

Texas Historical Commission staff (CTS), 7/29/2010  
18" x 28" Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Marker without post for attachment to wood  
Williamson County (Job #10WM03) Subject (Atlas) UTM: 14643593E 3375147N  
Location: Norman's Crossing,

### **M.B. NORMAN HOUSE**

IN 1873, MART B. NORMAN (1856 – 1921) CAME TO THIS AREA, WHICH WOULD LATER BE CALLED NORMAN'S CROSSING. M.B. NORMAN FARMED, RAN A GENERAL STORE AND CO-OWNED A COTTON GIN IN THE COMMUNITY LATER NAMED FOR HIM. IN 1906, HE PURCHASED THIS PROPERTY AND SOON AFTERWARD BUILT A TWO-STORY CROSS-GABLED HOUSE WITH OCTAGONAL-SHAPED PROJECTIONS, INCLUDING A WRAP-AROUND PORCH, DESIGNED IN THE QUEEN ANNE STYLE. THE SECOND STORY FEATURES A DECORATIVE BALCONY AND DORMERS; OTHER NOTABLE ELEMENTS INCLUDE A DOUBLE DOOR AND TRANSOM, SQUARED COLUMNS, FISHSCALE SHINGLES, DECORATIVE GLASS AND LAPPED SIDING. AFTER M.B. NORMAN'S DEATH IN 1921, HIS WIFE, NETTIE (MAYHALL), CONTINUED TO OWN THE PROPERTY, WHICH HAS REMAINED IN THE FAMILY FOR MORE THAN 100 YEARS.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 2010  
MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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**RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS:  
2010 Official Texas Historical Marker  
Sponsorship Application Form**

Valid September 1, 2009 to November 30, 2009 only

This form constitutes a public request for the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to consider approval of an Official Texas Historical Marker for the topic noted in this application. The THC will review the request and make its determination based on rules and procedures of the program. Filing of the application for sponsorship is for the purpose of providing basic information to be used in the evaluation process. The final determination of eligibility and therefore approval for a state marker will be made by the THC. This form is to be used for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (building marker) requests only. Please see separate forms for either Historic Texas Cemeteries or subject markers.

**Proposed marker topic** (official title will be determined by the THC): M.B. Norman House

**County:** Williamson

**Town** (nearest county town on current state highway map): Norman's Crossing

**Street address of marker site or directions from town noted above:** 12500 FM 1660 Taylor, TX 76574-5281

**Marker Coordinates:**

**If you know the location coordinates of the proposed marker site, enter them in one of the formats below:**

UTM Zone          Easting          Northing  
Lat: 30.500031      Long: -97.503709      (deg, min, sec or decimal degrees)

**Otherwise, give a precise verbal description here** (e.g. northwest corner of 3rd and Elm, or FM 1411, 2.6 miles east of McWhorter Creek): Roughly 500 feet West of intersection of FM 1660 with CR 129

**NOTE:** Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers must be placed at the structure being marked.

**Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers definition:** Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) markers are awarded to structures deemed worthy of preservation for their historical associations and architectural significance. RTHL is a legal designation and comes with a measure of protection; it is the highest honor the state can bestow on a historic structure, and the designation is required for this type of marker. The RTHL designation becomes effective upon approval by the THC. Official Texas Historical Markers signify the RTHL designation, which comes only through application to and approval by the THC and must include public display of an Official Texas Historical Marker. Owners of RTHL-designated structures must give the THC 60 days written notice before any alterations are made to the exterior of the structure. RTHL status is a permanent designation and is not to be removed from the property in the event of a transfer of ownership. Only the THC can remove the designation or recall the marker. The marker must remain with the structure and may not be removed or displayed elsewhere until or unless the

## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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THC gives express approval in writing for such action. Once designated as RTHL, properties are subject to provisions of Texas Government Code, Section 442.006(f).

**Criteria:**

1. **Age:** Structures eligible for the RTHL designation and marker must be at least 50 years old.
2. **Historical significance:** Architectural significance alone is not enough to qualify a structure for the RTHL designation. It must have an equally significant historical association, and that association can come from an event that occurred at the site; through individuals who owned or lived on the property; or, in the case of bridges, industrial plants, schoolhouses and other non-residential properties, through documented significance to the larger community.
3. **Architectural significance:** Structures deemed architecturally significant are outstanding examples of architectural history through design, materials, structural type or construction methods. In all cases, eligible architectural properties must display integrity; that is, the structure should be in a good state of repair, maintain its appearance from its period of significance and be considered an exemplary model of preservation. Architectural significance is often best determined by the relevance of the property to broader contexts, including geography. Any changes over the years should be compatible with original design and reflect compliance with accepted preservation practices, e.g., the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.
4. **Good state of repair:** Structures not considered by the THC to be in a good state of repair are ineligible for RTHL designation. The THC reserves the sole right to make that determination relative to eligibility for RTHL markers.

**Special National Register considerations for RTHL marker applications:** If a structure has been individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under either Criterion A or B **and** Criterion C (Architecture), the historical text compiled as part of the National Register nomination process may be submitted as part of the marker process, provided it includes the required reference notes and other documentation. Acceptance of the National Register information for the purposes of the marker process will be up to the sole determination of the THC. Listing in the NRHP does not guarantee approval for an RTHL marker. See the THC web site at <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madnrcrit.html> for National Register criteria.

Check this box if the property is individually listed in the NRHP.

**APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

Any individual, group or county historical commission (CHC) may apply to the THC to request an Official Texas Historical Marker for what it deems a worthy topic. Only complete marker applications that contain all the required elements and are submitted online as required can be accepted or processed by the THC (for RTHL markers, the required elements are: sponsorship application form; narrative history; documentation; legal description of the property; site plan; floorplan; historic photograph; and current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure—please resize photographs to 1-2 MB, or approximately 1024 x 768 pixels).

- Completed applications must be duly reviewed, verified and approved by the county historical commission (CHC) in the county in which the marker will be placed.
- The sponsorship application form, narrative history and documentation must be submitted as Microsoft Word or Word-compatible documents and sent via email attachments to the THC by no later than November 30, 2009.
- Required font style and type size are a Times variant and 12-point.
- Narrative histories must be typed in a double-spaced (or 1.5-spaced) format and include separate sections on context, overview, significance and documentation.
- The narrative history must include documentation in the form of reference notes, which can be either footnotes or endnotes. Documentation associated with applications should be broad-based and demonstrate a survey of all available resources, both primary and secondary.

- Upon notification of the successful preliminary review of required elements by the THC, a non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required. The fee shall be submitted to the THC within ten working days of application receipt notification.

**APPROVAL BY COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

The duly appointed marker representative (chair or marker chair) noted below for the county historical commission will be the sole contact with the THC for this marker application. To ensure accuracy, consistency and efficiency, all information from and to the THC relative to the application—and throughout the review and production processes—will be via direct communication with the CHC representative. All other inquiries (calls, emails, letters) to the THC will be referred to the CHC representative for response. By filling out the information below and filing the application with the THC, the CHC representative is providing the THC with notice that the application and documentation have been reviewed and verified by the CHC and that the material meets all current requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker program.

**As chair or duly appointed marker chair, I certify the following:**

Representatives of the CHC have met or talked with the potential marker sponsor and discussed the marker program policies as outlined on the THC web site. CHC members have reviewed the history and documentation for accuracy and made corrections or notes as necessary. It is the determination of the CHC that the topic, history and documentation meet criteria for eligibility.

**CHC comments or concerns about this application, if any:**

**Name of CHC contact** (chair or marker chair): Chris Dyer

**Mailing address:** 716 S Austin Ave                      **City, Zip:** Georgetown, TX 78626

**Daytime phone** (with area code): 512-943-1670                      **Email address** (required):

cdyer@williamsonmuseum.org

**PERMISSION OF PROPERTY OWNER FOR MARKER PLACEMENT**

**Property owner:** Isaac Norman

**Address:** 12500 FM 1660                      **City, state, zip:** Taylor, TX 76574-5281

**Phone:** 512-352-3056    **Email address:**

**Legal Description of the property** (metes and bounds, lot and block, etc.): The house itself is AW0483 NEIGHBORS, R.S. SUR., ACRES .50 (WCAD property R020884, as described in Williamson County Deed records volume 1213 page 293). The surrounding farm also includes WCAD properties R332271, R319345, R020826, & R020560.

Upon receipt of the application, the THC will provide the owner with a letter that outlines the legal responsibility of ownership under the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark statute. The letter must be signed by the owner and returned to the THC before the evaluation can be completed.

**NOTE:** The property owner will not receive any additional copies of correspondence from the THC. All other correspondence—notice of receipt, request for additional information, payment notice, inscription, shipping notice, etc.—will be sent via email to the CHC representative, who is

encouraged to share the information with all interested parties as necessary. Given the large volume of applications processed annually and the need for centralized communication, all inquiries about applications in process will be referred to the CHC for response. The CHC is the sole liaison to the THC on all marker application matters.

### **SPONSORSHIP PAYMENT INFORMATION**

Prospective sponsors please note the following:

- Payment must be received in full within 45 days of the official approval notice and must be accompanied by the THC payment form. The THC is unable to process partial payments or to delay payment due to processing procedures of the sponsor. Applications not paid in the time frame required may, at the sole discretion of the THC, be cancelled or postponed.
- Payment does not constitute ownership of a marker; Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers and other Official Texas Historical Markers are the property of the State of Texas.
- If, at any time during the marker process, sponsorship is withdrawn, a refund can be processed, but the THC will retain the application fee of \$100.
- The Official Texas Historical Marker Program provides no means of recognizing sponsors or property owners through marker text, incising or supplemental plaques.

**Marker sponsor** (may be individual or organization): Isaac Norman

**Contact person** (if applicable):

**Mailing address:** 12500 FM 1660      **City, zip:** Taylor, TX 76574-5281

**Email address** (required): deh@fastanimals.com    **Phone:** 512-352-3056

### **SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS**

In order to facilitate delivery of the marker, neither post office box numbers nor rural route numbers can be accepted. To avoid additional shipping charges or delays, use a business street address (open 8 a.m.—5 p.m., Monday through Friday).

**Name:** Isaac Norman

**Street address:** 12500 FM 1660      **City, zip:** Taylor, TX 76574-5281

**Daytime phone** (required): 512-352-3056      **Email** (required): deh@fastanimals.com

### **TYPE AND SIZE OF RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS**

As part of its review process, the THC will determine the appropriate size marker and provide options, if any, for the approved topic based on its own review criteria, including, but not exclusive of, historical significance, replication of information in other THC markers, relevance to the Statewide Preservation Plan and the amount of available documented information provided in the application narrative. In making its determination, however, the THC will also take into account the preference of the CHC, as noted below.

The sponsor/CHC prefers the following size marker:

27" x 42" RTHL marker with post (\$1500)

- 27" X 42" RTHL marker without post\* (\$1500)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker with post (\$1000)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker without post\* (\$1000)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque with post (\$750)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque without post\* (\$750)

\*For an RTHL marker without post, indicate to what surface material it will be mounted:

- wood
- masonry
- metal
- other (specify)

### **SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION (via email required)**

When the CHC has determined the application is complete, the history has been verified and the topic meets the requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, the materials should be forwarded to the THC via email at the following address:

[markerapplication@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:markerapplication@thc.state.tx.us).

- The CHC or marker chair should send an email containing the following attachments (see attachment function under file menu or toolbox on your computer):
  - This application form
  - The narrative history (including documentation)
  - Legal description of the property
  - Detailed floor plan for each floor of the structure
  - Detailed site plan of the property
  - At least one historic photograph
  - Current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure

**RECORDS RETENTION BY CHC:** The CHC must retain hard copies of the application as well as an online version, at least for the duration of the marker process. The THC is not responsible for lost applications, for incomplete applications or for applications not properly filed according to the program requirements. For additional information about any aspect of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, see the Markers page on the THC web site (<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madmark.html>)

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Texas Historical Commission  
History Programs Division  
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276  
Phone 512/463-5853  
[history@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:history@thc.state.tx.us)



**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*

## M.B. NORMAN HOUSE

### I. CONTEXT

The settlement of Avery was established in the mid-1800s by Daniel Kimbro, veteran of the Mexican War and Williamson County pioneer. The small farming community later was known as Norman's Crossing after pioneer M. B. Norman (1856-1921) who came to the area from Alabama in 1872. Besides farming a large tract of land along Brushy Creek, Norman, along with M. R. Kennedy, built and operated the local cotton gin. By 1914 the village boasted a general store, school, church, and a garage and machine shop. Descendants of some of the settlers still live in the area<sup>1</sup>.

This community (sometimes called Norman) is distinct from the nearby Hutto and Rice's Crossing communities. It appears as a separate entity on United States Geological Survey maps<sup>2</sup>, has an entry in GNIS<sup>3</sup>, and appears as a destination on TxDOT signage<sup>4</sup>. The *Handbook of Texas Online* contains an entry for Norman's Crossing<sup>5</sup>, as does *Land of Good Water*<sup>6</sup>, the principal written resource for Williamson County history.

### II. OVERVIEW

M.B. (Mart) Norman, born in Alabama on May 10 1856 to Isaac and Catherine (Davis) Norman, came to the area known today as Norman's Crossing in 1873, where he rented land to farm<sup>7</sup>. By 1881 he barely had enough wealth to purchase his own land, plowing barefoot because he couldn't afford shoes<sup>8</sup>. On September 12 1882 he married Nettie Mayhall<sup>9</sup>; their children were Lady Humphrey,

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1 Text from Texas Historical Commission marker #9312

2 USGS 7.5 minute series, Coupland Quadrangle, 1982

3 GNIS Feature ID 1388217

4 The author (David Hollingsworth, [deh@fastanimals.com](mailto:deh@fastanimals.com)) observed Norman's Crossing as a destination on TxDOT signs at US 79 & FM 1660 (Hutto) and at US 79 & FM 3349 (Frame Switch) in the spring of 2009.

5 <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/NN/hnn33.html>, retrieved August 16, 2009

6 Clara Stearns Scarbrough, *Land of Good Water, takachue pouetsu: A Williamson County History* (Georgetown, Texas: Williamson County Sun Publishers, 1973) p 442

7 *A History of Texas together with A Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1893) pp 359-60

8 Scarbrough p 442



Lucille Blackman, Annie Patterson, Lorene McKay, I.W. Norman, Rankin Norman, Howard Norman, and Irene Norman<sup>10</sup>. Some time before 1892 he built a gin, perhaps the first business in the community<sup>11</sup>, together with M. R. Kennedy, which subsequently burned and was replaced at a cost of \$6,000<sup>12</sup>. By 1893, M.B.'s mother was living with him; five of M.B.'s siblings lived in Williamson County<sup>13</sup>. In 1894, M.R. Kennedy deeded land for a school; M.B. was one of the school's trustees<sup>14</sup>. In 1906, M.B. purchased 618.33 acres<sup>15</sup>, including the historic property described in this document, used it for farming, and shortly thereafter built the house<sup>16</sup>.

The house is a two story building with an asymmetric plan in one of the late Victorian styles<sup>17</sup>, such as Queen Anne<sup>18</sup>. The house is roughly square in area with the east-west axis having a notable two-story (plus gable) component that juts out at each end, with each end having windows on three sides. The front (north) facade is dominated by four features: a prominent overhanging gable over a first-floor bay window, a centered second-story dormer, a fenced porch with column-supported roof wrapping from the front entrance to the eastern juttied component, and a small covered second-story balcony oriented along the northeast diagonal. Below the balcony the porch is angled diagonally with the roof forming a pseudo-pediment supported by columns. The rear elevation is dominated by a

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9 Lewis p 359-60

10 Norman, Isaac *Application for Texas Dept of Agriculture's Family Land Heritage program*, p1

11 Scarbrough p 442 describes the gin as the first business in the community. However the entry for *Avery* (p 415) mentions that Tom Avery's gin burned in 1878. Perhaps Scarbrough meant the first business in the community *qua* Norman's Crossing rather than the area in general: Lewis p 359 describes Mr. Norman as living in Rice's Crossing, today considered a separate community, and the Avery family cemetery is on the far side of Rice's Crossing. The author leaves the issue for future researchers to resolve.

12 Lewis p 360

13 Lewis p 359

14 Lee, Frances *History of Norman's Crossing* (1981) p2, which references a deed record of December 12, 1894

15 Williamson County deed record v108 p383

16 Norman family records do not include information about the house's construction and the author has been unable to locate other evidence of the house's construction date. Williamson County tax records from 1906-1910 do not identify the house *per se* and the land appraisal values are unenlightening. The author also searched the Williamson County records for "Norman" entries in mechanics liens, deed of trust, bonds to pay liens or claims, attachment liens, labor liens records, hospital lien records, *lis pendens* records, and bills of sale, but nothing relating to the house existed. Although M.B.'s personal property was cataloged in detail for probate (Williamson County probate record #2370) and the real property indicated was the expected 618.33 acres, the house was not mentioned.

17 Smith, Gregory *Re: Norman House, Norman's Crossing, Williamson County, Texas* April 27, 2007

18 The reader should be aware that the author lacks a background in architecture and has likely used terminology idiosyncratically or improperly.

building-wide gable, with two second-story windows, that partially rests over a porch.

The windows are varied in size and shape but fall into two basic categories: horizontally split two-over-two and those making use of diamond-and-stripes leaded patterns. The exterior is covered primarily by white overlapping horizontal boards. Other notable architectural details are the circular wood panels that make up the house's skirting and are also used above the pediment, the inclusion of features of visual interest on the faces of and atop the gables, the matching columns of the porch and balcony, and the functional but decorative lightning rods with colored glass balls.

In addition to the house and aforementioned gin, M.B. built or operated a general store<sup>19</sup>. M.B. was also a Steward of the Methodist church<sup>20</sup>. In 1914, M.B.'s son, I.W. Norman, continued the tradition of leadership by opening a garage and machine shop<sup>21</sup> and at some point operating a blacksmith shop<sup>22</sup>. M.B. died in 1921<sup>23</sup> and ownership of the house and farm passed to his estate (Nettie et al). At that time, the farm had 16 mules, 3 horses, 5 cows & a bull, 16 hogs, sows, and pigs, 9 wagons, over 30 pieces of itemized farming equipment, 4000 bushels of corn, 50 bales of cotton, 3000 bales of hay, 8 tons of cotton seed, and 58 bushels of cane seed. The sum of personal property was over \$11,000 and the land was worth over \$77,000<sup>24</sup>.

Nettie Norman deeded the house to her son I.W. in 1932<sup>25</sup>. I.W. Norman died in 1935<sup>26</sup> and his widow Winnie (Rickord) Norman owned the property until 1979<sup>27</sup>. I.W. and Winnie's children were Wynette Forley, Howard B. Norman, and Isaac W. "Jock" Norman. I.W. raised cotton, corn, hay, cows, and sheep on the property. During his ownership, the Hutto-to-Coupland road (now known as

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19 There is disagreement as to M.B.'s relationship with the store. Scarbrough p 442 indicates that he "erected" the store but that others operated it; Lee p2 declares that he operated it. Of course, operation could have changed over time.

20 Lewis p 360

21 Ibid; note that each of the community's 1914 institutions mentioned in the text are associated with either M.B. or I.W.

22 Norman p2

23 *Williamson County Cemeteries Volume 2* (Williamson County Historical Commission), p 212

24 *In Re Estate of Martin B. Norman, deceased*, No 2370, Estate records of Williamson County

25 Williamson County Deed Records v 254, p 25

26 Lee p 3

27 Norman p 6

FM 1660) was widened, requiring 4.33 acres of I.W.'s property<sup>28</sup>.

The present owner, Isaac W. "Jock" Norman was first deeded a portion of the present farm in 1979 and acquired more from a relative in 1990 and 1991. Today, the land is operated by Isaac's cousin, Jay J. Jaecks, Jr. The primary crops are cotton, corn, and pecans. Isaac lives on the property with his wife, Frances (Tyler) Norman and his daughter, Patricia Norman. Their other children are Wynette Lessner, Leigh Norman, Howard R. Norman, and Lisa Norman<sup>29</sup>. Mr. Norman is president of the Norman's Crossing community association, which has roughly 70 members<sup>30</sup>.

Some modifications have occurred to the house over the years. The rear porch (south side) was screened mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century and a window was added when the kitchen area was remodeled. As with most other houses, utility lines and air conditioning have been attached. The roof is of modern composite material. There have likely been other alterations as well. As can be seen from photographs of the current property, the modifications to the house have been made in a manner sensitive to its original design and construction and have not resulted in a loss of architectural integrity.

### III. SIGNIFICANCE

In 1982, the Norman's Crossing community received a Texas Historical (subject) Marker, which mentions M.B. Norman and the farm containing the house, although not the house itself. In 2006 the farm, then approximately 100 acres in size, was accepted<sup>31</sup> into the Texas Department of Agriculture's Family Land Heritage (FLH) program, which requires that the land be in continuous agricultural operation within the same family for at least a century. In 2007, Greg Smith of the Texas Historical Commission wrote an opinion indicating that the house should be considered eligible for the National

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28 Norman p 2

29 Norman p 3

30 Hollingsworth, David *Notes from personal correspondance with Mr Isaac Norman*; in possession of author

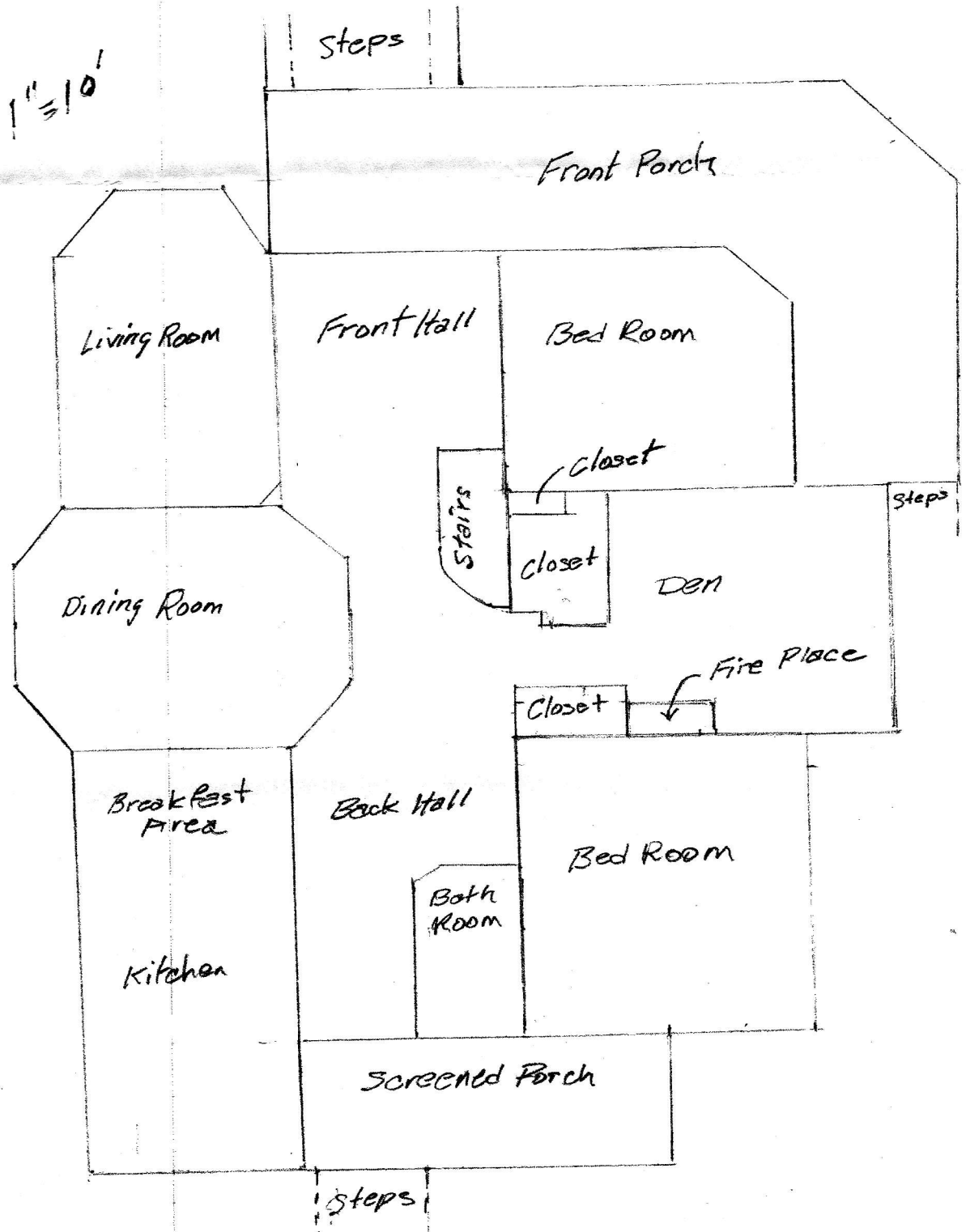
31 Combs, Susan *Letter of Sep 30, 2006 to Mr. Isaac Norman*

Register under Criteria A and C<sup>32</sup>.

The property as a whole retains its integrity as a historic farm with accompanying farmhouse. The house has retained its architectural integrity and has been associated with (via ownership & occupation) three generations of Normans, each of which has been a community leader. The house is the most prominent building in the area and principal architectural example from the community's founding. Eventually, this area of Williamson County will develop and Norman's Crossing will likely lose its identity as a separate community. The Norman House will hopefully remain as an example of how a family and a community prospered at this crossing of Brushy Creek.

North  
Norman Home

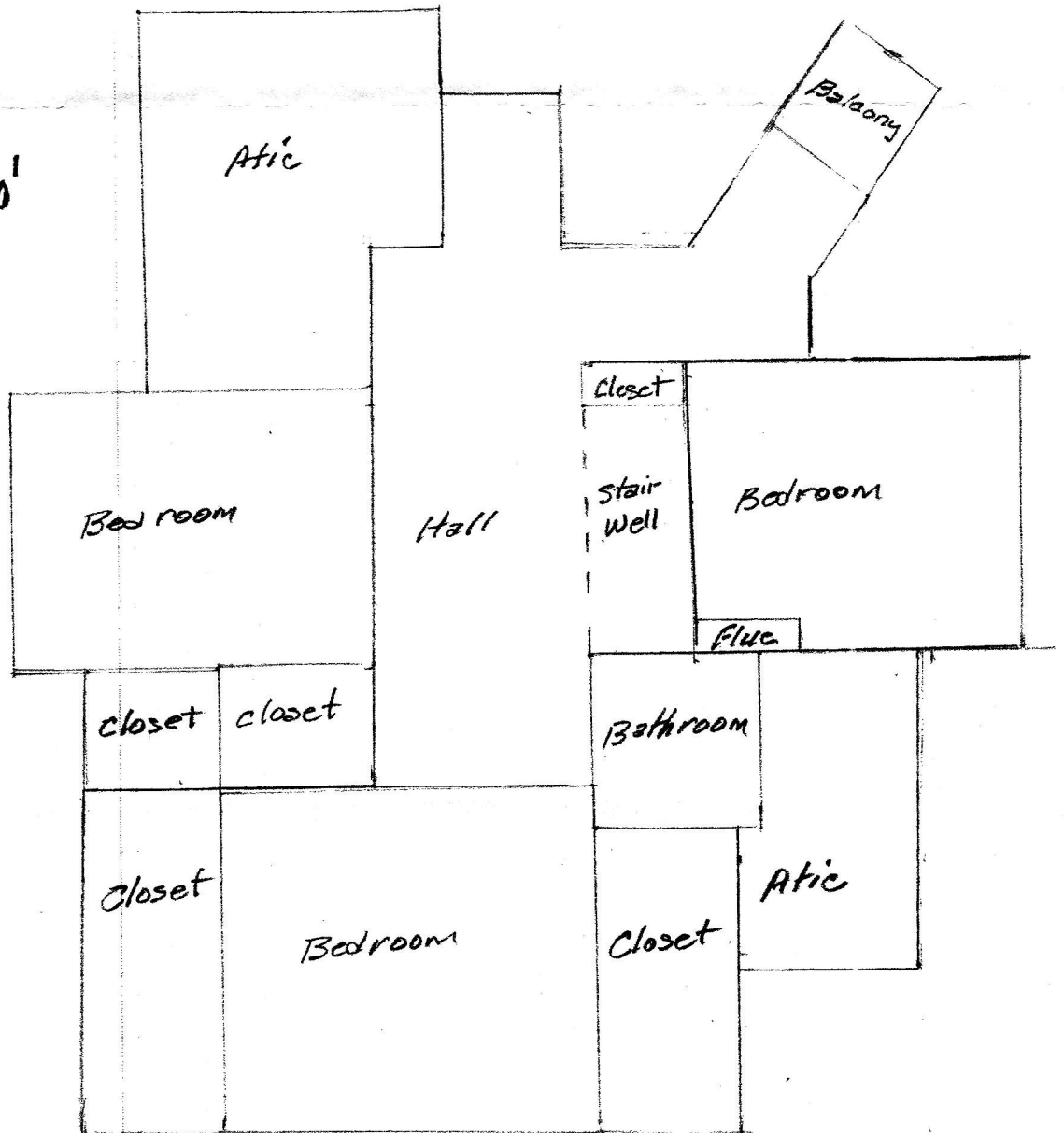
Ground Floor Plan  
Interior Dem.



N  
Norman Home  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Plan

Interior Dem

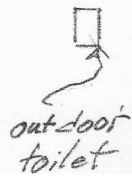
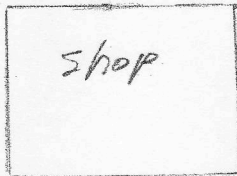
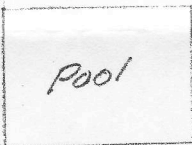
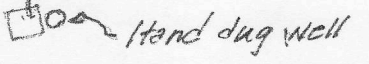
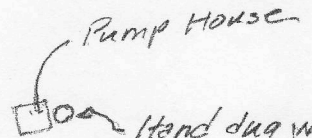
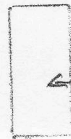
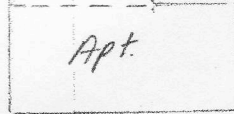
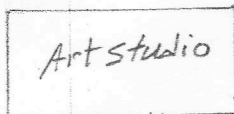
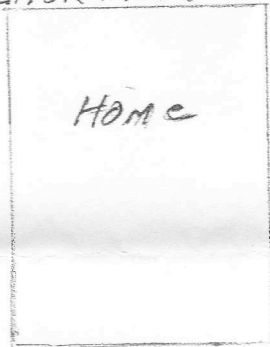
1" = 10'

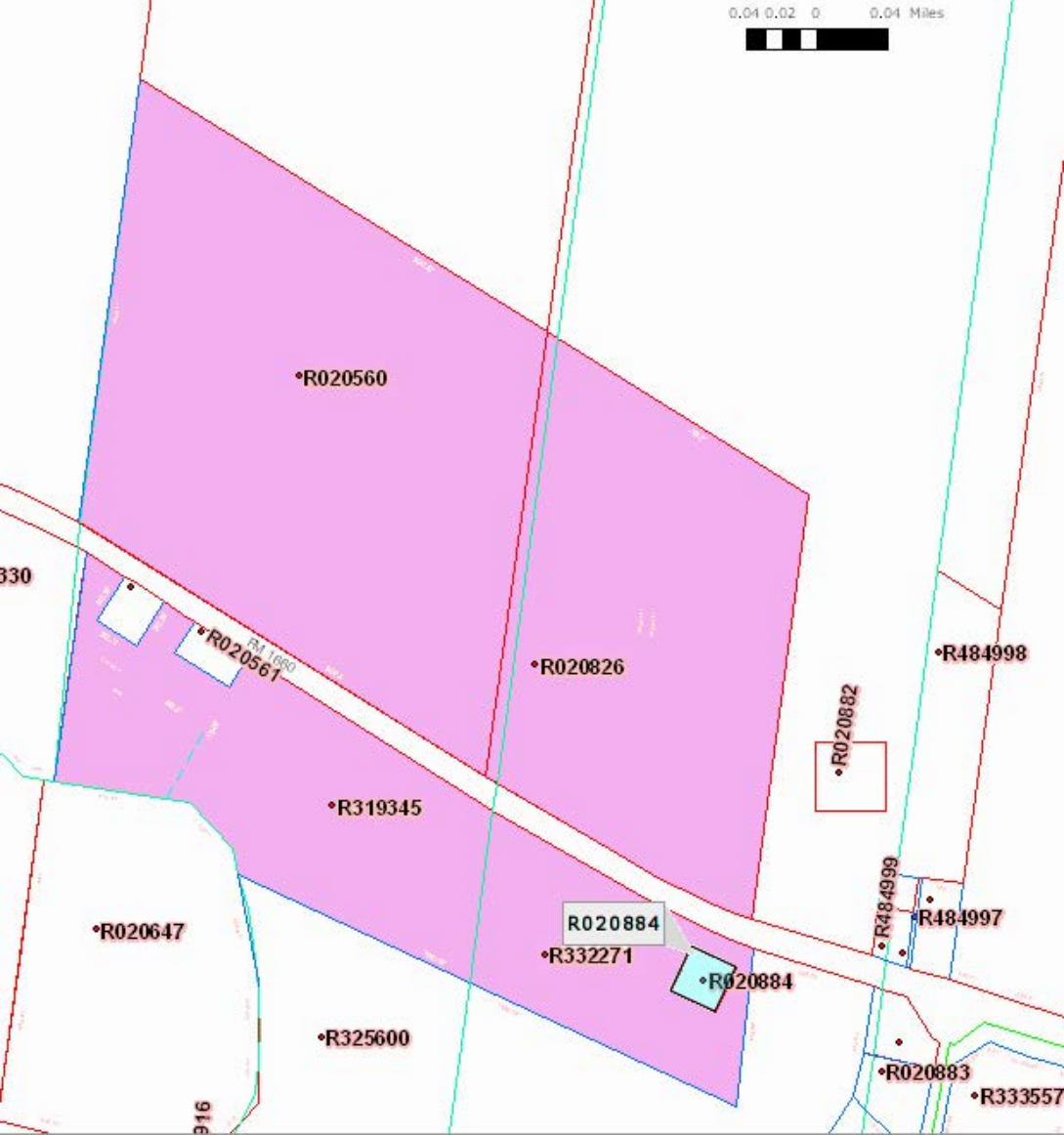


North  
Norman Home Grounds

1" = 40'

Exterior Meas.





•R020560

•R020826

•R319345

•R020647

•R325600

R020884

•R332271

•R020884

•R020882

•R484998

•R484999

•R484997

•R020883

•R333557

330

316

RM 1690



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

JOB # 10WM03

Authorization for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Designation

RECEIVED

Property considered for designation:

FEB 16 2010

Name of House, Address of House, Name of County, Texas:

M.B. Norman House, 12500 FM 1660, Taylor, Williamson County

History Programs Division

Legal Description (Lot and Block or Metes and Bounds):

The Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation is awarded to historic structures deemed worthy of preservation for their architectural integrity and historical associations. Authorized by the Texas Legislature under Texas Government Code, Chapter 442, RTHL is the highest honor the state can bestow on historic structures in Texas. Designated properties are afforded a measure of legal protection and become part of the recorded history of the state's built environment.

Benefits of the RTHL designation:

- Recognition that a property is of local, regional or state significance.
Protection for up to 90 days from exterior alterations, including demolition or relocation.
Ad valorem tax exemptions, where granted by local taxing authorities.
Inclusion in the Texas Historic Sites Atlas.
Technical preservation assistance through the THC.

Responsibility of the property owner under the RTHL provision, as noted in Texas Government Code, Chapter 442.006 (f):

A person may not damage the historical or architectural integrity of a structure the commission has designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark without notifying the commission at least 60 days before the date on which the action causing the damage is to begin. After receiving the notice, the commission may waive the waiting period or, if the commission determines that a longer period will enhance the chance for preservation, it may require an additional waiting period of not longer than 30 days. On the expiration of the time limits imposed by this section, the person may proceed, but must proceed not later than the 180th day after the date on which notice was given or the notice is considered to have expired.

Additionally:

- The designation requires the public display of the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark marker. The marker is the property of the State of Texas and may not be removed or relocated without the prior permission of the Texas Historical Commission.
RTHL status is a permanent designation which is retained with the property even upon transfer of ownership. Only the Texas Historical Commission may remove the designation.
Structures designated as RTHLs do not have to be open to the public, but the marker must be accessible to the public.
RTHL designation does not imply eligibility for federal tax incentives for rehabilitation.

I, the property owner or legal administrator of the property noted herein, signify below that I have read the information regarding Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks and that I voluntarily seek the designation for the property. I further promise to comply with the provision noted in the Texas Government Code.

Name (print) Isaac Norman

Mailing address: 12500 FM 1660

City, state, zip: Taylor, TX 76574-5281

Phone: 512-352-3056 Email: cdyer@williamsonmuseum.org

Signature: Isaac M. Norman



# Study of Effects of Proposed Transmission Line on the M.B. Norman House

David E Hollingsworth, 2006

This document relates to planning efforts by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) for the Clear Springs/Zorn to Hutto transmission line project. It identifies a historic property along proposed route 5A, discusses the significance of the historic property and its constituent resources, analyzes the potential effects of building the transmission line along proposed route 5A, and presents recommendations based on the analysis.

## Identification of Historic Resources

The historic property described in this document is the Norman homestead and farm in Norman's Crossing, Williamson County, Texas.

The property, currently owned by Isaac "Jock" Norman, has an address of 12500 FM 1660 Taylor, TX 76574<sup>1</sup>. The property is divided into northern (69.57 acres) and southern (25.775 acres) portions by FM 1660. Eastern and western portions of the property are from different surveys (Neighbors & Gerlack, respectively). Thus, the Williamson County Appraisal District has four entries for the property: R-14-0260-0001-A<sup>2</sup>, R-14-0260-0001<sup>3</sup>, R-14-0483-0006-A<sup>4</sup>, and R-14-0483-008<sup>5</sup>. Two additional parcels of ½ acre each, R-14-0260-0001-H<sup>6</sup> and R-14-0260-0001-HA<sup>7</sup>, are on the south side of FM 1660 and otherwise surrounded by R-14-0260-0001-A.

The southeast parcel (R-14-0483-0006-A) contains the primary historic resource, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, located at N30.495251, W-97.500197<sup>8</sup>. Near the house is a historic well, an ironing house, and some non-contributing modern buildings and structures. The .5 acre parcels contain a 1930<sup>9</sup> house and a 1940<sup>10</sup> house; these were once used as rent houses<sup>11</sup> and are now owned by other family members<sup>12</sup>.

## Significance of Historic Resources

The author visited the Norman property in September of 2006 and took photographs of the two-story farmhouse, built circa 1906<sup>13</sup>. At my request, a historian employed by Texas Historical Commission

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1 Williamson County Appraisal District records, see following notes for details

2 [http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop\\_id=R319345](http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop_id=R319345)

3 [http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop\\_id=R020560](http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop_id=R020560)

4 [http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop\\_id=R332271](http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop_id=R332271)

5 [http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop\\_id=R020826](http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop_id=R020826)

6 [http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop\\_id=R020561](http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop_id=R020561)

7 [http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop\\_id=R432614](http://wcad.org/Map/Default.asp?prop_id=R432614)

8 Coordinates obtained via Google maps (<http://maps.google.com>) and are in WGS84 coordinates

9 <http://wcad.org/AcctDetail.aspx?ID=240442>

10 <http://wcad.org/AcctDetail.aspx?ID=79175>

11 Personal interview, Isaac "Jock" Norman, September, 2006. Mr. Norman referred to the buildings as having been rent houses but the author has not attempted to verify their historical use.

12 See notes 9 & 10

13 The author has been unable to locate evidence of the house's construction date. Williamson County tax records from 1906-1910 do not identify the house per se and the land appraisal values are unenlightening. The author also searched the Williamson County records for "Norman" entries in mechanics liens, deed of trust, bonds to pay liens or claims, attachment liens, labor liens records, hospital lien records, lis pendens records, and bills of sale, but nothing relating to

reviewed the photographs and based on them determined that the farmhouse would likely qualify as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) and for the National Register (NR) at the local level of significance<sup>14</sup>. The historian noted that the house would qualify for the NR under criterion C and possibly criterion A for agriculture. The integrity of the agricultural aspects of the building are likely sufficient for criterion A to apply. The house would probably also qualify under criterion B for association with transcendent figures from Norman's Crossing's history. At the time of this writing, applications for RTHL and NR are in progress.

The complete property, approximately 100 acres in size, has been accepted<sup>15</sup> into the Texas Department of Agriculture's Family Land Heritage (FLH) program, which requires that the land be in continuous agricultural operation within the same family for at least a century. The property retains its integrity as a historic farm with accompanying farmhouse. Other possible contributing elements are the historic well and ironing house. Less likely but still possible contributors to the farm's historic character are the secondary houses<sup>16</sup>.

The farm is not a single parcel: it is split by FM 1660, which was designated as such in 1951<sup>17</sup>. Ignoring for a moment the road and the land to its north, the remaining property of about 26 acres would itself retain integrity as a historic farm and qualify as a FHL property. However, since historic buildings within the farm and elsewhere in the community are placed with the expectation of an east-west transportation corridor at that location<sup>18</sup>, the road itself is possibly historic. If it were, it would act as a minor contributing element to the overall setting.

### Historic Associations of Contributing Resources

The historic associations of this property deserve their own analysis. In short, Norman's Crossing exists as an identifiable and distinct community, M.B. and I.W. Norman are transcendent figures from Norman's Crossing's history, and they owned and lived in the Norman house.

The unincorporated Norman's Crossing community (sometimes called Norman) is distinct from the nearby Hutto and Rice's Crossing communities. It appears on United States Geological Survey maps<sup>19</sup>, has an entry in GNIS<sup>20</sup> and appears as a destination on TxDOT signage<sup>21</sup>. The *Handbook of Texas Online* contains an entry for Norman's Crossing<sup>22</sup>, as does *Land of Good Water*<sup>23</sup>, the primary resource for Williamson County history. A Texas Historical Marker exists for the community<sup>24</sup>. The community

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the house existed. Although M.B.'s personal property was cataloged in detail for probate (Williamson County probate record #2370) and the real property indicated as the 618.33 acres, the house was not mentioned.

14 Letter from expert historian attached

15 Letter from Texas Department of Agriculture attached

16 The author has not visited the secondary houses and has performed no analysis of their potential contribution to the historic character of the farm.

17 <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/tpp/hwy/fm1500/fm1660.htm>

18 The placement of the buildings is readily seen on the USGS map at the following note: the building indicated with a cross near the western edge was Robinson Chapel, built before 1895; one of the two second houses is marked just east; the Norman house is at the eastern end of the property; finally, three buildings north of FM 1660 near the intersection with the Brushy Creek crossing. Unfortunately, the history of this road prior to 1951 is not known by the author.

19 <http://www.topozone.com/map.asp?lat=30.49466&lon=-97.49766&datum=nad83&u=5&layer=DRG&size=l&s=24>

20 <http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnispublic/f?p=151:2:17831088635246172959::NO::>

21 Norman's Crossing appears as a destination on signs at US 79 & FM 1660 (Hutto) and at US 79 & FM 3349 (Frame Switch).

22 <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/NN/hnn33.html>

23 Clara Stearns Scarbrough, *Land of Good Water: A Williamson County History* (Georgetown, Texas: Williamson County Sun Publishers, 1973) p 442

24 [http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/common/viewform.asp?atlas\\_num=5491009312&site\\_name=Norman's%20Crossing](http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/common/viewform.asp?atlas_num=5491009312&site_name=Norman's%20Crossing)

once had two (segregated) schools and multiple businesses. Today, the community retains a combined church and community center building with an active community association which meets at the center<sup>25</sup>.

M.B. Norman, born in Alabama in 1856, came to the area in 1873, where he rented land to farm<sup>26</sup>. By 1881 he had enough wealth to purchase his own land. In 1882 he married Nettie Mayhall and some time before 1892 built a gin, the first business in the community<sup>27</sup>, together with M. R. Kennedy, which subsequently burned and was replaced at a cost of \$6,000<sup>28</sup>. In 1894, M.R. Kennedy deeded land for a school; M.B. was one of the school's trustees<sup>29</sup>. In 1906, M.B. purchased 618.33 acres<sup>30</sup>, including the historic property described in this document, used it for farming, and shortly thereafter built the house<sup>31</sup>. In addition to the gin previously mentioned, M.B. built or operated a general store<sup>32</sup>. M.B. was also a Steward of the Methodist church<sup>33</sup>, known as Robinson's Chapel<sup>34</sup>. M.B. played a significant role in all of the community's institutions of the time that are mentioned in the sources located by the author.

In 1914, M.B.'s son, I.W. Norman, continued the tradition of leadership by opening a garage and machine shop and at some point operating a blacksmith shop<sup>35</sup>. M.B. died in 1921<sup>36</sup> and ownership of the house and farm passed to his estate (Nettie et al), who deeded the house to I.W. in 1932<sup>37</sup>. I.W. died in 1935<sup>38</sup>.

## Potential Effects on Historic Resources

Proposed route 5A would involve a direct take of the historic property. Even ignoring the direct take, the route would negatively impact the historic character of the property as a whole and the farmhouse in particular.

Although proposed route 5A was placed along a parcel boundary, the “boundary” is merely that of the original surveys<sup>39</sup> and is not treated as a boundary on the ground. The result is that the route, if realized, would remove land from the historic property and would introduce a new boundary that separates it into eastern and western portions.

Ignoring the effects on the property itself, the proposed route runs within 1000 feet of the farmhouse. The house is oriented such that visitors approach from the east and the kitchen window looks across the property to the west. The westward view from the house, which today is of farmland all the way to the treeline surrounding Brushy Creek, would be dominated by the transmission line, thus affecting the historic character of the house by damaging its setting & feeling as an early 20<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse in

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25 Personal interview, Isaac “Jock” Norman, September, 2006.

26 *A History of Texas together with A Biographical History of Milam, Williamson, Bastrop, Travis, Lee and Burleson Counties* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1893) pp 359-60

27 Scarbrough p 442

28 Lewis p 360

29 Lee, Frances *History of Norman's Crossing* (1981) p2, which references a deed record of December 12, 1894

30 Williamson County deed record v108 p383

31 See previous notes regarding the house's construction date.

32 There is disagreement as to M.B.'s relationship with the store. Scarbrough p 442 indicates that he “erected” the store; Lee p2 declares that he operated it.

33 Lewis p 360

34 Scarbrough p 442

35 Application for Texas Dept of Agriculture's Family Land Heritage program, section II

36 *Williamson County Cemeteries Volume 2* (Williamson County Historical Commission), p 212

37 Williamson County Deed Records v 254, p 25

38 Lee p 3

39 Gerlack & Neighbors surveys; see the WCAD entries in previous notes

eastern Williamson County.

## Recommendations

The LCRA should consider the Norman house a National Register eligible property. Because the house's historic character is agricultural in nature and the surrounding farmland has been granted historical status as an Family Land Heritage property, the boundary of eligibility should be considered to include at least the 26 acres south of FM 1660 and possibly the entire 100 acres. The LCRA should therefore consider proposed route 5A to involve a direct take of a historic property as well as an indirect take (via viewshed impacts) to the historic farmhouse, which is within 1000 feet of the proposed route.

In the absence of other factors, route 5A should be excluded as a potential route. Since other factors are likely to be present, the LCRA will have to balance the effects on this property against the other factors. The author recommends that the LCRA perform its own investigation and analysis of the Norman house and surrounding property if the routes are deemed sufficiently close in preference that the choice of a preferred route depends on details relating to the property. Additionally, if route 5A is chosen as the preferred route, the LCRA should consult with the THC before construction, since the property may at that time have become a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark and therefore fall under Texas Government Code Section 442.006(f).

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