

SAM BELL MAXEY HOUSE

— STATE HISTORIC SITE —

Paris, Texas

On-Site Activity

Grade 7

Life Through Artifacts

In these suggested activities, students will examine artifacts to discover more about the lives of the Maxey residents, including the Maxey family and their household servants. Students will also explore the historic site and compare present day to historic resources to determine how the site has changed over the years.

Maxey House Tour

During the tour, highlight house appointments, artifacts, and other material culture that give clues to the quality of life of Maxey family members. Examples might include hand-painted portraits, furniture, books, etc. Distribute the **artifact graphic organizers 1-3** for students to take notes on particular items.

Questions to ask along the tour might include:

- How do the family rooms and the artifacts reflect this family's standing in the community?
- What can you learn about the Maxey family from their possessions?
- How do the artifacts tell you about the daily lives of both the family members and the house staff?
- What daily chores might have been challenging for house staff in the late 1800s? What parts of the chores would have been especially difficult? Why?

Activity: Letters About Life

Opening discussion questions to ask in or near the servants' quarters might include:

- The Maxeys had been slave owners and some of the servants working in the Maxey house were formerly enslaved people. What can you tell about their lives in the Maxey household? Why are there few primary source documents from enslaved persons?
- How could their stories be better investigated and known? What can you imagine the formerly enslaved people might have felt working in the home of a former Confederate general?

Distribute the **primary source letter excerpts** and the **graphic organizer**. Explain that these are the transcribed texts of letters written by the Maxeys and others during the late 1800s. The letters give some insight into the lives and responsibilities of the Maxey household staff. Read the letters aloud or ask for volunteer readers. Have students work individually or in pairs to complete the organizer. Share responses.

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Activity: Mapping Maxey

Historical Context

The 5-acre Maxey property included vegetable gardens, orchards, a vineyard, and livestock, including chickens, turkeys, and pigs. Marilda Maxey, wife of Sam Bell Maxey, started the gardens while the servants helped to maintain and expand them. The garden's decorative plants, including more than 200 varieties of roses, crape myrtle from Kentucky, and bearded irises, reflected the fashion of decorative gardens of the era. After Marilda's death, the Maxey's great-nephew Sam Bell Maxey Long inherited the home and began extensive remodeling in 1911. Maxey Long's wife, Lala, continued to care for the gardens.

Display/distribute the **1885 Bird's Eye View map** and the **satellite map** of the Maxey house. As a group, discuss what differences they notice on the two maps. What elements of the house and landscape appear in one map but not the other?

Distribute the **Maxey S. H. S. 1976 site plan**. Have students explore the grounds individually or in pairs and label the location and names of architectural and landscape elements they notice during their observations of the site.

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Artifact Graphic Organizer 1

Find artifacts that relate to this person in the Maxey household. Complete the graphic organizer.

Library: Sam Bell Maxey	
What artifacts in this room tell about Maxey's military and political careers?	
List 3 other artifacts in this room that you find interesting:	
1.	I think this artifact is interesting because
2.	I think this artifact is interesting because
3.	I think this artifact is interesting because

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Artifact Graphic Organizer 2

Find artifacts that relate to this person in the Maxey household. Complete the graphic organizer.

Dining Room: Marilda Maxey	
What artifacts in this room tell about Marilda's life running the Maxey household?	
List 3 other artifacts in this room that you find interesting:	
1.	I think this artifact is interesting because
2.	I think this artifact is interesting because
3.	I think this artifact is interesting because

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Artifact Graphic Organizer 3

Find artifacts that relate to these people in the Maxey household. Complete the graphic organizer.

Servant Quarters: Household Staff	
What artifacts tell you about the lives of formerly enslaved people who served in the Maxey household?	
List 3 other artifacts in these quarters that you find interesting:	
1.	I think this artifact is interesting because
2.	I think this artifact is interesting because
3.	I think this artifact is interesting because

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Activity Resource: Letter About Life Excerpts 1874-1886 [transcribed texts]

May 12, 1874: Marilda Maxey to Sam Bell Maxey

As John can't work out now I have him and Nancy in the house cleaning it. I am having it washed perfectly clean, the glass and all the wood work too, have had the beds and in fact everything on the place out to sun ever since you left till the rain came. I sent to Dr. True's and got some varnish and a brush and to Mr. Bab's and got some walnut stain and I am now having the furniture upstairs varnished.

February 25, 1877: Mary Susan Gatewood Terrill to Marilda and Sam Bell Maxey

This morning I was over at your House and went all over the yard and garden. John has his garden so nicely bedded up and has lettuce, onions and peas up – he is ahead of everybody here. The Flowers in the pit look beautiful, now Mall (?), I pulled a few and enclosed to you a sweet reminder of home. I tell you we are terrible anxious to see that great big, desolate house once more filled and see a living man, woman and child actually moving in and around& it . . . I know after the terminus of this Presidential question, Uncle is disgusted with Washington and ready to enjoy a quiet summer under “his” own vine and Fig tree” – for there is no “vine or tree” in a more prosperous or a more flourishing condition than yours. The servants are perfectly devoted to their “white people,” seems anxious to have everything just as you would wish it.

May 2, 1878: Mary Susan Gatewood Terrill to Marilda Maxey

Nancy has been in a good deal of trouble about Johnnie a few nights ago he had several convulsions, is better now, you know how easily alarmed Nancy is and how foolish about children. I think that Johnnie must be cutting his teeth.

June 15, 1885: Marilda Maxey to Sam Bell Maxey

I thought that when you all left that I would visit my friends while you were away, but I have been out of the yard once. August still worrying with the weeds in the orchard. Uncle Tobe asked August why he did not cut the weeds out of the orchard – that he had ‘knowed the place for many years, and he had never seed it look so bad.’ August's face turned red as a beet, but said nothing. Yesterday August finished fitting rattan hay around the Strawberries, and I hope we will, if we live have Strawberries next year.

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Letters About Life Graphic Organizer

Date of the Letter	What was the chore/work?	Who did the chore/work?	Where was the work done?

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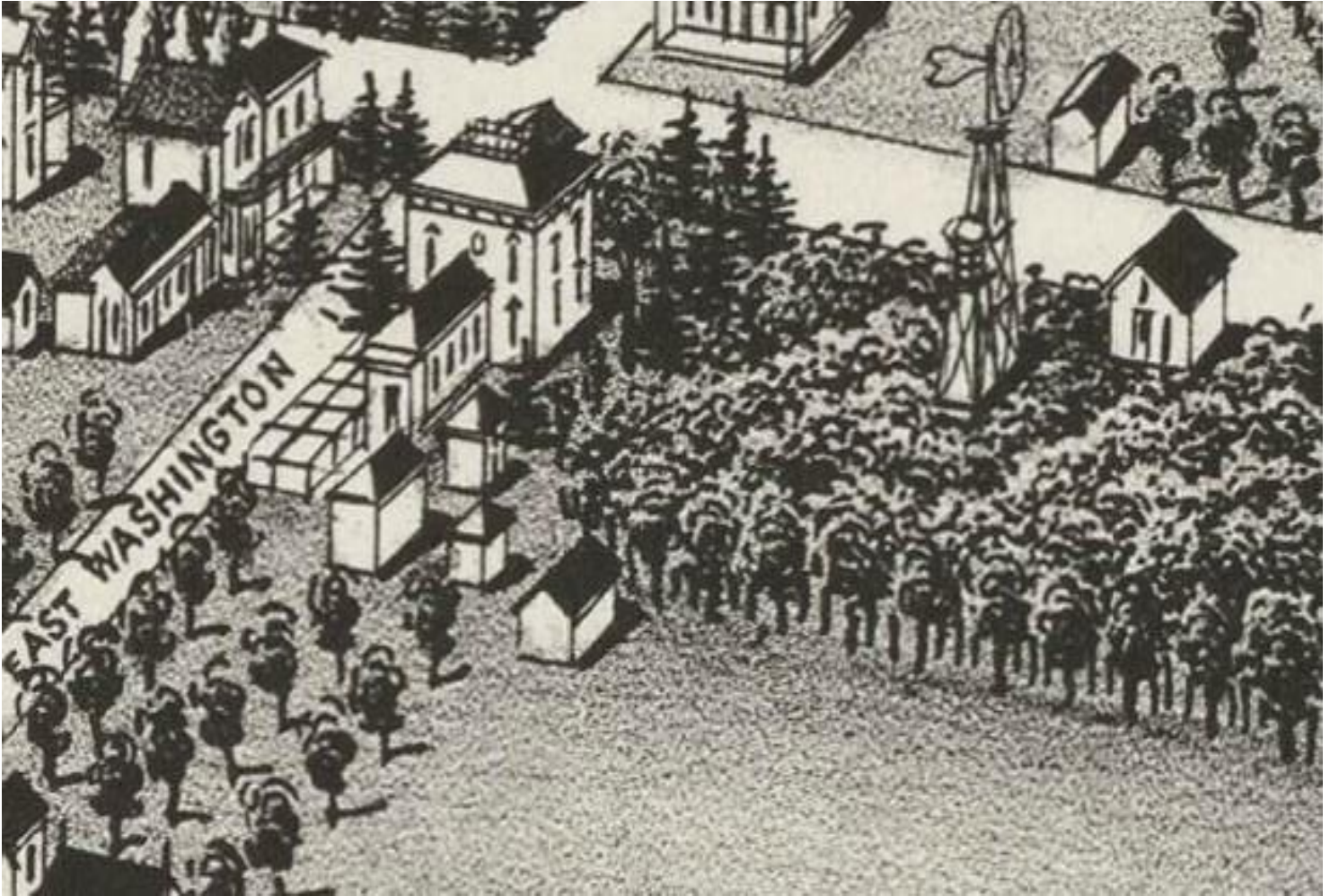
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Activity Image: 1885 Bird's Eye View map from the back of the Maxey house



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Activity Image: Satellite view of the Maxey House State Historic Site



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Activity Resource: Lala feeding the chickens



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Activity Image: Lala and cousin Baby Alice under the rose arbor



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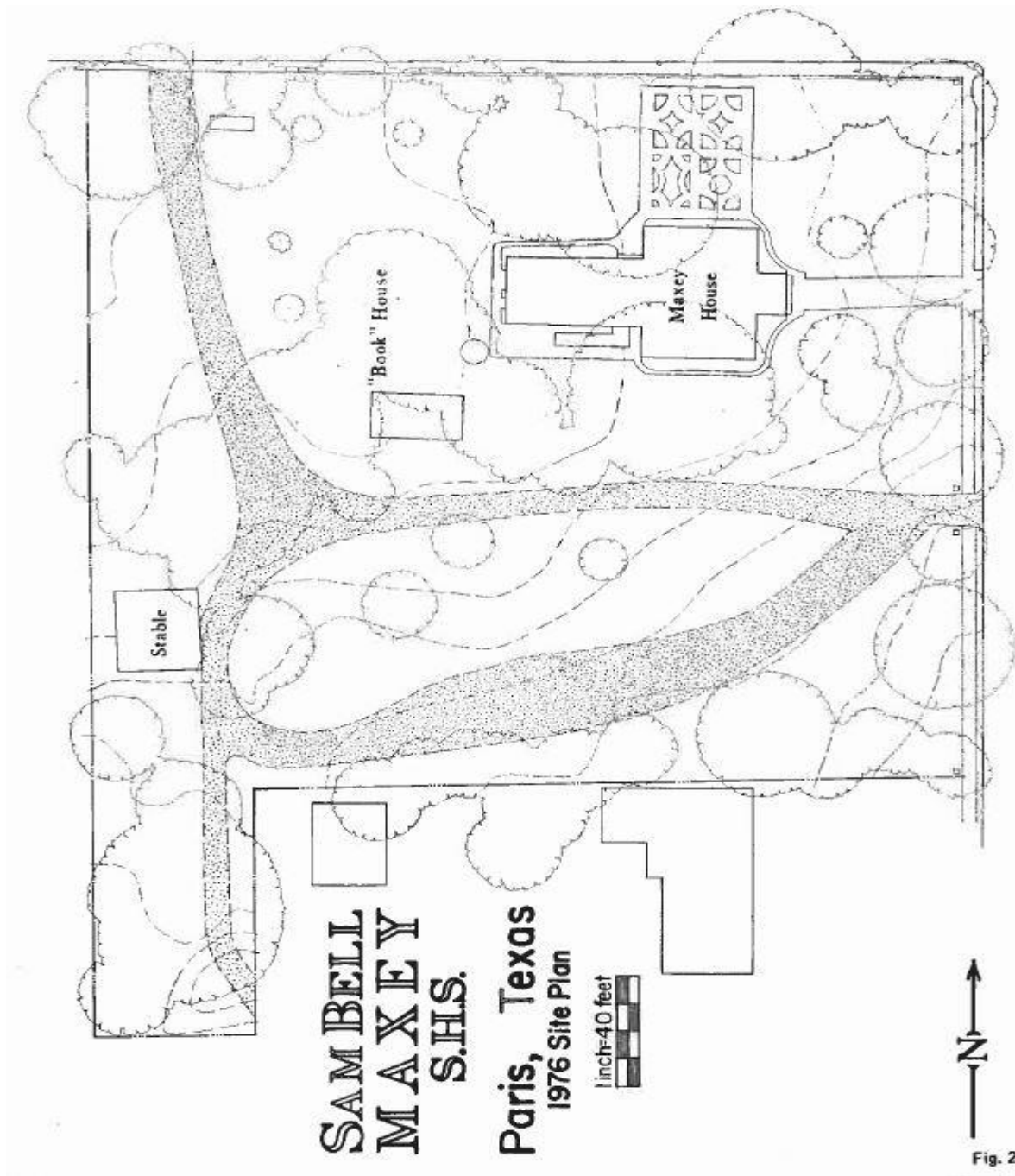
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Activity Image: 1976 Site Plan of Sam Bell Maxey State Historic Site



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