

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Gazebo for Albert Steves
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Gazebo at Haven River Inn

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 105 FM 473, at east portion of property
CITY OR TOWN: Comfort
STATE: Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** Kendall **CODE:** 259
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A
ZIP CODE: 78013

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (nomination) (request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (meets) (does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (nationally) (statewide) (locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date
State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Structure

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	0	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	1	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: *The Sculpture of Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas*

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: Recreation and Culture / Work of Art

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: Recreation and Culture / Work of Art

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: OTHER: Faux bois sculpture

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION
WALLS
ROOF
OTHER CONCRETE

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheet 5).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Art

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: c.1926

SIGNIFICANT DATES: c.1926

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Dionicio Rodriguez

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 5 and 6).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 6).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

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

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

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

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	14	511320	3315075

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The gazebo is located in the southeastern portion of a track of land described in Kendall County deed records as follows: "22.73 acres of land, more or less, out of the Justo Esqueda Sur. No. 25, Abs. No. 157 in Kendall County, Texas." The nomination encompasses only the gazebo and the ground upon which it stands.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The nomination boundary is drawn to include only the Gazebo itself. Although the estate itself may be eligible, it has not yet been evaluated due to the specific focus of this theme (*Sculpture of Dionicio Rodriguez*).

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Patsy Light and Maria Pfeiffer

ORGANIZATION:

DATE: January 2003

STREET & NUMBER: 300 Argyle

TELEPHONE: (210) 824-5914

CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78209

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-7)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Johnnie Merchant

STREET & NUMBER: PO Box 899

TELEPHONE: (830) 995-3834

CITY OR TOWN: Comfort

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78013

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Gazebo for Albert Steves
Comfort, Kendall County, Texas

DESCRIPTION

The Albert Steves Gazebo is in the southeastern portion of the Steves property, approximately 1.5 miles due east of Comfort, Texas. The gazebo features an octagonal palapa roof, capped by a small lantern, also with a palapa roof. The main roof, of three concentric layers of “straw,” is supported by eight 12’ high “tree trunks,” which mimic the textures of pecan, cypress, pine, hackberry and oak bark. Crossed “branches” serve as supporting brackets. A three-foot high railing of small “logs” is infilled with diagonal “branches.” The floor is made of eleven “cross-sawn” 14” wide “oak” planks. Three 5’2” “planed logs” serve as steps. The diameter of the gazebo is 12’10” and the total height is approximately 18’. The structure is elevated 3’ from the ground and has a base faced with concrete “rocks;” six are hollowed out for planters and one rolls back to reveal an opening. A relative of the family said that Mr. Steves stored his wine under the gazebo. Present throughout the gazebo are “wormholes”, patches of “lichen” and “peeling bark.” A large amount of color remains, and the structure is in good condition.

Three concrete benches are also placed on the grounds, but are not included in this nomination, due to their small size and distance from the primary resource. Two of the benches lack the detail of Rodriguez’s designs, while the third has a more organic shape and faux bois details. The seat, backrest, armrests, legs and braces evidence “peeling bark” and “worm holes.” It is probable that there was a large circular planter or pond east of this bench, as a rock border remains.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Albert Steves Gazebo is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, in the area of Art, as an outstanding example of the work of noted sculptor Dionicio Rodriguez. Although the estate itself may be eligible, it has not yet been evaluated due to the specific focus of this multiple property submission (*Sculpture of Dionicio Rodriguez*).

Albert Steves was the son of German immigrants who settled in Comfort before moving to San Antonio, where they established a lumber business and became one of the city’s leading families. In addition to working in the family business, Steves served as “...president of two railroads in Mexico, president of a Mexican mining company, vice-president of the City National Bank, and as a director of the Alamo National Bank.” He was also a member of many civic, fraternal, social and political groups (Steinfeldt, 1978: 12, 13).

Steves wanted a summer home near his birthplace, and he bought land high on a hill near the Guadalupe River near Comfort. There he built a large house that he named, “Aleswana,” a combination of the names of his four children. Steves commissioned Dionicio Rodriguez to build a “palapa” roofed “tree” branch gazebo and four benches for the large grounds. A family member, Margaret Lateer, remembers that the gazebo was built before 1931, was once used as an aviary, and that Mr. Steves stored his wine behind a small “rock” door underneath the sculpture (Lateer to Light). Although there is no signature, the technique is unmistakably Rodriguez’s with his application of “worm holes,” “peeling bark texture,” “lichen,” and imitation “bark” of pecan, cypress, pecan, peach, hackberry and oak trees. The round structure is 18-feet tall and is sited on a hillside high above the Guadalupe River. The property is now the Haven River Inn, and the present owners relate that it is a popular site for weddings. The gazebo is strikingly similar to the Marmion Gazebo (Sweeny, Brazoria County) and to one seen in a photograph of the Phelan mansion (Beaumont, Jefferson County).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

Gazebo for Albert Steves
Comfort, Kendall County, Texas

It is an interesting parallel that he and Marmion both commissioned Rodriguez to build similar gazebos for their vacation homes at approximately the same time. The construction and measurements of the two gazebos are comparable, and are exceptional examples of Rodriguez's artistry. The Steves' gazebo and three concrete benches are sited near the house and have a view of the river. The property, on FM 473, belongs to Johnnie Merchant and Diane White, and is operated as Haven River Inn, a bed and breakfast.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Conversations with Carlos Cortes, Margaret Lateer and Diane White.

Steinfeldt, Cecilia. *San Antonio Was*. San Antonio, Texas; The San Antonio Museum Association, 1978. pp. 1-14.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 7

Gazebo for Albert Steves
Comfort, Kendall County, Texas

PHOTO LOG

Rodriguez sculptures at Albert Steves' summer home (now Haven River Inn)

Comfort, Kendall County, Texas

Photographs by Patsy Light

March 1998

Negatives on file with Patsy Light

Gazebo

Camera facing east

Photo 1 of 2

Detail of inside of *palapa* roof of gazebo

Camera facing up

Photo 2 of 2