

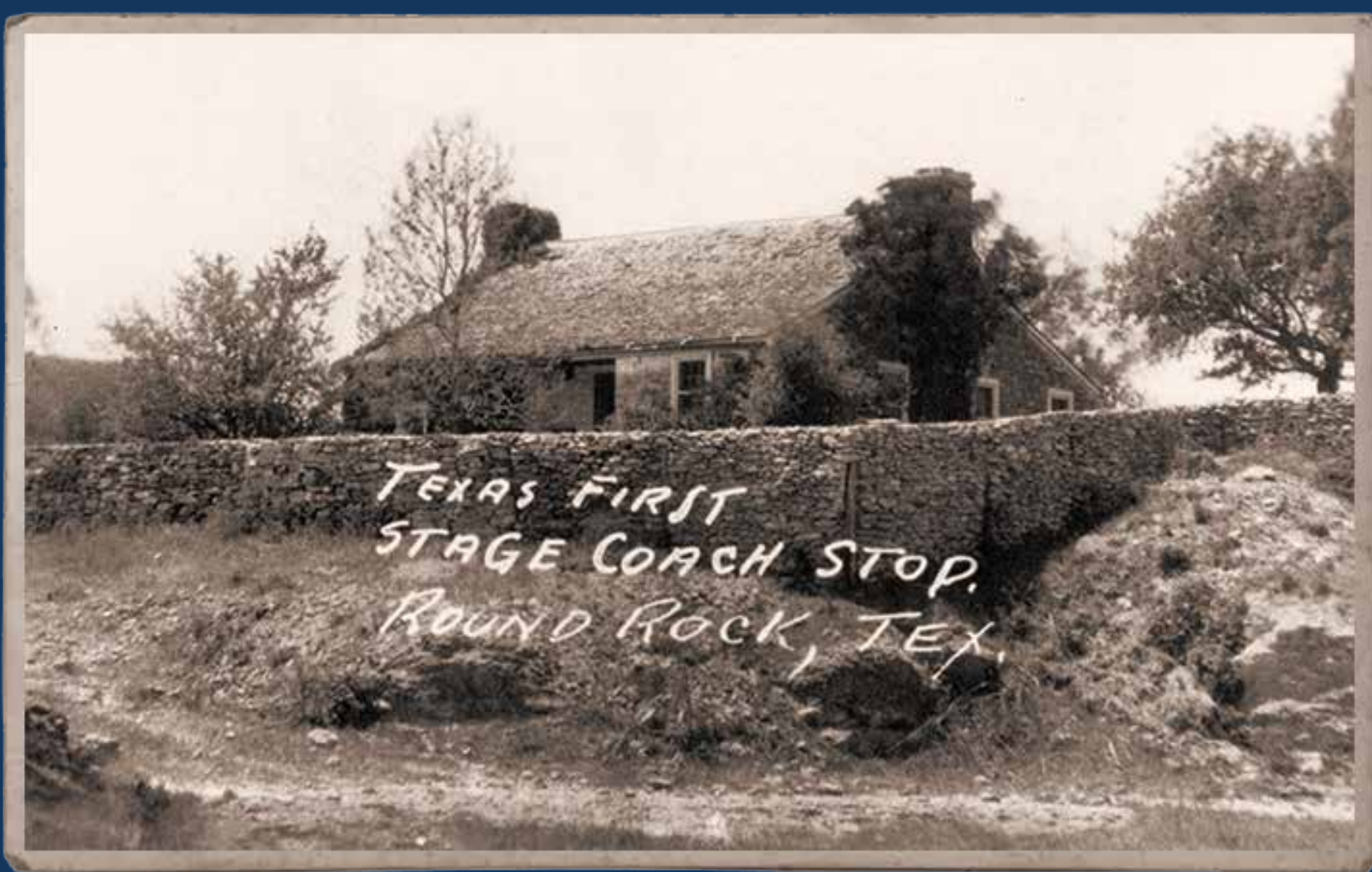
# Old Stagecoach Inn

## Owners and Occupants

The Old Stagecoach Inn was completed in 1853, the same year that Round Rock was named after a stone marking a low water crossing where a military road crossed Brushy Creek. After 170 years of continuous occupation by families and businesses, the Inn was threatened with demolition for necessary safety improvements on RM 620. Through the efforts of citizen advocates and nonprofits, City management and staff, and above all the leadership of the Mayor and City Council, the restored stagecoach inn now rests surrounded by buildings of the same era in Round Rock's Old Town.

The people of Round Rock, Round Rock Preservation, and the descendants of the Inn's many owners are eternally grateful to Mayor Craig Morgan and the City of Round Rock for respecting this historic property enough to invest in saving it from demolition. Generations to come will be enriched not only by the beauty of its architecture, but also by its historic significance to the development of Round Rock.

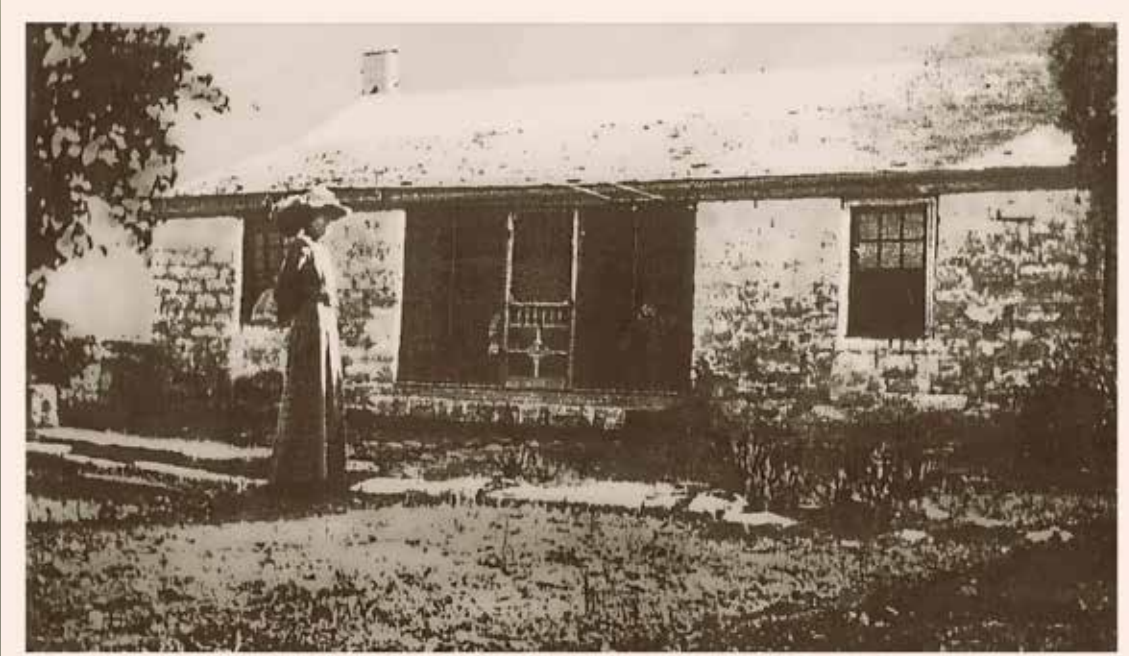
October 2024



A widely-circulated post card heralded the Inn as "Texas' First Stage Coach Stop," although it was not. The photo was taken in the mid-1940s after Harold and Sue Richards had built its dry stack retaining wall.



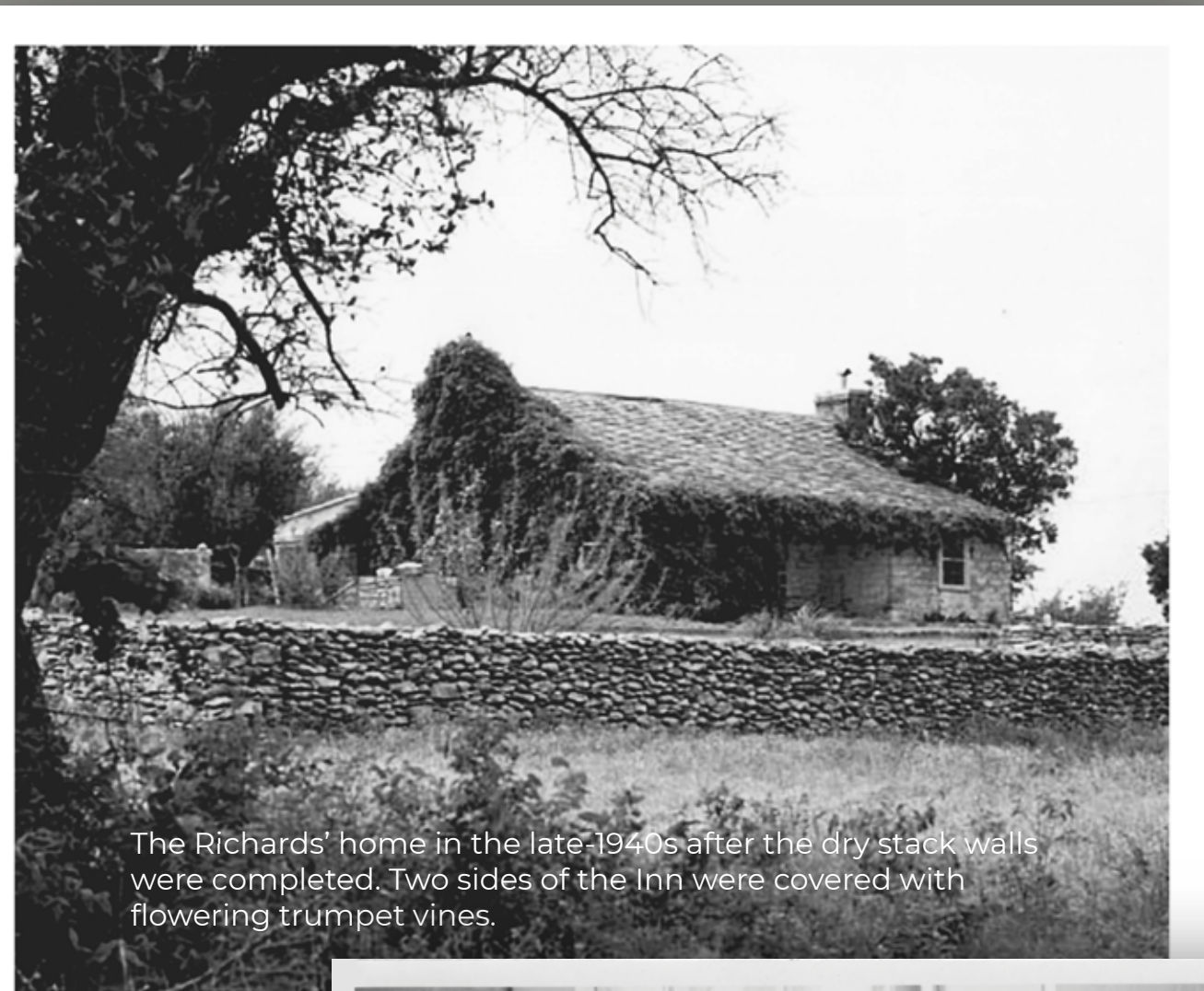
Entrance to the Old Stagecoach Inn. Photo courtesy the Barker History Center, date unknown.



The woman in the photo is believed to be J.J. Harris' wife Susie Harris (1823-1890), hostess at the Stagecoach Inn. In the photo the entrance porch has been screened in.



Rear side of the Inn ca. 1914. At this time the Inn had no electricity or indoor plumbing. Note the rain barrel at the corner of the house. The woman with the cat in her lap is Mattie (Belcher) Cox, mother of Sue (Cox) Richards.  
B.C. and Henrietta's first grandchild Catherine was born at the Inn in 1914.



Harold Richards reading by the window. The Stagecoach Inn interior walls were plastered smooth for most of its history. Photo early 1940s.



Don and Laura Davol made several alterations, including adding two bedrooms and a bath to the south side of the house.



The Inn was designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1963, receiving a state medallion and plaque.



Unaware of the Inn's designation as a Texas landmark, new owners changed the roof and windows without review by the Texas Historical Commission. In 1994 the Commission determined that these changes diminished its historic integrity and repealed the designation.



The Inn housed several restaurants in the 1990s and 2000s, including Chisholm's, Gumbo's, and The French Quarter Grille. The picture windows were replaced with nine-lite windows. Photo 2013.



In 2018 the Inn was relocated 1000 feet north to prevent its demolition for a road project.



The relocated and renovated Stagecoach Inn, 2024.

### 1848-1880 John J. & Susie Harris

John J. (J.J.) and Susanna Elizabeth (Tisdale) Harris arrived from Kentucky around the time Texas became a state, and bought land on the south side of Brushy Creek from Jacob Harrell. J.J. was one of the signers of the petition to create Williamson County in 1848. Located on a stagecoach route from Brownsville to Helena, Arkansas, their home also served as a rest stop for travelers, postal delivery, and a change station for horse teams. Stone for the 18-inch thick walls was quarried from the hill on which it was built and the cedar floor was hauled by ox cart from Brenham. Chimneys on the north and south walls provided heat and ten double-hung windows provided ventilation. Construction took five years, from 1848-53.

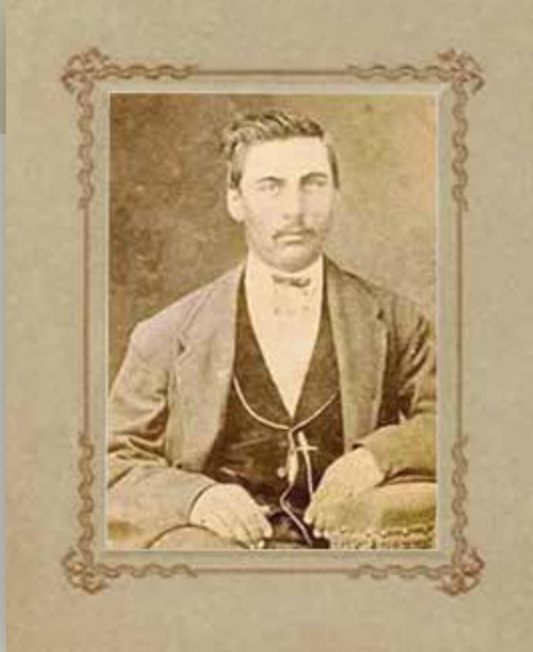
Susie and J.J. were known as gracious hosts, serving delicious meals and providing comfortable rooms for weary travelers. Accounts report that the stage driver would sound a horn, which would set off a chorus of honks from the large flock of geese that Susie kept to provide feather beds for the guest rooms. The Inn continued to serve travelers after the railroad extended to Round Rock in 1876.

**Legend has it that the following guests stayed at the Old Stagecoach Inn:**  
Outlaw John Wesley Hardin  
Con artist Jefferson Randolph "Soapy" Smith  
Outlaw Sam Bass  
Texas Ranger Ira Aten  
Cattle baron Isom Prentice (Print) Olive

### 1880-1907 John G. (Jack) & Annie Harris

Over the years J.J. and Susanna granted parts of their land to several family members. The Inn went to their third son John G. (Jack) Harris and his wife Annie in 1880. By then there was a railroad depot in Round Rock and several hotels had sprung up around it. The Inn was primarily their home although it was also a tavern for a time.

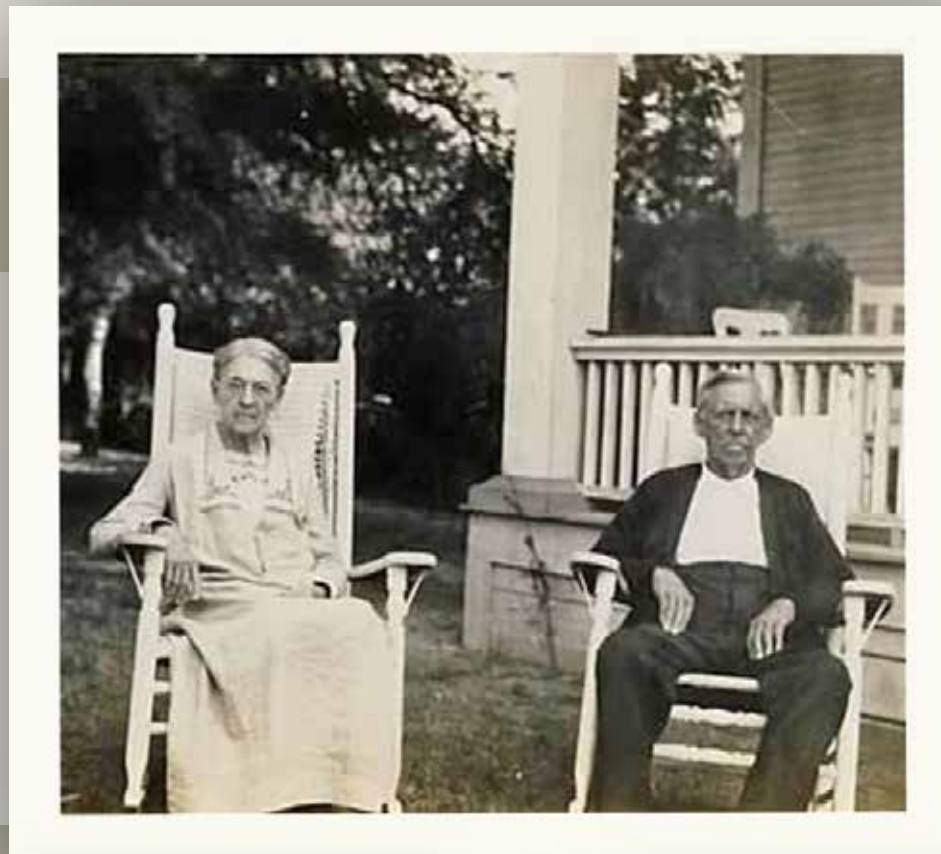
J.J. and Susie Harris' third son John G. (Jack) Harris (1849-1926) owned the Inn with his wife Annie from 1880-1907.



Youngest child Joseph P. (J.P.) Harris (1849-1932) moved to Stephenville where he cared for his father J.J. in his later years.



Oldest son Alexander S. Harris (1842-?) operated a general store in Round Rock during the early 20th century in the building now known as the Sansom House.



J.J. and Susie Harris' third son John G. (Jack) Harris (1849-1926) owned the Inn with his wife Annie from 1880-1907.

### 1907-1932 B.C. & Henrietta Richards

After earning a civil engineering degree from the University of Michigan in 1877 Benjamin Chester (B.C.) Richards moved to Kerr County, Texas to work as a surveyor for the State of Texas and for private interests. By 1880 he also owned rock quarries in Kerrville and Van Raub (near Boerne), and in 1882 he met and married Henrietta Eckstein. In 1907 he purchased 12 1/2 acres including the Inn from Jack Harris for \$750 to be close to his rock quarry business interests in Round Rock and Cedar Park. When he first came to Round Rock in January of 1908, he brought his 15-year old youngest child Rolfe with him. Rolfe took ill while in Round Rock and died shortly after arriving. B.C., his wife Henrietta, and their family used the Inn as a residence until 1932.



Benjamin Chester Richards (1853-1939) and Henrietta (Eckstein) Richards (1862-1951)

### 1932-1941 Donald Joseph

Donald Joseph was a University of Texas professor and author who purchased the Inn and surrounding 2 1/2 acres in 1932 from B.C. Richards for \$1,000. He paid \$300 cash and Richards took a note for the additional \$700. B.C. Richards retained ownership of the remaining 12 1/2 acres. Joseph lived in the Inn until 1941, at which time Harold Richards paid Joseph \$100 and assumed his unpaid \$700 debt to B.C. and Henrietta Richards to acquire the 2 1/2 acres and the Inn.

### 1941-1957 Harold & Sue Richards

Harold and Sue (Cox) Richards and their two youngest children moved into the Inn in September of 1941. Their oldest child, Catherine, had been born in the Inn in 1914 when B.C. and Henrietta owned it. Their middle child Dorothy was married there in front of the north fireplace in 1942. During WWII their two sons and three sons-in-law served overseas and their home became a center of support for their daughters, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren left stateside.

During this time the couple built extensive dry stack limestone walls around the north, south, and east sides of the property, as well as an enormous grill. This labor helped to keep them busy while their minds were occupied with the safety of their young men at war. Happier days and family activities returned at the Inn when all five men returned safely from war. These post-war days were the happiest of childhood memories for the Richards' grandchildren.

Harold Richards died on October 29, 1948, after an evening with family, and Sue continued living in the Inn. She had an addition built across the back of the Inn and replaced the sash windows with metal casements, with much of the work done by her sons and sons-in-law. She sold the property to J.O. Barger in 1957.



Harold (1890-1948) and Sue (Cox) Richards (1895-1987), owners of Inn 1941-1957



Tom and Dorothy (Richards) Hutchison, Sr. married in front of north fireplace at the Inn, November 7, 1942.

### Route of RM620

RM620 was originally planned to pass south of the Inn when the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) was developing plans to extend RM620 to Mansfield Dam in 1946. Sue Richards' sister lived just south of the Inn and grandchildren frequently visited both homes. In order to keep peace in the family and protect their children's safety, Harold Richards struck a deal with TxDOT to have RM620 rerouted to the north of the Inn. For a recorded \$100, Richards deeded 0.87 acres of his land for the roadway and another 0.65 acres for right of way to the State of Texas in September of 1946. The resulting "S" curve in the roadway eventually prompted the RM620 overpass safety project, which required the Inn to be relocated entirely.

### 1957-1959 J.O. and Mary Barger

No information about James Otis and Mary Bates Barger's two years in the inn has been found at this time.

### 1959-1972 Donald & Laura Davol

#### 1972-1982 Laura & Ned Bemis

In the 1950s several of Round Rock's early homes were bought and rehabbed by retired Army veterans. Don Davol bought the Stagecoach Inn in March 1959 and brought his wife Laura and their two children from Florence to their new old home in Round Rock. Their children, Frank and Phebe, enjoyed the wooded property around the Inn and looked forward to the summer carnival at Old Settlers Park, which at that time was just across the railroad tracks.

In 1963 their application for designating the Inn as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark was approved, and they attached a medallion and plaque to the building. They opened the Inn as part of a tour of historic Round Rock homes. At the time it was still considered one of the oldest and best-preserved stagecoach stops remaining in Texas. The Davols made several renovations, including adding two bedrooms and a second bath to the south side, and a swimming pool overlooking RM 620.

Don Davol died in a car accident in October 1965. Laura remarried seven years later and she and her husband Lloyd (Ned) Bemis stayed in the house until he passed away in 1978. Laura sold the property in 1984.

### 1984-1999 Bedico Property Ltd. et al.

Round Rock-based developer Bedico Properties Ltd. purchased the property in 1984, then sold it to Bob Clark Builders of Texas, who built a small business center on the 3 1/2 acres around the Inn in 1986. The other buildings in the center were of similar size and had rough limestone exteriors to complement the Inn. However, by 1988 the center was owned by the builder's lender, Briercroft Savings & Loan, and by 1993 it had been sold three more times. At some point during this period the state historical marker disappeared.

In 1994 the owner replaced the casement windows with large picture windows and replaced the shingled roof with standing seam metal. This was approved by the City's Historic Preservation Commission, but the new owner did not realize that the alterations also needed approval from the Texas Historical Commission. Because of these changes and the missing medallion, the Texas Historical Commission revoked its state historic designation in 1995. The Inn remains a City-designated historic landmark.

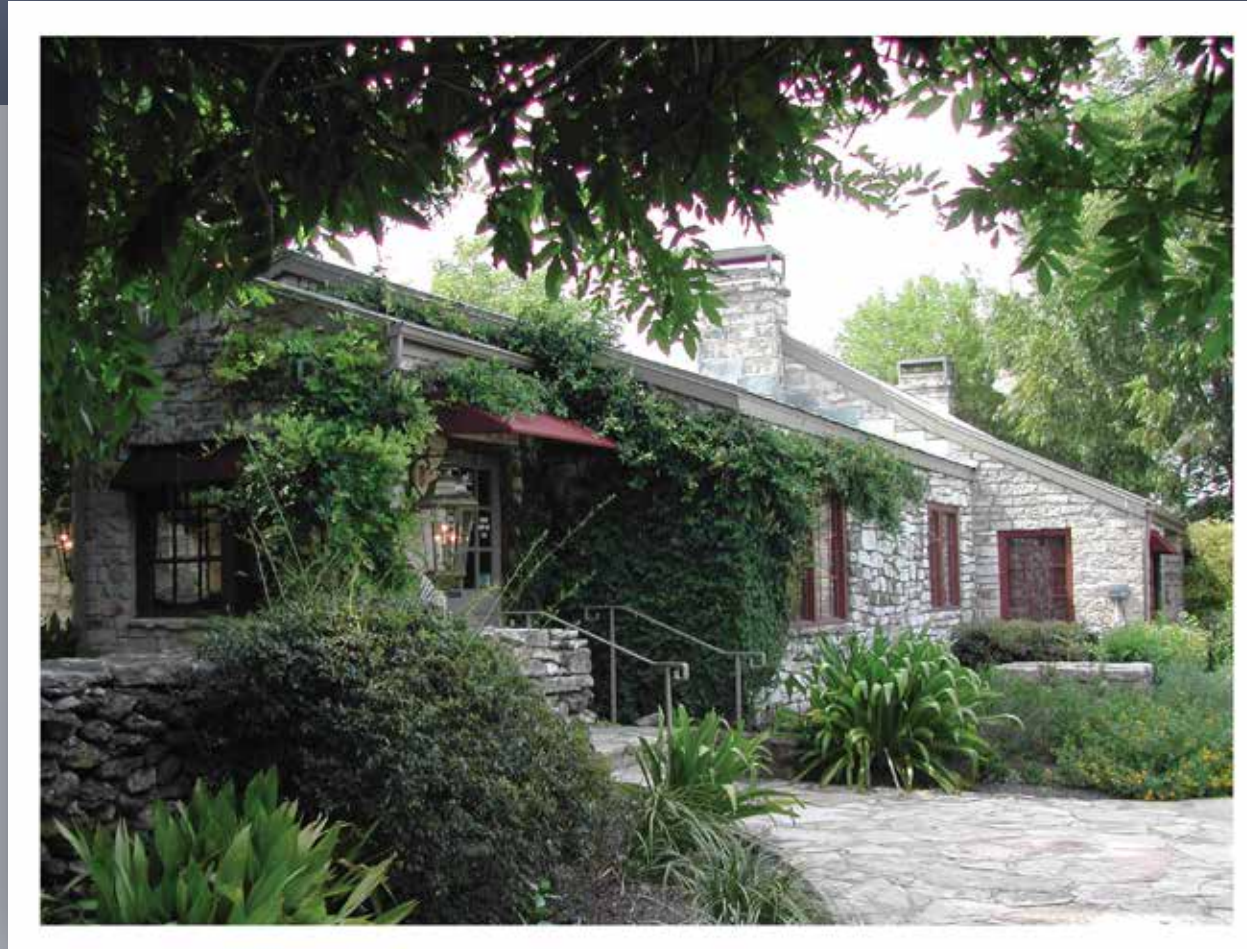


Photo of Gumbo's restaurant in 2004. The entrance was on the south side through the bedrooms added by the Davols.

### 1999-2012 Commercial property

The first business to occupy the Inn was a restaurant called Chisholm's, followed by a number of fine dining establishments. In 1999 the center was purchased by the Commons of Round Rock, which sold it to Back In Texas Ltd. The restaurant with the longest tenancy in the Inn was Gumbo's, whose owners Michael and Yoli Amir were from Baton Rouge. Shuler and Denise Page later purchased the Round Rock location and operated it for another seven years until moving it to Georgetown as Gumbo's on the Square. The French Quarter restaurant opened the same year, but soon were asked to move.

There are stories from restaurant personnel through the years of unexplained noises and lights and sound systems mysteriously turning on by themselves. Friendly spirits playing tricks?



FRENCH QUARTER GRILLE

### 2012-present City of Round Rock

The City of Round Rock purchased the Inn in 2012 as right-of-way acquisition for a new railroad overpass. When the City's Historic Preservation Commission received the request for demolition in 2013 it responded with a recommendation to investigate the feasibility of relocating it. In 2016 the nonprofit Round Rock Preservation was formed and began to advocate for its relocation and raise funds for its restoration.

In July 2017, after considerable input from the citizens of Round Rock, the City hired Architetax to conduct a feasibility study for relocating the 100-ton, 170-year-old, unreinforced masonry building. When the study was completed the City Council approved \$796,000 from hotel occupancy taxes to fund the relocation and stabilization of the Inn and approved a project management contract with Architetax. Phoenix II LLC was hired as general contractor for relocation and stabilization with H.D. Snow and Son as the relocation contractor.

In April 2018 the original part of the building, excluding additions made since the 1950s, was moved down the hill across the railroad tracks, and across Brushy Creek to its present location 1000 feet to the north. While stabilizing the structure Phoenix completed masonry restoration, returning the window openings to their original size and reconstructing missing parts of the back wall. Stones from the dry stack walls were moved for reuse in the future park that would surround it. The Inn was then mothballed, since full rehabilitation could not proceed until the park construction was completed.

In 2023 Architetax completed plans to rehabilitate the Inn as a meeting facility. Additional funding was secured and rehabilitation began under HCS Inc., Commercial General Contractors. Round Rock Preservation contributed \$55,500 toward historically appropriate doors, windows, and floors. The metal roof was replaced with cedar shakes, climate control systems installed, and access was made ADA-compliant. At long last the Inn was reopened in 2024.



The Inn's supporters celebrate its successful relocation, November 2018.