

**CITY OF ROUND ROCK
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

To: Round Rock City Council
Cc: Steve Norwood, City Manager
Brad Wiseman, Planning and Development Services Director

Date: November 19, 2013

From: Round Rock Historic Preservation Commission
Prepared By: Joelle Jordan

Re: **Report on Stagecoach Inn**

DESCRIPTION OF THE STAGECOACH INN:

Located at 901 Round Rock Avenue, the building known as the Stagecoach Inn, is one of the three oldest remaining buildings in Round Rock. It was built from 1848 to 1853 and is emblematic of frontier life at the time. The building was designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1963, although later removed after some insensitive alterations in the 1990s (see history section on pgs. 7-10). The building currently has Historic (H) Overlay Zoning, which is the tool that the City has to designate local historic landmarks. The local designation was added in 1984.



Postcard of the Stagecoach Inn, pre-1930
Photo: Bob Brinkman: *Images of America: Round Rock*, pg. 26

REPORT BACKGROUND:

In January 2013, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) heard a presentation by City Transportation Department staff on the RM620 Improvements Project which will affect the property at 901 Round Rock Avenue, known as the Stagecoach Inn.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviews Certificates of Appropriateness for building permit, exterior modification or demolition for properties that have Historic (H) Overlay Zoning. Section 46-99 of the Code states that the Commission must use the *Secretary of the Interior Standards* in its review, as well as a set of adopted design guidelines. As part of a recent project, the City also adopted amendments to the Code of Ordinances to provide a set of standards that can be used for the relocation of historic properties in certain circumstances, such as in lieu of demolition (Section 46-99.1). Because of its local historic designation, the HPC had requested information on the road improvement project as they anticipated that they would be involved in later reviews as they pertain to the Stagecoach Inn's local historic designation.

As is customary, the HPC has an annual work session each year in August during which time they received updates on a number of projects. For that meeting, they requested that City Staff provide an update on the RM 620 Safety Improvements Project.

The HPC determined at the work session that they would like to provide more information and analysis on 3 potential options that they heard from Staff were being considered for the Stagecoach Inn before the City determines what will occur to the building. The 3 options identified include:

- 1) Relocation of the existing building**
- 2) Demolition of the existing structure and a reconstruction of some sort of representative structure**
- 3) Reconstruction of a "replica" on a different site**

In addition, they requested the following information be included in this memo:

- 1) History and significance of the building, including historic/architectural integrity over time**
- 2) Interpretive signage options**

ANALYSIS AND INFORMATION ON 3 OPTIONS, IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE

Option 1) Relocation of the existing building (preferred option)

This option involves moving the original part of the building (approximately 35x40 feet) to another location in the Old Town area.

As part of a recent project, the City amended the Code of Ordinances to provide a set of standards for the relocation of historic properties in certain circumstances; for example, in lieu of demolition (Section 46-99.1). The relocated structure can keep its historic overlay zoning on the new site and continue to be recognized as a local historic landmark. The project also resulted in a report which included a list of structural movers in the State of Texas.

Examining relocation would first entail having a contractor from a structural moving company with expertise in moving unreinforced masonry structures evaluate whether it would be feasible to move the building and provide a cost estimate to complete the move. It may also be necessary to have a structural engineer look at the condition of the building.

The relocated structure should remain in the Old Town area of the City and may be suitable for the City-owned site along Brushy Creek or incorporated into the City's Bathing Beach Project if the building can be moved across Brushy Creek.

Option 1 Recommendation: The HPC recommends evaluating the feasibility of relocation of the structure to another location in Old Town in terms of the ability to move the structure successfully and the cost of the project. This option would be acceptable by City Code which lists relocation as the preferred method of preservation over demolition. The Historic Preservation Commission, Staff, and the City Council received several comments and a petition from the public requesting the relocation of the building.

**THE FEASIBILITY AND COST OF RELOCATION OF THE STAGECOACH INN SHOULD
BE DETERMINED BEFORE CONSIDERING OTHER OPTIONS.**

The Historic Preservation Commission feels that relocation is important to consider for the following reasons:

1. Every generation defines what it considers historic in terms of what it deems as valuable from the past. It is our generation's time to decide if Round Rock's Stagecoach Inn is valuable enough to be saved by relocating the inn to another location.
2. The Stagecoach Inn is one of the oldest structures in Round Rock. Round Rock has a limited stock of significant historic buildings. The Stagecoach Inn

was built circa 1848-1853. The Stagecoach Inn has uniqueness as one of the remaining early-day stagecoach inns in Texas and in America.

3. Demolition is the ultimate deadline for historic preservation. We've heard individuals express regrets many times about tearing a building down; and we've have yet to hear one person express regrets about not tearing down a building. There certainly will be regrets expressed in the future if the Stagecoach Inn is demolished. Once a structure is demolished, the chance for future hands-on experiences with the structure are lost forever and only memories in book and photos remain.
4. Inappropriate changes can be reversed. While changes over the years caused the State of Texas to remove the Inn's state landmark status, which the Inn held from 1963-1996, inappropriate changes (roofing material changes, enlarged windows, and additions) could be reversed.
5. The Stagecoach Inn is an irreplaceable structure in Round Rock. One doesn't save a historic building simply because it is old. One saves a historic structure because the structure tells the story and history of the community. One saves a historic structure so future generations can share a tangible hands-on heritage experience with the community's past. The Stagecoach Inn is an irreplaceable structure because without the structure it is difficult to visually tell the story of early day transportation into and out of Round Rock.
6. The Stagecoach Inn is a Local Legend. The Stagecoach Inn received a 2013 City of Round Rock Local Legend Award for its contribution to the history and development of the community.

Option 2) Demolition of the existing structure and a reconstruction of a representative structure (if relocation is not feasible)

This option involves the demolition of the existing structure and would require a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition according to City Code. One of the options presented in the proposal for the Bathing Beach Project was to construct an open pavilion structure of the same size and shape as the original building to educate the public about the original Stagecoach Inn.

Option 2 Recommendation: If the existing structure will not be relocated, the HPC requests that the existing original materials be saved for use in the "Bathing Beach" project. A structure such as the pavilion shown in the "Bathing Beach" project, with appropriate educational signage, serves as the next best alternative to moving the existing structure if that is not determined to be feasible.

Option 3) Reconstruction of a “replica” with references from *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (not recommended)

This option involves the demolition of the existing structure and would require a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition according to City Code. This option proposes to construct an entirely new building with new materials that looks the same or as similar as possible to the original Stagecoach Inn on the Bathing Beach project site.

Option 3 Recommendation: The HPC has included Option 3 in this document because we have been made aware that reconstruction of a replica is being considered; however, the **HPC feels that this is not a viable preservation option.** There is no evidence that reconstruction is an option to consider when the original building is still standing; therefore, reconstruction of a “replica” would not be desired in accordance with City Code and The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards. If relocation of the original structure is selected as an option, then restoration back to the corresponding period in time should be considered.

REVIEW OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR’S STANDARDS:

Based on discussion at their annual work session concerning the creation of a “replica”, the HPC requested to review and provide an analysis of The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards concerning reconstruction. A summary is provided below:

An Overview of the Standards:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties provide historic preservation principles in non-technical language that promote historic preservation best practices. The Standards are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing, and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. The Standards offer four distinct approaches to the treatment of historic properties, and notes that choosing an appropriate treatment for a historic building is critical. The choice of treatment depends on a variety of factors, including the property's historical significance, physical condition, proposed use, and intended interpretation.

- Preservation - focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.
- Rehabilitation - acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

- Restoration - depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.
- Reconstruction - re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

Choosing Reconstruction as a Treatment:

The purpose of reconstruction is to re-create an entire non-surviving building with new material. Much like restoration, the goal is to make the building appear as it did at a particular--and most significant--time in its history. The difference is, in reconstruction, there is far less extant historic material prior to treatment and, in some cases, nothing visible. Because of the potential for historical error in the absence of sound physical evidence, this treatment can be justified only rarely and, thus, is the least frequently undertaken.

Standards for Reconstruction:

1. Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.
2. Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure, or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts which are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
3. Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.
4. Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color, and texture.
5. A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.
6. Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.

The standards note that reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships. In this case, reconstruction applies to a building that has been previously demolished and not one that still exists at a different location.

HISTORY: INCLUDING HISTORIC/ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY OVER TIME AND HISTORIC DESIGNATIONS

History:

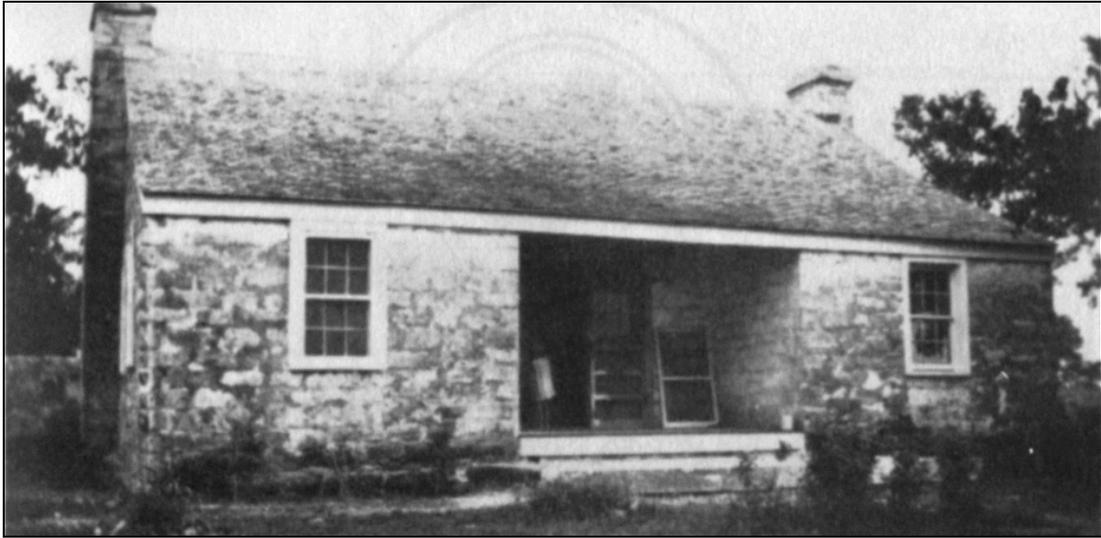
The Stagecoach Inn was built by John Harris ca. 1848-1853, making it one of the three oldest surviving buildings in Round Rock (the others are the Harris-Ross house ca. 1849, and the McNabb-Quick house ca. 1853). It was built along the first stagecoach line through Williamson County, extending from San Antonio to Waco. It served mainly as a horse-changing station and rest stop, since it was close enough to Austin that overnight lodging was usually only necessary during bad weather. Mrs. Susie Anna (Tisdale) Harris was proud that every room had its own feather bed, courtesy of the flock of geese they kept, which would honk loudly and alert the townspeople to the stage's arrival. Some of the inn's guests are believed to be Soapy Smith, Ira Aten, Print Olive, and outlaws John Wesley Hardin and Sam Bass. The inn was in operation for 30 years, until the railroad arrived in New Round Rock. The building became a tavern, then a home for about a century, and has been a restaurant since the mid-1990s.

Timeline of Architectural Changes and Designation Status

1848-1853 John J. and Susie Anna (Tisdale) Harris build their stagecoach inn. The original portion of the building is a typical vernacular Texas pioneer house of approximately 35 x 40 feet, with a side-gabled hall-and-parlor plan with a slight gullwing flare to the roof. The middle of the front wall is recessed to shelter the entrance, although the roof is continuous across the front. There are large fireplaces centered at each gable end. The stone was quarried from the hill on which it stands, and beams were of hand-hewn oak. The original floors were cedar that was hauled from Brenham by ox-cart, and were in good condition when they were covered with oak flooring in the 1950s.



Photo ca.1920s. Earliest known photo of the Stagecoach Inn (format and handwriting indicates that it was part of a series of postcards produced by the Economy Drug Store in the 1920s). Note the shingle roof, 6-over-6 sash windows and lack of a rear addition.



Another photo taken at more or less the same time. Photo courtesy the University of Texas Barker History Center.

1930s Some of the window openings are widened to accommodate metal casement windows, and a shed addition is constructed across the back of the building.

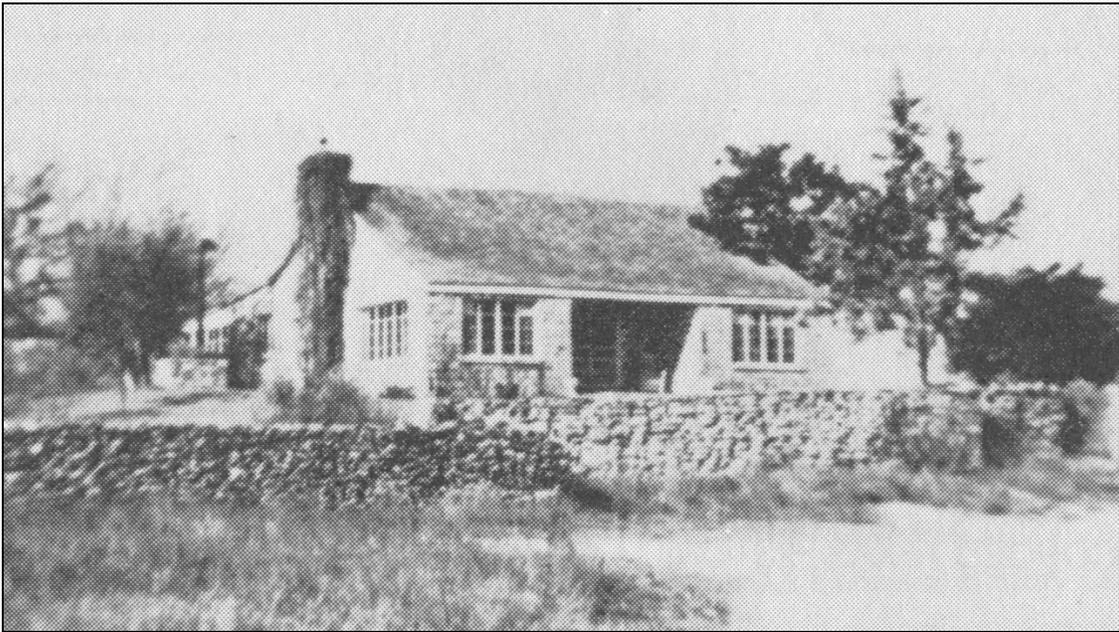


Photo ca. 1940s, courtesy Texas State Archives. Note the rear addition and new windows with enlarged openings.

1963 Owners Don and Laura Davol apply for and receive designation as a Registered Texas Historic Landmark, which includes a medallion.

1971 Mrs. Davol applies for and receives an official Texas historical interpretive marker. From the application: “the Davols have added to the original structure,

no part of the old was disturbed. They utilized stone and exposed beams to blend with the old building materials.” This probably refers to the approximately 22 x 28 foot addition to the south side.

- 1979 Round Rock adopts its first historic preservation ordinance.
- 1984 The property is rezoned from “R-6 (low-density residential)” to “Historic District C-1 (Commercial),” making it a city historic landmark.
- 1984-1988 The 3.29-acre property is developed as “The Commons,” a retail and office complex designed to complement the Stagecoach Inn. In 1989 historic landmark designation is removed from most of The Commons property to include just the inn and its surroundings, but none of the other buildings.
- 1994 At some point the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) medallion has been removed. The HPC approves the request for a standing seal roof and fixed single-light windows, not realizing that changes must also be reviewed by the state.



Photo after changes to the property in 1994. The addition to the left was added some time in the 1960s.

- 1995 The owner’s architect realizes that the building is an RTHL, and sends drawings of the completed improvements to the Texas Historical Commission (THC) architect for review. He explains that they chose a metal roof because the slope of the rear addition was too low for shingles and had leaked badly. He offers to install new windows that are more like the original ones if they can find a picture.

The THC architect replies that the windows were originally 6-over-6 wood windows and that the openings were probably enlarged for the metal windows in the 1930s. She notes that if the owner had been interested in restoring the property, the THC would have recommended that the new roof be wooden or wood-colored composition shingle, perhaps with metal on the back addition. The metal windows should have been restored or replaced with matching units, or the wooden windows could have been replicated, although that would have involved narrowing the openings.

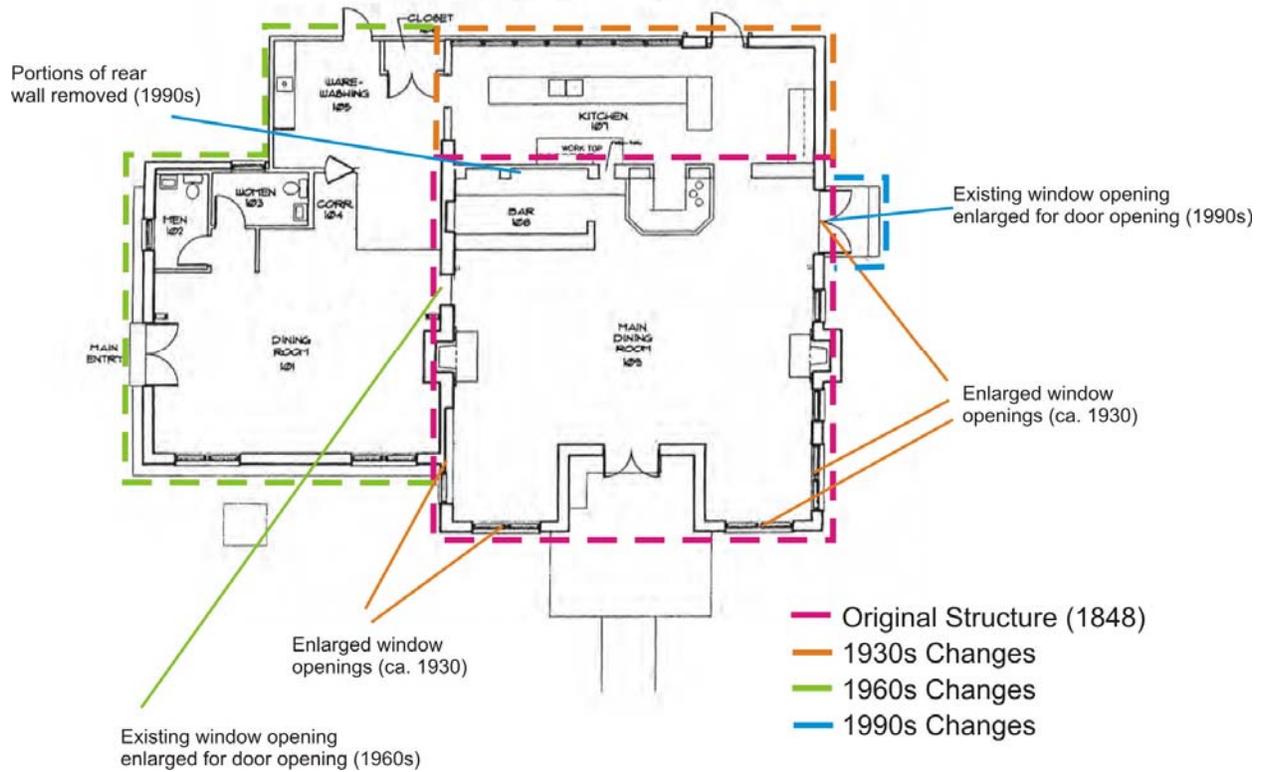
A new architect sends new plans to the THC, including plans to enclose a rear porch, adding a door (probably between the dining room and kitchen), and adding an outbuilding with a smoker and restroom. The THC architect recommends that the windows be retained as windows instead of being turned into doors, and informs her that the State Marker Review Board is currently considering de-designation of the property due to the number of exterior alterations.

- 1996 The State Marker Review Board removes RTHL designation from the property.
- 2000 The City of Round Rock adopts Design Guidelines for Historic Properties that would have offered guidance to the HPC when they considered alterations to the property in 1994.
- 2000s Gumbo's Restaurant opens in the building and replaces the windows. The City of Round Rock purchases the project in anticipation of the RM 620 improvements project. The building currently houses the French Quarter Restaurant.
- 2013 The Stagecoach Inn is honored with a 2013 City of Round Rock Local Legend Award.



The French Quarter Restaurant in 2013.

Diagram of Changes to the Stagecoach Inn Over Time



Possibility for restoration to original condition:

When the Stagecoach Inn's Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designation was removed, the Texas Historical Commission's architect cited the building's metal roof, and modern, single-lite windows. A shingle roof (with a metal roof on the rear addition if necessary) would be preferable, and acceptable options for the windows were to restore the 1930s casement windows, or to use 6-over-6 wooden sash windows, although this would involve narrowing the openings in the stone wall. Even though a number of additions were added to the original building, the Texas Historical Commission did not cite them as reasons for de-designation.

Most of these changes are reversible, so it is possible to restore the building. The roof and windows can be replaced, and most or all of the additions would likely be removed as part of relocation. Most of the additions were constructed with minimal alteration to the existing structure. Those that present more significant problems include existing window openings that were enlarged as doorways, and the removal of most of the original back wall to make access to the kitchen.

After consultation with a structural mover, if it is in fact feasible to relocate the building, restoration should be considered. This document however does not take into account how the space would be programmed once relocated and restored.

INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE:

Interpretive signage is an important means of educating the public on the history of Round Rock, which is one of the Historic Preservation Commission's goals. Regardless of what the outcome is for the Stagecoach Inn, a marker should be displayed at the original location describing the building that once stood there. The preferable means of doing this would be through the Texas Historical Commission's Marker Program with a "subject marker". Obtaining a subject marker requires application approval and payment of fees. If not approved, then the City should seek alternate means of obtaining a similar type of marker for the site.

According to the City's 1992 Historic Resources Survey, one of the areas of significance for the site was "transportation", noting that "this building was one of the most well-preserved stagecoach stops remaining in the state, and is a reminder of Round Rock's past importance as a stop on the Chisholm Trail and other stage roads. Since the Stagecoach Inn building will be affected by modern-day transportation project, this will provide a relevant theme to the marker.

If relocation of the building is pursued, the Certificate of Appropriateness for Relocation requires that the applicant display a plaque provided and paid for by the City which documents the historic building's original location, date of relocation, and reason for relocation.

If the creation of a new building is undertaken, such as the pavilion identified in the Parks Department's plan for the Bathing Beach (or a replica), signage should be provided at the new location to identify the new building as a contemporary re-creation of the original building.