



Welcome

This three acre property has played an important role in Texas history, the development of the Round Mountain community and has touched the lives of many people, myself included. In lieu of giving you a personal tour, I'll attempt to portray the important details here.

Here you'll find information about:

- History of the Birdtown Inn
- Living Room & Den
- Entry & Stairs
- Dining & Kitchen
- Baths
- Grounds & Trees
- Cistern & Wells
- Ghost Stories
- Weddings
- Logistics & Details

History of Birdtown Inn

The story of this home begins in the mid 1860s in war-ravaged Virginia. Mr. Martin was ill and decided to pack his large family and move them to the promised healing powers of Central Texas. The family settled in Burnet County and tried to restart their lives. Mr. Martin did not find the healing he was hoping for and within a few years, he passed away.

Mrs. Elitha Martin was left uprooted with a limited ability to support her family. She sold their land and purchased a 300 acre parcel on which she could build a life for her family. She invested in this lovely spot along the year-round creek where the stagecoach line stopped on each trip to change out ponies. The stagecoach ran three times each week between Austin and Fredericksburg, bringing mail and passengers back and forth.



Prior to the founding of the official post office, this little town was known as 'Birdtown' after the founder, Joseph Bird whose cabin sits across the road. In 1874, Elitha Martin built a the Birdtown Inn knowing there would be a steady stream of visitors.

This community was a booming town in the late 1800s. Mrs. Martin was able to provide housing for the school teacher, the music teacher and the cobbler, as well as folks passing through. In 1880, she was approached by a community organization - they needed a place to meet and saw potential in the wooden stables that continued to serve the stagecoach line. They struck a deal – they would foot the bill for construction of a stone building that was in the style of her hotel in exchange for a \$1 per year lease – for 100 years. The building was planned to house ponies and stagecoaches on the ground floor, and be perfect for town gatherings, dances, voting and other community needs upstairs.



Mrs. Martin later built a two story general store and allowed a blacksmith shop to be built on the property. These were located on the NE and NW corners of the current property, respectively. She then became the postmistress and established the post office inside the general store. The founding of the post office forced the name change from Birdtown to Round Mountain as there was already a town too close in name to Birdtown.

Mrs. Martin ran the hotel and she was the postmistress of Round Mountain. She left the property to her children and it remained in the family until the early 1900's. It then changed hands numerous times, eventually falling into abandonment and ruin. It remained empty for decades – a beacon to brave neighborhood children and rowdy teenagers. The windows were broken, the roofs caved in. Feats of bravery were accomplished as the spooky dark windows invited ghost stories galore. The store was carted to San Antonio stone by stone to build a house. The blacksmith shop burned down. The house and carriage house remained, but were in desperate need of love and attention.



Both buildings were both brought back to life by a series of owners starting in the 1960's. The collapsed kitchen was rebuilt as a bathroom, the fallen chimneys were restored, the broken windows were replaced.

Today the stagecoach itself is a dusty memory. The ponies are remembered only by the occasional horseshoe that pops up in the yard. The many people that have passed through to stay the night, cast a vote, twirl around the dance floor or purchase a sack of flour have passed out of living memory, but still the buildings remain.

I count myself lucky to be a part of this story and I invite you to continue on as I describe the home in more detail.



Living Room & Parlor

As the story goes, the parlor was the room directly next to the staircase. It was kept closed unless there was a special visitor. The original room had a massive fireplace that was replaced with the window alcove that exists today.

On the other side of the stairs, the living room's fireplace also required rebuilding and was kept in its original location. The only change that was made was bringing the hearth up instead of leaving it at floor level as was customary in the 1800s. The firebox remains lined with soapstone which is known to absorb and then slowly release heat. This chimney is built without a flue and draws well.

As the story goes, the original room above the living room was Mrs. Martin's personal bedroom. That floor collapsed and the rebuild left the living room open to the second floor. A close eye can find the area in the stone fireplace that may have once opened to provide heat to the second story bedroom. We believe the blue color on the ceiling was original to the house and also covered the staircase.

The owner during the 1920's was rumored to have large luxurious parties that included having a woman standing on the second floor balcony singing to all the guests. This owner, Mr. Glass, was also said to make regular trips to Austin and even St. Louis to bring the finest goods to the Round Mountain store.

Entry, Stairs & Landing

This home was built in the traditional dog-trot style of early Texas buildings. With a direct line from the front door to what is now a screened in porch, a breeze can cut through the summer heat. The same can be found on the second floor, although the last sign of the upstairs porch that was originally on the front of the house is the doorway.

Both the entry and landing seem to have the original wood as the floor, as well as the stairs. During renovation, it was found that the stairs had at one time been blue with a carpet runner down the center.

On the upstairs landing, we have a collection of photos and paintings of the house, both historic and modern. Quintin Martin, Ms Martin's grandson is responsible for the large artwork depicting the hotel and carriage house. A copy of these prints can be found in the Round Mountain Post Office, the Johnson City Library and Johnson City Bank.



The small painting near the brown chair depicts the property as it was initially laid out - with the stagecoach road coming out of the creek and passing both the house and the carriage house before turning toward the road. The driveway ran up what is now the property line to the West.



Dining & Kitchen

The dining room is in the original location, we believe. It was a public room where guests were served. There is a bit of a mystery in the dining room - the window frame on the right window was trimmed at an angle. Was there a staircase here? If you look at the original floors in the room above, you can see that there may have been.

The fireplace and mantel are original. The dining room is also an excellent place to look at the original headers or lintels over the windows. That is cypress milled just down the road in the little town of Cypress Mill. Based on the window lintel, I wonder if the wall between the dining room and what is now the kitchen was original to the house.



The fireplace in the kitchen is built in a style that would not be found in 1800s Texas. It would, however, be found in Virginia at the time (think Jamestown). Mrs. Martin, being a recent transplant from Virginia, would have had this designed to her taste.

The original construction included a separate building for the kitchen, as was custom. The stone kitchen was separated from the hotel by a washroom that included the original well. The kitchen is said to have burned and the stones were used to build the current bathroom. The door leading from the kitchen to the bathroom was the original backdoor.

The washroom was enclosed in order to provide protection from the Native Americans, as the story goes.



Hotel and livery stable, Round Mountain, Texas,
built by great granduncle Sam in 1850 and
burned in 1875.

Baths

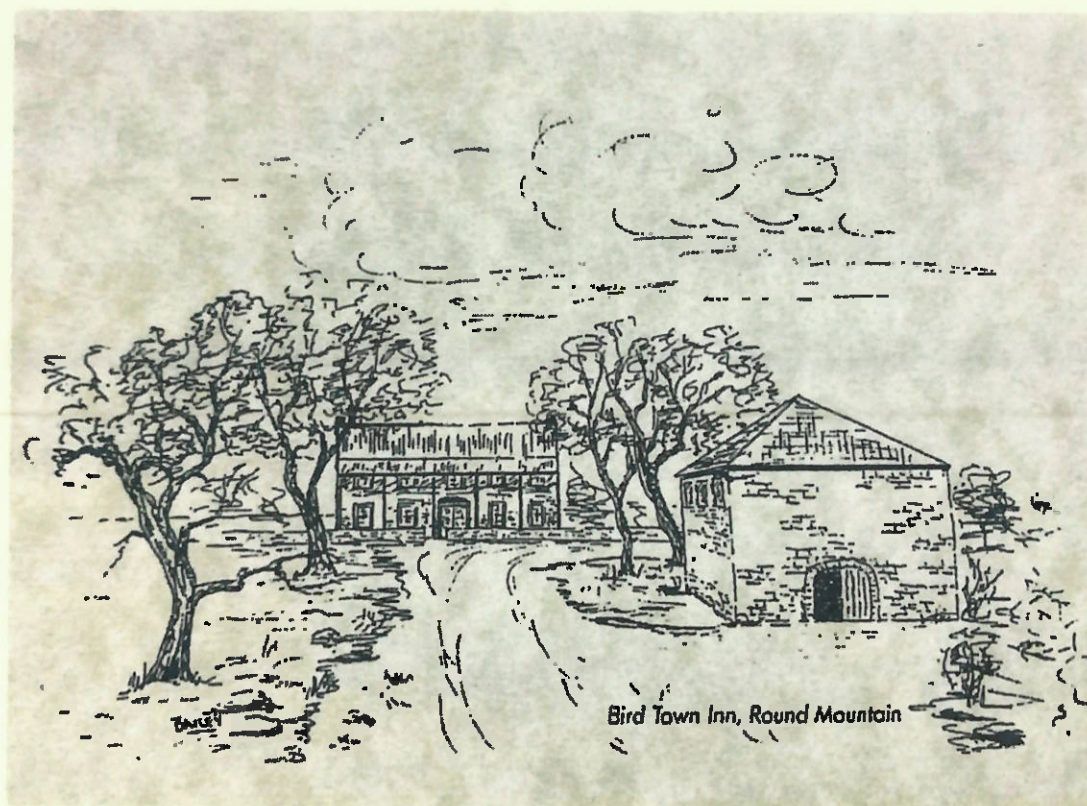
The bathrooms are not original to the house. The original construction boasted a "6-holer" outhouse. The current full bathroom was constructed in the 1960s, we believe. There were some missteps in the construction that hindsight has made clear. The odd boat shape design seems to be about maximizing size while excluding the original well, which can be found right outside the wall.

The slab was poured and the stone walls were built to mimic the original walls. Unfortunately, unlike the main house, the stone walls weren't built on solid stone footers, but simply on the concrete slab. The slab was not strong enough and has since broken. Evidence of this can be found in the roof, the walls and the floor. The floor has been repaired and the walls repointed, but these repairs are only temporary. We have had many innovative ideas on what the future may hold for this room, but have not yet put final plans into action.

The half bathroom under the stairs was added in the 1970s we believe and is on an entirely separate septic system. The water source is also the main well, but it branches off that main line prior to the kitchen and full bath.

Grounds & Trees

This particular spot was special to Mrs Martin because of the stagecoach line, but also because this portion of Cypress Creek was well known to be a year round creek that local ranchers could rely on for summer watering of their cattle. The spring fed creek continues to run year round. There is a rock wall along the creek that serves as the current property line.



Bird Town Inn, Round Mountain

This property sits on what is referred to as a "pecan bottom." The pecan trees provide as many pecans as you're willing to pick up. There are a variety of pecan trees throughout the property, each grown a particular shape and size of pecan. My favorite are the native pecans that fall from the large tree closest to the house and the paper shells that fall from the tree near the carriage house. I believe there are a total of 8 pecan trees on the property.

There are also a variety of trees and bushes selected for feeding the bees and other pollinators. My favorite are the Mexican Plum trees that provide fruit in the fall and the sweetest blossoms in the spring.



Cistern & Wells

In the middle of the back patio you'll find the cistern. It is a 12,000 gallon 'jug shaped' cistern used to hold rainwater. This allowed the occupants to have a source of water that did not have the mineral content that makes well water hard in this area. This soft water was especially good for baking and washing hair. The cistern no longer holds water. I was told that the folks that built the bathroom had excess rocks and they tossed them into the cistern, breaking it's clay lining.

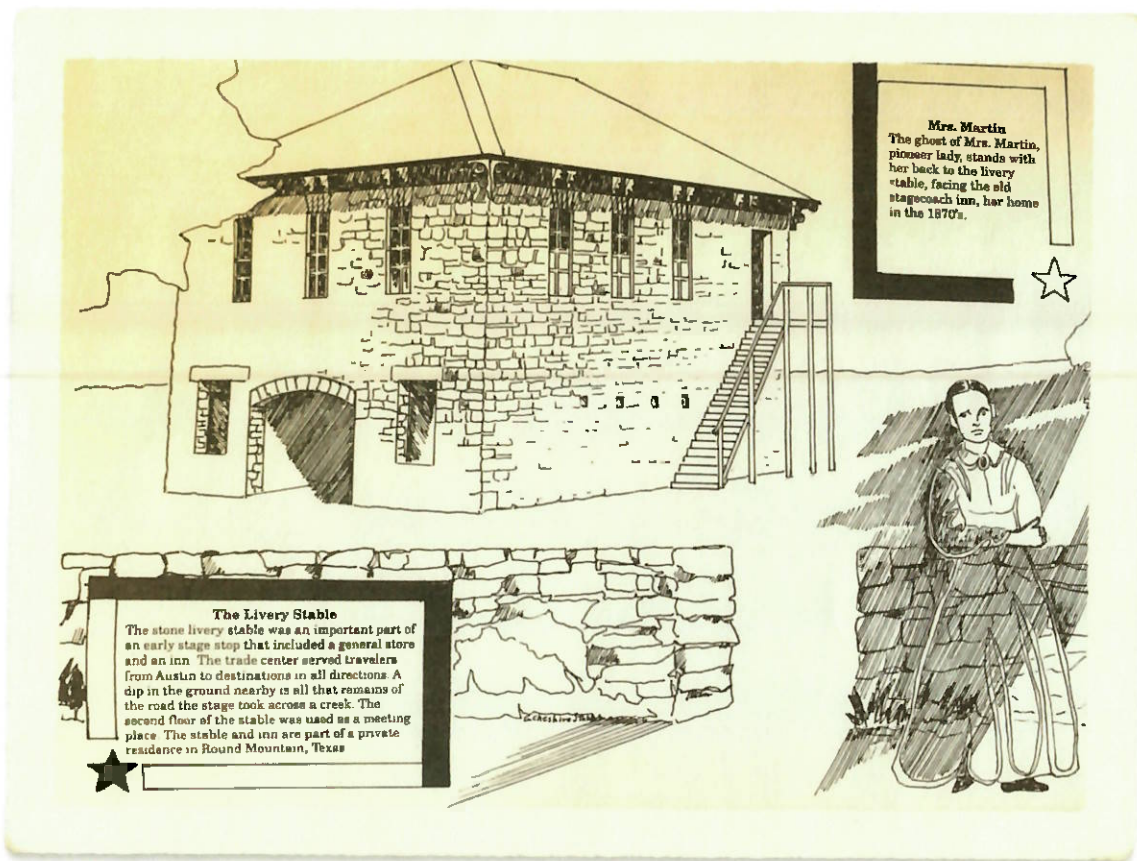
The original well is located behind the bathroom. The well in current use is located in the well house by the road. I was told that it is approximately 25 feet and even during the worst droughts of the last few decades, it was never dry. This abundance comes from its close proximity to fresh springs.



Ghost Stories

A house this old will always come with a few ghost stories. After living here, I can say that I have never had a negative experience, but I'm happy to share that stories that I have heard.

Many neighborhood youngsters reported seeing a ghostly woman in a long white dress with long dark hair wringing her hands in apparent sadness. Could this be Mrs Martin lamenting the loss of a child? It is said she lost three children very young.



Another story comes from masons hired to repair a portion of the stone wall in front of the house. They had been working all day when the owner arrived. They asked if their work was ok - the old woman inside had been glaring at them all day and they were worried that had done something wrong. The owner explained that no one was home. They insisted she had been standing at the upstairs window every time they looked. When they came inside and saw that there was no floor below that window, they reportedly left the property immediately, abandoning both their work and their tools!

There is even a photo that appears to have captured a ghost walking through the gate. I've never known what to think of it, but a lifelong local looked at the photo and said that he recognized the ghost as a man who lived there when he was a boy.



Weddings

We know there have been weddings here in the past, and one of our hopes was to have weddings here again. As a ceremony or reception location, we felt that the history and beauty of this property could really shine. Family needs are taking us away, but the potential will remain.

There is a church just West of our property that would be a perfect spot for a small ceremony. In front of this church is the historical marker celebrating Elitha Martin. She built the church, which is now owned by the City of Round Mountain.

