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(Oct. 1990)  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY


HISTORIC NAME: Smith Ranch  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Grand Valley Lands

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: FM 916 one mile west of SH 174  
CITY OR TOWN: Rio Vista  
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Johnson  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A  
VICINITY: X  
CODE: 251 ZIP CODE: 76093

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (x nomination) (\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (x meets) (\_\_\_ does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ( \_\_\_ nationally) ( \_\_\_ statewide) (x locally). ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2-14-07

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_


In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register<br>___ See continuation sheet.  | <br>Signature of the Keeper _____ | Date of Action<br><u>4/3/07</u><br>_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register<br>___ See continuation sheet |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register                           |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____  |   |  |

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**5. CLASSIFICATION**

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**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Buildings, structures, sites

| <b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b> | <b>CONTRIBUTING</b> | <b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b> |
|---|---------------------|------------------------|
|   | 6                   | 5 BUILDINGS            |
|   | 3                   | 0 SITES                |
|   | 2                   | 1 STRUCTURES           |
|   | 0                   | 0 OBJECTS              |
|   | 11                  | 6 TOTAL                |

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
AGRICULTURE/agricultural fields, agricultural outbuildings, storage  
FUNERARY: cemetery  
TRANSPORTATION: air-related=hangar

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
AGRICULTURE/agricultural fields, agricultural outbuildings, storage  
FUNERARY: cemetery  
TRANSPORTATION: air-related=hangar

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** NO STYLE

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION BRICK, STONE, WOOD  
WALLS WOOD/weatherboard  
ROOF ASPHALT, METAL  
OTHER WOOD, GLASS

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-11).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection 7 Page 5Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

The Smith Ranch, named Grand Valley Lands by Lowell Smith Sr., was established on the Nolan River in Johnson County by John Wesley Smith in 1887 and has been occupied continuously by the Smith family for more than a century. One mile west of Rio Vista on Farm to Market Road 916, the Smith property currently includes more than 2,000 acres, incorporating the original 640-acre tract and an additional 960 acres purchased before the death of Lowell Smith Sr. The rural historic landscape is associated with a number of related historic events and individuals, including Native American archaeological sites, the 1801 Philip Nolan expedition, early surveyor Charles Sevier, first Johnson County settler Henry Briden, pioneer settler Thomas Haley and his 1850s Haley Racetrack and gambling house, the Haley-Smith Cemetery, Grange Hall and the Grange Hall Cemetery, the Chisholm Trail and nearby Kimball Bend Crossing, a native grass prairie preserve, and the First State Bank of Rio Vista. Contributing extant outbuildings and features include the 1887 Smith home (altered in the 1920s and 1950s), a stone smoke house, blacksmith shop, mule barn, windmill with cylindrical water tank, well house, a barn made from railroad cars, an avenue of pecan trees, the Haley-Smith Cemetery and sites of the Haley home, gambling house and racetrack.

**Geographical Setting and Physical Context of Property**

The Smith Ranch is located on the border between the Cross Timbers and the Fort Worth Prairie and is composed of both bottom land, ideal for crops, and high rolling pastures for ranching. The main house lies approximately one mile west of the City of Rio Vista (population 656 in 2000) on the north side of FM 916 at the junction of Haley's Creek and the Nolan River, both of which flow through the ranch. The ranch property, which actually adjoins Rio Vista, is 37 miles south of Ft. Worth, eight miles south of Cleburne, and six miles north of the 1880s town of Blum. Cleburne (formerly Camp Henderson) and Blum are also located on the Nolan River. The Brazos River is about 5 miles southwest of the ranch.

The ranch property adjoins, on the south side of FM 916, the former site of Noland's [sic] River Grange #471, which was organized June 24, 1874. It was associated with the national Grange Movement (the National Grange of the Patrons of Animal Husbandry), a social brotherhood of farmers founded in 1867 to benefit farms and local communities and to care for the sick, distressed, widows and orphans. Grange buildings generally served as town halls and as a meeting place for church groups. A two-story building served as a one-room school (which Alice Menefee Smith attended) with a Masonic Lodge upstairs, and was the seat of the first community in the vicinity, known as Grange Hall. (All four Smith Ranch owners were members of the Noland [sic] River Masonic Lodge #453, now housed by the former First State Bank Building in Rio Vista.) About 1900-05, after the arrival of the railroad, the hall was moved across the river to Rio Vista on a mule-pulled barge, using ropes and a stone capstan on the east side of the river,<sup>1</sup> and converted into a store. Grange Hall Cemetery remains at the original site; historic figure Henry Briden (1825-1908) and three generations of the Smith family, the Menefee family, and their neighbors are buried there.

On the ranch just north of the homesite, on a bluff overlooking the Nolan River at the mouth of Haley Creek, is the Haley-Smith Cemetery (Site 2) where Lucinda Sevier Briden (1825-1875), the first Anglo-American woman to settle in Johnson County, and Captain Thomas Haley (1816-1865) are buried. Several

<sup>1</sup> As witnessed by Lowell Smith Sr. as a small boy.

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unmarked graves covered with thick stone slabs shroud this cemetery in mystery. Texas Historical Commission archaeologist Dan Potter, who visited the site in July 13, 2005, determined that there is also archaeological evidence of early Native American activity at this site.

This rural historic landscape was recognized by the Texas Department of Agriculture as a Texas Heritage Property "Century Ranch" in 1987, having been farmed and shaped by four generations of the Smith family since 1887. The Smith House (Site 3), built in 1887 by John Wesley Smith (1828-1900) and altered in the 1920s and 1950s, was recognized in 1965 as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. The landscape of spacious fields, woodlands, and gently rolling hills includes an approximately 25-acre fenced Native Prairie Grass Preserve (West Bell Pasture) that includes big and little bluestem, side oats gramma and Indian grasses that have never been plowed or grazed.

The old Cleburne-Kimball Wagon Road runs through the ranch between and roughly parallel to Rio Vista's State Highway 174 and the Nolan River. This road was probably the earliest in Johnson County, likely used by soldiers traveling from Fort Belknap northwest of Fort Worth to Fort Graham, established in 1849 and now under Lake Whitney. Cleburne was known as Camp Henderson during the Civil War. It was renamed and became a permanent settlement, taking Buchanan's place as county seat in 1867. A stone highway marker, which is assumed to mark this road, dates from pioneer days and is located in the Inc Pasture. The heavy stone marker stands about 18 inches tall, with the marks "CLE 9 m [Cleburne nine miles]."

Just west of the point at which Haley's Creek joins the Nolan River lies the entrance to the ranch. Lined by two long rows of paper-shell pecan trees (Site 8)<sup>2</sup> planted in 1937 by Lowell Smith Sr., the drive leads directly to the ranch house (Site 3), branching west to the left of the house toward the numerous agricultural buildings, about a half-mile through back pastures to a storm cellar and remains of the home<sup>3</sup> and barn of Capt. Thomas Haley (Site 1) and the site of Haley's 1850s oval racetrack and gambling shack.<sup>4</sup> This gravel road was known by the family as "Alice's Road" because Alice Menefee Smith was the first to allow her neighbors to use the track as a shortcut. County Road 1209, referred to by the family as "Shirley's Road," was built through the ranch property in 1986, at which time the older road reverted to private ranch access.

The Chisholm Trail played an important role in the history of the region from 1867 through the 1880s, crossing the Brazos River at nearby Kimball Bend Crossing. One of the Chisholm Trail markers recently erected by the Johnson County Historical Commission is located at the entry to the Native Prairie Grass Preserve at the southwest corner of the original Smith section of land. Less than a mile north on the Nolan River was the Henry Briden<sup>5</sup> Cabin, which was moved to Rio Vista in 1974, where it was restored and designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. Cattleman and Texas Ranger Meredith Hart (died 1863) arrived in 1855 and built his home, also a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, just east of Rio Vista. The 1901 J.T. Baker Farmstead, a National Register property, is south of the Smith Ranch, 1.2 miles north of Blum.

<sup>2</sup> Four varieties of native pecans grafted with papershell pecans. The tree just outside the gate is a native.

<sup>3</sup> Lowell Smith Sr. was born in the old Haley home.

<sup>4</sup> Texas Historical Commission archaeologist Dan Potter recommended further evaluation of the site to determine the exact location of the gambling shack. Further inspection is planned for December of 2005.

<sup>5</sup> A portion of the Henry Briden land was purchased by Captain Haley and is part of the original Smith Ranch property. Briden's granddaughter Maggie was married to Henry Van Zandt in the Smith's parlor in 1912.

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Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

To the northeast of the main house, less than a mile through the pastures, the ranch land rises just beyond the Nolan River to a grass covered rolling hill that has a spectacular view back to the west across the Nolan Valley and the Smith Ranch. A modern Hill Country style guesthouse surrounded by fieldstone veneer is located on the bluff. The Smith Ranch now includes over 2,000 acres of fine farm and ranch land that has contributed food (corn, milo, oats, wheat, beef), fuel (natural gas) & fiber (cotton) to the economy since the 1880s.

## Smith Ranch resources

Surrounding the main ranch house (site 3) are many features and outbuildings of a rural farm landscape. Each structure enhances the architectural and agricultural history of the ranch and possesses good to high degrees of integrity from the times when they were constructed. Outbuildings relate to current and past agricultural usage. Many are vestiges of the days of self-sufficiency farming.

A hand-dug, native rock lined 1887 well, approximately 25-30 feet deep in shallow sand near the Smith House, was filled in by the early 1950s. Old stones near the well site are from the old well. Key outbuildings include a four-sided pyramidal well house (Site 6) topped by a cylindrical water tank, a pump house (Site 9), and windmill tower (Site 10) dating from 1910-20. The pump house is six feet by six feet, a painted concrete block structure built in the 1940s. The well house is a little larger, constructed by Merrimon Smith before 1913 in painted wood and topped with a large wood barrel holding tank. The windmill is a steel structure typical of the southern plains states. It was used to pump well water until the early 1950s. Because the blades are currently in storage, the windmill is classified as a noncontributing resource.

The smoke house (Site 7) is the closest outbuilding to the main house. The original building was wood, clad with a metal roof. In the 1930s a fieldstone rock veneer was added to the exterior, and the floor was cemented. The interior contains intact wood racks and meat supports. Hogs were killed and hung here in the fall, then cured with salt, wrapped in tow sacks, put in ashes and placed in a nearby root cellar (now filled in) where canned goods, beef and the hams were stored. An original walk from the house led to a wash-pot behind the smokehouse, where laundry was done.

There were two original servants' houses behind the main house. Bessie's House (Site 17) is a 1999 replica of a previous c. 1910 house for servants and ranch hands. The new house was rebuilt on the same footprint but without the chimney. It has painted horizontal wood siding (the original was white clapboard) on a wood framed structure with a concrete foundation and metal shake roof. It is a single story building with an attic loft. The mailbox of Bessie Ate, the last servant to reside on the farm, is still at the southwest corner of the house. Bessie's House now serves as the ranch office, complete with Lowell Sr.'s original desk from the bank.

The northern boundary of the house and outbuilding area is defined by Haley Creek, which flows east into the Nolan River, which in turn bisects the ranch about one-half mile from the main house. The western edge of the complex is anchored by a large boxcar barn (Site 12) constructed of large steel trusses covered in corrugated galvanized metal panels and supported on four wooden railroad boxcars purchased in the 1940s. This structure, which replaced a smaller log barn, was used as the main barn for grain, hay and machinery storage. This 50 by 100 foot building stands in the area where stood previously two 25 by 30 foot log corncribs hand-hewn by axe (demolished mid-1950s). Two additional boxcar storage buildings (Site 11) are to the north, and to the northeast

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are cattle holding pens or corrals. Cattle loading chutes occupy the area of an earlier ten by ten foot wooden saddle house.

Additional contributing features in this area include two buildings over 100 years old. The original mule barn (Site 4) was where mules were harnessed. A nearby blacksmith shop (Site 5) still contains many original blacksmithing tools and branding irons. The tools were recently dug up from under the fire pit, which was rebuilt over the exact location of the original. The 'JWS' branding iron was converted to an 'S' brand in 1900. The blacksmith shop also holds an old welding machine, antique bins used for storing small tools and parts, an old air compressor and the old ice box from the main house. The blacksmith shop and mule barn were originally built of wood and later covered in corrugated galvanized metal, in the 1940s, to preserve the original wood. Original barns and corncrubs (demolished) were hand-hewn logs. A milkbarn (demolished) was located by the extant water trough. Remains of an old cattle scale are located behind the mule barn.

A farm equipment storage area, with farm machinery up to a century old, is located behind the main house, and a trash dump can be found in Hilltop Pasture. A storage building (Site 14), which archives bank memorabilia and farm records, the combination ranch manager's office, saddle and tack house, and ranch storage (Site 15), and a farm machine barn (Site 16) are pre-engineered, metal building construction circa 1970s, and are not visible from the road. A hitching post for the ranch horses is recent. The horse corral now occupies the site of an earlier wooden clad 25 by 30 feet milk barn.

Orchards (peaches, plums, pears, blackberries) and gardens were located just northeast of the house for quick access for fresh vegetables for the dinner table. Alice Menefee Smith had good luck raising fruit trees because she put corncobs in the holes when planting the trees. Old mustang grape vines are still producing. Trees have grown up along the adjacent fence line. The original three-sided chicken house (dismantled) was a wooden clad building approximately 10 feet by 40 feet, north of the main house. The site of the c. 1900 Pipes' cotton gin<sup>6</sup> is located on the Nolan River between the house and Grange Hall. The gin may have been associated with the Grange.

A private airplane hangar (Site 13) was first built in 1951 to the west of the house in Rocky Pasture. It was moved, due to vandalism, to the east side of the house in the late 1950s. It is constructed of steel sheathed in corrugated galvanized metal panels. It faces south and allows access to the airstrip in the adjacent pasture. There is evidence of an old buffalo wallow in the east airstrip. Both Lowell Smith Sr. and Jr. flew their own planes; Sr. taught himself to fly in the Rocky Pasture in an Aronica Chief plane. One of the first airplane landings in the area was in the old Pecan Grove in the Nolan Pasture. Because the hangar has been moved and altered, it is classified as a noncontributing resource.

### The Smith Ranch House: Characteristics and Architectural Description

The Smith's main house (Site 3) is the centerpiece of the farm and ranch activities. The foundation of the 1887 two-story Smith House is rock with stone piers and beams. A gabled shake-style metal roof now covers the original wooden shingles. Hand-hewn rocks form chimneys on either end of the house, but it is said that they could never quite keep the house warm. Wood stoves also gave heat and kerosene lamps gave light. The wood structure faces south to catch the breeze.

<sup>6</sup> "Elder Rio Vistan Reflects on Yesteryear," Rio Vista Eagle & Triangle News, Souvenir Centennial Section, June 7, 1984, page 34.

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Built of lumber from the Haley house<sup>7</sup> as well as pine and poplar lumber hauled from Dallas, using square iron nails, the original home was influenced by early Texas "dog trot" log cabin construction, which allowed circulation of air down the central hallway, in this case to a rear, screened porch. All of the first floor rooms were accessed through the central hall and had high ceilings (nine feet ten inches in the two front rooms, eleven feet six inches in the dining room, eleven feet nine inches in the old kitchen).

A wide, two-level front porch just shy of the full length of the house, with six structural support posts and turned wood balusters and railings decorated with ornate wood brackets on each level, gave its basic Folk National Style a fashionable Texas Victorian appearance. Entry doors<sup>8</sup> on both levels of the house featured stained-glass transoms. The exterior was sheathed in horizontal wood siding and accented with four double hung windows on each level of the front façade. The house was symmetrical about the front axis and each of the side façades had a masonry fireplace, centered in each of the two front rooms. For a short time beginning about 1914, an outside stairway allowed access to the upper porch but was removed by 1920. During this time, a widow and her two young children were tenants in the Smith House.

The upper porch was enclosed as a screened sleeping porch in the late teens or early 1920s, in a more Classical Style of architecture with broad entablature above the new columns. Four, squared masonry columns supported the lower balcony. Two windows were added on the first floor with wooden boxes for holding firewood under each, so that one could reach the wood without going outside.

A Delco Plant was added at this time to provide electric lights. Its workings were in the well house, which was built by Merrimon before 1913. Dave Sowell, who was courting Esther Smith at the time, said he could tell when it was time to leave because the electricity would begin to fade. When the Rural Electric Cooperative brought electricity to rural homes in 1938, the icebox was replaced by a refrigerator. Lowell Sr. added the breakfast room wing and a carport in the 1940s and modified the front façade in 1954-55 by removing the upstairs balcony and turning the front elevation to a full porch façade in the Neoclassical style. Four large, two-story Doric style columns from Mary Korn Wilkerson Hall (1910) at Tarleton State University<sup>9</sup> replaced the former square columns of the porch.

The two windows added to the first floor were removed, along with their wood-boxes.<sup>10</sup> Wood shutters accented the double hung six-over-six pane windows, and the front entry was modified with a classical broken pediment entry doorway. The upper level door was converted to a window. The front façade of the house is today exactly as Lowell Smith Sr. modified it. The west and east façades of the original portion of the home appear as they were in 1887, with chimneys on both façades. In the early 1900s, a bathroom was added to the rear of the west façade. Beyond this addition is a den added by Lowell Smith Sr. in 1950. The east façade includes the 1920s dining room extension, and the 1940s breakfast room.

Shirley and Lowell Smith Jr. moved into the house in 1978 and made final additions by adding living space to the rear/north façade of the house so that the original part of the home could remain intact. The carport was

<sup>7</sup> Family tradition indicates that some of the lumber for the house came from the old Haley house, but Lowell Sr. is also said to have been born in the Haley home while his parents were living there. It is thus surmised that the Haley house was torn down and rebuilt around 1887.

<sup>8</sup> Both of these original doors are in storage on the ranch.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Korn Wilkerson Hall was built as a two-story dorm and torn down in 1955. Two of the columns are on a house in Stephenville. J. Louis Evans worked at Tarleton at the time. His wife Martha verified this.

<sup>10</sup> The two wood-boxes are still in the home.

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Smith Ranch  
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also modified and extended. The additions are on concrete foundations with brick veneer and were done in a manner to maintain a balanced front elevation, allowing the original house footprint to dominate the architecture. The last additions, while updating areas of the house to meet modern needs, deferred to the original house location and massing to highlight its position on the ranch site.

The floor plan of the home has seen mostly front facade alterations since 1887. A small wood stairway in the hall gave access to the two bedrooms on the second floor. In preparation for her son's new bride in 1920, Alice Menefee Smith turned the stairway 90 degrees from its original position, where a let-down bed originally stood. There is a parlor/living room to the right of the hallway; the dining room is beyond the parlor, and the old kitchen<sup>11</sup> beyond that. The dining room features a six-over-five-pane glass window, which is also believed to date to 1920, when Alice opened the wall between the parlor and dining room, originally solid, with glass French doors. The doors were later moved to the dining room entries, one into the new breakfast room and one into the old kitchen, leaving the dining room open to the living room. The breakfast room, which has two windows on the south wall, juts out from the house and original kitchen, now a butler's pantry. Originally this area served as a small pantry with a perforated tin flour bin bolted to the wall, a sifter always kept in the bin, and an icebox with wet cloths hung over it to keep it cool. In the late 1940s, Lowell Smith Sr. replaced the old pantry with a breakfast room, where stands a washstand believed to have been brought from Tennessee by Wesley Smith, who kept what gold he might have in its drawer.

A bedroom, the John Wesley Smith Bedroom, is to the left off the central hall and has always been used as a bedroom, first by Wesley and Ann, followed by Merrimon and Alice. All four passed away in the room. The first phone was hung in the southwest corner of this room. Off the master bedroom was a small room that first served as a nursery, containing the one closet in the house ("Wesley's closet"), and later a music room; Lowell Smith Sr. converted it to a full bath circa 1940. The original bath north of the nursery had been designated as a bath even before plumbing, with tub and basin likely installed in the first decade of the 1900s and the commode added about 1911 or 1912. Merrimon would never drink from the bathroom sink, as he was not convinced it was as sanitary as water from the kitchen. The old bath was converted to a breakfast room/family room; it now connects to the early 1950s den. Shirley and Stretch Smith added the remainder of the lower level to the rear of the house in 1978.

The second level of the house is virtually identical to the original floor plan. Closets were added to each of the two bedrooms. A few stairs lead up to the attic, where the original trunks<sup>12</sup> that came over in the wagons were stored. Lowell Smith Sr. raised the ceiling and remodeled the attic as a bedroom/bath in the late 1940s and used this room as his own, as he liked to be able to keep an eye out on the surrounding ranch through the six windows on three walls. Wallpaper in one room covers jade-colored, painted wood. Most wood flooring in the original section of the house is carpeted for protection. The wood can be seen on the upstairs landing. The west bedroom still contains the furnishings used by Lowell Jr. when he was a boy. A clock in the east bedroom belonged to Alice Menefee Smith. The Lowell Srs. and their children used this room as a den, gathering to read, study school lessons and listen to the radio. A potbellied stove was located here during those days. A covered

<sup>11</sup> When the walls of the old kitchen were uncovered, horizontal shiplap boards were exposed and painted; 9.5 inches wide on three side walls, 5 inches wide on the south wall.

<sup>12</sup> Two of the original trunks are still in the home.

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wood chest in the attic bedroom is one of the two wooden boxes that held logs for the fireplaces. A rocker is assumed to have been Wesley's.

Though the façade of the home has been modified by the Smith family over the years, it retains historical integrity from the era of Lowell Smith Sr. and integrity of location and setting from 1887. The Smith house itself was noted as a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark in 1965, and the ranch was listed by the Texas Department of Agriculture as a Texas Heritage Property "Century Ranch" in 1987. The house contributes to the agricultural and settlement aspects of the Smith Ranch. The rural historic landscape retains integrity in its location, relationship to the community and surrounding natural features, and in its materials, feeling and associations.

**Table of resources, Smith Ranch**

| <b>Number</b> | <b>Built</b> | <b>Resource</b>                      | <b>Category</b> | <b>Status</b> |
|---------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1             | c. 1852      | Haley Homestead site (41JN58)        | SITE            | C             |
| 2             | 1865         | Haley-Smith Cemetery (41JN57)        | SITE            | C             |
| 3             | 1887/1955    | Smith House                          | BUILDING        | C             |
| 4             | c. 1900      | Mule barn                            | BUILDING        | C             |
| 5             | c. 1900      | Blacksmith shop                      | BUILDING        | C             |
| 6             | c. 1913      | Well house and water tank            | STRUCTURE       | C             |
| 7             | c. 1935      | Smoke house                          | BUILDING        | C             |
| 8             | 1937         | Landscape features (pecan trees)     | SITE            | C             |
| 9             | c. 1940      | Pump house                           | STRUCTURE       | C             |
| 10            | c. 1920      | Windmill                             | STRUCTURE       | NC            |
| 11            | c. 1945      | Boxcar storage                       | BUILDING        | C             |
| 12            | c. 1945      | Machinery barn                       | BUILDING        | C             |
| 13            | 1951         | Airplane hangar                      | BUILDING        | NC            |
| 14            | c. 1975      | Storage building                     | BUILDING        | NC            |
| 15            | c. 1975      | Manager's house/saddle house/storage | BUILDING        | NC            |
| 16            | c. 1975      | Farm machine barn                    | BUILDING        | NC            |
| 17            | 1999         | Bessie's House                       | BUILDING        | NC            |

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## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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### APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** AGRICULTURE, SETTLEMENT, ECONOMICS,  
ARCHEOLOGY/Prehistoric, Historic Non-aboriginal

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1887-1957

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1887

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** Lowell Smith, Sr.

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** John Wesley Smith

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-12 through 8-26).

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## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-27 through 9-28).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

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

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository (*Layland Museum, Cleburne, Texas; owner's collection*)

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The Smith Ranch was established in 1887. Its historic context provides background information about the patterns of history and development that shaped the ranch and the surrounding geographic area. This rural historic landscape is nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Agriculture and Settlement, Criterion B in the area of Economics for association with Lowell Smith, Sr., and Criterion D for its archeological potential to yield information important to prehistory and history. As a rural historic landscape, the Smith Ranch possesses a significant concentration, linkage and continuity of areas of land use, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features. Archeological evidence of the earliest local habitation by both Anglo-American settlers and semi-nomadic Native Americans can be found on the property. The historic fabric of the Smith Ranch landscape in relationship to the surrounding community is quite significant. Lowell Smith Sr. is recognized by the local community as having played a vital role in the development of Rio Vista and neighboring communities. His contributions to the banking industry were recognized in their time and today as innovative and significant. The property retains historic and architectural integrity to a good degree.

**Criterion A: Settlement**

**Philip Nolan, the Nolan River & the Cross Timbers Expedition of 1801**

The Nolan River is named for an Irish explorer, mustanger and protégé of General James Wilkinson of Kentucky, a friend of Aaron Burr and commander of U.S. forces in Louisiana. Philip Nolan (1771-1801) lived with Wilkinson and served him as bookkeeper and shipping clerk from 1788 until 1791. Nolan is believed to have drawn the first Anglo-American map of Texas, which has never been found, but his observations made their way to Wilkinson, who produced a map of the Texas-Louisiana frontier around 1804.

Nolan, who was one of the earliest Anglo-Americans to enter Spanish Texas and the Cross Timbers region, first visited Texas in 1791 on a trading expedition and lived with Comanches and other northern tribes for two years before returning to New Orleans with fifty mustangs. In 1794 he obtained permission in San Antonio de Bexar to obtain horses for the Louisiana regiment and returned 250 mustangs in 1795. He headed to Texas again in 1797 with trade goods, even though trade between Louisiana and Texas was prohibited. Spanish officials became suspicious about his loyalties and believed he might be stirring up the native tribes in Texas against Spanish rule by procuring horses and mapping the interior for the United States military. Nolan returned to Natchez in 1799 with more than 1,200 horses.

Nolan left Natchez again in October of 1800 with a well-armed group of at least 27 men, but without a passport. He erected a small fortification with corrals at a Brazos River tributary, believed by many to be between Blum and Rio Vista, and was killed there in March of 1801 by Spanish troops from Nacogdoches sent to intercept him. His men were captured, tried, and sent to prison. Because of the decade he spent in Texas, Nolan has become recognized, accurately or not, as the first in a line of many armed attempts to free Texas from Spanish and Mexican control. A granite marker was erected in Nolan's memory about four miles south of Rio Vista on Highway 174.

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**The Seviers and Bridens: 1849**

Surveyor Charles Sevier received an 1856 patent land grant from the Republic for the plot of land that comprises the basis of the original 640 acres of the ranch. Henry Briden (1825-1908) came to Texas from Germany as a stowaway in 1845 and served on the frontier for two years as a Texas Ranger before being employed by Charles Sevier, who died<sup>13</sup> in Mexico in 1848 while serving with Captain Jack Hays of the Texas Rangers. Briden married Sevier's daughter Lucinda Sevier (1825-1875) in July of 1849. The young couple arrived from Galveston in August of 1849 in a wagon pulled by oxen, accompanied by her father's brother, A.H. Sevier, also a surveyor. They are believed to be the first permanent settlers of European descent in Johnson County.

Lucinda's uncle gave the young couple land from the Charles Sevier survey and helped them build their first one-room log cabin near springs on the Nolan River, and, unfortunately, in plain view of a well traveled Indian trail. Soldiers from Fort Graham warned the Bridens of trouble with the Indians, so they moved south of the fort for about two years, then returned and built a two-room log cabin on the west bank of the river in a densely wooded, less visible spot. Four children were born in this cabin before 1856, when Briden built a larger home with two fireplaces. Lucinda Sevier died in 1875, leaving four young children. She and Briden's second wife, Mattie Foard (died 1881), are buried in the Haley-Smith Cemetery. Briden outlived three wives and continued to live on the banks of the Nolan River until 1900. He is buried in the Grange Hall Cemetery beside his third wife, Sarah Ann Mulliness.<sup>14</sup> The Briden cabin was originally located on property adjoining to the Smith Ranch, and the original 640 acres of the Smith Ranch was part of the Charles Sevier survey.

**Horseracing with the Haleys: 1852 – 1887**

The Haley name was well known in Johnson County from circa 1852 until the late 1880s.<sup>15</sup> In the early 1850s, Thomas Franklin Haley (1817-1865) moved from Shelby County in east Texas, where he had lived with his brothers and father since about 1840, to the Nolan River Valley just west of the Cross Timbers wilderness of Johnson County, still frequented by Indians. On July 18, 1854, Haley purchased two areas totaling 1058 acres for \$1100 from Green B. Hardwick. Haley raised quarter horses on the property and built a home and frontier racetrack in the back pasture of what is now the Smith Ranch. Here early settlers gambled money, land, cattle and other valuables on their horses, and Haley imparted his love and knowledge of fine horses to his four sons. Horses were essential to the economy in the 1850s, and horseracing, which was also a popular pastime in Galveston and Houston, provided an opportunity to gather information about potential horses while being entertained. Haley raised running horses and he was friends with some of the most prominent names in horse

<sup>13</sup> Some accounts say that Sevier accompanied his daughter to Johnson County. An affidavit by H. Briden confirms Sevier's death in 1848.

<sup>14</sup> "Rio Vista Locale Was Scene of First First Johnson County Settler," by Faye Taack Carmichael, granddaughter of Henry Briden, copies on file in Cleburne's Layland Museum. Alvarado Bulletin Section 5 Centennial Edition, July 1979.

<sup>15</sup> Although G.B. Hardwick is in the chain from Sevier and Briden to Haley, he was likely an absentee land speculator and therefore not significant in our story of the people and the land.

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breeding in north Texas. He constructed an oval track in front of his home, with a small building at one end where the men placed bets, bought whiskey and traded tips on the horses.

In the Civil War, Haley was elected first lieutenant of the "Johnson County Slashers" and served with his sons John, 21, and Thomas Jr., 17. Charles, 14, had to wait another year to join the military and Allen, 12, stayed with his mother, Elizabeth. The regiment left for Arkansas in 1862 and Thomas replaced the company commander after he was killed. Thomas was seriously wounded two years later in Louisiana<sup>16</sup> and returned to Texas, where he died seven months later on February 1, 1865. He is buried in the Haley-Smith Cemetery on the Smith Ranch. In 1868, Thomas Jr. and John sold most of their well-bred horses. From a few of the best mares saved by the brothers came one of the foundation sires of the modern American Quarter Horse, Lock's Rondo, a double-bred Shiloh colt foaled in 1880. Bred by Charles "Chick" Haley on the ranch, Rondo was lost in a Fort Worth horse race believed to have been thrown by the Haley brothers' jockey. Convinced they had the better horse, the Haleys wagered and lost all their money and the stallion himself. A year later, W.W. Lock purchased Rondo for \$1,000. The horse became one of the most outstanding sires in Texas. The remains of the Haley period include the sites of the house, gambling house and racetrack, with an old well, storm cellar and ruins of a barn. The Haleys had additional stables and outbuildings as well. J.L. Adcock, who lived on the Haley place as a young man, verified the sites of the home and racetrack. The home, which may have been rebuilt in the late 1880s, was the birthplace of Lowell Smith Sr. It was destroyed by a fire in the 1970s.<sup>17</sup>

## The Chisholm Trail: 1866-1884

New York lawyer Richard Kimball (1816-1892) and printer and Texas land merchant Jacob de Cordova (1808-1868) together owned in scrip or title about one million acres of Texas land, including a cotton plantation a few miles west of the Smith Ranch known as Kimball's Bend, and had elaborate schemes to colonize the area. By 1854 they had established a town with stores, churches, schools and saloons at this crossing point, the only one for miles up or down the Brazos River. A ferry operated near the crossing from shortly after the Civil War until around 1915. The town of Kimball flourished during the days of the old Chisholm Trail. The cattle drives crossed at this point, making the settlement a convenient stop for ranchers and drovers. The trail followed portions of the old fort supply routes through Johnson County, with herds from South Texas crossing the Brazos River at Kimball Bend Crossing, stopping to rest in a pasture a few miles north at the 1870 Bennett Ranch, about three miles west of the Smith Ranch on FM 916, moving up the Nolan River Valley to the Nolan River Crossing about two miles due west of Cleburne, and then on toward Fort Worth, Wichita and Abilene. Millions of cattle went north over the trail, occasionally requiring as much as two days for one herd to pass through.<sup>18</sup> Although the Haley family left no records regarding their interaction with the drovers, it is safe to assume the Haleys would have traded horses with the drovers, and that the cattle drives sometimes crossed the property.

<sup>16</sup> Alice Menefee Smith's father is believed to have been in the same battle.

<sup>17</sup> This section is a summary of: Bailey, Georgianne, "Texas Turf: The Men and their Horses to the Civil War," Master's Thesis: Texas Christian University, 1982.

<sup>18</sup> Leach, Dan and Billie Anne, *Johnson County, Texas: A Pictorial History*, Vol. 1, 1998, The Donning Company, Virginia Beach, Virginia; page 72-73.

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The Sandusky Place, a homestead on the old wagon road from San Antonio that became the trail for the Chisholm Trail, is on that ridge less than a mile northwest of the Smith Ranch.<sup>19</sup> Drovers stopped there for cool water from the rock-lined well and to trade for eggs, bacon and vegetables, and even fresh horses. Isaac and Mary Lucy Menefee Sandusky, married in 1873, "resided on the land that Ike had bought on 'Sandusky Hill' where The Chisholm Trail moved near their home after crossing the Brazos River at Kimball Bend."<sup>20</sup> Their daughter Rosa Sandusky married George Smith, a brother of Merrimon Smith, and Mary Lucy was a sister of Merrimon's wife Alice Menefee Smith. Ike and Mary Lucy are also buried in the Grange Hall Cemetery.

## Rio Vista & the Coming of the Railroad: 1881

Grange Hall declined and Rio Vista began to grow when the railroad built a line one mile east of the river in 1881. Constructed by the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway, the railroad, which lies between the Smith Ranch and Rio Vista, connects the Gulf of Mexico with Chicago and runs parallel with State Highway 174. The first regular train came through in 1885, and soon as many as three trains arrived each day. By 1900 Rio Vista had over 175 inhabitants with a church, school, bank, meat market, blacksmith shop, drug stores, saloon, several general stores, a newspaper, a post office and a livery stable. Along the railroad track, the land divides itself into black flatland soil for farming on the east and picturesque, rolling ranch land to the west. From September of 1898 to May of 1899, Rio Vista shipped 150 carloads of grain and 1700 bales of cotton. A fire swept through the town in 1914, destroying many businesses that were never restored. With a loss of manpower during World War II, the area turned to dairy farming for the next twenty years. In the 1960s farmers began raising milo, returning to wheat and hay and cattle ranching in the 1980s. It is interesting to note today that raising horses has again become popular.

## The Smith Family: 1887 – 2005

In 1887, the Haley brothers sold their place on the Nolan River to John Wesley Smith for \$12,000 in gold. They moved to Sweetwater, where they continued to breed, raise and race outstanding Quarter Horses. The track where Rondo was trained now lies in a grassy field behind the Smith Ranch House.<sup>21</sup> John Wesley Smith (1828-1900) was one of ten children born to Jane Puckett and Ericus Smith in the community of Viola on

<sup>19</sup> Cleburne Times Review, Jan. 11, 2004, page A5: "Godley reminiscences recorded for posterity," According to Mather Willis the old Chisholm Trail "crossed the Brazos River at the Old Kimbell Crossing or Kimbell Bend, then it followed the Nolan River up to near Bethany then continued by mark Pages." San Angelo newspaper article (undated) with a story told by LaRue Sandusky Tyler. The 1866 diary of George C. Duffield, as quoted in The Clifton Record, Sept. 30, 2005 in "Growth of the Cattle Industry in Bosque County" also indicates an early route through Kimballville and the loss of much of his drive's equipment and "beeves" while crossing the Brazos River in route to Rock Creek in Johnson County.

<sup>20</sup> Mrs. William B. (La Rue Sandusky) Tyler of San Angelo, quoted by Viola Block in *The History of Johnson County and Surrounding Area*, 1970. Also, from a letter submitted by Tyler June 10, 1981 for the historic musical drama "The Inherent Legacy: the Story of Johnson County." The Smith Ranch, Sandusky Place and Bennett Ranch are also listed in The Chisholm Trail Museum's brochure, Johnson County, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Bailey, Georgianne, "Texas Turf: The Men and their Horses to the Civil War," Master's Thesis: Texas Christian University, 1982. The above section on the Haley Era summarizes a chapter entitled "The Haleys." Bailey is a professor of history at Georgia College & State University and the editor of the Georgia Historical Quarterly, a publication of the Georgia Historical Society.

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Hickory Creek in Warren County, Tennessee, where he received a country school education. Wesley first moved to Shelby County, Texas, in 1847. He returned to Tennessee for a year, then came back to Texas and received a half section patent (320 acres) of land from the State of Texas. He married Jackey Ann "Annie" Cooper (1834-1898) in Shelby County, Tennessee, in 1852.

Wesley enlisted in the Civil War in 1862 at the age of 34 as a second sergeant with Company A, First Regiment of the Texas Lancers, 28<sup>th</sup> Texas Calvary. He provided his own horse and saddle.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the war, in 1868, he moved to Rock Tank<sup>23</sup> in Johnson County to be near the Cooper family, who were also very early settlers. Wesley and Annie's first six children died before the couple moved to Johnson County, two while Wesley was away at war. The family moved in a covered wagon and brought with them an African-American man and his wife who had cared for the family in Wesley's absence. The Smiths' first two children, Mary Caroline (Callie) and Merrimon, were born in Shelby County, while George Washington and Josie Ann (Joseanna) were born in Johnson County.

Wesley paid \$12,000 in gold for a house and land to the heirs of Captain Thomas Haley. Haley was from Tennessee and had lived previously in Shelby County, Texas. It is assumed that Wesley knew him. The Warranty Deed was signed on July 7, 1887 and Wesley built the main Smith Ranch House in that year. A terrible drought, in which the Nolan River dried up, preceded the greatest flood ever recorded in the area (16 inches of rain in one day) on August 28, 1887. Merrimon was 22, George, 19, and Josie, 8, when the family moved into the house. Their sister Callie was already married to Joe Hughes, but was to move back later with her three sons to live with her parents until she later married Arch Watts. Wesley Merrimon Smith (1864-1913) married Martha Alice Menefee (1872-1936) in 1890 and probably lived in the old Haley House, where Lowell was born, for a time. George married Rosa Sandusky, a granddaughter of Frank Menefee, at about the same time. They lived in the Smith home while their house was built. George and Rosa's son Elmer Franklin was born in the Smith house in 1895.

Alice Menefee's father, Henry Franklin Menefee (1831-1920), and his family were among the earliest European settlers in Johnson County. Her uncle was one of 107 men who signed the petition to the State to have Johnson County created out of portions of Ellis, Navarro and Hill counties. Frank Menefee and his brother William Orville (1828-1913), a Methodist minister, were sons of Laban Menefee (1796-1843), who came to Texas from Nashville, Tennessee, with his brother Jarrett and their families in the winter of 1834-35. Laban served in the Texas border wars and received a wound in an Indian battle. He died a year later in 1843.<sup>24</sup> Laban owned 500 acres of land on the west side of Rio Vista, on the banks of the Nolan River. Frank and his brother William Orville Menefee (1828-1913) settled on this land in 1854.<sup>25</sup>

Wesley Smith often rode horseback or took a buggy into Cleburne, where in 1892 he became a director of The National Bank of Cleburne, said to be the first real bank in Cleburne. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge for over 40 years. He always voted as a Democrat, but avoided politics. His daughter-in-law Alice

<sup>22</sup> Wesley brought his saddle home from the Civil War with a saber slash near the horn. The saddle disappeared from the mule barn during the 1930s.

<sup>23</sup> Rock Tank was located between Cleburne and Grandview. The community was also known as Cuba.

<sup>24</sup> A historical marker commemorating the Menefee family reunion at Smith Springs on the Nolan River, held every year since 1891, was placed near the Rio Vista bank. *The History of Johnson County and Surrounding Area*, by Viola Block, 1970.

<sup>25</sup> "Menefee Family 100<sup>th</sup> Reunion," Aug. 4, 1990, Cleburne, Texas. Family booklet.

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described him as “dominant, a character, a strong personality, frugal and well-respected by everyone.” When his wife Annie died in 1898, John Wesley asked his oldest son Merrimon to move his family, including two-year-old Lowell, into the house to help his daughter Josie care for him. John Wesley died on December 13, 1900, and the house passed to Merrimon and his wife.

Merrimon and Alice made few changes in the house, save for the installation of a bathroom and indoor plumbing. Merrimon had a fatal illness and was sent on a stretcher by train to a doctor in Fort Worth. Merrimon had arranged for Lowell to study at Peacock Military Academy in San Antonio, and after she became a widow in November of 1913, Alice kept her promise to send him the next fall, because she wanted the best for her children. Later on, Alice and Esther lived in an apartment in Cleburne during the week so that Esther could attend school there.

It is said that Alice carried a 45/60 caliber Winchester rifle known as a “buffalo gun” at night when checking on noises, and that gun is still in the family. With her teenage son away and her own health weak, she considered selling the ranch until her five-year-old daughter Esther persuaded her to keep “the most beautiful place in the whole world.” Instead, she took in Clinie Putnam, a widow with two young children, to live upstairs from about 1914 to 1920. They had the use of the outside stairs and used the upstairs east bedroom as a kitchen/living area. There was no running water or indoor bathroom upstairs, only a pot-bellied stove. Esther’s swing hung in the hallway, just inside the back porch, where ice cream was made from home-grown peaches, eggs and milk. Esther recalled drawing up butter and milk from the cool well each morning. Alice’s father would come to stay with Alice during the winters, sleeping in the let-down bed in the parlor and telling his grandchildren his Indian stories.<sup>26</sup> Alice also depended on Merrimon’s brother George and his wife Rosa for advice and encouragement.

While growing up in the house, Alice’s son Lowell Niles Smith Sr. (1895 – 1975) cleaned a gun in the master bedroom. His “unloaded” gun put a hole in Wesley’s mahogany wardrobe and every garment hung in it. After Lowell’s studies at Peacock Military Academy, Daniel Baker College and World War I service as a Lieutenant, Alice welcomed her son and his new bride Gladys Brown (1899-1971), a graduate of Southern Methodist University in Dallas and the daughter of a prominent physician in Brownwood, to the house in 1920 by opening the wall between the parlor and dining room and placing glass French doors there. Gladys was unprepared for the lack of conveniences but lived in the home with her mother-in-law for nearly 16 years, doing whatever needed to be done, from delivering babies to doing the family wash and tending the gardens. She kept chickens and sold eggs during the Depression to supplement the family income and made butter for the family into the early 1960s. Esther married David Sowell Jr. at the Smith home in July of 1928. Alice suffered a stroke the same year and remained paralyzed until her death in 1936.

Lowell lived in the house the remainder of his life, appreciating his rare heritage and the privilege of being the third generation and expressing to his son Lowell Jr. his hope that this tradition would be continued. He never discarded an old hat, hanging them all on a hat rack near the old kitchen door. Lowell Sr. loved gadgets. He built his own telephone line from Rio Vista to the house. He used two old-fashioned crank wall phones to connected lines for the ranch hand and the housemaid, one on the porch and the other in the kitchen.

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<sup>26</sup> Esther Smith Sowell recalls one story: The Menefees lived between Rio Vista and the ranch. With the men away during the Civil War, the Comanches were active. Alice’s infant sister Fanny died and was buried at night in an unmarked grave because of the Indians.

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Gladys taught school in Rio Vista for a few years and the couple had two children, Barbara Jean and Lowell, Jr. When German prisoners of war from Rommel's Afrika Korps were brought from a camp in Cleburne to replace farm laborers in service during World War II, Gladys insisted that they could not do the manual field labor expected of them on the amount of food they were receiving. Even though the farmers had been told not to do so, she prepared a huge batch of beans for them every day, and sometimes also watermelon. Lowell Jr. worked with them. Only the enlisted men worked, as the officers were exempted. Sam Piper, whose father had been a slave, lived in the smoke house for many years and helped around the house, telling stories to Lowell Jr. Piper was one of the many gentlemen who lived and worked on the farm in the 1920s and '30s. Six-foot-eight Doodle Hall was the ranch hand for 40 years beginning in the late 1930s.

## Criterion A: Agriculture

### Food, Fiber and Fuel: Agriculture and the Rural Landscape

Farms in the physiographic region west of the Cross Timbers region, roughly parallel with Interstate 35, were generally grazing lands, while those in the Blackland Prairie to the east were under cultivation. The Smith Ranch is in the transition region between the two. From the beginning, the economy of Johnson County was tied to agriculture. For decades cotton was the mainstay for much of the local economy. Cotton was a money crop; since it did not spoil as quickly as other crops, it was easy to ship to market. Cotton buyers and gins were located in Rio Vista and Cleburne. Cleburne had a big compress, important to the development of the cotton economy.

Just before the turn of the century the Smiths began producing cotton. The Smiths' other crops included wheat, oats and corn. Corn was the largest crop in the 1880s, as it provided food for animals and humans, but cotton was the key crop for nearly 80 years before root rot developed in Johnson County and production in West Texas became more cost efficient. The earliest Smith farming operation required intensive labor, much of which was done by mules used to pull the heavy equipment. Many farm workers also lived on the ranch, each family with its own box-style house with a shallow well, garden, storage cellar, milk cow and other necessities for self-sufficient farming. The families worked the land on thirds, fourths or halves, earning money only when a crop was made. Some workers had their own plots and worked as tenants; some worked only for room and board, some labored for a combination of room, board and wages. The farm workers' house sites can be identified throughout the farm by bits of pottery, bricks and other artifacts.

Grain crops were grown both for cattle feed and for sale. In the 1940s, the Smiths experimented with weaning calves from their mothers and feeding them with grain grown on their farm to produce what the cattle industry calls "fat cattle." This was done for several years, but the practice was finally abandoned as it was more profitable to sell the grain at harvest time and sell the calves as they were weaned. In the early years, the grain was cut with sickles, tied and shocked to sit in the fields until the thrashing machine came along. The thrashing was done by people who had the equipment and were hired to come to the various farms to do the job. Cook shacks followed the thrashing machines. Later, when harvesting grain became more mechanized and the Smiths had their own combines, which took the place of the thrashing machines, crops would be hauled to town in trucks. Grain was graded for moisture content, which meant the producer would get less for grain harvested

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too soon, as it was considered "green," and therefore had too much moisture in it. Around 1900, red-topped cane was grown, and in those years much of it was manually harvested with knives. The Smiths raised a form of cane called Higeer, which was used as feed for the cattle during the winter. The cane was cut and bundled and hauled to a stack lot around August of each year and saved for the winter.

Cattle raised in the early years at Smith Ranch were horned Hereford, familiarly known as White Face or referred to as English cattle. The first brand, which is on file in Johnson County, was JWS for John Wesley Smith. In the early 1900s, the brand changed to a flat S, or an S turned sideways on the right hip. Hereford remained on the place until the 1980s, when the ranch gradually moved to Black Angus production. As cattle raisers, the most devastating thing the Smiths faced was dealing with the screwworm. When he was a young person riding his horse through the cattle, Stretch Smith learned how to spot an animal that was infected with the screwworm by looking for evidence of an open wound or blood on an animal. It could be anywhere on the animal, and newborn calves were as susceptible as older cows. The method of doctoring for this was difficult. The screwworm would eat into the flesh of the animal, normally where the animal had been scratched, or where something such as birth or a wound created blood. The animal had be roped or run into a running chute to be treated. A medicine that looked like black tar was put into the hole where the screwworm had eaten. Around the late 1950s, a procedure for control of the screwworm was introduced. The flies that developed these worms were produced sterile and were flown by airplane and distributed over huge areas at a time, thereby eliminating the screwworm. Some people believe this procedure increased the population of coyote and other varmints, as well as of deer, as these animals, like the cattle, were no longer being infected by the screwworm.

In addition to their cattle operation, the Smiths also raised sheep from the late 1940s through the 1950s. Sheep had to two cash payments, one for wool and one for selling the animals for slaughter. Crews came to the ranch at certain times of the year to sheer the sheep. The wool was collected in big bags and sold. But raising sheep was difficult at that time because the coyote and wolf populations were growing, and dogs also were a threat. Eventually, it became too much of a problem to keep the sheep along with the beef cattle. Beginning in the 1940s and culminating in the 1970s, nearly all the fields that had been farmed were gradually converted to pastures, though there is still strong evidence of terracing in the old fields. The last crop raised as part of the farming operation was milo, but raising milo every year on the same land is a problem, as it is very hard on the land, and other crops need to be rotated with it. This gave the Smiths another reason to exit any kind of farming and go strictly with ranching. Today, as part of the total ranching operation, the only crop grown is wheat for cattle grazing. Tractors are used to feed round bales to the cattle, and when it is time to move cattle, a cattle-catching company is hired to do the chore. They are working cowboys, and they bring their horses and equipment, although the Smiths' ranch workers help.

At his death, Lowell Smith Sr.'s family owned 2336 acres of land. With the advent of electricity and refrigeration in 1938, it soon became cheaper to purchase what was needed at the store rather than trying to produce everything at home. The last mule was sold in the late 1930s. In 2004, the Jenny H #1 gas well in the Barnett Shale came into being in southern Johnson County and brought a new use to the land, with the Blackwell Pasture participating in the pooling and production of this well. The words of Esther Smith Sowell, who was born in the Smith house in 1909, summarize the history of the rural lifestyle on the Smith Ranch:

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Cotton was the money crop. The corn and oats were stored and used mainly for feed. Cows were kept for milk and calves were fattened for beef. Hogs were raised and slaughtered for the meat and lard. Chickens were raised for eggs and to eat. A large garden furnished fresh vegetables in season, and were canned for winter use. There was a large orchard of peaches, plums and berries. A storm cellar in the back yard was an ideal place to store the many jars of preserved vegetables and fruit. This cellar not only made good cold storage, but was a real haven of safety in stormy weather. The many pecan trees on the place provided an abundance of nuts for eating and cooking.”

In the fall of each year, after a killing frost, fattened hogs were killed and butchered. Sausage was made and sacked. Hams and bacon were smoked and cured. After hanging for a while, these were packed in ashes and stored in large wooden boxes for use throughout the year. These were in the smokehouse, which is the small rock house in the back yard. The excess fat was trimmed from the hogs and rendered into lard in a large iron pot in the back yard and used for frying and other cooking. Some of the fat was used to make lye soap for laundry, dishwashing and cleaning.

There was a hand dug well in the back yard. This well furnished water for drinking, bathing and cooking. During hot weather the well was used to keep the milk, butter and eggs cool. They were lowered into the well in a large bucket. This was before there was a windmill and deep well. There were beehives east of the house. They were robbed each year to get honey used in cooking as well as being used like syrup. There were fireplaces and wooden stoves in the house to furnish heat. The wood for these was cut from trees along Haley Branch and Nolan River. This wood was cut in lengths and stacked along the west side of the yard. With such a degree of self-sufficiency, it was only necessary to buy very few essentials to supplement their food: flour, sugar, cornmeal, and in the winter a barrel of apples. A highlight of farm operation was in late June or July of each year when the thresher with its crew of men came to thresh the grain. Rosa and Alice did a lot of cooking to feed 15-20 hard working men, and dishwashing afterward was also a big task. After threshing the grain, there was a large haystack in the pasture for the livestock to eat on during the winter.

From the 1940s to the present time, everything has changed. Tractors replaced the mules; combines took over the grain harvest. Even an airplane and landing strip became part of the operation. Lowell Sr. became a pilot. He enjoyed flying around to oversee the land, and that of his neighbors. Crops underwent a radical change, with no more cotton, just milo, wheat, and white-faced cattle. These rapid changes came about due to World War II. Renters or sharecroppers were no longer available, because these people could go to the nearby cities to work making planes and guns for the military. Rapid mechanization became necessary. Those of us that have lived from the early 1900s have seen many changes in the way of life.<sup>27</sup> In conclusion, the land and the people were partners along with Mother Nature as she was needed to provide the seasons and the moisture to make it all work. Each generation had to make adjustments and changes to adapt to the ever-moving marketplace. The Smiths are proud of their small role in feeding, clothing, and now with the exploration of the Barnett Shale in Johnson County, fueling, America.

<sup>27</sup> Sowell, Esther Smith, "Then and Now," 1987 Centennial pamphlet for the John Wesley Smith House. Smith family files.

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## Criterion B: Economics

### Lowell Smith, Sr.

Lowell Niles Smith Sr. was a pioneer in community banking whose influence was felt throughout Texas and the nation. His banking traditions came to be recognized and emulated across the country. After World War II, his clientele stretched around the world. Lowell Smith went into the U.S. Army to serve as an officer in World War I. When he came home to Rio Vista in 1919, his mother had Victory Bonds she had purchased to help the war effort with money from her 1918 cotton crop, the best ever for the family. Although these bonds were government-issued, their market value was approximately fifty cents on the dollar. Lowell cashed them in at one of the Cleburne banks and used the money as an investment in a new bank being organized in Rio Vista. Rio Vista was a small agricultural community with a private bank which, through its owner, Sid Norwood, was connected to The National Bank of Cleburne. At the same time Lowell Smith was beginning his banking career, he also was starting to take over the family's traditional farming and ranching operation.

The first minutes for Guaranty State Bank are dated 1919, reflecting its organization, but the bank did not open for business until Jan. 4, 1921. The bank started out small in a vacated grocery store on the town square in Rio Vista. The building was the only brick building erected before a 1914 fire that devastated the town. The bank stayed there until it moved to a new location on Hwy 174 in 1962. The town's Masonic Lodge is now housed in the old bank building. The initial capitalization of the new bank was \$25,000, which was contributed by various shareholders.<sup>28</sup> This amount was very impressive for a rural bank of that day, and that was all the money ever contributed to the bank's capital in its entire near 80-year history. The bank never had to go back to the investors for additional capital, which was very unusual. Commodity prices had been high at the close of World War I, and bankers of the time depended on that factor to do well. The farm economy, and especially cattle prices, fell apart in the early 1920s, though, making that a difficult time to have started a bank.

The name of the bank changed to First State Bank Rio Vista in the mid 1920s. The devastating effect of the 1929 stock market crash and succeeding depression was late in reaching Rio Vista, Texas. Smith held his bank stock, and over time his investment paid off. The Depression was difficult on banking because loans could not be repaid at their stated values and on the terms under which they were made. First State Bank's lending had been conservative throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, though, and it maintained a large capital and was not prone to grow aggressively. While many other banks in the area were failing, First State remained secure.

Smith also forged a strong relationship with the bank examiners in the 1930s. In those days, there were no restaurants in Rio Vista, and the examiners would occasionally go to the Smith home to eat a meal. One examiner told Mr. Smith, "They're closing too many of these banks. Now, I don't think they'll bother you, but if they ever try to, you call me and I'll come help." In March of 1933, the United States Congress created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), bringing about the biggest change in the history of banking and stabilizing the American economy for the next 50 years because of regained confidence in the banking system. After the law was enacted, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a "bank holiday" for two weeks, while

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<sup>28</sup> Guaranty Bank was organized by E. L. Etier of Fort Worth, with the help of local citizens. C.H. Coffman was the first president; Douglas Wade, vice-president; Ed Ball, cashier; and Lowell Smith, clerk. Ed Ball, who married the granddaughter of Meredith Hart, and Lowell Smith Sr. operated the bank from the day it opened. In 1927 Smith bought out Ball and became cashier.

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banks around the nation were examined to see if they could be reopened under the FDIC. Written in Mr. Smith's hand in the general ledger for the bank from that time period is: "By order of the President and the Governor, we are closed." The examiners spent a Sunday afternoon looking at everything in the bank and approved it for FDIC membership.

Lowell Smith Sr. pioneered many of the firsts in banking. One area where he was far ahead of his time in his thinking was in making loans to women.<sup>29</sup> He made loans to married women in their own names when it was still the custom to have their husbands join them in signing the notes. During the 1930s, First State was one of the first banks in the state to finance automobiles on a monthly basis, allowing customers to make payments from their income. Smith also financed small airplanes. The law required the planes be maintained, and unlike most other pieces of equipment that depreciate over time, airplanes become more valuable. During that period, the price of light aircraft went up substantially because fewer new ones were being built due to liability on the manufacturers. Additionally, there was not much competition for the loans. From the bank's success with airplane loans evolved the idea of putting a landing strip across the back of the bank. And from that, a whole new phase of marketing developed at the "Fly-In Bank." Customers were able to fly in with a plane for a loan officer to see, and once the plane was theirs, they could fly in to make their payment or a deposit. Knowing a cup of coffee or a cold drink awaited them, many pilots used a good-weather day as an excuse to fly down to Rio Vista to do their banking business.

During the 1940s, while Lowell Smith, Sr. was still at the helm, many people from the Rio Vista area who had gone away during World War II followed the migration to cities such as Fort Worth or Dallas to seek better employment. But they kept their bank accounts in Rio Vista, a practice unique for that time but one that led to the type of long-distance banking common in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because the bank was not in a convenient location for many of its customers, it went out of its way to use the technology at hand to make it easy to complete paperwork and make deposits by mail and to apply for loans by phone. That type of banking was not accepted elsewhere, but it worked well for Rio Vista because the bank was stable, and the customers appreciated being able to deal with someone they knew. One reason for the bank's popularity was that no service charges were levied on accounts, no matter how small, for many years. The Smiths achieved some of their most important pioneering efforts in the period of the 1940s through the 1970s, when they took steps to improve on the available technology. Since Cleburne customers, especially car dealers, were charged long distance for calls to the bank, the bank worked both with the local phone company and with Southwestern Bell to have calls from Cleburne treated as local.

A group of residents in Kopperl (15 miles southwest) wanted to hire a teacher and develop an Agriculture Department for the school. They formed an association to promote their idea, which was a big step for a small school district with little money. Smith attended a public meeting where their plan was discussed. One of the first topics that came up was finding someone to help the 15- and 16-year-old students by loaning them money to buy calves and feed for their projects. Since Smith was the only banker there, he was asked if he would want to finance the projects. He said he would, but then they got into a discussion of who would sign the notes. Insightfully, he said no one had to sign with the young people. "You just send the kids in. They'll sign the notes. That's all we need." Smith seized the moment, and the business he developed through that one offer lasted for generations. There were no laws to require those loans be paid, but the youngsters were learning how

<sup>29</sup> See Oral History Project Interview of Helen Campbell, July 9, 1997, attached with documentation.

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to borrow money in the process of doing their projects. He was putting kids in the cattle business, and they never forgot who got them started. They were the nucleus of the business the bank did in Kopperl for the next 50 years.

When USPS zip codes were first introduced, Rio Vista was placed in the Waco area rather than the Fort Worth area, which meant that customers living north of the bank couldn't always get one-day service on mail-in deposits. Government officials said a zip code couldn't be changed, but Lowell Smith, Jr. was sent with maps in hand to Washington, D.C., to make the request, and the problem was resolved. The bank moved to a new location on the highway in 1962, in a former cow pasture, and adopted the name Cowpasture Bank to celebrate the new location. In 1970 the town of Rio Vista had a population of about 200, yet First State Bank had 9,000 customers. At the time the bank was sold to Wells Fargo a few years ago, the town population had risen to 500 and bank accounts had increased to approximately 40,000. Lowell Smith Sr. did not tend to hold offices in organizations, though he was instrumental in helping start the Rio Vista Grange Cemetery Association that cares for the historic graveyard across the road from the Smith Ranch. Smith and four others were the founding directors of the Johnson County Memorial Hospital. He was active in other organizations such as the American Legion and the Masonic Lodge. Smith's name lives on in The Lowell Smith, Sr. History Center, a part of Layland Museum in Cleburne. The legacy of Lowell Smith, Sr. lives on today, even though he died in 1975. Several of the banking innovations Smith developed in Rio Vista, including loans for automobiles and planes, loans to women in their own name apart from their husbands, and conducting business by phone, were breakthroughs for their day and eventually allowed and adopted statewide years later.

## **Lowell (Stretch) Smith, Jr.**

Lowell "Stretch" Smith Jr. (b. 1933) became the third generation of Smiths in the banking business. He attended schools in Rio Vista and Cleburne where he picked up his nickname as a first baseman. He received a degree in finance from Southern Methodist University, where he met and married Shirley Segars (b. 1933) of Oklahoma in 1954. Following service in the Air Force (1955-57) Stretch became an assistant state bank examiner for two years, traveling primarily in West Texas. After his father's death, sister Barbara Jean and her husband Arthur Lee Denton, Jr. lived in the Smith house for a year while they built a home across the Nolan River, now the Guest House. In August of 1978, when their youngest daughter entered college, Stretch and Shirley moved from Cleburne, where they had raised their two daughters, to the ranch. Additions to the house were completed in October of 1979. Lowell Jr. continued the work of his father on the Smith Ranch and at First State Bank in Rio Vista. Lowell and Shirley's daughters and grandchildren plan to preserve the ranch and its history. Smith, Jr. served as president beginning in his late twenties and later as chairman of First State Bank of Rio Vista, in the period from 1962 to 1999. Smith, Jr. was on the board of the American Banking Association and served as president of the Texas Bankers Association from 1987-88, during one of the most difficult time periods for banking, when many banks all over Texas were failing. He was also chairman of the trustees of the Southwestern Graduate School of Banking at Southern Methodist University in Dallas in the early 1990s.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Dan Utley, now chief historian of the History Programs Division of the Texas Historical Commission, recorded oral histories with Smith, Jr. while at Baylor University in the 1990s.

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## Criterion D: Archaeology

The Smith Ranch is located in an area inhabited by Native Americans and explored by early Europeans. Though no permanent Indian villages were established in the vicinity, Tonkawa, Kickapoo, Anadarko and Caddo tribes hunted the area until the mid-1870s and may have engaged in rudimentary farming in the fertile bottomlands to provide subsistence. Buffalo roamed the area and a low spot on the ranch may have been a "blow out" or "buffalo wallow." As a child, Stretch Smith found many arrowheads on the ridge that runs along Haley Creek and in the Airstrip Pasture between the main house and the Haley-Smith Cemetery. According to Texas Historical Commission archaeologist Dan Potter, who visited the ranch July 13, 2005, these areas have potential for archaeological artifacts from the prehistoric era. State Archeological Landmark designation is currently being pursued for the Haley Home site (41JN58) and the Haley-Smith Cemetery (41JN57). The Haley-Smith Cemetery and nearby Grange Cemetery are also being nominated for Historic Texas Cemetery designation.

The Haley-Smith Cemetery contains nine named and marked graves. Captain Thomas Haley died February 1, 1865 and is the oldest known burial. Others are Lucinda G. Sevier Briden (died 1875), Mattie M. Foard Briden (died 1881), Leonard A. Fisher (died 1896), John Hubble,<sup>31</sup> V. L. Smith, T. D. Haley, Nannie Taylor and C. L. Barker. Inside and outside the chain link fence enclosure, there are ground irregularities suggesting possibly more unmarked graves exist. There are large and small stones that have been broken by animals or passers-by. The known veterans of wars buried in the Haley-Smith Cemetery are John Hubble from Colonel Felix Houston's Regiment of the Texas Revolution (1836) and Leonard A. Fisher and Captain Thomas Haley of the Confederate States Army.<sup>32</sup>

## Smith Ranch Archaeological Report by Jimmy Smith

January 20, 2006

### Archaeological Evidence

Texas Historical Commission archaeologists and stewards undertook an archaeological assessment of the Smith Ranch during the fall of 2005. A previous survey of the ranch was undertaken by one of the Texas Historical Commission stewards. The assessment consisted of surface examination for diagnostic artifacts, metal detector surveys of areas known to have been utilized historically, and subsurface testing for prehistoric components. Infra red photography was also available and examined.

The surface survey, consisting of walking surveys, was impacted by the presence of Coastal Bermuda grass planted in Mr. Smith's pastures and heavy undergrowth along Haley Creek and the Nolan River. As a result, sites known to Mr. Smith became the focus of the documentation. The metal detector survey consisted of systematically covering the area where the Haley homestead, site number 41JN58, was located and the area where a structure reported to have been a gambling shack associated with the racetrack was located. Metal hits were flagged and mapped. Limited excavation was carried out in an attempt to document the presence of

<sup>31</sup> Photocopies of letters concerning John Hubble.

<sup>32</sup> Military information on Captain Thomas Haley, John Hubble, Leonard Fisher.

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artifacts consistent with the early period of occupation (A.D. 1852-1887).

Subsurface testing consisted of shovel tests 40 cm in diameter excavated in arbitrary 20 cm levels to a depth that would determine the presence of intact archaeological deposits. Once the presence of cultural deposits were either confirmed or dispelled, excavation was stopped. The lowest level of cultural materials was not determined.

### Conclusions

Intact cultural material is present in several locations on the Smith Ranch. The presence of additional sites buried in the floodplain along the Nolan River is highly likely. Three sites, the Haley Homestead (41JN58), the Haley Cemetery Prehistoric Site (41JN57) and the Haley Racetrack Gambling Shed Site (no number) were documented.

### Haley Homestead

During the visual surface survey the original well and the location of the homestead were documented. Two structures after the original Haley Homestead were built on this location and all have either burned or been torn down. No foundation stones were observed on the surface. Metal detector surveys produced artifacts consistent with 1852-1857 indicating archaeological deposits are present.

### Haley Cemetery and Prehistoric Site

The Haley Cemetery, located adjacent to Haley Creek, contains the graves of some of the earliest settlers in Johnson County. Some of the earliest graves in the cemetery are covered with large concrete slabs forming what may be sub-surface vaults. The age and construction of these graves qualifies this cemetery as an archaeological site.

Surface survey of the area around the cemetery produced visual evidence of prehistoric cultural materials. Subsurface test units were placed in several areas to a maximum depth of 80 cm. Undisturbed cultural material exists along the creek in an area delineated on the attached map. The cultural material consists of fire-cracked rock, flint debris, tools, shell and bone (in excellent condition). The presence of shell and bone indicate the soil acidity is conducive for preservation of that form of perishable artifact, which also provide a significant amount of additional information about the people living on the site. The presence of fire-cracked rock is suggestive of campfires and the quantity observed represents either a large campsite or reuse over a long period of time. Diagnostic projectile points in the collection of Mr. Smith were examined and determined to be from the Middle to Late Archaic period in Texas (ca. B.C. 2500-500).

### Haley Racetrack Gambling Shed Site

The site is located on an elevated portion of pastureland adjacent to Haley Creek and on the south end of the area where the track was laid out. A fence running east-west roughly bisects the site. The northern portion has been plowed while the southern portion was never in pasture. Visual surface survey found two areas of interest. Along the east slope of the rise were numerous concentrations of burned rock. No evidence of prehistoric occupations was noted and it is assumed these represent campfires associated with the racetrack. The second area of interest was located to the south of the fence line (undisturbed section of the site). Several

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cut stones that may represent the foundation of the structure were noted. The metal detector survey indicated large numbers of artifacts to the west of this group of rocks but few to the east. This would be consistent with other early house sites where trash was commonly left in the area behind the structure. While metal artifacts were mapped in the plowed area of the site, large numbers were also noted in the undisturbed southern section. Artifacts consistent with the A.D. 1852-1887 period and associated with horse trappings were recorded in undisturbed contexts.

Investigators

This report was prepared by Jimmy Smith, Texas Historical Commission Steward with the assistance of Dan Potter, Texas Historical Commission Regional Archaeologist. Field work assistance was provided by Texas Historical Commission Stewards Glynn Osburn and Art Tawater. Metal Detector survey was conducted by John Yates and Max Rathael. Earlier visual surveys took place in 2000. Surveys for this project took place on 11/12/2005 and 01/01/2006. This report was submitted on 01/20/2006.

**Conclusion**

The Smith Ranch meets Criteria A, B and D at the local level of significance, being significantly associated with Lowell Smith Sr. and the Smith family throughout its existence from 1887 to the present day. It retains integrity in its location and relationship to surrounding natural features, including the Nolan River and Haley Creek, and in its association with historic resources related to early area settlement, including the Haley homesite and racetrack site, Haley-Smith Cemetery, Grange Hall and its cemetery, as well as in the ranch's relationship to the neighboring town of Rio Vista. The Smith Ranch qualifies as a rural historic landscape in its historical use, occupancy and significant concentration and continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways and natural features for more than 100 years. The contributions of Lowell Smith, Sr. to banking and the prosperity of Rio Vista are significant, and this property is the historic resource most closely associated with his life. Tangible evidence of human use over many years is seen in numerous landscape characteristics that include land use and activities, patterns of spatial organization, response to the natural environment over time in shaping the land, cultural traditions, buildings, structures, vegetation, circulation networks such as the airstrip, farm roads, railroad, creeks and river, as well as boundary demarcations and archeological sites. The Smith Ranch qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of its significant local history since 1887, and prior to that in its association with the Haley family and other local historic events. The history is intact because of the four Smith generations, to whom the house and agricultural landscape represent the past. A significant amount of important area history happened on or near the Smith Ranch property, including the Chisholm Trail, Philip Nolan's camp and last battle, the early Briden settlement, and the Haley horses and racetrack. The agricultural landscape of Smith Ranch is worthy of preserving because it represents the many changes that occurred in this area since 1887 and even before the Smith family were owners. The changes included adaptation from raising grain to cotton, and from raising cotton to raising cattle as the land became better suited to different uses over time.

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** approx. 2336.23 acres in the Charles Sevier Survey, Johnson County, Texas.

| <b>UTM REFERENCES</b> | <u>Zone</u> | <u>Easting</u> | <u>Northing</u> |    | <u>Zone</u> | <u>Easting</u> | <u>Northing</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|----|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| a.                    | 14          | 648398         | 3567591         | g. | 14          | 649998         | 3564274         |
| b.                    | 14          | 649460         | 3568262         | h. | 14          | 649429         | 3563922         |
| c.                    | 14          | 650519         | 3568404         | i. | 14          | 648967         | 3564263         |
| d.                    | 14          | 651868         | 3568795         | j. | 14          | 648007         | 3565086         |
| e.                    | 14          | 652549         | 3567764         | k. | 14          | 647590         | 3565792         |
| f.                    | 14          | 652574         | 3566667         | l. | 14          | 647971         | 3566789         |

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:** see continuation sheets 10-29 through 10-30.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:** The boundaries include all property historically associated with the site. The boundaries reflect property owned by the Smith family at the end of the period of significance in 1957.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY** (with assistance from Bob Brinkman, historian, Texas Historical Commission)

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**NAME/TITLE:** Phoebe Allen

**ORGANIZATION:**

**DATE:** December 5, 2005

**STREET & NUMBER:** 2510 Cedarview Drive

**TELEPHONE:** (512) 444-1326

**CITY OR TOWN:** Austin

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 78704

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS** (see continuation sheets FIGURE-33 through FIGURE-37)

**MAPS** (see continuation sheets MAP-31 through MAP-32 and topographic map)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet PHOTO-38)

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**ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

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**NAME:** Shirley and Lowell Smith, Jr.

**STREET & NUMBER:** P.O. Box 249

**TELEPHONE:** (817) 373-2450

**CITY OR TOWN:** Rio Vista

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 76093

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

**Smith Ranch, 1887: 1058 acres** in the Charles Sevier Survey, Johnson County, Texas (sold 1854 by Green B. Hardwick to Thomas Franklin Haney, sold 1887 to John Wesley Smith).

**Acreage increasing Smith Ranch, 1887-1956: 1178.23 acres**, as follows:

|                    |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Lacewell pasture:  | 120 acres    |
| Hilltop pasture:   | 120 acres    |
| Blackwell pasture: | 150 acres    |
| Bell pasture:      | 120 acres    |
| Rocky pasture:     | 106.91 acres |
| Brumbelow pasture: | 142 acres    |
| Taack pasture:     | 163.74 acres |
| Nolan pasture:     | 85 acres     |
| B. Smith pasture:  | 28.58 acres  |
| Starvout pasture:  | 103 acres    |
| Inc pasture:       | 139 acres    |

**Total acreage: 2336.23 acres (approximate).**

This is the acreage and boundary of the Smith Ranch as of 1956, the end of the period of significance. Below are legal descriptions for certain portions of the Smith Ranch.

**Brumbelow Pasture** (142 acres)

A tract of 142 acres of land, being a part of a survey of 160.1 acres of land known as the northeast quarter (NE 1/4) of H. & T. C. R. R. Co., Section 28, patented to John F. Kimbell assignee of E. B. Kimbell, on August 17, 1891, by Patent 221, Vol. 12 and described by metes and bounds as follows: BEGINNING at the northeast corner of the southeast quarter (SE 1/4) of Section No. 28; THENCE — North 30 West 824 vrs. to a stake; THENCE — South 53-1/2 West 924 vrs. to a stake in the west boundary line of the northeast quarter (NE 1/4) of Section 28; THENCE — South 30 East 950 vrs. to the northwest corner of the southeast quarter (SE 1/4) of Section 28; THENCE - North 60 East 919 vrs. to the place of beginning.

**Hilltop Pasture** (120 acres)

Being a part of the David Moore Survey, Pat. No. 125, Vol. 11; and BEGINNING at the northwest corner of said David Moore Survey; THENCE — South 30 East with the west line of said Survey 830-1/2 vrs. to a mound of rock in Pyeatt branch in the division line between B. L. Powell et al and the Taylor heirs; THENCE — North 60 East with said division line 820 vrs. to a mound of rock; THENCE — North 30 West 830-1/2 vrs. to the north line of said David Moore Survey; THENCE — South 60 West with the north line of said Survey 820 vrs. to the place of beginning, containing 120 acres of land, more or less.

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**Nolan Pasture** (85 acres)

A part of the CHARLES SEVIER SURVEY, ABSTRACT 752, and described as follows; BEGINNING at the Southwest corner of a tract of 131 acres sold by Neil Thompson and wife to T H. Briden: THENCE North 60 East with the said Briden's South line 862 varas to a stake for corner in center of Cleburne and Kimbell Road; THENCE South 10 West 874 varas with said road to a stake for a. corner; THENCE South 30 East 76 varas to B. J. Jacksons Northeast corner; THENCE South 60 West 446 varas to a stake for a corner; THENCE South 24 East 147 varas to a stake for corner; THENCE South 14 West 276 varas to center of Nolan River; THENCE up the meanderings of said river to the place of beginning, containing 85 acres of land, more or less, and being the same land described in deed recorded in Volume 116, Page 156, Deed Records, Johnson County, Texas.

**Rocky Pasture** (107 acres)

TRACT V: Being a part of the John F. Kimbell Survey, Pat. 325, Vol. 20, 964, and described by metes and bounds as follows: BEGINNING at the northeast corner of said John F. Kimbell Survey in line of the Charles Sevier Survey; THENCE — South 60 West with fence on the north line of said John F. Kimbell Survey 928 vrs. to the northwest corner thereof, at fence corner; THENCE — South 30 East with fence on the west line of said Kimbell Survey, 874.4 vrs. to center of public road; THENCE — with said public road North 32-1/2 East 469 vrs.; THENCE — with center said public road, North 55° 15' East 72 vrs.; THENCE — leaving road with fence North 29 West 116 vrs. to a stake; THENCE - leaving road with fence North 29 West 116 vrs. to a stake; THENCE — North 58-1/2 East pass on north side of barn entering road again at 112 vrs., continuing same course with road 418 vrs. to the east line of said John F. Kimbell Survey; THENCE — North 30 West with survey line and public road 519.3 vrs. to the place of beginning, containing 105 acres, more or less. TRACT VI: Being a part of the John F. Kimbell Survey, Patent No. 325, Vol. 20, Abst. No. 964, and being a part of the 105 acre tract deeded to Mrs. Nora Gatewood in Vol. 66, Page 455 of the Probate Minutes of Johnson County, Texas; BEGINNING at a point for corner in the most northerly northwest corner of Mrs. Nora Gatewood's 105 acre tract; THENCE — North 56° 53' East (called North 58° 30' East in deed from Mrs. Jasie Harris to E. Gatewood recorded in Vol. 330, Page 212 of the Deed Records of Johnson County, Texas) with the most easterly north line, a distance of 311.1 feet to a point in the center of a public road; THENCE — South 10° 00' East with the center of said public road, a distance of 340.0 feet to a point for corner; THENCE — South 53° 12' West (called South 55° 25' West in the said Mrs. Jasie Harris to E. Gatewood deed) continuing with the said public road a distance of 191.9 feet to a point for corner, said point being an ell corner of Mrs. E. Gatewood's 105 acre tract; THENCE -- North 29° 00' West with the most northerly west line of the said 105 acre tract a distance of 322.2 feet to the place of beginning and containing in all 1.91 acres of land, more or less.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:** The boundaries include all property historically associated with the site. The boundaries reflect property owned by the Smith family at the end of the period of significance in 1956.

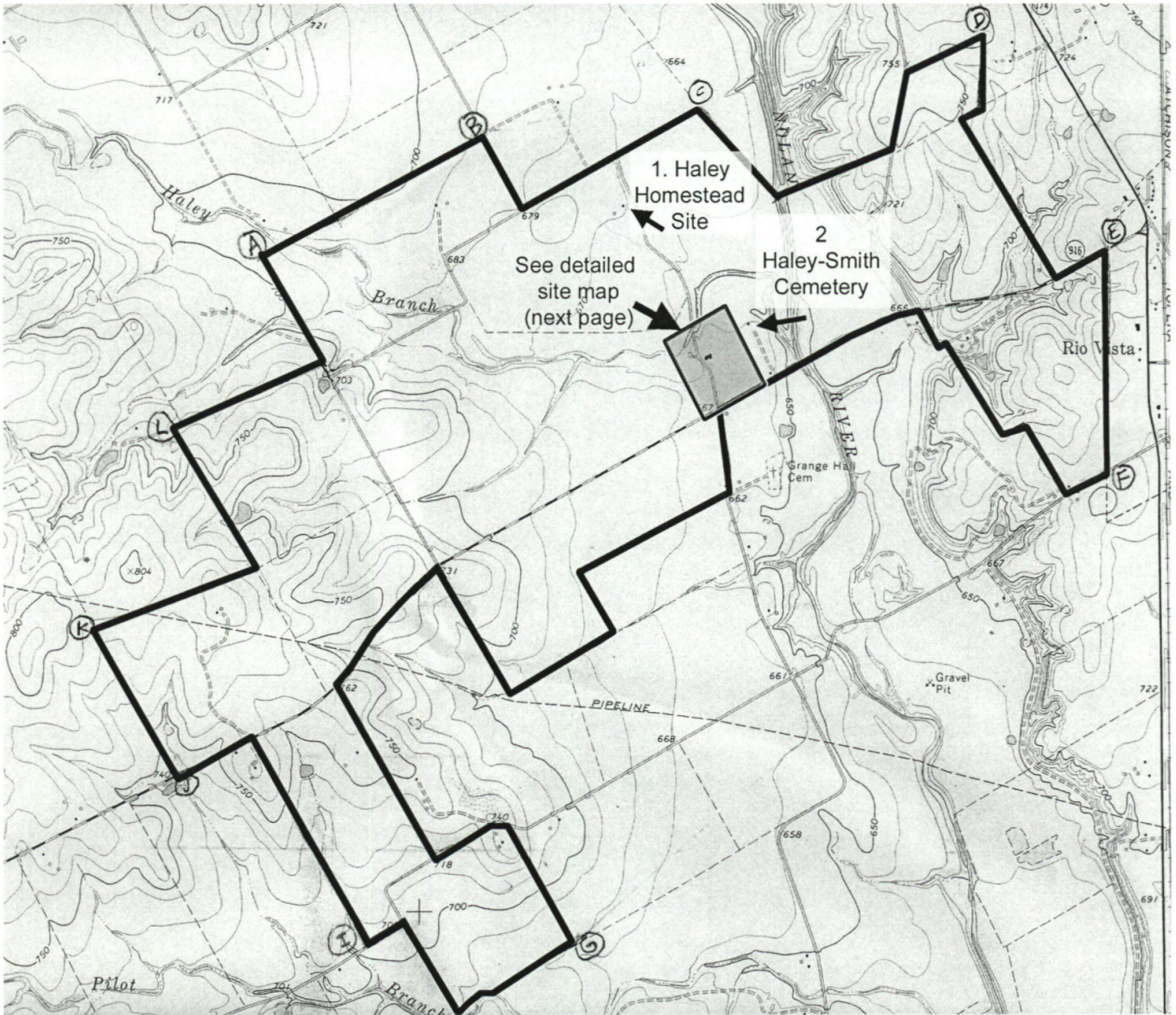
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 31

Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

Site plan for Smith Ranch. See continuation sheet MAP-31 for inset map.



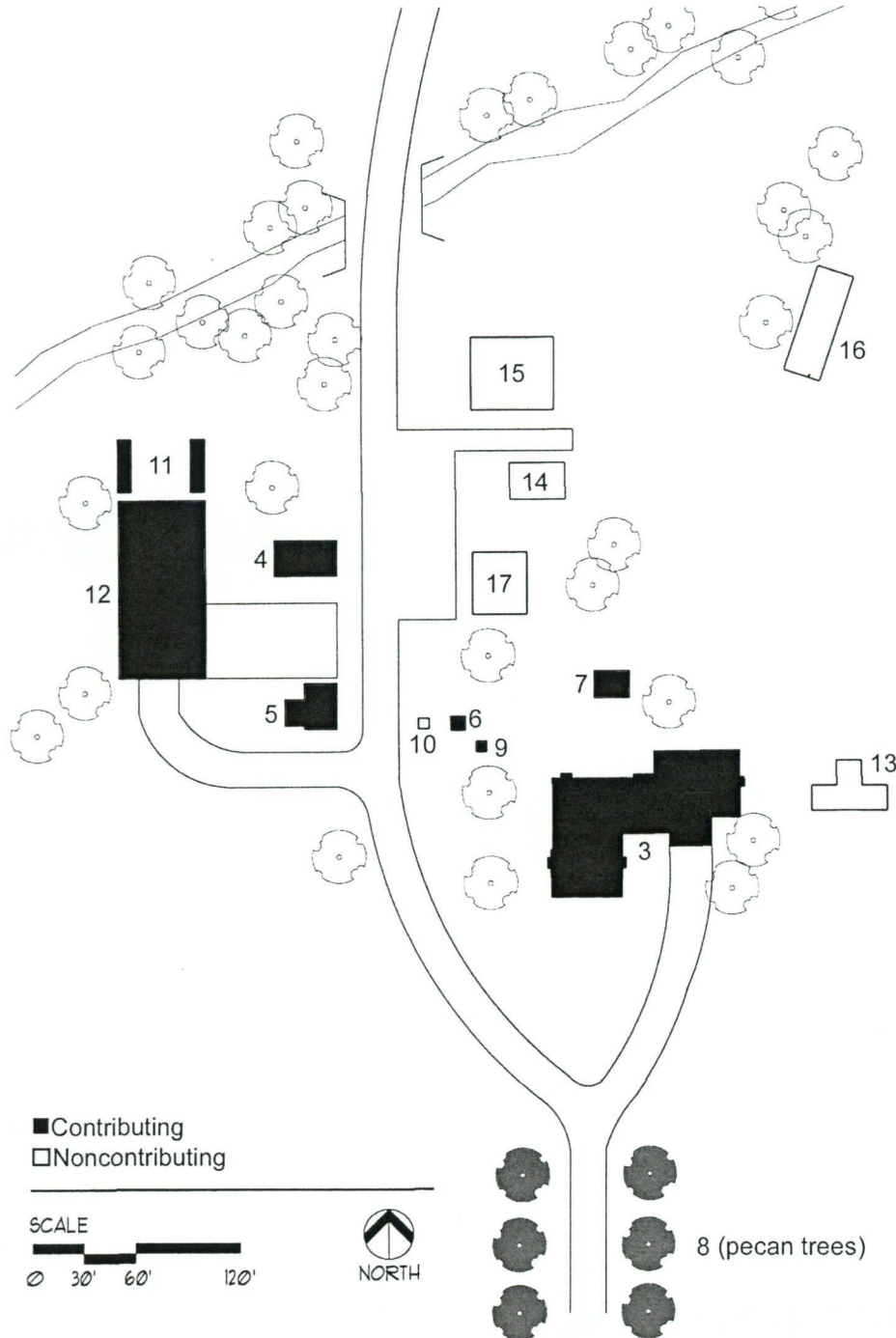
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 32

Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

Inset map for Smith Ranch.



|    |                                      |
|----|--------------------------------------|
| 3  | Smith House                          |
| 4  | Mule barn                            |
| 5  | Blacksmith shop                      |
| 6  | Well house and water tank            |
| 7  | Smoke house                          |
| 8  | Landscape feature (pecan trees)      |
| 9  | Pump house                           |
| 10 | Windmill                             |
| 11 | Boxcar storage                       |
| 12 | Machinery barn                       |
| 13 | Airplane hangar                      |
| 14 | Storage building                     |
| 15 | Manager's house/saddle house/storage |
| 16 | Farm machine barn                    |
| 17 | Bessie's House                       |

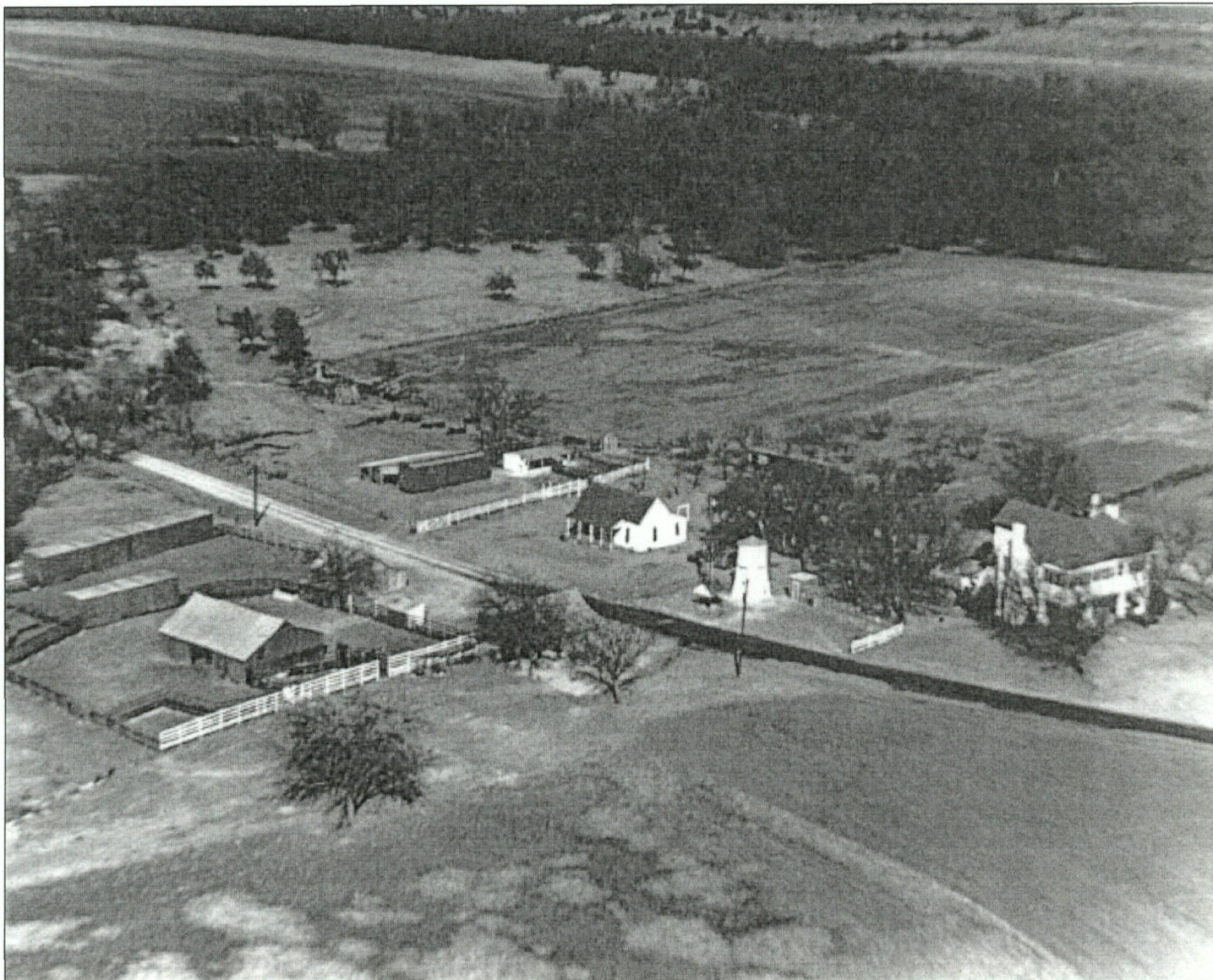
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 33

Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

Figure 1. Smith Ranch, aerial view circa 1940. Southwest oblique, camera facing northeast.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 34

Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

**Figure 2. Smith House and family circa 1910. From left, Lowell Smith, Sr., Wesley Merrimon Smith, Alice Meniffee Smith, Esther Smith (Sowell), Maggie Van Zandt (granddaughter of Henry Briden).**



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 35

Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

Figure 3. Smith Ranch (Grand Valley Lands), circa 1948-1950. Southeast oblique, camera facing northwest.



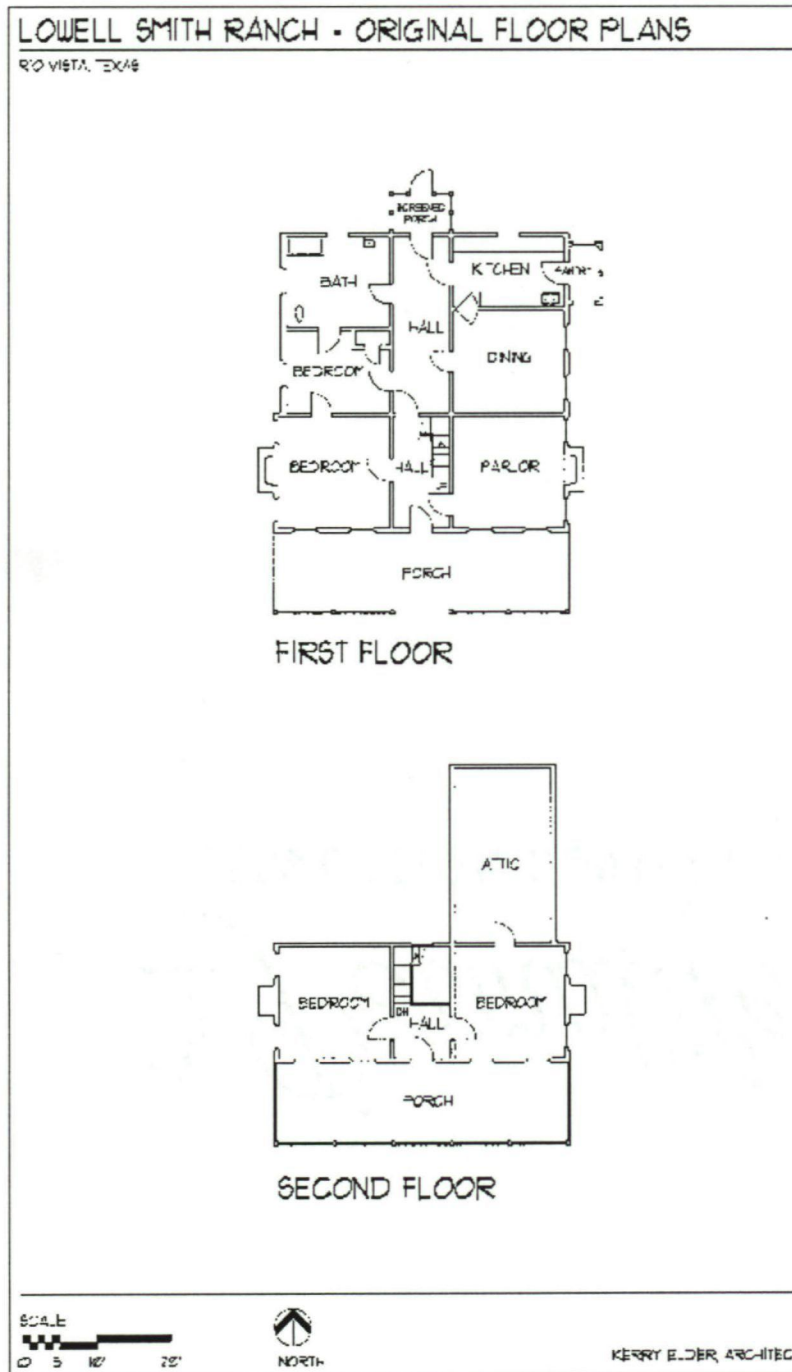
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 36

Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

Figure 4. Smith House floor plan c. 1887. Drawn by Kerry Elder, architect.



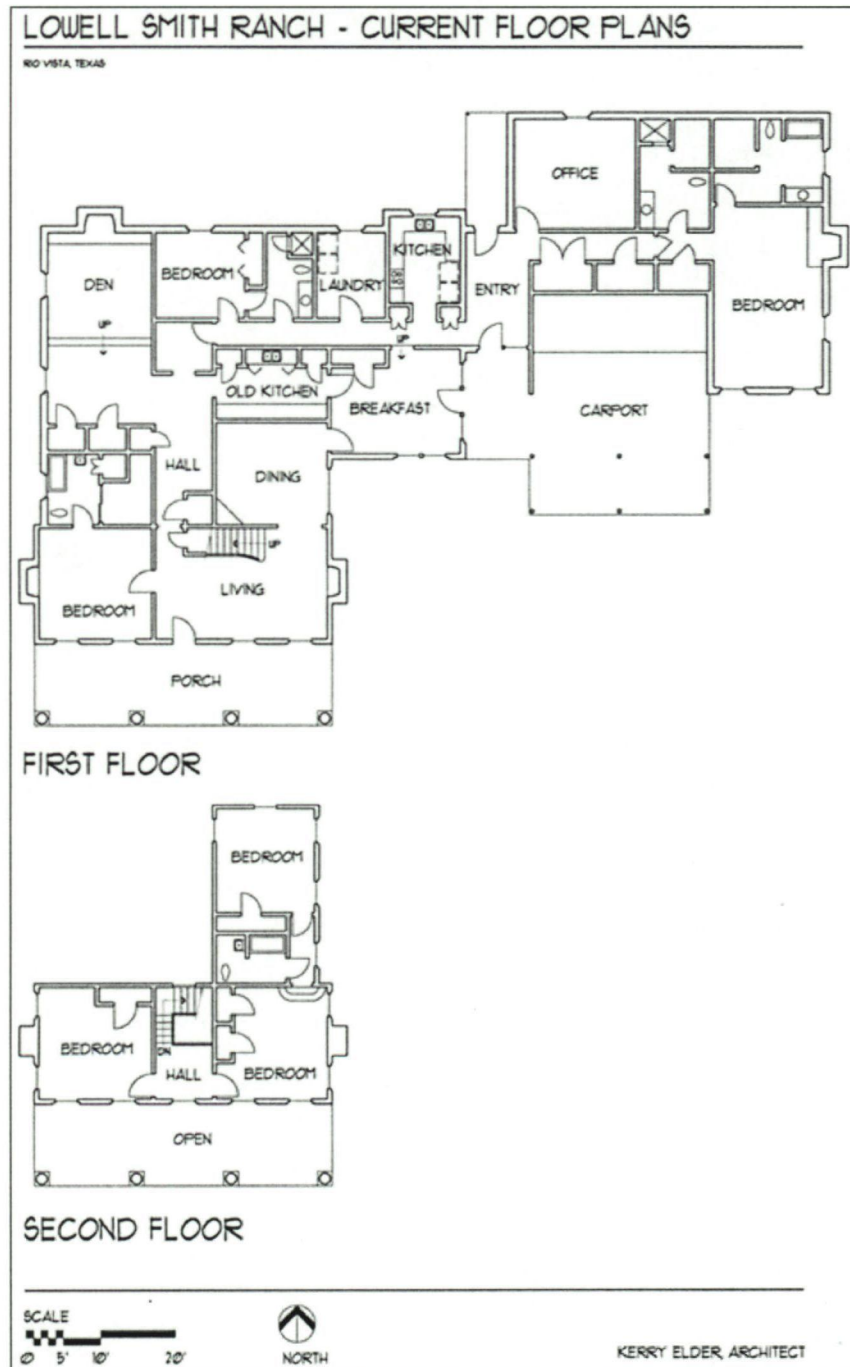
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 37

Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

Figure 5. Smith House floor plan, 2005. Drawn by Kerry Elder, architect.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section PHOTO Page 38

Smith Ranch  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas

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**PHOTOGRAPHIC INVENTORY**

Smith Ranch  
FM 916 one mile west of SH 174  
Rio Vista vicinity, Johnson County, Texas  
Photographs by Phoebe Allen, Austin, Texas, November 2005  
Negatives on file at Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas.

Photograph 1 of 10, Smith Ranch, southwest oblique  
Camera facing northeast

Photograph 2 of 10, Haley Homestead site, southwest oblique  
Camera facing northeast

Photograph 3 of 10, Field east of Haley Homestead site, from the west  
Camera facing east

Photograph 4 of 10, Haley-Smith Cemetery, northwest oblique  
Camera facing southeast

Photograph 5 of 10, Smith House and pecan trees, from the south  
Camera facing north

Photograph 6 of 10, Smith House, south elevation  
Camera facing north

Photograph 7 of 10, Machinery barn, blacksmith shop, mule barn, windmill, water tank and well house,  
from the south  
Camera facing north

Photograph 8 of 10, Smoke house, south elevation  
Camera facing north

Photograph 9 of 10, Blacksmith shop, north elevation  
Camera facing south

Photograph 10 of 10, Bessie's House, southwest oblique (reconstruction – noncontributing)  
Camera facing northeast

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

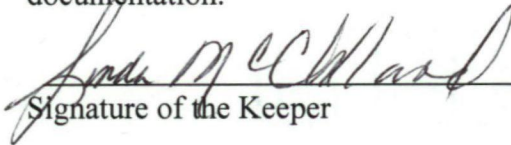
NRIS Reference Number: 07000271

Property Name: Smith Ranch

County: Johnson State: Texas

Multiple Name: N/A

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

April 3, 2007  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 5: Classification

“Historic district,” is hereby entered as the Category of Property to indicate that the property consists of a number of buildings, sites and structures.

Section 8: Significance

To correspond with the property’s significance under Criterion D, “2500-500 B.C.” and “1852-1887” are, hereby, added to the Period of Significance and “European American” and “Native American (Archaic)” are, hereby, entered under Cultural Affiliation.

-----  
The Texas State Historic Preservation Office agreed with this amendment.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DISTRIBUTION:**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Smith Ranch

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Johnson

DATE RECEIVED: 2/21/07 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/12/07  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/27/07 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/06/07  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07000271

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Ranch (2336.23 acres) is significantly associated with ranching in the Nolan River and cow home of Lowell Smith, Sr. who made considerable contributions (in banking) to the economic progress of the local community. Site for "district" (section 5) for additional dates for period of significance, and period of significance is 1887-1957. Home is associated with generations of the Smith Family and is a designated "Century Ranch".

RECOM./CRITERIA

Scap A+B

DISCIPLINE

History of such historic and a great complement of features that make distinct a rural historic landscape.

REVIEWER

RA Cullard

DATE

4/3/07

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

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



SMITH RANCH

FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174

RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 1 OF 10



SMITH RANCH

FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174

RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 2 OF 10



SMITH RANCH

FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174

RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 3 OF 10



SMITH RANCH

FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174

RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 4 OF 10



SMITH RANCH  
FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174  
RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 5 OF 10



SMITH RANCH  
FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174  
RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 6 OF 10



SMITH RANCH

FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174

RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 7 OF 10



SMITH RANCH

FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174

RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 8 OF 10



SMITH RANCH

FM 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174

RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

PHOTO 9 OF 10



SMITH RANCH  
FM. 916 ONE MILE WEST OF SH 174  
RIO VISTA VICINITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, TEXAS

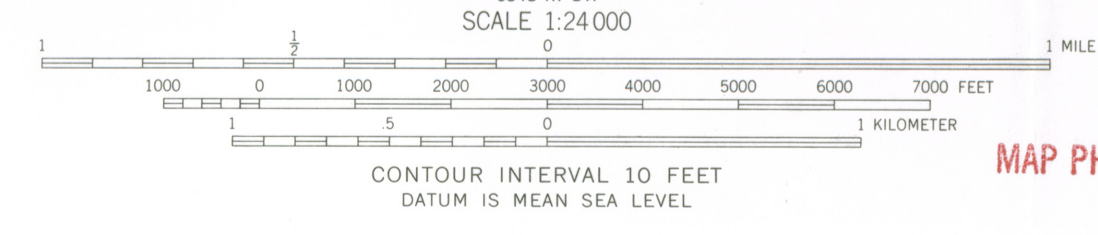
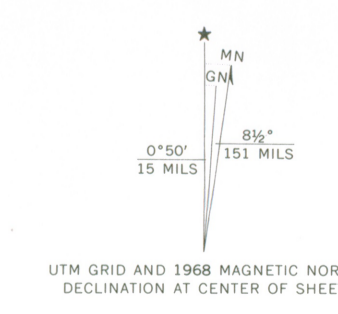
PHOTO 10 OF 10



UTM  
Coordinates

|   |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|
| A | 6498378 | 3547591 |
| B | 6498400 | 3548442 |
| C | 6498425 | 3549294 |
| D | 6498450 | 3550145 |
| E | 6498475 | 3550996 |
| F | 6498500 | 3551847 |
| G | 6498525 | 3552698 |
| H | 6498550 | 3553549 |
| I | 6498575 | 3554400 |
| J | 6498600 | 3555251 |
| K | 6498625 | 3556102 |
| L | 6498650 | 3556953 |
| M | 6498675 | 3557804 |
| N | 6498700 | 3558655 |
| O | 6498725 | 3559506 |
| P | 6498750 | 3560357 |
| Q | 6498775 | 3561208 |
| R | 6498800 | 3562059 |
| S | 6498825 | 3562910 |
| T | 6498850 | 3563761 |
| U | 6498875 | 3564612 |
| V | 6498900 | 3565463 |
| W | 6498925 | 3566314 |
| X | 6498950 | 3567165 |
| Y | 6498975 | 3568016 |
| Z | 6499000 | 3568867 |

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1968  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, north central and central zones  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines  
Areas covered by dashed light-blue pattern are subject to controlled inundation



MAP PHOTOINSPECTED  
1976  
No major culture or drainage changes observed

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Primary highway, all weather, hard surface   | Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface |
| Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface | Unimproved road, fair or dry weather           |

State Route

BLUM, TEX.  
NW/4 BLUM 15' QUADRANGLE  
N3207.5—W9722.5/7.5  
1968  
AMS 6548 III NW—SERIES V882

3297-123



# TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Rick Perry • Governor

John L. Nau, III • Chairman

F. Lawrence Oaks • Executive Director

*The State Agency for Historic Preservation*

TO: Linda McClelland  
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Gregory W. Smith, National Register Coordinator  
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Smith Ranch, Rio Vista, Johnson County, Texas

DATE: February 13, 2007



- The following materials are submitted regarding the Smith Ranch:

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Original National Register of Historic Places form |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Resubmitted nomination                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Multiple Property nomination form                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Photographs  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | USGS map   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Correspondence                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Other:   |

### COMMENTS:

SHPO requests substantive review

The enclosed owner objections (do ) (do not ) constitute a majority of property owners

Other:

Linda McClelland  
04/13/2007 04:52 PM  
EDT

To: Erika Seibert/WASO/NPS,  
cc:  
Subject: Smith Ranch

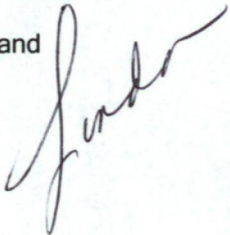
Erika--

I've placed a nomination for Smith Ranch in Texas in your mail box (it includes Criterion D). The case has been made for A and B, for agriculture and economics, and I can list it in those areas. Can you look at the documentation for settlement and historic and prehistoric archeology?

I will be doing an slr to make this a district, and will probably need to add to the period of significance and add a cultural affiliation if you find the case is made for prehistoric and/or historic archeology. I'll do the slr and communicate with the state if you have any recommendations. (Also, I can discuss dropping Criterion D etc., if you feel that is appropriate).

Take care and Thanks,

Linda McClelland



- Linda -

It's fine for D. I wish it were organized differently, but, it still meets D. Let me know if you need me to do anything else w/ this.

- E .

rec's for period of sig: 2500-500 BC  
1852-1887 AD

" Cultural affiliation: European American  
Native American (Archaic)