

STARR FAMILY HOME

state historic site

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VISITORS GUIDE

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Welcome to the Starr Family Home State Historic Site. Part of the Marshall community for more than a century, this property consists of seven buildings including the main house, Maplecroft, Rosemont Cottage and the Blake House. Experience the rich history and elegant lifestyle of four Starr family generations, from family portraits and hand-carved

late-19th-century furnishings to delicate collections of glassware and china. Explore each room of this real place filled with memories and real stories from the past. Visitors can expect the same warm hospitality today that the Starr family extended to travelers passing through East Texas more than 100 years ago.

The Maplecroft dining room features original family furnishings and place settings.



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION



Guided tour of Maplecroft's parlor

MAPLECROFT

The Starr Family Home State Historic Site interprets four generations of Starr family history through Maplecroft, the 1871 home of Frank and Clara Starr, and other buildings located on the property. The Starr family played an important role in Texas history from the formative years of the Republic of Texas throughout the state's rapid growth in the late 19th century.

Dr. James Harper Starr was president of the board of land commissioners and receiver of the land dues for Nacogdoches County, secretary of the treasury for the Republic of Texas, a local banker and a prominent land agent. Starr County was named after him. He moved with his family to Marshall in April 1870, to expand and solidify their land agency business. They built individual family homes on a shared land parcel of 52 acres, and Maplecroft is the centerpiece of this property.

The Starr family's efforts to survey, map and sell land throughout the state made them instrumental in Texas' growth, as they helped bring railroads and new settlers to the state through the remainder of the 19th century. Members of the Starr family continuously owned Maplecroft from its construction until the death of its last resident, Clara Pope Willoughby, in 1985. The family renovated and modernized the home over the years, but it retains its Victorian grace and the superb workmanship of the 1870s.

The dining room features original family furnishings.

James and Harriet Starr

Dr. James Harper Starr (1809–1890) was a successful physician, a surgeon in the Texas Army, the secretary of the treasury for the Republic of Texas and president of the Board of Land Commissioners for Nacogdoches County. In the 1840s he changed careers to become a land agent for those who exchanged property for Republic of Texas debts. During the Civil War, he served as an official in the Postal Service of the Confederate States West of the Mississippi. He was also a land agent and considered an expert on Texas real estate law.

Dr. Starr and his wife Harriet raised five children of their own, as well as two of their oldest daughter's children. Dr. Starr and his oldest son, James Franklin "Frank" Starr, moved with the extended family from Nacogdoches to Marshall in 1870 to relocate the family's profitable land agent's office. They chose Marshall because the town had a telegraph and a railroad station. After the Starrs opened their office in Marshall, business grew quickly. They loaned money out of their new office and, as a result, operated the first bank in Marshall. The state was awarding land grants to encourage railroad construction and the Starrs acquired many tracts of land as payment for surveying and mapping these properties.



Portrait of Frank Starr



Portrait of Clara Starr

Frank and Clara Starr

Frank and Clara Starr raised six daughters at Maplecroft, all of whom received their early education in a schoolhouse on the property that had originally been built as a former slave's home. Each daughter remained on the Starr property after

marriage, in homes provided by their parents, creating a complex of family buildings spanning more than 100 years and keeping multiple generations of the family close as their households grew.

Ruth Starr Blake was the second-youngest child of Frank and Clara Starr and her home, now known as the Blake House, still stands on Starr Family Home property. She moved back home when her husband died and eventually inherited Maplecroft. Mrs. Blake renovated the house during her residence to accommodate her extensive decorative arts collection, featuring Wedgewood china, Steuben and Venetian glass and Persian rugs. When she died, her niece, Clara Pope Willoughby, inherited and maintained Maplecroft, which she visited regularly. She granted the property and its contents to the State of Texas upon her death in 1985, and the site opened to the public in 1986.



Dr. Starr bought 52 acres on the edge of Marshall in 1870, establishing this site as the family's home and residing in Rosemont with his wife Harriet and their granddaughters. A fire in the late 19th century destroyed the main house. Only a single

Murano Art Glass Pear