

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

**1. Name of Property**

Historic Name: Mary Christian Burleson House

Other name/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

**2. Location**

Street &amp; number: 117 Louise Street

City or town: Elgin

State: Texas

County: Bastrop

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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

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

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D  
Signature of certifying official / Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

11/29/23

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

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

### Category of Property

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

### Number of Resources within Property

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1            | 1               | buildings  |
| 0            | 0               | sites      |
| 1            | 2               | structures |
| 0            | 0               | objects    |
| 2            | 3               | total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** DOMESTIC/single-dwelling  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuilding, agricultural field

**Current Functions:** VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** Hall-and-Parlor

**Principal Exterior Materials:** WOOD/weatherboard

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets 7-7 through 7-14)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Exploration/Settlement; Ethnic History: Black; Architecture (*local level of significance*)

**Period of Significance:** ca. 1847–1870

**Significant Dates:** ca. 1847, ca. 1855

**Significant Person:** NA

**Cultural Affiliation:** NA

**Architect/Builder:** NA

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8-15 through 8-34)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheets 9-35 through 9-39)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

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

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): NA

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property:** 1 acre

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 30.359358 Longitude: -97.368405

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The boundary of parcel 11123, defined by the Bastrop County Appraisal District records as "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Subdivision, Lot 1, Acres 1.000."

**Boundary Justification:** The legal boundary is a portion of the original Thomas Christian grant on which the house was constructed. The nomination includes all resources associated with the house on the 1-acre parcel.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Izabella Nuckels, Historic Preservation Specialist, and Amy E. Dase, Senior Historian  
Organization: Cox|McLain Environmental Consulting, now Stantec Consulting  
Street & number: 8401 Shoal Creek Boulevard, Suite 100  
City or Town: Austin State: Texas Zip Code: 78757  
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Telephone: 512-338-2223  
Date: August 1, 2023

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheets MAP-40 through MAP-42)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets FIGURE-43 through FIGURE-55)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets PHOTO-56 through PHOTO-82)



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**Photograph Log**

Name of Property: Mary Christian Burleson Home  
City or Vicinity: Elgin  
County: Bastrop County State: Texas  
Photographer: Izabella Nuckels  
Date(s) Photographed: August 2022

Photograph 1  
South and east façades. Camera facing northwest.

Photograph 2  
West and south façades. Camera facing northeast.

Photograph 3  
Porch at south façade. Camera facing east/northeast.

Photograph 4  
North and west façades. Camera facing southwest.

Photograph 5  
East façade. Camera facing west.

Photograph 6  
North and east façades. Camera facing southwest.

Photograph 7  
North façade. Camera facing south.

Photograph 8  
North and west façades. Camera facing southwest.

Photograph 9  
West façade. Camera facing east.

Photograph 10  
Foundation, looking under the porch at the south façade towards the northwest corner of the building. Camera facing northwest.

Photograph 11  
Main Bedroom interior. Camera facing west.

Photograph 12  
Main Bedroom interior. Camera facing north towards Kitchen/Dining Room.

Photograph 13  
Main Bedroom interior. Camera facing south towards porch.

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Photograph 14

Main Bedroom interior. Note the loft opening in ceiling at Photograph center. Camera facing northeast with Kitchen/Dining Room to left and Living Room to right.

Photograph 15

Living Room interior. Camera looking south towards porch.

Photograph 16

Living Room interior. Camera looking west into Main Bedroom.

Photograph 17

Back Bedroom interior. Camera facing east.

Photograph 18

Back Bedroom interior. Camera facing west.

Photograph 19

Kitchen/Dining Room interior. Camera facing west.

Photograph 20

Kitchen/Dining Room interior. Camera facing northeast towards Back Bedroom.

Photograph 21

Roof structure viewed from Kitchen/Dining Room interior. Camera facing up towards the southwest.

Photograph 22

Overall site looking towards house from north end of property. Camera facing south.

Photograph 23

Barn at north end of property. Camera facing northwest.

Photograph 24

Barn at north end of property. Camera facing east.

Photograph 25

Beveled-shoulder cistern at north side of house. Camera facing west.

Photograph 26

Capped bell cistern at north side of house. Camera facing down.

Photograph 27

Entrance of property from Louise Street showing fencing and drive. Camera facing north.

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

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

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*This project was funded through an Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund grant from the National Park Service that addresses damage inflicted by Hurricane Harvey. In January 2020, National Park Service staff concurred that this property is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.*

## Description

The Mary Christian Burleson House, built c. 1847, is a single-story, hall-and-parlor plan wood frame residence with a rear shed addition in Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas. It has a rectangular footprint, side-gable roof, and full-length, south-facing porch at the primary façade. Sited approximately 1 mile north of Elgin's nineteenth century downtown, the 1-acre nominated property has two contributing resources: the wood-frame house and ca. 1870 cistern. There are three noncontributing resources—a ca. 1880 cistern, ca. 1900 barn, ca. 1900 perimeter fence—that were built after the period of significance. The property, located on the outskirts of Elgin, predates the city's establishment. The large, tree-filled lot is secluded, allowing the Mary Christian Burleson House to retain its integrity of setting as a 19<sup>th</sup>-century rural homestead. Alterations to the floorplan and loss of original materials happened gradually through subsequent ownership and decades of deferred maintenance. Nevertheless, the house is a rare surviving local example of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century pre-railroad residential design and retains good integrity of overall design, setting, location, and association. The current property owner has undertaken significant efforts to stabilize and survey the house and property.

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## Setting

Directly below the Balcones Escarpment and a region of the upper Gulf coastal plains, Bastrop County has plentiful timber and prairies. It has both secondary forests and woodlands, comprised of blackjack, oak, elm, pecan, and other trees, and Blackland Prairies in the northwest. The prairies have timber including oak, pecan, elm, mesquite, and bois d'arc. The terrain is characterized by rolling uplands and broken hills.<sup>1</sup> Surface layers of sandy, loamy soils dominate, and post oak, cedar, hickory, elm, and walnut are abundant.<sup>2</sup> The Colorado River courses north-south through the county.

Elgin, Texas, is at the north edge of the diamond-shaped Bastrop County. The town is approximately 17 miles north of Bastrop, the county seat. United States Highway 95 South, which roughly parallels the north-south Union Pacific Railroad tracks, connects the two towns. The core of Elgin is organized in a grid aligned parallel to the Houston & Central Texas Railroad tracks. After East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, to the north of the commercial district, an area of residential development is also organized in a grid, oriented at about a 45-degree angle from downtown. Commercial, religious, civic, railroad-related transportation, and educational resources comprise downtown Elgin, with domestic resources to the north and west.

The Christian Burleson Home is on the north side of Louise Street, a residential street at the north edge of Elgin, west of the intersection of Louise and Lexington Streets (**Figure 1**). Mary Christian Burleson and her family constructed the building on the Thomas Christian Headright, League No. 26, Abstract No. 26, before the establishment and platting of Elgin. The field notes for League No. 26 describe the land as "east of the Colorado [River] and north of the San Antonio Road," and it totaled 1 league, or 4,428.4 acres.<sup>3</sup> The current property's legal description is "Mary Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900* (Nortex Press, 1977). Paula Mitchell Marks, "Bastrop County," *Handbook of Texas Online* (1976, Revised 2020), <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bastrop-county>.

<sup>2</sup> Paula Mitchell Marks, "Bastrop County," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, 1976, Revised 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Texas General Land Office, *Thomas Christian Survey (4,428.4 acres), Bastrop County, Abstract 20, Spanish Collection 18:19. Patented to Christian, October 29, 1832*, Texas General Land Office (1832).

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Burleson Homestead Subdivision, Lot 1, Acres 1,” and it is surrounded by a 22-acre portion of the “Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Subdivision, Lot 2.”<sup>4</sup>

The house is on a fenced acre of land that reflects the rural character of a late-nineteenth-century rural homestead. Two cisterns, dating to ca. 1870 and ca. 1880, are north of and adjacent to the house (**Figure 2**). A barn, likely built in the twentieth century, is north of the house at the edge of the property, and minimal remnants of materials that comprised a cedar cattle chute are extant. A gravel driveway and stone pavers lead into the property and to the house. The property is enclosed by a barbed wire and post fence (**Figure 3**).

The adjacent area remained rural for nearly a century (**Figure 11**). The area north of Louise Street was undeveloped through the 1950s.<sup>5</sup> On the south side of Louise Street are late-twentieth century and early twenty-first-century homes. Before the 1960s, the Christian Burleson House driveway extended north, and two substantial buildings were extant.<sup>6</sup> A late-1980s, single-family residential development is on the east side of Lexington Street, facing the Christian Burleson House.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Previous Documentation and Site History*

In 2015, Architexas Architecture, Planning and Historic Preservation, Inc. (Architexas), drafted “Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan,” which documented the history and existing conditions of the building and site. Prepared for the Mary Christian Burleson Preservation and Development Foundation, a non-profit organization that oversees the property, the report documents the ownership history, construction of the building and materials, an archeological survey, and conjectural drawings of the current and historical plans. The chain of title for the property documents that Christian Burleson owned the property until her 1870 death. Daughter Nancy Christian Gatlin owned it subsequently. Eight different families owned the property between the 1890s and the 1940s. In 1952, Joseph Higgins purchased the property and, in 1954, the Teague family purchased it. The property was vacated in the 1970s and remained uninhabited until restoration efforts began in the 2010s.<sup>8</sup> As of 2023, most of the land surrounding the property has been sold, and a brewery was being constructed to its north.

The report’s archeological site survey of the 1-acre property was conducted by Cristin Embry. The survey suggested expected types of archeological remains; results of a January 2015 pedestrian surface inspection; a description of outbuildings, fences and walkways, and cisterns; historic and current accounts of vegetation and plantings; archeological concerns associated with ground disturbance; and recommendations for further research. Subsurface excavation revealed intact archaeological deposits present at the site.<sup>9</sup>

The 2015 report provided 1950s and 1960s site maps of the 23-acre Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Subdivision, based on interviews with previous owner Ed Teague. These are the earliest available descriptions of the homestead, including features that are not extant, and they only describe a small portion of the Thomas Christian Survey. The

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<sup>4</sup> Bastrop County Clerk, *Bastrop Central Appraisal District Records*, Bastrop County Clerk (n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous, *Bastrop County, Texas* (Nationwide Environmental Title Research, LLC), 1959.

<sup>6</sup> Anonymous, *Bastrop County, Texas*, 1959; Anonymous, *Bastrop County* (Nationwide Environmental Title Research), 1974.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, *Bastrop County* (Nationwide Environmental Title Research), 1989; Anonymous, *Bastrop County* (Nationwide Environmental Title Research), 1981.

<sup>8</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., “Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan” Prepared for the Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Development Foundation (2015).

<sup>9</sup> Cristin Embree, “Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Community Archeological Survey,” Site 41BP928, December 14, 2015, On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

; Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., “Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan.”

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1950s map depicts the house with a front porch and entrance centered on the east façade, and a back porch on the north façade between the two cisterns. Directly west of the house is a sinkhole and to the north is a shed the Teague family built. A flower garden, peach orchard, and brooder house were central on the site map. To the north of the orchard was a shed and chicken coop, and a barn was to the east. These elements, and the gravel driveway, are within the perimeter fence. North of the fence is a three-hole outhouse and remnants of a nineteenth-century barn that may have been demolished in the 1940s. To the west of the 1-acre nominated property is pasture and to the east is a 4-acre garden. The 1960s map depicts a possible nineteenth-century midden north of the garden, a “rattlesnake canyon” and a “trash canyon” northwest of the house, and a log cabin the Higgins family built at the 23-acre property’s northeast corner.<sup>10</sup>

Today, the 1-acre parcel has the Christian Burleson House facing south on Louise Street, accessed by the north-south gravel driveway depicted in the mid-twentieth century maps, two cisterns at the north side of the house, a barn with fenced corral at the north end of the acre, a barbed-wire and post perimeter fence, and remnants of a cattle chute.

*Dating the Christian Burleson House*

A variety of sources guided deciphering the construction date of the Christian Burleson House and associated resources. Oral histories, accounts recorded by local educator A. H. Carter, and anthologies, including the Lewis Publishing Company’s 1893 *History of Texas Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travel, Lee and Burleson Counties*, describe Mary Christian Burleson moving to the Christian Survey in 1840 and constructing a log cabin, then returning in 1847 to construct a more-permanent residence. Carter describes an expansion of the second home in 1855.<sup>11</sup> In 2012, anthropologist Dr. Michael B. Collins observed that certain timbers, juniper poles, waney lath, wood pegs, and nails dated to the 1840s or 1850s.<sup>12</sup> The 2015 archeological site survey by Embry corroborated construction dates for the house and other resources.<sup>13</sup>

*Christian Burleson House and Property, 1847 to 1870*

The likely appearance of the 1847 Christian Burleson homestead is based on known sources: existing conditions, oral histories, research conducted for the 2015 Architexas report, and sources on typical house forms from the period of significance. The 1847 vernacular house was wood-frame, and likely built in the hall-and-parlor form with side-gable roof. It featured a full-length integrated front porch facing south with two single-door entrances; six-over-six, double-hung wood windows; and an exterior east chimney at the west façade. The exterior walls were clad in wood weatherboard siding, possibly of varying dimensions, and secured with square nails. Wood posts formed the foundation, and the building was secured with mortise and tenon joinery. Available timber like post oak, long leaf pine, and roughhewn cedar would have been used. The interior likely had two rooms flanking a central hall. The house was expanded with a rear (north) addition by 1855, a typical modification to the hall-and-parlor form. The rear, broken gable roof was likely a result of this modification.

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<sup>10</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>11</sup> A. H. Carter, "Notes on the Early History of Elgin" Bastrop Public Library (n.d.).

<sup>12</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>13</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

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Tax records provide clues to the homestead's historical setting. In 1850, the year that Christian Burleson appears to have had the largest number of livestock with more than 200 head of cattle, she cultivated 6 acres.<sup>14</sup> In subsequent years, Christian Burleson owned fewer cattle, one or two horses, and several dozen swine. During this settlement period, cattle were typically branded and roamed unfenced, while horses and swine would have been penned.<sup>15</sup> It is likely that her penned livestock and a small garden were adjacent to the house.<sup>16</sup>

### Mary Christian Burleson House

The Burleson House is a one-story, wood-frame vernacular residence with a rectangular main footprint, side-gable roof, and full-length, south-facing porch at the primary façade (**Resource 1 on Figure 2; Photograph 1-9**). It is sited on 1 acre out of the Thomas Christian Survey, with characteristics representative of a rural agricultural property type. The following summary of the building's construction, dimensions, and materials is an update to the 2015 report's description of then-current conditions.

The main house is 32 feet square with a 4-foot-wide, full-length integrated porch that faces south on Louise Street (**Photograph 1**). The main volume sits on five rows of historic and replacement wood posts with flat tops and unfinished sides sitting on square, poured concrete pads. The posts support two east-west wall frames with base plates made of 8-inch square hand-hewn timber, possibly longleaf pine (**Photograph 10**). The walls are constructed from a mix of 4-inch square and 2-inch by 4-inch studs with tenons at the bottom inserted into mortises in the base plates.<sup>17</sup> The plan of the house may have been expanded from one-room-deep in 1847 to the current, two-room-deep footprint in 1855.

#### *Roof Construction*

The dual-pitched gable roof is clad in corrugated metal. It is constructed from sawmill slab lath nailed to unfinished juniper pole rafters set between 32 and 36 inches on center from one another. The rafters terminate at the top plate of the exterior wall frames (**Photograph 21**). A ceiling hatch to the attic is in the main bedroom (**Photograph 14**). The 2015 report does not definitively date the roof; however, it suggests the profile is typical of the mid-nineteenth-century form and that the materials and axe marks suggest the roof predates 1870.<sup>18</sup> The broken gable may be a result of the 1855 rear addition.

#### *South Façade*

The primary south façade has a full-length integrated porch that faces Louise Street (**Photographs 1-4**). The exterior wall is clad in wood, weatherboard siding that varies in width from 2.25 to 7 inches wide. Vertical, wood corner boards are extant. Two single paneled, wood front doors, nearly symmetrical, lead to separate rooms; one door has four panels, and the other has two (**Photographs 2-4**). This facade has openings for three windows between and flanking

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<sup>14</sup> Census Office U.S. Department of the Interior, Bastrop County, Production of Agriculture 1850 (Manuscript), Ancestry, Washington, D.C., 1850.

<sup>15</sup> Randolph B. Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865* (Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> The configuration of the property that Mary Christian Burleson inhabited and cultivated during the period of significance is unknown; therefore, the approximate location of the 1-acre nominated property within the larger Thomas Christian Survey is indicated on **Figure 8** for reference.

<sup>17</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>18</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

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the doors, although none are extant; multiple-light, double-hung wood windows likely filled these openings. The porch has wood ceiling boards painted white and blue. Few of the original wood floorboards remain, and the porch is in poor condition.

*East Façade*

The east façade faces the north-south gravel driveway from Louise Street. The wall is clad in wood, weatherboard siding of varied widths with vertical wood corner boards. A four-panel, single wood door is centered under the indication of a gable-roof portico that likely covered the main entrance when it shifted to this side of the building after the period of significance (**Photograph 5**). A mid-twentieth-century photograph, the earliest available of the building, depicts this later entrance (**Figure 12**).<sup>19</sup> Three windows on this façade are boarded on the exterior, one is south of the door and the other two are to its north. Remnants of eight-over-eight, double-hung wood windows extant in the frames are likely not original.

*North Façade*

The north façade is likely part of the 1855 expansion of the house. The wall is clad in wood, weatherboard siding of varied widths with vertical, wood corner boards. Vertical wood boards with some overlapping horizontal boards have been installed at the west end of this façade and are not original. There is a boarded single door opening on the west side of the north façade and two boarded windows on the east side (**Photographs 6-8**). These windows were likely multiple light, double-hung wood windows.

*West Façade*

The west façade has three boarded openings and a plywood sheet over the west end of the south-facing porch. The wall is clad in weatherboard wood siding of varying widths with remnants of white paint. Metal sheets temporarily patch areas where siding is missing. At the north end of the west façade, a four-panel, single wood door, visible from the interior, has an exterior plywood cover (**Photograph 8-9**). This entrance is part of the 1855 addition. To the south, there is a boarded door opening; this was likely a later-altered original window opening. Farther south are two six-over-six, double-hung wood windows boarded on the exterior with remnants in the frame. These window units may be original to the house and installed in this nonhistoric location from elsewhere. Evidence of fire-damaged beams at the foundation and ghosting on the interior wall suggest an external chimney was on this façade at one time.<sup>20</sup>

*Interior*

The interior of the Burleson House consists of four adjacent rooms which functioned as two bedrooms, a kitchen/dining room, and a living room (**Figure 4**). It is likely that the ca. 1847 house was constructed to be one room deep, possibly with a hall between the two rooms. The rear rooms may have been part of the ca. 1855 addition. A. H. Carter described in the 1930s.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>20</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>21</sup> Carter, "Notes on the Early History of Elgin."

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The south-facing porch leads to a main bedroom at the southwest quadrant of the house that was likely part of the 1847 house. It is the largest room in the house (**Photographs 11-14**). Along its east wall, is a framed closet at the south corner, and in the north corner, a large ceiling hatch opens to the attic and roof structure. Along the west wall, the ghost of a fireplace mantle is on the paneling (**Photograph 11**). Charred beams at the foundation indicate the former location of an external chimney. This interior space has walls clad in wide horizontal board, painted light blue. The ceiling is clad in wide, light blue/green painted wood board. Wood floorboards, 3.25 inches wide, are in poor condition and missing in many locations. Wood bracing is installed throughout the room for support.<sup>22</sup>

The east entrance leads to the living room at the southeast quadrant of the building that was also likely part of the 1847 house (**Photographs 15-16**). This room. The walls are clad in green-painted, wide boards oriented horizontally on the north, south, and east walls, and vertically on the west wall. The wood floorboards are 3.25 inches wide, blue-painted ceiling boards are intact, and in fair condition.<sup>23</sup>

To the north, in the northeast quadrant of the building, is the back bedroom, likely part of the 1855 rear addition (**Photographs 17-18**). It has pink-painted gyp board walls, wood flooring, and unpainted, wide wood ceiling boards. There is a closet constructed from partition walls at the southwest corner. Door frames between the living room and back bedroom and the back bedroom and kitchen, to the west, are intact, but the doors are gone. The finishes are in poor condition. The gyp board and flooring were likely installed outside of the period of significance.

The kitchen, at the northwest corner of the building, was likely part of the 1855 rear addition, and historically may have had a different function (**Photographs 19-20**). A nonhistoric kitchen addition that once protruded from the west door of this room was removed. The rectangular kitchen has blue-painted wood board on the walls. The width varies and it is oriented horizontally on all walls except for the east wall between the back bedroom and kitchen. Small remnants of wallpaper and cloth are on the walls. Paneled, single wood doors are extant in the north, rear exits and between the kitchen and main bedroom to the south. The ceiling boards have been removed, exposing the roof structure. The wood flooring that remains is in poor condition.

The 2015 Architexas report notes that the ceiling height in some rooms and the flooring may have been altered. It describes the ceilings in the living room and main bedroom as lowered. The floorboards in all rooms range in width from 2.25 inches to 3.25 inches and are in poor condition. Original floorboards would likely be 5 inches or wider. For example, some 5-inch-wide flooring is in the back bedroom closet, but throughout the house, varied floorboard widths indicate several replacement campaigns.

### *Cisterns*

Two cisterns are adjacent to the north side of the Burleson House (**Photograph 7**). The eastern cistern, partially above ground and filled with debris, was constructed from irregularly sized native stones with grey mortar (**Resource 2 on Figures 2 and 3; Photograph 25**). In the 2015 Architexas report, Embry refers to this as a beveled-shoulder cistern and describes remnants of a gutter system connecting the cistern to the house. It is 3 feet in diameter and covered with a 2-inch by 8-inch wood board added sometime in the twenty-first century. The Teague maps refers to this as a bottle cistern, and Embry estimates it was built between the early 1860s and the late 1870s, and possibly associated with Christian Burleson.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Carter, "Notes on the Early History of Elgin."

<sup>23</sup> Carter, "Notes on the Early History of Elgin."

<sup>24</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."



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The western sandstone-lined bell cistern with stucco plaster lining is submerged (**Resource 3 on Figures 2 and 3; Photograph 26**). Embry refers to it as a bell cistern, and it is currently capped with concrete. The bell cistern is the most common type in Texas and was often constructed under the kitchen floor of a house.<sup>25</sup> The Teague maps note this bell cistern and midden that Embry suggests was built between the 1880s to 1900; it is unlikely to be associated with Christian Burleson.<sup>26</sup>

*Barn*

A ca. 1900 wood-frame barn with vertical wood-siding and a shed roof clad in corrugated metal is at the north edge of the nominated property (**Resource 4 on Figures 2 and 3; Photographs 23–24**). The building has three interior spaces: an enclosed central room entered through a single door, flanked by two smaller spaces with low cut-out entryways. A hog-wire fence surrounds the building and a corral to the south. The Teague maps do not provide construction dates for this building; however, they do depict a nineteenth-century barn to the northeast that is no longer extant, and it is likely that this barn was built later.<sup>27</sup> As late as 1959, at least three buildings were in the immediate vicinity of this barn, but are not extant.<sup>28</sup> The barn's materials, configuration, and likely ca. 1900 construction date indicate that the building postdates the period of significance. Further archeological investigation may reveal more information about the building.

*Fence and Driveway*

The 1-acre property has a perimeter fence made from barbed wire and unfinished posts of various dimensions (**Resource 5 on Figures 2 and 3; Photograph 27**). Remnants of an unpaved driveway lead from Louise Street north about halfway into the property at the east side of the house. A straight row of nonhistoric inset pavers leads from the driveway westward to the house's east façade.

*Alterations to the Christian Burleson House*

The Christian Burleson House underwent a series of alterations, many of which were recorded in the Architexas report based on interviews by Embry. A 1988 source noted that the Christian Burleson House was built directly in front of the family's original log cabin, and some of the cabin's materials were incorporated in the construction of the newer home.<sup>29</sup> Ed Teague, whose family purchased the house in the 1950s, heard that the house was originally an L-plan and that a fire burned two rooms, including a rear kitchen. He also learned from neighbor Chessy Scott that the house once had a breezeway. Patsy Hoffman, a visitor to the house as a child, recalled that the building has been its current configuration since at least the 1940s. Hoffman's 1940s site plan shows a fireplace on the west wall that is no longer extant.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>26</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>27</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>28</sup> Anonymous, *Bastrop County, Texas*, 1959.

<sup>29</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>30</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

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*Restoration*

To preserve the property's physical integrity, the Mary Christian Burleson Preservation and Development Foundation, a local non-profit organization, is restoring the house. Grant funding from the Texas Historical Commission has supported research and planning for the work that the agency is overseeing. Phase I work will include stabilization, new foundation footings, reopening the porch, foundation beam repairs, and window salvage, plus emergency repairs to siding and roof panels damaged by Hurricane Harvey in 2017. The rear, nonhistoric-age kitchen addition was removed, and the building's exterior "envelope" will be restored.

**Integrity**

The Christian Burleson House retains its historical and physical integrity, epitomizing the evolution of a mid-nineteenth-century agricultural homestead and reflecting early settlement practices in Bastrop County. Contributing resources on the property, the house and the beveled-shoulder cistern, are in their original locations. The setting has changed with the nearby development and both construction and demolition of buildings and structures since 1870, the end of the period of significance. Yet vegetation screens the perimeter of the property from most viewsheds of modern encroachments. The three noncontributing resources on the property, each built by about 1900, do not distract from or diminish integrity of setting. As a result, this relatively intact setting conveys the rural aesthetic of a small-scale nineteenth-century farm and retains integrity of feeling.

The Christian Burleson House and cistern retain their integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The cistern, mostly underground, appears to be intact. The original one-room-deep, hall-and-parlor design evolved with a conventional addition, two rear rooms, possibly built ca. 1855, with the rear broken-gable roofline as evidence. Some wood siding and interior flooring, wall paneling, and ceiling board materials are missing, rotted, or displaced. Modifications include removal of the chimney/fireplace, boarded or added fenestration, and replacement siding. Nevertheless, the house has much of its original and historic-period materials—its post oak foundation posts, mill-sawn timbers, juniper roof poles and wany lath, and mortise-and-tenon connections—common vernacular construction materials in nineteenth-century Central Texas.

Documentation links the associative qualities of the property with its nineteenth-century history. Primary sources, secondary materials, and oral tradition indicate that the Christian Burleson House reflects the evolution of vernacular construction in Bastrop County from settlement through the mid-nineteenth century.

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## Statement of Significance

The oldest building in Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas, the mid-nineteenth-century Mary Christian Burleson House is representative of domestic architecture built during settlement of Austin's Little Colony. Constructed between ca. 1847 and ca. 1855 for the twice-widowed Mary Randolph "Polly" Buchanan Christian Burleson family, the building is an example of pre-railroad vernacular architecture once common in Texas. The property also has a barn, two cisterns, and fencing; one of the cisterns was likely constructed during Mary Christian Burleson's lifetime. The Christian Burleson House is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement at the local level of significance as the earliest extant Anglo homestead in Elgin associated with Anglo settlement, and under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage: Black as the institution of slavery was intertwined with the early settlement experience. Finally, it is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance as an example of mid-nineteenth-century vernacular architecture on the Texas frontier. The period of significance for all three criteria begins c. 1847, to account for the building's likely construction date, and extends to Christian Burleson's 1870 death, to accommodate improvements to the property during her occupation.

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## CRITERION A: EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

### Settlement of Bastrop County

Anglo-American settlement of Central Texas began in the early 1820s with Stephen F. Austin's colonies. The first to bring Anglo-American settlers to Mexican Texas, Austin's initial two colonies were in southeast Texas, in the present-day counties of Fayette, Grimes, and Washington, among others.<sup>31</sup> The last to form, known as the Little Colony, included part of present-day Bastrop County, east of Austin, and Travis County.<sup>32</sup> Although Thomas Christian, Mary Christian Burleson's first husband, received a land grant in the Little Colony in 1832, like many pioneers, he was slow to improve his land due to a climate of local political uncertainty and conflict with Native American tribes forced from their lands. It was not until the late 1840s that the widowed Mary Christian Burleson established a permanent homestead on the Christian property at the northern edge of the county and settled the land that would become Elgin, Texas, where she remained until her 1870 death.

### *Bastrop County Before Anglo-American Settlement*

Indigenous occupation of Bastrop County has existed for more than 1,000 years, and the various local tribes had differing responses to Mexican governance and Anglo-American pioneers. Comanches, Apaches, and Caddos were initially in favor of peace treaties and potential trade with the Mexican government. Tribes who had more recently moved into Texas, including the Cherokees, Delawares, Shawnees, and Kickapoos, were interested in land grants and the favor of Mexican officials, aiding in fights against tribes who were hostile towards new immigrants. The Wichitas were less interested in working with the Mexican government. The Karankawas and Tonkawas, who historically inhabited Bastrop County, remained independent of new settlers before Stephen F. Austin's colonization efforts. In the early 1820s, the Native American population of more than 20,000 outnumbered Anglo American and Mexican inhabitants.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ernest Allen Connally, "Architecture at the End of the South: Central Texas," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Volume 11, No. Dec. 1952 (1952); Christopher Long, "Old Three Hundred," in *The Handbook of Texas History*, 1952, revised 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Connally, "Architecture at the End of the South: Central Texas."

<sup>33</sup> Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

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From his 1821 visit to Texas, Austin wrote in his journal that Indians were “universal enemies to man” and this sentiment persisted as his Anglo-American colonists arrived.<sup>34</sup> Conflict began early and aggressively. In response to accusations of theft and murder by the Karankawas, Austin led 90 men, 30 of whom were enslaved from Jared Groce’s plantation, in an armed confrontation. The Karankawas were pushed into Goliad, and they agreed to move west of the Guadalupe River to maintain peace. Competition with other tribes for resources in this area led the Karankawas to venture back into the colony, leading to attacks from white settlers. Austin, and later DeWitt, established colonies between the Wichita’s principal villages near Waco and their raiding targets near San Antonio and Goliad that resulted in a decades-long conflict. Like the Karankawas, the Wichitas were eventually pushed out of their villages.<sup>35</sup>

The Karankawas and Cherokees maintained positive early relationships with Anglo-American settlers. Both groups aided in conflicts against other tribes, including the Karankawas and Wichitas. Despite amiable relations, by the mid-1830s, most Native American tribes had been displaced from the Bastrop County area.<sup>36</sup>

### *The Little Colony*

In 1820, Spain opened Texas to Anglo American settlers. Prior to this, Spain did not allow foreigners to settlers its territories; however, there was little interest of Spaniards to move to the area. Three small settlements at Nacogdoches, San Antonio de Bexar, and La Bahia del Espiritu Santo (now Goliad) were inhabited by the early nineteenth century. In 1821, Mexico was granted independence from Spain and continued to try to draw Anglo-Americans to the area. Anglo-American pioneers were attracted by cheap land and the lack of agreements between Mexico and the United States enabling debt collectors or law enforcement to enter the territory. Furthermore, Anglo-Americans believed that the eastern side of Texas would eventually be acquired by the United States.<sup>37</sup>

Between 1825 and 1835, the Austin family facilitated the introduction of settlers and land grants for more than 1,000 titles across their colonies.<sup>38</sup> Colonization efforts began in 1820 when Stephen F. Austin’s father, Moses Austin, arrived to San Antonio de Bexar with an enslaved man named Richmond, and implored Governor Antonio de Martinez of Spanish Texas for permission to settle 300 families in Texas.<sup>39</sup> His initial request refused, the senior Austin consulted with Felipe Enrique Neri, Baron de Bastrop. The Dutch-born Baron de Bastrop, working for the Spanish government after a failed attempt to establish a colony in Louisiana, supported Austin’s land request, which was approved in January 1821. Moses Austin died that June, and his son traveled through San Antonio and Goliad before selecting a valley between the Brazos and Colorado Rivers to establish a new settlement on his father’s behalf.<sup>40</sup> Martinez agreed to allow Austin to provide land grants of 640 acres for the head of a family, 320 for a wife, 160 for a child, and 80 acres for each enslaved person. Austin would receive 12.5 cents per acre granted.<sup>41</sup>

By late 1821, Austin’s first pioneers settled in Washington-on-the-Brazos and Columbus, on the Colorado River. Two years later, the colony of San Felipe de Austin became headquarters of Austin’s settlements, and more Anglo-American settlers, primarily of English and Scottish ancestry and emigrating from Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and

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<sup>34</sup> Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*, 115.

<sup>35</sup> Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*.

<sup>36</sup> Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret S. Henson, "Anglo-American Colonization," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2021.

<sup>38</sup> The Texas General Land Office, "Austin's Colony Records," n.d.

<sup>39</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, "The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas" (University of Texas at Austin, 1954), University of Texas at Austin Libraries; Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*.

<sup>40</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, "The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas".

<sup>41</sup> Eugene C. Barker, "Austin, Stephen Fuller," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2021.

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Mississippi, arrived in Texas.<sup>42</sup> The first 300 families had settled by 1825, and the population equaled 1,800, 443 of whom were enslaved.<sup>43</sup> Austin was granted additional land to settle 500 more families. Two years later, Austin received a third grant to settle 100 families north of the San Antonio Road and east of the Colorado River in the Little Colony, which encompassed the approximate area of current-day Bastrop County.<sup>44</sup> Austin personally selected his colony's settlers to be "as enlightened, as moral, as good, and as law-abiding men as can be found in any part of the United States, and greatly more so than ever settled a frontier."<sup>45</sup> Early settlers were usually farmers, attracted by the fertile land, who brought enslaved persons and established homesteads and small communities with commercial, institutional, and public amenities.<sup>46</sup>

During the late 1820s, pioneers established farms and developed transportation routes connecting them to small communities and, each other, along the way. Settlers began with subsistence farms of hog, cattle, corn, and small gardens, and they lived in quickly constructed one- or two- room log cabins with dirt floors and no windows. The establishment of cash crops, in particular of cotton, developed shortly after. This larger scale agriculture was only possible with enslaved labor, and many of the first settlers were enslavers. Six hundred bales of cotton were produced in 1827.<sup>47</sup> In 1828, James Goacher established a trace, or road, from the lower settlements of the Little Colony that encouraged pioneers to the area. Thomas Thompson cleared farmland near the Colorado River crossing but waited for other permanent occupants before homesteading. The next summer, Martin Wells established a home near the river crossing, followed by Moses Rousseau and James Burleson. In the fall of 1829, Edward Jenkins and his family settled 5 miles south of the crossing; but most early local Anglo emigrants, like Joseph Duty, Josiah Wilbarger, Robert Coleman, William Barton, Jesse Barker, and Lehman Barker, developed land near the crossing.<sup>48</sup>

The Little Colony was called Mina from 1827 to 1832, and a governing body known as the *Ayuntamiento* was organized to oversee its incoming settlers.<sup>49</sup> Titles for one or one-half leagues were issued in the Little Colony Contract of 1827 from June 25, 1832, first to Isaac Harris, through February 6, 1833. The Foundation of the Town of Bastrop was also granted four leagues on the east bank of the Colorado River at the San Antonio Road. In total, 61 grantees received 49.5 leagues in the contract. Among the first settlers in the Little Colony were Josiah Wilbarger with one league on the "Colorado E Side" (date of title October 22, 1832); John Burleson with one league on the "Colorado E Side, Joins Gilleland" (date of title October 30, 1832); and Thomas Christian with one league on the "Colorado, Sisc League North of Bastrop (not on the...illegible)" with a title date of October 29, 1832.<sup>50</sup> Although a community was forming around the future town of Bastrop, most of the earliest pioneers, like Joseph Duty, Josiah Wilbarger, Robert Coleman, William Baron, Jesse Barker, and Lehman Barker, settled along the river outside of town. In 1830, a traveler recorded only two families and a bachelor, one of whom was thought to be Hornsby, living in camps in the town of Bastrop.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Connally, "Architecture at the End of the South: Central Texas."

<sup>43</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, "The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas"; Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*. Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*.

<sup>44</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, "The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas". Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*.

<sup>45</sup> Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*. Page 25.

<sup>46</sup> Connally, "Architecture at the End of the South: Central Texas."

<sup>47</sup> Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*.

<sup>48</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, "The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas".

<sup>49</sup> Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*.

<sup>50</sup> Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*. Pages 29-32

<sup>51</sup> Baron de Bastrop had previously tried and failed to establish a German settlement in the town of Bastrop vicinity in 1823. Paula Mitchell Marks, "Bastrop, Texas," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, 1976, Revised 2018.

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Conflict with the Mexican government and a growing population led to unrest. In 1835, after disagreements between Austin and the Mexican government, President Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana tried to enforce colonial rule. On October 2, 1835, the Battle of Gonzales began the Texas Revolution which concluded with victory and Texas independence under General Sam Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. Houston was elected president of the Republic of Texas, and the population grew substantially. At the beginning of the Republic era, Texas had an estimated 30,000 Anglo Americans, 3,478 Tejanos, 14,200 American Indians, and 5,000 enslaved persons.<sup>52</sup> By 1850, the Republic had 212,000 people. It increased to more than 600,000 in 1860. Despite this increase, the Republic population remained rural with only about 20 towns of 1,000 or more inhabitants.<sup>53</sup>

During the 1840s and 1850s, concentrations of rural agriculturists began to form communities, with vehicular roads connecting them to the county seat. In 1850, 74 percent of the county were rural farm families. Early farms in the Little Colony were on the east side of the Colorado River and along its banks; however, by the late 1840s, several communities developed west of the river including Walnut Creek Settlement, Cedar Creek Settlement, and Jenkins Prairie. In the northwest of the county, to the south of the Christian Survey, a concentration of residents became the community of Grand Prairie, later named Youngs Settlement, with a post office by 1849.<sup>54</sup> Transportation routes were developed and refined to connect Bastrop with the new settlements.

### *Town of Bastrop*

Settlers in the Little Colony focused on improving their farms and cultivating the rich soil of Bastrop County. Corn and cotton were early crops. Farmers, many of whom utilized enslaved labor, plowed their fields with oxen, mules, or horses. Hogs were raised for meat, cows provided dairy, and abundant wild game in nearby piney woods were a regular food source. Pioneers built modest cabins or houses from locally available pine. Nearby timber included oak, cedar, walnut, and pecan. Neighbors often lived great distances from one another and lived simply, making their own rudimentary furniture, and eating from their gardens.<sup>55</sup>

Settlers came to present-day Bastrop County in the early 1830s, yet the town of Bastrop was the only formally established community until the 1870s when the railroad arrived.<sup>56</sup> In 1832, Jose Miguel de Arciniega officially platted a central town square, and lots set aside for public uses. He named the town Bastrop, though it was renamed Mina two years later. Three years later, 1,100 settlers resided in the vicinity, and by 1836, the town had about 400 residents.<sup>57</sup> With the number of settlers in and adjacent to Mina increasing, a governing body called the Municipality of Mina was established.<sup>58</sup> Between 1834 and 1836, the *Ayuntamiento* of the Town of Mina issued 80 deeds to individuals, including one to Mary Christian Burleson in 1835.<sup>59</sup> Mina incorporated in December 1837 and again became known as Bastrop. At that point, a courthouse, hotel, gunsmith shop, general store, and residences had been built. The adjacent Lost Pines Forest supported the local timber industry from the mid-1830s through 1860, providing lumber for the nearby state capital at Austin.<sup>60</sup>

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Lucile Jackson Perkins, "The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas".

<sup>52</sup> Joseph M. Nance, "Republic of Texas," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, 1952, Revised 2021.

<sup>53</sup> Connally, "Architecture at the End of the South: Central Texas."

<sup>54</sup> Kenneth Kesselus, *History of Bastrop County, Texas: 1846-1865* (Jenkins Publishing Company, 1987).

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth Kesselus, *History of Bastrop County, Texas Before Statehood* (Wash Jones Press, 1999).

<sup>56</sup> Marks, "Bastrop County."

<sup>57</sup> Marks, "Bastrop County."

<sup>58</sup> Bastrop NRHP

<sup>59</sup> Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*. P. 38.

<sup>60</sup> Marks, "Bastrop County."

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In the late 1840s, a post office and school opened in Bastrop, and the following decade saw tremendous growth, which continued through the end of the nineteenth century. Churches, a newspaper, and additional educational institutions, including the Bastrop Military Institute and a number of private schools, supported the community by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> Early transportation included ferries to move both travelers and goods along the Colorado as early as the 1830s. By 1862, the Houston and Texas Central Railroad laid tracks in Bastrop and further connected the community with the state.<sup>62</sup> Despite a devastating fire in 1862 and numerous floods, the population continued to grow and reached 2,000 in 1884.<sup>63</sup>

### Mary Christian Burleson

Mary Christian Burleson's settlement journey in Texas is emblematic of Austin colony Anglo pioneers. She arrived in Texas with her first husband, Thomas Christian, in 1832. On October 29, 1832, he received title to 4,428.4 acres.<sup>64</sup> Like others in Austin's third colony, the Christian's settlement conflicted with local Native American tribes as they were displaced. This led to slow establishment of a homestead on the Christian land grant, and an altercation that resulted in the eventual death of Thomas Christian. The widowed Christian Burleson moved from the established town of Bastrop to various pioneers' fortified settlements for nearly 10 years before she brought her children to reside permanently on the Christian Survey. Local histories recount two homes on the Christian Survey, a one-story log cabin constructed in 1840 and a one-story, wood-frame house, the subject of this nomination, constructed ca. 1847 and expanded ca. 1855. Christian Burleson, until her 1870 death, and her children subsequently, were integral to community development, granting land rights to the railroad that would plat the town of Elgin on part of her property.

Mary and Thomas Christian were born to families who had immigrated to Virginia from Ireland and Scotland. Mary "Polly" Buchanan was born in Wytheville, Virginia, to a Scottish Nancy Wright and an Irish John Buchanan on March 1, 1795.<sup>65</sup> She and Thomas Christian married in 1820 or 1822 in Wayne County, Kentucky.<sup>66</sup> He was the great-grandson of William Christian (1608–1663), the governor of the Isle of Man and a celebrated public figure. William Christian's son, Gilbert, his wife Lucy Richards Christian, and his children, arrived in America in 1726, likely from Ireland. Gilbert Christian's eldest son, William, married Virginia-born Mary Campbell. This William Christian was a Virginia Ranger captain, a county judge, and grantee to thousands of acres in Kentucky for fighting in the French and Indian Wars. His son Gilbert inherited this land.<sup>67</sup> Gilbert Christian's son Benjamin, a soldier in the Revolutionary war, married Eliza Ann Greenup, and they became parents to Thomas Christian in Kentucky in 1795.<sup>68</sup> He fought in the war of 1812.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Marks, "Bastrop, Texas."

<sup>62</sup> Marie Deacon et al., *Resources of Bastrop (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)*, National Park Service (Texas Historical Commission Historic Sites Atlas, 1978, National Register of Historic Places nomination).

<sup>63</sup> Marks, "Bastrop, Texas."

<sup>64</sup> Texas General Land Office, Thomas Christian Survey (4,428.4 acres), Bastrop County, Abstract 20, Spanish Collection 18:19. Patented to Christian, October 29, 1832, October 29,, 1832.

<sup>65</sup> Byron Howard, "Burleson, Mary R. B. Christian " in *Handbook of Texas Online*, 1994.

<sup>66</sup> Byron Howard, "Burleson, Mary R. B. Christian ". Norman Woods Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith* (SMU Press, 1979); Lewis Publishing Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties* (The Lewis Publishing Company, 1893).

<sup>67</sup> Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*.

<sup>68</sup> Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*; Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

<sup>69</sup> Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*; Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

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After marrying, Mary and Thomas Christian left Virginia and had several children as they migrated westward, then southerly. The first three children were born in Virginia: John Madison, Nancy Wright, and Eliza Ann.<sup>70</sup> They moved to Spring Hill, Illinois, where they had two more children, Martha Allison and Amanda Jane, and then to Missouri, before joining the Little Colony (**Figure 5**).<sup>71</sup> The Christian family arrived in Texas in May 1832.<sup>72</sup> They first moved to Mina, and he was granted a lot on Block 26, Abstract 128, of the Mina Town Tract.<sup>73</sup> They built the fifth house in town alongside the river.<sup>74</sup> Their sixth child, Sarah "Sallie" Buchanan Christian was born on September 11, 1832.<sup>75</sup> On October 29, 1832, Christian received a land grant centered on the north edge of Bastrop County in the Little Colony (**Figure 6**).<sup>76</sup> The Christians did not immediately move to their headright survey.<sup>77</sup>

By 1832, other local pioneers had moved to their land grants; yet, the Christian family had not yet settled theirs, and they were further delayed by Thomas Christian's death in 1833.<sup>78</sup> According to family history, the Christians began searching for land to farm outside of Bastrop, and moved near current-day Webberville, likely to John Webber's fortified settlement.<sup>79</sup> Both Josiah Wilbarger, the first pioneer to settle outside of Bastrop in July 1832, and Reuben Hornsby had improved their land.<sup>80</sup> By late summer 1833, the Christian family resided on Hornsby's property.<sup>81</sup> On August 22, 1833, a group of settlers, including Christian, Wilbarger, and three others, met at Hornsby's Bend, near current-day Webberville, to explore Walnut Creek.<sup>82</sup> During a stop at Pecan Springs, near Webber's settlement at the present-day Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, after chasing a lone Native, conflict arose between the Anglo-American settlers and a group of Comanches. Native casualties are unknown, but Christian and a man named Strother were killed. Two other companions fled. Wilbarger, shot and scalped, survived, and lived another 11 years. Despite his injuries, Wilbarger lived another 11 years.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Some sources also list the Christians in Kentucky when their children are born; however, the 1850 census has Virginia as the state of birth for Eliza and John. Byron Howard, "Burleson, Mary R. B. Christian". Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*; Mary Christian Burleson Foundation, "Tenacity and Texas Begin with 'T'" (n. d.).

<sup>71</sup> Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*. Byron Howard, "Burleson, Mary R. B. Christian". Foundation, "Tenacity and Texas Begin with 'T'." Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>72</sup> Foundation, "Tenacity and Texas Begin with 'T'."

<sup>73</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>74</sup> Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

<sup>75</sup> Sarah is sometimes referred to as "Sarah B." in archival documents. Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*.

<sup>76</sup> Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*. Unknown, *Map of Bastrop County, Texas, including the Prairies and Lakes region* (General Land Office), 1847.

<sup>77</sup> Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

<sup>78</sup> Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*. Richard Denney, "Reuben Hornsby," 2021. Hilory G. Bedford, *Texas Indian Troubles: The Most Thrilling Events in the History of Texas Illustrated* (Hargraves Printing Co., Inc., 1905).

<sup>79</sup> Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

<sup>80</sup> Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*. Richard Denney, "Reuben Hornsby." Bedford, *Texas Indian Troubles: The Most Thrilling Events in the History of Texas Illustrated*.

<sup>81</sup> Single men visited the Hornsby homestead, including Standifer and Haynie, who arrived from Missouri to survey Austin's Little colony. Lucile Jackson Perkins, "The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas".

<sup>82</sup> Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*. Richard Denney, "Reuben Hornsby."; Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

<sup>83</sup> Bedford, *Texas Indian Troubles: The Most Thrilling Events in the History of Texas Illustrated*. Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the*



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After Christian's death, the widowed Mary Christian moved their six children to various fortified settlements and residences in and around Bastrop.<sup>84</sup> They first resided in a log cabin Hornsby built for the family on his property.<sup>85</sup> Next, the family returned to Bastrop and lived on land George Perkins owned north of Piney Creek.<sup>86</sup>

In 1834, Mary Christian married her second husband James Burleson Sr., a fellow settler with a noted military career. He was born in 1775 in Tennessee to Aaron and Rachel Hendricks Burleson. Burleson Sr. and his first wife, Elizabeth Shipman, had 12 children. He had fought under General Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans before arriving in Texas in 1827, and led the Grass Fight between Mexico and Texas under the direction of their son General Edward Burleson, a military and political figure in Texas.<sup>87</sup> Four of their sons—John, Jonathan, Joseph, and James—moved to Texas.<sup>88</sup> Son Jonathan emigrated to Texas in 1830, and was granted land adjacent to and west of the Christian Survey on December 4, 1832; however, he did not improve the land, and lived on his mother-in-law's property.<sup>89</sup>

Mary Christian Burleson and her family faced hardship through the 1840s. Following their marriage, Mary and her children moved in with Burleson Sr., and the couple welcomed a daughter, Elizabeth Burleson.<sup>90</sup> After the Grass Fight in November 1835, Burleson Sr. fell ill and died in January 1836.<sup>91</sup> Upon his death, their infant/toddler daughter inherited her father's household furniture, five cows with calves, and six lots in Bastrop, including the house where the family lived.<sup>92</sup> The same year, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna attempted to conquer Texas. After the fall of the Alamo that March, settlers in Bastrop County fled east in the "Runaway Scrape."<sup>93</sup> When Santa Anna sent troops to burn Bastrop, few residents remained. The "Scrape" ended after Santa Anna lost the Battle of San Jacinto in April, and the Texas Republic formed, but many Texans, including those in the Bastrop area, suffered during the journey and farmland had been pillaged.<sup>94</sup> Family history recounts how Mary Christian Burleson swam the Brazos River with young Elizabeth on her back and that her other children walked barefoot from Fort Bastrop to Parker's Fort, west of Waco, seeking safety.<sup>95</sup> Until 1840, Christian Burleson and her seven children lived in Bastrop, possibly on the land Burleson Sr. willed to their young daughter.

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*Story of A. Frank Smith.* Cynthia J. Beeman, *Historic Marker Application: Elgin Methodist Church*, Texas Historical Commission (Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas Libraries, 1988; Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

<sup>84</sup> Beeman, *Historic Marker Application: Elgin Methodist Church*. Cristin Embry, "A Texas Frontier Woman: Mary Christian Burleson," *Texas Heritage*, Volume I (2016).

<sup>85</sup> Foundation, "Tenacity and Texas Begin with 'T'."

<sup>86</sup> Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*. P. 666.

<sup>87</sup> Beeman, *Historic Marker Application: Elgin Methodist Church*. Cristin Embry, "A Texas Frontier Woman: Mary Christian Burleson."

<sup>88</sup> Anonymous, "Mary Randolph 'Polly' Buchanan Christian."; Byron Howard, "Burleson, James, Sr.," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, 1976, Revised 2022.

<sup>89</sup> Unknown, *Map of Bastrop County, Texas, including the Prairies and Lakes region*, 1847. Members of the Elgin Historical Committee, *A History of Elgin, Texas 1872-1972* (Von Boeckmann, 1972).

<sup>90</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

<sup>91</sup> Anonymous, "Mary Randolph 'Polly' Buchanan Christian."; Byron Howard, "Burleson, James, Sr.". Alwyn Barr, "Grass Fight," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, 1952, Revised 2016.

<sup>92</sup> Foundation, "Tenacity and Texas Begin with 'T'."

<sup>93</sup> Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*; Carolyn Callaway Covington, "Runaway Scrape," in *Handbook of Texas*, 2016, Revised 1952.

<sup>94</sup> Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*.

<sup>95</sup> Architexas Architecture Planning and Historic Preservation Inc., "Mary Christian Burleson Homestead Historic Structure Report and Preservation Plan."

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Small Protestant churches formed, secretly until the Republic era, and Christian Burleson was a founder of the local Methodist church. Under the Mexican government, Catholicism was mandated, and colonists were prohibited from attending Protestant services or forming congregations. In spring 1835, settlers met in Jesse Halderman's Bastrop storehouse under the direction of James Gilliland, a Methodist lay preacher. The group included Mary Burleson Christian, five couples—the C. Andersons, the Boyces, the Deleplains, the Brisbanes, and the McGehees—and Celie Craft, an enslaved woman held by a Mrs. Samuel Craft of Craft's Prairie. These were charter members of the second oldest Methodist church in Texas.<sup>96</sup> The Christian's daughter, Sarah B., married Tennessee-born John Summerville Smith, first steward and first Sunday School superintendent of the First United Methodist Church in Elgin.<sup>97</sup> The congregation organized in 1874 and met in a school until a one-room, wood-frame church was constructed in 1882, the first house of worship in Elgin.<sup>98</sup>

In 1840, twice widowed, Mary Christian Burleson finally moved her seven children to the Christian Survey in the area that would become Elgin.<sup>99</sup> The family, with children ages 5 to 17, built a log cabin on this land. Their closest neighbor, Mike Young, lived 3 miles south in Young's Settlement, also known as Perryville.<sup>100</sup> In the 1930s, A. H. Carter, a local historian and teacher at the Burleson Branch School described the home:

While she and her six children were living in the one-room house just back of what is now known as the Carter addition, the settlers were warned of a threatened Indian raid.<sup>101</sup> She was busy getting a piece of cloth out of the loom, so did not heed the warning until rather late in the afternoon. When she took the cloth from the loom, she and her six children escaped, some riding a horse and some in an ox-cart. They got as far as Mark Young's that night, and discovering the log chain had been lost, she sent John and a Negro boy back the next morning to look for it. They found the house had been raided, the feather beds opened and feathers scattered to the breeze, and everything topsy-turvy. The family hurried on to Bastrop, where the settlers had been called to flee for safety.<sup>102</sup>

The family returned to Bastrop until 1847 when they went back to the Christian Survey and built a one-story, wood-frame house, the subject of this nomination. Carter also described the new home.

In 1847, Mrs. Burleson built a conventional Texas ranch house nearer the edge of the prairie, two large rooms with an open hall between. In 1855, she added two other rooms and weather-boarded it. Much later this place became known as the T. Wilson place... This was, and is, the oldest house in Elgin. To enable her to make the improvements, she sold to a Mr. Taylor a plot covering the Puckett and Owens Addition for the sum of \$75.00 and a bay mare.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Mary came from a Methodist family and Thomas was noted to be an active member of the Methodist church, as well. Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*; Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*. Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*. Moore, *Bastrop County: 1691-1900*.

<sup>97</sup> John S. Smith arrived to Texas in 1851 and married Sarah B. Christian the following year. Two of his grandsons became Methodist bishops and he was a leader in the Elgin Methodist Church for over 60 years. He died on April 8, 1915. Beeman, *Historic Marker Application: Elgin Methodist Church*.

<sup>98</sup> Beeman, *Historic Marker Application: Elgin Methodist Church*.

<sup>99</sup> Beeman, *Historic Marker Application: Elgin Methodist Church*. Spellmann, *Growing a Soul: the Story of A. Frank Smith*.

<sup>100</sup> Committee, *A History of Elgin, Texas 1872-1972*.

<sup>101</sup> It is likely the one of Mary's seven children was living independently at this point.

<sup>102</sup> Carter, "Notes on the Early History of Elgin."

<sup>103</sup> Carter, "Notes on the Early History of Elgin."

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By the early 1850s, the matriarch was actively participating in the market economy with her agricultural pursuits. In 1850, Christian Burleson's 6 cultivated and 1,494 unimproved acres were valued at \$1,500, and she had farm implements worth \$15. She had 9 draught animals, 7 horses and 2 oxen, to work her land and her livestock holdings, which were plentiful. That year, Christian Burleson had \$2,020 total livestock holdings with 100 dairy cows, 150 beef cattle, and 60 hogs.<sup>104</sup> In the mid-1850s and later, Christian Burleson's participation in the market economy was less robust, she typically had one horse, a few dozen bovines, and an occasional large number—50 to 170 swine.

To sustain her agricultural pursuits and her household in the antebellum period, Christian Burleson probably relied on her maturing children, her stepsons, and enslaved people the family held. It is unknown if there were other dwellings on the property associated with Christian Burleson during her lifetime. By 1850, when her four daughters resided with her, Eliza, Amanda, and Sarah Christian each owned real estate valued at \$400; and daughter Elizabeth Burleson owned real estate valued at \$700. Nearby, son John M. Christian resided with wife Cynthia, a native South Carolinian, and the couple's two children, James and Martha. Her four Burleson stepsons continuously held varying numbers of enslaved men, women, and children until 1864. Christian Burleson herself was an enslaver in 1855 when she held 5 enslaved people. None were reported in previous or subsequent years.<sup>105</sup>

Her children and stepchildren also ran livestock operations and farmed on the Christian Survey, described as having rich clay soil and receiving adequate rain, in the 1850s.<sup>106</sup> Daughter Elizabeth is described in Francis White Johnson's *A History of Texas and Texans* as "a capable rancher of the family lands," and a participant in cattle drives. With no water source on the survey, it is likely that the Christians had to move their cattle to keep them fed and watered. In 1857, a local drought forced settlers to drive cattle for miles to water.<sup>107</sup> Christian Burleson's oldest child, John Christian raised horses on the land through the 1850s, and was murdered in a dispute about a horse in 1860.<sup>108</sup> Her second youngest daughter, Sarah B. Christian, acquired substantial amounts of land when she and John S. Smith, one of the largest landowners in the county, married in 1852. Smith spent most of his life driving cattle.<sup>109</sup>

During the last decade her life, Christian Burleson and several of her children lived in the vicinity of the homestead on land that would become Elgin. In 1860, Christian Burleson held \$2,000 in real estate and resided with daughter Elizabeth "Betsy" Burleson Brooks and son-in-law Charles W. Brooks in Bastrop County. Brooks was a farmer native to Alabama.<sup>110</sup> Burleson's daughter Sarah and son-in-law John S. Smith resided on a nearby farm.<sup>111</sup> During the 1860s, the matriarch worked with stepson and adjacent survey owner, Jonathan Burleson, to grant right of way to the Houston and Texas Central Railway. This area of the Christian/Burleson land holdings along the new railroad track eventually developed into the city of Elgin (**Figures 8, 9, 10**).<sup>112</sup> Mary Christian Burleson remained on the Christian Survey until her death in on May 27, 1870.<sup>113</sup>

The Christian/Burleson family was involved in organizing the Elgin Methodist Church and with developing educational institutions. In the 1860s or early 1870s, the Burleson Branch School opened in a one-room log cabin on

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<sup>104</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Bastrop County, Production of Agriculture 1850 (Manuscript).

<sup>105</sup> Tax Collector and Assessor Denton County, Texas, Ad Valorem Tax Rolls, 1861 (Manuscript), 1861, 1861.

<sup>106</sup> Craig Melde and Ron Emrich, *Elgin Commercial Historic District*, National Park Service (1996).

<sup>107</sup> Syd Davis, "From Hogeys to Elgin (A History of Elgin, Texas)" Prepared for the Bastrop Historical Society (1962).

<sup>108</sup> Cristin Embry, "A Texas Frontier Woman: Mary Christian Burleson." Foundation, "Tenacity and Texas Begin with 'T'."

<sup>109</sup> Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Inhabitants of Bastrop County, Ancestry, National Archives and Records Administration, 1860, Manuscript Population Census.

<sup>111</sup> Craig Melde and Ron Emrich, *Elgin Commercial Historic District*.

<sup>112</sup> Byron Howard, "Burleson, Mary R. B. Christian".

<sup>113</sup> Byron Howard, "Burleson, Mary R. B. Christian".

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C. H. Carter's property between Elgin and the Burleson community.<sup>114</sup> A Mr. Dew, who specialized in Greek and Latin, taught classes and with a Mr. Moore and A. H. Carter, who moved to the area in 1871.<sup>115</sup> In May 1873, the school was incorporated as the Burleson Male and Female Academy by Mary Christian Burleson's sons-in-law John S. Smith, C. W. Brooks, Thomas H. Gatlin, and Ed Tisdale, plus W. P. Miles, James Newton, and L. C. Cunningham. The academy was not well attended and closed. In 1874, son-in-law Smith organized a school in Elgin, near the Methodist church parsonage. Professor A. H. Carter and his assistant were the first instructors.<sup>116</sup>

Mary Christian Burleson's children each contributed to the Elgin community. Ann Eliza married P. Bordon; John married Cynthia H. Reid; Nancy married Thomas H. Gaitlin; Amanda Jane married J. E. Tisdal; Martha married Sherman Reynolds, a local merchant and steamboat operator; and Sarah B. married John S. Smith, a prominent farmer and Methodist minister.<sup>117</sup> In her will, the matriarch left her youngest daughter Elizabeth 400 acres, already in her possession, and divided the remainder among her daughters and a daughter-in-law, John Christian's widow, Cynthia.<sup>118</sup> She is buried in the eponymous Mary Christian Burleson Cemetery, approximately 1 mile north of the house, on the Thomas Christian Survey.

#### CRITERION A: ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK

Many of the first Anglo-American settlers in Bastrop County relied on enslaved labor to establish their agriculturally based economy; however, the experience of enslaved persons in relation to the Thomas Christian Survey and Mary Christian Burleson is lacking. She held enslaved persons one year, 1855, according to tax records. Both of her husbands, Thomas Christian and James Burleson Sr., died before Texas achieved independence and records of their engagement with slavery is limited. Christian Burleson's children were intermittent enslavers, as were James Burleson Sr.'s sons, including Jonathan Burleson. It is probable that Burleson Sr. was an enslaver during his two-year marriage to Christian Burleson. Regardless of the limited record, it is impossible to separate the early settlement experience from the institution that so heavily shaped local society. Various sources that describe enslaved Texans yield few specific insights about those who interacted with Christian Burleson but provide general context about the period and conditions of the enslaved in Texas.<sup>119</sup>

#### *Brief Background on Slavery in Early Texas*

The institution of slavery in present-day Texas began in the 1820s, although it had existed in the area as early as the sixteenth century and was legal in New Spain. The enslaved in eighteenth-century Spanish Texas was small with 20 of 3,103 people enslaved in 1777, and 43 of 2,919 people enslaved in 1785.<sup>120</sup> The latter enslaved population resided in San Antonio, Nacogdoches, and La Bahia.<sup>121</sup> As Anglo-American settlers moved into the area, their desire to grow cotton, which could be a highly profitable venture, motivated incoming farmers to support and sustain the use of slaves

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<sup>114</sup> Byron Howard, "Burleson, Mary R. B. Christian ". Carter, "Notes on the Early History of Elgin."

<sup>115</sup> Davis, "From Hogeys to Elgin (A History of Elgin, Texas)."

<sup>116</sup> Anonymous, "Elgin Courier Sesquicentennial: Education, School & Sports: Elgin's "College"," *Elgin Courier*, Wednesday, August 17, 2022, 2022.

<sup>117</sup> Company, *History of Texas, Together with a Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties*.

<sup>118</sup> Anonymous, *Will and Testament for the Estate of Mary Burleson Deceased*, Office of the County Clerk (Bastrop County: From Elgin, Texas vertical File at the Bastrop Public Library, 1869.

<sup>119</sup> Additional primary source research into land and tax records, Freedmen's Bureau archives, and WPA slave narratives may provide further insight into the experience of enslaved persons on the Thomas Christian Survey. Secondary sources, including academic theses and dissertations that focus on related topics, may also provide supporting information.

<sup>120</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865*, 11.

<sup>121</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865*, 19.

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for labor. As Stephen F. Austin wrote in 1824, "the principal product that will elevate us from poverty is cotton and we cannot do this without the help of slaves."<sup>122</sup> Austin encouraged enslavers to join his new colonies even among the growing antislavery movement in Mexico. Settlers brought varying numbers of enslaved people as they established farms in the Little Colony. Josiah Bell, with his wife and two sons, brought three enslaved persons to the colony. Jared E. Groce brought 90 enslaved people from Georgia and established a substantial plantation along the Brazos River near present-day Hempstead, west of Bastrop.<sup>123</sup>

At the same time, opposition to slavery fomented in newly independent Mexico. In 1824, a constitutional congress prohibited the slave trade and declared that enslaved people brought into Mexico would be freed. However, several months later a colonization law did not mention this decree. Mexico's changing policies towards slavery caused hesitation for enslavers considering a move to Texas. Austin continued to advocate for the institution as essential to successful colonial settlement. In January 1824, Austin implemented regulations for the colony that included four articles as the first "slave code," with instructions about fines and punishment for runaway bondsmen, their return, theft, and conducting trade.<sup>124</sup>

During the second half of the 1820s, Mexico issued a series of antislavery decrees to erode slavery while Austin and his colonists found means to uphold the institution. By the end of 1825, Austin's colony had a population of 1,800, 443 of whom were enslaved by 69 different families.<sup>125</sup> The 1827 Constitution of the State of Coahuila and Texas prohibited bringing new bondsmen to the colony and decreed that all children of enslaved persons would be free. In response, Texians developed a system of indentured servitude, requiring bondsmen and their children to sign contracts requiring them to pay unfeasible amounts in exchanged for "freedom."<sup>126</sup> On September 15, 1829, Mexican President Guerrero decreed immediate emancipation. The order was not published when it reached Texas as the local governor and Austin sought ways around it. By December, Guerrero had exempted Texas from the order.<sup>127</sup>

Slavery grew after Texas gained independence. The Constitution of 1836 solidified protections for the institution. Approximately 5,000 of the state's 38,470 residents were enslaved in 1836.<sup>128</sup> In 1837, Bastrop County's population included 111 enslaved people and the number had grown to 299 in 1840.<sup>129</sup> The same year, tax records document 12,570 enslaved people across the Republic and the numbers continued to climb, reaching 38,753 in 1847.<sup>130</sup> In 1850, Bastrop County had a population of 2,180, nearly half of whom, 919, were enslaved.<sup>131</sup> Thousands of enslaved people came to Texas each year through the 1850s, most immigrating with their holders from the southern states; some arrived through the enslaver trade from other states; and a limited number had been transported through the African-based trade. Enslaved labor was the foundation of much of the large-scale agricultural economy, especially cotton.<sup>132</sup> Most bondsmen worked as field hands, others were craftsmen, domestic servants, or livestock handlers. Approximately 30 percent of white Texas families held bondsmen in 1850, mostly with one or two enslaved workers. Only a few, 2.3 percent, held more than 20 individuals, representing the small group of well-to-do planter families who resided on plantations.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Randolph B. Campbell, "Slavery," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2023.

<sup>123</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*, 14.

<sup>124</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*.

<sup>125</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*.

<sup>126</sup> Campbell, "Slavery."

<sup>127</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*.

<sup>128</sup> Campbell, "Slavery."

<sup>129</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*, 264.

<sup>130</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*, 55.

<sup>131</sup> Paul Mitchell Marks, "Bastrop County," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2020.

<sup>132</sup> Campbell, "Slavery."

<sup>133</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*.

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Food and clothing afforded to enslaved people was dependent on individual enslavers. The Constitution of 1845 required each bondsman be supplied “with comfortable clothing” and “a sufficient quality of wholesome food,” citing fines if unmet; however, the parameters of “comfortable” and “sufficient” were undefined.<sup>134</sup> Clothing provided was functional, constructed from rough fabrics, and often sewn on site.<sup>135</sup> Most farmers grew their own food, and corn and pork were primary components of bondsmen’s diets. Enslavers may have allowed the enslaved to establish gardens or small plots to grow food.<sup>136</sup>

Housing for enslaved people was rudimentary and varied. Arrangements may have been one or more individual or multiple-family houses to small villages. Bondsmen in Sabine County, in East Texas along the now Louisiana border, resided in windowless 10-square-foot log cabins. The bondsmen on William T. Scott’s property in East Texas’ Harrison County had 20-square-foot cabins, some shared.<sup>137</sup> Many quarters had fireplaces. Dirt floors and limited ventilation were typical. Other than a bed or cot, most had no furniture unless bondsmen procured or made their own. In summary, housing provided little comfort from weather extremes.<sup>138</sup>

The lives of enslaved Texans centered around family and were enhanced by worship and music. Although marriage and family ties had no protections, bondsmen made efforts to marry someone on the same or an adjacent farm. It was usually in the enslavers’ best interest to retain families as those bonds helped them control their labor force. Bondsman opposed the disruption of families when threatened with the sale or migration of a family member. Religion and music were key intertwined practices of enslaved Texans, and enslavers often encouraged faith. Song might accompany work and was a way enslaved culture expressed their experience.<sup>139</sup>

Although most Texans were not enslavers in the mid-century, the institution shaped the entirety of Texas society. In 1850, enslavers owned 72 percent of the state’s real property, 68 percent of its total improved acreage, and 61 percent of its livestock.<sup>140</sup> Of slaveholding families, only one-third contributed to 89 percent of cotton production in 1850, and 91 percent in 1860. Despite comprising the majority of families, non-slaveholding Texans primarily engaged in subsistence farming with minimal cash-crop production. Texas politicians and leaders were often from the minority, enslaving class. Regardless, most Texans supported the practice.<sup>141</sup>

### *Slavery and the Christian Burleson Property*

Limited documentation recounts the enslaved persons associated with the Thomas Christian Survey or Mary Christian Burleson homestead. Pre-1837 tax records are incomplete, and both written and oral histories lack sufficient representation to tell even a small part of their story. In 1855, Mary Christian Burleson held five enslaved people who combined, were valued at \$2,300. She is not reported as an enslaver in any other tax or census records. Some of her children were enslavers. Son John M. Christian, who in 1855 owned and possibly lived on 271 acres out of the Elizabeth Standifer Survey west of the Thomas Christian Survey, held two bondsmen value at a combined \$1,800. The same year, son-in-law John Smith, who owned and possibly resided on 407 acres out of the Thomas Christian Survey,

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<sup>134</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*, 134.

<sup>135</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*.

<sup>136</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*.

<sup>137</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*; Tom III Scott et al., “Scott, William Thomas,” in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2021.

<sup>138</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*.

<sup>139</sup> Campbell, “Slavery.”

<sup>140</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*, 209.

<sup>141</sup> Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865*, 210.

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held one bondsman valued at \$800.<sup>142</sup> The number of enslaved held by Christian and Smith varied, and by 1859, no bondsmen are recorded to be held by either.<sup>143</sup>

As a prominent early pioneer, James Burleson Sr. may have been an enslaver. Mary Christian Burleson was married to James Burleson Sr. from 1834 until his death in 1836. One of his 12 children, Jonathan Burleson, was granted the property adjacent and to the west of the Thomas Christian Survey. According to narratives and tax records, Jonathan Burleson did not develop the land adjacent to the Christians; instead, he resided on land out of the Nancy Blakey Survey that his wife owned to the west and across the Colorado River from the town of Bastrop.<sup>144</sup> Burleson is known to have held a 600-acre property of pasture and cotton fields, which ran on slave labor. His antebellum success—social status and wealth—could be measured by the number of African Americans and ethnic Africans whom he owned, which increased by 6 between 1850 and 1860. Although there are no available records that connect Jonathan Burleson's enslavement practices to those on the nominated property, there is a strong likelihood of shared experiences (possibly familial ties) between these individuals that is worth further examination.

The 1850 and 1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedules and WPA Federal Writers' Project Slave Narratives provide a starting point from which to learn about the adults and children Burleson enslaved. Table 1 lists those enumerated for each census year. It is difficult to track individuals because the census did not record names, only gender and age. Therefore, those markers were used to identify people (represented in *italics*) who may have been on this property in both 1850 and 1860. The men, women, and children range in age from 10 months to 50.<sup>145</sup> In the late 1930s, one of the formerly enslaved children (likely "Male, Age 9 or Male, Age 7 listed on the 1860 census) provided invaluable oral testimony about his experience on the Jonathan Burleson Plantation.

James Burleson (c.1852-1943), 86 years old and living in East Austin at the time of his interview, was born about 1852 to an unnamed white man and Emiline Burleson Banks (likely "Female, Age 28") on Jonathan Burleson's cotton plantation.<sup>146</sup> Emiline (c.1832-1912) was a "house woman" who carded and spun cotton to weave into clothes.<sup>147</sup> She had seven sons and two daughters, and after emancipation married James' stepfather, Henderson Banks, who had been enslaved on the Banks cotton plantation near Webberville, west of Bastrop.<sup>148</sup> James described his enslaver's treatment as rough, adding "That was [the white folks'] way."<sup>149</sup> "Old Aunt Angeline," a fieldworker he recalled, "would fight anybody that tried to whoop her. Many was the time that Master Jake [Burleson] tried to whoop her for something, and he would end up by 'standing almost naked' in the [cotton field] row." James implied, too, that the white Burleson's treated him differently. Citing two examples—"running like mischief" after cussing out Mistress Nancy [Burleson] and getting scolded for sleeping when he was supposed to be helping at gin—he lightly claimed, "white folks just

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<sup>142</sup> Tax Collector and Assessor Bastrop County, County Tax Rolls, Texas, County Tax Rolls, 1837-1910, Family Search, Texas State Library and Archives, 1855.

<sup>143</sup> Tax Collector and Assessor Bastrop County, County Tax Rolls, Texas, County Tax Rolls, 1837-1910, Family Search, Texas State Library and Archives, 1859.

<sup>144</sup> It is unclear if Jonathan Burleson's cotton plantation was on the Blakey Survey or on the property adjacent to the Thomas Christian Survey.

<sup>145</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Slave Schedules, Ancestry.com, National Archives and Records Administration, 1850; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Slave Schedules, Ancestry.com, National Archives and Records Administration, 1860.

<sup>146</sup> All quotes in this paragraph are from "James Burleson," *Texas Slave Narratives*, Rootsweb.com, [https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~ewyatt/genealogy/\\_borders/Texas%20Slave%20Narratives/TEXAS%20B/Burleson,%20James.html](https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~ewyatt/genealogy/_borders/Texas%20Slave%20Narratives/TEXAS%20B/Burleson,%20James.html); "James Burleson," Texas Department of State Health Services; Austin Texas, USA; *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*

<sup>147</sup> "Emiline Banks," Texas Department of State Health Services; Austin Texas, USA; *Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982*.

<sup>148</sup> Historic county maps show the Banks Survey as north and adjacent to the Nancy Blakey Survey.

<sup>149</sup> Jake Burleson may be Jonathan Burleson's son, Jacob R. Burleson. Family Search Contributor, "Jonathan R. Burleson Family Tree," (Family Search, 2023), Family Tree. "James Burleson," *Texas Slave Narratives*.

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spoiled me.” It raises the question as to whether the race of his biological father had anything to do with James’ treatment, and if James was himself a Burleson descendant. The interview documents other aspects of life on the Burleson Plantation—segregated quarters, foodways, types of labor, emancipation in Bastrop County, and African American life post-emancipation—all of which are valuable leads that could broaden the rich and complex history of Bastrop County and the nominated property.<sup>150</sup>

**Table 1. U.S. Federal Slave Census Schedules for Jonathan Burleson, 1850 and 1860.**<sup>151</sup>

Individuals thought to have lived on the property in both 1850 and 1860 are shown in *italics*—an assumption based on the age listed.

| 1850        |           | 1860        |           |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Male        | 18        |             |           |
| <i>Male</i> | <i>12</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>23</i> |
| <i>Male</i> | <i>9</i>  | <i>Male</i> | <i>19</i> |
| <i>Male</i> | <i>3</i>  | <i>Male</i> | <i>12</i> |
| <i>Male</i> | <i>2</i>  | <i>Male</i> | <i>11</i> |
| <i>Male</i> | <i>1</i>  | <i>Male</i> | <i>10</i> |
|             |           | Male        | 40        |
|             |           | Male        | 33        |
|             |           | Male        | 9         |
|             |           | Male        | 7         |
|             |           | Male        | < 1       |

| 1850          |           | 1860          |           |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|
| Female        | 33        |               |           |
| Female        | 20        |               |           |
| Female        | 1         |               |           |
| <i>Female</i> | <i>19</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>28</i> |
| <i>Female</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>28</i> |
| <i>Female</i> | <i>8</i>  | <i>Female</i> | <i>17</i> |
| <i>Female</i> | <i>5</i>  | <i>Female</i> | <i>15</i> |
| <i>Female</i> | <i>4</i>  | <i>Female</i> | <i>13</i> |
| <i>Female</i> | <i>3</i>  | <i>Female</i> | <i>13</i> |
|               |           | Female        | 50        |
|               |           | Female        | 32        |
|               |           | Female        | 20        |
|               |           | Female        | 6         |
|               |           | Female        | 3         |

<sup>150</sup>“James Burleson,” *Texas Slave Narratives*.

<sup>151</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Slave Schedules, Ancestry.com, National Archives and Records Administration, 1850; U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Slave Schedules, Ancestry.com, National Archives and Records Administration, 1860.



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## CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

The Mary Christian Burleson house is an example of the modest, vernacular dwellings Austin colony settlers constructed in Central Texas. As was typical, the pioneer family first constructed a ca. 1840 log cabin on the Christian Survey, likely using timber from or near this land. The family moved to the safety of Bastrop for several years before returning to their land in about 1847 to construct a permanent home. This plain, one-story, wood-frame, gable-roof house with a full-length south-facing porch is what architectural historian Drury Blakely Alexander described as an Early Texas House in *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*.

### Pre-Railroad Folk Architecture

Before the arrival of the railroad in mid- to late-nineteenth-century Texas, an era of American folk architecture resulted in modest dwellings constructed by local labor with locally sourced materials. The earliest railroads arrived in the 1850s, where resourceful frontier-settlement architecture prevailed from the 1820s with the Austins' first colony through mid-century in Central Texas.<sup>152</sup> Typical domestic architectural types constructed by Anglo-American settlers in Bastrop County were basic protective log buildings that, within the first decade of settlement, evolved into double-crib log or wood-frame houses, utilizing abundant local timber.<sup>153</sup> Unadorned rectangular-plan, one-story, wood- or timber-frame houses with gable roofs and chimneys and south-facing porches became the typology settlers constructed when time and materials were available.

Before Anglo-American settlement in Texas, early iterations of folk architecture were built throughout the northeastern United States beginning in the seventeenth century. Virgin forests provided a steady supply of building material. English and French colonists brought the post-and-girth construction tradition, substantial frameworks of hewn timber, to America. Thin horizontal board covered the frame, and massed houses, more than one room deep, and often two stories high became commonplace across New England. The Tidewater South, a region of states on the east coast extending from Virginia through Maryland and North Carolina, adapted the frame house to be one room deep and linear in plan. Due to the pleasant climate of the Tidewater South, interior space was not as expansive. The hall-and-parlor form, a plan consisting of two rooms separated by a central hall, and the I-house form, a singular rectangular room, were the two main domestic designs. Full-width front porches were typical by the late eighteenth century. Although massed folk houses are rare, later rear additions are common, and the Tidewater South tradition was widespread in rural areas of the southern states through the early twentieth century.<sup>154</sup>

A substantial form of log construction that first began along the east coast made its way to Texas. The middle colonies of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland were home to immigrants from forested Germanic countries in northern Europe who brought a tradition of hewing large timber to square and horizontally stacking logs to create substantial wood buildings and structures. Settlers built what became known as the Midland log house across the eastern United States and transported this version to East and Central Texas as they traveled westward. This modest house usually had one room, sometimes with a loft or attached porch. Weatherboard siding may have been added later, but otherwise, this log building type was difficult to expand or modify.<sup>155</sup>

Advances in transportation allowed for more complex and lighter frame construction using mass-produced materials. With the railroad expansion during the mid- to late-nineteenth century, building materials, especially lumber, was more readily available. Lighter, balloon- or braced-framing clad in wood board replaced rudimentary log construction.

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<sup>152</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2017).

<sup>153</sup> Marie Deacon et al., *Resources of Bastrop (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)*. Section 7, Page 2.

<sup>154</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*.

<sup>155</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*.

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Despite materials becoming more widely accessible and construction techniques more refined, domestic forms from the pre-railroad era persisted. For example, the front-gable house dominated early Greek Revival design. The hall-and-parlor house became ubiquitous across the Southeast. The I-house, the passed-plan, side-gable house, and the one-story pyramidal house remained popular into the early twentieth century. Various configurations of additions, porches, and chimneys were often applied to each of these folk types in the post-railroad era.<sup>156</sup>

### The Early Texas House in Bastrop County

Despite the establishment of new towns like Mina (now Bastrop), a depressed economy coupled with political and religious turmoil prevented substantial construction during settlement of Austin's colonies, and early domestic buildings provided only rudimentary protection.<sup>157</sup> Upon arrival, pioneers set up temporary camps. The 1835 *Guide to Texas Emigrants* recommended that settlers bring tents or sail cloth to use until a house could be built.<sup>158</sup> Bastrop's first Anglo-American residents erected basic cabins for shelter, from local pine with cedar shingle roofs. These buildings were unlikely to have piers, using only the ground as a base dirt for flooring. Wood shutters or animal hides might have covered the window openings. Mud-fill and sticks reinforced fireplaces and chimneys.<sup>159</sup> Some Bastrop settlers also constructed stockades for additional protection in the 1830s. John T. Webber built a blockhouse north of town, and groups of settlers constructed similar buildings and homes.<sup>160</sup>

After 1836, Anglo-American and European settlers brought building traditions and construction techniques to communities across the Republic of Texas. Frequently, these evolved into a one-story, gable-roof building with a front porch, or the Early Texas House. When timber was locally available, single- or double-crib single-story log cabins were erected.<sup>161</sup> Double-crib cabins, also known as dog-trot houses, consisted of two rooms separated by a breezeway (**Figure 13**). Houses of this form during the 1830s and 1840s period may have had an attic, south-facing porch, and fireplace at the gable end.<sup>162</sup> Iterations of this form were typical in the upper and middle south regions of Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Arkansas.<sup>163</sup>

Availability of timber and lumber was essential to the type of pre-railroad house that could be constructed locally. The 1835 *Guide to Texas Emigrants* describes the plentiful natural building materials of Texas with timber available in most areas for any type of construction. It notes that the price of lumber is high due to the lack of sawmills and advises immigrants to bring "plank, scantling, window-sash, &c" with them.<sup>164</sup> Eastern Texas and a pocket of land near Bastrop yielded an abundance of pine for Anglo-American settlers. Bastrop is just west of the Lost Pines Forest, the westernmost section of loblolly pine trees in the United States. Situated 100 miles west from the main stand of pines, this 75,000-acre area provided plentiful lumber.<sup>165</sup> In 1838, the Bastrop Steel Company was incorporated, and with its sawmill, grist mill, planning mill, lath, and shingle mill, launched the lumber industry in Bastrop. Lumber was transported overland via wagons with six yokes of oxen pulling 20 or 30 cars. Bastrop supplied lumber to Austin,

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<sup>156</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*.

<sup>157</sup> Willard B. Robinson, "Architecture," in *Handbook of Texas History*, Texas State Historical Association, 1976, revised 2017.

<sup>158</sup> Jr. David Woodman, *Guide to Texas Emigrants* (M. Hawes, 1835).

<sup>159</sup> Kesselus, *History of Bastrop County, Texas Before Statehood*. P. 57.

<sup>160</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, "The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas".

<sup>161</sup> Drury Blakely Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*, Published for the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art (The University of Texas Press, 1966).

<sup>162</sup> Robinson, "Architecture."

<sup>163</sup> Drury Blakely Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>164</sup> David Woodman, *Guide to Texas Emigrants*., 117.

<sup>165</sup> Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, "Bastrop State Park," n.d.

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including that for the first capitol building, and to Houston, West Texas, and Mexico.<sup>166</sup> By the 1850s, several lumber mills had been established and “long strings of ox and mule teams loaded with lumber lined the road in all directions.”<sup>167</sup> Residents of Bastrop and adjacent areas began construction of substantial buildings using local pine, some kiln dried. Wood pegs secured frames and bricks were handmade and dried.<sup>168</sup> During his travels through Texas, Frederick Law Olmsted describes Bastrop as “here or there” having “a good house and a rich and well-cultivated planation.”<sup>169</sup> He chronicles “scraps of newspapers” that estimate “Bastrop has more material than any town of its size in Texas.”<sup>170</sup>

On the east side of the state and with similar materials to Bastrop County, a distinctive early house, referred to locally and by scholar and educator Elliot A. P. Evans as the “East Texas House,” developed. Emerging from the influence of settlers from Tennessee and Kentucky and persisting through the nineteenth century, this rural house type constructed of wood—usually one-story with a porch—was both “well-ventilated and well adapted to the site.” The basic plan had a single room, possibly with a hall and another room. Two-room houses with no hall were also constructed. Function determined the number of and location of rear additions. In his description of the East Texas House, Evans observes that six-over-six and nine-over-nine light window sashes were common until the 1880s, and that two roof types are common: an uninterrupted gable at about 45 degrees and a broken gable with two slopes that extend over the front porch. An attic or loft space was possible with both roof configurations.<sup>171</sup>

During the antebellum period, wood, brick, and quarried stone building construction took place on farms and in towns throughout Texas; however, stylized architecture evolved later in Texas than in the northeastern United States.<sup>172</sup> The prevailing mode of transport for building materials was waterway, and towns established along coasts and major rivers generally had more high-style architecture than did rural areas, like Bastrop County.<sup>173</sup> The county had a mix of architectural influences, mostly from the Upper and Middle South applied to modest dwellings.<sup>174</sup> Some exhibit stylistic influences, especially those that reference Greek Revival design, popular in Texas from 1840 through 1870.<sup>175</sup> Characteristics of Greek Revival architecture in Texas are symmetrical plans arranged around a central corridor with a symmetrical façade, sometimes with a portico. Geometric order, balance, and restrained details were present.<sup>176</sup> The two-story, 1842 Wilbarger House in Bastrop is an example of the style with a central, two-story, front-gable portico that plain box columns support.<sup>177</sup> The majority of settlers constructed unpretentious, wood-frame houses with modest

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<sup>166</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, “The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas”.

<sup>167</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, “The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas”. Page 106.

<sup>168</sup> Lucile Jackson Perkins, “The Local History Approach to Teaching Social Studies: A Compilation of Historical Data on Bastrop, Texas”.

<sup>169</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas; or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier; with a Statistical Appendix* (Dix, Edwards & Company, 1857). P. 117.

<sup>170</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas; or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier; with a Statistical Appendix*. P. 497.

<sup>171</sup> Elliot A. P. Evans, “The East Texas House,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Volume 11, No. Dec. 1952 (1952).

<sup>172</sup> Robinson, “Architecture.”; Drury Blakely Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>173</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*.

<sup>174</sup> Terry G. Jordan, *Texas Log Building: A Folk Architecture* (University of Texas Press, 1978).

<sup>175</sup> Robinson, “Architecture.” Drury Blakely Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>176</sup> Robinson, “Architecture.”

<sup>177</sup> Drury Blakely Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*.

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details that referenced Greek Revival influences, such as multiple-light, double-hung sash windows, and front-gable porticos.<sup>178</sup>

### Frontier Construction Technology

Frontier pioneers utilized materials on or near their land to quickly construct log cabins for protection. A log cabin generally referred to a house constructed with rounded logs with saddle-notched or V end joints. This differed from a log house, which was constructed of square, hand-hewed logs connected by rabbeted or dovetail joints at each corner. The saddled joints of the log cabin retained water and were less permanent and watertight than its log-house counterpart. Both dwelling types had gable roofs and one or two rooms, sometimes with a sleeping loft. Log cabins were generally considered impermanent starter homes. Some improved their log buildings with wood siding or weatherboarding, and others chose to construct replacement wood-frame homes.<sup>179</sup>

According to material culture scholar Henry Glassie, if a frontier house in the South is not a dog trot with breezeway or log cabin, it is likely a one-story, two-room house with a paired primary door and an exterior chimney on a gable end. He identifies this simple yet distinctive form in early European history through the Iron age that immigrants brought to America. In its earliest form in New England, this rectangular house with centered door had a front-gable roof. Modifications were made to accommodate local climate and materials as pioneers and settlers moved westward and employed this typology. This form was typically built on farmsteads, evolving from mountain cabins along the East Coast, slowly moving across the South and westerly where it was constructed from log, wood-frame, or stone.<sup>180</sup>

The wood-frame homes of 1830s and 1840s Texas required a greater level of skill than the log buildings. These homes were constructed with frames made of straight, square, hand-hewed logs braced by diagonal square timber. Wood pegs connected structural pieces. This construction technology derived from a medieval English tradition. The exterior was often clad in weatherboard and board covered interior walls and ceilings. Early log and wood-frame houses had similar one- or two-room plans. Two-room houses often had a hall or breezeway between two rooms and a full-width porch, often south-facing (**Figure 14**).<sup>181</sup>

Prince Karl von Solms-Braunfels, who established German colonies in Central Texas, provided a detailed description of house construction in 1840s Texas. He described the American ax, made of hard steel that could be used to cut 15 to 20 trees per day. Felled trees were hewed in the forest, bound with chains, and dragged by oxen or other livestock to the building site. Solms-Braunfels advised that a foundation is essential and proposed unhewed posts of 12 to 18 inches diameter and 7 feet long driven 3 feet into the ground. Constructing the floor at 4 feet above grade was considered sufficient to keep insects and animals away. Floor joists were installed, and squared logs were stacked horizontally along the perimeter for walls. The gable roof was constructed by erecting triangular gables at two ends and connected with a ridgeboard. Unfinished rafters were nailed to the ridgeboard. He advised making roof shingles and floorboards from cedar or elm. The shingles could be 3 feet long and the floorboard 6 feet. The house Solms-Braunfels described is about 13 feet square with 10- to 12-foot-high ceilings. He recommended that the house face north or south with few windows on the east and west façades to minimize direct sunlight. Two one-room houses could be built with a connecting breezeway 5 or 6 feet wide between them. Solms-Braunfels notes that the roof may be extended to the north or south side for a sleeping porch. He estimated that a pair of Americans could construct this house type in about six days.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Robinson, "Architecture."

<sup>179</sup> Drury Blakely Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>180</sup> Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971).

<sup>181</sup> Drury Blakely Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>182</sup> Editor Francis Edward Abernethy, *Built in Texas* (University of North Texas Press, 2000).

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Francis Edward Abernathy describes folk building as “primarily utilitarian” and that such a home is “never finished.”<sup>183</sup> The initial log cabins were quickly erected for protection and replaced with permanent dwellings as soon possible. Continuous improvements were common to vernacular buildings of Texas as pre-cut and manufactured materials, like window sashes and porch posts, became available, especially with the railroad, and as inhabitants required new functionalities, like interior bathrooms and kitchens. Even the earliest-built hall-and-parlor houses had rear additions and porch modifications so promptly that these elements are considered characteristics of the type.

### Mary Christian Burleson House

Architectural historian Virginia Savage McAlester describes the hall-and-parlor house as two rooms wide and one room deep, with later expansions that typically include a front porch and rear addition. Early timber framing was replaced by lighter balloon framing as lumber became available. Variations of chimney placement, addition configuration, and porch roofline were common. Early iterations of this house had two single doors on the primary façade. Although McAlester categorizes the hall-and-parlor house as a post-railroad, National Folk tradition, Mary Christian Burleson likely had access to lumber milled in Bastrop before the railroad arrived to the area.<sup>184</sup>

Like many vernacular houses, the Christian Burleson House has been modified, but remains an example of a mid-nineteenth century hall-and-parlor house. The gable roof extends over a full-width, south-facing front porch (enclosed around the mid-twentieth century and recently reopened) which has two single entry doors, one for each interior room, flanked by window openings. Remnants of charred floor joists and ghosting of an interior mantle indicate an off-center exterior chimney on the west side. Although window openings have been altered, it appears that few were on the west façade. A. H. Carter described two rooms and a hall in his ca. 1930s account of the 1847 building.<sup>185</sup> Currently, the building interior has four rooms, the rear two were likely added, and no hall. There is patching on the rear (north) interior wall that indicates a hall may have been enclosed. The building also retains materials consistent with 1840s and 1850s frontier construction including the post oak foundation posts and hand-hewed timber base plate timbers. Cedar pole rafters support the roof with wany lath. Six six-over-six, double-hung wood windows are in poor condition, but retain sufficient material to convey their original design.

Modest examples of frame, vernacular buildings are important resources for understanding the early available building materials and technologies of frontier settlers, and in Bastrop County, they are rare, with no mid-nineteenth-century vernacular buildings outside the City of Bastrop listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The earliest-built NRHP-listed dwelling in Bastrop County is the Jenkins House at 1710 Main Street, a ca. 1830 one-room log building, expanded ca. 1836 to a two-room log house, and, enclosed in the 1850s, to produce a wood-frame building with Victorian-influenced design (**Figure 15**). More substantial wood-frame houses in town include the ca. 1836 Campbell Taylor (Greenlief Fisk) House at 1005 Hill Street, which is one-and-one-half stories with front-gable dormers. Other early frame NRHP-listed houses in Bastrop are Greek Revival style including the two-story, 1842 Wilbarger House; the one-story ca. 1860 Judge R. Batts House at 609 Pecan Street with partial-width front porch, exterior chimneys at each gable end, and like the Christian Burleson House, six-over-six windows; the 1850 John Cornelsum House at 702 Main Street, modest in scale with a front-gable roof; and the ca. 1850 A. A. Erhard House at 1106 Pecan Street with a hall-and-parlor plan, six-over-six windows, and board-and-batten siding (**Figure 16**).<sup>186</sup>

### Conclusion

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<sup>183</sup> Francis Edward Abernathy, *Built in Texas*, p. 13.

<sup>184</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*.

<sup>185</sup> Carter, "Notes on the Early History of Elgin."

<sup>186</sup> Marie Deacon et al., *Resources of Bastrop (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)*.

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The Mary Christian Burleson house is a surviving example of early frontier settlement in Bastrop County. The property retains sufficient original fabric to illustrate construction technologies and materials that Bastrop County's earliest Anglo-American settlers employed building domestic resources. Burleson's journey to Texas and settlement of the Christian Survey during the early settlement period through Texas' fight for independence from Mexico, the Republic era, and statehood, represent the early history of Anglo emigrants in the state. The ca. 1840 log cabin she built with her family evolved into a wood-frame, hall-and-parlor house around 1847, and a ca. 1855 addition and weatherboarding completed the often-typical evolution of a period dwelling. The family first constructed a log home that prioritized their needs for shelter and protection, then adapted the building for their comfort and permanent residence. Due to limited physical evidence and gaps in archival record, this nomination provides only a partial interpretation of the homestead and all of the lives associated with it. Additional research into related primary sources may help to enhance the understanding of the experience of enslaved persons associated with the homestead.

The Mary Christian Burleson House is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement, Ethnic Heritage: Black and Criterion C in the area of Architecture all at the local level of significance. The period of significance is 1847, to account for the building's likely construction date, and extends to Mary Christian Burleson's 1870 death, to accommodate improvements to the property during her occupation.

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Maps

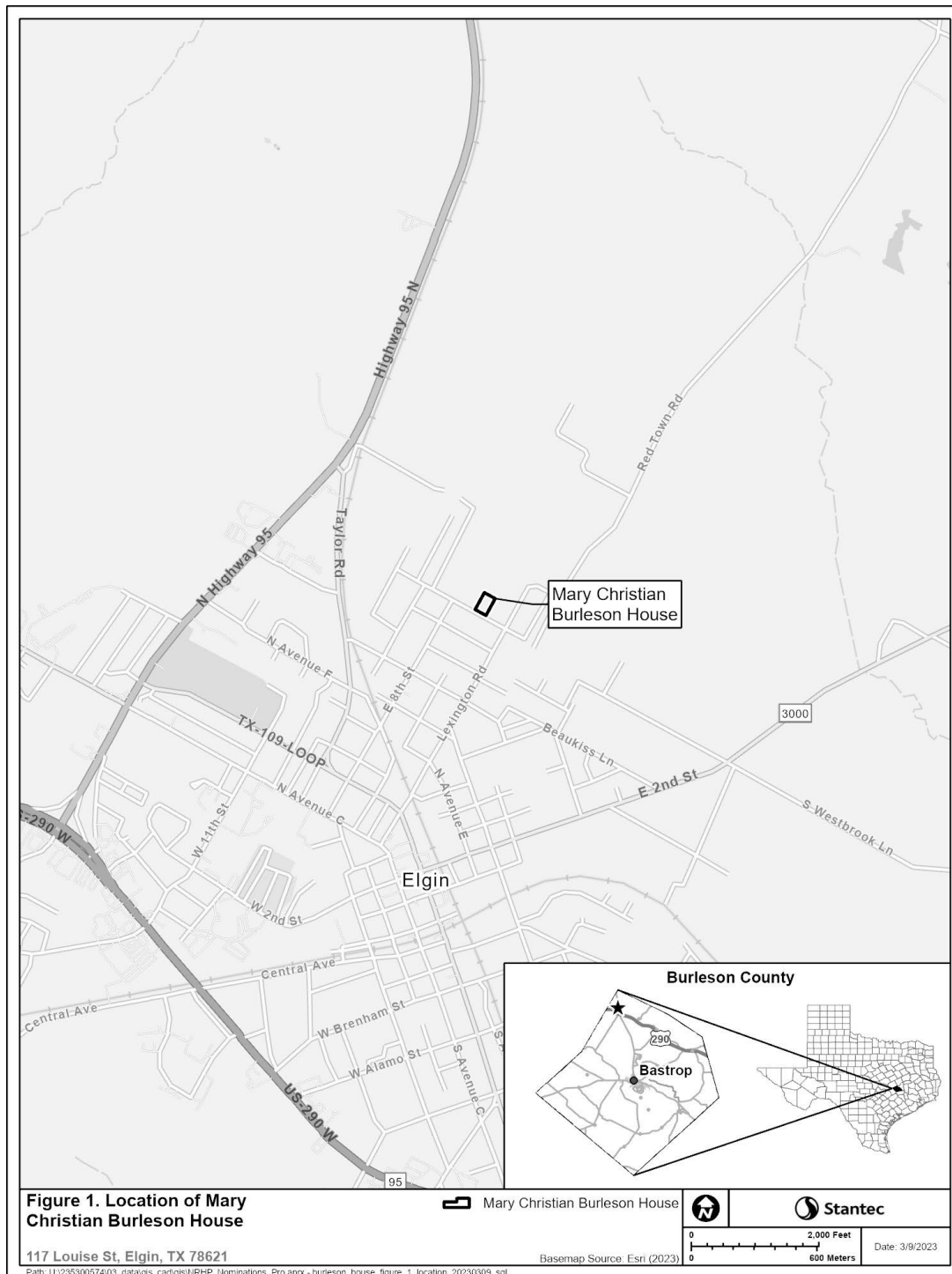


Figure 1. Location of Mary Christian Burleson House. Stantec 2023.

Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas



Figure 2. Mary Christian Burleson House Property Boundaries and Contributing/Noncontributing Resources. Stantec 2023.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas



Figure 3. Mary Christian Burleson House Contributing/Noncontributing Resources. Stantec 2023.

Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

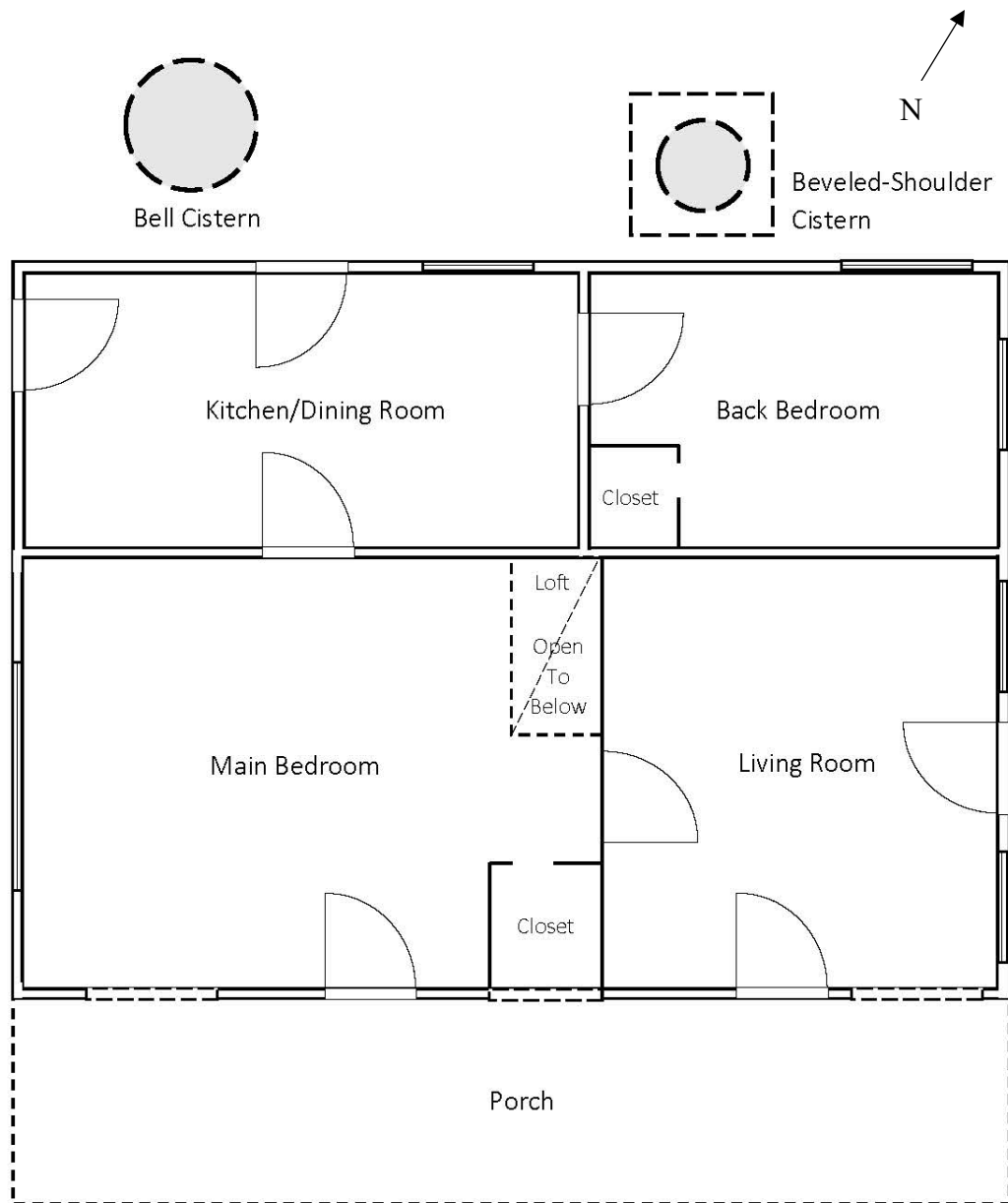


Figure 4. Schematic plan of Mary Christian Burleson House with cisterns. Stantec 2023.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas



Figure 5. 1836 Map of Texas with Parts of Adjoining States Compiled by Stephen F. Austin. Note Austin's first Colonies outlined in green and Stephen F. Austin's Little Colony in yellow at center.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Stephen F. Austin, *Map of Texas with Parts of the Adjoining States* (H. Stanner), 1836.



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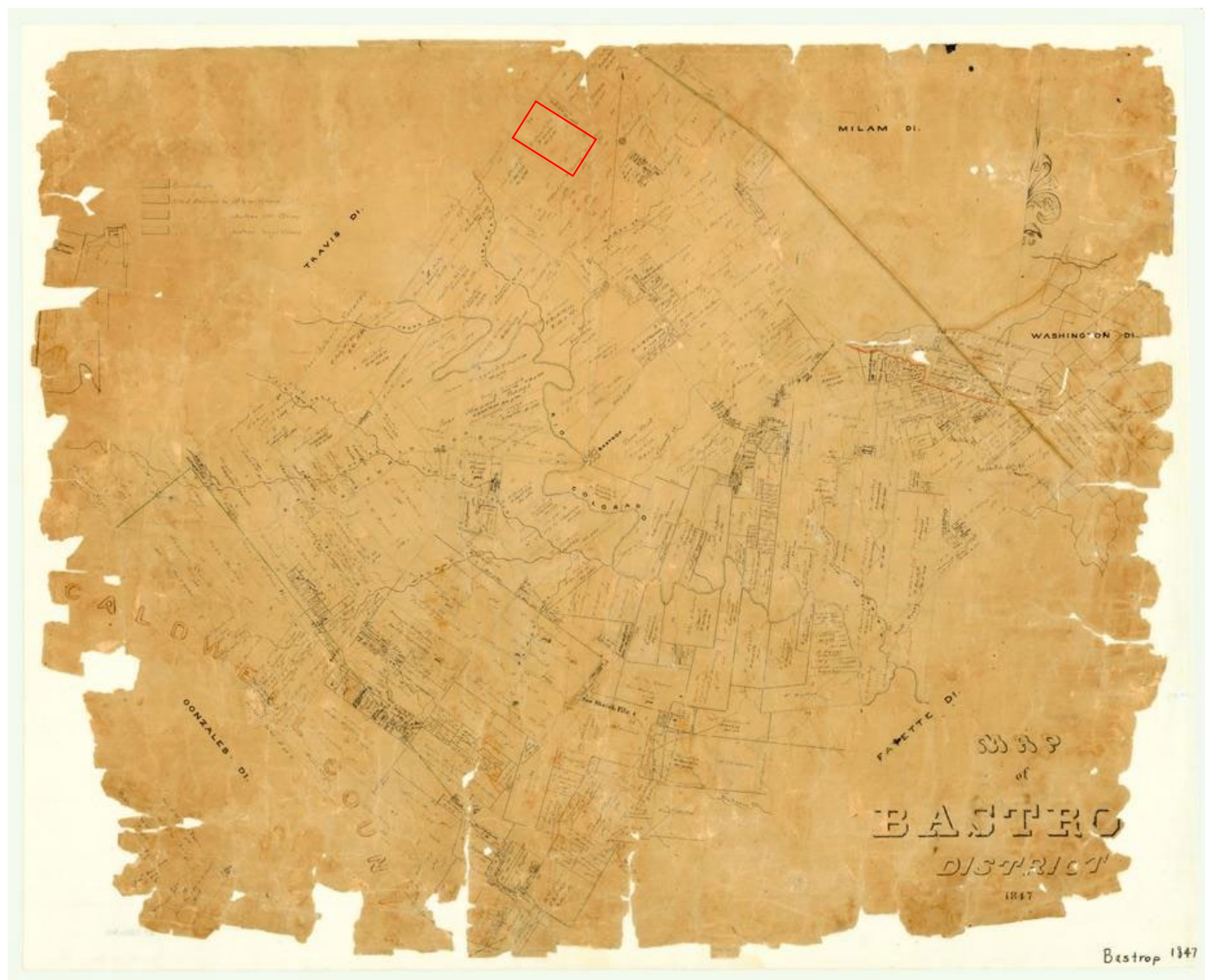


Figure 6. 1847 Map of Bastrop County.<sup>188</sup> Thomas Christian property indicated with red box.

<sup>188</sup> Unknown, *Map of Bastrop County, Texas, including the Prairies and Lakes region*, 1847.

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Figure 7. 1879 Map of Bastrop County.<sup>189</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Texas General Land Office, *Map of Bastrop County, Texas* (Texas General Land Office), 1879.



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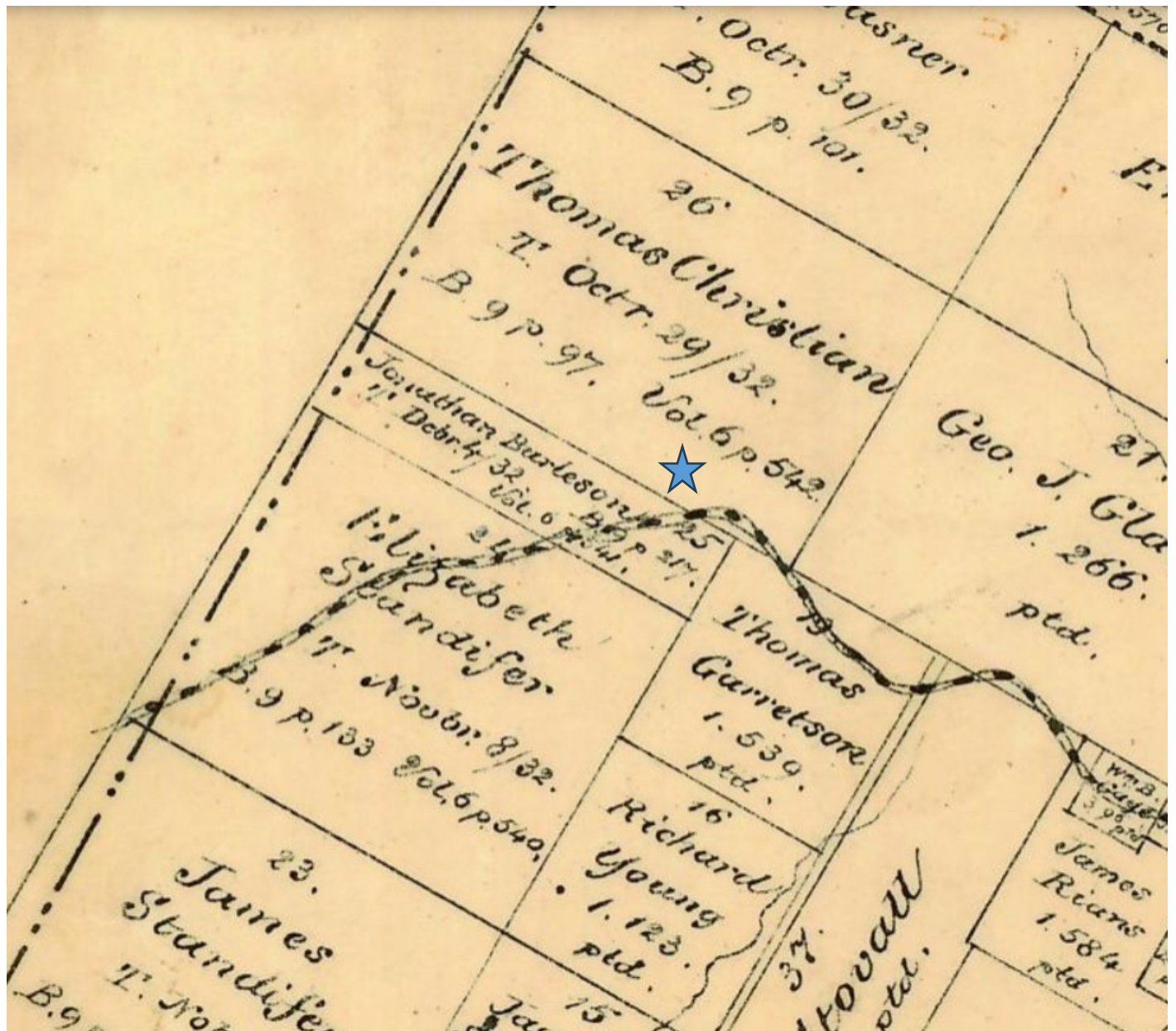


Figure 8. Excerpt of 1879 map of Bastrop County, annotated by Stantec.<sup>190</sup> Note the railroad track at the south corner of the Thomas Christian property. The blue star represents the approximate location of the 1-acre nominated property in relationship to the 4,428.4-acres Thomas Christian Survey.

<sup>190</sup> Texas General Land Office, *Map of Bastrop County, Texas*, 1879.

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Figure 9. 1883 Map of Bastrop County.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>191</sup> George J. Thielepape, *Map of Bastrop County, Texas, including the Prairies and Lakes region*. (Texas General Land Office), October 1883.



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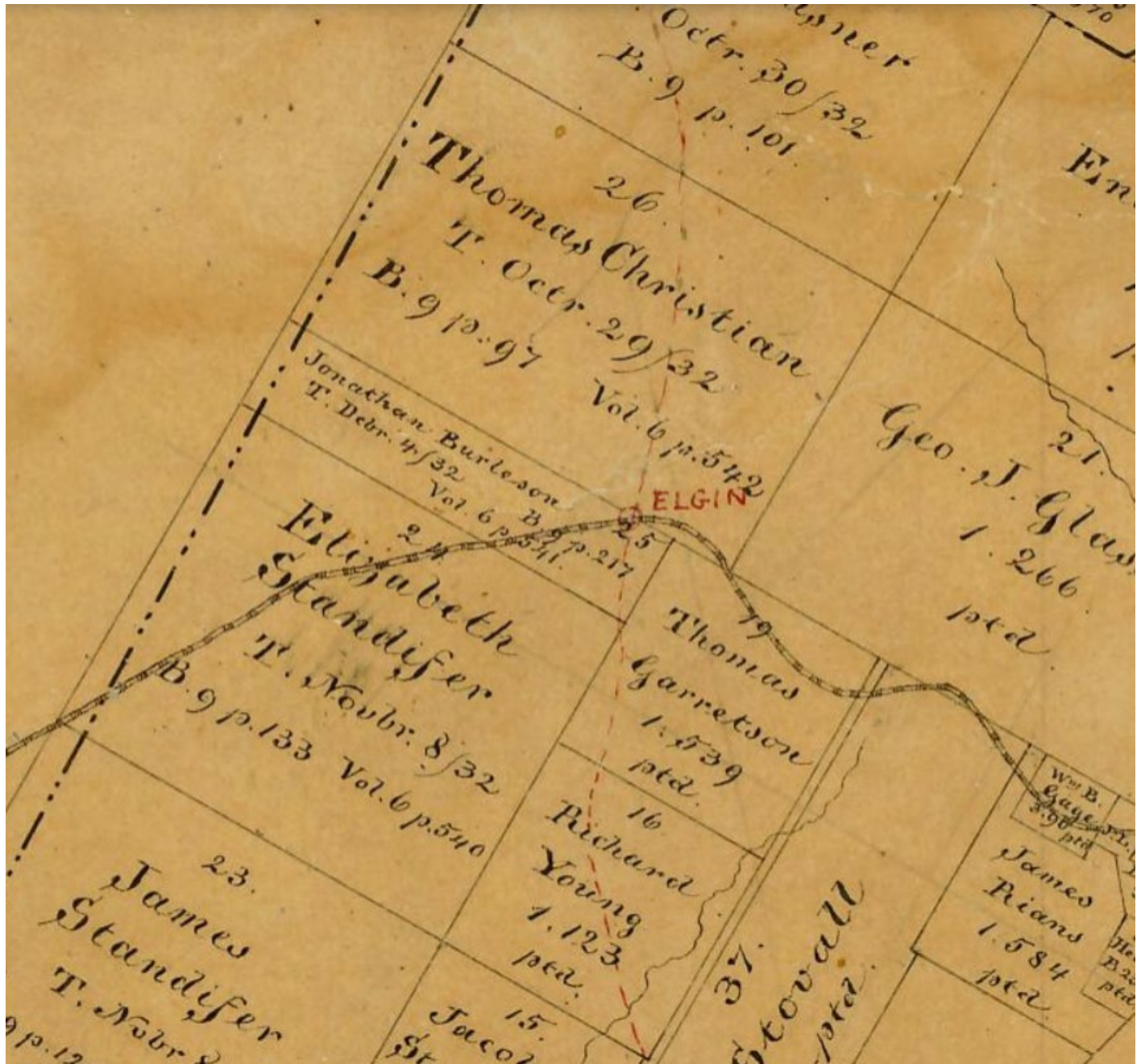


Figure 10. Excerpt of 1883 Map of Bastrop County, annotated bt.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>192</sup> Thielepape, *Map of Bastrop County, Texas, including the Prairies and Lakes region.*, October 1883.

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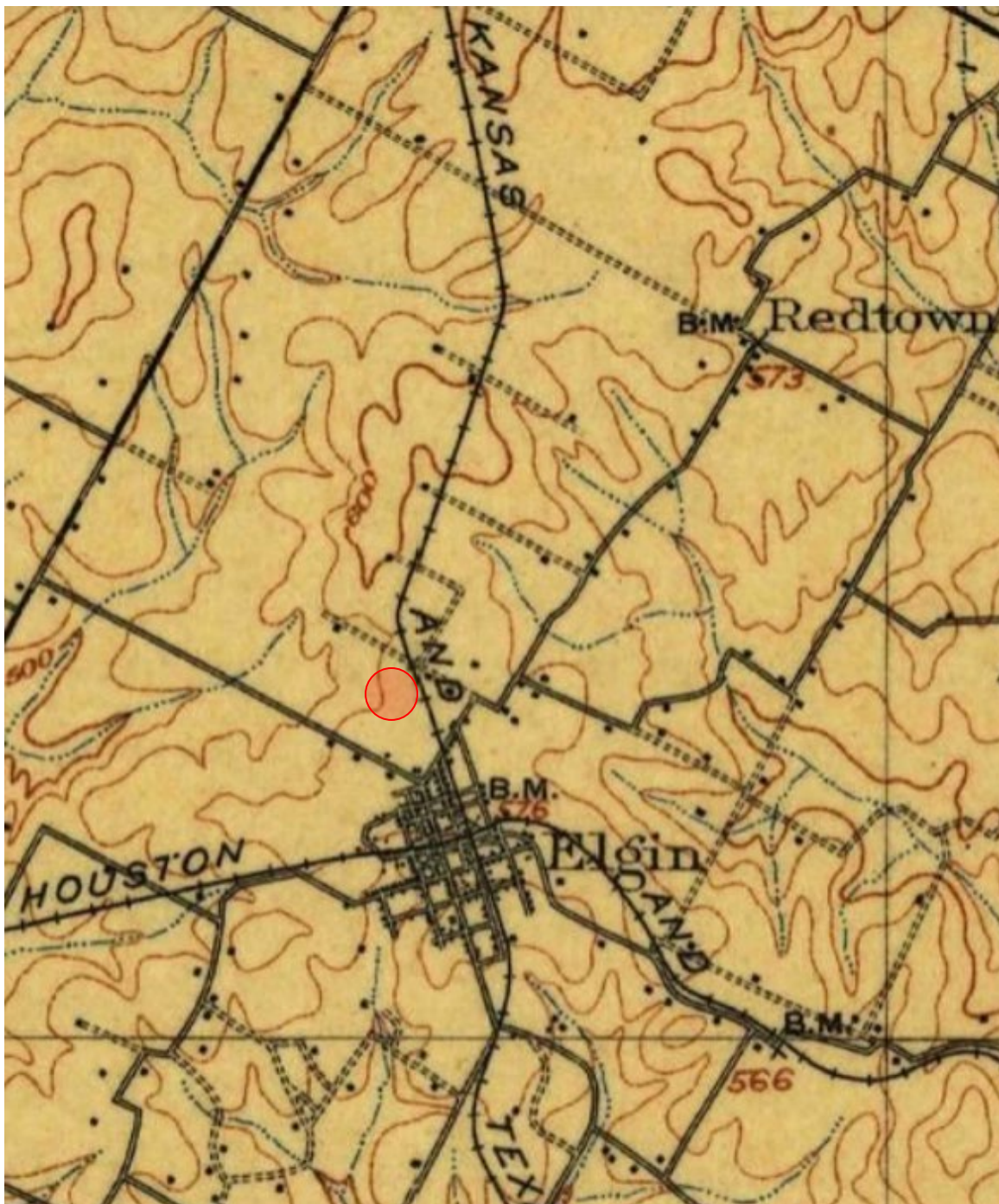


Figure 11. Excerpt of 1904 USGS Map of Bastrop County.<sup>193</sup> Note the approximately location of the Burleson house in red.

<sup>193</sup> U. S. Geological Survey, *Bastrop Sheet* (U. S. Geological Survey), 1904.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Figure 12. Photograph of the Mary Christian Burleson House ca. 1940 to ca. 1960.

Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Figure 13. The early 1840s Tom Ireland House in Webberville, Texas, an example of a double-crib cabin or dog-trot house with a breezeway separating two rooms, a common early Texas house form.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Anonymous, *Tom Ireland House, Webberville, Travis County, TX*, Historic American Building Survey (Library of Congress, July 1975).



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Figure 14. The ca. 1836 Thomas Barnett House in Rosenberg, Fort Bend County, Texas, is an example of house with a dual-pitched roof and two rooms without an open breezeway, like the Burleson House.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Drury Blakely Alexander and Todd Webb, *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*; Anonymous, "[Thomas Barnett House], photograph," (crediting Fort Bend Museum, 1962).

Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Figure 15. The ca. 1830 Jenkins House at 1710 Main Street in Bastrop, Texas.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Marie Deacon et al., *Resources of Bastrop (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)*; Texas Historical Commission, "[Old Jenkins Home, (Front oblique)], photograph," (1969).

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Figure 16. The ca. 1850 A. A. Erhard House at 1106 Pecan Street in Bastrop, Texas.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Marie Deacon et al., *Resources of Bastrop (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)*; Texas Historical Commission, "[A. A. Erhard (Front elevation)], photograph," (1972).



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**Current Photographs (August 2022)**

Photograph 1. South and east façades. Camera facing northwest.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 2. West and south façades. Camera facing northeast.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 3. Porch at south façade. Camera facing east/northeast.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 4. Porch at south façade. Camera facing west.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 5. East façade. Camera facing west.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 6. North and east façades. Camera facing southwest.



Photograph 3. North façade. Camera facing south.

Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 7. North façade. Camera facing south.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 8. North and west façades. Camera facing southwest.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 9. West façade. Camera facing east.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 10. Foundation, looking under the porch at the south façade towards the northwest corner of the building. Camera facing northwest.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 11. Main Bedroom interior. Camera facing west.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 12. Main Bedroom interior. Camera facing north towards Kitchen/Dining Room.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

Photograph 13. Main Bedroom interior. Camera facing south towards porch.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 14. Main Bedroom interior. Note the loft opening in ceiling at Photograph center. Camera facing northeast with Kitchen/Dining Room to left and Living Room to right.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 15. Living Room interior. Camera looking south towards porch.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 16. Living Room interior. Camera looking west into Main Bedroom.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 17. Back Bedroom interior. Camera facing east.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 18. Back Bedroom interior. Camera facing west.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 19. Kitchen/Dining Room interior. Camera facing west.



Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 20. Kitchen/Dining Room interior. Camera facing northeast towards Back Bedroom.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 21. Roof structure viewed from Kitchen/Dining Room interior. Camera facing up towards the southwest.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 22. Overall site looking towards house from north end of property. Camera facing south.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 23. Barn at north end of property. Camera facing northwest.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 24. Barn at north end of property. Camera facing east.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 25. Beveled-shoulder cistern at north side of house, obscured by foliage. Camera facing west.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 26. Capped bell cistern at north side of house. Camera facing down.





Mary Christian Burleson House, Elgin, Bastrop County, Texas

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Photograph 27. Entrance of property from Louise Street showing fencing and drive. Camera facing north.



- end -