

STARR FAMILY HOME

state historic site

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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 dining room with original Starr family table and chairs.





This was the bedroom of Frank and Clara Starr.

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, 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.

Left: The parlor was a place for adults to chat and relax.

James and Harriet Starr

Dr. James Harper Starr (1809–1890) was a successful physician, secretary of the treasury for the Republic of Texas, and president of the board of land commissioners for Nacogdoches County. It is this last position that in 1841 caused him to change careers and 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 Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederacy. He was also a banker and considered an expert on Texas real estate law.

Dr. Starr and his wife Harriet raised their five children, as well as two of their grandchildren. 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 of the town's amenities such as location and telegraph service. After the Starrs opened their land agency in Marshall, business grew quickly. They loaned money out of their land agency 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.

Dr. Starr bought land on the edge of Marshall in 1870, establishing this site as the family's home and



Portrait of Frank Starr

Frank and Clara Starr

Frank Starr married Clara Fry Clapp in 1868 and built the family home, Maplecroft, in 1871 on land deeded to him by his father. Maplecroft was built in the Greek Revival style, typical of Texas homes built in this time period.

Frank and Clara Starr raised six daughters at Maplecroft. The Starr girls received their early education in a schoolhouse on the property that had been built as a former slave's retirement home. Four of the Starr



Portrait of Clara Starr

daughters—Clara, Harriet, Sallie, and Ruth—remained close by, building homes within walking distance of their parents' house. Of the other two daughters, Pamela and her husband lived at Maplecroft, with Mary visiting frequently. This created a complex of family buildings spanning

more than 100 years and keeping multiple generations of the family close as their households grew.

Legacy

Frank and Clara's widowed daughter, Ruth Starr Blake, moved from her home to Maplecroft to care for her aging widowed mother. Upon Clara's death in 1925, Ruth inherited Maplecroft and its environs. Ruth chose her beloved niece, Clara Pope Willoughby, as her heir. Willoughby granted the property and its contents to the State of Texas upon her death in 1985. The site opened to the public as a museum in 1986.

In 2010, the Texas Historical Commission closed the site for extensive repairs and to write an interpretative plan focusing on the 19th century, a time period that illustrates the Starr's greatest influence on Texas history. Maplecroft's interior received a complete renovation with new floor coverings and freshly painted walls. Victorian era family heirlooms and family portraits, believed to have been painted in the 1880s, complete the house's new look.

residing in the original main house, Rosemont, with his wife Harriet and their granddaughters. A fire in the late 19th century destroyed the main house and a single wing remains today.

Left: This 19th century enameled inkwell is from the Starr Family Home collection.