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STEAMBOAT HOUSE: SAM HOUSTON'S LAST HOME

by John W. Payne

The old house has had several names — Buena Vista, Bailey Place, Old Sam Houston Home, Squatters's Place, and Steamboat House, the colorful name that most Texans no doubt prefer.

The story begins with Dr. Rufus Bailey, a brilliant and somewhat eccentric New England clergyman who arrived in Texas in 1854. The next year he accepted a position as language professor at Austin College, a Presbyterian school in Huntsville.¹ Dr. Bailey was well known as a prolific writer of sermons and newspaper articles, a number of which were collected in book form.² People in Huntsville seem to have had mixed feelings about the professor. They admired his scholarly achievements but not his frugal habits. One acquaintance, Pleasant W. Kittrell, a physician who kept a journal for recording his business transactions and his private opinions, apparently liked Dr. Bailey but found him a close man with his pocketbook. "It is like squeezing sugar out of a crabapple to get money out of the old Doctor," Kittrell wrote in March 1861.³

In September 1855 Dr. Bailey, with the consent of the Board of Trustees and President Daniel Baker, paid \$100 to Austin College for five acres located northeast of town and described in the deed records of Walker County as part of a league of land originally granted to Pleasant Gray, one of the founders of Huntsville.⁴ The next year Bailey bought an adjoining three acres from George W. Grant for \$45.⁵ The tracts were combined to form the grounds on which Bailey built the famous house in about 1858, planning, apparently, to offer it as a gift to his son Frank and his bride.⁶

For a meticulous man such as Dr. Bailey, planning a house was no casual undertaking. He had a poor opinion of most Texas houses he had seen and wanted to show that he could design something better. "There is such a deficiency in architectural taste that I thought [it] proper to exhibit real skill in that line," he said.⁷ Whether he succeeded is still a subject of debate. For descriptions of the original structure we must rely on old-timers who told about the house as they remembered it from childhood. Their memories, however, are in remarkable agreement, Will Kittrell, Pleasant Kittrell's son, for example, lived in the house in the 1860s — and almost died there of yellow fever. Some sixty years later, in 1926, Will Kittrell wrote to *The Huntsville Item*:

As built by [Dr. Bailey] there were three rooms 14 X 14 on the ground floor, with three above the same size. ... A four foot gallery on either side, up and down stairs, with bannister rails two feet high. Two 4 X 4 closets [ran] from the lower floors, both sides, extending to above the roof. Front steps covering the front of the lower rooms

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were from the ground to the [upstairs] front room, [obscuring] all view from the lower front room. ... It had somewhat the appearance of a steamboat, double decked, and some one [gave] it the name of the Steamboat House.⁸

Whether "Steamboat House" was the name used at this time is uncertain. It is possible that Will Kittrell simply adopted the popular twentieth-century designation. In any case, the name does not appear in the deeds or in any other records of the time.⁹ Nor is there any available evidence for the story that young Frank Bailey and his wife, thinking Rufus Bailey's house a monstrosity, declined to live there, but the story is not hard to believe.¹⁰

Disappointed though he must have been, Dr. Bailey apparently remained proud of his new house. Inspired by the unobstructed view from the small promontory where the house and grounds were located, he gave the place the happy name "Buena Vista," a surprising choice coming from a somber man.¹¹ He may also have decided to move into the house himself. That is suggested by some of the sketchy information available to us. Bailey became president of Austin College in December 1858 and, according to George L. Landolt's history of the school, the house became Bailey's "Austin College home."¹² This does not seem likely, since the house was far removed from the campus. Just how long Bailey lived there, if at all, cannot be determined. Bailey remained president of the school until sometime in 1862, when he resigned because of poor health.¹³ Late that year or early the next the house got a new occupant of even greater fame.

In 1861 Sam Houston had been removed from the governor's office because he refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy. He believed the Confederacy would bring anarchy and ruin to his beloved Texas. For a time Houston and his family lived at his farm, Cedar Point, in Chambers County. But Houston wanted to return to Huntsville, which he had long thought of as his home. In the autumn of 1862 he registered at Captain Sims's Hotel, a well-known establishment where Dr. Pleasant Kittrell and other Huntsville citizens sometimes took their meals.¹⁴ Mean-time, according to an account given many years later by Jeff Hamilton, the general's personal servant, workmen were repairing the Bailey house, which Houston had rented. As Jeff remembered, Houston tried to buy the house but Dr. Bailey refused to sell.¹⁵ According to one biography, Margaret Houston arrived by coach on a chilly day in December. The family moved in and began to make themselves as comfortable as possible in a poorly-arranged house. The presence of servants and the four younger children made it a noisy place. Houston chose the dark front room behind the wide, outside stairs as his bedroom, perhaps because it afforded him some privacy.¹⁶

These last months of Houston's life were darkened by ill health and by his sadness over the tragic war. Huntsville's male population was mostly composed of old men and young boys, few of whom Houston knew or

cared to associate with. Many of them, after all, considered him a Unionist — or worse. But these months were brightened somewhat by visits with old friends and even with some former political adversaries. There was, for example, Dr. Pleasant Kittrell, who had opposed Old Sam in the bitter Houston-Runnels race for governor in 1857, but who was not inclined to hold grudges. Kittrell and Houston would meet occasionally for long talks, their earlier differences apparently forgiven. On one occasion Kittrell drove fourteen miles from his farm to spend the night with the Houston family. Houston graciously accompanied Kittrell to the room upstairs where his guest was to sleep, but the two men began a conversation that lasted until midnight. When Houston finally told Kittrell good night and left the room, he had trouble finding his way to the stairs in the dark. Dr. Kittrell then heard Houston shout to Mrs. Houston, who had long since retired: “Margaret, Margaret, come and show me out of this cursed house.”¹⁷

Houston’s health declined during the early months of 1863. In the summer he made a trip to Sour Lake, in Hardin County, hoping that the mineral baths would bring some improvement. It was here that he heard the disturbing news that Vicksburg had fallen to the Union on July 4. He returned to Huntsville in a weakened condition. One afternoon he came back to the house from a walk suffering from chills and fever. His condition grew worse and developed into pneumonia. Dr. Markham, a friend and former associate of Dr. Kittrell’s, was called in. Markham had Houston’s bed placed in the center of the room so that it caught what little air was stirring in the hot and humid weather. Jeff Hamilton slept on a pallet near the bed, ready to attend to Houston’s every need. Mrs. Houston was nearly always close by.¹⁸

One day Houston’s old acquaintance, Dr. Kittrell, accompanied by Kittrell’s nine-year-old daughter, Lilla, arrived by carriage at the Steamboat House. Whether it was a professional visit or merely a friendly call, or both, is not certain. Many years later Lilla Kittrell (Mrs. John Durst) remembered the visit clearly. General Houston, she said, held out his hand and said, “My old friend, Dr. Kittrell, I’m glad to see you. It will be our last meeting in this life.” Then he turned to Lilla and said, “Come, daughter, and kiss the Old General. This is the last time you will ever see him.” A forbidding growth of whiskers on the old man’s face caused Lilla to hesitate, but at her father’s urging she dutifully complied. Houston’s gloomy prediction was all too accurate. Three days later, at dusk on July 26, 1863, while Margaret was reading to him from her Bible, Sam Houston died.¹⁹

Almost exactly three months earlier, on April 25, Rufus Bailey, at age seventy, had died. He, too, was a victim of pneumonia. Six months before this, on October 20, 1862, while visiting in Grimes County at the home of a friend, Daniel D. Atchison, Dr. Bailey had asked Atchison to draw up his will. In the document, witnessed by Atchison and Atchison’s

wife Lucy, Bailey had willed all his property, “real, personal, and mixed,” to his son Francis B. (Frank) Bailey.²⁰ Frank Bailey was now the owner of the house he had rejected some five years earlier.

Bailey did not keep the house long. In November 1863 he sold to A.C. McKeen “ten acres ... comprising the residence and ground on the East side of Huntsville known as ‘Buena Vista,’ or the ‘Bailey Place,’ ” for \$4000.²¹ It is worth noting that this description, taken from the record in the clerk’s office of Walker County, does not contain the name “Steamboat House.” Later that same month, Margaret Houston gave up the place and moved to Independence, where she lived until her death in 1867.

Three years later, Dr. Pleasant Kittrell decided to leave his farm and move back into what he once described as the “noise and bustle & confusion of a village & political life.”²² The residence he purchased was one he already knew, Steamboat House, though in his journal he did not use this name. In his journal entry of New Year’s Day 1867, he wrote that he had bought on December 25, 1866, “the house and lot situated ... just out of the corporate limits, near or on the eastern verge of Huntsville.” It was the place that had been “improved by Dr. [Rufus] Bailey and called by the euphonious and very appropriate Spanish name, *Buena Vista* or ‘beautiful view.’ ” The terms of the purchase, like so many of the doctor’s business transactions, were somewhat inexact: “I promised by notes to pay \$1500 for the property, \$750 of which I obligated myself ... to pay on the 25th Jan’y 1867. The remainder ... on or before Jan’y or March (I forget which) 1868.”²³

Kittrell’s journal reveals very little about the short time he lived at Steamboat House. There is an entry, in April, in which he complains of the carelessness of one “Madison,” a freedman, who left down the garden fence and let in a gang of hogs that rooted up the doctor’s potatoes,²⁴ but this is about all. It is unfortunate, from the historian’s viewpoint, that Kittrell does not describe the onset of the yellow fever epidemic that struck Huntsville in the fall of 1867 and carried off 130 victims, including eventually Dr. Kittrell himself. The disease, in the words of one writer, “spread through the community like a forest fire out of control.” Kittrell and other doctors, aided by volunteer nurses, worked night and day. Only with the coming of cooler weather in mid-October did the fever subside.²⁵

Both the doctor and his son Will became sick in September. On September 22 Eliza Thomas Nolley, a young woman who had volunteered to work as a nurse, wrote a note to Captain Thomas J. Goree, the doctor’s nephew whom she would soon marry: “Dr. Kittrell and Willie are both sick at one time ... the doctor alarmingly so. But I am pleased to say that he is now better. Willie is doing well and with good nursing, we trust, will soon be entirely restored....”²⁶ But three days later, Martha Ann Otey, Miss Nolley’s sister — a widow with two children who also had volunteered as a nurse — wrote a note to Captain Goree informing him that his uncle was slowly dying and would not last until nightfall.²⁷

Apparently Dr. Kittrell died that afternoon, since September 25 is the date carved on his tombstone in Oakwood Cemetery. Years later, his son Will — the “Willie” mentioned in Miss Nolley’s letter — recalled that the doctor died “in the east room upstairs” in Steamboat House — the same house, but not the same room, where Sam Houston had died four years earlier.²⁸

Mary Frances Kittrell, Dr. Kittrell’s wife, decided to stay on at Steamboat House after the doctor’s death. On September 22, when the doctor was on his deathbed, he had made out a will directing that his estate be divided equally among his wife and five children.²⁹ However, Dr. Kittrell had put the house in the name of his oldest son Norman, aged eighteen, and it was Norman who received title to the property in December.³⁰ In 1873, when Norman was twenty-four years of age, he deeded the house to his mother so she might have a homestead in case of his death. If her death preceded his, the property would revert to him.³¹ It was agreed that Mrs. Kittrell would live in the house and take care of the younger children.

Lilla Kittrell Durst recalled that her mother did not find Steamboat House an easy place to manage. “Who on earth ever thought of planning such a house,” she would often say. It is easy to understand her frustration. Lilla remembered, even after sixty years, the weird arrangement of the building:

There wasn’t a window in the house except [that] the top of each door had a window sash built in that would neither be raised [nor] lowered ... In the summer we could open both doors to get air, but in winter if the wind was from the north we’d open the south door; if [the wind was] from the south we’d open the north door.³²

Still, Lilla looked back on her time there as “some of the happiest days of my life.”³³ One such happy day probably was June 25, 1868, when a wedding supper and reception were held at Steamboat House. Miss Eliza T. Nolley, the young woman who volunteered as a nurse during the fever epidemic, was married to Major Thomas J. Goree, Dr. Kittrell’s nephew. Major Goree, now thirty-three years of age, had been practicing law for about ten years and during the Civil War was a member of General James Longstreet’s staff. The wedding took place at the Methodist Church in Huntsville. The reception at the house was attended by all the bridal party, including twenty bridesmaids and groomsmen and many friends.³⁴

Five years later, in 1873, Major Goree and Mrs. Kittrell agreed to an unusual real estate transaction. They simply exchanged places, Mrs. Kittrell going to the major’s house at Midway, in Madison County, and the major taking over Steamboat House.³⁵ Major Goree had formed a law partnership with Colonel L.A. Abercrombie in Huntsville and also planned to go into business as a merchant.³⁶

It was during Major Goree’s ownership that important alterations were made on the house. Lillian R. Otey McGary remembered that her uncle remodeled the house, “tearing the front away, extending [the] room with a bay window, then [adding] a porch and a room out towards [the]

East....” Major Goree, who was by this time superintendent of the state prison, used convict labor to do the work.³⁷ According to one source, “The distinctive facade was destroyed ... and all that [now] remained of the unique house was the two-story six-room body and [the] exterior galleries.” In fact, the house had now taken on a “Victorian style.”³⁸

Of even greater interest to the historian is a famous meeting that took place in the house on October 10, 1879, the day that Sam Houston State Normal Institute officially opened. The opening-day ceremony had gone well, highlighted by an admirable speech by Bernard Mallon, president of the new school. Even Governor Oran Robert’s misfortune in accidentally knocking over a glass of water on the speaker’s stand did not spoil the proceedings.³⁹ After the ceremony a dinner was given by Major Goree and his wife at Steamboat House. The dinner turned out to be an important one, as Oscar H. Cooper, a member of the normal school faculty, remembered vividly fifty years later. In a letter to Eliza T. Goree on February 9, 1929, Professor Cooper wrote:

I recall pretty definitely the first day at the Sam Houston Normal Institute.... After the opening exercises you had a dinner, and at the dinner the following were present.... Governor Roberts, Mr. [Roger Q.] Mills, Mr. Mallon, Captain Goree, and myself. One incident of that dinner I remember with extraordinary interest. I was seated with Governor Roberts on my left, Mr. Mills on my right, and Mr. Mallon across the table. Everybody felt good about the fine opening. I said something like this: ‘The next thing we ought to do in Texas is to organize the University of Texas,’ and [Mr.] Mills [a U.S. Congressman] commented.. ‘I don’t see why that hasn’t been done already.’ Governor Roberts said, ‘I’m in favor of it, too.’

After the dinner we went out on the verandah.... I attached myself to Governor Roberts out there.... I asked him if he would find out from the Comptroller of Public Accounts when he went back to Austin about the condition of the resources of the University of Texas ... and he promised at once that he would have the Comptroller look up the University funds and let me know. It was there that my connection with Governor Roberts’ activities in bringing about the organization of the University of Texas began.⁴⁰

It would take four years and much hard planning, especially by dedicated men such as Dr. Ashbel Smith, to complete work on the Austin branch of the University, but there is no doubt that Oscar Cooper’s suggestion marked the revival of a project that had met with repeated delays since the time of the Republic of Texas.

In April 1891, Thomas J. Goree, having served with distinction as prison superintendent for fourteen years, resigned to take a job as general manager of the New Birmingham Company, which had been organized to develop iron-ore deposits in Cherokee County.⁴¹ Goree sold the Steamboat House and grounds to I.N. Smith for \$2250.⁴² I.N. Smith and C.H. Smith, apparently a relative, sold the property to a Huntsville hardware and real estate firm, Lamkin Brothers, in August 1917.⁴³ Eight years later, in March 1925, the firm sold it to Oakwood Cemetery Association for

\$3500.⁴⁴ On January 15, 1928, The Dallas Morning News reported that the building known as "Old Steamboat House" had been moved and now stood "on North Main Street near the public school."⁴⁵ The newspaper gave few details, but other sources reveal that the house had been sold to J.H. Johnson by Mrs. C.A. Randolph, secretary of Oakwood Cemetery, for \$250.⁴⁶ Johnson's son, J.G. Johnson, recalled that the Johnson family had paid \$350 or \$400⁴⁷ to have it moved from the cemetery to the new location, a distance of half a mile.⁴⁷ In 1933, J.E. Josey, a former Huntsville resident who was then publisher of The Houston Post, bought the house from the Johnsons for \$500.⁴⁸ Undoubtedly Josey already was developing plans for restoring the building, but these would not be worked out in detail until 1936, the year of the Texas Centennial.

Meanwhile, in its location near the public school, the Steamboat House had fallen on hard times. A newspaper reporter who saw the house in February 1936 wrote:

For two years it has been known as 'Squatters's Place' and that is what it is today — a squatters's place. A rickety, patched, draughty haunt of families who come to it and if there are rooms vacant, walk in and camp as best they may.

There were four families living in it when the [reporter] visited it, not to mention one aged bachelor who had a room in what is now the east gable upstairs. One of its 10 rooms was vacant — a family had just moved out.

J.G. Johnson, the former owner and now the caretaker, was one of the "squatters," having moved into the front room with several of his children after he had been "burned out" at another house two months earlier. On the north side of the house there was still a gallery, one of the few remaining traces of the original "steamboat" appearance. There "a child with her doll sat at a small, rough-made table and played with the doll and occasionally tossed a scrap of food to a waiting dog. In the rooms above, shouting and running could be heard." The house had been painted yellow. Its porch floor had rotted and some of the panes of the bay window near the entrance were missing. At the windows, dirty sheets had been hung in the place of curtains. "The old place isn't what it used to be," J.G. Johnson remarked. "[It's] just a place to camp in now."⁴⁹

For the past three years J.E. Josey had been proceeding with plans to restore the house. Josey and Mrs. I.B. McFarland, president of the Harris County Historical Society, had conducted an extensive search for information on the original appearance of the building.⁵⁰ Interviews with oldtimers produced much helpful material. Colonel Andrew Jackson Houston, son of Sam Houston, relying on memories from early childhood, said that the house "faced west, with a long gallery along each side and across one end, like the decks of an old Mississippi River steamer." He also remembered that the building was set in a large grove of trees.⁵¹ Mrs. John W. Thomason, Major Goree's daughter, described the house as it was when she was a girl.⁵² Will Kittrell and Lilla Durst, as noted,

remembered clearly what the house looked like when they lived there with their mother, Mrs. Pleasant Kittrell. So did their sister, Mrs. Sallie Sterrett. The most notable features, all seemed to agree, were the twin turrets at the front. Mrs. Sterrett recalled, "The ... turrets were about four feet above the roof, and we crazy children used to climb up there and play."⁵³ Mrs. Durst remembered that there were two fireplaces, one in the parlor and one in the room above, and brick flues for heaters. There were several outbuildings at the back: a well house, a chicken house, and a stable.⁵⁴

J.E. Josey considered several plans drawn up by architects for restoration of Steamboat House. On June 16, 1935, The Houston Post carried a photograph of a diorama of the house and grounds executed by Edward Wilkinson, a Houston architect and artist.⁵⁵ This was the plan Josey preferred, and the firm of Wilkinson and Nutter was given supervision of the restoration.⁵⁶ On February 1, 1936, Josey announced that the house would be presented formally to the state on March 2, Texas Independence Day and also Sam Houston's birthday. A celebration would be held in Huntsville. Governor James V. Allred would attend the celebration ceremony. Josey also received a telegram from Governor Hill McAlister of Tennessee accepting an invitation to the celebration as a representative of the state where Sam Houston spent his early years.⁵⁷

The year 1936 was an important one for many towns in Texas, and Huntsville would be honored doubly, since it was there on March 2 that the Sam Houston birthday observance and the local Texas Centennial celebration would be held. These were certain to draw a large crowd — as many as 15,000 people from throughout the Southwest, according to one estimate. An article in The Dallas Morning News on February 26 conveyed something of the pleasurable expectation of the event:

[Huntsville] will soon become a showplace of color and pomp. Flowers and flags will form the central part of the decoration scheme. The remainder is supplied by the city's natural beauty, it being set in the midst of tall pines and rolling hills.⁵⁸

Steamboat House had been dismantled to facilitate its transfer to Sam Houston Park, where it would be placed near Houston's other Huntsville home and his old law office. The Dallas paper reported that "scores of workmen were on the job" and that it was hoped that they would have the house ready for the celebration. Joseph Weldon Bailey, Jr., son of the famous Senator Joe Bailey, would present the house to the state in behalf of J.E. Josey. Governor Allred would accept it in behalf of the state. In addition to Governors Allred and McAlister, Governor Philip La Follette of Wisconsin, who would be in Texas on a lecture tour, had promised to be present.⁵⁹

March 2 arrived with clouds and a threat of showers. In the morning there was a ceremony at Houston's grave in Oakwood Cemetery. During the afternoon the presentation of Steamboat House took place in Sam Houston Park. A crowd of 10,000 people had gathered despite the overcast

sky and occasional drops of rain. Persons in charge of the program decided to disregard the unpromising weather rather than disappoint the crowd. Dr. Harry Estill, president of Sam Houston State Teachers College, introduced Henry Paulus, chairman of the board of regents of the college, and Paulus, in turn, introduced former Governor W.P. Hobby, master of ceremonies. Governor Hobby spoke briefly, making special mention of the contribution that former Huntsville residents had made to the city of Houston, where he lived.⁶⁰

Governor McAlister of Tennessee, who delivered the main address, spoke from a rostrum located near a pecan tree that Sam Houston was said to have planted. In a photograph taken that day, Governor McAlister presented an impressive figure, wearing a dark suit and an old-fashioned wing collar and tie. Standing bareheaded in the rain, he eulogized Houston, the hero of both Texas and Tennessee. "For it was there in Tennessee," the governor said, "that Texas' great liberator began, under the friendly and approving eye of Andrew Jackson, the career that [already had] marked him as one of America's immortals."⁶¹

Following Governor McAlister's Speech, Joseph W. Bailey, Jr., in behalf of J.E. Josey, presented the Steamboat House to the State of Texas, with the hope that it "will become a shrine to which all lovers of freedom may turn for inspiration." Governor Allred, in accepting the shrine, expressed "the heartfelt gratitude of the entire citizenship of the state" to Josey for making the gift. Both the main address and the presentation were broadcast statewide over the Texas Quality Network.⁶²

It should be noted that the ceremony took place not before the restored Steamboat House we see today but in front of the two-story remnant of the original house that had been moved to the park only a week earlier. Construction began soon after the ceremony, and on June 8 it was reported to J.E. Josey that "the towers are up and are now being weather-boarded."⁶³ Work was completed in the autumn, and photographs taken in early 1937 show the house much as it appears now. By this time another dedication was being planned. A reporter for *The Houston Post* wrote facetiously, "It looks as though Texas cannot stop 'Centennializing.' " This "second baptism" of Steamboat House would take place on March 2, 1937,⁶⁴ which would also be the date for the dedication of still another shrine, the new Sam Houston Memorial Museum. The museum, a handsome octagonal building of pink brick and Texas limestone, was erected with funds supplied by the state through the Centennial Board of Control. It had cost \$35,000⁶⁵ — a considerable sum in those Depression years.

Invitations were sent out in late January. While the ceremonies would certainly draw a sizeable crowd, it was expected to be smaller than the Centennial gathering. Fortunately, the weather on March 2, 1937, seems to have been more pleasant than that of the previous year. At least there was no mention of rain in the newspaper accounts. Attendance reached

only 2000 people — a fair-sized crowd but only a fraction of the size of that a year earlier. The two-hour program was highlighted by an address by William McCraw, the portly attorney general of Texas, who, not surprisingly, emphasized Houston's career as a lawyer: "[Sam Houston] was at his greatest as a citizen here in your midst as he practiced the law he loved," the attorney general said. Other speakers were Dr. Estill, Dr. J.L. Clark, chairman of the Walker County Centennial Board, and Representative A.T. McKinney. One honored guest, who made no speech but was given a round of applause, was a ninety-seven-year-old black man, Jeff Hamilton, the faithful slave who had kept vigil over Houston's deathbed in Steamboat House.⁶⁶ Somewhat deaf but still sprightly, Jeff was then living in Belton, where he was being cared for by his daughter.⁶⁷

For almost forty years following the Centennial celebrations, Steamboat House remained unchanged except for minor repairs and repainting. In October 1975, Austin architects Bell, Klein, and Hoffman prepared a lengthy preservation and development plan for Sam Houston Memorial Museum. One section of the plan contained a narrative history of Steamboat House, with recommendations for its repair and maintenance. In the opinion of the architects, prompt attention should be given to "inadequate roofing and flashing, deteriorated wood and weakened foundations."⁶⁸

Apparently these recommendations were followed and the house was put in better condition. Over the next dozen years, however, it began once more to show the results of weather and increasing age. Sam Angulo, director of the museum, became convinced that Steamboat House was unsafe and should be closed until repairs could be made. Three construction engineers inspected the house and came to the same conclusion. They found, among other problems, unstable piers, insufficient bracing of the walls, and settling chimneys that caused the roof rafters to sag.⁶⁹ There could be no doubt that the house was unsafe. In September 1988 Sam Angulo placed a sign near the front stairway: "Closed for Repairs."

In a conversation with the writer on February 14, 1989, Angulo was hopeful that work could begin soon. The house was being emptied of its furniture, pictures, and other historical objects to make ready for the workmen.⁷⁰ Sam Houston State University chose David Hoffman, Inc., an Austin architectural firm,⁷¹ as supervisor of an extensive repair project that would put the proud old house in sound condition.

NOTES

¹George L. Landolt, *Search for the Summit, Austin College through XII Decades, 1849-1970* (Austin, 1970), pp. 113-116. Landolt's information on Bailey differs slightly from that in the article in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, I, p. 501. According to the *DAB*, Bailey was ordained as a minister in the Congregational Church, although usually he is referred to as a Presbyterian. Perhaps he changed denominations after his appointment to a professorship at Austin College.

²*Dictionary of American Biography*, I, p. 501.

³Langston Gorce, ed., *The Kittrell Journal, 1853-1867* (Bryan, Texas, 1980), I, p. 234. Kittrell's journal is replete with such remarks about his acquaintances in Walker and Madison counties.

⁴Book D of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, p. 267.

⁵Book D of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, pp. 322-323.

⁶The belief that Frank Bailey and his wife rejected the house that his father built for him may or may not be true, but it has been repeated so often that it is accepted as fact.

⁷Will Kittrell, son of Pleasant Kittrell, quotes Bailey's boast some fifty years after it was made. W.H. Kittrell, Sr., to *The Huntsville Item*, November 30, 1926.

⁸Kittrell to *The Huntsville Item*, November 30, 1926.

⁹There is much speculation about the origin of the name "Steamboat House." In addition to the theory that Dr. Bailey designed it to resemble a steamboat, it has been said that the house actually was built by a retired steamboat captain, and — perhaps the ultimate absurdity — it was built from lumber salvaged from a wrecked steamboat!

¹⁰The story, like others concerning the house, may or may not be true, but the weird appearance of the building makes it easy to believe.

¹¹Bailey apparently was a gloomy man. His interest in Spanish may explain the choice of the name. Too, memories of the Mexican-American War and Zachary Taylor's great victory were still fresh in the 1850s.

¹²Landolt, *Search for the Summit*, p. 53.

¹³Landolt, *Search for the Summit*, p. 116.

¹⁴Some biographies are vague about the date Houston returned to Huntsville, but most agree that it was in the fall of 1862. See Llerena Friend, *Sam Houston. The Great Designer* (Austin, 1954), p. 351, and William Seale, *Sam Houston's Wife. A Biography of Margaret Lea Houston* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1970), pp. 222-223. Captain James Sims's hotel and dining room apparently were well known in Huntsville. Dr. Pleasant Kittrell recorded that he once "ate out" part of a medical bill that Captain Sims owed him for treatment of the captain's daughter, Ellen. *The Kittrell Journal*, II, p. 72.

¹⁵Jeff Hamilton, as told to Lenoir Hunt, *My Master. The Inside Story of Sam Houston and His Times*. (Dallas, 1940), p. 84. Jeff Hamilton's story is convincing except for the dates. He says, for example, that Houston moved to Huntsville in 1861. The date must have been 1862.

¹⁶Seale, *Sam Houston's Wife*, pp. 222-224.

¹⁷Will Kittrell, Sr., to *The Huntsville Item*, November 30, 1926.

¹⁸M.K. Wisheart, *Sam Houston. American Giant* (Washington, 1962), pp. 646-647. There is a puzzling statement in Wisheart's account. He writes that Dr. Markham "had Houston's bed moved downstairs...." Houston's bed was already "downstairs."

¹⁹Kittrell's visit to Steamboat House during Houston's last illness is described by several of the doctor's descendants in such detail as to be convincing. Kittrell's granddaughter, Miss Lucy Kittrell, told the story to the writer in a delightful letter in 1971. Lucy McGary Kittrell to John Payne, January 9, 1971.

²⁰Probate Minutes D, Walker County, Texas, p. 608.

²¹Book F of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, p. 291. Note that the grounds of the estate now include ten acres, since Bailey had bought two additional acres in May 1861. Book F of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, p. 123.

²²*The Kittrell Journal*, I, p. 225.

²³*The Kittrell Journal*, II, p. 160.

²⁴*The Kittrell Journal*, II, p. 171.

²⁵Henri Gerard Noordberg, "The Yellow-Fever Epidemic of 1867 at Huntsville," in D'Anne McAdams Crews, ed., *Huntsville and Walker County, Texas, A Bicentennial History* (Huntsville, Texas, 1976), pp. 214, 231.

- ²⁶Noordberg, "The Yellow-Fever Epidemic of 1867," pp. 218-219.
- ²⁷Noordberg, "The Yellow-Fever Epidemic of 1867," p. 219.
- ²⁸Will H. Kittrell, Sr., to The Huntsville Item, November 30, 1926.
- ²⁹The original will is on file in the Walker County, Texas, court house.
- ³⁰Book F of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, p. 678.
- ³¹Book N of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, pp. 449-451.
- ³²Clipping, n. p., n. d., sent to the writer by Miss Austin Durst, October 23, 1971.
- ³³Clipping sent by Miss Austin Durst to writer, October 23, 1971.
- ³⁴Lillian R. Otey McGary, *Autobiography*, typed manuscript, John W. Thomason Room, Newton Gresham Library, Sam Houston State University.
- ³⁵McGary, *Autobiography*.
- ³⁶Newspaper story written by Mrs. Sue Goree Thomason for the Huntsville Item, March 6, 1941; Herman Crow, "Thomas Jewett Goree," *Handbook of Texas, A Supplement*, III, p. 345.
- ³⁷McGary, *Autobiography*.
- ³⁸*Preservation and Development Plan for the Sam Houston Memorial Museum* (Austin, 1975), p. 71. This plan contains excellent architectural descriptions of the buildings in the Sam Houston Memorial Museum complex.
- ³⁹Jack W. Humphries, "The Old Town of Huntsville. The Perspectives of Estill and Thomason," *East Texas Historical Journal*, XXIII (Fall 1985), p. 42.
- ⁴⁰Oscar H. Cooper to Mrs. E.T. Goree, February 9, 1929. Copy in John W. Thomason Room, Newton Gresham Library, Sam Houston State University.
- ⁴¹Crow, "Thomas Jewett Goree," *Handbook of Texas*, III, p. 345.
- ⁴²Book 5 of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, pp. 520-522.
- ⁴³Book 40 of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, p. 505.
- ⁴⁴Book 54 of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, pp. 479-480.
- ⁴⁵The Dallas Morning News, January 15, 1928.
- ⁴⁶Special to The Houston Chronicle, February 26, 1936.
- ⁴⁷Special to The Houston Chronicle, February 26, 1936.
- ⁴⁸Book 74 of Deeds, Walker County, Texas, pp. 4-5.
- ⁴⁹Special to The Houston Chronicle, February 26, 1936. Essentially the same story appeared in The Dallas Morning News, February 9, 1936.
- ⁵⁰The Houston Post, Sunday, June 16, 1935.
- ⁵¹The Houston Post, January 25, 1935. The colonel's memory is somewhat faulty. The galleries ran on both sides of the house but not "across one end."
- ⁵²The Houston Post, January 25, 1935.
- ⁵³The Houston Post, June 16, 1935.
- ⁵⁴The Houston Post, February 1, 1936.
- ⁵⁵The Houston Post, Sunday, June 16, 1935.
- ⁵⁶*Preservation and Development Plan*, p. 77.
- ⁵⁷The Houston Post, February 1, 1936.
- ⁵⁸The Dallas Morning News, February 26, 1936.
- ⁵⁹The Dallas Morning News, February 26, 1936.
- ⁶⁰The Houston Post, March 3, 1936.
- ⁶¹The Houston Post, March 3, 1936.
- ⁶²The Houston Post, March 3, 1936.
- ⁶³J.L. Clark to J.E. Josey, June 8, 1936, quoted in *Preservation and Development Plan*, p. 77.

⁶⁴The Houston Post, February 21, 1937.

⁶⁵An invitation letter to the public was sent from the office of H.F. Estill, president of Sam Houston State Teachers College, on January 27, 1937. In the letter \$35,000 is given as the cost of the building. This figure is amazingly low, but it should be remembered that this is the period of the Depression.

⁶⁶The Houston Post, March 3, 1937.

⁶⁷The Houston Post, March 13, 1938.

⁶⁸*Preservation and Development Plan*, p. 103.

⁶⁹True Cousins to Sam A. Angulo, September 6, 1988.

⁷⁰Conversation with Sam Angulo, February 14, 1989.

⁷¹News Bureau, Sam Houston State University, November 18, 1988.