas must have felt it was finally safe enough to bring the family to the Nueces Strip. Ultimately, the couple had five sons and four daughters, all of whom lived to adulthood and lived on the ranch.¹⁴ Mary’s father, Simon Reider, also lived with the family on the ranch. He became active in the Presbyterian Church in Cotulla and died in 1895.¹⁵

Platting the townsite and bringing the railroad to within a mile of his ranch enriched Cotulla’s coffers considerably. Tax records in 1881 show that he owned 45 horses, 300 head of cattle, and 25 hogs. Two years later, he had doubled the number of both horses and cattle. More importantly, he owned 62 town lots, seven blocks, and more than 10,000 acres of land that raised his total worth to nearly \$32,415. He opened a lumber company valued at \$12,000 in 1883. By 1884, his property alone was worth \$54,812.¹⁶ By any stretch of the imagination, Joseph Cotulla was a wealthy man in La Salle County.

This 5.89-acre homestead tract was the headquarters of Cotulla’s now extensive cattle ranch. Cotulla added rooms – primarily bedrooms – onto the two-room building as his family grew. The first addition had been a shed-roofed kitchen on the rear of the original house. Later, he added bedrooms to the side of the two-room house in a linear fashion without benefit of hallways or antechambers. Shed-roofed additions grew off the rear of the bedrooms. Finally, the family added a full-façade porch across the entire length of the long, linear plan house. At one time, a front-gabled wing was added to the end of the house but it has since been demolished. By the time the house was “finished,” about 1910, it looked like a long, one-story, side-gabled volume with a lower, attached shed-roofed wing across the rear and the full-façade shed-roofed veranda stretching across the

¹⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Agricultural Schedule, 1880.

¹¹ John Leffler, “COTULLA, TX,” *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hgc16>), accessed November 13, 2011. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

¹² Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

¹³ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

¹⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1900.

¹⁵ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

¹⁶ Ludeman, 1975: 152.

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front of the house. The porch was screened as early as the 1920s and its tongue-in-groove floor was replaced with concrete in 1965.¹⁷

The main part of the house, the first addition, and the smokehouse were built with local stone found scattered about the landscape near the Nueces River. The stone that built the old house, kitchen, and first bedroom addition was stacked in random courses and bound by mortar made of ashes and goat's milk.¹⁸ One of the first accessory buildings on the home ranch was a substantial smokehouse which lies directly behind the house. It is similar in size and construction to the great smokehouses of German settlements in Fredericksburg and New Braunfels with stone walls and a gabled roof. Like the original house and first addition, the smokehouse was built of stacked stone built in random courses. The smokehouse partially collapsed and was later rebuilt using some quarried sandstone with dressed corners.

As time passed, the railroad brought milled lumber and subsequent additions were of frame construction and wood siding. They followed the floor plan and roof pitch form of the original rooms. Each new addition received a coat of stucco to match the others. Other resources on the site included a stone cistern, a frame privy, a potato shed, various animal barns, a carriage house, and storage sheds. Only the cistern survives of these early resources. It may have been built as early as the 1880s when Mary and the children came to the ranch.

By 1900, most of the Cotulla family still lived at the homestead. Joseph and Mary's children were as industrious as their parents. According to the 1900 census, Caroline, the oldest of the nine children, was the town postmistress and Louisa assisted her in those duties. She had her own house in Cotulla and her brother Edward and his family lived with her. Edward was a bookkeeper, Simon was a confectioner, Joseph Jr. worked as a farm laborer, and William, the youngest child, a beekeeper.¹⁹ In addition to their large cattle ranching operation, the family kept goats, dairy cows and chickens on the "Town" ranch.²⁰

Joseph Cotulla Sr, at age 56, had no job listed but he was almost certainly involved in the ranching and farming operations. Also at the family compound were Emetrio Gomez, Felipe Rodriguez, and Cesario Lopez, all field hands on the Cotulla Ranch.²¹ Ranch hands and their families generally lived at the ranch year round. They had small houses at various work stations on the property.²² A decade later, Joseph Sr., Joseph Jr. and William Cotulla were all listed as stock raisers. Caroline continued as the Cotulla postmistress.²³

Cattle ranching and goat herding drove the county's economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but wild mustangs contributed to the mix, as well. In 1905, the U.S. Army engaged in the largest wild mustang round-up in history, staged in La Salle County between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande. Some of the soldiers reportedly stayed at the Cotulla Ranch down by the Nueces River during that expedition.²⁴ The animals were sold to the Argentine army.

¹⁷ Bill Cotulla, interview February 16, 2013.

¹⁸ Bill Cotulla, interview February 16, 2013.

¹⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1900.

²⁰ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

²¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1900.

²² Cotulla, personal communication August 23, 2013.

²³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1910.

²⁴ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

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Ranching reigned supreme in La Salle County and little farming was done until Joseph Cotulla successfully drilled a deep 2,200 foot artesian well on his property in 1910. The steam-powered pump provided sufficient water for his entire household, his livestock, and crop irrigation. Although Cotulla had grown crops as early as 1880, the artesian well allowed him to expand his farming operation to include cotton. According to some sources, he was the first in the county to do so. Soon afterward, other farmers and ranchers began to follow suit and crop raising became a viable occupation in the county. The use of artesian wells bringing fresh water to the desert was nothing short of miraculous. Many residents took up cotton farming and at one time, Cotulla boasted three cotton gins.²⁵ A comparison of the 1910 and the 1920 census records for La Salle County show a spectacular shift in occupations from ranching to farming. Joseph Sr., Joseph Jr. and William Cotulla were right at the forefront of those who now listed their occupations as farmers rather than ranchers.²⁶

In the early 1900s, the Cotullas were a successful ranching family with several large ranches beside the “Town” ranch. In fact, Joseph Cotulla accumulated more than 30,000 acres of land in La Salle, Dimmitt, and Webb County during his lifetime. In addition, they owned a house in Mexico City which was a shipping point for much of the Cotulla cattle.²⁷

As founders of Cotulla, the family also took an interest in the town and county they helped create. Joseph Sr. served at least six terms as a La Salle County Commissioner.²⁸ He also served as one of the first schools trustees when the first school house opened in Cotulla in 1885.²⁹ In addition, Cotulla donated the land for the town’s main cemetery, Cotulla Cemetery. The earliest grave is dated 1882 and numerous stones dating to 1886 show the effect of a smallpox outbreak in the community. Joseph Cotulla himself came to rest in this, his own cemetery.³⁰

When all their endeavors seemed fruitful, sorrow gripped the Cotulla family when mother Mary died of a heart attack while traveling by train from Mexico to Cotulla in 1905. Although several of the children had left home to strike out on their own, most moved back to help their father with his domestic and ranching chores; according to the 1910 census, six of the Cotulla children lived at home on the ranch. Though she had her own home and occupation in Cotulla, Caroline followed suit and moved back home. She continued to serve the community as the town postmistress, however. Louisa assisted her in her duties. Cotulla’s sons, Joseph and William, continued in their father’s footsteps as stock raisers.³¹

The 1910s and 1920s were prosperous decades for farming and land development in La Salle County and many families who were able to irrigate changed from being listed as “stock raisers” in the census to “farmers.” Joseph Cotulla, the patriarch, was shown as a farmer, as were his sons, Joseph and William. By the 1920

²⁵ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

²⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1920.

²⁷ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

²⁸ J. Marion Hunter, *The Trail Drivers of Texas*.

²⁹ Texas Historical Commission, Subject Marker, Cotulla School.

³⁰ Texas Historical Commission, Subject Marker, Cotulla Cemetery, 1981.

³¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1910.

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census, daughters Louisa, Mary, and Emma still lived at home, as did Joseph Jr.; William owned his own farm and Simon lived in Cotulla and gave his occupation as butcher.³²

Joseph Cotulla died in 1923 and left 22,000 acres of land in Dimmitt and Webb counties to his sons in a life estate. The 2,300-acre Town Ranch (Cotulla Ranch) was left to his daughters. Three of his daughters, Louisa, Mary, and Emma continued to live in the house. Louisa was listed as head of the household with her occupation as “farmer” in the 1930 census.³³

One of the last resources added to the ranch compound was a small, frame cottage added behind the house after World War II. Previously, a goat herder’s shack lay near the smokehouse but it burned down soon after the war. The Cotullas replaced it with a small frame house used to shelter Japanese families who were interned at Chrystal City during the war. It was moved to the site in 1945. Although the military designed it as “semi-permanent” construction intended to last only five years, the little house remains in fairly good condition today. It lies next to the smokehouse and contributes to the site as a shelter for ranch hands, a not uncommon use after the war when internment and POW camps were closed across the country and “excess” buildings were offered to nearby families. A historic goat herder’s shack in the vicinity of the headquarters was torn down.

Over the years, the Cotulla children succumbed to illness and passed away. The last of the children were Mary and Simon, who both died in 1962. Since that time, residents of La Salle County have found it more and more difficult to make a living from ranching. Some kept dairy cows while others raised chickens. Still others left agriculture altogether. Today the Cotulla Ranch is one of fewer than ten traditional family ranches still in operation in La Salle County.³⁴ Great-grandson Bill Cotulla lives on the old ranch complex with a section – 640 acres – of land still dedicated to cattle ranching. Joseph Cotulla’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren continue the family’s ranching heritage in La Salle, Dimmitt, and Webb counties.

Conclusion

Joseph Cotulla’s legacy in La Salle County and the town of Cotulla is undisputed. The Polish immigrant was a pioneer settler in the sparsely inhabited region who ultimately accumulated more than 30,000 acres of land in La Salle, Dimmitt, and Webb counties. On the home ranch he ran about 2,500 head of cattle at the height of its operation. He brought the railroad through his property and lent his name to the county seat. His successful ranching ventures, aided by the presence of the railroad, attracted hundreds of new residents to the county in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A businessman as well as a stock raiser and farmer, Cotulla also owned a meat market and confectionary store in town and his children contributed to Cotulla’s workforce. In addition, Joseph Cotulla served as County Commissioner for his precinct for a number of years. Mary Cotulla undoubtedly assisted her husband in his ventures while not pre-occupied with her nine children. The Cotulla Ranch property, represented by the 5.89 Cotulla homestead tract, has been continuously occupied by five generations of Cotullas since Joseph Cotulla first leased (1865) and then purchased (1877) the land. It is significant under Criterion A for its association with exploration and settlement and frontier agriculture in La Salle County. It is also significant under Criterion B for its association with Joseph Cotulla, one of the first to settle and build a successful ranch in the Nueces Strip. He is further significant as the man who single-handedly brought the

³² U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1920.

³³ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule, 1930.

³⁴ Bill Cotulla, interview, February 16, 2013.

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

International and Great Northern Railroad through his land and founded the town of Cotulla, the La Salle County seat. Finally, the ranch is significant under Criterion C, for the Cotulla home, a remarkably intact frontier fortress and home dating to the earliest period of American habitation in La Salle County. Although it has received numerous additions to the side, the original one-room house is clearly evident, reading as a one-story, side-gabled, stucco-covered stone shelter with a shed-roofed stone kitchen addition to the rear. Cotulla's descendants opened a window-sized segment of the wall (covered in plexiglass) to expose the original random course stone construction to later generations and visitors. The Joseph and Mary Cotulla Ranch complex is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A, B, and C, all at the local level of significance.

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

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Interviews

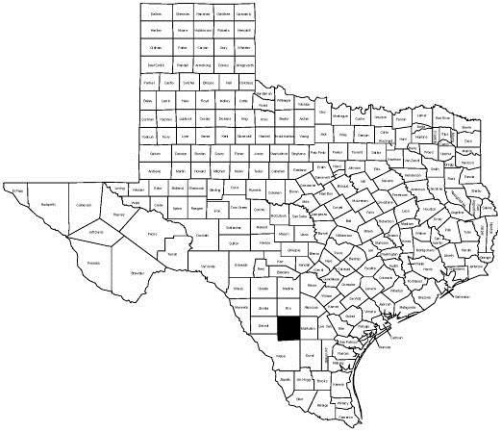
Barlow, Jim interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. February 16, 2012.
Barlow, Jim interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. October 5, 2011.
Cotulla, Bill interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla Ranch, La Salle County, Texas. October 6, 2011.
Cotulla, Bill interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla Ranch, La Salle County, Texas. February 16, 2012.
Keck, John interview with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. February 16, 2012.
Tyler, Ora May with Terri Myers. Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas. October 6, 2011.

Personal Communication

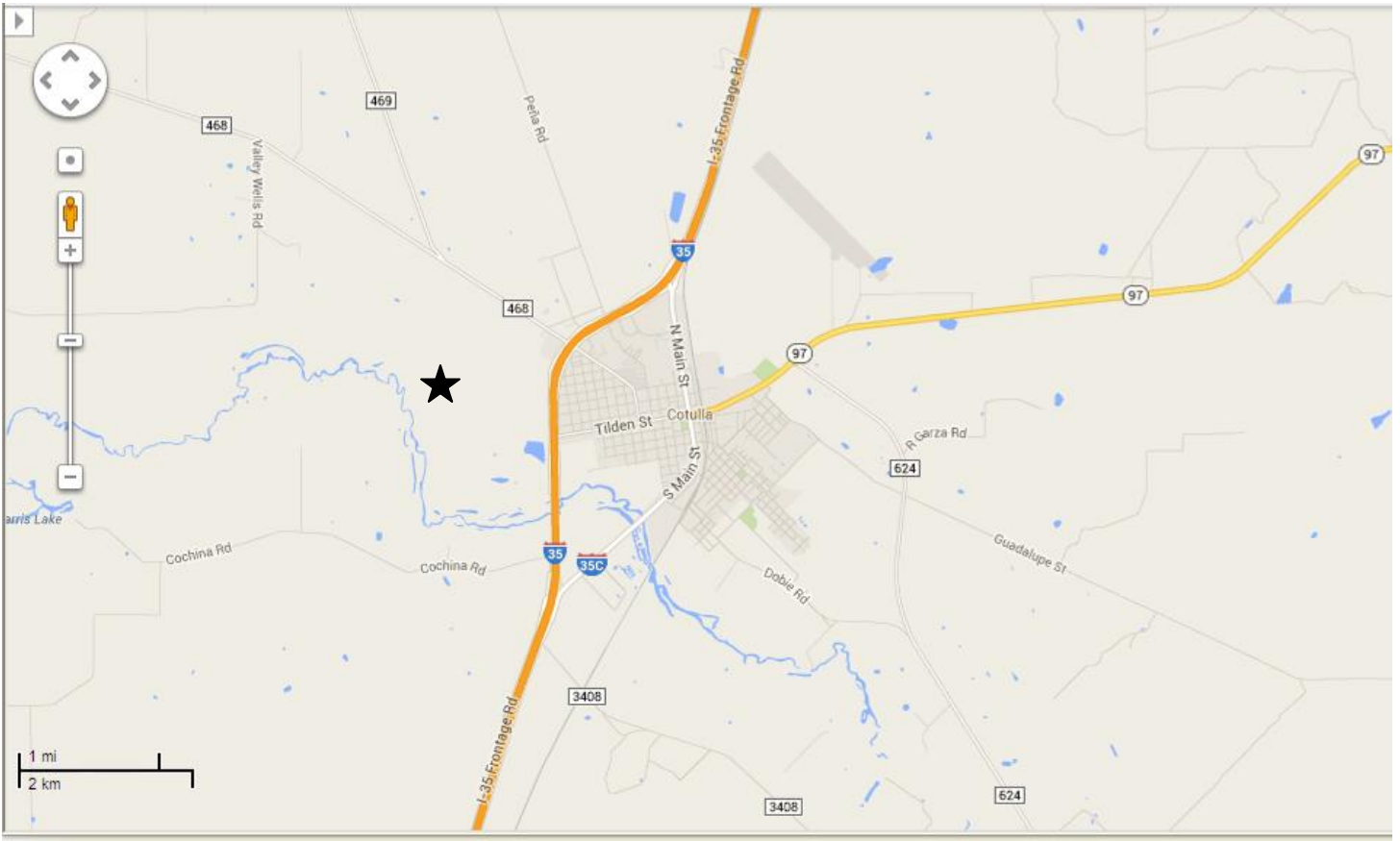
Cotulla, Bill conversation with Terri Myers. February 16, 2013 and August 23, 2013.

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Map 1: La Salle County (shaded) is located in south Texas.

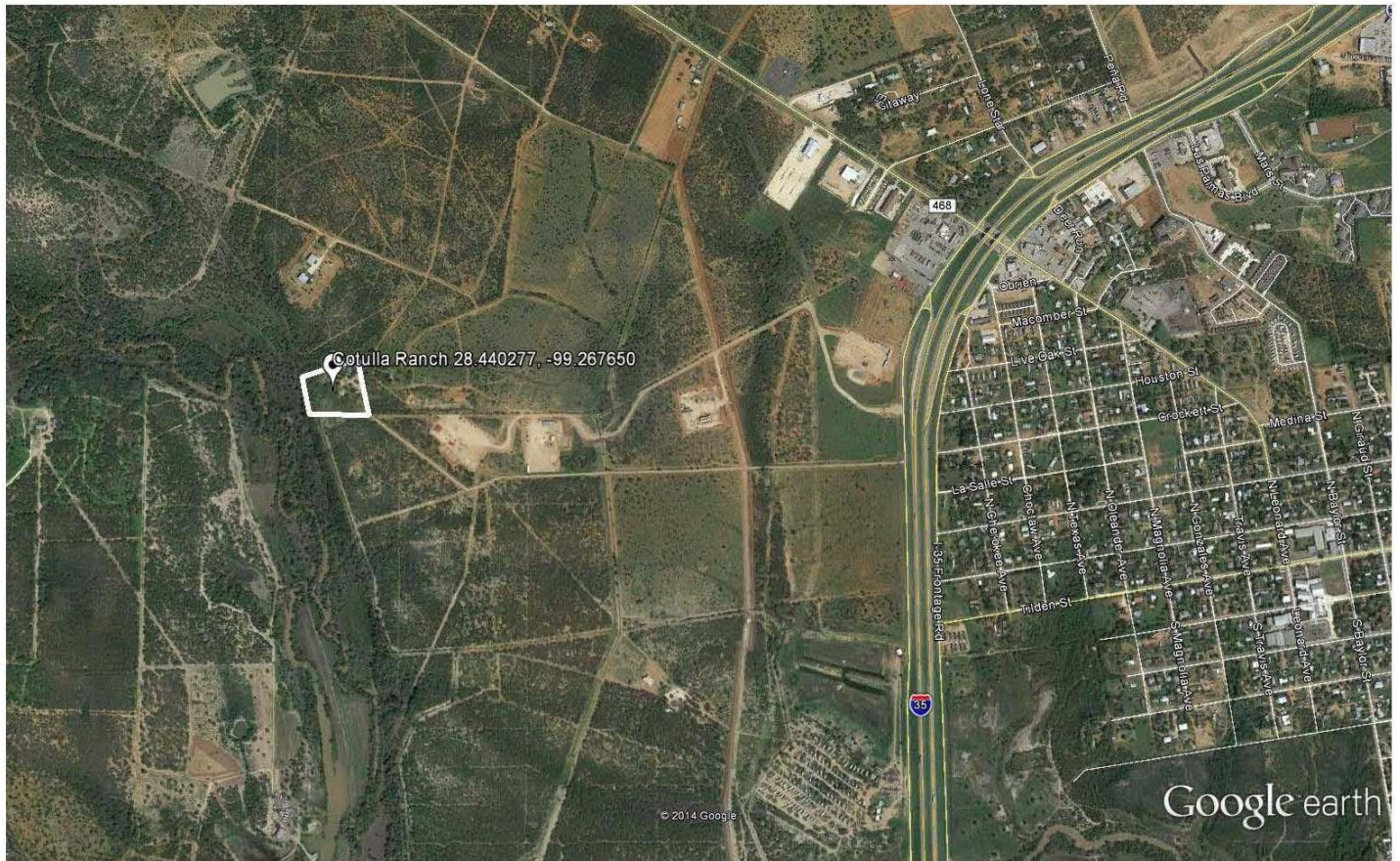


Map 2: The nominated property (starred) is located about 1 mile west of the town of Cotulla. Top edge of map is north.



Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Map 3: One-mile scaled Google Earth map depicting boundary and latitude and longitude coordinates for the nominated property.

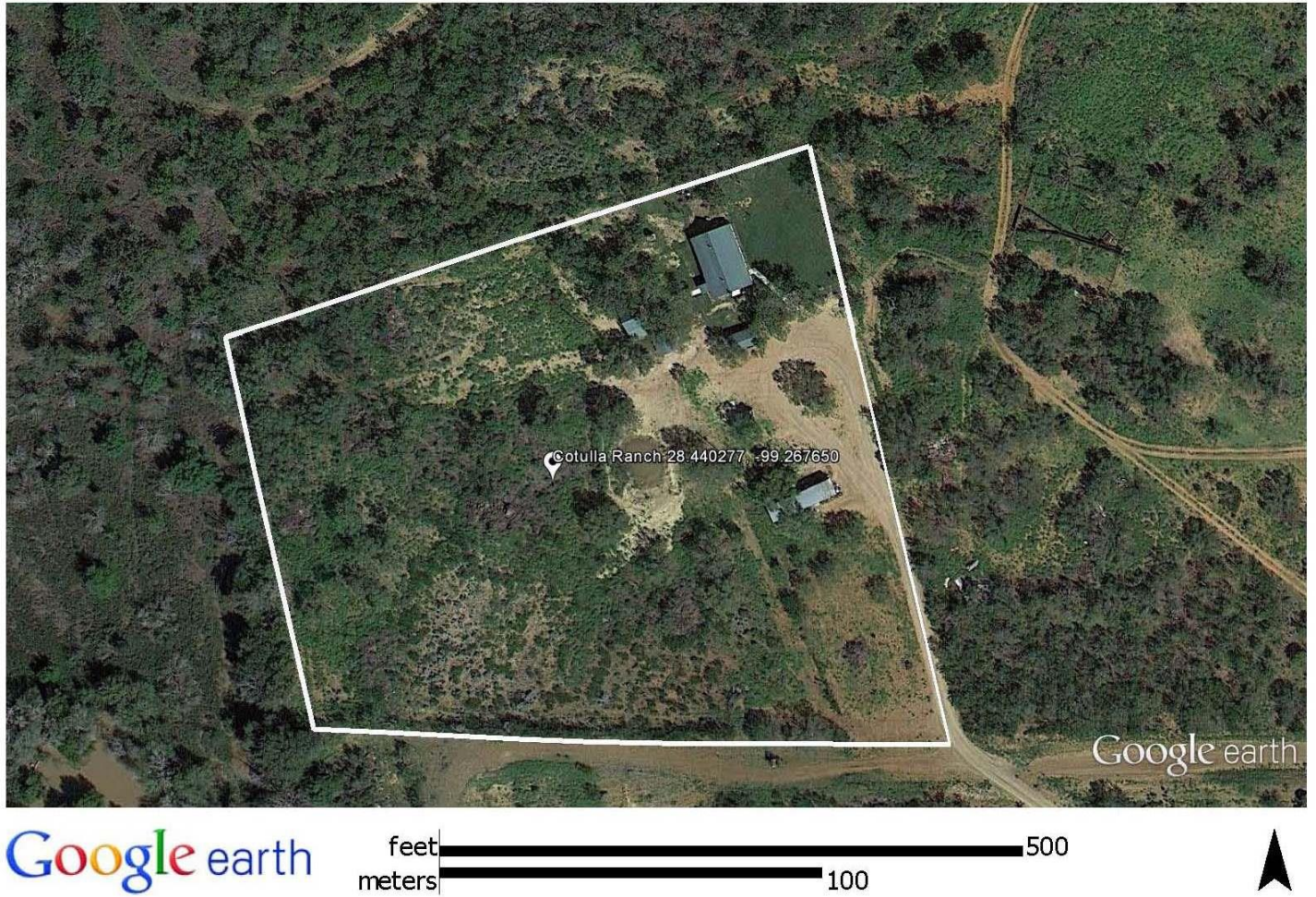


Google earth



Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Map 4: Scaled (to five hundred feet) Google Earth map depicting boundary and latitude and longitude coordinates for the nominated property.



Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

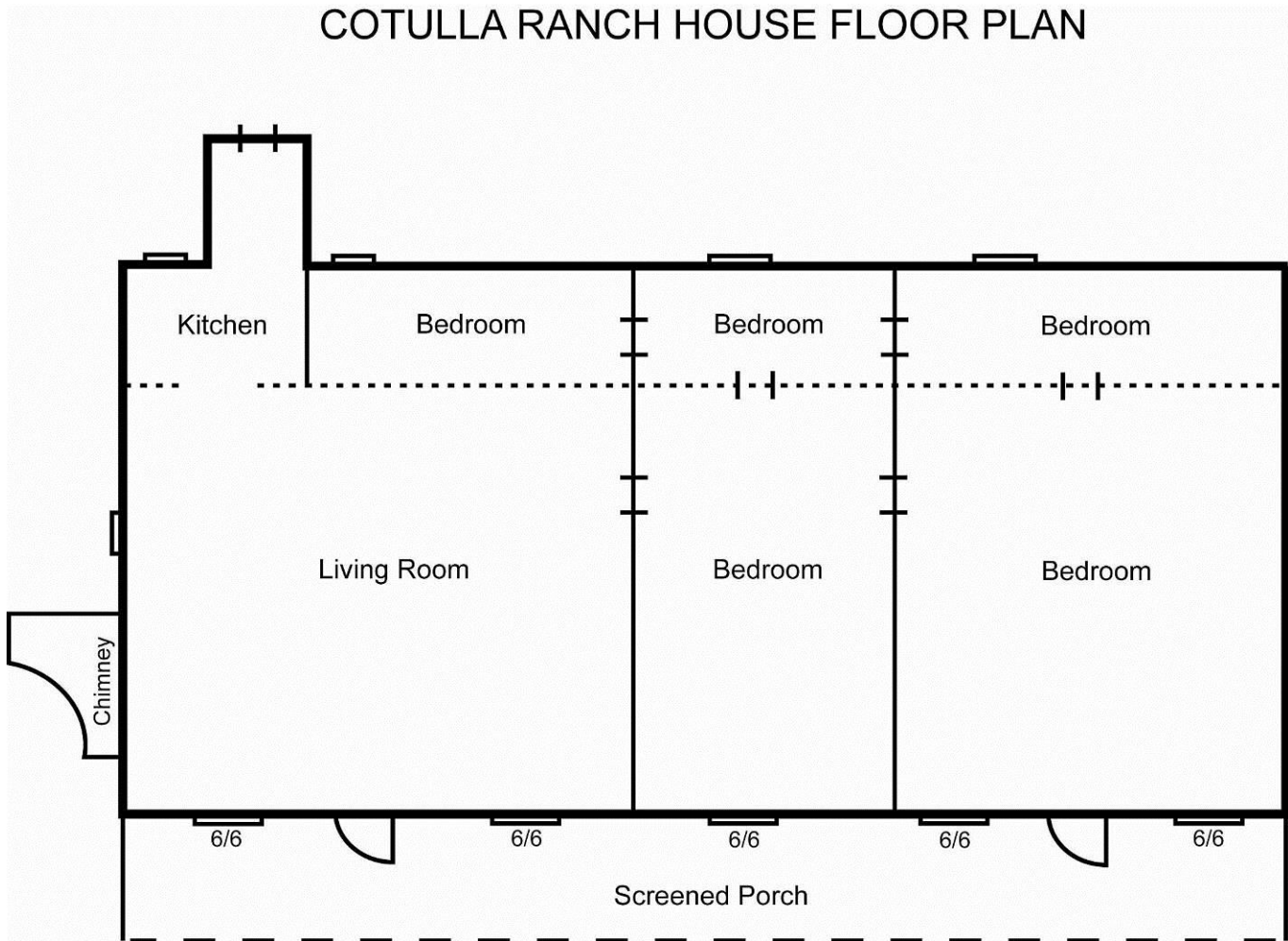
Map 5: Aerial photo depicting all resources. Base map using Microsoft Bing Maps. No scale.



Resource Number	Name	Date	Description	Status
1	Cotulla House	c. 1865 w/ multiple additions	Stone & stucco house	Contributing
2	Smoke House	c. 1880	Sandstone; windowless	Contributing
3	Cistern	c. 1890	Sandstone cylinder	Contributing
4	Carport	c. 1960	Rustic wood, metal	Noncontributing
5	Ranch Hand House	1940s	Frame; "ribbon" windows	Contributing
6	Stock Pond	1990s	Ovoid, 1000 square feet	Noncontributing
7	Non-historic Trailer	c. 1975	Single-wide, metal	Noncontributing

Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Figure 1: Floor plan of the main house (Resource 1, contributing). No scale. Right edge is north.



Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Figure 2: Young Joseph Cotulla Starting Career as a Cowboy, ca. 1865-1870.

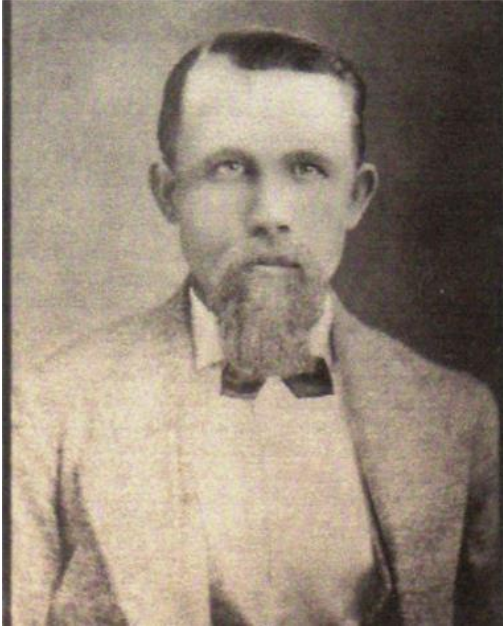


Figure 3: Joseph Cotulla, County Commissioner, ca. 1900.



Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Figure 4: Cotulla Family at Ranch House ca. 1900.



Figure 5: Caroline Cotulla in the yard, ca. 1910.

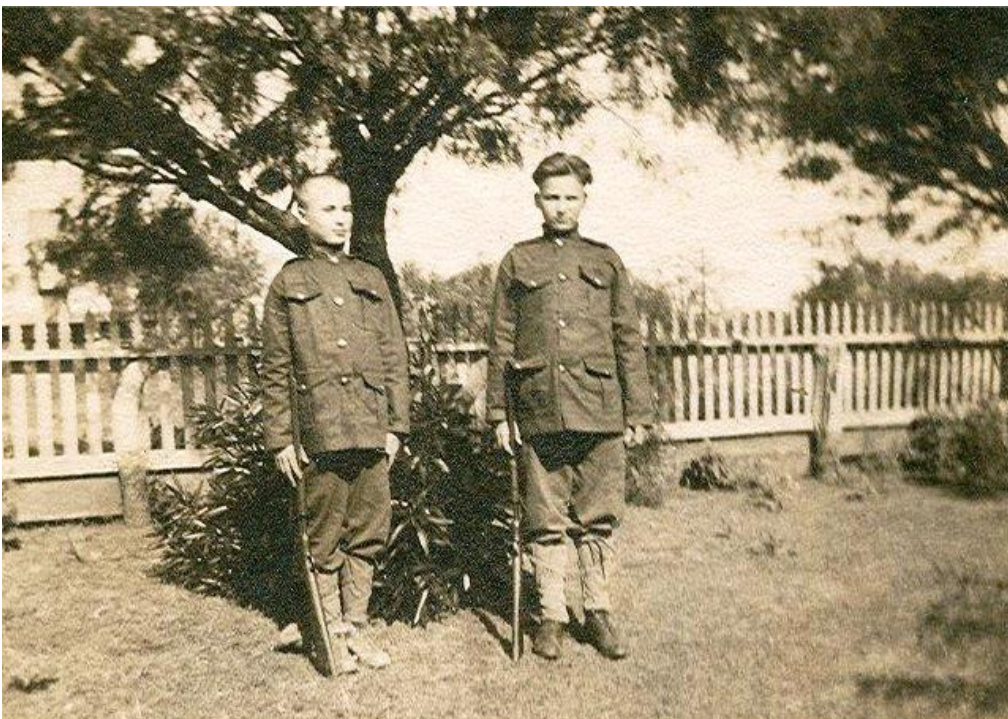


Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Figure 6: Paul and Roy in the potato shed, ca. 1905.

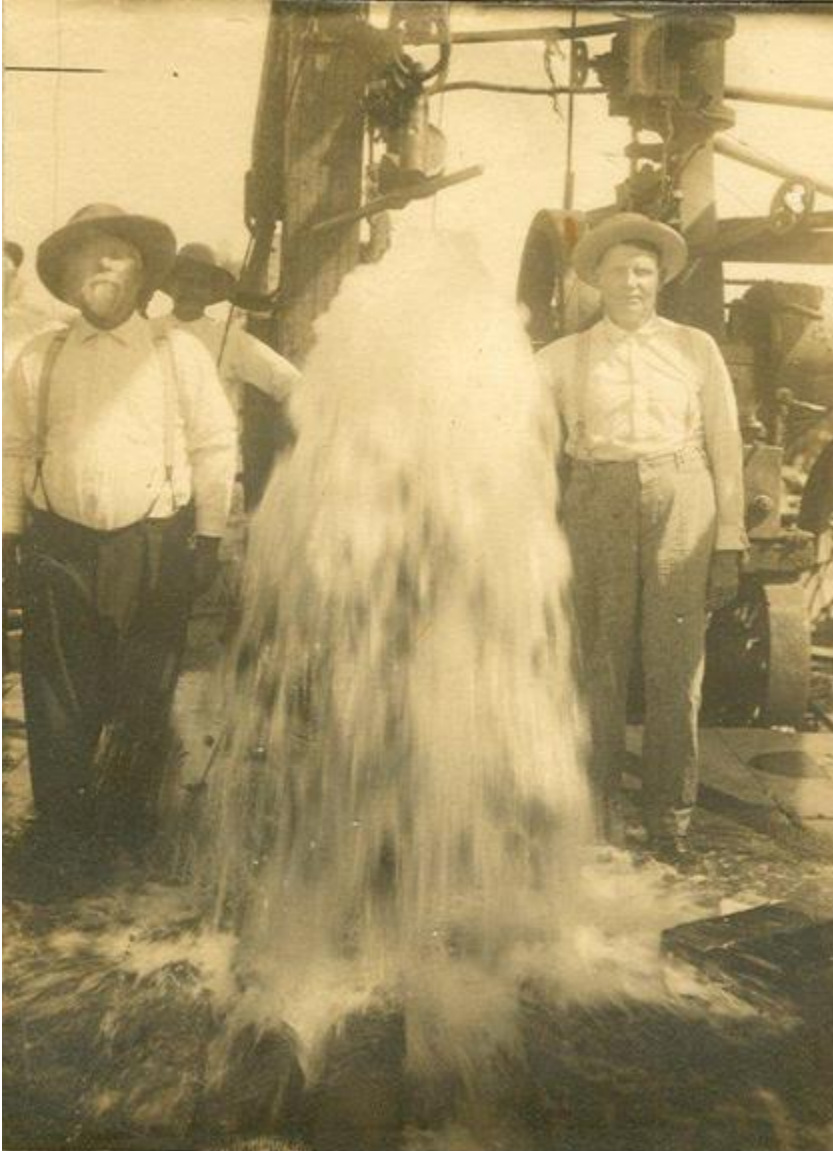


Figure 7: Paul and Roy in the yard, ca. 1915.



Cotulla Ranch, Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas

Figure 8: Joseph Cotulla (left) brings in the first water well, 1910.

















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Cotulla Ranch
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, La Salle

DATE RECEIVED: 5/06/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/29/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/13/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/22/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000342

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 6.13.14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories



TO: Edson Beall
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20005

FROM: Carlyn Hammons
Texas Historical Commission

RE: New Submission, National Register Nomination
Cotulla Ranch, La Salle County, TX

DATE: April 24, 2014

The following materials are submitted:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form and electronic locational data (in .kmz format) on CD. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the <u>Cotulla Ranch</u> to the National Register of Historic Places. <i>ash</i>
	Resubmitted nomination.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original NRHP signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.
	Multiple Property Documentation form on disk.
	Resubmitted form.
	Original MPDF signature page signed by the Texas SHPO.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CD with seven (7) TIFF photograph files.
	Correspondence

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

