(Oct. 1990)

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**
**REGISTRATION FORM**

## 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

**HISTORIC NAME:** M. G. Michaelis Ranch
**OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER:** N/A

## 2. LOCATION

**STREET & NUMBER:** 3600 FM 150 West **NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A
**CITY OR TOWN:** Kyle **VICINITY:** N/A
**STATE:** Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** Hays **CODE:** **ZIP CODE:** 78640

## 3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this _x_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 _x_meets ____does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___nationally ___statewide _x_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 |
|---|---|---|
| ____ entered in the National Register<br>___ See continuation sheet. | | |
| ____ determined eligible for the National Register<br>___ See continuation sheet. | | |
| ____ determined not eligible for the National Register | | |
| ____ removed from the National Register | | |
| ____ other (explain): | | |

## 5. CLASSIFICATION

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** DOMESTIC: Single dwelling;
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Animal facility
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Agricultural fields

**NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:**

| CONTRIBUTING | NONCONTRIBUTING | |
|---|---|---|
| 15 | 4 | BUILDINGS |
| 3 | 0 | SITES |
| 8 | 1 | STRUCTURES |
| 3 | 0 | OBJECTS |
| 27 | 5 | TOTAL |

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

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** Rural Properties of Hays County, Texas

## 6. FUNCTION OR USE

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** Agriculture

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** Agriculture

## 7. DESCRIPTION

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne
OTHER

**MATERIALS:**

| | |
|---|---|
| FOUNDATION | Stone |
| WALLS | Wood |
| ROOF | Metal |
| OTHER | Stone, Metal |

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-# through 7-#).

## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

__X_ **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.

__X_ **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:** Agriculture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1898-1955

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1898; 1902

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** unknown

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-# through 8-#).

## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheet 9-#).

**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:**

x State historic preservation office *(Texas Historical Commission)*
_ Other state agency
_ Federal agency
_ Local government
_ University

_ Other -- Specify Repository:

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** 288 acres

**UTM REFERENCES**

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ## | ###### | ####### | 3 | ## | ###### | ####### |
| 2 | ## | ###### | ####### | 4 | ## | ###### | ####### |

(see continuation sheet 10-#)

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheet 10-#)

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION** (see continuation sheet 10-#)

## 11. FORM PREPARED BY

**NAME/TITLE:** Terri Myers

**ORGANIZATION:** Hardy Heck Moore & Myers **DATE:** July 30, 2000

**STREET & NUMBER:** 1414 W. 6th Street **TELEPHONE:** (512) 478-8014

**CITY OR TOWN:** Austin **STATE**: Tx **ZIP CODE:** 78703

## ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** (see continuation sheet Map-#)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-#)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

## PROPERTY OWNER

**NAME:** Maximo Michaelis III

**STREET & NUMBER:** 3600 FM 150 West **TELEPHONE:** (512) 268-2241

**CITY OR TOWN:** Kyle **STATE:** TX **ZIP CODE:** 78640

M.G. Michaelis Ranch

Section 7 – Physical Description

The Michaelis Ranch comprises the original homestead and surrounding 288-acre agricultural tract purchased by Max Gustav. Michaelis in 1898. The ranch was developed and occupied by Michaelis, his son, grandson and now, great-grandsons for the past 100 years and its built resources reflect the age and evolution of the property. It is one of a series of ranch tracts that lie along both sides of County Road 150 between Kyle and Driftwood, in north-central Hays County. Approximately rectangular in shape, the ranch lies along the north side of Highway 150 from which most of the buildings and cleared fields, punctuated by clusters of trees, are visible. A dirt road marked by stone entry piers extends from the main road to the building complex where it completes a loop in front of the primary residence on the north and an agricultural complex on the west.

Built resources can be divided into four functional units: the principal building compound, comprised of adjacent domestic and agricultural components; secondary agricultural features including sheds and barns located throughout the property; pastures for grazing livestock and cultivated fields for crop fields. Aboveground infrastructure includes the packed earth driveway and unimproved ranch roads that access remote pastures and fields. Various items such as an old gasoline pump and landscaping features including rock retaining walls and grape arbors add to the historic appearance of the property.

From the entrance on County Road 150, the long driveway curves to the northwest, leading directly toward the building compound with the house positioned so that it is the focus of the approach. Although the agricultural component of the main building compound is larger and has numerous buildings and structures, the the main residence, a large ca.1898 Modified L-plan house with a wrap-around porch and Queen Anne stylistic features, dominates the visual landscape. It is larger and more ornate than most other ranch houses of the period and locale, but served the same functions as its contemporaries; it sheltered the family and served as headquarters for their ranching operations. The house is defined by gabled wings projecting from a high-pitched metal hipped roof, a sweeping wrap-around porch and late-Victorian era ornamentation including turned porch posts and jig-sawn braces, patterned shingles, a bay window and turreted gazebo. The single entry door is flanked by sidelights and fenestration consists primarily of two-over-two wood sash windows.

A fenced yard surrounds the house and stone piers built in the 1940s flank the walkway to the entrance on the front porch. A low stone landscaping wall embedded with seashells, fossils and crystal from about the same period holds foundation plantings around the front and east side of the house.

A large complex of agricultural buildings lies immediately west of the house and yard, beyond a long guesthouse and garage. Barns, sheds, pens and corrals are linked by well-worn dirt paths through the complex. Historic barns are of stone or frame construction with gabled or hipped metal roofs. Most are at least partially open to provide circulation. Buildings and structures are generally divided into animal barns and corrals, feed and equipment storage, vehicle

garages and fences. Other agricultural structures include grain silos, wells, cisterns and a scale for weighing mules. An old gasoline pump stands near the entry to the building compound.

Most of the property is composed of agricultural land divided into grazing pastures, crop fields and animal corrals. Horse pastures are separate from the cattle pastures and special pens were built to contain bulls. Some of the corrals are constructed of stacked wood *(corrales de llena)*. Pastures and fields are defined and enclosed by historic rock walls and interlocking cedar limb fences. Other historic landscaping features include rock entry piers, a gate and cattle guard, metal sign and the dirt driveways and paths. To the north lie cedar covered rocky hills that remain in a natural state. Historic features date from the initial occupation of the ranch by its founder, M. G. Michaelis Sr., in 1898, through 1955 when Max Michaelis III launched an expansion program that included many new facilities to accommodate the breeding and exhibition of the Charolais cattle for which the ranch is famous.

**Site No. 1. Michaelis House. Category: Contributing. Built: 1898; Remodeled 1902.**
Description: 1-story Modified L-plan frame house with Queen Anne stylistic embellishment including bay window, wrap-around porch, turned porch posts, patterned shingles, decorative brackets and spindle frieze. Sidelights and a transom frame the door. False bevel siding covers most of the house with asbestos shingles on rear additions; windows are predominantly 2/2 light double hung sash but horizontal louvered windows are on a 1940s addition. Originally, entry led into a central hall; remodeled in the 1940s, the hall was opened to the living room on the east side and a dining room and library on the west. Bedrooms were added to the rear and a shed-roofed kitchen attached to the west side, all during the period of significance. Several minor additions to rear and small area of porch enclosed.

Significance: Built by M. G. Michaelis Sr., founder of the Michaelis Ranch, the house has been continuously occupied by his descendants for more than 100 years. The house lies at the heart of the Michaelis ranching operations and is associated with the agricultural heritage of the Kyle area in Hays County. It is an unusually fine example of the Queen Anne architectural style in a rural setting.

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**Site No. 2. Garage, Office, Guest Room. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1900; Additions**
Description: An elongated side-gabled frame building consisting of multiple one-room segments arranged in a linear fashion. A three-sided frame auto garage is attached on the south end of the long, narrow building; it is open to the packed-dirt driveway on the east side. Most of siding on the office-guest room is a combination of weatherboard and asbestos shingle. The building was remodeled in 1960 but retains its original configuration and appearance, as well as function, to a good degree as evidenced by ca. 1910 photographs.

Significance: Associated with the Michaelis Ranch at the turn of the 20th century when M. G. Michaelis had built a successful business and entertained many guests, customers and visiting family members.

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**Site No. 3. Scales. Category: Contributing. Built: 1902**.
Description: Wood framed, partially enclosed pen with platform to support mules built over subterranean scales.

Significance: Scales built for mule breeding operation associated with the early success of the Michaelis Ranch. Equipment is intact and scales remain operational. Structure represents technological improvements associated with progressive farming methods of the period.

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**Site No. 4. Shop. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1900**

Description: Long, narrow front-gabled frame building with sheet metal roof; individual chicken coops project from exterior walls.

Significance: Originally built as a forge to make horseshoes for horses and mules which were important in the early success of the ranch. This narrow shop building has served various agriculture-related purposes, including housing chickens, since the forge became obsolete. Like most utilitarian farm and ranch resources, the shop has been incrermentally altered in response to changing technologies and agricultural trends needs. However, the modifications are consistent with agricultural practices and traditions. The shop is associated with historic ranch operations and retains its original architectural fabric to a moderate degree.

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**Site No. 5. Open Shed. Category: Contributing. Built: 1955**.
Description: Simple frame shed with sloping metal roof; open on east side.

Significance: Associated with expansion of the ranch operations with the promotion of the Charolais.

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**Site No. 6. Agricultural Vehicle Garage. Category: Contributing. Built: 1955**.
Description: Shed-roofed frame shelter for tractors and other ranch vehicles. Wood sides and sloped metal roof. Open on south side.

Significance: Associated with expansion of the ranch and site improvements with the promotion of the Charolais cattle. The structure housed vehicles necessary for ranch operations.

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**Site No. 7. Well. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1890**
Description: Brick lined well. The submergible pump was added circa 1968;

Significance: Said to be the second well built in Hays County. Necessary to successful ranching operations.

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**Site No. 8. Cottage. Category: Noncontributing. Built: 1961**.
Description:

Significance: Originally constructed after the end of the historic period and rebuilt in 1997 the small house does not contribute to the historic character of the ranch.

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**Site No. 9. Show Barn. Category: Noncontributing. Built: 1966**.
Description: Large exhibition barn of painted concrete block with low-pitched front-gable roof. Open interior with unobstructed center aisle flanked by individual cattle pens on both sides for most of its length. Large openings with hasp-hinged doors on north and south ends.

Significance: Built during the height of popularity for the Charolais, the show barn was used to display cattle for auctions held at the ranch beginning in the mid-1960s. The property does not meet recommended age criteria and its design and materials are incongruous with other historic buildings on the ranch.

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**Site No. 10. Hay Shed. Category: Contributing. Built: 1955**.
Description: Large, open pole barn of frame construction.

Significance: The Michaelis family grew and stored hay for its cattle. The shed is associated with the day to day operation of the ranch and retains its integrity to a large degree.

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**Site No. 11. Veterinary Room. Category: Noncontributing. Built: 1960**.
Description:

Significance: Out of necessity, ranchers administered vaccines and performed other veterinary services for their own livestock. However, this building was built after the period of significance and is associated with later ranch operations.

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**Site No. 12. Open Sheds. Category: Contributing. Built: 1955**.
Description: Similar to other pole supported open sheds with wood siding and corrugated metal roofs.

Significance: Served utilitarian ranch functions during the period of significance.

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**Site No. 13. Open Hay Barn. Category: Contributing. Built: 1955**.
Description: Metal hipped-roof barn supported by lally poles atop partial height stone walls. Upper portion above wall is open for air circulation.

Significance: Primary hay barn associated with historic ranch functions. Unchanged since built, the structure retains integrity and contributes to the historic character of the ranch.

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**Site No. 14. Horse Barn. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1935**
Description:

Significance: Although the Michaelis Ranch gained its reputation largely through mule and cattle breeding, horses have always been an important part of the ranch history. Built after the original barn burned down, the horse barn represents the continuing ranching traditions. It retains its historic fabric to a moderate degree.

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**Site No. 15. Large Barn. Category: Contributing. Built: 1935**.
Description: Large front-gabled barn with stone walls covered in concrete stucco. Interior space is divided into separate spaces for mixing and storing livestock feed. Central aisle leads between large open doors at both ends and connects the building complex with pastures to the west.

Significance: Built after the original frame barn burned in 1935, this large building was probably constructed of stone to reduce the likelihood of future fires. It is associated with historic agricultural operations of the ranch and retains its original fabric and function.

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**Site No. 16. Silos. Category: Contributing. Built: 1955**.
Description: Two medium-sized turreted grain silos fabricated with galvanized steel.

Significance: Built during a period of expansion, the silos stored grain to feed livestock and thus contributed to ranch operations. They remain unchanged since their placement in 1955 and are typical of mid-20th century support structures.

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**Site No. 17. Open Sheds. Category: Contributing. Built: 1955**.
Description:

Significance: built after the original barn burned down;

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**Site No. 18. Camp House. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1920, remodeled in 1961**
Description: Modest front-gabled frame bungalow with wood siding.

Significance: This early 20th century house is set in a grove of trees with its own fenced yard. Hays County farmers often built one or more small tenant houses for temporary or seasonal workers but ranchers commonly provided more substantial housing for their foremen or valued resident workers and their families. Typically, these families remained tied to the ranch for many years. The Zapalac family followed that tradition on the Michaelis Ranch where they occupied this bungalow in the 1920s and 1930s. Subsequent families have lived in the house and assisted with ranch duties since that time. Although extensively remodeled in 1961, the house retains sufficient integrity and historic associations with the ranch to be a contributing feature of the property. It reflects a historic relationship that played a significant role in ranching tradition.

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**Site No. 19. Open Shed. Category: Contributing. Built: 1951**.
Description: Large pole framed sheds with metal roofs for hay storage

Significance: A typical feature of large ranch and farm properties in the mid-20th century, the

shed sheltered feed and equipment from the elements and supported the ranch operations.

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**Site No. 20. Open Shed. Category: Contributing. Built: 1955**.
Description: Metal pole framed shed with metal roof

Significance: Used to store old and discarded equipment and "junk", it is a typical feature of traditional agricultural properties of the mid-20th century.

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**Site No. 21. Large Open Barn. Category: Noncontributing. Built: 1966**.
Description: Metal structure with metal roof

Significance: Vehicle barn built after the historic period.

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**Site No. 22. Open Shed. Category: Contributing. Built: 1951**.
Description: Metal pole framed shed with metal roof

Significance: Used to store old equipment and "junk", it is a typical feature of traditional agricultural properties of the mid-20th century.

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**Site No. 23. Sign. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1955**.
Description: Metal advertising sign supported by wood posts; feature painting of a Charolais bull
Significance: Designed by the early Charolais Association, the sign marks the expansion of breeding activities and the development of on-site exhibition of the Charolais on the ranch.

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**Site No. 24. Cattle Guard and Entry Gates. Category: Contributing. Built: 1952**.
Description: Rock piers and two large trees define the entrance to the ranch from Highway 150.. Swinging double gates made of metal poles are mounted at the entrance over a metal cattle guard.

Significance: Simple but decorative rock piers serve landscape and identification purposes. The cattle guard and gates were necessary to keep livestock from wandering off. These are typical features of early ranches in Hays County and contribute the historic character of the Michaelis Ranch.

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**Site No. 25. FM 150. Category: NA. Paved in 1952**
Description: Two-lane asphalt county road

Significance: Defines the southern boundary of the Michaelis property and connected the ranch

to Kyle, the nearest town. The Michaelis house has historically fronted the road which was typical of historic farms and ranches in Hays County. The curving two-lane country road has narrow shoulders and follows the topography of the landscape in traditional fashion. Although it contributes to the character of the ranch, the road does not lie within its boundaries.

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**Site No. 26. Bull Pens. Category: Noncontributing. Built: 1966**.
Description: Rectangular pastures enclosed by wood fences

Significance: Although confined bull pens are traditional these features were established after the period of significance.

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**Site No. 27. Driveway. Category: Contributing. Built: 195?**.
Description: Long curved driveway of hard-packed dirt and gravel leads to building complex with spur to pastures.

Significance: The unpaved drive stands on the original course and is surfaced with traditional materials.

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**Site No. 28. Gasoline Pump. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1925**.
Description: A single metal gas pump stationed at the entrance to the agricultural complex.

Significance: Many early 20th century Hays County ranches and farms maintained their own gasoline pumps to power tractors and other agricultural vehicles and this is a vestige of that era. The pump stands near the site of the original family dwelling that pre-dates the 1898-1902 Michaelis House.

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**Site No. 29. Stack Yard. Category: Contributing. Post-1935**
Description: Site of original barn.

Significance: Fenced space stands on the site of the original barn and is used for traditional agricultural activities.

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**Site No. 30. Working Pens. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1935; 1951**
Description: Pens enclosed by fences of interlocking cedar logs.

Significance: Established after the original barn burned in 1935, the pens were rebuilt in 1951. Small, enclosed yards for handling cattle are a necessary feature of the historic cattle ranch.

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**Site No. 31. Walls and Fences. Category: Contributing. Built: ca. 1898-1955**

Description: Series of rock walls made of limestone found on site; network of wood fences made of interlocking cedar limbs.

Significance: Historic ranches in rocky western Hays County typically contained walls made of stone cleared from the grazing pastures and crop fields. The dry stack walls often define boundaries between ranches and enclosed areas within them. Surviving walls are visible along country roads, especially in the Mt. Sharp and Mt. Gainor communities. Those on the Michaelis Ranch are follow traditional patterns. Likewise, a series of cedar fences constructed of interlocking posts built in a zig-zag pattern define pastures and pens throughout the property. Although they have been continuously rebuilt over the years, they follow traditional methods and patterns and contribute to the historic landscape.

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**Site No. 32. Pastures. Category: Contributing. Established: 1898-1955**
Description: Series of cleared fields of native grasses enclosed by wooden fences.

Significance: The current grazing pastures were defined and established in the ranch's formative period and have been used continuously for grazing cattle and other livestock.

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**Site No. 33. Crop Fields. Category: Contributing. Established: 1898-1955**
Description: Cleared fields for cultivation of hay and other forage crops.

Significance: In the rocky, hilly terrain of this region crop fields were established in more level areas with deeper topsoil. Considerable effort went into clearing fields of rocks and improving soil for cultivation. Rocks were used to build stacked walls throughout the property. These fields have been continuously used for cultivation of hay and other feed for livestock since the establishment of the ranch.

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## Section 8: Statement of Significance

### Summary

The M.G. Michaelis Ranch is one of the best, most intact examples of a historic ranch compound still surviving in a rapidly changing area of Hays County. Accessed by a dirt road from the north side of the County Road 150 approximately seven miles west of Kyle, Texas, the building complex and surrounding fields and pastures occupy the original 288-acre ranch parcel purchased and developed by M. G. Michaelis in the late 1890s. Worked by four generations of the Michaelis family since 1898, the parcel contains stellar examples of buildings; structures, objects and sites typically associated with traditional Central Texas ranches of the late-19th and early 20th centuries. The late-Victorian period Queen Anne style house and ranching complex made up of barns, wells, garages, and other agriculture-related outbuildings, lies on the original 288-acre tract purchased by M.G. Michaelis Sr. in 1898 from Captain Fergus Kyle. As expected in a working ranch developed over a 100-year period, many of the individual resources have been altered to accommodate new agricultural techniques. However, most retain their original function and integrity to such an extent that they clearly portray ranch life and work of the historic period. Perhaps as important, the land use and property layout, including the building complex, pastures, pens, fences and fields, remain largely unchanged from the turn of the century when the ranch was fully developed. These combined elements -- the buildings and structures together with the built landscape -- preserve a rare artifact of Hays County's ranching heritage which was the cornerstone of its early economy and development. M.G. Michaelis and his descendants contributed significantly to that legacy particularly in breeding champion livestock, first mules and later, cattle. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the Michaelis Ranch was one of the largest mule breeders in the country supplying Jacks and Jennets to the U.S. Army and exporting them to foreign countries. Later, the family turned to cattle breeding and gained fame for introducing the French Charolais cattle to the United States. The Michaelis family lives on the ranch and continues to raise champion cattle. The property is associated with the Multiple Property nomination Rural Properties of Hays County. Because of its strong ties with the county's ranching heritage the M.G. Michaelis Ranch is nominated to the National Register under Criteria A, at the local level of significance. Additionally, the buildings and landscape include all of the major components of a traditional Central Texas ranch, including the pastures, crop fields, houses, barns, pens and corrals historically associated with ranching, the sum of which vividly conveys the essence of that life and setting. Despite alterations to individual resources, the M.G. Michaelis Ranch possesses an extraordinary sense of place and retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Together, these resources embody the distinctive and significant characteristics of the historic Central Texas ranch. Thus, the M.G. Michaelis Ranch is nominated to the National Register under Criteria C as a rural historic landscape district at the local level of significance.

### Historic Background

Farming and ranching have formed the basis for Hays County's economy since the

Spanish first attempted to establish a colony near present San Marcos in the early 19th century. Plagued by Indian raids, floods and insufficient resources, the Spanish effort failed and settlement attempts were severely limited in present Hays County until Texas gained statehood in 1845. Native Americans still ranged through the area and neither the predominantly rocky soil in the central and western sections, nor the black clay soil of the eastern prairie appeared suitable for extensive cultivation. Prospective American settlers trickled into the region during the Mexican War (1846-1848). Their numbers increased after the war when the U. S. government focused its attention on encouraging and protecting settlements in the newly won territory. A line of frontier forts were established through the Texas Hill Country, among them Fort Martin Scott, near Fredericksburg in 1848. Military presence provided greater protection against Indian raids and settlers streamed into the region, including Hays County, where they established farms and began raising livestock. Virtually all of the county's residents in the antebellum period relied on agriculture for their survival. Merchants, businessmen, mill operators and professional people not engaged directly in farming or ranching served those who were. In the era before cotton cultivation dominated the Blackland Prairie, most of the county's farmers lived in the western part of county where they planted vegetable gardens and forage crops to feed stock. Nearly all raised small numbers of livestock including sheep, goats, swine and cattle. Hays County cattle helped feed Confederate forces during the Civil War but it wasn't until after the war ended in 1865 that the demand for beef in Northern and Eastern markets prompted the Texas cattle industry. Stockmen rounded up herds of loose cattle and drove across open range to railroads bound for northern and eastern markets. The romantic era of the cowboy and cattle drives lasted fewer than 20 years but left an indelible mark on the American vision of Texas and the west.

As railroads pushed into Texas creating more accessible shipping points and barbed wire began to close the open range in the 1880s, ranching became a more stable agricultural endeavor. Stockmen no longer relied on rounding up free-roaming longhorns but began to fence tracts of grazing land and plant their own forage. They began selective breeding of beef and dairy cattle, goats, sheep, and horses and mules and built specialized barns and pens to accommodate modern ranching practices.

Max Gustav Michaelis was among this new breed of progressive agriculturalists that established successful long-term ranches in Hays County in the late 19th century. Michaelis was born to Hedwig Goos and Theodore Michaelis in July 1864, in Round Top, Texas, when the population was less than 200 people. Theodore Michaelis immigrated to the Republic of Texas from the Kingdom of Prussia. A gunsmith by trade, he also established ranching interests in the Republic as early as 1837 (Stovall 1986:222). During the Civil War Theodore Michaelis fought for the Confederacy and lost an eye at Vicksburg. Accused of killing a federal soldier after the war, he fled toMexico where he took up cattle ranching with a partner in Chihuahua, north of Durango. During their father's self-imposed exile, Max (M.G.) and his brother Carl were sent to Prussia for their education from 1877-1879. Carl received a degree in pharmacy but M.G. returned to Texas and settled in New Braunfels in the 1880s where he began his career as a livestock trader. There he began breeding quality mules, both Jacks and Jennets.

Michaelis arrived in New Braunfels, about 30 miles north of San Antonio, shortly after the International and Great Northern (I. & G. N.) Railroad completed its track between Austin and San Antonio. The arrival of the railroad, altered the course of agriculture and development

throughout Texas and Hays County was no exception. When the I. & G. N. began construction on its Austin-San Antonio route through Hays County in 1880, landowners were encouraged to plat new towns along their tracks. The presence of the railroad promised land development and economic opportunities for the railroad companies, landowners and new businessmen who were attracted to the sites. In 1881, Mr. and Mrs. Fergus Kyle deeded land for a townsite along the I. & G. N. line and the town of Kyle was born. The town became a rail center for local farmers and ranches to ship their products to market.

Soon after Kyle was platted and the first lots auctioned to hopeful entrepreneurs, M. G. Michaelis moved from New Braunfels, an established German community, to the new town of Kyle. He became a good friend of Capt. Fergus Kyle and Giescke, both of whom had served with his father, Theodore Michaelis, for the Confederacy. Michaelis and Giesecke opened a mercantile store in Kyle and in the spring of 1898, he purchased a 288-acre tract of land from Fergus Kyle, about seven miles west of town. According to family lore, Michaelis actually won the ranch from Kyle in a horseracing bet (Michaelis personal communication, 2000).

Previous owners made limited improvements to the land before its sale to Michaelis. The first known residents were a family named Young purchased the property in 1873. They may have built the earliest dwelling near the site of the present house, to the south. Fergus Kyle obtained the tract from the Youngs but did not reside there (Michaelis personal communication, 2000). He probably purchased the property as an investment in hopes that the presence of the railroad would increase land prices in the area surrounding his new town. Kyle deeded the tract to Michaelis soon after he bought it, in 1898. Michaelis may have built the core of the present house shortly afterward. It was completely remodeled to its present appearance in 1902 when Michaelis married Anna "Lillie" Louise Huettig in Brenham and brought her to his ranch. The enlarged house was a country showplace. Fashionable Queen Anne ornamentation including multiple gabled wings, an attached gazebo, projecting bay window and patterned shingles were added to the frame dwelling. A wrap-around porch with decorative turned posts, spindle frieze and clipped corner entrance enhanced its appearance.

Michaelis spent the next three years building his ranch and what was reportedly the largest barn in Texas. He raised cattle and ran a small dairy operation in the early years of the ranch. But he loved horses and bred matched teams for color, size and action. However, mules were his stock in trade. The Michaelis Ranch was one of the country's largest purveyors of mules and at one time had more Jennets than all other Texas ranches combined. Mules were essential to hauling and freighting industries through World War I and well into the 1920s before gasoline-powered* vehicles were widely available. The Michaelis Ranch supplied mules to the U.S. military and mining companies and exported them to mines in South African and coffee plantations in Guatemala. Michaelis' mules were so valued that he sold one Jack in Mexico for $5,000 in gold. At the time, land in Hays County sold for $2.50 to $3.00 an acre (Michaelis personal communication, 2000).. However, as motorized vehicles became more common in the United States, the demand for mules declined. Michaelis sold most of his mules to South Africa and turned his attention to horses and cattle. M. G. Michaelis was 38 years old when he married and his only son, Max Michaelis Jr., was born three years later, in 1905. His wife's sister, Corrine Huettig soon came to live on the ranch, followed by their mother in 1912. Born in 1891, she was only 14 years older than her nephew, M.G. Michaelis Jr., and was his constant

companion. The family enjoyed a pleasant lifestyle during a period of relative prosperity in Hays County at the turn of the century. Numerous photographs from the early 20th century depict the family engaged in a variety of recreational activities such as swimming, picnics, and camping.

In addition to the home ranch, Michaelis purchased other nearby property and expanded his local ranch holdings. At the same time, he maintained several businesses in Kyle. Throughout the 1910s and early 1920s, Michaelis improved his stock and property, establishing a family ranching legacy in Hays County that continues to the present. Many of the historic barns, pens, sheds and infrastructure, including fences and walls, were originally built during this period.

In addition to his ranching activities, Max Michaelis Sr. collected old buggies and saddles that he stored in his big barn. In the mid-1930s, the enormous barn caught fire and burned to the ground, killing dozens of mules and horses. The fire was so immense; it was seen from the town of Kyle, about seven miles to the east. The volunteer fire department arrived in time to protect the house and Michaelis donated land he owned across from the Kyle City Hall for a fire station in gratitude. Loss of the barn and its contents, including the collection of antique buggies, is said to have broken his heart. He never rebuilt the huge barn but instead erected several smaller barns, sheds and pens to serve a variety of related purposes. Many of the existing ranch features date from this post-fire period. Despite the tragedy, Michaelis continued to breed and show livestock at his ranch Kyle Ranch (Michaelis personal communication, 2000). M.G. Michaelis Jr. grew up on the ranch and graduated from Kyle High School. Like all ranch and farm children he assisted with the numerous chores and developed skills necessary for the successful operation of the ranch. He also worked on ranches in Mexico where his grandfather had established ties during his sojourn there after the Civil War. He In 1925, Hays County experienced a terrible drought and Michaelis spent that summer working for David McKeller on his ranch in northern Mexico near Eagle Pass. At the age of 19, M. G. Michaelis Jr. drove a herd of shorthorns from Mexico to the United States where he traded them to local cattlemen. Within five years he was branding his own herds of shorthorns and Herefords. He partnered with the Walker family of Luling and his grandfather helped him buy the El Fortin and Carrizalejo ranches in Mexico. When he married in 1932, the partners split the farms and Michaelis kept El Fortin (Michaelis personal communication, 2000).

M.G. Michaelis Jr. spent much of his time in Mexico during the 1920s and 1930s. Like his father, his interests lay in breeding champion stock. He was living in Mexico when received a pair of Charolais bulls from his friend Mexican General Acosta, in 1934. Acosta had acquired the French bulls from General Perez Trevino, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock in Mexico. Michaelis sent them to his father at the Kyle ranch for experimental crossbreeding with purebred Shorthorns and Herefords. This importation is thought to be to be the first time the Charolais bloodline was introduced into the United States. Ultimately, the Michaelis Ranch achieved fame in cattle breeding circles for its success with the Charolais.

The Charolais cattle as a distinct breed appeared as early as 878 A.D. in the old provinces of Charolles and Nievre, in west-central to southeastern France. They probably developed from local herds and by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they were a favorite in French markets, especially at Lyon and Villefranche. Charolais cattle are physically distinguished by their white color and long bodies. Selective breeding yielded cattle suited for draft, milk and meat purposes. Bred for size, muscling, and utility, the French Charolais are considered less refined in appearance

than some other breeds, notably those in the British Isles (Briggs 1980).

Despite their long heritage in France and the European continent, Charolais were not introduced in the Western Hemisphere until the early 20th century. Jean Pugibet, a young Mexican industrialist of French ancestry, saw Charolais cattle while he served as a volunteer with the French army. Impressed by their appearance and productivity, he brought some of the French cattle to his ranch in Mexico after the war. In 1930, he arranged for a shipment of two bulls and 10 heifers to Mexico and increased his total to 37 – eight bulls and 29 cows – in two later shipments in 1931 and 1937. Pugibet died shortly after the last shipment and no further imports were attempted. Until the mid-1960s, all of the Charolais in Mexico, the United States and Canada, including the Michaelis' stock, were descendants of this initial Pugibet herd.

The first Charolais to come into the United States from Mexico are believed to be the two purebred bulls, Blanco and Plato, given to M. G. Michaelis Jr. by his friend General Miguel Acosta in 1934. Two years later, in 1936, another pair of bulls was purchased from Pugibet and imported by the King Ranch in Texas. Max Michaelis Sr. bought another pair of bulls for the ranch near Kyle in 1941 and his son purchased the remaining Pugibet herd of purebred domestic Charolais for his Mexico ranch in 1955.

It has been said that no other breed has impacted the North American beef industry so significantly as the introduction of Charolais. The Charolais came into widespread use in the United States cattle industry at a time when producers sought larger framed, heavier cattle than the traditional British breeds. Cows performed well under a variety of environmental conditions; they thrived in warm weather and tolerated moderate cold conditions, and raised heavy calves. Bulls developed a well-deserved reputation for improving smaller, less rugged herds by "grading-up" (Briggs 1980). Max Michaelis Sr. enthusiastically raised Charolais cattle on his Kyle Ranch for breeding stock until his death on April 11, 1950. His herd remains widely known and respected in the field today.

When Max Michaelis, Sr. died, two-thirds of the ranch passed to his son and the remaining third to Corinne "Aunt Corinne" Huettig, who assumed control of the ranch until 1955. Corinne Huettig proved to be an astute businesswoman and it is a testament to her talent and skill that she operated the ranch with only one man to help her until she relinquished the job to Max Michaelis Jr. in 1955. She came to own a third of the Michaelis cattle. Corinne Huettig died in 1963 and was followed by her sister, Lillie Michaelis, in 1967 (Michaelis personal communication, 2000).

After his father's death in 1950, M. G. Michaelis Jr. purchased the Pugibet herd of purebred domestic Charolais from the original French importers. He launched an ambitious building program that included the construction of new barns, sheds and other support facilities and the rebuilding of fences and corrals. Max Michaelis Jr. developed the strong herd of domestic Charolais that are now well known around the world. He widely promoted the breed and his efforts were rewarded. The Charolais were hailed as a superior breed of cattle and their popularity soared in the 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s.

Between 1955 and 1970-71, the Charolais market boomed. Eight men worked on the ranch, raising and showing the cattle. Numerous buildings and structures, including the large concrete-block show barn, were added to the ranch complex when the Charolais surged in popularity. In 1976, Max Michaelis owned about 700 head of cattle. Now the ranch has reduced

its herd to about 150 breeding stock. The Michaelis Ranch has never raised cattle for beef, only as seed stock, and maintains that tradition to the present. Max Michaelis Jr. died in 1976 but his son Maximo Michaelis III, wife Sharon, and their two sons live in the family home and continue to work the ranch as its founder, M.G. Michaelis did when he acquired the property more than 100 years ago.

Typical of working agricultural sites, the Michaelis Ranch contains a mix of historic and non-historic buildings and structures. Historic built features throughout the ranch reflect the evolution and changing fortunes of livestock breeding and ranching in Central Texas. At the heart of the ranch lies the ca. 1898 Queen Anne styled residence that has sheltered four generations of ranchers in Hays County. Enlarged and completely remodeled from an earlier, more modest dwelling, the elegant ranch house represents Hays County's transition from a frontier economy of scattered settlements and subsistence farmers to one based on cash crops and progressive agriculture at the turn of the 20th century. Furthermore, it illustrates the relative prosperity and success of farming and ranching in the Kyle area during that period. Historic resources closely associated with the house include a cistern and well, a vegetable garden, grapevines for jams and wine, an orchard and flower gardens within a fenced yard built to keep ranging cattle at bay. An elongated historic period guesthouse and attached auto garage lie just outside the fence to the west. Although a small part of the porch was enclosed as a sunroom in the 1950s, it is set back from the primary façade and the porch maintains its "wrap-around" effect. Several small additions to the rear of the house are not visible and may, in fact, date to the historic period. Minor alterations detract little from the house's historic character and are mitigated by its impressive design, ornamentation and original materials. The Michaelis Ranch house is an outstanding, unusually well detailed example of the Queen Anne style in a rural setting and retains its 1902 appearance historic architectural integrity to a remarkable degree.

Agricultural resources on the Michaelis Ranch include typical, yet classic examples of utilitarian ranch architecture dating from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. Most of the barns, animal sheds and corrals built in the historic period lie clustered in an organized complex to the west of the main house. One of the most interesting properties associated with the ranch's early success is a frame structure equipped with scales used for weighing mules. Outbuildings include barns, sheds, corrals *(corrales de llena),* and structures common to Hays County ranches and farms from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. Although there are many older properties among the outbuildings, many have been remodeled to suit more modern farming or ranching methods. A coded map with legend showing historic names and current use of the features is included with the nomination.

The buildings, fields, pasture and landscape of M. G. Michaelis Ranch reflect the historic evolution of ranching traditions in Hays County to an exceptional degree. It is a tradition that is fast fading from the rural landscape. Family ranches once stretched across most of the county west of IH-35. The Alexander, Bleakly, Cowan, Farris, Freeman, Fulton, Garnett, Gregg, Halifax, Helm, Hoskins, Kelly, Keyes, Kuykendall, Martin, Nagel, Newberry, Phillips, Rutherford, Sawyer, Scrutchin, Spillar, Storm, Whited, Williams and Winn spreads once typified the county's historic ranching traditions. Today, many of these ranches are being sold to developers for residential subdivisions as the booming population in Austin pushes demand for housing into the surrounding counties.

In the face of this encroaching development, the Michaelis Ranch stands as one of the county's oldest surviving family-owned ranch tracts still in agriculture. The Michaelis family, including the youngest generation, is committed to maintaining their historic ranch properties and traditions. It is an outstanding example of a rural ranch complex that embodies the agricultural heritage of Hays County and is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A for its historic associations with that heritage. It is also nominated under Criterion C as an outstanding example of a historic ranch complex.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

**Boundary Justification**

The 288-acre parcel nominated follows the boundaries of the original property purchased by M.G. Michaelis from Fergus Kyle in 1898. It includes the family home, fields and all of the buildings historically associated with the original ranch complex. Although the Michaelis family purchased and sold other nearby parcels over the years, and today own about 600 acres total, this parcel represents the family's original and continuous homestead in Hays County.

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