

ABSTRACT

The Material Culture of the Polley Mansion, Whitehall:
Vernacular Architecture, Decorative Arts, and Domestic Arts

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The Polley Mansion, with its massive walls, generous proportions, and wide double galleries, is described in *Texas Homes of the 19th Century* as “one of the most important plantation homes in early Texas.” In fact, the Polley Mansion, constructed with native sandstone, is the only stone antebellum plantation house still surviving in Texas. The preservation of the house and the Polley family papers provide a unique record of details about the construction, furnishing, and management of the house. This investigation into the material culture of the Polley Mansion—its vernacular architecture, decorative arts, and domestic arts—draws upon those archives and others to provide a detailed picture of the Polley Whitehall Mansion. Through letters, maps, receipts, photographs, historic records, and newspaper articles we meet the family, and learn how they stake

their claim, construct their house, furnish the rooms, keep their house, and make their home.

The Material Culture of the Polley Mansion, Whitehall: Vernacular Architecture,
Decorative Arts, and Domestic Arts

by

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A Thesis

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PREFACE

In 2013 a great-great-great-granddaughter of Joseph Henry Polley¹ described the Polley Whitehall Mansion:

The mansion is endangered now. She stands as if her back is broken, and her dress is torn. Her bonnet is ripped up and has holes in it. Her insides bleed and she is starving for some repair, but no one answers. Animals sleep under her roof because there are no longer any walls to close her up, it looks like a barn and a trash can but she stands as tall as she can. She guards the cemetery and watches the sunrise and the sunset . . . The barn fell a few years ago. The chimneys are cracked up, the mantles are gone, and the screen doors are off their hinges².

Goeth's description parallels my own introduction to the Polley Mansion, known as Whitehall. My husband's grandmother died in 2007 and we inherited her eighty-eight acres on the outskirts of Floresville in Wilson County, Texas. We began making the trek from Baylor University, where we worked and lived, to Floresville to begin our own process of restoration. One day we decided to take a different route home. Travelling down FM 539 past the small town of Sutherland Springs and over the bridge crossing Cibolo Creek, we drove past the house. I

¹ Melanie Goeth, author of *She Serenity*, is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Joseph Henry Polley. Her father, A. C. "Connie" Goeth, lived in the Polley Mansion for fourteen years, during the years his father, A. C. Goeth occupied the house (1922-46), while Judge C. A. Goeth was the owner of the house. In her "stream of consciousness" memoir reflecting on her stay in a mental institution, Goeth recalls glimpses of the Polley Whitehall Mansion in 2013 before it was purchased in late 2015 by Keith and Robin Muschalek who began the long process of clean-up and restoration.

² Melanie Goeth, *She Serenity* (Pittsburg: Dorrance Publishing, 2013), 14–15.

was immediately impressed by the strength of the stone structure and the obvious historic value of the building and the small log cabin that sat off to the side and behind it. I was also appalled by the apparent neglect and misuse of the structure ([Figure D.66](#), [Figure D.67](#), [Figure D.68](#)). Pieces of a tin roof lay in the yard, the paint was peeling, parts of the porch rail were missing, weeds and brush crowded in on the structure, broken-down cars and trucks littered the site, and debris and trash filled the yard. The dilapidated sign out front that read “Whitehall / Polley Mansion” seemed to stand in mockery of the place. I remember thinking how tragic the house looked sitting on the knoll overlooking the pastures that led down to Cibolo Creek, and hoping that someone would rescue the house and restore it to what must have been its former glory.

The process of restoration at our own home place continued as we cleaned out closets, pulled up giant ragweed, cut down invasive mulberry trees, and began to see the place coming into shape. In 2015 we began to see changes in the Polley Whitehall Mansion. First the trash was gone from the yard. Then the weed and brush were tamed. A new roof, a coat of paint, new rails on the porch, and the sign, no longer a mockery, but an intimation of things to come, was refurbished ([Figure D.69](#)).

Since then I have become friends with the new owners, Keith and Robin Muschalek, and taken upon myself the task of digging into archives, libraries,

museums, historical associations, and county courthouses, and sifting through boxes of letters, bills of sale, journals, deeds, wills, and photographs, to piece together the story of the house—meeting the family, staking the claim, constructing the building, furnishing the rooms, making home, and keeping house. This thesis is the product of that effort.

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I find myself indebted to a great many people for their assistance in this project. I would like to especially thank all the archivists and curators who have opened their collections to me and provided invaluable help and service including: the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA; the Daughters of the Texas Revolution Museum, San Antonio; the Texas Collection, Baylor University; the Texas Heritage Museum, Hillsboro, Texas; the Wilson County Courthouse, Floresville, Texas; the Guadalupe County Courthouse, Seguin, Texas; the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas; the Pearce Museum, Corsicana, Texas; the Brazoria County Historical Museum, West Columbia, Texas; the Wilson County Historical Commission, Floresville, Texas; the Texana/Genealogy Department at the San Antonio Library. A special appreciation goes to the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History for their patience in fulfilling all my many calls for documents and to the New England Historic Genealogical Society for their kindness in locating, scanning, and making available to me many documents and photographs from a distance. I would also like to thank Dr. Kenneth Hafertepe for his critical reading of this thesis and his patient instruction with respect to

material culture, vernacular architecture, and decorative arts over the last two years. Likewise, my thanks go to Dr. Richard McCaslin for opening the door to the Polley Mansion through all his previous research. I also appreciate the critical review of my work by the other members of my committee, Dr. Steven Sloan and Dr. Michael Parrish. I would also like to thank Robin and Keith Muschalek, who have opened their home to me and shared its stories. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Dr. Robert Creech, who has driven with me all over Wilson, Guadalupe, Bexar, and Kendall Counties, chasing down new “leads” and patiently, kindly, and critically proofreading this thesis. Thank you all for being a part of the story.

DEDICATION

To Keith and Robin, for saving the house

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This investigation of the material culture of the Polley Mansion—its vernacular architecture, decorative arts, and domestic arts—presents a unique opportunity. The Polley Mansion, with its massive walls, generous proportions, and wide double galleries, is described in *Texas Homes of the 19th Century* as “one of the most important plantation homes in early Texas.”¹ Harry Ransom points out in the Foreword to the book in 1966 that a “vivid awareness” of “ideas, values, assets, and deficiencies — mixed in a bewildering present which we struggle to understand and a past which we have come at last to cherish” can be found in the architectural history of Texas, which is rapidly disappearing.² The preservation of the Polley Mansion provides such a chance to broaden our awareness. Similarly, the preservation of the Polley Papers, thanks to the foresight of family members in the 1930s, gives an unusual glimpse into the way the building was constructed, a specific knowledge of the choices made to furnish the house, and an intimate understanding of the strategies that were

¹ Drury Blakeley Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the 19th Century*, 1st edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 238.

² Alexander and Webb, *Texas Homes of the 19th Century*, vii.

employed in the maintenance of the household, particularly through the domestic arts of Mary Bailey Polley. The character, fortitude, and resilience of the Polley family resonates, not only in their survival through the rigors of frontier life, but also through the endurance of their home, the preservation of the family's papers and records, and the continuance of their descendants.

Alexander writes:

This nineteenth-century Texas architecture is for the most part anonymous architecture, that is, architecture built by unknown builders. Few men in Texas were trained in the profession of architecture before 1900 . . . The character of Texas homes before 1900 is the result of the strong influence of the cultural origins of the builders—in most cases also the owners. As a result, the houses of this period reflect clearly the background, aims, and ambitions of the builders, as well as the limitations of the frontier environment.³

Meeting the family of Joseph H. Polley, observing them constructing the house, furnishing the rooms, keeping house, and making a home through a detailed look at the physical building and archival records of the house will help later generations become aware of how the Polleys lived, develop an appreciation for their struggles and accomplishments, and cherish their own Texas homes and culture.

³ Alexander and Webb, *Texas Homes of the 19th Century*, 3.

Antebellum Mansions in Texas

The Polley Mansion is one of the few surviving antebellum mansions in Texas. Antebellum mansions, characterized by the forms of Greek Revival, which lasted from the 1840s until 1870 in Texas, include: the Col. Elijah Sterling Clack Robertson plantation house in Salado, Texas, built in 1852; the Freeman plantation house in Jefferson, Texas, completed in 1850; the Hatfield plantation house in Brenham, Texas, built in 1853; the Liendo plantation house in Waller County, Texas, built in 1853; Mimosa Hall in Leigh, Texas, built in 1844; Monte Verde in Rusk County, Texas, completed in 1857; the Varner-Hogg plantation house in West Columbia, Texas, built ca. 1835; and the William Garrett plantation house in San Augustine, Texas, built in 1861. Identification of the material with which the houses were constructed provides one method of organizing their study. Brick houses would have been more expensive to build and taken more labor to construct. Since importing materials was a difficult enterprise at that time in history, most of the houses were built of materials readily available in their local region— local woods, handmade bricks, and stone hewn close by.

Some of the houses were entirely of wooden construction. The Liendo plantation house near Hempstead, Texas, a wooden frame two-story Greek

Revival house, was built in 1853.⁴ Monte Verdi, begun in 1854, located in Rusk County was constructed of wood, pine and cypress, all native to the area.⁵ The William Garrett plantation house, a one and one half story frame house with a center hall and a recessed porch, extending along the length of the front of the house, was built in San Augustine in 1857. Timber was readily available in these areas of east Texas and the coastal plains.

One of the houses was built with a combination of wood and brick. The Freeman plantation house, a Greek Revival house, was influenced by the Louisiana raised cottage style with a one-story clapboard frame above a brick basement. The building was constructed with slave labor and made of brick produced and lumber cut on the property.⁶

⁴ Historic American Buildings Survey, "Liendo, Farm Road 1488 & Wyatt Chapel Road Vicinity, Hempstead, Waller County, TX," still image, accessed September 21, 2018, [//www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0231/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0231/).

⁵ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Monte Verdi Plantation," accessed September 21, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000104.pdf>.

⁶ Historic American Buildings Survey, "Williamson M. Freeman House, Route 49, Jefferson, Marion County, TX," accessed September 21, 2018, [//www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0485/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0485/).

At least one of the houses was a combination of wood and stone. The Elijah Sterling Clack Robertson plantation house, 1856-60, was constructed of cypress wood and stone⁷, both resources indigenous to the area around Salado.

Some of the houses were entirely brick. The Mimosa Hall, a two-story brick house, was built in 1844. It is the earliest example of brick architecture in Harrison County.⁸ The Varner-Hogg plantation house was built in Brazoria County in 1835. Photographs taken prior to remodeling in 1920 reveal that “the main plantation house faced Varner Creek to the northeast. The house was brick and plaster with a two-story central hall plan and two rooms per floor.”⁹ The Polleys’ first Whitehall house was also built in Brazoria just a few years later. Like the later Whitehall on the Cibolo, both houses resemble the Varner-Hogg plantation house with their central hall plan, two-story galleries on both stories, and their orientation toward a river or creek. According to the nomination form for the National Register for Historic Places, Columbus R. Patton was probably

⁷ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Colonel Elijah Sterling Clack Robinson Plantation,” accessed September 21, 2018, <https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/NR/pdfs/83003084/83003084.pdf>.

⁸ “Mimosa Hall | Resources by Index Name | Harrison County Historic Sites Survey | Harrison County | Regional Resources Map for East Texas History | Center for Regional Heritage Research | SFASU,” accessed September 21, 2018, <http://www.sfasu.edu/heritagecenter/4992.asp>.

⁹ United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Varner-Hogg Plantation,” accessed September 14, 2018, <https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/NR/pdfs/80004082/80004082.pdf>.

the builder of the first house. It is likely that his brother, William Hester Patton, was acquainted with Joseph H. Polley, both being from Brazoria and fighting in the Texas Revolution. Polley's partner, Samuel Chance, served in Patton's Columbia Company in the Revolution.¹⁰ An early image of the Patton house in the 1880s shows a striking resemblance to the Polley Mansion ([Figure D.79](#)).¹¹

The Polley Mansion, however, constructed with native sandstone, is the furthest west, and is the only stone antebellum plantation house still surviving in Texas.¹²

The Name

The Polleys' house on the Cibolo has been called by several names—Polley Mansion, Whitehall, the Polley Whitehall Mansion, Polley's on the Cibolo—sometimes causing confusion and making it difficult to find agreement on a definitive nomenclature.

¹⁰ "Chance, Samuel," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed 12 June 2010, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fch13>.

¹¹ "Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site | West Columbia, Texas | Texas Historical Commission | Columbus Patton and the Enslaved People of Patton Place," accessed September 21, 2018. <http://www.thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/varner-hogg-plantation-state-historic-site/history/columbus-patton-and-enslaved>.

¹² The Neill-Cochran house in Austin is also constructed of stone, albeit limestone rubble. Another limestone house, called the "Bluebonnet House," is located outside Marble Falls. Preservation Texas describes the house as having been constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. At the present little is known about its history. The Venderveer and Dorbrandt families are associated with the house. There are no Historic American Building Survey photographs or drawings for this building.

The Polleys' home near Sutherland Springs and their home in Brazoria were both given the name Whitehall. Josephine Polley Golson claimed that the Brazoria home was called Whitehall-on-the-Brazos.¹³ The name honored Joseph's birthplace in Whitehall, New York, which was most likely named for the Palace of *Whitehall* at Westminster, Middlesex, the main residence of the English monarchs from 1530 until 1698. Whitehall, New York, was originally settled by Philip Skene, a British soldier, and called Skenesborough. After the Revolutionary War, the name was changed to Whitehall.¹⁴

The fact that the Polleys called their house in Brazoria "Whitehall" is evidenced by the existence of a cash book among the Polley Papers at the Briscoe Center for American History. The cashbook, from 1825-41, records transactions made by Joseph H. Polley during that time and is titled "Whitehall."¹⁵ As early as 10 November 1848, a letter from Emeline, the Polleys' newly-married daughter, was addressed to her mother, Mary Bailey Polley, at Cibolo Creek.¹⁶ However, no letters were addressed to Whitehall. Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge titled her

¹³ Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light: Saga of Brit Bailey and Other Hardy Pioneers*. (San Antonio: Naylor, 1950), 65.

¹⁴ Crisfield Johnson, *History of Washington Co., New York: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 473 ff.

¹⁵ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7641.

¹⁶ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7630.

watercolor of the house “Mr. Polley’s Plantation.”¹⁷ Joseph B. Polley referred to the house as Whitehall in a letter written to his sister Harriet Roxanna Polley, 5 December 1861, saying that he had heard that they had “quite a party at Whitehall.”¹⁸ He also referred to the home as “Whitehall” in a “Historical Reminiscences” article, 18 August 1906. Golson, in *Bailey’s Light*, also mentioned that the Polleys’ home was called Whitehall.¹⁹ In newspaper articles and magazines from the early twentieth century the house was variously referred to as Whitehall, Polley’s Mansion, the Polley Mansion, The Polley Whitehall Mansion, and the Whitehall Mansion.

The names on the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) drawings and photographs are similarly confusing. The HABS drawings are identified as “Polley Mansion.” However, the photographs are described as “Whitehall.” The current owners generally refer to the house as “the Polley Mansion.”

Slavery

Although this paper is not primarily about slavery, acknowledgement must be made that the construction and maintenance of the household

¹⁷ Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, *Views of Texas, 1852-1856: Watercolors by Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, Together with a Journal of Her Departure from Texas*, First Edition (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1988).

¹⁸ J. B. Polley’s Letters and Diaries, Texas Heritage Museum, Hillsboro, TX.

¹⁹ Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 65.

depended, to a large extent, on the slaves that Joseph H. Polley owned. The 1840 census indicates that Joseph Polley owned three slaves he acquired in New Orleans in 1836.²⁰ The Slave Schedule of the Census of 1850²¹, taken shortly after his move to the Cibolo, records that at that time he owned ten slaves, ranging in age from forty years to one year, and including three males, three females, one sixteen-year-old girl, and three male children. Ten years later, in 1860, at the height of his agricultural and ranching enterprises, Polley owned nineteen slaves, ranging in age from fifty years old to three years old, according to the Slave Schedule of the Census for that year.²² Records reveal that he still owned three male slaves and three female slaves and that they were ten years older than the slaves mentioned in the 1850 census. The children listed in the 1850 census were represented by children and teenagers also ten years older in the 1860 census. Additionally, there were nine children under the age of ten. It appears from the census records that Polley added no slaves, or perhaps only one female slave, to his household during the decade from 1850 to 1860. Nine children were added, probably born to slaves already belonging to Polley. After the Civil War, Polley

²⁰ Richard B. McCaslin, *Sutherland Springs, Texas: Saratoga on the Cibolo*, 1st Edition (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2017), 16.

²¹United States Bureau of the Census, Seventh Census, 1850, Texas, Schedule Two, Slave Population: Guadalupe County.

²² United States Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census, 1860, Texas, Schedule Two, Slave Population: Guadalupe County.

reported in his letter requesting pardon from President Andrew Johnson, written on 30 April 1866, that he did not trade in slaves. He only bought those he felt would suit him, and only sold them when those he bought failed to suit him. He reported that as soon after June 19th as the news reached him, he informed his twenty slaves that they were free, offered them liberal contracts to work for him for the remainder of the year, and that he had fulfilled his part of the contract to the letter.²³ Not to condone in any way the injustice of slavery, a simple interpretation of the data the censuses provide appears to demonstrate that the slave community associated with the Polleys was a somewhat stable and thriving group of people.

Historian Richard B. McCaslin also asserts that the slavery practiced at the Polley Mansion may have been a little different than traditional expectations. He writes that

Market agriculturalists in the antebellum community relied on slaves for labor, but perhaps not always in a way familiar to modern readers. Cato Morgan, who was owned by Polley, battled with Indians, carried weapons while herding cattle, and even traveled unescorted as far as San Antonio.²⁴

²³ "Case Files of Applications from Former Confederates for Presidential Pardons ('Amnesty Papers'), 1865-67 › Texas › P › Po › Polley, J H › Page 5," Fold3, accessed September 4, 2018, <https://www.fold3.com/image/24309961>.

²⁴ McCaslin, *Sutherland Springs, Texas*, 3.

Cato Morgan was often referred to as “Uncle Cato” by family members and even those visiting the Polley Mansion. R. M. Denney, having recently returned to St. Louis from a visit to the Polleys’ home, asked his hostess, Mary Polley, in a letter of 29 April 1857, to “Tell all the Darkies I have not forgotten them. Did Uncle Cato give Hattie that five cents?”²⁵

Joseph B. Polley’s “Historical Reminiscences,” published in the *Daily Express* of San Antonio from 1906 to 1911, records several stories about the slaves. In an article of 16 December 1906, he mentioned Matilda, Jim Bailey, and Cato Morgan by name and recounted stories about their performing deeds of valor in the face of danger.²⁶ In another article written on 18 August 1907, he named several of the grown male slaves in 1858: Burrell, Jim, Reuben, and Cato.²⁷ Joseph B. would have been eighteen years old at that time. In another story in the *Daily Express*, 24 March 1907, he described an amusing episode when he and a black youth named Albert²⁸ attempted to share a blanket during a cold night when

²⁵ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MS7634.

²⁶ *The Daily Express* (San Antonio) December 16, 1906, accessed from The Portal to Texas History.

²⁷ *The Daily Express* (San Antonio) August 18, 1907, accessed from The Portal to Texas History.

²⁸ In the article above Joseph B. reports that Albert is twenty years old in 1865. There is a fifteen-year-old slave listed on the slave census for 1860. Perhaps Albert is a freed slave who is still working for the Polleys. In the same article Polley talks about the Emancipation Proclamation.

they were out searching for a bunch of horses. Embedded social restraints and Albert's convention of wrapping the blanket around his head for warmth made the possibility of sleeping together problematic.²⁹ In still another article, 3 February 1907, Polley told an entertaining story about flirting with some lady visitors at the Polley Mansion. In the course of the story, he reported what was probably a rather common scene at the home. He mentioned his mother "going with a train of little darkies for vegetables for dinner."³⁰

Although Joseph H. Polley's views on slavery and the Civil War are not completely clear, he and his brother Jonathan often had disagreements about the topic. Joseph's letters are not available, but a copy of Jonathan's letter, 9 March 1861, reveals Jonathan's opposition to abolition, his regret about secession, his advocacy for fugitive slave laws and a constitutional amendment to recognize slaves as property, and his favoring lynching or hanging of abolitionists who come south to "tamper with the slaves."³¹ Another letter from Jonathan to his

²⁹ *The Daily Express* (San Antonio) March 24, 1907," accessed from The Portal to Texas History.

³⁰ *The Daily Express* (San Antonio) February 3, 1907," accessed from The Portal to Texas History.

³¹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7636.

brother, dated 3 May 1861, also discusses abolition.³² Joseph disagreed with his brother on some or all of these points.

It is not my intention to justify the actions of the Polleys with respect to slavery. Slavery is wrong. The family could have made other choices about how to manage their agricultural and ranching enterprises. However, it does seem that under the circumstances, and immersed in a culture that accepted and relied upon slavery, the Polleys treated their slaves with a measure of compassion.

Review of Previous Research

The Polley Whitehall Mansion is briefly mentioned in several works of Texas and southern history. *Early Texas Homes* briefly mentions the “Joseph H. Polley House: ‘Whitehall.’”³³ *Views of Texas, 1852-1856*, a catalog of an exhibit of Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge’s watercolors relating to Texas also contains a watercolor of the Polley Whitehall Mansion ([Figure D. 4](#)) and some description of the time she spent there in 1855–56 as a teacher for the Polley children.³⁴ *Alluring San Antonio Through the Eyes of an Artist* contains a drawing and a description of

³² Polley Papers, Letters: 1860 and undated. Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archives, San Antonio.

³³ Dorothy K. Bracken and Maurine W. Redway, *Early Texas Homes*, 1st edition (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1956), 24.

³⁴ Hardinge, *Views of Texas, 1852-1856*, 14–19, 56, 73–76.

the Polley Whitehall Mansion.³⁵ *Texas Homes of the 19th Century*, a joint project between the Amon Carter Museum and the University of Texas School of Architecture, has a photo of the Polley Whitehall Mansion and a description of the house.³⁶ *Wilson County, Diversified Farming Center of Southwest Texas* has a reference to the Polley Whitehall Mansion.³⁷

Several others books, although not mentioning the Polley Whitehall Mansion by name, give insight into the culture of the time. *With the Makers of San Antonio: Genealogies of the Early Latin, Anglo-American, and German Families with Occasional Biographies* discusses the construction of similar houses built at the time and mentions some of the Polleys' acquaintances. *Memoirs of Mary A. Maverick: Arranged by Mary A. Maverick and Her Son Geo. Madison Maverick* gives a detailed picture of life on the Cibolo.³⁸ Mary Maverick's niece married Dr. Gray Jones Houston, who was a neighbor of the Polleys. *The Material Culture of German*

³⁵ Lillie May Hagner, *Alluring San Antonio Through the Eyes of an Artist*, 1st Edition (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1940), 136–37.

³⁶ Alexander and Webb, *Texas Homes of the 19th Century*, 1966, 46, 238.

³⁷ C. L. Patterson, *Wilson County, Diversified Farming Center of Southwest Texas*. (Floresville, TX: Floresville Chronicle-Journal, 1939), 7, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006582951>.

³⁸ Mary Adams Maverick and George Madison Maverick, *Memoirs of Mary A. Maverick: Arranged by Mary A. Maverick and Her Son Geo. Madison Maverick* (San Antonio: Alamo Printing Company, 1921), 111f.

Texans gives insights into German houses with similar floor plans, built at the same time.³⁹

The Polley Whitehall Mansion is often mentioned in newspapers and periodicals of the early twentieth century, such as *The Frontier Times*, *The San Antonio Express*, *The Seguin Gazette*, and *The Floresville Chronicle*. The weekly columns, “Historical Reminiscences” written by Joseph B. Polley in the *Daily Express* (San Antonio) between the years 1906 and 1910 offer first-hand accounts of the Polley family and life at Whitehall.

Drawings of the kitchen can be found in *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*.⁴⁰ The drawings, along with most of the illustrations in Vlach’s book, are from the Historic American Buildings Survey. *Texas Log Buildings: A Folk Architecture* also contains a photograph and description of the log kitchen.⁴¹

Bailey’s Light: Saga of Brit Bailey and Other Hardy Pioneers is a memoir written by Joseph H. Polley’s granddaughter, Josephine Polley Golson.⁴² She

³⁹ Kenneth Hafertepe, *The Material Culture of German Texans* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2016), 155.

⁴⁰ John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, Second edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 50.

⁴¹ Terry G. Jordan, *Texas Log Buildings: A Folk Architecture*, Reprint edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), n.p.

⁴² Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 87–125.

recalled details about the mansion in the chapters, “The Polleys Move Near San Antonio,” “The Big House on the Cibolo,” “‘Ole Miss’ Still at Work,” and “Childhood Memories.”⁴³

The memoir of Joseph B. Polley, son of Joseph H. Polley, *A Soldier’s Letters to Charming Nellie*, is also an important work for understanding the historical context, although the book adds little to an understanding of the house itself.⁴⁴ McCaslin produced an edition of *A Soldier’s Letters to Charming Nellie* in 2008, one hundred years after Polley first published his book.⁴⁵ The extensive notes, introduction, and illustrations give unique insights into Polley’s exploits in the Civil War, his acquaintances, and the historical context of the letters.

By far, the most information available on the mansion is found in McCaslin’s later book, *Sutherland Springs, Texas: Saratoga on the Cibolo*. Although McCaslin includes many references to Polley⁴⁶ and his relation to the town of Sutherland Springs, his description of the house is limited to a small section

⁴³ This book is difficult to find, but it has been conveniently digitized by the University of North Texas and is available online at <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapht1013811/?q=87>.

⁴⁴ Joseph Benjamin Polley, *A Soldier’s Letters to Charming Nellie* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1908).

⁴⁵ Joseph Benjamin Polley, *A Soldier’s Letters to Charming Nellie*, ed. Richard B. McCaslin (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008).

⁴⁶ McCaslin explains that his book, *Sutherland Springs, Texas: Saratoga on the Cibolo* began as a research paper inspired by the Polley Whitehall Mansion, and that first monograph relied heavily on the family papers of Joseph H. Polley and John Sutherland Jr.

explaining the construction of the house.⁴⁷ The focus of his book is much broader, encompassing the entire history of the town of Sutherland Springs. However, in the introduction to that work, McCaslin mentions that his interest in writing the book on Sutherland Springs was inspired by seeing the Polley Whitehall Mansion on a geography field trip around the San Antonio area.⁴⁸ McCaslin has also written the entry on “Joseph Henry Polley” in the *Handbook of Texas*.

Of particular interest for this project would be an unlocated book, mentioned in the *New York Times*, 9 July 1911 (page 71), the *Daily Express* (San Antonio), 2 July 1911, and *Confederate Veteran*, vol. XIX, No. 2, 2 February 1911. The book is described as “*The History of Texas*, by Judge J. B. Polley, written in collaboration with Judge C. C. Cummings, fully illustrated, published by Neale Publishing Company, two large octavo volumes, \$5 net, the set, half morocco, \$10 net, the set; full morocco, \$20 net, the set.” The book has not been located in either the Library of Congress or the Texas State Library. Robert Krick, in his bibliography of Neale’s Publishing Company, points out that *Texas History*, by C. C. Cummings (no mention of Polley), although advertised several times, was possibly never published. The first volume was styled as “First Folks and First Facts of Texas” and the second as “First Folks and First Facts of Tarrant County.”

⁴⁷ McCaslin, *Sutherland Springs, Texas*, 35.

⁴⁸ McCaslin, *Sutherland Springs, Texas*, 6.

The books are described as two volumes “beautifully illustrated with pictures and portraits and contain many valuable charts, maps and diagrams.” The book’s listing in Publisher’s Trade List Annual supports the position that at least a few copies of the set were published.⁴⁹

Methodology

The paucity of secondary materials necessitated turning to primary sources as the main avenue for information relating to the vernacular architecture, decorative arts, and domestic arts of the Polley Whitehall Mansion. These primary resources included private archives, public repositories, libraries, museums, newspaper, historical societies, and personal interviews. The most valuable resource was the Polley Papers at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas. Mildred B. Garrett loaned the papers to University of Texas Library to be copied in 1931. Another note in the archive states that the papers were “copied from originals in possession of Mrs. Sarah Stark Baylor Vezey, Austin, Texas, and Mrs. Mamie Polley Fitzgerald, Floresville, Texas, through Mrs. S. G. Garrett, Floresville Texas, 1932.

⁴⁹ Robert K. Krick, *Neale Books: An Annotated Bibliography* (Dayton, OH: Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1977), 34.

They copied the papers and returned them to Mildred B. Garrett.”⁵⁰ Sarah Stark Baylor Vezey was the daughter of Mary Augusta Polley Baylor, daughter of Joseph H. Polley, and Mary Ella “Mamie” Polley Fitzgerald was the daughter of Walter Webster Polley, son of Joseph H. Polley. I have yet to discover whether the original papers are still in existence and, if so, where they are located. In addition to the four boxes of the Joseph H. Polley Papers and the two boxes of Polley Family Papers, the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History proved to be a valuable resource of other Polley items located in a variety of other collections. Because of the great volume of papers, I focused my research on items that mentioned the Polley Whitehall Mansion, its material culture — vernacular architecture, decorative arts, or domestic arts. Other private archives visited included the Daughters of the Texas Republic Archives in San Antonio, and the Texas Collection at Baylor University.

Public repositories also held valuable resources. I visited county courthouse archives in Wilson County and Guadalupe County. I also consulted online resources such as the United States Census Records and the Slavery Schedules of the United States Census.

Several museums added information to this study: The Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, the Witte Museum in San Antonio, the Pearce Museum

⁵⁰ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7628.

in Corsicana, the Texas Heritage Museum in Hillsboro Texas, the Sutherland Springs Museum, and the La Vernia Heritage Museum.

Several historical societies aided my research: the New England Historic Genealogical Society, the Wilson County Historical Society, and the La Vernia Historical Association.

Online resources were extremely helpful in this research: The Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Handbook of Texas Online, and the Portal to Texas History. The Portal to Texas History was a particularly rich resource for its access to images of the Polley Whitehall Mansion and its connection to the newspapers and periodicals that mentioned the house.

Finally, the personal connections that I made during this research have given rich and meaningful insights into the house. Keith and Robin Muschalek, the present owners of the Polley Mansion invited me to tour the house and spent hours talking with me about its story. Shirley Grammer, LaJuana Newman-Leus, and Maurine Liles, members of the Wilson County Historical Society, were a great resource for all things Polley.

All these resources contributed to piecing together a story that reveals a little more about the construction of the house, the furnishing of the rooms, the keeping of the house, and the making of the home.

Summary of Chapters and Appendices

This first chapter introduces the house, placing it in the context of other contemporary antebellum houses. The next section discusses the role that slavery played in the life of the house, followed by a review of previous research. The methodology employed in this research project follows. The first chapter concludes with a chapter-by-chapter summary of the entire thesis.

Chapter Two, “Meeting the Family,” introduces the reader to the members of the Polley family who lived in the house and to their extended family. It also gives what information can be gleaned about the slaves, without whose work the enterprises of the mansion would not have succeeded.

Chapter Three, “Staking the Claim,” uses evidence uncovered in the research to posit a location for the stake house, which was built before the Polleys constructed the big house. Images and stories about the stake house are also included in this chapter.

Chapter Four, “Vernacular Architecture: Constructing the Building,” pieces together what we know about the building of the house, from the stone hewn from a nearby stream to the cypress beams supporting the roof, harvested from along the banks of Curry Creek, north of Boerne. This chapter also recounts the role of Joseph’s brother, Jonathan, in planning the house, purchasing the windows and doors, and buying the tin for the roof.

Chapter Five, "Furnishing the House," again emphasizes Jonathan's role in purchasing the furnishings for the house. Receipts uncovered in the archives and items mentioned in the probate will of Mary Polley give many details about the furnishings of the house.

Chapter Six, "Making Home and Keeping House," discusses the role that Mary Bailey Polley played in the domestic arts associated with the house. Her cooking, sewing, household management, household economy, landscaping, and gardening are described.

Finally, Chapter Seven concludes the study of the Polley Whitehall Mansion and suggests how the details uncovered in this paper could have further importance in suggesting archaeological investigations and in providing resources for further restorations of the house. Questions that still remain to be answered are reiterated.

The first appendix, "Succession of Property Owners of the Polley Whitehall Mansion / FM 539 South / Sutherland Springs, Texas / Wilson Country (1835-2018)," lists those who have held the property that the Polley Whitehall Mansion sits on, from Felipe Elua to the present owners, Keith and Robin Muschalek.

“Archives Holding Polley Whitehall Materials,” the second appendix, lists the archives, museums, libraries, courthouses, and historical associations that have holdings relating to the Polley Whitehall Mansion.

The third appendix, “Flora Related to the Polley Whitehall Mansion,” contains a list of all the flora mentioned in the letters, receipts, newspaper articles, and other Polley family related materials. This list could prove useful for a restoration of the properties surrounding the house.

Finally, Appendix C, “Photographs of the Polley Whitehall Mansion,” brings together images of the Polley Whitehall Mansion and associated buildings into one location. The photographs and images present different views of the house: front, back, east side, west side. The photographs and images are arranged chronologically so that the changes made to the house may be easily viewed. Drawings of the stake house, photographs of the kitchen, surrounding area, related houses, and Joseph H. and Mary Bailey Polley are also included.

CHAPTER TWO

Meeting the Family

*Joseph Henry Polley (1795–1869)*¹

Joseph Henry Polley ([Figure D.76](#)), born 28 December 1795 in Whitehall, Washington County, New York to Jonathan Polley (1760–1840) and Rachel Hubbard Polley (1770–1821), joined the New York militia as a teamster in the War of 1812 in the company of Samuel Brown. After the war, he moved to Missouri, becoming acquainted with Moses Austin and traveling with him to Texas in 1820 to acquire a land grant from the Spanish government. Returning the next year with Stephen F. Austin, Joseph was involved in building a fort at the bend of the Brazos River (modern-day Richmond, Texas). Joseph and Samuel Chance, both unmarried men, shared a headright for a parcel of land, as members of the original “Old 300” settlers of Stephen F. Austin’s colony. Austin appointed Joseph sheriff of the colony. Joseph and Mary Augusta (Pollie) Bailey, the daughter of James Britton Bailey, another early settler in Brazoria, in a civil

¹ Biographical information from, Richard B. McCaslin, “Polley, Joseph Henry,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed September 15, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpo11>; “The Polley Association | Polley Mansion Timeline,” The Polley Association | Joseph Henry Polley Descendants, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://www.polleyassociation.org/polley-mansion-timeline>; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; Mary A. Polley Baylor Reminiscences, undated, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

ceremony in 1823, followed by a Protestant ceremony on 24 October 1826, and followed by a Catholic convalidation on 21 July 1831. The Polley's relocated to San Felipe from 1826 to 1828, returning to Brazoria in 1828. The couple obtained another headright in the Austin colony. Their home in Brazoria, also called Whitehall, was a meeting place during the Texas Revolution and a social gathering spot. Joseph was an escort for the fugitives during the Runaway Scrape during the Texas Revolution. He began a thriving ranching business and moved to a new home site on the Cibolo Creek, near San Antonio, acquired from his soon-to-be son-in-law, John James, in 1847. The move was partially motivated by a desire to find a healthier climate for his family. Joseph owned land from Corpus Christi to Llano County and west to Medina County, and at one point was purported to have had the second largest herd of cattle in the state, only surpassed by the King Ranch. Their new home on the Cibolo became a social gathering place for the area. Polley was interested in education, sponsoring schools in both Seguin and Sutherland Springs. He built his successful ranching and farming business with the use of slaves, at one point as many as twenty. He reluctantly supported the secession of Texas, although he was too ill to attend the meeting where the vote was taken. Sometime after the Emancipation Proclamation, Polley freed his slaves and divided his stock among family members, retaining most of his property, although his prosperity had decreased

drastically. He died on 26 March 1869, and was buried across the road from the Polley Whitehall Mansion in the family cemetery.

Mary Bailey Polley (1809–1888)²

Mary Augusta Bailey Polley ([Figures D.74](#) and [D.75](#)) was born on 9 June 1809 to James Britton Bailey and Edith Smith in North Carolina or Tennessee. Mary's mother died in 1815, and Baily married her sister, Nancy, also known as Dorothy or Dot. The family moved to Texas around 1818, settling near the Brazos River. Although not a part of the "Old 300" Austin colony, Stephen F. Austin recognized the Bailey family's squatter's claim to a league and a labor of land on the east bank of the Brazos River, now Bailey's Prairie. Mary was courted by both Stephen F. Austin and Joseph H. Polley, but she chose to marry Joseph H. Polley. Mary gained a reputation as an industrious and gifted homemaker. She and Joseph had eleven children. Their first child was born in San Felipe. Nine of the children were born while they lived in Brazoria; two were born while they lived on the Cibolo. Mary outlived her husband by nineteen years, dying on 21 January 1888. She spent the last ten years of her life operating the family home as

² Biographical information from Merle Weir, "Bailey, James Briton," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed September 15, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fba08>; "The Polley Association | Polley Mansion Timeline." The Polley Association | Joseph Henry Polley Descendants, accessed January 25, 2018. <https://www.polleyassociation.org/polley-mansion-timeline>; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; John Henry Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas* (Austin: L. E. Daniell, ca. 1890), 219.

a boarding house and caring for her two children with mental disabilities,
Jonathan James and Catherine Sayre.

*Jonathan Polley (1800–1887)*³

Jonathan Polley, brother of Joseph H. Polley, was born in Whitehall, Washington County, New York, in 1800 to Jonathan Polley (1760–1840) and Rachel Hubbard Polley (1770–1821). He married Clarissa Kinner in 1817, and they had nine children. On various censuses he is listed as a merchant and a farmer. His residences are listed on Poultney Street, Whitehall, Fort Anne, and Yorkville. He was involved in some ventures with the B. & O. Railroad and in constructing a house in New York City with Thomas McCotter in 1855. Jonathan visited his brother in Sutherland Springs at least twice, and consulted with him about the construction of the house and supplying the furnishings for the Polley Mansion on the Cibolo.

³ Biographical information from “The Polley Association | Polley Mansion Timeline.” The Polley Association | Joseph Henry Polley Descendants, accessed January 25, 2018. <https://www.polleyassociation.org/polley-mansion-timeline>; Polley Family Papers, 1824–1976 (bulk 1855–1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; United States Census Records; Crisfield Johnson, *History of Washington Co., New York: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 308, 499.

*Mary Augusta Polley (1827–1915)*⁴

Mary Augusta Polley was born in San Felipe in 27 December 1827, the first-born daughter of Joseph Henry and Mary Bailey Polley. She married Joseph Egbert Polley, her cousin, in 1842 in Brazoria. Mary and Joseph Egbert had two children, Eleanor Adelia Polley Pickett and Joseph Egbert Polley II. Her husband died in Brazoria County in 1845, before the Polleys' move to the Cibolo. Mary next married Walker Keith Baylor, the nephew of the co-founder of Baylor University, Judge Robert Emmett Bledsoe Baylor, and cousin of Confederate officer and Indian fighter, John R. Baylor, in 1852. They had seven children: Mary Augusta Baylor (died as an infant), Sarah Stark Baylor Vezey, James Belger Baylor, Mary Augusta Baylor Stevenson, Lucy Katherine Baylor Hooks, Blanche Baylor Tiner, and Laura Agnes Baylor.

⁴ Biographical information from "The Polley Association | Polley Mansion Timeline." The Polley Association | Joseph Henry Polley Descendants, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://www.polleyassociation.org/polley-mansion-timeline>; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; Mary A. Polley Baylor Reminiscences, undated, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; "Mary Augusta Polley Baylor (1827-1915) - Find A Grave," accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9745831/mary-augusta-baylor>.

*James Bailey Polley (1830–1834)*⁵

James Bailey Polley was born on 30 January 1830 in Brazoria, Texas, and died on 25 August 1834, in Brazoria, Texas at the age of five years and two months. Josephine Polley Golson claimed that James died in the flood of 1834.

Emeline Elizabeth Polley (1832–1848)

Emeline Elizabeth Polley was born 25 April 1832 in Brazoria, Texas, the second-born daughter of Mary Bailey and Joseph H. Polley. She married Jonathan James, land surveyor and partner of Joseph H. Polley, on 18 August 1847. The next year, Emeline died in childbirth on 21 December 1848, at the age of seventeen years, seven months, and twenty-one days. She was buried in the Polley Family Cemetery, across the road from the Polley Whitehall Mansion. Her daughter, Emeline, survived, but died before the age of two.

⁵ Biographical information from Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. Birth and death dates of family members are as recorded in the family Bible; Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light: Saga of Brit Bailey and Other Hardy Pioneers*. (San Antonio: Naylor, 1950); Bernice Strong, "James, John [1819-1877]," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed September 15, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fja17>.

*Susan Rebecca Polley (1835–1906)*⁶

Susan Rebecca Polley Henderson Brooks was born 1 May 1835. She married Connally Findlay Henderson in 1858. They had two children, Mary Bailey Henderson and Connally Henderson Tiner. Her husband, Connally, was killed in action during the Civil War, in the Battle of Gaine's Mill in Hanover County, Virginia, on 27 June 1862. Their daughter, Mary Bailey Henderson, died in 1865, when she was only three years old. She was buried in the Polley Family Cemetery. Susan subsequently married J. D. Brooks, and they had three children, Susan Fletcher Brooks in 1876, Joseph Henry Brooks in 1877, and Mary Kinney Brooks Craighead in 1879. Susan only lived one year, and she was also buried in the Polley Family Cemetery. Susan and J. D. were buried in the Sutherland Springs Cemetery.

*Sarah Adel Polley (1837–1869)*⁷

Sarah Adel Polley was born 21 March 1837 in Brazoria. She died 22 May 1869, at the age of 32, and was buried in the Polley Family Cemetery.

⁶ Biographical information from "Susan Rebecca Polley Henderson Brooks (1835-1906)," accessed September 15, 2018, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9745835/susan-rebecca-henderson_brooks; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

⁷ Biographical information obtained from "Sarah Adel Polley (1837–1869) - Find A Grave," accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/186495144/sarah-adel-polley>; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

Catherine Sayre Polley (1839–1919)

Catherine Sayre “Kate” Polley was born 19 February 1839 in Brazoria, Texas. She was an inmate of the State Lunatic Asylum for over thirty-eight years. The Texas State Lunatic Asylum, which was built in 1856 and began operating in 1861, provided “state of the art” care for people determined to be “lunatic,” who would find physical rest and mental revitalization among the beautifully landscaped grounds and the majestic live oak trees. Supporting a “cult of curability,” the institution contended that a routine of exercise, social contact, and structured activity, along with diet, rest, and physical health, could cure mental illness. The Polleys sought and paid for such care for their daughter.⁸ Catherine was listed as “lunatic” on the United States Census. Several letters in the Joseph H. Polley Papers at the Texas Collection at Baylor University, from or to Catherine Polley, discuss her dissatisfaction with her school in Seguin (undated) and her time at the asylum in Austin (1876, 1878). A letter in the Polley Papers at the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archives from Jonathan James to Mary Bailey Polley discusses payments to the State Asylum (1877). She died 29 June 1919 at the age of 80 in Austin at the Austin State Hospital. She was buried in the Austin State Hospital Cemetery.

⁸ Sarah C. Sitton, *Life at the Texas State Lunatic Asylum, 1857-1997* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 3.

*Joseph Benjamin Polley (1840–1918)*⁹

Joseph Benjamin Polley was born 27 October 1840 in Brazoria, Texas. He graduated from Florence Wesleyan University at Florence Alabama, returning to Texas and enlisting in Company F, Mustang Greys, of the 4th Texas Infantry, against his parents' wishes. He was a quarter master sergeant in the 4th Texas Infantry, and later he was the historian of the Texas Brigade and author of *Hood's Texas Brigade*. He lost his right foot at the battle of Darbytown Road near Richmond on 7 October 1864. After returning to Texas he was admitted to the bar, practicing law in Floresville, Texas. He married Mattie LeGette of Seguin, Texas, and they had five children: Josephine Polley Golson, Hortense Polley Rudesill, Mattie LeGette Polley Paine, Imogene Polley (who died in infancy), and Jesse Henry Polley. Joseph B. Polley wrote "Historical Reminiscences" in the San Antonio Express from 1906 until 1911. He died on 2 February 1918 and was buried in the Floresville City Cemetery.

⁹ Biographical information from Thomas W. Cutrer, "Polley, Joseph Benjamin," accessed September 15, 2018, *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpo10>; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; "Joseph Benjamin Polley (1840-1918)," accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/67256262/joseph-benjamin-polley>; James Mallery Black, *Families and Descendants in America of Golsan, Golson, Gholson, Gholston, Also Goldston, Golston, Etc.*, (Salt Lake City: James M. Black, 1959), 139; William Richard Cutter, *American Biography: A New Cyclopaedia*, Vol. 43 (American Historical Society, 1930), 147-153.

*Harriet Roxanna Polley (1842–1925)*¹⁰

Harriet Roxanna Polley Houston was born on 10 September 1842 in Brazoria, Texas. She was married in 1866 to David Hannah Houston. They had eight children: Edith Houston (who died in 1870 at the age of two and was buried in the Polley Family Cemetery), Mary Adel Houston Gafford (1870-1953), Joseph Ross Houston, George Smith Houston (who died in 1877 at the age of four and was also buried at the Polley Family Cemetery), Emma Houston Wright (1878-1947), Lizze New (1879-1957), Walter Houston (1882-1952), and Russell Houston (1844-1952). Harriet died on 11 November 1925 in La Vernia, Texas and was buried with her husband in Salem Cemetery in Sayers, Bexar County, Texas. A series of letters between Harriet and David in the Polley Family Papers at the Briscoe Center for American History reflect their tender relationship.

¹⁰ Biographical information from “Harriet Roxana Polley Houston (1842-1925),” accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/175580840/harriet-roxana-houston>; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

*Abner Hubbard Polley (1845–1932)*¹¹

Abner Hubbard “Hub” Polley was born on 5 October 1845 in Brazoria, Texas. He was first married to Elsie Belle Beverley in 1870. They had five children: William B. Polley, Fannie B. Polley, Beverly Hubbard Polley, Henry Mason Polley, and Ellen Alice (Nellie) Polley. Abner Hubbard and Elsie Belle Beverley were divorced because of Elsie’s affair with Frank McLean sometime between 1880 and 1882. Abner Hubbard married Frances Marian Brown in 1885. They had five children: Joseph Lucius Polley, James Olin Polley, Mary Mae Polley Scott, Hal Henry Polley, and Sterling Hilmer Polley. “Hub” fought in the Civil War and was a trail driver. He died on 19 January 1932 in Smithson Valley, Comal County, Texas and was buried in Mission Burial Park South in San Antonio.

¹¹ Biographical information from “Abner Hubbard Polley (1845-1932),” accessed September 15, 2018. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/86236926/abner-hubbard-polley>; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; Jack DeMattos and Chuck Parsons, *The Notorious Luke Short: Sporting Man of the Wild West* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2015), 283; “RootsWeb’s WorldConnect Project: Families of Sequoyah County, OK & Others,” accessed September 15, 2018. <https://wc.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=mjr6387&id=I22318>.

*Jonathan James Polley (1848–1925)*¹²

Jonathan James Polley was born on 14 December 1848. He was the first child to be born on the Cibolo. Census records described Jonathan as “idiot.” He died in 1925 and was buried in the Sutherland Springs Cemetery.

*Walter Webster Polley (1851–1928)*¹³

Walter Webster Polley was born on 1 October 1851 in Sutherland Springs, Texas. He married Ada Wyatt. Their children were: Mary Ella Polley Fitzgerald, James Ricks Polley, Alma Augusta Polley Craighead, Walter Wyatt Polley, and Zoe Polley Parks. Ada died in 1895 at the age of 38. She was buried at the Floresville City Cemetery. Walter died on 16 May 1928 and was also buried at the Floresville City Cemetery.

¹² Biographical information from “Jonathan James Polley (1848-1925),” accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/9745839/jonathan-james-polley>; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

¹³ Biographical information from “Walter Webster Polley (1851-1928).” accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/69222947/walter-webster-polley>; Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

*James Britton Bailey (1779–1832)*¹⁴

James Britton Bailey was the father of Mary Bailey Polley. He was born in North Carolina on 1 August 1779. He married Edith Smith, and they had six children. After Edith died in 1815, James married her sister Nancy, who was also known as Dorothy or Dot, and they had five children. After living in Kentucky and Tennessee, the family and six adult slaves moved to Texas in 1818, settling near the Brazos River. Bailey allegedly bought land from the Spanish government. After Mexico's war of independence, his claim was not recognized. Despite contentions between Stephen F. Austin and Bailey at the time when Austin was awarded his grant for a colony, Austin recognized Bailey's claim to a league and a labor of land on the east bank of the Brazos River on 7 July 1824. That area is known today as Bailey's Prairie. Bailey fought in the Battle of Velasco (1832). Brit Bailey had a reputation for becoming engaged in brawls and for being a bit eccentric. His eccentricity was evident in his will which stated that he was to be buried standing up and facing the West with his rifle at his side and a jug of whiskey at his feet. He died of cholera on 6 December 1832.

¹⁴ Biographical information from Weir, Merle, "Bailey, James Briton," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 12, 2010, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fba08>; James Britton Bailey Papers, 1832-1869, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

*John James (1819–1877)*¹⁵

John James was the husband of Emeline Polley James, the Polleys' second oldest daughter. He was born on 13 February 1819 at Gorleston, Suffolk, England, while his parents were visiting there from Nova Scotia, Canada. At the age of seventeen he came to fight in the Texas Revolution, arriving in San Antonio in 1837, delayed by illness, and missed the Revolution. He went to work as a land surveyor, becoming acquainted with Joseph H. Polley on a visit to Brazoria. James married Emeline on 18 August 1847. The next year, Emeline died in childbirth on 21 December 1848. Their daughter survived, but also died one year and nine months later, on 28 August 1850. James aided the Polleys with purchases of land, livestock, construction materials, and household goods. He also helped with securing laborers and selling the Polleys' bacon and butter in San Antonio. He also made arrangements on behalf of Mary Bailey Polley for the care of her daughter, Catherine, at the State Asylum in Austin.

¹⁵ Biographical information from Strong, Bernice. "James, John [1819–1877]," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 15, 2010, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fja17>; Polley Papers at the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Museum; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

*Cato Morgan (1815–1892?)*¹⁶

Golson recorded that Cato Morgan had a wife named Rachel and four children, Alex, Lizzie, Bill, and Celia, who were among the slaves Polley freed after the Emancipation Proclamation. The Census for 1870 recorded Alec and Eliza living with Cato, but his wife was listed as Melinda. In the 1880 census Cato was sixty-five years old and living with Rachel, aged forty-five, with three step-children, Orange Wash (fourteen years old), Anne Wash (thirteen years old), and Marray Wash (nine years old), and a child, Joe Cato Morgan (six years old). Joseph B. Polley recorded an episode of Cato picking mustang grapes to make preserves and being attacked by Indians in his “Historical Reminiscences.” He also mentioned that Cato was a grown slave in 1858 in one of his “Historical Reminiscences.” In the 1880 Census. the Morgans were listed immediately before the entry for Mary Bailey Polley, indicating that they were neighbors. A newspaper clipping of an obituary of Cato Morgan, found among the Burges-Jefferson Family Papers, at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, probably written by Polley and perhaps published in the *Western Chronicle*, reads thus:

¹⁶ Biographical information obtained from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 81; J. B. Polley, “Historical Reminiscences,” *Daily Express* (San Antonio) 16 December 1906; J. B. Polley, “Historical Reminiscences,” *Daily Express* (San Antonio) 18 August 1907; United States Census 1870; United States Census 1880.

Faithful Unto Death

Once more death has claimed one of the pioneers of Wilson county. Cato Morgan, who came with his old master, J. H. Polley, now deceased, to the county in 1847, died at his home on the Cibolo on the night of Sept 21st, at the advanced age of 77. Few better men, white or black, have ever gone to that "bourne from whence no traveler returns." As a slave he was always faithful and trustworthy and was with several expeditions after Indians in early days; as a freedman, his course was such as to win him the respect of all who knew him and the love and confidence of the family he had served for nearly forty years. He had been in ill health for the last year, but had so improved as to ride about and warrant his faithful wife to leave him at home with the youngest boy, some 13 years old. All alone, with the boy last Sunday night he ate his supper and sank into a slumber which knew no waking. The boy found him at daylight dead. Apparently there had been no struggle and the good old man had died as he had lived, quietly. Let us drop a tear over his grave and remember him as one having a white heart beneath a black skin.¹⁷

Apart from the last line, the obituary represents high praise and noble sentiment directed toward a good and well-lived life.

*Aunt Matilda (Unknown)*¹⁸

Golson recorded that Matilda was also among the slaves Polley freed after the Emancipation Proclamation. Joseph B. Polley described an episode of Matilda blowing a horn warning Indian attacks in his "Historical Reminiscences."

Emeline Polley James wrote to Mary Polley, 10 November 1848, saying that

¹⁷ Burges-Jefferson Family Papers, 1836 (1857-1892) 1960, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁸ Biographical information obtained from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118; J. B. Polley, "Historical Reminiscences," *Daily Express* (San Antonio) 16 December 1906; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7630.

Matilda was sick. Joseph H. stipulated in his will that each of the girls could choose a female slave to go with them upon their marriage. It could be possible that Matilda was sent to San Antonio with Emeline when she married. Sadly, it was Emeline who died the next month in childbirth. Supposedly Matilda returned to the Polleys' house in Sutherland Springs, perhaps with the charge of caring for Emeline's surviving baby, and stayed with the family until her emancipation.

*Peter Matilda (Unknown)*¹⁹

Golson recorded that Peter Matilda was among the slaves Polley freed after the Emancipation Proclamation. There is no other information revealed about Peter. Was he Matilda's son or husband? Did he become part of the James's household when Emeline married? Was he born to Matilda after she returned to the Polley home? Further research is warranted.

*Albert and Josie Nivens (Unknown)*²⁰

Golson recorded that Albert and Josie Nivens were married, and that they were among the slaves Polley freed after the Emancipation Proclamation. Joseph B. recounted a story in his "Historical Reminiscences" of a negro boy, Albert, 20

¹⁹ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118.

²⁰ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118; J. B. Polley, "Historical Reminiscences," *Daily Express* (San Antonio), 24 March 1907.

years old in 1865 who was reticent about sleeping with him to keep warm on a cold night when they were out running cattle one night.

Ruben Robinson (Unknown)²¹

According to Golson, Ruben was among the slaves Polley freed after the Emancipation Proclamation. Joseph B. Polley mentioned that Ruben was a grown slave in 1858 in one of his “Historical Reminiscences.”

Jim Bailey (Unknown)²²

Jim Bailey was among the slaves Polley freed after the Emancipation Proclamation according to Bailey’s Light. Joseph B. Polley recorded an episode of Cato and Jim picking mustang grapes to make preserves and being attacked by Indians in his “Historical Reminiscences.” He also mentioned Jim as a grown slave in 1858.

²¹ Biographical information obtained from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 118; J. B. Polley, “Historical Reminiscences,” *Daily Express* (San Antonio) 18 August 1907.

²² Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 118; J. B. Polley, “Historical Reminiscences,” *Daily Express* (San Antonio) 16 December 1906; J. B. Polley, “Historical Reminiscences,” *Daily Express* (San Antonio) 18 August 1907.

*Burrell (Unknown)*²³

Joseph B. Polley mentioned in his “Historical Reminiscences” that Burrell was a grown slave in 1858. No other information is currently available about the life of Burrell.

*Theresa McCloud (Unknown)*²⁴

Theresa Moore, a former house slave who left after the emancipation, wrote a letter to Mary Bailey Polley, 4 February 1869, asking her to keep in touch because she misses the family and their “home by the Springs.” It is possible that Theresa Moore had married, and her name was changed to Theresa McCloud. However, this is unconfirmed.

*Buck Winn (Unknown)*²⁵

*John (Unknown)*²⁶

²³ J. B. Polley, “Historical Reminiscences,” *Daily Express* (San Antonio), 18 August 1907.

²⁴ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 118; Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

²⁵ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 118

²⁶ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 118

*Hester (Unknown)*²⁷

*Charlotte (Unknown)*²⁸

*Fannie (Unknown)*²⁹

*Anne (Unknown)*³⁰

*Ben Montgomery (Unknown)*³¹

*Theodora Henderson (Unknown)*³²

²⁷ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118

²⁸ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118

²⁹ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118

³⁰ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118

³¹ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118

³² Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118

Nothing is yet known about the nine men and women listed above other than the fact that Golson recorded that they were among the slaves Polley freed after the Emancipation Proclamation. Regrettably, all that is known about these slaves has been communicated by their Anglo owners. The stories of the enslaved men, women, and children told in their own voices would probably paint a different picture. Further research is needed to give these valuable persons a name, a face, and a story.

³³ Biographical information from Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 118.

CHAPTER THREE

Staking the Claim

Introduction

Josephine Polley Golson reported in her book, *Bailey's Light*, that Joseph H. Polley and his family started for Cibolo Creek on 1 August 1847.¹ They had wagon loads of possessions to cart overland from their home in Brazoria to their new home on the Cibolo. It is clear that they had arrived in San Antonio by 18 August 1847 since that is the day that Emeline, the Polleys' second oldest daughter, and John James were married in San Antonio. It is unclear for how long the Polleys may have stayed with John and Emeline in San Antonio. However, it is likely that the family soon settled with some kind of accommodation in their new place on the Cibolo. On 29 December 1847, John James wrote to Polley, noting that he was sending three men down to do some work for him. On 26 May 1848, John James wrote to Polley, addressing the letter to Cibolo, showing that had become settled enough in their new house to

¹ Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light: Saga of Brit Bailey and Other Hardy Pioneers* (San Antonio: Naylor, 1950), 89.

consider it their address.² The family, having completed the work on the stake house near the Cibolo, began to think about a more permanent structure. Golson reported that the family did not consider building a new home until 1848.³ However, the year 1848 brought tragedy to the family that may have postponed the beginning of construction on the new house. Emeline Elizabeth James died in childbirth on 21 December 1848, aged 17 years 7 months and 21 days, only 16 months after her marriage to John James. Her daughter, also named Emeline, died on 28 August 1850, at the age of 1 year, 9 months.

Images of the Stake House

Two images of the stake house exist. The first is in the possession of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archives in San Antonio. That drawing, which is in very poor condition, reveals a structure built of vertically placed logs surrounded by trees ([Figure D. 2](#)). This may be “poteaux-en-terre,” or post in the ground, construction, which was common in French Canada and later introduced into Louisiana.⁴ Generally used for temporary dwellings, such impermanent forms were expected to last only a decade or two before a better

² Joseph Henry Polley Papers, 1825-1926, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, MSS 7631.

³ Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 92.

⁴ Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach, *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 164–65.

quality structure could be built.⁵ John James was from Nova Scotia, Canada, where such construction was common, and Polley had lived in upstate New York, not far from the Canadian border. Perhaps one or both men were familiar with this type of quick construction and suggested this plan for the stake house. In the image two other log cabins with horizontal log construction are visible in the background. A large pot is located at the front of the house and a woman is standing in the doorway. Joseph Polley Paine, great-grandson of Polley, in an undated letter describes the temporary residence:

Stake House, the home of the Joseph Henry Polley family while Whitehall (the Polley mansion two miles north of Sutherland Springs, Texas, on present Farm road 539) was being built....The stake house was sketched by the contractor who supervised the slave labor that built the mansion."⁶

The other drawing of the "stake house," signed by Paine, is entitled "Polley Stake House / Joseph Polley Paine" ([Figure D. 3](#)). The drawing shows a log cabin with similar construction, vertical logs. However, Paine's drawing shows a barrel rather than a pot located at the front of the house. The house is surrounded by trees, with one tree in the foreground being girdled. As in the other drawing, two log cabins constructed of horizontal logs are in the

⁵ Cary Carson et al., "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies," *Winterthur Portfolio* 16, no. 2/3 (1981): 113 ff.

⁶ Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archives, San Antonio.

background. In Paine's drawing a ghost-like woman stands in the doorway, and a man carrying a load of firewood moves towards the house.⁷

Location of the Stake House

The location of the stake house is unclear. Some have contended that the stake house must have been built near the present location of the Polley Whitehall mansion, arguing that Polley would know better than to construct a house, even a temporary one, on the banks of a creek that was prone to flooding. However, evidence indicates that the stake house may have been located near the bank of the Cibolo. Harry McCarry Henderson in an article entitled "The Polley Mansion" reported that "He [Joseph H. Polley] selected a spot on a high knoll about two miles north of the site of the old town of Sutherland Springs, overlooking Cibolo Creek . . ."⁸ The paper, possibly an address to a meeting of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, described the history of the Polley House, and is preceded by this statement, as a testament to the veracity of the story: "This was presented in the presence of Josephine Polley Golson, and Mr. O. W. Linne, in collaboration with Colonel Crimmins."⁹ Additionally, Joseph B.

⁷ Wilson County Historical Association Archives, Floresville, TX.

⁸ Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archives.

⁹ Josephine Polley Golson is the eldest daughter of Joseph Benjamin Polley, and the granddaughter of Joseph Henry Polley. She married Edward Maurice Goldstein, a businessman

Polley, in one of his “Historical Reminiscences” articles written on 18 August 1907, described the location of the stake house thus:

For a number of years when he was a child, the writer’s home was on a bluff from which one could look down into the water of the Cibolo Creek, forty-five feet below. The kitchen where three times a day all the darkeys on the place congregated for their meals, fronted on this bluff, the space between door and bluff’s edge being only about ten feet wide.¹⁰

Also revealing is the deed for Polley’s purchase on Cibolo Creek, filed in the Guadalupe Courthouse on 1 March 1849. At the beginning of the deed is a map ([Figure D.1](#)). The map shows two trails. One of the trails roughly parallels the course of the current FM 539 from the southern border of the Elua Land Grant to the northern border. The other trail begins at the southern end of the FM539 trail and proceeds northeast towards Cibolo Creek. The trail ends at the Cibolo, with a small circle at this juncture on the map. This circle could very well mark the location of the stake house, since this deed would have been drawn up several months after the Polleys settled on the Cibolo. The circle could also represent the location of the Cibolo Spring. Often springs are represented with a circle on topographical maps. A photo of Joseph B. Polley standing beside the Cibolo

from New York. Her name on the Census in 1900, 1910, and 1920 is listed as Josephine P. Goldstein. On the 1930 Census her name appears as Josephine Golson. Mr. O. W. Linne owned the Polley Whitehall Mansion from 1946 until his death in 1988. Martin Lalor Crimmins, also from New York, was a herpetologist who rode in the Rough Riders with Teddy Roosevelt and invented an anti-venom for rattlesnake bites (Paul Adams, “Martin Lalor Crimmins,” *Handbook of Texas History Online*, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fcr19>).

¹⁰ J. B. Polley, “Historical Reminiscences,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, 18 August 1907.

Spring taken in 1899 by Harold Hardinge bears the note on the back, “Mr. Joe Polly [*sic*] at Cibolo Spring—1899.”¹¹

It seems reasonable to conclude that the stake house may have been located on a high bluff overlooking the Cibolo Creek about two miles above the sulphur springs in Sutherland Springs. Perhaps an archaeological dig in the future could reveal further evidence about the location of the original stake house.

¹¹ Hardinge Family Collection, R. Stanton Avery Special Collections, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Box 18, Folder 358, Mss, 1050.

CHAPTER FOUR

Vernacular Architecture: Constructing the House

Introduction

A string of tragedies befell the Polleys between 1848 and 1850. In 1848 Texans experienced the greatest rainfall they had faced in fifty years.¹ The flood in the spring of 1848 was followed by a cholera epidemic in 1849. On 14 December 1848 Mary Bailey Polley herself gave birth to her tenth child, Jonathan James, named after her new son-in-law. The 1880 Census listed Jonathan James, her son as “idiotic.” Their second oldest and recently-married daughter, Emeline Elizabeth Polley James, died in childbirth in December of 1848. Her surviving daughter, also named Emeline, died in July of 1850. In the midst of these tragedies, the Polleys began to make plans to build their permanent home a little further up on the knoll facing the Cibolo, on the road from Sutherland Springs to Seguin. What fortitude must the family have had to forge ahead with plans to build the Polley Whitehall Mansion and their agricultural and ranching enterprises.

¹ Daniel McNeel Lane, *Sam Maverick's Trail: The Story of the First American Exploration of the Texas-Mexico Border* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2017), 7.

Whitehall in Brazoria

Several factors contributed to the plans the Polleys were making for the construction of the house. In some ways the house resembled their former Whitehall, their house in Brazoria. In 1832 they had settled on land obtained from Mary's father, James Britton Bailey, and constructed the first Whitehall. The houses shared a name that honored Joseph H. Polley's hometown in New York. The Brazoria house had become one of the first public houses in Stephen F. Austin's settlement and a meeting place for early Texas revolutionary councils.² Likewise, the Polley Whitehall Mansion located on a main road from Sutherland Springs to Seguin and near the main road from Lavaca to San Antonio, also became a social center, a gathering place to entertain guests from all around.

Although a description of the former Whitehall house in Brazoria does not exist, a description of Bailey's house, the house in which Mary Bailey Polley grew up is described as:

two stories high, covered with shingle, the main body is to be twenty feet by thirty-five feet in length, and two galleries in front the full length of s^d building. Eleven feet wide, one above and one below, both tonged [*sic*] and groved [*sic*] — and bannesterd [*sic*] round s^d. galleries, and the lower rooms of the house is to be [jointed] and the plank to be laid down rough Likewise the weatherboarding to be nailed on rough Also there is to be a partition of plank dividing the upper and lower parts of the house into four rooms two twenty foot rooms and two fifteen foot rooms with the

² Richard B. McCaslin, "Polley, Joseph Henry," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 30, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpo11>.

necessary doors and windows that may be required and said building to be sit on twenty inch blocks, as many as may be required . . . ”³

Although the construction materials and the dimensions of the house differ, the house that Mary grew up in and the house that she and Joseph built near the Cibolo share similarities. The two stories and the two banistered galleries are found on both houses. The gallery on the Bailey house is actually a foot wider than the Polley Whitehall Mansion. The rooms in the Polley Whitehall Mansion are a little larger, measuring almost eighteen feet, whereas the rooms of the Bailey house are fifteen and twenty feet. It is not clear how the Bailey house was “jointed” with a plank between the rooms. However, it seems to parallel the large hallway between the rooms that exists in the Polley Whitehall Mansion.

Whitehall in New York

The Polley Whitehall Mansion takes its name from the town where Joseph was born in New York. Jonathan, Joseph’s brother, who still lived in Whitehall, New York, was involved in the construction and furnishing of the Polley Whitehall Mansion. Golson reported that Jonathan modeled the house on the old family home in Whitehall.⁴ Evidence that Golson actually visited Jonathan’s

³ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7628.

⁴ Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey’s Light: Saga of Brit Bailey and Other Hardy Pioneers* (San Antonio: Naylor, 1950), 93.

home in Whitehall is unavailable, although her father, Joseph B. Polley, did spend a year in Whitehall. The identity of the old family home Jonathan is speaking about or where the home is located is unclear. In a letter from Emeline M. Kinner, Jonathan's and Joseph's sister, in Fort Ann, New York, to Joseph H. Polley, 4 June 1848, she reported that Jonathan had built a new brick house on the old place and a new brick house in Whitehall.⁵ The house in Whitehall is likely his house on Poultney Street. He described that house in a letter to his niece, 2 November 1877, saying "It stands on Poultney street which runs east and west we are under the south side of Skeens Mountain . . ."⁶ The letter contained a drawing of the house on Poultney Street, which was not similar to the Polley Whitehall Mansion. The "family home" on which Jonathan based the plans for the Polley Whitehall Mansion is more likely a house that was mentioned in letters from Jonathan Polley to Joseph H. Polley, 21 June 1850 and 8 September 1850, which reported that Adolphus Polley had sold the family home to John Kinner.⁷ The Kinner home place shows up on a historical map of Washington

⁵ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7631.

⁶ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7638. The address of the house is also mentioned in Crisfield Johnson, *History of Washington Co., New York: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers*. (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 499.

⁷ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7631.

County, New York, dated 1853, located near the Champlain Canal and the Saratoga Railroad, on the road from Whitehall to Smith's Landing.⁸

Jonathan also revealed in a letter to Joseph, 9 January 1855, that he had worked with McCotter, perhaps Thomas McCotter, on a building in New York City in 1855.⁹ Jonathan had some experience in overseeing the building of houses, whether or not he was an architect himself. However, architectural plans for the Polley Whitehall Mansion remain unlocated. The Historic American Building Survey data lists the architect as "unknown."¹⁰ It is likely that the house was a product of vernacular architecture, "a regional tradition established and evolved by owners and craftsmen without the help of professional architects."¹¹

In a letter to Joseph, 20 December 1848, Jonathan promised to come to Texas, possibly to help with the plans for the construction of the house.¹² No further letters in the Polley Papers detail Jonathan's involvement in the

⁸ "Historical Maps | Washington County, NY - Official Website," accessed August 31, 2018, <http://www.co.washington.ny.us/730/Historical-Maps>.

⁹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

¹⁰ Historic American Buildings Survey, "Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX," accessed August 31, 2018, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235/>.

¹¹ Kenneth Hafertepe, *The Material Culture of German Texans* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2016), 11.

¹² Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7631.

construction of the house. However, Joseph B. Polley recounted in his column, "Historical Reminiscences," 21 April 1907,¹³ his traveling with his Uncle Jonathan back to New York in 1850 when he was ten years old and returning to his home in Texas three years later. In the article, he discussed the slowness of mail and travel in those early days. In 1850 he returned with his uncle to Whitehall, New York, riding on a horse to Brazoria, on steamboat to Galveston, on another steamboat to New Orleans, on yet another steamboat up the Mississippi and Ohio to Beaver, then traveling by a canal boat to Erie, on a steamer to Buffalo, New York, on another canal boat to Albany, and finally a train to Whitehall, New York. The trip took a month. Three years later young Joseph returned to Texas, taking the train from Whitehall through New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Cumberland to Wheeling, then a steamboat to New Orleans, Galveston, and Indianola, and a stage to John Sutherland's stage stop on the Cibolo. The trip took three weeks. A letter from Jonathan to Joseph H. Polley, 21 June 1850, reported that he and Jo [J. B.] had arrived safely in Whitehall, New York.¹⁴ It is likely that Jonathan came to Texas sometime in 1849 and returned to

¹³ J. B. Polley, "Historical Reminiscences," *The Daily Express* (San Antonio), Sunday, April 21, 1907.

¹⁴ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7631.

New York by June 1850. Possibly this is the time that construction began in earnest on the Polley Whitehall Mansion.

Historic American Buildings Survey of Whitehall

Although no architectural plans for the house have been located the Historic American Buildings Survey of 1936 ([Figures D.26](#), [D.27](#), [D.28](#), [D.29](#), [D.30](#), [D.31](#), and [D.32](#)) provided an architectural plan for the house at that time.¹⁵ In the survey the house was described as a two story house, built of local stone and coursed rubble, with cypress framing. Coursed rubble is masonry composed of roughly shaped stones fitting approximately on level beds. The house measured 53'3" by 46'3" with a five-bay front, a gable roof, and a two-story porch across the front. The survey of 1936 described a new front porch and back porch with a galvanized iron roof over the original shingles. The house was constructed with a center-hall plan and heated by five fireplaces. Whitehall also included a separate log kitchen, 15' square, with a stone fireplace and chimney, as well as a stone cistern. The detailed data sheets reads:

The rectangular plan contains four main rooms and a large, wide stair hall on each floor. the house was heated with five fireplaces. The wooden frame front porch across the front was added at a later date; exact date not known. Second floor ceiling joists, roof rafters and all roof bracing consist of cypress timbers pegged together. System of roof bracing is expressive of construction ability and ingenuity [*sic*]. Rafters covered with cypress sheeting varying from 6" to 22" in width, finished with cypress shingles.

¹⁵ Survey, "Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX."

The HABS drawings suggest several questions requiring further research. Was the interior stairwell inside bedroom #1 and bedroom #3 original to the house? Was the frame wall in bedroom #1 and bedroom #3 original to the house? Was the closet in bedroom #5 original to the house? Was the external door in the downstairs parlour #1 original to the house? What was the purpose of the strong box built into the wall in parlour #2, and was it original to the house? Two older interior photographs of the house exist: one of bedroom #4, taken by Harry Hardinge in 1899 ([Figure D.10](#)), and the other of parlour #1, taken by the Historic American Building Survey in 1936 ([Figure D.39](#)). Neither of these images provides data to answer the outstanding questions.

Similar Contemporary Construction

Similar construction was found in the Dr. Gray Jones Houston house. An image of the house accompanies an article published in the *San Antonio Express*, 3 November 1929 ([Figure D.78](#)).¹⁶ Although the Houston house in 1929 was in a serious state of deterioration and missing its roof, similarities between the two houses are striking. This is in part because much of the material for the construction of the house came from the same place. The stone for Dr. Houston's house was hewn from sandstone along Elm Creek, like the Polleys' house. The article mentions that a cornerstone of the house, dated 1854, was preserved at

¹⁶ "Old House Marks Texas' First Oil Well," *San Antonio Express*, November 3, 1929, 31.

Judge Minor's home at 301 W. Huisache St. in San Antonio. Houston also ordered his doors and windows from New York from Alex Coats, the same person that made the Polleys' windows and doors. In a letter from Jonathan to Joseph H., 13 May 1856, Jonathan said that he had received Houston's order for doors and windows from Coats. A letter from 24 September 1856 noted that Houston's order had been shipped on the schooner *Hannah Martin*, under Captain Morgan, and insured by the Atlantic Marine Insurance Company for \$225.¹⁷ Houston was still working on his house in 1859, when he asked Joseph, in a letter of 5 September 1859, to borrow a few of his scaffolding planks, assuring him that they would be able to tell the planks apart, because Houston's were elm and Polley's were post oak.¹⁸ This statement reflects the landscape that is visible even today. The Polley house is surrounded by post oak trees. The Houston house, which has not been located, must have been a little further down the road, near Elm Creek, where, presumably, elm trees were more common.

It is unclear where the Houston house was located, but it was probably within a mile or two of the Polley house. Mary Maverick, whose daughter,

¹⁷ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7634.

¹⁸ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7635.

Elizabeth, married Dr. Houston¹⁹, said the house was twenty-seven miles south southeast of San Antonio.²⁰ Elizabeth Maverick Houston's obituary claimed she died in Sutherland Springs, a mile from her first Texas home.²¹ Dr. Gray Jones Houston's brother, Ross Houston, also built a house on the Cibolo just a mile from his brother's house. He also received supplies from New York for the building of his house, as mentioned in a letter from Jonathan to Joseph H., 5 January 1857, "The doors and sashes were shipped on January 6, 1857 on Bark *Mustang* and consigned to C. H. Jordan, Port Lavaca marked Ross Houston, Sutherland Springs."²² The Gray Jones Houston home, in an advanced state of disrepair when this article was published in 1929, has probably succumbed to the elements.

According to the Texas Historical Landmark Application, the Polley Whitehall Mansion also holds some similarities to the Barker-Huebinger House

¹⁹ Frederick Charles Chabot, *With the Makers of San Antonio: Genealogies of the Early Latin, Anglo-American, and German Families with Occasional Biographies* (San Antonio: Artes Graficas, 1937), 282.

²⁰ Mary Adams Maverick and George Madison Maverick, *Memoirs of Mary A. Maverick: Arranged by Mary A. Maverick and Her Son Geo. Madison Maverick* (San Antonio: Alamo Printing Company, 1921), 111.

²¹ "In Memoriam," *Magazine of the Daughters of the Revolution*, vol. 3, no. 4, (November 1895), 240.

²² Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7634.

just a few miles down the road.²³ Both houses were made of local stone. The mortar for the stones was made by crushing mussel shells taken from the Cibolo Creek and burning them with lime. The Barkers bought the land on 12 May 1869 from Dr. Gray Jones Houston. The Barker house, along with the Masonic Temple in La Vernia, were purported to have been built by a stonemason named Lemmon between 1869 and 1871, according to an article written by Shirley Grammer, which was included in the Historical Marker Application Form for the Barker-Huebinger house. The article also states that the stone for the building of the Polley home was quarried on the Cibolo at the mouth of Elm Creek, about 3 to 3 ½ miles northwest of the Polley home and about 1 ½ miles northwest of the Barker Rock House.

The Brahan Masonic Lodge #226 A. F. & A. M. in La Vernia, Texas, built in 1871, also bears a striking resemblance to the construction of the Polley Whitehall Mansion. The stone was quarried nearby and hauled to the site by ox-cart.²⁴ The stone resembles the stone used to construct the Polley Whitehall Mansion and the Barker-Huebinger House. The Masonic Lodge also has torsion bars holding it

²³ "[Historic Marker Application: Barker-Huebinger Homestead]," Texas Historical Commission, accessed through The Portal to Texas History, August 18, 2008, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph491925/>.

²⁴ "Details for Brahan Lodge #226, A.F. & A.M. (Atlas Number 5493000487)," accessed September 1, 2018, <https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/>.

together, similar to the ones on the Polley Whitehall Mansion. Information on the stonemason was not available.

The Historic American Building Survey drawings of the Wilhelm and Wilhelmina Neese House in Warrenton, Texas, built in 1870–71, bears a striking resemblance to the plan of the Polley Whitehall Mansion, including the inclusion of the interior stairwell in the right rear room, rather than in the main hallway ([Figure D.77](#)). In the Neese house this room is the kitchen; in the Polley house it is a bedroom. The Neese house has a hipped roof rather than the plain pitched roof of the Polley house. The Polley house also has five fireplaces. Although the first story is almost identical to the Polley house, the second story of the Neese house is constructed quite differently. Historian Kenneth Hafertepe points out regarding the Neese house that “the first floor plan looked like any Anglo central passage plan, except that the passage did not have a staircase; an enclosed staircase was in the right rear room.”²⁵ One other coincidence, as yet unexplored, revolves around the fact that Wilhelm Neese and Joseph Schmitt, who was the

²⁵ Hafertepe, *The Material Culture of German Texans*, 154.

stonemason on John James' house in San Antonio,²⁶ emigrated from Germany in between 1847²⁷ and 1849.²⁸ Hafertepe observes that:

The house of John James, a business partner of Maverick's, was a far more typical Anglo Texan house. James's main house was a squarish block set back from the street, with galleries on both the front and rear elevations; the kitchen, a separate building behind the main house, had only a front gallery. Both the first floor of the main house and the kitchen were built of stone; later Sanborn Maps show a frame second floor to the main house, which may have been a later addition. Both the way in which the James House related to the street and the relation between house and kitchen marked it as being more conventionally Anglo Texan.²⁹

The similarity between this description of the James house and the Polley house could suggest a common builder.

Construction of the Doors

Although the Polley papers do not reveal much about the stonemasonry work on the house, the letters and receipts do offer details about the doors, windows, ceilings, floors, wall coverings, roofing, and lumber that was used in

²⁶ Chabot, *With the Makers of San Antonio*, 285. Joseph Schmidt began building the Maverick's Alamo Plaza house in early July 1850, shortly after he had arrived in Texas. Perhaps James recommended his work to Polley, who was also beginning construction on his house. Perhaps this warrants investigation. Joseph Schmidt's name is sometimes spelled Schmitt.

²⁷ *A Twentieth Century History of Southwest Texas* (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1907), 182. This publication uses "Joseph Schmitt."

²⁸ Jeff Carroll, "Warrenton, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 15, 2010, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hnw20>.

²⁹ Kenneth Hafertepe, "The Texas Homes of Sam and Mary Maverick," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 109, no. 1 (July 2005): 19.

the construction of the house. Joseph H. Polley looked to his brother Jonathan in New York for advice and assistance in purchasing the doors for the house. In a letter of 30 April 1853, Jonathan informed Joseph that he had arranged for the doors to be made. He advised Joseph that "the one Panel doors are going out of fashion as they are weaker & more liable to warp." Coats was to be in charge of constructing and painting the doors and windows, and Jonathan added the dimensions of the doors in a letter sent in July of 1853, saying that the "8 Hall doors will finish 2 ½ x 7 ½ ft." with "18 common [doors] 6 feet 10 inches by 2 feet 8 inches." A letter of 5 October 1853 contained information about the price for the hall doors: "The Hall doors you will see are higher but are the same price of some made for Tho Clark a neighbor." The doors were to be packed in lumber, that would serve the dual purpose of protection for the windows and providing material for the casing. The doors were to be shipped from New York. Jonathan assured that "The doors Mr Coats charged extra being extra [long] common being 6 8/12 x 2 8/12, The workmanship cannot be beat, The doors are now the most fashionable, 4 panels and beveled instead of mouldings, which our folks like best."³⁰ He even advised Joseph on how the doors should be carted once they arrive at Lavaca: "The 2 carts of doors, will be about 43 inches thick, if they will go in side by side it is the best way to carry them, put the sash on the top."

³⁰ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

Construction of the Windows

The windows were built and painted by Coats in New York in the same manner as the doors. Jonathan gave the dimensions of the windows in a letter of July 1853: "28 windows 5 feet 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches high by 2 feet 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide and 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches thick." In the 5 October 1853 letters Jonathan explained that "Mr Coats says he will make the very best for \$2,50, two 50/100 Dollars per window which if you want have your windows cased for them and send the size I think if you should order them you had better have them painted here." Jonathan was still finalizing details about the windows in a 20 March 1854 letter, which read "Respecting the blinds Mr Coats thinks there is some mistake as the sash was all of a [size] yet your outside caseing may be different he wants the width between the hanging caseing to window stool and the blinds will be right." One box of merchandise for Joseph H. Polley in the care of Robert M. Forbes arrived from New York at Lavaca on the schooner *Rainbow* on 12 October 1854. The contents were not described. However, Jonathan was still asking questions about the blinds in a letter of 9 January 1855. Jonathan wrote: "The blinds are done. They are to be painted Paris green. He needs to know the distance of the hanging casements from the outside wall before he can get the hangings." Historian William B. Maynard explains that "One up-to-date element shared by tasteful

residences of whatever size or style was the green latticed shutter . . . 'Venetian blind' refers today to a slatted interior window shade that can be pulled up and down, but in the early nineteenth century it more often referred to outside shutters."³¹ He points out that shutters were often painted green, often "painted with four coats, the last two of Paris green." Correspondence continued regarding the windows and blinds. A letter of 13 May 1856 contained Coats's bill for painting the doors and windows and enquiries about the glass for the windows, which would be bought in New York. The letter also stated that Houston had also ordered doors and windows from Coats. A letter of 30 October 1856 informed that Coats would have the sashes done that week, and the painter and glazier would then take them. A letter from Alex Coats to J[onathan] Polley, [1856], finalized the costs for the doors and windows at "2 cents per pane, 2 inch doors at 5 dollars, blinds are 7 ½ ft long-3 ½ dollars, blinds that are 6 ft 4 inches-3 dollars, packing will cost 10-15 dollars." The whole bill was \$133. Coats knew this to be a low price, but he had hoped to get some more business from the settlers in the area around the Cibolo. Finally, in a letter dated 8 January 1857, Jonathan announced: "The doors and sashes were shipped on January 6, 1857 on Bark Mustang and consigned to C. H. Jordan, Port Lavaca marked Ross Houston, Sutherland Springs." It is not clear whether these were Polley's windows or the

³¹ William Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in the United States, 1800-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 140.

windows that Houston had ordered. The ordeal of ordering and receiving the windows from New York had lasted from 1853 until 1857.

Construction of the Ceilings, Floors, and Walls

On 18 July 1855 R. M. Forbes sent a letter to informing J. H. Polley that he had substituted seven-eighths inch ceiling for three-quarters inch. Polley received 3000 ft. dressed ceiling from the company of Forbes & McKee on 24 July 1856. According to Cornell University, "Dressed Ceiling describes the treatment of large sections of a ceiling plane that is dressed by three-dimensional materials or objects that enliven the plane in terms of decoration or ornamentation."³²

Receipts from Robert M. Forbes, Lavaca 29 May 1855 and 16 August 1856 to Joseph H. Polley for flooring, indicated that the flooring for the house, perhaps downstairs in 1855 and upstairs in 1856, was installed.

We know little about the wall coverings in the house. In the summer of 2016, in the process of restoration, Keith and Robin Muschalek found a piece of pink striped fabric on the wall behind some trim boards in the back right downstairs room. They are considering whether this piece may be original to the house. A talk entitled "The Polley Mansion" by Harry McCarry Henderson,³³

³² "Cornell University - Intypes: Dressed Ceiling," accessed September 1, 2018, <https://intypes.cornell.edu/intypesub.cfm?inTypeID=143>.

³³ *San Antonio Express*, January 6, 1952, 15.

given to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas on January 10, 1952 in San Antonio in the Oriental Room of the Gunter Hotel to the De Zavala Chapter of the Texas Historical Landmarks Association, reported that the rooms of the house were named "Green Room," "Pink Room," "Star Room," "Blue Room," (The Bridal Chamber), and "Tan Room." To prove its credibility, the article had this disclaimer: "This was presented in the presence of Josephine Polley Golson, and Mr. O. W. Linne, in collaboration with Colonel Crimmins."³⁴ The bit of wall covering uncovered by the Muschaleks may give support to the fact that the wall coverings in the rooms gave the rooms their color names.

A bill of sale of 28 June 1856, from Joseph H. Polley to DeWitt A. Huff listed fabric purchased—36 yds of pink Calico 12c for \$4.32; 42 ½ yds Hickory 74c for 5.95; 35 ½ yds Striped Lowell 75c for 5.32.³⁵ Perhaps these are fabrics used for wall coverings, and the Striped Lowell is the wall covering for the back right downstairs room.

Constructing the Roof

Jonathan reported to Joseph H. in a letter, 30 April 1853, that "Roofing tin is very high. Nat Park says that formerly it was put on here for \$10 the square but will now cost more I think. I will purchase his machine for turning the edges

³⁴ Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archives, San Antonio.

³⁵ Joseph H. Polley Papers, 1850-1914, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco.

and you can turn them. Park says he always squares (that is, have the sides true and at right angles with the ends before turning the edges.)”³⁶ Jonathan again repeated in a letter from July that roofing tin was high. The Muschaleks, present owners of the house, have preserved pieces of the tin roof, which seems to match this description of the roofing materials of the house. A system called *terneplating* is described where the edges were turned up and soldered to the next plate.³⁷ Jonathan informed Joseph in a letter of 5 October 1853 “that I have sent you 40^a Tin & 65^a lead, the proportion to make solder, just melt it together and all is right I think getting it here will save you \$20.” His motivation was to save Joseph a little expense on the tin roofing.

The cypress rafters, joined by wooden pins, illustrated an intricate level of craftsmanship. The cypress lumber was supplied by Edward Quirin Kriegner from Curry Creek, according to receipts dated 23 September 1853, 8 April 1854, and 29 May 1854. Joseph H. Polley ordered three wagonloads of lumber from Kriegner in September, and continued to make orders in November 1853, and in March, April, and May of the next year. Some of the rafters were 16, 17, and 18

³⁶ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

³⁷ Henry Lionel Williams and Ottalie K. Williams, *Old American Houses and How to Restore Them - 1700-1850* (Garden City, NY: Country Life Press, 1946), n.p.

feet long.³⁸ Mr. Kriegner operated a saw mill on Curry Creek, just north of Boerne, where tall cypress trees still line the creek banks. John James had laid out the town plat of Boerne, and Polley's connection with James may have acquainted him with the sawmill. Judge William E. Jones established a sawmill there in 1850. Kriegner was the manager of the Curry Creek sawmill in the 1850s and 1860s for Judge Jones.³⁹ Kriegner was buried in Kendall County off Urschel/Acker Rd. on the Frank Stanush Ranch in a cemetery is reported to hold only his unfenced grave.⁴⁰

Additions, Deconstruction, and Reconstruction

Various additions, deconstruction, and reconstruction were made to the house, most after the property passed from the hands of the Polleys.

The watercolor of the house made by Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, a view of the front side of the house, drawn from the left side, does not include the cistern or the log kitchen.⁴¹ The watercolor has these notes: "Mr. Polley's Plantation /

³⁸ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

³⁹ Kendall County Historical Commission, *A History of Kendall County, Texas: Rivers, Ranches, Railroads, Recreation* (Dallas: Taylor Pub. Co., 1984).

⁴⁰ Brenda Anderson-Lindemann, *Bridging Spring Branch and Western Comal County, Texas* (Privately published, 2015), 94.

⁴¹ Sarah Ann Hardinge Family Papers [Artworks: Box 4-6], Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives, Fort Worth.

Harrie's Birth-place (1855) / Drawn from recollection / about Eighteen Miles from Seguin, Texas. The date refers to her son, Harry's, birthdate, not the date of the watercolor. The inscription, "Drawn from recollection," disqualifies this watercolor as a completely accurate representation of the house. The watercolor also includes several slave houses scattered around behind the house.

The photographs taken by Harry Hardinge, Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge's son, when he visited the Polley home in 1899⁴² reveal a portion of the breezeway/outdoor eating area was added at the left rear of the house beside the back door that leads to the kitchen ([Figures D. 8](#) and [D. 9](#)). The same photograph shows another log structure behind the kitchen. The use of this structure is unclear. In one of the photographs, taken from the front left side of the house, the cistern and log house are not clearly visible ([Figure D.6](#)). However, the kitchen is shown in another photograph taken at the same time ([Figures D.8](#) and [D.9](#)). Although the cistern is not visible from the front view of the house, another photograph from the front right side of the house reveals what could be the cistern and the pipes leading from the roof to the cistern ([Figure D.7](#)). The photo of the back of the house also shows an overhang constructed over the downstairs back door. No structure exists over or around the upstairs back door. Another of Hardinge's photographs shows a man standing beside a well or spring. The

⁴² Hardinge Family Collection, Mss, 1050, R. Stanton Avery Special Collections, New England Historic Genealogical Society. Box 15, Folder 372.

caption on the photograph, written in Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge's hand reads: "Mr Joe Polley at Cibolo Spring — 1899." Based on this inscription, the person must be Joseph B. Polley and perhaps this is a spring near Cibolo Creek ([Figure D.13](#)). Hardinge's photos also reveal what appears to be a ferry along the creek ([Figure D.14](#)). This is quite similar to a watercolor Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge's *A Private Ferry on the Guadalupe River, Seguin, Texas, 1853*.⁴³

Another photograph of the Polley Whitehall Mansion shows a husband, wife, and four children in front of the house ([Figure D.5](#)). A note associated with this photograph reads: "Joseph H. Polley Homestead / on the Cibolo / from original in possession / of Mrs. Mamie Polley Fitzgerald / San Antonio, Tex."⁴⁴ Mamie Polley Fitzgerald was the daughter of Walter Webster Polley, youngest son of Joseph H. Polley. The identity of the family is unclear. However, the photograph was likely taken before the Hardinge photographs in 1899. The tree with the sign on it just inside the picket fence seems to be the same in both photographs. It is not likely that the family is Joseph H. Polley's, because their youngest child was born in 1851. It seems unlikely that the house would have been as finished and as well landscaped as this photograph displays by 1851.

⁴³ Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, *Views of Texas, 1852-1856: Watercolors by Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, Together With a Journal of Her Departure from Texas*, First Edition (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1988), 26.

⁴⁴ "Joseph Henry Polley," Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, ca. 1935–ca. 1938, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

Another scenario is that the family is that of J. B. Polley. Since the photograph only shows four children, the photo must have been taken before 28 Dec 1880, because that is the birthdate of Jesse Henry Polley, the fifth child of Joseph B. and Martha Legette Polley. Identity of the family is difficult without further images for comparison.

A set of photographs taken by Arthur W. Stewart in 1936 for the Historic American Buildings Survey⁴⁵ reveal several changes to the Polley Whitehall Mansion. A screened-in porch has been added around the second story back door ([Figures D.35](#) and [D.36](#)) and an enclosed room has been added on the left side of the center back door ([Figure D.35](#) and [D.36](#)).

Later photographs of the Polley Whitehall Mansion reveal further constructions and deconstructions: different fencing, awnings added to the windows, extensions added to the downstairs porch, and an enclosed room added to the right rear of the house ([Figure D.63](#) and following). Currently no rails enclose the first-floor porch. During the neglect the house suffered just before the current owners took possession of the house, the first-floor rails suffered much damage and had to be removed.

⁴⁵ Historic American Buildings Survey, "Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX."

CHAPTER FIVE

Decorative Arts: Furnishing the Rooms

Belongings from Brazoria

Some of the Polleys' belonging traveled with them when they made the move from Brazoria to the Cibolo. The family began the move from their house at Bell's landing in Brazoria on 1 August 1847. Their granddaughter, Josephine Polley Golson, recalled being told that the family had several wagonloads of household goods and that the trek took a number of days.¹ A letter from Charles D. Sayre, in New York, to Joseph H. Polley, 2 July 1839, discussed the purchase or building of a wagon for Polley. It would cost \$110 and would be sent out on the *Bryan*, the name of the ship which would carry the wagon from New York to Lavaca, Texas.² According to Golson, the Polleys were met by the Sayres, fellow New Yorkers and Brazoria residents, in San Antonio.³ They were at that time

¹ Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light: Saga of Brit Bailey and Other Hardy Pioneers* (San Antonio: Naylor, 1950), 89.

² Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7629.

³ Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 89.

involved in a Presbyterian mission effort in San Antonio.⁴ The Polleys' daughter, Catherine Sayre Polley, born 19 February 1839, may have been named after Sayre's wife, Catherine. We do not know what items the Polleys moved to the Cibolo, but having lived a comfortable life in Bell's Landing, we must assume that some of their household treasures made the move with them.

One item that apparently made the move first shows up in Golson's account of the Polleys' life in Brazoria— the Polleys' washpot, which Mary Bailey Polley highly valued. It was purported to have been brought to Texas by her father, James Britton Bailey.⁵ Images of such washpots can be seen in John Michael Vlach's *Back of the Big House*.⁶ When the Polleys left their home in Brazoria during the Runaway Scrape, fleeing Santa Anna and his forces, Mary hid the washpot by sinking it into the river.⁷ Presumably they reclaimed it when they returned to their home. The washpot, perhaps the very same one, made another appearance in Golson's recollections. She reported that Joseph was sitting in front of the house near the Cibolo late one spring afternoon in 1848.

⁴ Frederick Charles Chabot, *With the Makers of San Antonio: Genealogies of the Early Latin, Anglo-American, and German Families with Occasional Biographies* (San Antonio: Artes Graficas, 1937), 302.

⁵ Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 92.

⁶ John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, Second Edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 219.

⁷ Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 81.

This would have been the stake house, which was located near Cibolo Creek.⁸ He saw a wall of water coming down the creek. Rushing down to the creek where the slaves were doing the laundry on a little island in the middle of the creek, Joseph called for help and the group managed to rescue the laundry and the women from the flood, but all the buckets, tubs, and pots were washed away. Several weeks later the iron washpot was found lodged in a tree a few miles down the river.⁹ Golson recounted that it was a flood in 1834 that took the life of the Polleys' first son, James Bailey. She also recalled that the Bailey's home was on a knoll, and many families of the community took refuge there during the flood¹⁰. Perhaps these memories were brought back to the Polleys' minds with the experience of the flood in 1848, sealing the Polleys' plan to relocate their new house a little distance from the creek on a higher knoll overlooking the creek.

Delays in Building and Furnishing the House

The years between 1847, when they arrived, and when they moved into their new house, probably around 1854, were filled with prosperity, but also with many heartaches for the Polleys. Their second oldest daughter, Emeline Elizabeth Polley James, who married John James, the Polleys' friend and business

⁸ For a discussion of the location of the Stake House, see page 42 of this thesis.

⁹ Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 92.

¹⁰ Golson, *Bailey's Light*, 83.

partner shortly after their arrival at the Cibolo, died in childbirth on 21 December 1848. Her infant child, Emeline Elizabeth James, survived but died on 28 July 1850. The flood in 1848 contributed to a cholera epidemic in 1849, killing hundreds of people in San Antonio, sometimes as many as thirty-five dying within a twenty-four-hour period.¹¹ Mary Maverick in her memoirs remembers that “one third of the population [of San Antonio] fled to the ranchos and into the country and they generally got above this heavy atmosphere and escaped.”¹² Many well-to do people came to the Cibolo to escape the horrors of the cholera outbreak.¹³ The Polleys’ sad remembrances of the death of their oldest son, James, who, according to Golson, had drowned at the age of four during a flood in 1834 in Brazoria, and the cholera epidemic that threatened the lives of their other children after that earlier flood, probably added to their grief and dread.¹⁴

But the Polleys persevered. The project of building the plantation home was conceived, planned, and executed. Once the construction was complete, the

¹¹ Pat Ireland Nixon, *A Century Of Medicine In San Antonio* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 97.

¹² Mary Adams Maverick and George Madison Maverick, *Memoirs of Mary A. Maverick: Arranged by Mary A. Maverick and Her Son Geo. Madison Maverick* (San Antonio: Alamo Printing Company, 1921), 105.

¹³ Richard B. McCaslin, *Sutherland Springs, Texas: Saratoga on the Cibolo*, 1st Edition (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2017), 14.

¹⁴ Another family member points out that there was no record of a flood in 1834, but that records point to a terrible flood in June of 1833, followed by an epidemic of cholera and mosquito-borne diseases. She wonders if he simply drowned in the river, not during a flood.

Polleys began to think about furnishing the house. It is not clear when the Polleys moved from the stake house to the new house. Joseph's brother, Jonathan, in a letter dated 20 December 1848, promised to come to Texas to help with the building of the house.¹⁵ He made the trip from New York to help his brother draw up the plans for the house in 1849 or 1850 and returned to New York in 1850 bringing his nephew, Joseph B., with him.¹⁶ The boy, and perhaps his Uncle Jonathan, returned to the Cibolo three years later. Many years later Joseph B. Polley, in his weekly column, "Historical Reminiscences," described a Thanksgiving dinner that he enjoyed in 1854. The dinner prepared by his mother and her servants accommodated fifty people. It is likely that the dinner occurred in the new house, and perhaps it was the first Thanksgiving in the Polley Mansion.¹⁷ We know that the Polleys were living in the new house when Sarah Ann Hardinge came to live with them as a teacher for their children in the spring of 1855. It seems probable that the Polleys moved into Whitehall sometime in 1854. The dating of the Polleys' move to the house can be inferred from the

¹⁵ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7631.

¹⁶ Joseph Benjamin Polley, "Historical Reminiscences," *San Antonio Daily Express*, April 21, 1907, 45, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth442332/m1/45/zoom/?q=Polley&resolution=1.50705576207955&lat=6296.52707410246&lon=3924.2634749623257>

¹⁷ Joseph Benjamin Polley, "Historical Reminiscences," *San Antonio Daily Express*, April 21, 1907, 45, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth442332/m1/45/zoom/?q=Polley&resolution=1.50705576207955&lat=6296.52707410246&lon=3924.2634749623257>

dating and subjects of the correspondence between Joseph and his brother Jonathan in New York.

Jonathan Polley's Involvement in Furnishing the House

After perhaps as many as six years of construction the Polleys finally moved into their new house, probably sometime in 1854, and set about furnishing Whitehall with quality furniture purchased through Joseph's brother, Jonathan, in New York City. The purchases began in 1854 and continued until 1868.

The preservation of much of the correspondence between Jonathan and Joseph makes it possible to identify many of the items that the Polleys purchased to furnish Whitehall. In certain instances, the documents even specify manufacturers, dates of purchase, and prices of the goods. In April of 1853 Jonathan and Joseph were corresponding about the manufacture of the doors and window in Whitehall, New York. An order for lumber including the cedar that would be used in the construction of the roof is dated September, probably 1853. The actual receipt for the lumber is dated 8 April 1854. In October of 1853 Jonathan and Joseph began corresponding about the furniture that Jonathan would purchase to furnish the new house. On 4 October 1854, Joseph Polley was informed by Robert. M. Forbes, a merchandise and transport company in Lavaca, that a box from New York had arrived. On 6 November 1854, Forbes reported

that he was having difficulty finding haulers to move the cargo from the port in Lavaca to the Cibolo. In another letter from Jonathan of 9 January 1855, he continued discussing the construction of the windows and doors and the construction of a wagon for Joseph. Finally, on 5 October 1855, Jonathan reported that an order had been shipped from New York. In a letter dated 8 January 1857, Jonathan reported that the doors and windows were shipped on 6 January 1857. It is unclear what the Polleys used for doors and windows in the interim period. In a letter written to her daughters on 23 May 1858, Mary assured her daughters that the furnishings would be there by July. She says: "I expect you would like to hear something about the Music box¹⁸. It's on the way by this time and the rest of the things, sofa, chairs, carpet, two rocking chairs will all be on by July."¹⁹ However, on 9 May 1859 Jonathan was still discussing the selection of furniture for J. H. and reports that the pieces had been sent. A receipt for the furniture from Forbes & McGee was dated 25 July 1859. Other items were shipped later according to a letter dated 4-6 March 1860. Other receipts for household items were dated 1 Aug 1860 and 3 May 1868.

¹⁸ Perhaps the "Music Box," Mrs. Polley mentions is the piano. This letter is merely a transcription of the original letter, not a photostatic copy. It is possible that the date has been transcribed incorrectly and should be 1858 rather than 1859.

¹⁹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 2F.

Knives and Forks

In a letter from Jonathan to Joseph, dated 5 October 1853, Jonathan wrote that he was living in New York, making the purchases that Joseph had requested.²⁰ The main items discussed in the letter are the doors and windows. However, in addition to the doors and windows, Jonathan had purchased knives and forks. He indicated that although Joseph had requested that the knives and forks should be of American manufacture, high polished steel with wrought butts. Jonathan expressed regret that he was only able to find knives and forks with “the best ivory handles riveted” and “steel [high] polished.”²¹

Beds and Bedclothes

In the same letter Jonathan also regretted that he did not get the beds his brother had asked for, because the “feathers in market are too much mixed.” He advised him that “if you get a [wire] spring bed, and mattress, you will never use feathers, if I come again I shall bring springs to manufacture myself.”²²

²⁰ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

²¹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

²² Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

Curtains

In the same letter, with regards to the curtains, Jonathan wrote: “The curtains we did not know what whether damask or merine [moreen?], but we will attend to any orders at any time as there is a line of Schooners ^that^ runs direct to Matagorda bay.” Receipts from Robert M. Forbes & Co. in Lavaca indicated the arrival of one box of merchandise from New York on 28 March 1854, presumably containing these household items.²³

Hauling the Furniture from Lavaca to the Cibolo

In a letter of 20 March 1854, Jonathan related: “as regards your orders I will fill them as soon as I can after hearing from you again.”²⁴ The content of this order is not clear. Another shipping order from 4 October 1854 on the Schooner *Rainbow* to Joseph H. Polley, Sutherland Springs, in the care of Robert. M. Forbes & Co. in Lavaca is perhaps that order to which Jonathan referred in the 20 March 1854 letter. Even though the merchandise had made the long trek from New York around Florida and to the port at Lavaca, the boxes still had to be hauled on ox carts overland from Lavaca up to Sutherland Springs ([Figure D.83](#)). A letter from Robert M. Forbes to Joseph H. Polley, 6 November 1854, indicated that

²³ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

²⁴ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

Forbes was having difficulty in engaging haulers. This problem may have been due to the increasing tension relative to the “Cart Wars.” During the summer and fall of 1857, Mexican cartmen were attacked by masked bands believed to be Anglo teamsters who resented the competition from the Mexicans. Historian John Tutino reports that “the raids proved successful, and Mexican were effectively removed from the freight business between San Antonio and the Gulf coast ports.”²⁵ Another receipt from Forbes, 25 July 1859, listed the specific names of the haulers (in their own hand) for the three carts that would carry the furniture to Whitehall. The names of the haulers were all German, rather than Mexican — Friedrich Manz, [Gustavo Ziller], and [G.] Shulz.²⁶

The Piano

The next record of furniture purchases was dated 8 May 1859. In an information-packed, four-page letter Jonathan detailed the furniture purchases he had made for Joseph. The first item that he mentioned was a piano. He wrote:

I was 2 or 3 days looking around examining furniture & c, I was in a number of different piano warehouses with Adolphus to assist me and

²⁵ John Tutino, *Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 43.

²⁶ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

this was much the best bargain I could get it is a \$400 Piano but there is considerable competition and you will see I bought at a great reduction.²⁷

This piano, frequently mentioned in newspaper articles and magazine descriptions of the Polley Whitehall Mansion, was described as a beautiful rosewood piano “with mother-of-pearl keys, and with figures and flowers inlaid with pearls adorning the front over the keyboard.”²⁸ The Polleys’ piano survives in the possession of a family member in California. Such a piano was built in 1850 by Henry Hawkey. The keyboard featured mother of pearl naturals, and rosewood sharps. Above the keyboard, the fallboard had mother of pearl inlay in the shape of flowers, as well as painted designs. The iron frame also had lovely hand-painted flowers. The case had beautiful rosewood veneer and nice lines, with square edges rather than rounded.²⁹ A receipt for the piano, dated 25 July 1859, indicated that the piano was received in Lavaca by the company of Forbes & McGee. The piano and its shipping container weighed 786 pounds.³⁰

²⁷ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

²⁸ Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 97.

²⁹ Martha Novak Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano: 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 124.

³⁰ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7635.

Sofa and Chairs

Around 1859 Joseph H. Polley also purchased a mahogany sofa from New York. A bill of sale from the T. C. Houghton Company, Furniture Dealer and Upholsterer, Nos. 644 and 646 Broadway, dated 4 May 1859, listed “1 Mahy [Mahogany?] Sofa,” sold for \$40.00.³¹ In the letter of 8 May 1859 Jonathan guaranteed that “the man pledged his word that the upholstering is of pure hair and no swingle tow in them.”³² Swingle tow is the coarse part of the fiber that has been separated from the finer part. In fact, Houghton had won a bronze medal in 1857 for his sofas and chairs from the American Institute of the City of New York.³³

Jonathan also purchased chairs for Joseph. In the letter of 8 May 1859, he reported “as for the small chairs, a \$4 chair is of too ordinary carving and is not as strong as higher priced. the chairs I send you are \$6 chairs which I got for \$5.”³⁴ On the receipt from 4 May 1859, the chairs were described as “6 Mahy

³¹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7635.

³² Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

³³ American Institute of the City of New York, *Annual Report of the American Institute of the City of New York* (New York: Charles van Benthuyssen, 1858), 66.

³⁴ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7635.

[Mahogany?] Chairs \$30.00," again purchased from T. C. Houghton Company, furniture Dealer and Upholsterer, Nos. 644 and 646 Broadway.³⁵

It appears that Joseph had requested two mahogany rockers. However, Jonathan explained that "a house was recommended to me I went there after examining in numerous other places and Adolphus and I thought this was the best and strongest, I bought but he had not a mahogany Rocker but a rosewood the price \$30 he finally let me have it at the price of mahogany."³⁶ Jonathan went on to explain his purchase stating that "In the best shops a No 1. Rocker will cost \$50/ I was at Mr Springmeyers Sales Room yesterday took a seat in a Rosewood Rocker which I priced. It was \$50. Springmeyers cheapest chairs are \$12 for each."³⁷ Jonathan did his comparative shopping, no doubt, to assure his brother that he was making good use of his money and that his selections could be trusted. John H. Springmeyer was the brother-in-law of furniture maker John Henry Belter. In 1856 Belter's brother-in-law joined the firm, and in 1865 the firm's name was changed to Springmeyer Bros; the business went bankrupt in

³⁵ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

³⁶ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

³⁷ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

1867.³⁸ Belter's furniture was described as "curvaceous rosewood chairs, sofas, tables, etageres, beds etc." and as "a coarse and exuberant Rococo Revival manner, characterized by elaborate open crestings and aprons, decorated with C and S scrolls, leaves, flowers and grapes, partly in high relief, where extra sections were glued to the laminated base."³⁹ Miss Ima Hogg, an American society leader, beloved and respected Texas resident, philanthropist, patron and collector of the arts, was an early collector of Belter furniture, and several items are on display at Bayou Bend, her home turned Museum of Fine Arts Houston house museum, in the Belter Room.

For the other rocker, Jonathan substituted an arm chair on casters, explaining in the letter of 8 May 1859, that "for the other Rocker I got an easy chair on patent casters which I think you will like better as you can turn around & move around at your pleasure and as a Rocker is an independent piece it was not necessary to match."⁴⁰ On the receipt from Houghton the item was listed as "1 Mahy [Mahoganey?] Arm Chair \$20.00."⁴¹

³⁸ Joanna Banham, *Encyclopedia of Interior Design* (London: Routledge, 1997), 128.

³⁹ Joan M. Marter, *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 248.

⁴⁰ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

⁴¹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

Carpets

At the same time, Jonathan purchased carpets for the Polley Whitehall Mansion. In a letter to J. H., 8 May 1859, Jonathan wrote:

Now for your carpeting I got Brussels which is much the prettiest and cheap in the end. It is English and fast colours and I think beautiful. I got different carpet for the rooms and the rugs are pretty and I think large enough They had a large size at \$[6,0] which I came very near taking but did not. I think you will be pleased if not or if you are write me on the receipt of the goods.⁴²

The receipt indicated that purchases from Smith & Lounsbury on 6 May 1859 included twenty-eight yards of Brussels Tapestry at \$1.10 per yard, for a total of \$30.80; forty-two yards of Brussels Tapestry at \$1.10 per yard, for a total of \$46.20; and two rugs at \$4.00 each, for a total of \$8. An advertisement in *Carroll's New York City Directory* in 1859 boasted that the business held the largest and cheapest selection of carpeting in the city, listing "New Patterns *Brussels*, best English makers at 9s. and 11s. per yard."⁴³

⁴² Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

⁴³ G. Danielson Carroll, *Carroll's New York City Directory to the Hotels of Note, Places of Amusement, Public Buildings ... Etc: With a Description of and Directions When and How to Visit the Prominent Objects of Interest: Also to the Leading Mercantile Firms, in Every Commercial Pursuit ...* (Privately published, 1859), 70.

Items Mentioned in Mary Polley's Will

Doubtless many more items graced the Polley Whitehall Mansion. Some items of furniture were listed in the probate of Mary's will. Mary Bailey Polley died on 20 January 1888, outliving her husband, Joseph Henry Polley, by almost nineteen years. In her last will and testament made on 15 July 1886 and probated after her death on 2 April 1888, Mary bequeathed to her daughter-in-law, Francis Marion Polley, wife of Abner Hubbard Polley, all her kitchen furniture, a cane-bottom rocking chair, one bureau, one looking glass, one clothes press, an old safe, the dining table, and her buggy and horse, Charlie. She left her son Jonathan James Polley one bed, mattress, and bed clothing. Her granddaughter Adelia Pickett received one large hair bottom rocking chair, two silver forks, and two silver spoons. She bequeathed to her daughter, Hariett Polley Houston, two silver forks, two silver spoons, and a wide safe. She left her daughter, Susan Polley Brooks, two silver forks, two silver spoons, a work table, and the clothes press (already in Susan's possession). To her son, Walter Webster Polley, she bequeathed her large clothes chest. Her son, Joseph Benjamin Polley, received one dressing case, a large arm chair, and one hair bottom parlour chair. Her daughter, Catherine Sayre Polley, inherited one bed, mattress, bed clothing, two silver spoons, and two silver forks. A codicil to the will made on 14 January 1887 bequeathed her gold watch and chain to Abner Hubbard Polley. She bequeathed

one gold necklace to her granddaughter, Emma Houston, daughter of David H. and Harriet Houston. She revoked the gift of her buggy to Abner H. Polley and gave it to Walter W. Polley.⁴⁴

Carriages

At the foot of Joseph H. Polley's grave is a veteran's stone with the words, "Teamster Capt. Brown's Co. War of 1812." Although Joseph gained a reputation as a Texas pioneer and cattle rancher, he is also remembered as being a teamster, an ox cart driver in the War of 1812. He had an interest in carts, wagons, and carriages all his life. The transportation of goods was always a priority. Charles D. Sayre wrote to Joseph Polley from New York, 2 July 1839, about the purchase or building of a wagon at the cost of \$110. The wagon was to be sent out from New York to Lavaca on the *Bryan*. Polley paid taxes in Guadalupe County in 1853 for two wagons and six yoke of oxen, among other things.⁴⁵ In a letter of 9 January 1855 Jonathan Polley reported that he thought the \$100 wagon from Merian was too expensive, and he had asked Greenough to make a "lumber wagon for \$100 without a top or \$125 with a stationary top," reporting again on

⁴⁴ Probate Minutes, Volume C-D, 1883-1893, p. 614-621, Wilson County Courthouse, Floresville, TX.

⁴⁵ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

15 April 1855 that Greenough was still working on the wagon.⁴⁶ The wagon was shipped in October, according to a letter from Jonathan dated 12 October 1855.⁴⁷ A 22 May 1866 receipt from the United States Internal Revenue Service listed Joseph Polley's taxable items as 2 carriages, 1 piano, and 2 gold watches. A few months later 15 September 1866 the list was amended to 1 carriage, 1 gold plate, and 1 gold watch.⁴⁸ A letter from Henry Hoskins to Jonathan Polley, 28 January 1868, explained that Hoskins had sent Jonathan a copy of his *Illustrated Catalogue* that contains "many desirable styles of carriages some of which cannot fail to please your brother, being particularly suited for southern use."⁴⁹ Joseph had decided on a barouche and engaged Jonathan to make enquiries in New York for him about the purchase according to a letter of 2 February 1868. In a letter to Joseph, 3 May 1868, Jonathan wrote: "I left home on the 21st of April for New Haven where I purchased a Barouche not the kind you selected as I found none." Jonathan quoted the price as \$500, but that "I beat him down ten dollars." The total cost was \$490 for the carriage, \$133 for the harness, and \$6 for a "fancy

⁴⁶ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

⁴⁷ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

⁴⁸ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7637.

⁴⁹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7637.

mat." The carriage was purchased from Lawrence, Bradely, and Pardee⁵⁰, a carriage company in New Haven, Connecticut, and was shipped to Lavaca on the Brig *Emily* on 28 April 1868. It arrived on 1 July 1868.⁵¹

Decorative Arts at the Witte Museum

The existence of several other items of decorative arts that could have been found in the Polley home were uncovered in newspaper archives and museum finding aids. According to an article in the *Daily Express* of San Antonio, 18 August 1906, Mrs. E. M. Goldstein (J. B. Polley's daughter, Josephine) presented to the Alamo two relics. The items were a musket used at the San Jacinto battle by Asa K. Brigham and a knife. The knife was described as a "two-bladed, buckhorn handled knife left at J. H. Polley's home by one of General Taylor's soldiers after the war with Mexico." The knife was a "two-bladed affair" with the longest blade being over a foot long. The musket was described as originally being a flintlock, but "later arranged for a percussion cap." The article went on to say that Joseph B. Polley, son of Joseph H. Polley, had a number of

⁵⁰ A catalogue for the Lawrence, Bradely, and Pardee Carriage Company can be seen at https://books.google.com/books?id=E0e8-iyUXywC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ViewAPI#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁵¹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7637

other interesting items that he would doubtless loan at some time to the Alamo exhibit.⁵²

The musket and the knife, along with several other items that were once owned by the Polleys and displayed at the Polley Whitehall Mansion, eventually found their way into the collection at Witte Museum in San Antonio.⁵³ These items include:

A candle mold with slots for 18 candles, circa 1830, used to make candles for the first Texas Congress which convened in Columbia, Texas on 3 October 1837 was confirmed to be a part of the Witte Museum's collection in 2015.

A Bowie knife, circa 1830, purported to have been found on the San Jacinto Battlefield by Joseph H. Polley, was on exhibit at the Witte Museum in San Antonio in June 2018.

A medicine chest given to Joseph H. Polley by a sea captain who was on one of Jean LaFitte's vessels was confirmed to be part of the Witte Museum's collection in 2015. This item is the subject of a clipping found among the Polleys' archive at the Briscoe Center. The article from the *San Antonio Express*, 12 January 1936, states that the medicine chest was donated to the Witte Museum by Josephine Polley Golson and Emma Houston Wright, granddaughters of Joseph

⁵² "Relics to the Alamo," *Daily Express* (San Antonio), 18 August 1906.

⁵³ "Polley Items" finding aid produced by the Witte Museum, June 2018.

H. Polley. The article purports that “the medicine chest was given in a large sea chest to the grandfather of Josephine Polley Golson in 1821 by a sea captain, supposed to be on one of LaFitte’s vessels. The bottles contain the original medicine. The caps are of silver and the pestle and mortar are of rock crystal glass. Seven drawers each divided into half, and six pigeon-holes provide fittings for the medicine bottles. The whole may be locked by closing the cabinet doors over the drawers.”⁵⁴

A branding iron with the “JP” brand, believed to be the oldest brand in Texas, was confirmed to be part of the Witte’s collection in 2015. The brand is registered in Brazoria County, Texas, and was used by the ancestors of the donor.

Scales from the colony at Fredericksburg connected with the Polley family were confirmed to be part of the Witte’s collection in 2015.

A rifle purported to have been used in the battle of San Jacinto and the Civil War donated to the Witte Museum was returned to the family on 22 December 1955.

A gavel made from a tree on the San Jacinto Battlefield was confirmed to be in the Witte’s collection in 2015.

⁵⁴ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875) 2F, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. Houston Family Documents, 1862, 1880, undated.

A Bible said to be the first English version brought to Texas was once in the collection, but the file says “deleted 08/1872.”

A portrait of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna was also “deleted 08/1872.”

A spinning wheel brought to Texas by German colonists who came to Texas with Prince Carl von Solms–Braunfels is unlocated and scratched out on the donor card.

An early 19th century glass salt cellar once in the collection was “returned to Mrs. Polley’s daughter.”

In addition, a conversation with Tom Featherston, great-great-grandson of Joseph H. Polley and law professor at Baylor University, revealed that his mother, Mary Lou Polley Featherston, had given a large gourd to the Witte Museum. Some early drawings of the Polley Whitehall Mansion contain the image of an item which may have been a large gourd. Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge’s drawing of the house show such an item on the side of the house being used as a cistern. An early drawing of the stake house, sketched by an anonymous artist, identified as the contractor who supervised slave labor that built the mansion, also includes a gourd-shaped container beside the door of the stake house.⁵⁵ Joseph Polley Paine, great-grandson of Joseph H. Polley, also

⁵⁵ “Copy of a letter from Joseph Polley Paine,” Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archives.

sketched the stake house. However, the object in his sketch looks more like a wooden rain barrel. The Witte's possession of the gourd is, as yet, unconfirmed.

Other Items of Decorative Arts Revealed in Photographs

Two older photos of the interior of the house exist. One photo was taken in March 1899 by Harry [Henry] Hardinge, son of Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, who painted the first image of the house and was the school teacher of the Polley children in 1855 and 1856.⁵⁶ The house was still in the possession of the Polley family at that time the photo was taken. Mary Bailey Polley died in 1888, but the house was not sold out of the family until 1907. The photo reveals a wooden bedstead with a jacquard cover. The bed is a four-poster wooden cannonball bed with straight headboard and footboard. The bed covering is a geometric four-leaf jacquard pattern ([Figure D.10](#)). Mr. Hardinge's image is faintly visible standing beside the bed. The note on the back of the photo indicates that this was the bedroom in which Harry was born in 1855, and possibly the same bed.

The other photo of the interior of the house was taken during the during the Historic American Building Survey in 1936. Judge C. A. Goeth and his family would have been living in the house at that time. Even when owned by the Goeths, the house was still identified as the Polley Mansion. The furniture in the

⁵⁶ Hardinge Family Collection, Mss 1050, R. Stanton Avery Special Collections, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston. Box 18.

room appears to be contemporary to Judge Goeth's time. Of some note is the clock on the mantel, two framed images on the mantel, two other framed images on the wall, the andirons around the fireplace, and the mounted twelve-point buck. A similar mounted head was recently observed in the attic of the house. The clock, which appears to be made of marble with a figurine on the top, could be from the nineteenth century. The two framed images appear to be from the nineteenth century as well ([Figure D.39](#)).

Other images of the interior of the house and its furnishings can be found in articles in *The Seguin Gazette-Enterprise* during the time that Oscar C. Linne owned the house (1946–91). The Linnés furnished the house extravagantly with furniture purchased from abroad. However, all of those furnishings postdate the Polleys' tenure.

CHAPTER SIX

Domestic Arts: Making Home and Keeping House

Introduction

Devoting an entire chapter to the domestic arts of the Polley Whitehall Mansion may seem unorthodox. As Wendell Berry¹ says in his essay “In Distrust of Movements,” “the comparative few who practice the necessary husbandry and wifery [domestic arts] often are inclined to apologize for doing so, having been carefully taught in our education system that those arts are degrading and unworthy of people’s talents.”² Perhaps that opinion is changing, however, at least in the area of Museum Studies. Greenfield Village at the Henry Ford Museum has a curator of domestic arts, as does the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City has a domestic arts display in the American Wing. Lowery Stokes Sims, chief curator of the Museum of Arts and Design reports that she “had long been used to considering

¹ Wendell Berry, an American novelist, poet, environmental activist, cultural critic, and farmer, is recipient of The National Humanities Medal, the Jefferson Lecturer for 2012, 2013 Fellow of The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, recipient of the 2013 Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award, and the first living writer to be inducted into the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame.

² Wendell Berry, “In Distrust of Movements,” in *Citizenship Papers* (Washington, D.C: Counterpoint, 2003), 47.

craft and unsung domestic arts in the context of the fine arts.”³ I was particularly moved recently viewing an exhibit at the Anchorage Museum entitled “Needle & Myth.” The exhibit involved the deconstruction and reconstruction of salvaged antique embroideries, linens, and crocheted items. Reconfiguring the salvaged material “meant sifting through the tangible and intangible detritus of women’s lives. Some of it speaks long after its solitary makers no longer can.”⁴ My hope is that in sifting through the letters and receipts of Mary Bailey Polley’s life I can awaken her voice and elevate the status of domestic arts.

Berry observes:

. . . all of us who live in the suffering rural landscapes of the United States know that most people are available to those landscapes only recreationally. We see them bicycling or boating or hiking or camping or hunting or fishing or driving along and looking around. They do not, in Mary Austin’s⁵ phrase, “summer and winter with the land.” They are unacquainted with the land’s human and natural economies. Though people have not progressed beyond the need to eat food and drink water and wear clothes and live in houses, most people have progressed beyond the domestic arts—the husbandry and wifery of the world—by which those needful things are produced and conserved.⁶

³ Julie Lasky, “At Museum of Arts and Design, a Swan Song for Lowery Stokes Sims,” *The New York Times*, December 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/19/arts/artsspecial/at-museum-of-arts-and-design-a-swan-song-for-lowery-stokes-sims.html>.

⁴ Amy Meissner, “Inheritance Project,” accessed September 7, 2018, <http://www.amymeissner.com/inheritance-project.html>.

⁵ Mary Austin is the author of *The Land of Little Rain* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2009).

⁶ Wendell Berry, “In Distrust of Movements,” in *Citizenship Papers* (Washington, D.C: Counterpoint, 2003), 47.

Mary was deeply involved in the “husbandry and wifery” of her world, “summering” and “wintering” on the prairies along the Cibolo and becoming practiced and gifted in the domestic arts of cooking, sewing, gardening, landscaping, managing household economies, and providing hospitality for her family and strangers. The survival and flourishing of those in her charge depended on her abilities and perseverance in keeping a house and making a home.

Domestic Arts in Brazoria

Mary’s expertise in the domestic arts began, not with her residence at the Polley Whitehall Mansion, but much earlier at her residence, also called Whitehall, in Brazoria. In a letter from Mrs. C. Robinson to Joseph H. Polley, 12 March 1850, after discussing other issues at the beginning of the letter, Robinson addressed the remainder of the letter to Mary, saying “And now having answered your letter, I intend the rest of mine for Mrs. Polley, being anxious to show her that the old place has not entirely lost its name for industry since she left.”⁷ The author proceeded to enumerate repairs that have been made to the place, saying “you may remember you have ran away from this place because you did not want to rebuild all the houses.” These two statements, about Mary’s

⁷ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7632.

industry and her running away from building repairs, may seem incongruous.

Perhaps a flood or tropical storm had destroyed the buildings and contributed to the Polleys' decision to relocate. Robinson continued the letter discussing the productivity of the garden.

. . . I have a two acre garden so full of vegetables now that we are feeding them away rapidly to the cows to make room for spring gardening and this, too, after marketing every day in the week except the Sabbath, feeding our Negroes & giving our cows a large daily supply. I have raised 2000 heads of good cabbage since October – and if you will come & dine with me now I'll give you white hard headed lettuce & cabbage, celery, salsify, beets, spinach, carrots, parsnips, and mustard. I have a border nearly half way around the garden of raspberry vines – four square & a half of fine strawberries, half a dozen varieties of grapes – four of figs – almond trees – quince, Kentucky plums, Green Sage [& dill] – my roses, oleanders, Jessamines, pinks & bulbs would make your daughter absolutely envious. Last spring I had eighteen kinds of vegetables, ready for use at once. As for this spring I worked & sold near 800 pounds of butter, never having more than seventeen cows . . .⁸

If Robinson's industry was a close match for Mary's, the Polley house and garden in Brazoria must have been quite a sight. Clearly in Brazoria, Mary had a reputation for industry.

Sewing

Mary was also known for was her sewing. She was reported to have had the first sewing machine in Texas, according to Roger W. Fore's article "A

⁸ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7632.

Century of Service.”⁹ An earlier article in the *San Antonio Express*, dated 12 January 1913, makes the same claim.¹⁰ This claim, however, is likely false. According to Steve Hathcock, the first sewing machine was mailed to Texas from New York City in 1853, addressed to “Captain John Singer and wife, General delivery, Brazos Santiago, Texas.”¹¹

Mary received her first sewing machine a few years later in 1860, also from New York, a gift from her brother-in-law, Jonathan Polley. This gift was recorded in a receipt for a sewing machine costing \$85.00, dated 1 Aug 1860.¹² A letter from Catherine Polley, a cousin in New York, to Kate Polley, dated 3 May 1860, mentioned that the family in Whitehall, New York, had a Wheeler and Wilson sewing machine.¹³ Perhaps the family in New York, pleased with their machine, arranged to have one sent to their relatives in Texas. In the 1850s and 1860s Wheeler & Wilson had huge factories and employed thousands of workers.

⁹ Roger W. Fore, “A Century of Service,” *San Antonio Express Magazine*, December 18, 1949.

¹⁰ *San Antonio Express*. January 12, 1913. Accessed from The Portal to Texas History. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth432191/m1/36/zoom/>.

¹¹ Steve Hathcock, “Why the First Sewing Machine in Texas Was Delivered to Padre Island,” *Valley Morning Star*, accessed September 7, 2018, https://www.valleymorningstar.com/coastal_current/news/something_extra/why-the-first-sewing-machine-in-texas-was-delivered-to/article_c8756984-e9c7-11e4-9e55-2f7ae612eb7a.html.

¹² Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7636.

¹³ Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archive, San Antonio.

Their main factory was in Bridgeport, Connecticut; their sales and storage depots were at 505 & 625 Broadway, New York.¹⁴ Mary, if she had a Wheeler & Wilson, likely had a Model No. 1, which consisted of several varieties that were manufactured between 1852 and 1909, when the factory closed.¹⁵ In 1859 21,306 Wheeler & Wilson sewing machines were manufactured, and 25,102 were manufactured in 1860.¹⁶ Mary's daughter, Harriet, in a letter to her mother, 29 April 187[0], spoke of having her own sewing machine. Perhaps the Houstons, who bought windows and doors for their house along the Cibolo through the Joseph's brother Jonathan in New York, also bought a sewing machine through him.

But Mary was quite a seamstress long before she received the gift from Jonathan. Many household receipts list purchases of fabrics: cotton, calico, Negro Kersey, bleached muslin, shirting, striped Lowell, Hickory, brown linen, green barage, and linen for shirts.¹⁷ Negro Kersey was a rough, durable woolen fabric used to make clothes for the slaves. At one point ten children and as many as

¹⁴ Alex I. Askaroff, "Wheeler & Wilson, Sewalot," accessed September 8, 2018, <http://www.sewalot.com/wheeler%20&%20wilson%20sewing%20machines.htm>.

¹⁵ Askaroff, "Wheeler & Wilson, Sewalot."

¹⁶ Grace Rogers Cooper, "The Sewing Machine: Its Invention and Use," Smithsonian Libraries, accessed September 8, 2018, http://www.si.si.edu/DigitalCollections/HST/Cooper/CF/page_display_02.cfm?start=54.

¹⁷ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

twenty slaves needed to be clothed. Without a sewing machine, it must have been almost a full-time job sewing and mending the clothes for all those people. Mary appears to have passed this skill on to her daughters. Letters from Emeline, dated 10 November 1848,¹⁸ and Mary Augusta Baylor, 4 August 1854,¹⁹ discussed their sewing projects. Even her daughter, Catherine, who was residing at the State Lunatic Asylum in Austin, recorded in a letter of 17 January 1878 that she was doing some sewing.²⁰

Mary learned her sewing skills from her mother, Edith, and, primarily, from her step-mother, Nancy (Dorothy) Bailey. Golson explained that Stephen F. Austin and Joseph Henry Polley were both vying for Mary Bailey's affection, but Joseph won the pursuit. Mary's sister Elizabeth was also to be married to David H. Milburn, and they planned a double wedding. Mary and Elizabeth's step-mother had saved her wedding dress, bringing it with her from Kentucky. With much effort the light-gray silk dress with soft blue flowers was converted into two dresses for the daughters' wedding on 24 October 1826.²¹

¹⁸ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7630.

¹⁹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7630. MSS 7633.

²⁰ Joseph H. Polley Papers, 1850-1914, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

²¹ Josephine Polley Golson, *Bailey's Light: Saga of Brit Bailey and Other Hardy Pioneers* (San Antonio: Naylor, 1950), 60–61.

Other evidence of Mary's sewing skill was recorded in a letter of 5 March 1859, from Catherine Polley to Harriet, which mentioned Mrs. Polley making the summer clothes for Harriet and Adelia, who were at boarding school in Seguin at the time. These "summer clothes" would have been made by hand, before Mary received her sewing machine from Jonathan.²²

In a letter of 5 December 1861, delivered back to Texas by George Giddings, Joseph B. Polley, at that time in winter quarters with the Confederate army, tells his sister Harriet that his group of soldiers is supposed to be receiving a box of clothing from the Cibolo. Mary appears to be making good use of her sewing machine by sewing uniforms for the Confederate soldiers in her son's unit during the cold winter of 1861.²³

Sewing was a necessary skill in which all pioneer women participated. However, Mary's possession of a sewing machine and her slave labor helped to make her household particularly productive when it came to making clothing.

Cooking

Josephine Polley Golson affirms that "Mrs. Polley was a very practical woman, an excellent housekeeper and cook, and managed her household so that

²² J. B. Polley's Diaries and Letters, Texas Heritage Museum, Hillsboro, TX.

²³ J. B. Polley's Diaries and Letters, Texas Heritage Museum, Hillsboro, TX.

everything moved along like clockwork.”²⁴ She was quite famous for her cooking. Several letters requested copies of her recipes. An undated letter from E. E. Platt to Mary asked for her “receipt [*sic*] for making Silver Cake.”²⁵ A letter from M. V. Slocum of San Antonio to Mary, dated 14 July 1878, asked “would you please send me your receipt [*sic*] for sweet pickles.”²⁶ Joseph B. Polley in his “Historical Reminiscences” article of 16 December 1906, recounted the story of how Jim Bailey and Cato Morgan, who had been sent out to pick mustang grapes to make preserves, were attacked by Indians. Mary was also known for her peach preserves. Letters from John James to Joseph H. Polley, dated 9 and 10 August 1858, mentioned sending peaches to Mary.²⁷ Possibly James hoped the peaches would be converted into her famous preserves. Her daughter Harriet, married to David H. Houston, told about picking agarita berries for preserves in a letter dated 29 April 187[0].²⁸ Vinten Lee James, son of John James, the Polleys’ son-in-law and business partner, had this recollection of Mary, particularly her preserves:

²⁴ Golson, *Bailey’s Light*, 97.

²⁵ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7635.

²⁶ Joseph H. Polley Papers, 1850-1914. Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

²⁷ Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archive, San Antonio.

²⁸ Joseph H. Polley Papers. 1850-1914. Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Mrs. Polley was a rather small sized lady, gifted with unbounded energy. She was the first one up in the morning and the last one to go to bed at night. She personally oversaw the dairy, kitchen, and household work, and I never saw her idle. She excelled in preserving the great amount of fruit her orchard produced and her branded [*sic*] peaches and cream for dessert was the joy of my life; and her buttermilk biscuits, baked hams, fried chicken and game dinners I will never forget. Mrs. Polley had a lovable disposition. I never saw her angry, or heard her speak ill of any one. Every one who came under her influence loved her for the kind interest she took in all persons.²⁹

Perhaps the most extensive account of Mary's cooking skills was detailed in Joseph B. Polley's "Historical Reminiscences" article of 1 December 1907.³⁰ In the article, Polley had been recalling some of his most memorable Thanksgivings — 1850, when he was in New York living with his Uncle Jonathan; 1860, while he was in school in Alabama when Abraham Lincoln had just been elected and talk of secession was in the air; 1861, at his Confederate camp in Dumfries, Virginia; 1862, camping with the Confederate army in Fredericksburg, Virginia and "feasting" on bacon, bread, and coffee made out of parched rye; 1863, as his company was besieging Knoxville and the fare was bacon and cornbread; and 1864, when he was in the Howard Grove Hospital in Richmond, Virginia. However, by far the most memorable was Thanksgiving dinner at the Polley

²⁹ Vinton Lee James, *Frontier and Pioneer: Recollections of Early Days in San Antonio and West Texas* (San Antonio: Artes Graficas, 1938), 52.

³⁰ *The Daily Express* (San Antonio), December 1, 1907.

Whitehall Mansion, possibly the first Thanksgiving in the new house, in 1854. He unfolded the story thus:

The next Thanksgiving dinner that occupies a place in our memory, was that of 1854. I was in Texas, down on the Cibolo, and there was a ham at one end of the table, a couple of wild turkeys at the other—a saddle of prime venison in the center, between it and the ham a pan of chicken pie, and between it and the turkeys a platter on which reposed half a dozen teal ducks. On a side table were the spare ribs from three hogs killed the day before, a large plate of stuffed sausage seasoned with whole pods of pepper, and an immense bowl of chittlings. Flanking these main dishes, were sweet potatoes, turnips, big hominy, butter, pickles (sweet and sour) and corn and wheat bread. Back behind in the kitchen, ready to be produced at the proper time, were pies and cakes and a pudding. Never a boy worked as hard and as willingly as we did in running errands for his mother and sisters and getting a feast ready—but alas, never a boy realized more comfort from anticipation, and less from actual eating, than fell to our lot. Because that morning, while wending our way to the store after the loaf sugar that was needed to round out the feast, we had scared a wild deer from its lair, and boylike, had given chase to it until a meddlesome cow got in the way of our steed and caused him to turn a somersault that sent his rider flying broadcast through the air until halted by a collision with the frozen ground—the result being half an hour of unconsciousness and a sprained thumb joint—the family doctor took alarm and put us on a diet of gruel. Ordinarily, there might have been enough remnants of the feast to give a fellow a square meal the next day, but it didn't happen so that day—the home folks numbering fully twenty-five, the guests as many more, and there being at least six boys by the name of Houston among the latter.

The menu for Thanksgiving dinner at the Polley Whitehall Mansion in 1854 certainly reflected the effort of a woman “gifted with unbounded energy.”

Regrettably, her son did not get to partake of the bounty.

Gardening and Landscaping

Mary was also gifted in gardening and landscaping. Historian Richard B. McCaslin points out that her duties “included tending a large yard sodded with Bermuda grass and planted with oleander, crepe myrtle, pomegranate, mock orange, and other flowering shrubs. The pride of the gardens was an almond tree, highlighting a grove of fig, apple, and peach trees transplanted from New York.”³¹

The land was cultivated even before Mary brought her expertise there. Felipe Elua, a Louisiana Creole and former slave who had purchased freedom for himself and his family, was the first farmer of the land. Having lived on the land since 1807, in 1833 he officially obtained a Spanish land grant for one league and one labor of land, over 4,000 acres.³² He grew sugar cane, sweet potatoes, cotton, beans, and other vegetables.³³

³¹ Richard B. McCaslin, *Sutherland Springs, Texas: Saratoga on the Cibolo*, 1st Edition (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2017), 37.

³² “[Historic Marker Application: Barker-Huebinger Homestead],” Texas Historical Commission, accessed through The Portal to Texas History, August 18, 2008, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth491925/>.

³³ Benjamin Lundy and Thomas Earle, *The Life, Travels, and Opinions of Benjamin Lundy, Including His Journeys to Texas and Mexico, with a Sketch of Contemporary Events, and a Notice of the Revolution in Hayti* (Philadelphia: W.D. Parrish, 1847), 54, <http://archive.org/details/lifetravelsopini00lund>. It is not clear from the text whether his crops were grown on his plot in San Antonio or on his “fine piece of land near San Antonio.”

The Polleys were heavily involved in the cattle industry in Texas, but they also raised hogs³⁴, sheep, turkeys, and chickens. They also grew some cash crops, particularly cotton and corn.³⁵ Receipts indicate that they purchased the seed for their cash crops. Mary Augusta Baylor in her reminiscences recalled that when the family had lived in Brazoria, seeds were often brought from New Orleans or East Texas by newcomers moving into the country³⁶. However, many of the seeds for their gardening and landscaping came from saving and sharing seeds. In her letter of 12 March 1850, Mrs. C. Robinson offered Mrs. Polley seeds from her plants. Her list of plants included: white hard-headed lettuce, cabbage, celery, salsify, beets, spinach, carrots, parsnips, mustard, raspberries, strawberries, grapes, figs, almond trees, quince, Kentucky plums, Green Sage, dill, roses, oleanders, Jessamines, and pinks.³⁷ In his letter of 8 September 1850, Jonathan, her brother-in-law, sent a peach pit, plum seeds, and popcorn seeds. A couple of

³⁴ T. H. Duggan to J. H. Polley, 23 June 1856; Jn. A. Rogers to Joseph Polley, 21 December 1851, Joseph H. Polley Papers, 1850-1914, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

³⁵ John James to J. H. Polley, 11 October 185[2], Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archives, San Antonio; A. Stafford to J. H. Polley, 19 March 1858, and J. H. Polley to [Unknown], November 1857, Joseph H. Polley Papers, 1850-1914, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

³⁶ Mary A. Polley Baylor Reminiscences, undated, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, 16.

³⁷ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7632.

years later, in a letter of 16 September 1852, he asked how the peach trees that he helped to transplant and the fig trees were doing.³⁸ John James wrote to Joseph H. Polley, 21 January 1852, asking if Mrs. Polley could spare any onions for planting.³⁹ Mary wrote to her daughters, 23 May 1858, telling them that the flowers were looking fine “considering the dry hot weather.” She admitted that she did not know if she could keep them alive, because it was so hard for her to keep them watered.⁴⁰ Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge created three watercolors of Texas flowers while she was living with the Polleys in 1856-7. Perhaps these are some of the flowers Mary was struggling to keep alive in the hot spring and summer of 1858 ([Figures D.80, D.81, and D.82](#)).

David H. Houston wrote a tender letter to his sweetheart, Harriet Roxanna Polley, dated 15 September, 1861. He had gone to fight in the Confederacy and was at that time stationed in Houston on his way to the front. Houston mentioned the magnolia seeds he had sent to “Hattie,” and asked her to plant them.⁴¹ David did return from the Civil War unharmed, and he and Hattie

³⁸ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7632.

³⁹ Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archive, San Antonio, Doc 6166.

⁴⁰ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, 2F.

⁴¹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, 2F

were married in 1866. In a letter written around Christmas, Harriet sent Mary, her mother, an oleander sprout, a wax-plant, Celestial figs, grape cuttings, and a paper-plant from San Antonio.

The Polleys' cousin from Archibald, Ohio, sent them Catawba grape cuttings, Delaware Concord grape seeds and roots, and other varieties in a letter dated 4 November 1869. Eleanor Brackenridge from San Antonio wrote to Mrs. Polley on 12 November 1877, mentioning her rose geranium and double white oleander. The community's sharing of cuttings and seeds with one another must have brought beauty to their own surroundings in a rather hostile world and nourished the connections in their personal relationships. The Polleys' flora enriched both their environment and their community.

Household Industries

In his "Historical Reminiscences," Joseph B. Polley, in the midst of one of his other stories about his exploits with some young ladies, inadvertently revealed another enduring and endearing image of his mother. He recounted that he had seen the young ladies visiting the plantation going to the garden across the road in front of the house, "whither I had seen my mother going with a train of little darkies for vegetables for dinner." Laying aside the denigrating description, Joseph B. gave to the black children, the words painted a rather tender scene. These children, according to the census records, had probably been

born and reared at the Polleys' home. Mary was likely influential in their upbringing. In light of Vinton James's remark that he "never saw her angry, or heard her speak ill of any one," she must have been a good and patient teacher for the children. Gathering vegetables for dinner was a necessary daily task, and this casual remark reveals that the task was not one normally delegated, but one that Mary directed and participated in herself.⁴²

In addition to directing the work and instruction of the slaves, Mary was involved in several other household industries: selling bacon, eggs, chickens, turkey, and butter in Wilson County and San Antonio. The Polleys raised hogs and made bacon, ham, and sausage from the animals. Jonathan Polley mentioned the Polleys' raising hogs in his letter of 16 September 1852⁴³. In 1853, they paid taxes on two hundred hogs.⁴⁴ John James mentioned in a letter to Joseph H. Polley, 30 July 1856, that he had received the bacon and was selling it for the Polleys.⁴⁵

⁴² *The Daily Express* (San Antonio), February 3, 1907, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph442315/m1/31/zoom/>.

⁴³ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7632.

⁴⁴ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7633.

⁴⁵ Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archive, San Antonio. Doc 1666.

The business of selling butter got off to a slow start. Emeline Polley James wrote from San Antonio to her mother, 10 November 1848, "We have sold yet two dollars worth of the butter."⁴⁶ Business, however, must have picked up, because John James, in a letter to Joseph H. Polley, 1 March 1852, reported that he is sending Mrs. Polley some Patent Cow Milkers with instructions about how to use them.⁴⁷ As early at 1852, even before the house was finished, Mary created a successful household industry, making butter, a value-added product, from her milk cows, using cutting-edge technology. The first cow milker had been patented only three years earlier, in 1849, by Cyrus Knapp,⁴⁸ described in the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting by the New York Agricultural Society as "an Indian rubber cow milker."⁴⁹ Josephine Milby, on 15 September 1856, ordered butter, eggs, chickens, and turkeys.⁵⁰ Emma Houston in a letter written to Mary around Christmas told her to send the butter in the wagon to San Antonio.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7630.

⁴⁷ Polley Papers. Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archive, San Antonio. Doc 1666.

⁴⁸ "1849 - Patents Sitemap," accessed September 11, 2018, https://www.google.com/patents/sitemap/en/Sitemap/Unknown_Category/1849.html.

⁴⁹ New York State Agricultural Society, *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting*, (Albany: Charles Van Benthuyzen, 1851), 107.

⁵⁰ Polley Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Archive, San Antonio. Doc 1666.

⁵¹ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7635.

As a footnote to his article on the history of Wilson county, J. B. Polley reported

The "One Horse Farmer," of the San Antonio Express⁵², wrote a letter . . . recently in which he spoke of several Southwest Texas counties, but left out Wilson. His attention was directed to the omission when he wrote as follows to the editor of the Express: "Say to the good people of Wilson county that the printer man left out two sheets of paper that I cabbaged from the office of the Floresville Chronicle in the presence of Captain H C. Thompson, on which I said many nice things of old Wilson, as I always do. Why? I get sausage, fatty bread and milk, sweet milk, sure enough milk, no milk man's milk, when I visit that county."⁵³

The "One Horse Farmer" does not specifically identify Mary as the source of the Wilson County delicacies. However, since the letter was directed to her son, the Wilson county sausage, fatty bread, and milk that he praises could have been consumed at Mary's table.

After the emancipation of the slaves, the Polley children's marriages, and the death of Joseph, the size of the operation at the Polley house diminished. Mary was left with the care of the two remaining special needs children, Catherine and Jonathan. Census records described Catherine as a "lunatic" and Jonathan as an "idiot." To make ends meet, Mary ran the Polley Whitehall

⁵² The "One Horse Farmer" is George Seba Deitz (Deats). The *San Antonio Daily Express* identified that the "one-Horse Farmer" lived in Boerne in an article, 15 March 1887. His articles were published in *The San Antonio Daily Express*, between 1887-1892. According to a memorial marker in the Deats Cemetery in Boerne, Texas, he was the first tinsmith in San Antonio

⁵³ J. B. Polley, ed., *Wilson County, Texas: Its Description, Resources, Etc.* (Floresville, TX: Privately Published, 1888), 4.

Mansion as a boarding house. Jane wrote to her Aunt Polley, 18 June 1877, noting that Mary charged \$20 for board and \$5 for transportation to the spring.⁵⁴ In her letter to Mrs. Polley, 10 September 1877, Sarah D. DeCordova included her payment for boarding at the Polley house.⁵⁵ Jonathan Polley wrote to his niece, on 7 November 1877, that he had learned a lot from his subscription to the *Western Chronicle* newspaper, particularly “that your Mother keeps a Boarding House to accommodate visitors at the Springs.”⁵⁶ Jonathan’s brother, Joseph, had died ten years earlier, and Jonathan expressed his regret for not keeping in touch with Mary, saying “I must write her The next time I can get courage to write which I dread more than a whipping.” A letter from Juliet E. Johns indicated that the boarding house continued for a while even after Mary’s death in 1888. Juliet in a letter to Abner “Hub” Polley, 15 October 1900, lamented that her family’s home was destroyed in the Galveston hurricane of 1900. She understood that his wife was running a boarding house, and said that she also was taking in boarders. She continued: “but when I tell you that I am engaged in that tread-

⁵⁴ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7638.

⁵⁵ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7638.

⁵⁶ Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. MSS 7638.

mill existence—keeping a boarding-house—Mrs. Polley will know about what chance there will be of my getting off. . . .”⁵⁷

Conclusion

Mary Bailey Polley engaged and perfected many of the domestic arts: sewing, cooking, gardening, landscaping, and managing household enterprises. She kept a house and made a home for herself, her family, her slaves, her workers, her neighbors, and her community. Berry concludes his essay with words that could easily describe the picture painted of Mary Polley’s life by the pieces salvaged from books, letters, newspaper articles, and bills of sale.

The callings and disciplines that I have spoken of as the domestic arts are stationed all along the way from the farm to the prepared dinner, from the forest to the dinner table, from stewardship of the land to hospitality to friends and strangers. These arts are as demanding and satisfying, as instructive and as pleasing as the so-called fine arts. To learn them, to practice them, to honor and reward them is, I believe, our profoundest calling. Our reward is that they will enrich our lives and make us glad.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Joseph H. Polley Papers, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁵⁸ Berry, “In Distrust of Movements,” 51.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

These investigations into the vernacular architecture, decorative arts, and domestic arts of the Polley Whitehall Mansion, drawn from primary sources, fill in some of the questions regarding how the building was constructed, give more concrete descriptions of the items with which the family furnished the house, and reveal the domestic arts that were involved in keeping a house and making a home.

In addition to giving historians a fuller glimpse into plantation and ranch life in Texas in the mid-nineteenth century, this thesis could inform choices involving the restoration and re-furnishing of the Polley house. Early images, the letters from New York, and receipts give pertinent bits of information about the construction. The letters and receipts also point out specific manufacturers and styles of furnishing that were bought for the house.

Findings from this thesis could inform further investigation of the site of the Polley Whitehall Mansion. Excavation of the kitchen at the Polley Whitehall Mansion in March 2018 directed by Dr. Todd Ahlman, head of the Center for Archeological Studies at Texas State University, yielded few artifacts that dated

back to the time of the Polleys' occupation. The official report from that dig has not yet been published.¹ Earlier that year twelve archeologists and fifty-two amateur metal detectors found over 300 specimens: candlesticks, forks, horseshoes, assorted pieces of tack, shotgun shells, old farm equipment, toy soldiers, musket balls, and an 1823 British button, among other things.² However, the previously undiscovered information revealed in the "Historical Reminiscences" articles of Joseph B. Polley regarding the location of the stake house and the hand-drawn map on the deed of the property filed in the Guadalupe County courthouse could warrant a further archeological exploration at the suggested location of the stake house.

The information brought to light in this investigation could warrant further research along several avenues. The life of Felipe Elua and his position as a landholder and freed slave in Texas deserves more detailed study. The lumber milling business in the hill country in the middle of the nineteenth century could prove to be another informative field of study. Finding information about the construction of the Dr. Gray Jones Houston house and other houses along FM 539 could possibly shed more light on the architect and builder of the Polley house. Although not directly related to Museum Studies, an investigation into

¹ Todd Ahlman, "Polley Mansion Archeological Dig," email, April 2, 2018.

² Jeff Valcher, "Digging into the Past," *Wilson County News*, March 21, 2018.

into the life of Catherine Sayre Polley would add to the understanding of the treatment of mental illness in the nineteenth century in Texas and supplement to work of Sitton.³ The assembling of a detailed listing of the Joseph H. Polley's land holdings could help with an understanding of the extent of his ranching business. In-depth research into the life of the Polleys' slave, Cato Morgan, could provide a fascinating look into the life of slavery and freedom in Texas. A study of transportation involving carriages, carts, and wagons in nineteenth-century Texas could grow out of the Polleys' own investments and involvements in those enterprises. A guide to the flora of central Texas as described in the Polley papers and other letters and manuscripts from the nineteenth century could be used by citizen scientists to add to a database of such flora in Texas. Finally, a recipe book, based on some of the items mentioned in the Polley papers could give insights into the culture of mid-nineteenth century life in Texas.

These are, however, still quite a few unanswered questions. Although Robert E. Lee is rumored to have visited the Polley house, neither the Polley Papers nor the Robert E. Lee Archives support the claim. Joseph B. Polley's articles in the *San Antonio Express* do not refer to a visit. Does any concrete evidence exist proving that Robert E. Lee ever stayed at the Polley Whitehall Mansion? Where was the stake house located? When was the cistern

³Sarah C. Sitton *Life at the Texas State Lunatic Asylum, 1857-1997* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

constructed? When was the well constructed? When were the additions around the stairs made? Where were the slave quarters located? What did the Polleys use for windows and doors before the windows and doors arrived from New York? Who was the architect of the house, if an architect was engaged? Who was the stonemason? These questions await further investigation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Succession of Property Owners of the Polley Whitehall Mansion
FM 539 South
Sutherland Springs, Texas
Wilson Country
(1835–2018)

The first reference to this piece of land in legal records is found in the Spanish Land Grant dated 1833 and filed on 16 May 1853. This document is recorded in Volume D, 750–53, Deed Records of Guadalupe County, Texas. The instrument is written in Spanish, granting one league of land to Felipe Elua (Luar) by Commissioner Manuel Ximenez. The land is situated in the Bexar Land District on the East side of the Cibolo Creek, formerly in Guadalupe County, presently in Wilson County. The original documents are in the Bexar County Archives.

Elua's name is important, because in all subsequent deeds of sale of this property the section of land is referred to as the Elua Grant. Delving into the identity of Felipe Elua adds an unexpected dimension to the story of the property. Ben Lundy, a Quaker abolitionist from New Jersey, visiting San Antonio in 1833, in an entry in his diary written on 29 September 1833 describes a visit to Elua's property accompanied by Elua's son-in-law, Matthew Thomas. He records:

I walked out this forenoon with Matthew Thomas, to see the cane patch, grounds, &c., of his father-in-law, Felipe Elua, a black Louisiana creole, who was formerly a slave, but who has purchased the freedom of himself and family. He has resided here twenty-six years, and he now owns five or six houses and lots, besides a fine piece of land near town. He has educated his children so that they can read and write, and speak Spanish as well as French. They are all fine looking, smart black people. He has a sister also residing in Bexar, who is married to a Frenchman. The sugar cane, of which there is a patch of about an acre on Elua's land, looks as well as that which grows in Hayti, and the land is evidently well adapted to it. The frost does not kill the roots of the plant here as it does further north, but the sprouts make their appearance in the spring, so that it is unnecessary to replant it. Besides the cane, we saw some fine looking cotton, a large patch of sweet potatoes, together with beans and other garden vegetables, the property of the same black man, and all in beautiful order.¹

Elua settled in San Antonio in 1807 with his wife, Mary Ortero, and children.²

Estate of Felipe Elua (Luar) Deceased
Probate Court, Bexar County, 14 January 1842
Partition for Letters of Administration
Filed 31 January 1842
Recorded Book "B," 115
Henry I. Moore appointed Administrator 14 January 1842
Spanish Archives, Probate Court, Bexar County, Texas
Decree Declaring Administration
Vacant 29 May 1843
Filed and Recorded in Book "A," 269

Bexar County Probate records
26 June 1843, Book "A," 282
Ramalda Luar, her mark

¹ Benjamin Lundy and Thomas Earle, *The Life, Travels, and Opinions of Benjamin Lundy, Including His Journeys to Texas and Mexico, with a Sketch of Contemporary Events, and a Notice of the Revolution in Hayti* (Philadelphia, W.D. Parrish, 1847), 54, <http://archive.org/details/lifetravelsopini00lund>.

² Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 2.

E. Johnson

Juan Cap Johnston, her mark

Manual Gramp, his mark

Remata Luar E. Gramp, her mark

to

John James

The Felipe Elua (Luar) estate conveys to John James all rights, title, interest, property, passion, claim and demand which they have in one league and labor of land lying on the Cibolo river in the County of Texas.

Dated 23 July 1846

Filed 18 December 1846

Recorded in Book "A," 122

Deed Record of Guadalupe County, Texas

Tax Deed

J. L. Trueheart, Sheriff and Tax Collector,

Bexar County

Dated 13 April 1847

Filed 21 April 1847

Recorded in Volume "B." 90-92

Guadalupe County Deed records

Payment of State & County Taxes

For 1842-1843-1844-1845 (amount not stated)

The deed says in effect that the sale was made by Geo. T. Howard who preceded Trueheart as Sheriff and Collector and that the land was bid in by D. G. Rogers who relinquished his claim and authorized deed to John James.

D. G. Rodgers to John James

In consideration of the sum of \$250.00 promissory notes of the late republic, and the further sum of \$80.00, paid by John James of the City of San Antonio, sold unto John James all the interest and title to one league and labor of land on the east side of the Cibolo River, known as Survey No. 9, granted Felipe Luar by virtue of a certain certificate of Tax Sale, delivered to John James, and made part of this instrument granted by George T. Howard, Sheriff and Collector for Texas County and dated 1846, hereby relinquishing all rights acquired to said land. Signed by D. G. Rodgers.

John James to J. H. Polley

Dated 1 March 1849

Filed 8 August 1853

In consideration of the sum of one thousand and twenty-four Dollars to me paid by Joseph H. Polley of this state and County of Guadalupe . . . 1357 acres . . . It being the tract of Land on which the said Joseph H. Polley now resides together with all and singular the rights privileges and appurtenances to the same belonging or in anywise incident or appertaining.

Mary B. Polley (By executors A. H., J. B. and W. W. Polley) to Lou Rinda Polley (wife of E. G. Polley)

Dated 23 November 1904

Filed 30 November 1904

457 acres \$5000

Recorded in Volume 54 page 219 (This is division #5)

Recorded in Guadalupe County Records Book L pages 807-810

E. G. and Lou Rinda Polley to E. W. Billings, Wilson County Commissioner

Dated 2 April 1907

Filed 13 May 1907

457 acres \$9000

Volume 58 Page 152

Louise M. Cozby & husband to Charles Moehrig

Dated 6 December 1916

Filed 11 December 1916

Volume 94, Page 51

Lot 3 of the J. H. Polley homestead

Charles Moehrig & wife to Judge C. A. Goeth

Dated 31 March 1922

Filed 12 April 1922

Volume 117 page 5050507

"...part of the Eula grant and being Division No. 5 of the "J. H. Polley Homestead Tract", and containing 457 acres of land, more or less."

C. A. Goeth, et al (Nellie S. Goeth, Fred C. Goeth, Zelma B. Goeth, Arthur C. Goeth, Martha Goeth) to Oscar W. Linne
Dated 12 October 1946
Filed 21 October 1946
739.58 acres for \$23,000
Recorded in Volume 236, Page 236, Page 552, Deed Records of Wilson County, Texas

Esther Mae Linne to Clarence Terrell Vorpahl, Thomas Arthur Vorpahl, and Clarence Gilbert Paul Vorpahl
Dated 28 February 1991
Filed 4 March 1991
502.69 acres
Recorded in Volume 773 page 18

Clarence Terrell Vorpahl, Thomas Arthur Vorpahl, and Clarence Gilbert Paul Vorpahl to J. T. Hemby and Steven A. Keeland
Dated 22 August 1992
Filed 24 August 1992
391.383 Acres of Elua Grant
Recorded in Volume 809 page 71

J. T. Hemby and Steven A. Keeland to Mark Collins and wife, Conlan Collins Devereaux
Dated 20 August 1993
Filed
Recorded Volume 809 Page 71, Deed Number
Property: A 20,000 acre tract of land situated in Wilson County, Texas and being out of the Felipe Eula Survey No. 9, Abstract 9, and being part of that 391.383 acre tract conveyed to J. T. Hemby and Steven A. Keeland by deed record in Volume 809, page 71 of the Deed Records of Wilson County, Texas and being more particularly described by metes and bounds in Exhibit "A" attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Mark Alan Collins & Conlan Collins Devereau (A married couple) to Keith and Robin Muschalek (Eagle Ford Investments & Advisors LLC)

Dated 6 November 2015

Filed 10 November 2015

Recorded Volume 1879, p.754, Deed Number 00049445

Wilson County Records

APPENDIX B

Archives Holding Polley Whitehall Mansion Materials

Amon Carter Museum and Library

3501 Camp Bowie Boulevard
Fort Worth, TX 76107-2631
817.989.5040

<http://www.cartermuseum.org/library>

The library has a collection of Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge's letters in which she mentions her teaching at the Polley Whitehall Mansion. The museum also has her watercolor collection, which includes a painting of the Polley Whitehall Mansion and some other paintings of the nearby Texas landscape.

Brazoria County Historical Museum

100 E Cedar St
Angleton, Texas
979.864.1208

<https://brazoriacountytx.gov/departments/museum>

This museum has the Spanish deed to land granted to Samuel Chance and Joseph H. Polley signed by "Estevan F. Austin," written and signed in Spanish.

Dolph Briscoe Center for American History

The University of Texas at Austin

2300 Red River St.

Sid Richardson Hall, Unit 2

Austin, Texas 78712-1426

<https://www.cah.utexas.edu/research/index.php>

This library has copies of the Polley Papers and many other archives containing items related to the Polleys:

Joseph Henry Polley Papers, 1825–1926

Polley Family Papers, 1824–1976 (bulk 1855–1875)

Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, ca. 1935–ca. 1938

Burges-Jefferson Family Papers, 1836, (1857–1892), 1960

James Britton Bailey Papers, 1832–1869

Mary A. Polley Baylor Reminiscences, undated

James Britton Bailey Papers, 1832–1869

Stewart Title Company Records, 1870–1965

Fannie Ratchford: An Inventory of the Fannie Ratchford Photograph

Collection at the Texas State Archives, about 1933–1947

Prints and Photographs Collection (PPC), circa 1836–present

Emily Rutland Art Collection

Vertical Files—Polley, Hub; Polley, J. B., Polley, Joseph Henry

Photographs—Polley, Joseph Henry, 1795–1869 (family)

A Guide to the John Twohig Papers, 1835–1944 3N1

A Guide to the Robert Edward Lee Collection, 1858–1868, 1883, 2E356

Texas Newspaper Collection

Robert Edward Lee Collection, 1858–1868, 1883

Harry Ransom Center

The University of Texas at Austin

300 West 21st Street

Austin, Texas 78712

512-471-8944

<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/guide/>

The Ransom Center has photographs of the Polley Whitehall Mansion and other contemporary houses.

Texas Architecture Survey Photography Collection

La Vernia Heritage Museum

13136 U.S. Hwy 87 West, Hwy 87 at Bluebonnet (FM 775)

La Vernia, Wilson County, Texas

210-392-3281

<https://laverniahistory.com/museum/>

The LaVernia Historical Society has materials relating to the Polleys and the Houstons.

Library of Congress

101 Independence Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20540
(202) 707-5000

<https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=%22Joseph+H.+Polley%22&new=true>

Historic American Buildings Survey - Polley, Joseph H

One of the nine photos associated with the Historic American Buildings Survey was “not digitized.” I wrote to the Library of Congress and obtained copy of that photo, an interior photo of the living room of the house. That image is included in the appendix of this thesis.

New England Historic Genealogical Society

New England Historic Genealogical Society
99-101 Newbury Street
Boston, MA 02116-3007
1-888-296-3447

<http://digitalcollections.americanancestors.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15869coll32/id/2201>

This collection contains letters and photographs relating to the Polleys in 1855 and 1856 when Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge was a schoolteacher at the house and photos taken in 1899 when Harry Hardinge, Sarah’s son, who was born in the house, visited Sutherland Springs and the house and took some photographs.

Hardinge Family Collection

Pearce Museum

Pearce Museum at Navarro College
3100 W. Collin St.
Corsicana, TX 75110
903.875.7642

<http://pearcecollections.pastperfectonline.com/archive/7E310BE7-42EF-11D9-AF14-096843515300>

<http://www.pearcemuseum.com/collections/>

The Pearce Museum, which specializes in Civil War materials, has a letter from J. B. Polley to his mother. The letter is currently featured on the Museum's Collection landing page.

Portal to Texas History

Digital Projects Unit
University of North Texas
1155 Union Circle #305190
Denton, TX 76203-5017
<https://texashistory.unt.edu/>

The Portal to Texas History is an indispensable resource for locating all kinds of Texas history materials. I found the weekly columns, "Historical Reminiscences," written by J. B. Polley, particularly colorful and informative. He wrote the columns every week for six years. Although most of the articles pertained to his Civil War experience, many were his personal recollections about his childhood home, the Polley Whitehall Mansion.

Sutherland Springs Museum

6556 US-87
Sutherland Springs, TX 78161
(830) 305-1915
<http://www.ssmuseum.org/>

Texana/Genealogy Department at the Central Library of the San Antonio

Public Library

Texana Library
600 Soledad St.
San Antonio, TX 78205
210.207.2559
<https://www.mysapl.org/Services/Collections/Texana>

The library was particularly helpful in tracing genealogical questions, obtaining copies of old photographs, and accessing archives of local newspapers.

Texas Heritage Museum—Hill College

112 Lamar Drive
Hillsboro, Texas 76645
254.659.7750
<https://www.hillcollege.edu/museum/>

This small local museum focuses on the Civil War and contains the Civil War diaries of J. B. Polley, along with a collection of Civil War letters written from J. B. Polley back home to his family. Mrs. Gerald Joseph Stewart (Josephine Ann (Polley) Golson) was the great-granddaughter of J. H. Polley.

Civil War Diary of Joseph B. Polley, donated by Mrs. G. J. Stewart

Civil War Letters of Joseph B. Polley, donated by Mrs. G. J. Stewart

The Texas Collection at Baylor University

Carroll Library Building

1429 S. 5th St.

Waco, TX 76710

(254)710-3457

<https://baylorarchives.cuadra.com/starweb9/l.skca-catalog/servlet.starweb9>

The archive, which focuses on Texas History, holds several transcripts of Polley letters. No note about the location of the original letters is available.

Joseph H. Polley Papers. 1850-1914

Texas State Library and Archives Commission

<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/>

This site is an invaluable resource for answering all kinds of Texas historical questions.

Wilson County Historical Society

P.O. Box 101

Floresville, Texas 78114

(830) 393-2166

<http://wilsoncountyhistory.org/>

This archive contains many old photos, newspaper clippings, and historical documents. The site also provides a webpage with links to many other helpful

sites. Many of the photographs have been digitized on the Portal to Texas History.

Witte Museum

3801 Broadway St.
San Antonio, TX 78209
(210) 357-1900

<https://www.witemuseum.org/b-naylor-morton-research-and-collections-center/>

The museum houses several items that belonged to the Polley family and were donated to the Alamo or to the Witte Museum.

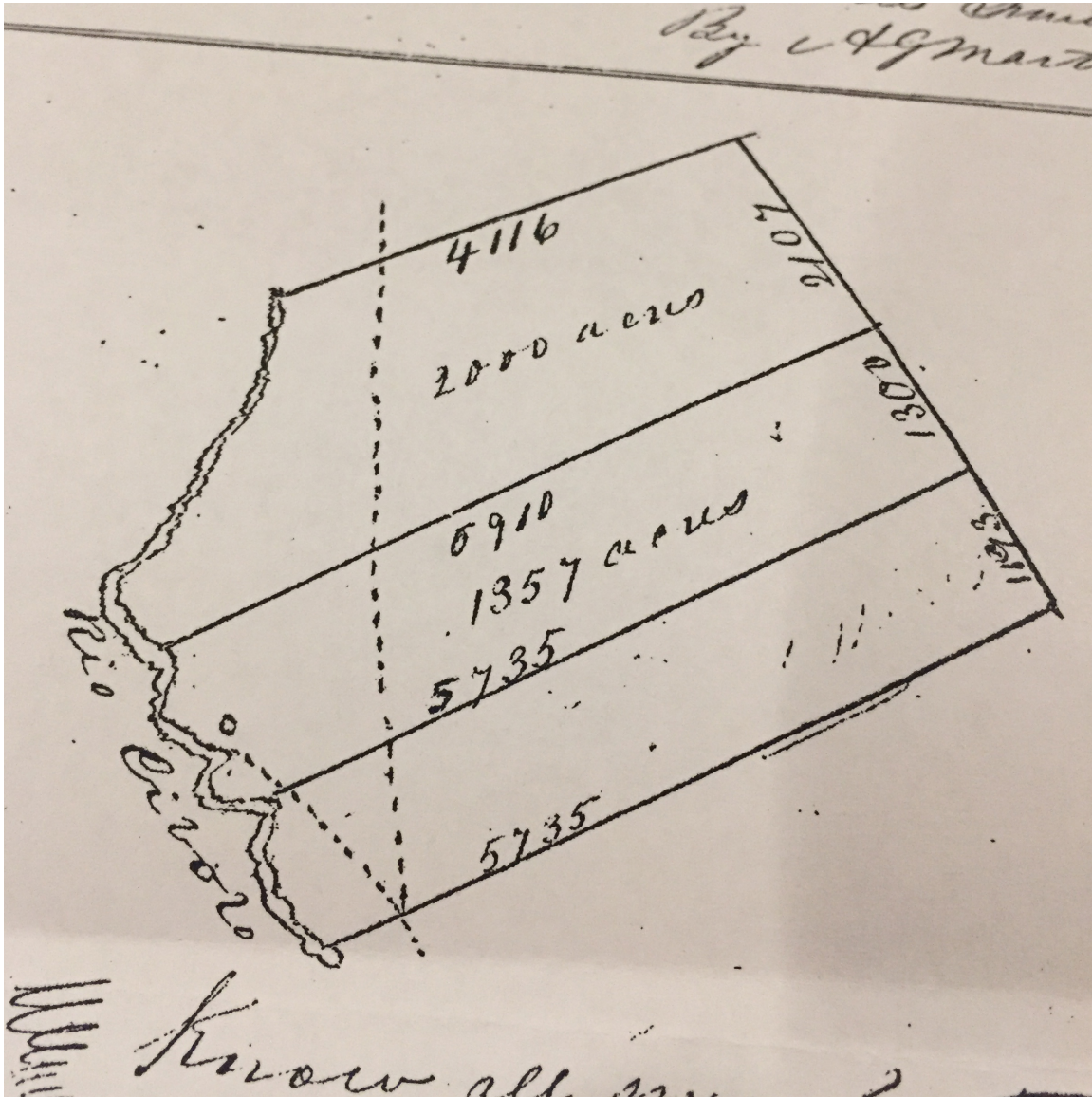
APPENDIX C

Flora Related to the Polley Whitehall Mansion

agarita	double white oleander	peach tree
almond tree	double white oleander	plum tree
apple tree	elm tree	pomegranate tree
Bermuda grass	fig tree	popcorn
catawba grapes	grape vine	post oak tree
celestial figs	live oak tree	rose geranium
corn	magnolia tree	rose geranium
cotton	mesquite trees	Spanish dagger
beans	mock orange tree	sugar cane
crepe myrtle	mustang grapes	sweet potatoes
Delaware Concord	onions	wax-plant
grapes	paper-plant	

APPENDIX D

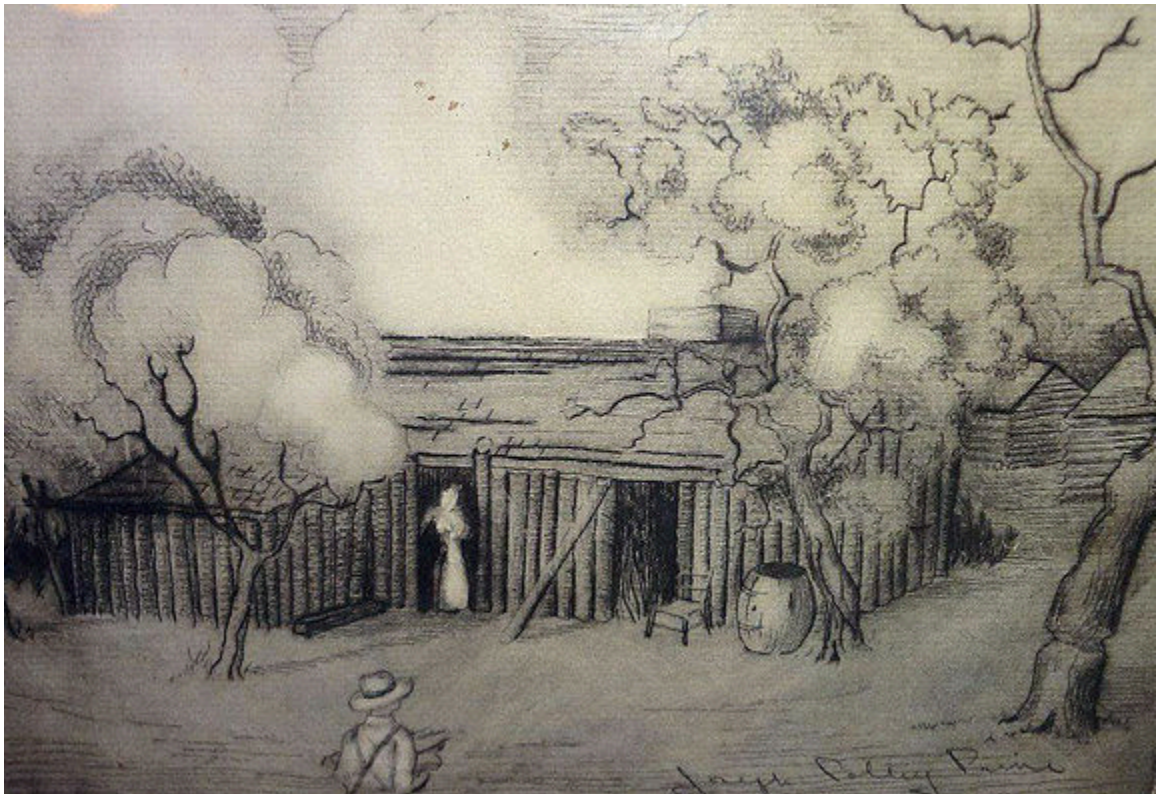
Photographs and Images Related to the Polley Whitehall Mansion



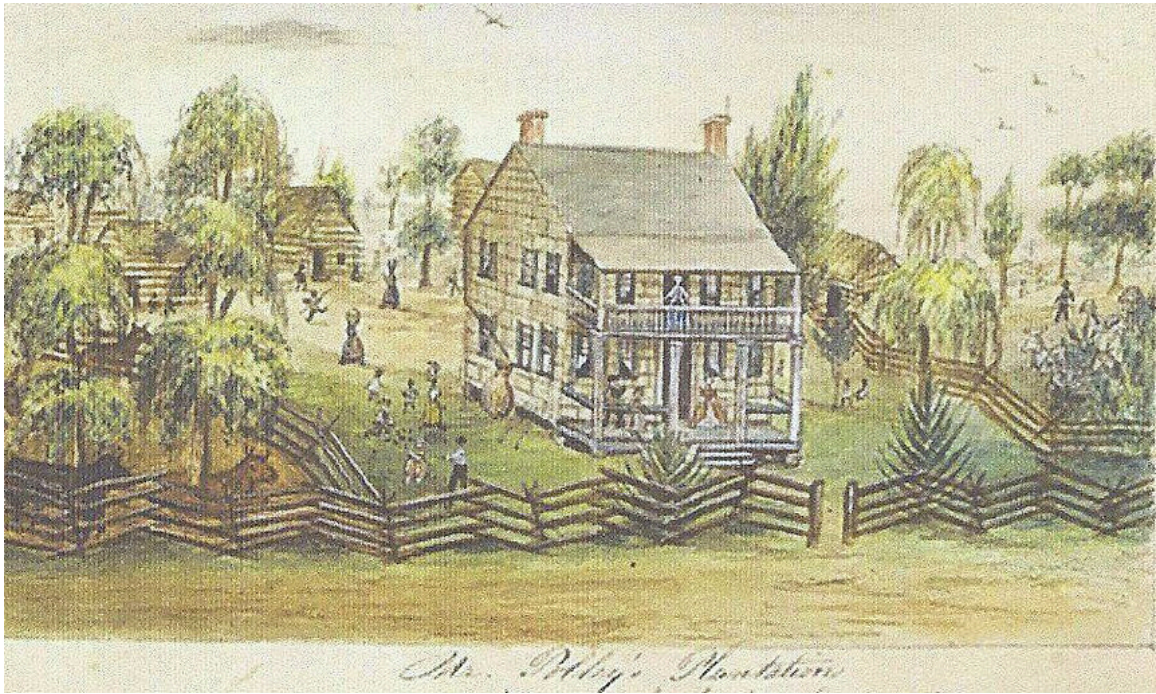
[Figure D.1](#). Drawing of the Polley Property on the Deed of Land from John James to Joseph H. Polley. 1 March 1849. Courtesy of the Guadalupe County Courthouse, Seguin, TX.



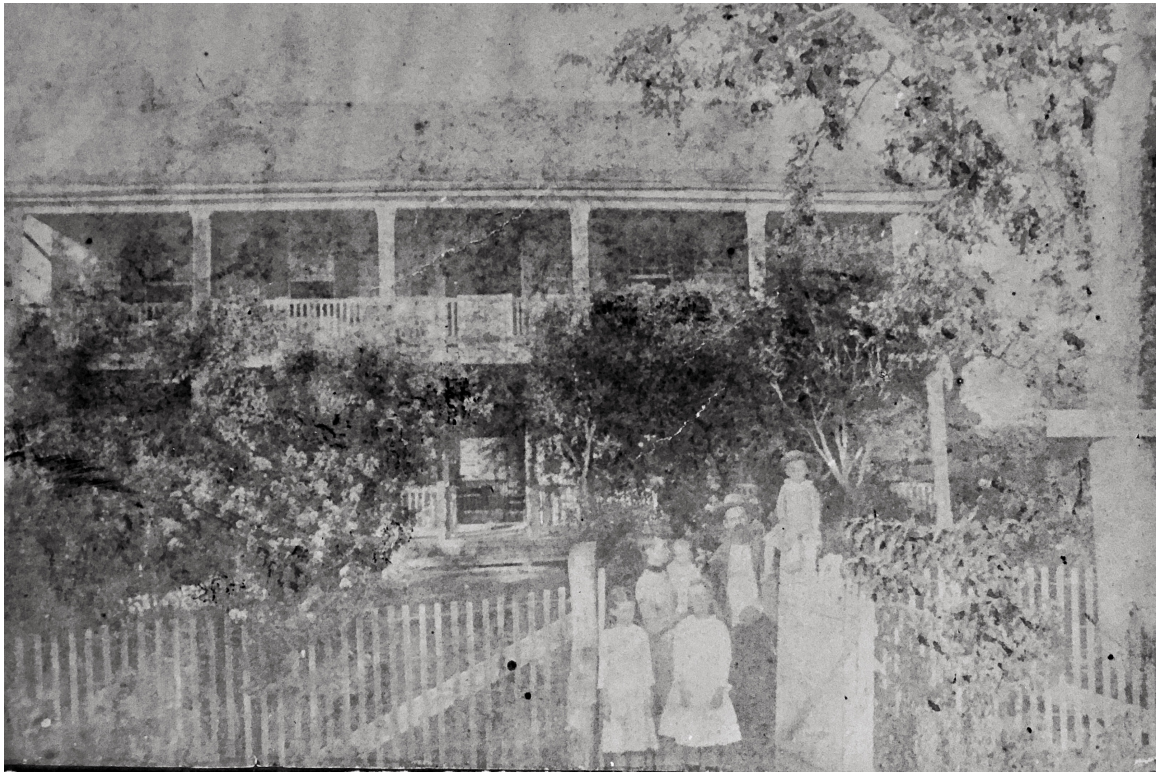
[Figure D.2.](#) Drawing of the Polley Stake House. Unknown artist. ca. 1847.
Courtesy of the Daughters of the Texas Revolution Archives, San Antonio.



[Figure D.3.](#) Drawing of the Polley Stake House. Joseph Polley Paine, artist. ca. 1940. Courtesy of Robin and Keith Muschalek, Sutherland Springs, TX.



[Figure D.4.](#) Drawing of Mr. Polley's Mansion. Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, artist. ca. 1857. From, Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, *Views of Texas, 1852-1856: Watercolors by Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, Together With a Journal of Her Departure from Texas*. First Edition (Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum, 1988). Courtesy of Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX.



[Figure D.5.](#) J. H. Polley Homestead. Unknown photographer. ca. 1880. Courtesy of Polley Family Papers, 1824-1976 (bulk 1855-1875), Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. Image digitally converted from photographic negative of Polley Whitehall Mansion.



[Figure D.6](#). Polley Whitehall Mansion (Front View). Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA. This photo is a reverse negative.



[Figure D.7](#). Polley Whitehall Mansion (Front View). Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



[Figure D.8](#). Polley Whitehall Mansion with Annotations (Rear View). Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



[Figure D.9](#). Polley Whitehall Mansion (Rear View). Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



[Figure D.10.](#) Polley Whitehall Mansion (Bedroom). Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.

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Figure D.11. Polley Ranch Corral and Trees. Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



Figure D.12. Polley Ranch Corral and Trees. Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



[Figure D.13.](#) "Mr. Joe Polley at Cibolo Spring." Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



[Figure D.14](#). Ferry at Cibolo Creek. Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



Figure D.15. Bridge over Cibolo Creek. Harry Hardinge, photographer. February 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



Figure D.16. Polley Whitehall Mansion (Front View). C. A. Goeth, photographer. ca. September 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.



Figure D.17. Slave Cabin, Polley Whitehall Mansion. C. A. Goeth., photographer. ca. September 1899. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA.

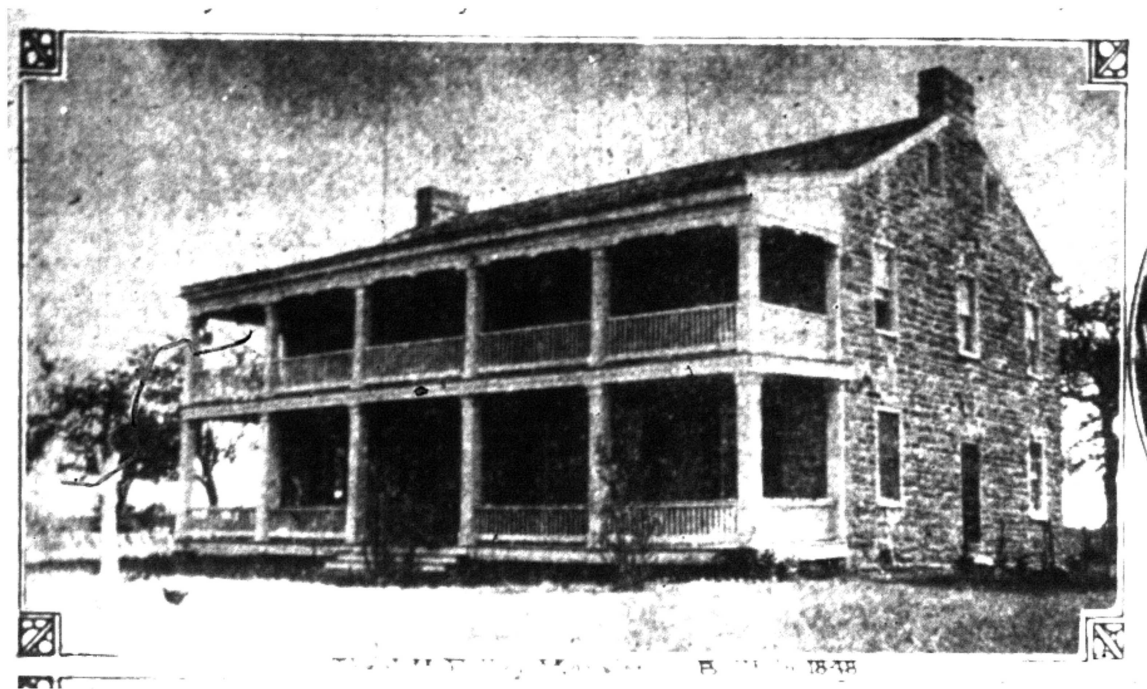


Figure D.18. "The Old Polley Mansion Built in 1848". Unknown photographer. ca. December 1928. From "Old Polley Home, Majestic in Its Four Score Years, Reminder of Ante-Bellum Days," *The San Antonio Express*, 30 December 1928.

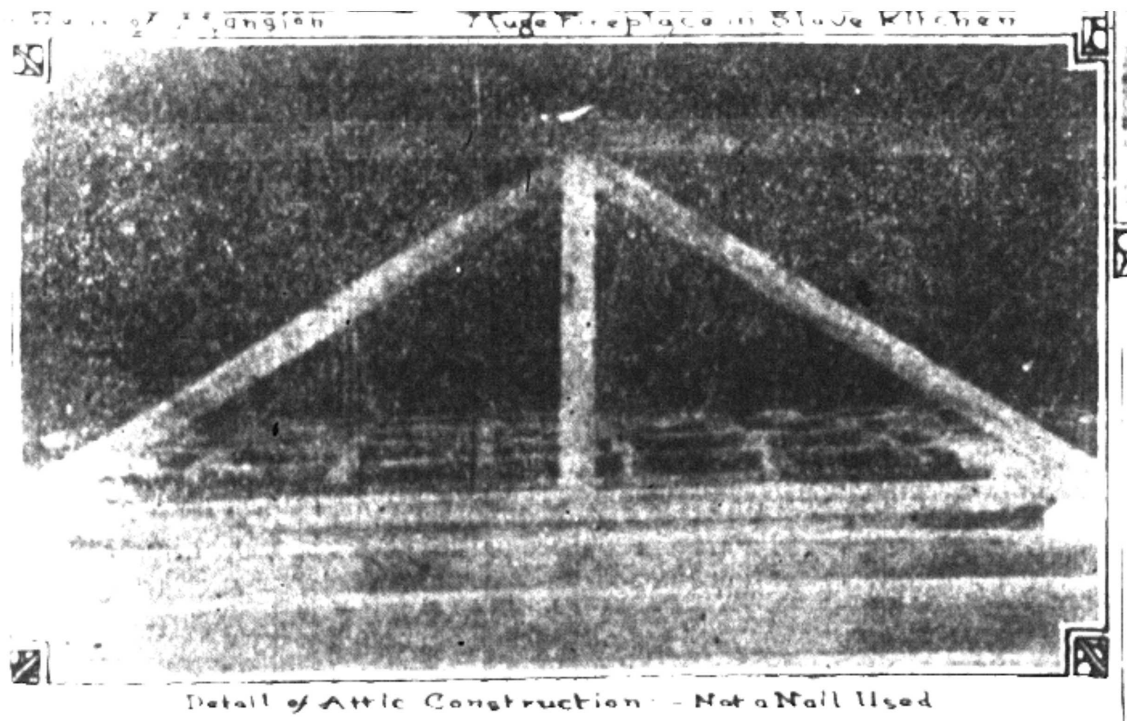


Figure D.19. "Detail of Attic Construction Not a Nail Used". Unknown photographer. ca. December 1928. From "Old Polley Home, Majestic in Its Four Score Years, Reminder of Ante-Bellum Days," *The San Antonio Express*, 30 December 1928.



Figure D.20. "From Kitchen to Dining Room." Unknown photographer. ca. December 1928. From "Old Polley Home, Majestic in Its Four Score Years, Reminder of Ante-Bellum Days," *The San Antonio Express*, 30 December 1928.



Figure D.21. "Slave Kitchen in Rear of Mansion." Unknown photographer. ca. December 1928. From "Old Polley Home, Majestic in Its Four Score Years, Reminder of Ante-Bellum Days," *The San Antonio Express*, 30 December 1928.

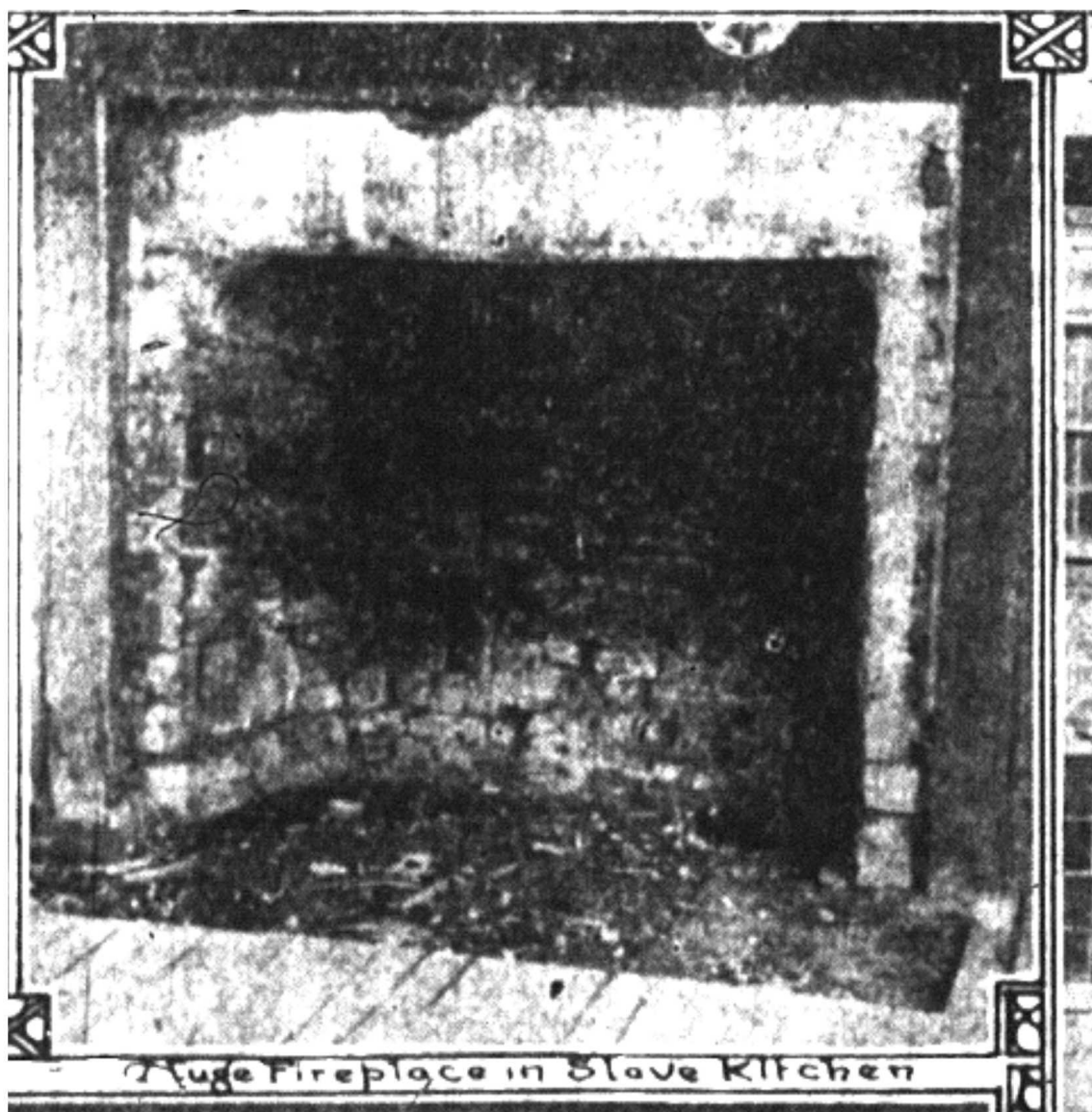


Figure D.22. "Huge Fireplace in Slave Kitchen." Unknown photographer. ca. December 1928. From "Old Polley Home, Majestic in Its Four Score Years, Reminder of Ante-Bellum Days," *The San Antonio Express*, 30 December 1928.



Figure D.23. "The Ante-Bellum Water Supply-A Cistern Still in Use." Unknown photographer. ca. December 1928. From "Old Polley Home, Majestic in Its Four Score Years, Reminder of Ante-Bellum Days," *The San Antonio Express*, 30 December 1928.



Figure D.24. "Cibolo Valley as Seen From the Polley Mansion." Unknown photographer. ca. December 1928. From "Old Polley Home, Majestic in Its Four Score Years, Reminder of Ante-Bellum Days," *The San Antonio Express*, 30 December 1928.



Figure D.25. Front View of Polley Whitehall Mansion with Mary Ella Polley and M. F. Fitzgerald. Unknown photographer. 1930. Photo donated by Dianne Perry to "In the heart of Texas Polley Country. . ." article. Courtesy of Texana/Genealogy Department of the San Antonio Library.

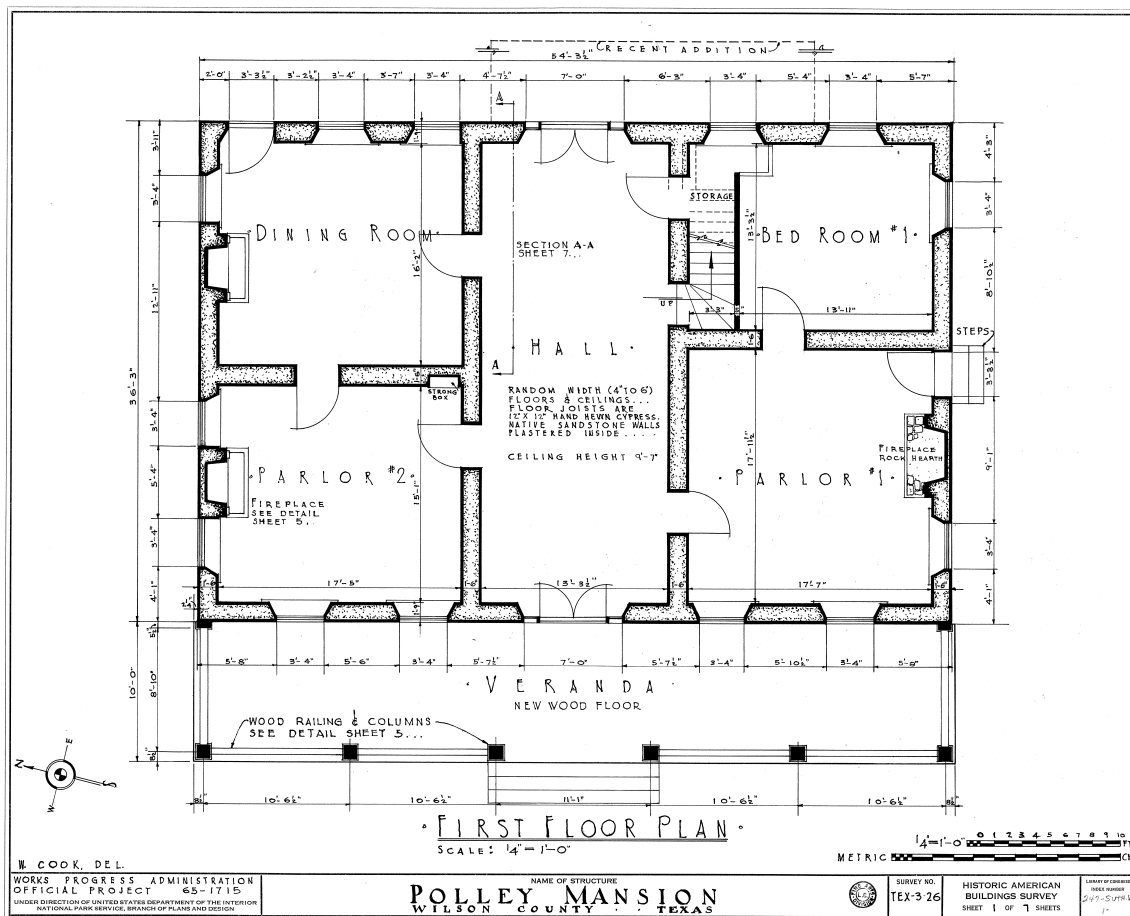


Figure D.26. Measured Drawing of First Floor Plan. Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, and Joseph H Polley. *Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX*. Documentation Compiled After 1933. <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx0235/>.

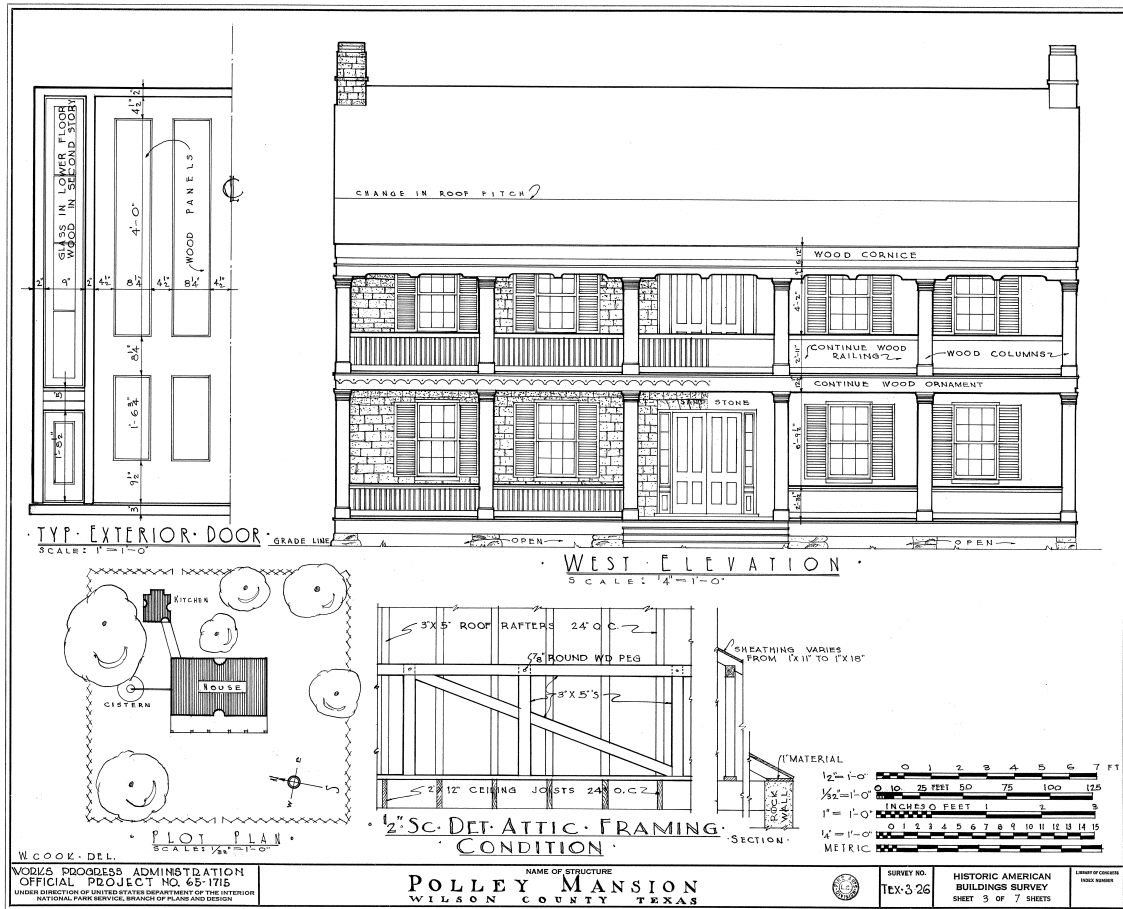


Figure D.28. Measured Drawing of Exterior Door, West Elevation, Plot Plan, and Detailed Attic Framing Condition. Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, and Joseph H Polley. *Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX.* Documentation Compiled After 1933. <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx0235/>.

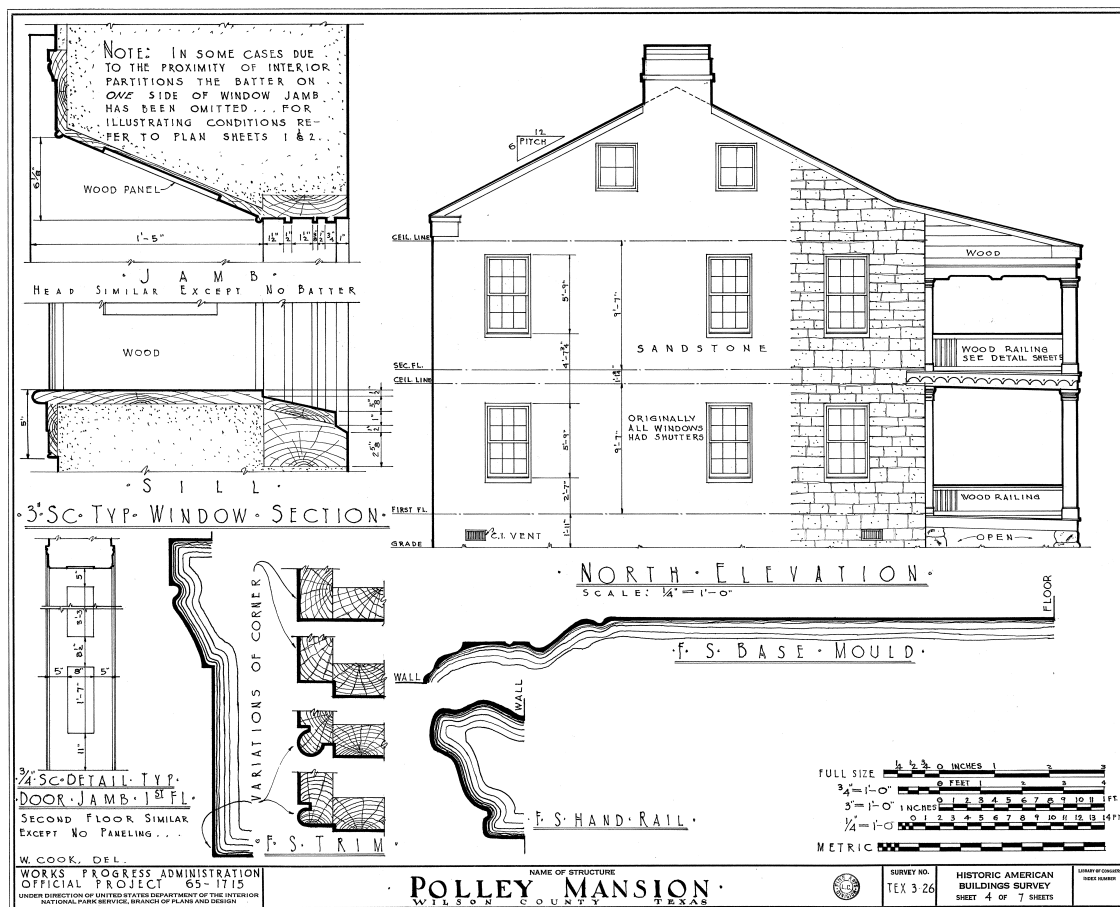
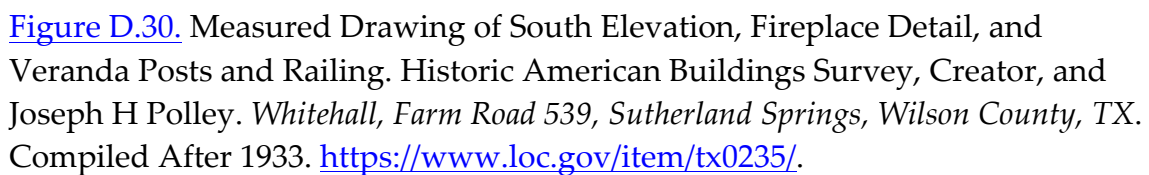
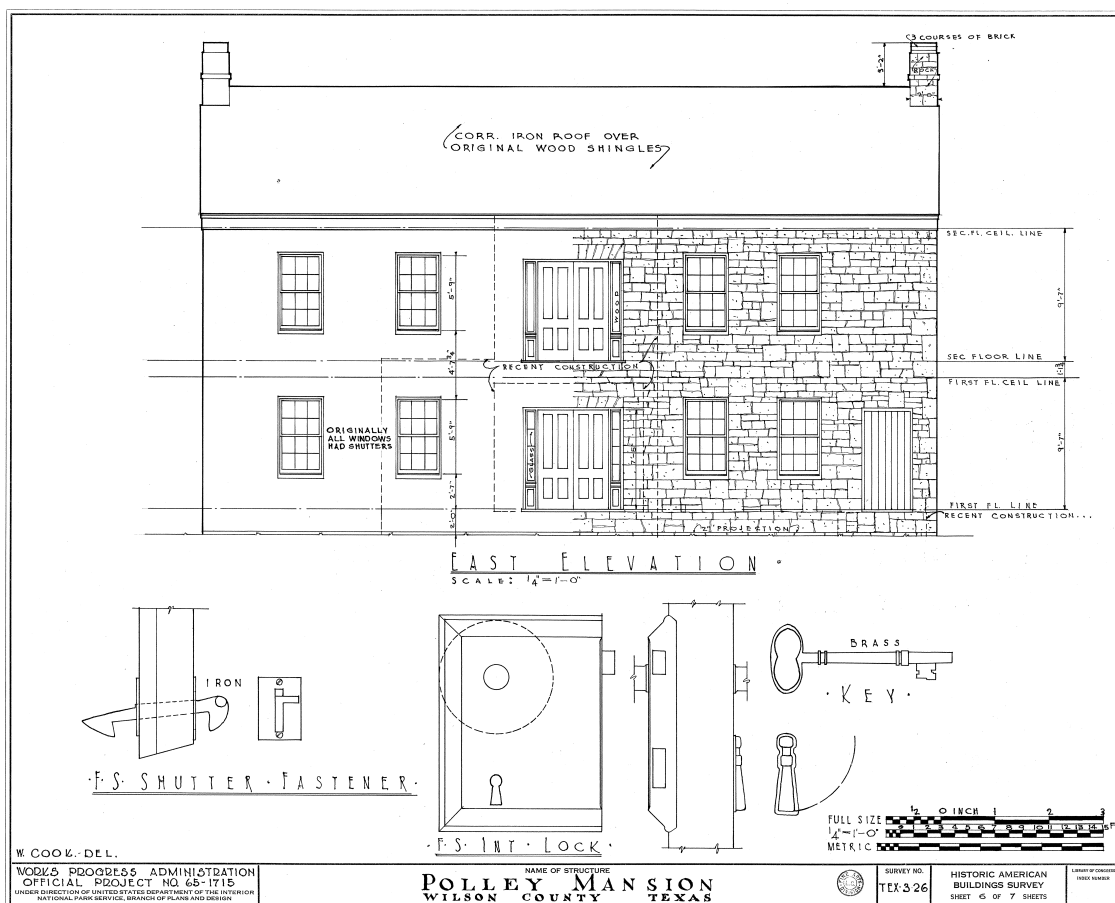


Figure D.29. Measured Drawing of Window Section, North Elevation, Trim, Base Mould, Hand Rail, and Door Jam. Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, and Joseph H Polley. *Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX.* Documentation Compiled After 1933. <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx0235/>.





[Figure D.31](#). Measured Drawing of East Elevation, Shutter Fastener, Lock, and Key. Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, and Joseph H Polley. Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Documentation Compiled After 1933. <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx0235/>.

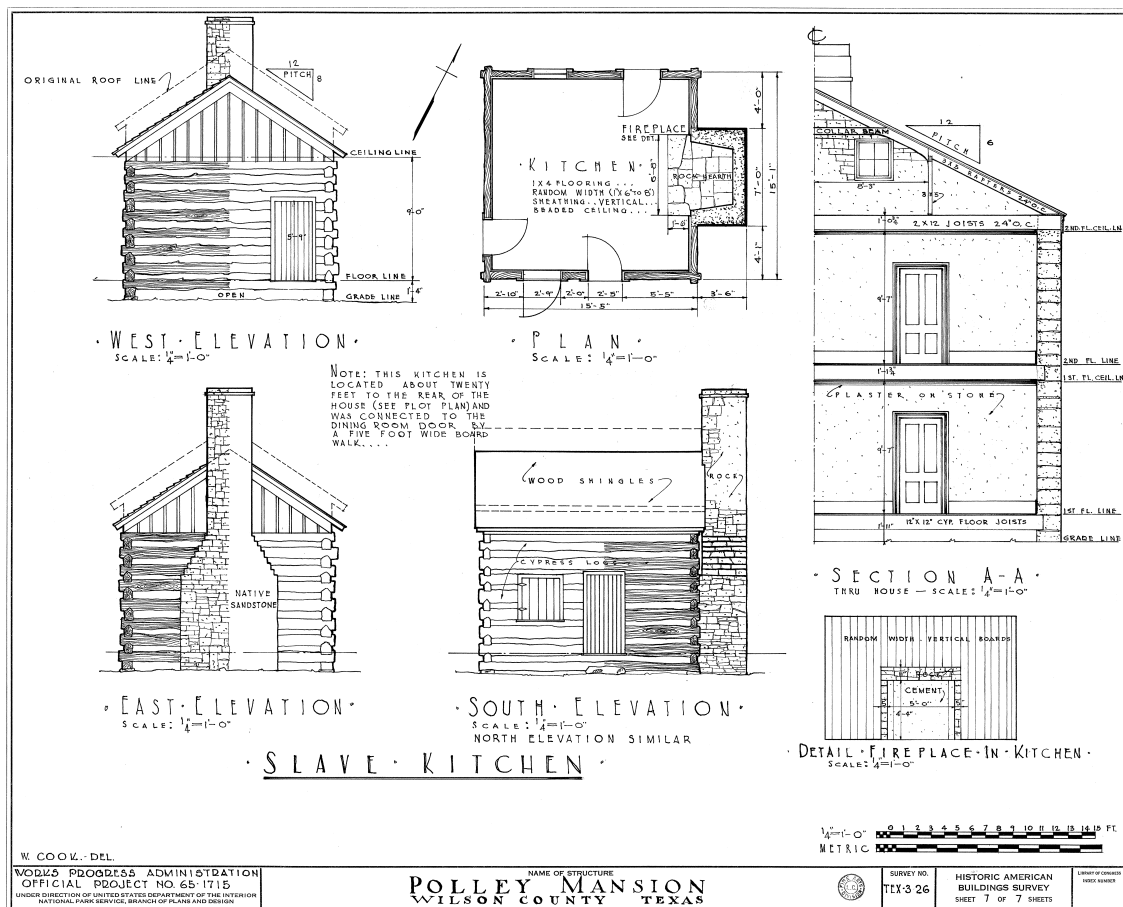


Figure D.32. Measured Drawing of Slave Kitchen. Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, and Joseph H Polley. Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Documentation Compiled After 1933. <https://www.loc.gov/item/tx0235/>



Figure D.33. West Elevation (Front). - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.156483p/>



Figure D.34. Southwest Elevation (West Front and South Side). - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936 <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.156484p/>



[Figure D.35](#). Southeast Elevation (South Side and East Rear). - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.156485p/>



[Figure D.36](#). East Elevation (Rear). - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.156486p/>



Figure D.37. Northeast Elevation (North Side and East Rear). - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.156487p/>



Figure D.38. Northwest Elevation (Showing Cistern and West End of Slave Kitchen). - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.156488p/>



Figure D.39. South Elevation of Fireplace in Living Room. - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.7/>

This image was not available at the Library of Congress website, but a copy of the image was secured directly from the Library of Congress.

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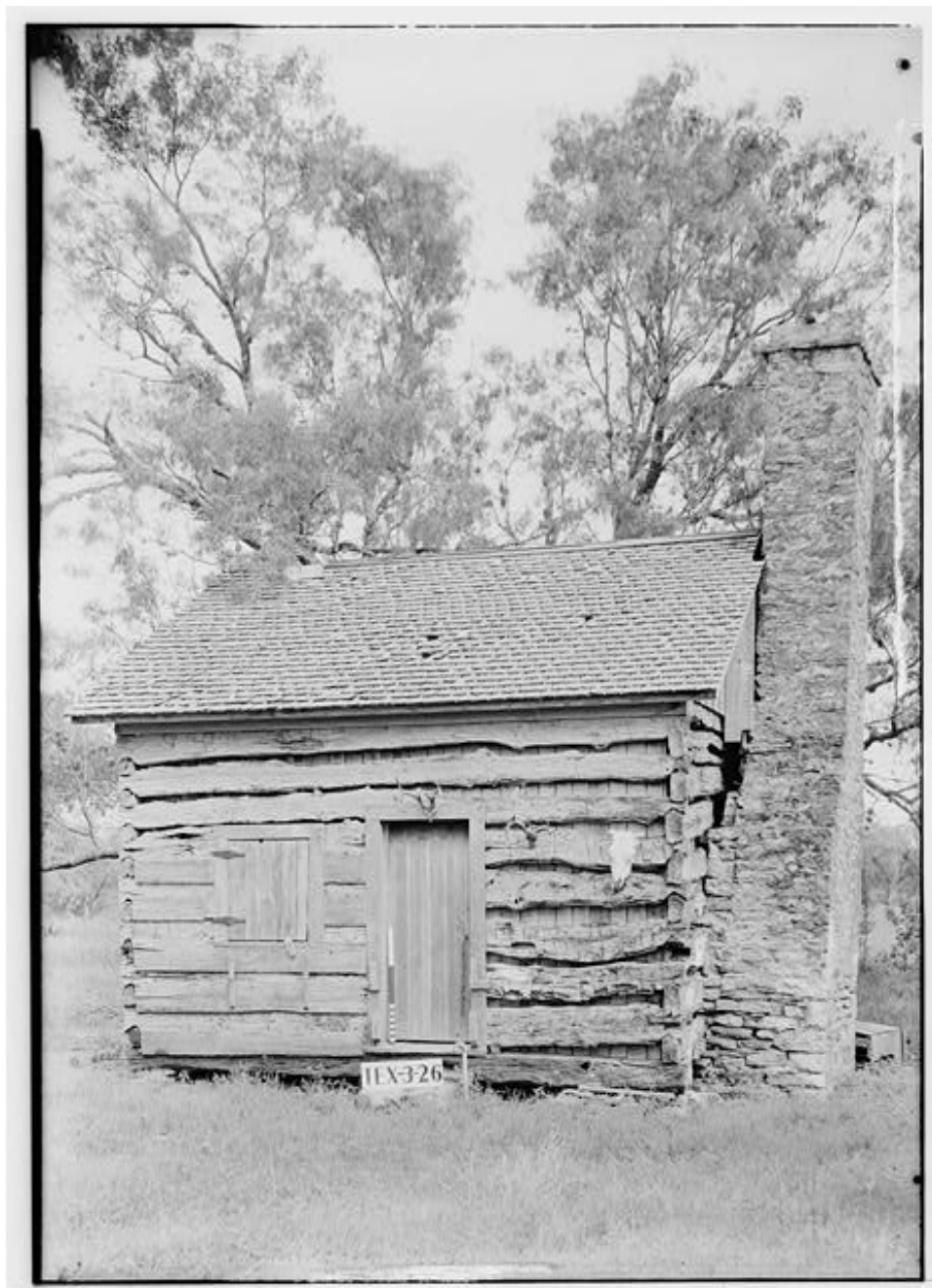


Figure D.40. South Elevation of Slave Quarters. - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.156490p/>

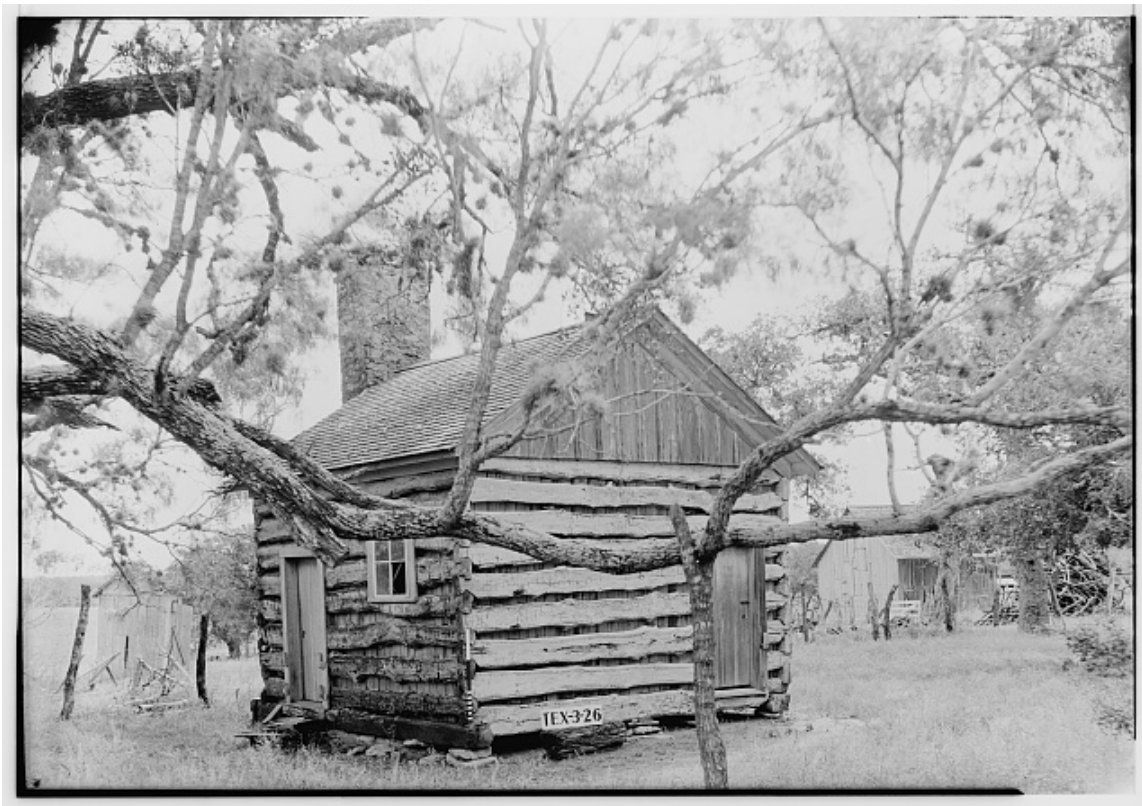


Figure D.41. Northeast Elevation of Slave Quarters. - Whitehall, Farm Road 539, Sutherland Springs, Wilson County, TX. Historic American Buildings Survey, Arthur W. Stewart, Photographer. April 28, 1936. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/tx0235.photos.156491p/>



Figure D.42. West Elevation of Whitehall Polley Mansion, Farm Road 539 near Sutherland Springs, Wilson County Texas. Photographer unknown. 1936.



Figure D.43. Front Elevation of Whitehall Polley Mansion, Farm Road 539 near Sutherland Springs, Wilson County Texas. Photographer unknown. 1936.



Figure D.44. South Elevation of Whitehall Polley Mansion, Farm Road 539 near Sutherland Springs, Wilson County Texas. Photographer unknown. 1936.



Figure D.45. Old Polley Mansion, Sutherland Springs. Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, p. 144. ca. 1935-ca.1938. Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



Figure D.46. Old kitchen at the Polley Mansion in Sutherland Springs. Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, p. 145. ca. 1935-ca.1938. Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



Figure D.47. Polley Mansion. Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, p. 145.
ca. 1935-ca.1938. Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



Figure D.48. Front steps of old Polley Mansion. Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, p. 147. ca. 1935-ca.1938. Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



Figure D.49. Mr. Edwards and son, Mrs. Goethe at the Polley Mansion. Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, p. 148. ca. 1935-ca.1938. Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



Figure D.50. View at Polley Mansion, showing Mr. Edwards, Richard, and Mrs. Goethe. Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, p. 153. ca. 1935–ca.1938. Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



Figure D.51. View at Polley Mansion, Sutherland Springs, showing old cistern and kitchen. Elmer J. Edwards Photograph Album, p. 160. ca. 1935–ca.1938. Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



Figure D.52. Front view of Polley(?) Home in Sutherland Springs. Fannie Ratchford Photograph Collection, 1933–1947. Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin. Box PP0199.



Figure D.53. Kitchen at Polley(?) Home in Sutherland Springs. Fannie Ratchford Photograph Collection, 1933–1947. Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin. Box PP0199.



Figure D.54. Kitchen at Polley(?) Home in Sutherland Springs. Fannie Ratchford Photograph Collection, 1933–1947. Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin. Box PP0199.



Figure D.55. Southwest elevation view of Polley(?) Home in Sutherland Springs. Fannie Ratchford Photograph Collection, 1933–1947. Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin. Box PP0199.



Figure D.56. Photo of Polley Mansion (Front) from "Century of Service" by Roger W. Fore in *San Antonio Express Magazine*, 18 December 1949.



Figure D.57. Photo of Polley Mansion (Slave Kitchen) from "Century of Service" by Roger W. Fore in *San Antonio Express Magazine*, 18 December 1949.



Figure D.58. Whitehall. Creator Unknown. October 1960. Courtesy of Texas Historical Commission. Accessed through Portal to Texas History.

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth495124/?q=Whitehall>



Figure D.59. Southeast Elevation of Polley Whitehall Mansion. Craig Kennedy, Photographer. 1979. Accessed through Portal to Texas History https://texashistory.unt.edu/search/?q=Whitehall&start=0&t=fulltext&fq=dc_type%3Aimage%2A



Figure D.60. West Elevation of Polley Whitehall Mansion. Craig Kennedy, Photographer. 1979. Accessed through Portal to Texas History https://texashistory.unt.edu/search/?q=Whitehall&start=0&t=fulltext&fq=dc_type%3Aimage%2A



Figure D.61. Northeast Elevation of Polley Whitehall Mansion and Kitchen. Craig Kennedy, Photographer. 1979. Accessed through Portal to Texas History https://texashistory.unt.edu/search/?q=Whitehall&start=0&t=fulltext&fq=dc_type%3Aimage%2A



Figure D.62. Southeast Elevation of Polley Whitehall Mansion. Craig Kennedy, Photographer. 1979. Accessed through Portal to Texas History https://texashistory.unt.edu/search/?q=Whitehall&start=0&t=fulltext&fq=dc_type%3Aimage%2A



[Figure D.63](https://texashistory.unt.edu/search/?q=Whitehall&start=0&t=fulltext&fq=dc_type%3Aimage%2A). Northwest Elevation of Polley Whitehall Mansion. Craig Kennedy, Photographer. 1979. Accessed through Portal to Texas History https://texashistory.unt.edu/search/?q=Whitehall&start=0&t=fulltext&fq=dc_type%3Aimage%2A



Figure D.64. Polley Whitehall Mansion. Shirley Grammer, Photographer. 1993. Wilson County Historical Society. Accessed through Portal to Texas History. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth130067/?q=Polley%20Mansion>



Figure D.65. Polley Whitehall Mansion. Shirley Grammer, Photographer. 2006. Wilson County Historical Society. Accessed through Portal to Texas History. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth130113/?q=Polley%20Mansion>



[Figure D.66.](#) Polley Whitehall Mansion. October 2015. Courtesy of Keith and Robin Muschalek



[Figure D.67](#). Polley Whitehall Mansion. October 2015. Courtesy of Keith and Robin Muschalek



[Figure D.68](#). Polley Whitehall Mansion. October 2015. Courtesy of Keith and Robin Muschalek



[Figure D.69](#). Polley Whitehall Mansion. October 2015. Courtesy of Keith and Robin Muschalek



Figure D.70. Whitehall in Wise [sic] County. Unknown Photographer. Undated. Courtesy of Texas Historical Commission. Accessed through Portal to Texas History. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph673203/?q=Whitehall>



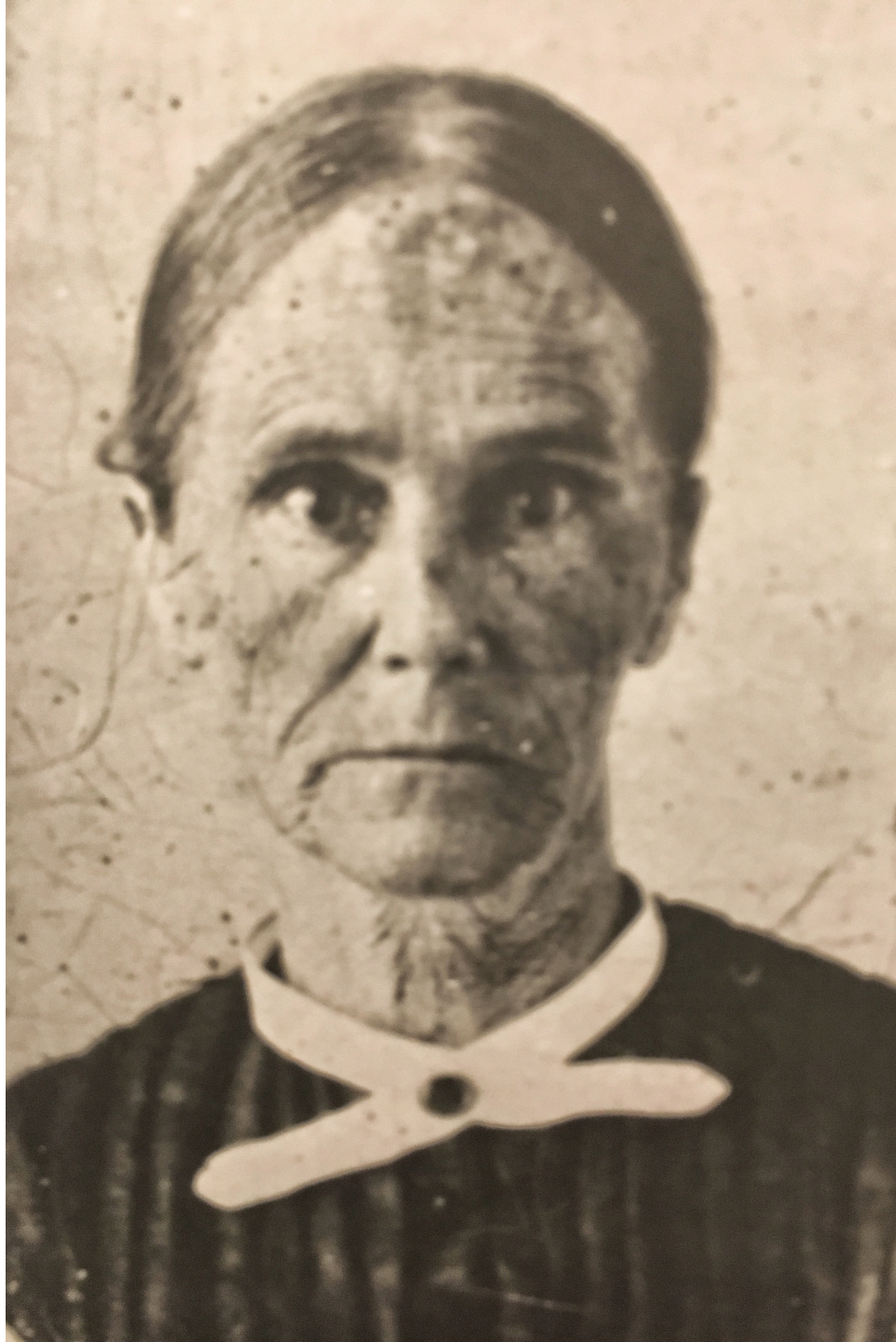
Figure D.71. Whitehall in Wise [sic] County. Unknown Photographer. Undated. Courtesy of Texas Historical Commission. Accessed through Portal to Texas History. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph674514/?q=Whitehall>



Figure D.72. Whitehall in Wise [sic] County. Unknown Photographer. Undated. Courtesy of Texas Historical Commission. Accessed through Portal to Texas History. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth672426/?q=Whitehall>



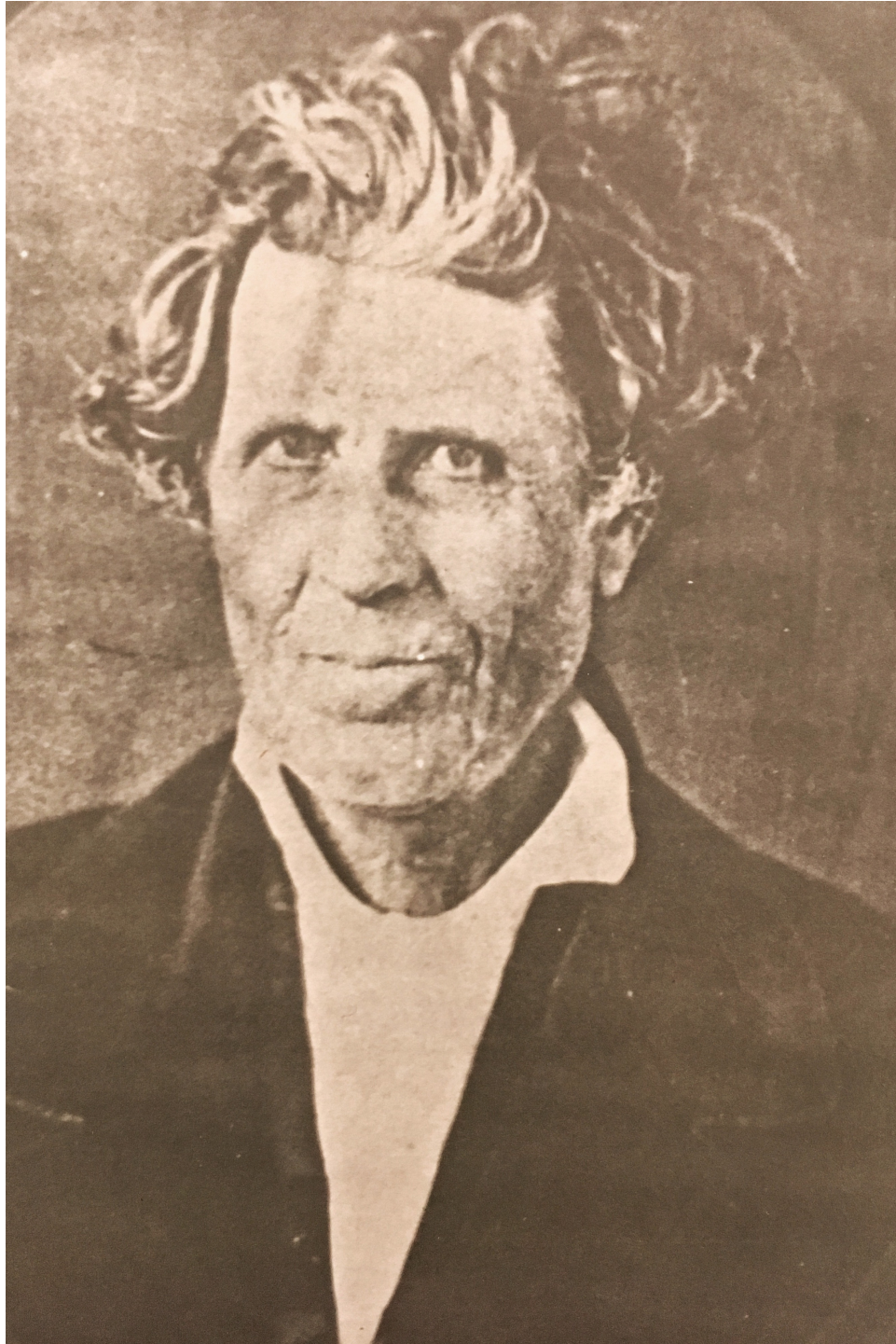
Figure D.73. Whitehall in Wise [sic] County. Unknown Photographer. Undated. Courtesy of Texas Historical Commission. Accessed through Portal to Texas History. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth671996/?q=Whitehall>



[Figure D.74.](#) Mary Bailey Polley. Polley, Joseph Henry (family), 1795-1869. Prints and Photographs Collection (PPC), circa 1836-present. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

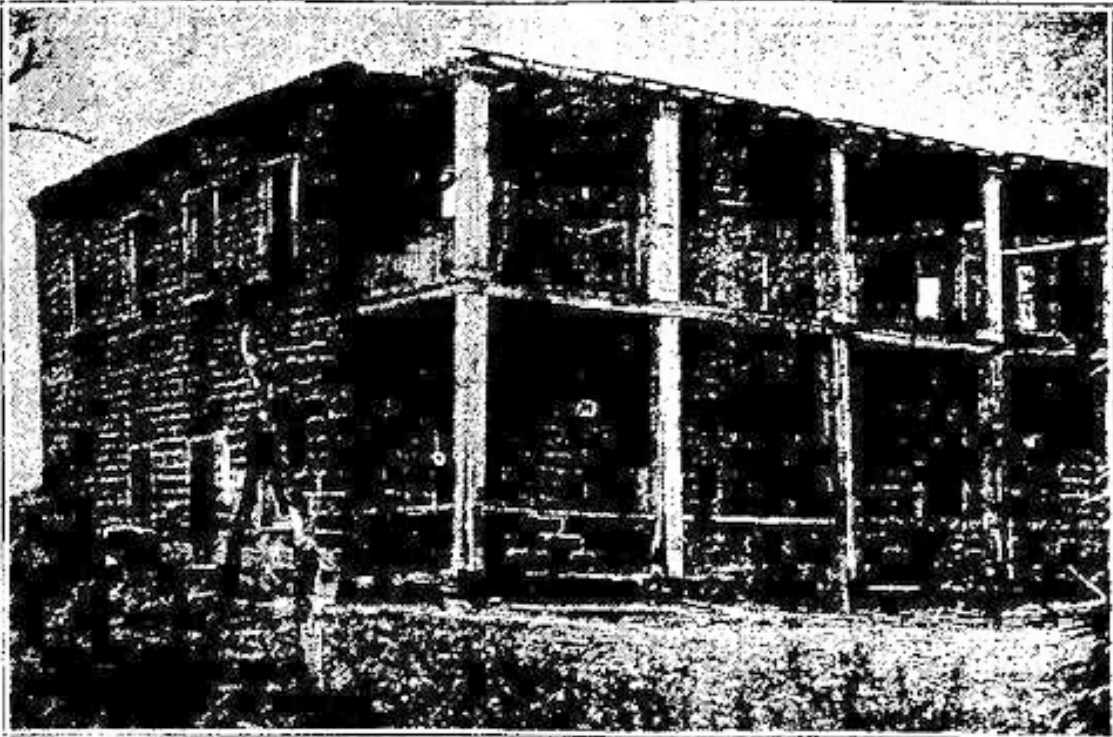


[Figure D. 75.](#) Mary Bailey Polley. Polley, Joseph Henry (family), 1795-1869. Prints and Photographs Collection (PPC), circa 1836-present. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.



[Figure D.76.](#) Joseph Henry Polley. Polley, Joseph Henry (family), 1795-1869. Prints and Photographs Collection (PPC), circa 1836-present. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Old House Marks Texas' First Oil Well



Entrance of the old homestead of Dr. Gray Jones Houston in Wilson County, 23 miles from San Antonio, marks the site of Texas' first oil well and perhaps the first discovery of oil by drilling or digging in the United States. The present year has been observed generally as the 75th anniversary of oil discovery in the United States on account of the well drilled in Pennsylvania in 1859, but Doctor D. T. Moore says that the

on the farm on Cibola Creek, in 1851 or 1854 when they encountered crude petroleum, which nobody at that time could identify. The well was a curiosity of wide interest, but the odor from it was so unpleasant, Dr. Houston had the negroes fill up the hole and thus stop oil development in Wilson County for nearly three-quarters of a century.

and thence to Pennsylvania to see the wonderful new find. He came back and reported it was exactly the same substance that had been found in the well on Dr. Houston's farm. By that time the War Between the States was too near for any development work and none was done.

Dr. Houston was the father of Nelson Houston, Gus Houston, A.

Figure D.78. Ruins of Gray Jones Houston House in "Old House Marks Texas' First Oil Well" in the *San Antonio Express* on 3 November 1929. Courtesy of the Texana/ Genealogy Department of the San Antonio Library.



[Figure D.79](http://www.thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/varner-hogg-plantation-state-historic-site/history/columbus-patton-and-enslaved). South Oblique of Varner-Hogg Plantation, West Columbia Vicinity, Brazoria County, Texas. ca. 1900. Courtesy of Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site and the Texas Historical Commission. <http://www.thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/varner-hogg-plantation-state-historic-site/history/columbus-patton-and-enslaved>



[Figure D.80.](#) Flowers Growing & Painted in Texas Belonging to & Painted by S. L. Daniels [Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge]. Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, artist. Vineland New Jersey, October 1878. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society. Boston, MA.



[Figure D.81](#). Flowers Growing in Texas Painted by S. L. Daniels [Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge Daniels]. Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, artist. Vineland New Jersey, October 1878. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society. Boston, MA.



[Figure D.82](#). Flowers Growing in Texas Painted by S. L. Daniels [Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge Daniels]. Sarah Ann Lillie Hardinge, artist. Vineland New Jersey, October 1878. Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society. Boston, MA.



[Figure D.83](#). Noon Rest on Wagon Train en route to Indianola on San Antonio Goliad Road. Photographer Unknown, 1870. Courtesy of Wilson County Historical Commission, Floresville, TX.

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