



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

08000538

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Faison, Nathaniel W., House
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Faison House; N.W. Faison House; Faison-Brown House

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 822 South Jefferson Street
CITY OR TOWN: La Grange VICINITY: N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Fayette CODE: 149 ZIP CODE: 78945

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (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 (meets) (does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (nationally) (statewide) (locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark Wolfe
 Signature of certifying official 2/3/10
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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.	<u>Diana McCulland</u>	<u>3/11/10</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	1 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	1 TOTAL

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

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: DOMESTIC / single dwelling

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE / museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: MIXED

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION BRICK
WALLS WOOD
ROOF ASPHALT
OTHER BRICK, GLASS, STONE

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-11).

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Section 7 Page 5

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Nathaniel W. Faison House, at 822 South Jefferson in La Grange, Fayette County, Texas, is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, as a good example of vernacular domestic architecture reflecting different periods of 19th-century settlement in Texas. The property consists of three separate volumes joined together by a rear U-shaped porch and courtyard. Historic records and the differences in each wing's design and construction indicate an evolution of the house from 1855 to the 1880s. Eastlake-inspired brackets on the front porch are the most ornamental of the home's exterior details, which also include Greek Revival elements.

The Faison House is also nominated at the state level of significance under Criterion A, in the area of Social History, for its ties to three periods of ownership: by Nathaniel W. Faison, a military hero and prominent landowner; by his brother Peter Faison and his family, who lived in the home for decades and whose furnishings still convey life in La Grange during the Gilded Age; and by Louisiana Brown, an African American freedwoman who worked for Nathaniel Faison before his death in 1870, when he left her the property. Extensive research indicates the Faison House is a rare if not unique extant example of a Texas property solely owned by a freedwoman in the decade after the Civil War.

Geographic Setting and Site

The Nathaniel W. Faison House is located just north of the Colorado River in La Grange, Fayette County, Texas. The building occupies the southwest corner of Lot 2, Block O of the John Eblin League, approximately 4,429 acres issued to John Eblin on June 10, 1831.¹ The lot is bounded by Live Oak Street on the northwest and South Jefferson on the northeast and slopes gently from north to south toward the river, which was an important commercial resource during the 19th century. The lot features both oak and pecan trees, as well as a non-contributing outbuilding near the southwest corner of the house, which faces northeast. Six wrought iron posts indicate that decorative iron fence once outlined the property, which is entered by a concrete driveway off of Live Oak Street; the driveway culminates in a parking pad at the back of the house, which is accessed by a concrete walkway leading to the brick patio, or courtyard, created by the U-shaped house. To the west of the patio is a brick, star-shaped planter added in the early 1960s. A walkway of similar brick runs from the front steps of the house to the edge of South Jefferson.

Exterior

The Faison House's three sections have no interior doorways connecting them, but are joined by a rear porch structure. All sections are wood frame with brick pier-and-beam foundations, wood lattice between the brick piers, brick chimneys, exterior wood siding, and shingled roofs. Each section features different lumber dimensions and construction techniques. This indicates, but does not prove, that they were built at different times, beginning with the humblest section, in place before 1860, and culminating in the final and most elaborate section, constructed in 1884, which faces Jefferson Street. (See Figure 2)

¹ General Land Office online Land Grant Search, accessed 16 August 2007.

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Northeast Elevation

From South Jefferson Street, all three sections of the building are visible, with the central section projecting toward the street. This major, northeast elevation is thus broken into three portions.

On the far left is Section A, and its northeast elevation is narrow, with a front-end gable; two 6-over-6 double-hung windows flank a corbelled brick chimney.

Section C is the central and major portion of the house. Its southwest corner meets Section A at its northeast corner. The symmetrical northeast elevation of Section C has five bays. The shingled, side-gabled roof is pierced by two corbelled brick chimneys positioned nearly in line with the central front porch columns. Five steps lead from the brick walk to the central porch bay and central entryway, which features a wood panel door with sidelights and transom of colored glass. The section's outer bays, two on each side of the entry, each feature one 2-over-2 double-hung window. Each porch bay is framed in jigsawn ornament: at the base between each pair of columns, brackets slope toward the bay's midpoint, along the porch roofline, smaller brackets flare out from columns, and each bay's midpoint is emphasized by an additional curvilinear element. Above the flat porch roof, three bands of fascia form a frieze that runs just below the narrow eave and wraps around the corners. These porch elements can be seen in a photograph of the Peter Faison family.²

Also visible from the street is the northeast elevation of Section B, attached to Section C at the corner (B's southeast corner to C's northwest). Section B is the smallest of the buildings, with a much lower roofline. The base of the front end gable is not much higher than the tops of its two 9-over-6 windows.

Northwest Elevation

From the northwest the Faison House emphasizes Section B's relatively small scale as compared to Section C. Starting from the left is the northwest end of the front porch, a single bay wide. The space between the corner column and the wall is framed by the same Eastlake detailing that runs the length of the porch on the east side. The northwest elevation of Section C is tall, indicating the high ceilings inside. A pair of 2-over-2 windows is centered below a circular vent placed just below the gable's peak. The base of the open pediment gives the impression of column capitals at the gable's base. A wide band of wood running below the gable's narrow eave, with the triple-fascia frieze wrapping around from the northeast façade, further emphasizes the implied columns, showing a subtle interpretation of the Greek Revival style. The northwest façade of Section B is simple, with two 9-over-6 windows on either side of a single door covered by a small overhang. Four steps lead up to the door. A small single chimney on the southwest end of the roof features a simple cap with a rounded metal rain cover. This chimney does not currently correspond to a stove or other heat source.

² The exact date of the photo is unknown, but the woman's dress style indicates the late Victorian era. The Smithsonian National Museum of American History Behring Center has a dress in its costume collection dating to 1892–1897, similar in sleeve design and bodice. See <<http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/costume/object.cfm?recordnumber=360511>>, accessed September 29, 2009.

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Southwest Elevation and Courtyard Façades

The rear, or southwest, side of the house allows direct access to each of the three sections, all of which open to the back porch. The courtyard within the U-shaped footprint of the Faison House features simple plantings, while at the outer edge, a large tree provides shade.

On the left of the southwest elevation, Section B features a single 9-over-6 window. The roofline features an end gable that ties into a low-pitch shed roof covering a small bathroom addition and the porch. Stairs lead up to the porch at the central section, the rear of Section C. Simple turned posts support the low shed roof overhanging the porch. The two central chimneys are visible and centered over the porch's central bay. A single door leads into the hall of Section C, with a second leading into the bedroom. Daylight is visible between this central section and Section A, demonstrating that the two volumes only touch at the corners (see Figure 2). The southwest elevation of Section A features three 6-over-6 windows, with a smaller one on the left and two larger ones in the middle and on the right. The roofline is a continuous gable that incorporates the porch and office.

Only visible from within the courtyard, the southeast façade of Section B is simple, with the small bathroom addition featuring a single 6-over-6 window, two doors opening onto the porch, and a hand-pumped well near the addition. The porch detailing appears to be the same as depicted in a 1931 *Houston Chronicle* article about the house—simple turned posts and a non-descript railing system. Only visible from within the courtyard, the northwest elevation of Section A nearly mirrors Section B opposite it, with a single window—a 6-over-6—on the rear room. Two adjacent panel doors open to the porch. The siding in this section is beveled, with the exception of the siding around the doors onto the porch. Here again is the wider tongue-and-groove siding seen on the kitchen.

Southeast Elevation

Finally, the general southeast elevation consists of the southeast façades of sections A and C. Section A features three bays visibly divided by four narrow pilasters with Doric-inspired features. Within each of the outer bays is a 6-over-6 window, the same size as the larger windows on the southwest elevation. The central bay is believed originally to have had a doorway, as indicated by the mechanic's lien dating to 1855; however, today there is no opening in the central bay of Section A's southeast elevation. The four pilasters come down from the fascia to the top of the foundation beams, indicating the possibility of a porch that spanned this façade at an earlier date; the mechanic's lien supports this (see "Section A: Exterior" below).

The southeast elevation of Section C matches the section's northwest elevation, with a pair of 2-over-2 windows centered below the gable peak and attic vent. The open pediment on this side complements the Doric-style pilasters of Section A, again demonstrating Greek Revival influences.

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INDIVIDUAL SECTIONS

Because of the differences in the appearances and styles of the house's three sections, here they are described separately.

Section A

Section A: Exterior

A March 1855 mechanic's lien dates the southern back wing of the house and describes this section as being "23 feet long 26 feet wide with small portico in front, ten windows six doors, doors to be panel, sash made for the windows, one of the front rooms to be 16 feet square the others to be 12-by-16-feet this room with an upper half story, in the two back corners of the home a small room 9-by-10-foot square, with 10-foot square pizza [*sic*] between the two..."³ The front of this section of the house likely faced southeast, toward the Colorado River, and there is evidence of a porch and doorway on that side. The two back corners of the house described above have a northern exposure while the small portico in front, which has been removed, would have had a southern exposure. This arrangement was typical of early, pre-Civil War Texas homes, as are the windows, which are 6-over-6.

Section A: Interior

The 1855 mechanic's lien describes the interior in this manner: "...all the rooms to be smooth ceiled over head, a rough ceiled on the walls [*sic*] & partitions with tongue and grove [*sic*] floors, two mantle pieces & chair boards to be covered with good cedar shingles & to have boxing and moulding [*sic*] under the eaves [*sic*]..."⁴ The architect/builder of Section A is known to be J.C. Alford.⁵ The interior has changed little from this description, with the fireplaces, mantels, and tongue-and-groove flooring still in place. An indoor staircase in the room on the west leads to an upper half-story; a door from what once was the main front room now leads to the back portico. The trim indicates a Greek Revival aesthetic, with the fireplace mantels featuring fluted pilasters. The stairs leading to the upper half-story are steep and narrow, and they end at a small landing. The door to the small attic is a batten door, and the unfinished attic space reveals the rough-hewn truss elements.

Section A: Modifications Since 1855 Mechanic's Lien

The 9-by-10-foot square room on the northeast of the structure has been removed, as have the front portico and door; this most likely occurred when Section C was added to the property in order to complete the U-shaped rear portico and create a new main entrance to the house. Variations in the siding demonstrate the alterations made before 1961. Additionally, the chimney has been removed, while the fireplace and mantel in the western portion of the section remain.

³ Fayette County Clerk's Office, Deed Record Books, vol. K, 195. The written word is interpreted as "piazza," a colonnaded porch.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

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Section B

Section B: Exterior

The northern back wing measures 14-by-32 feet and appears to be the earliest of the three sections, although there is no archival record to conclusively verify its construction date. It is possible that this structure was moved from Lot 3 or 4 in 1855, when S.S. Munger purchased those lots in addition to Lots 1 and 2, and contracted to build a home (Section A). A house is known to have existed on Lots 3 and 4 as early as 1848.⁶ Sanborn fire insurance maps of La Grange from these years do not include these lots.

This section features utilitarian doors and 9-over-6 windows. The western room—the kitchen—has two exterior doors of batten or plank construction; one opens to the porch, and the other opens on the northwest elevation. These two doors appear to have no fillers, shims, or glues, only closely fitted and cut pieces of planed wood. The dining room has one panel door opening to the porch. A well and pump sit on the porch just outside the kitchen door.

The exterior siding indicates some alterations to the courtyard-facing elevation. The kitchen section and bathroom addition features bevel siding but of different dimensions; the other elevations of Section B are also faced with bevel siding. In a narrow section between the exterior dining room door and the beveled siding of the kitchen, there are the broad tongue-and-groove boards similar to those found inside the kitchen. Beyond the door, the remaining siding of the dining room's exterior, porch wall is bead board.

Section B: Interior

The kitchen is approximately 14-by-20 feet square, and the dining room is approximately 14-by-12 feet. The two rooms are joined by a doorway. Ceilings and walls consist of planed wood slats, and the floor is tongue-and-groove; the planks are wider in this section of the house than those in sections A and C. The ceilings, which are painted planks, are significantly lower than those elsewhere: no more than 8 feet, or just over the tops of the windows. The kitchen walls are wide tongue-and-groove boards, simply painted, and the trim around windows is spare with no apparent style. The kitchen has no running water. The dining room walls are covered with a deep red wallpaper, and the baseboards feature a simple bead and foot.

Section B: Modifications

A small bathroom (6-by-7 feet) has been added to the southwest corner of this structure, and its door exits onto the portico. The bathroom is the only section of the house that has running water. A chimney remains on the northern roof of the kitchen, but there is no evidence of a fireplace; an older fireplace was most likely replaced with the wood cooking stove currently in the house.

⁶ Fayette County Clerk's Office, Deed Record Books K, 209 and 213; Book E, 123.

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Section C

Section C: Exterior

Section C forms the present-day front of the house, with an entrance facing South Jefferson Street. The symmetrical hall-and-parlor building is faced with beveled siding on all four sides, and the side-gabled roof is covered in composition shingles. Completed in 1884, the building exhibits Greek Revival details, such as the triple-fascia frieze and dentil cornice. The classical influences are carried through to the two central brick chimneys, constructed in a tri-partite design with base, shaft, collar and capital. Each chimney shaft features an inset panel. The unusual and highly decorative porch balustrade features elaborate Eastlake-influenced jigsaw details framing each bay of the 45-foot-long porch. The central entryway is a panel door with colored glass sidelights and transom. The door leads into the hallway, which has a corresponding door with transom at the opposite end; this door leads to the rear porch, which also has a door into the southern room of Section C. The front façade windows are 2-over-2 double-hung, and the same windows are used in pairs on the side elevations.

Section C: Interior

The interior of Section C consists of two large rooms, both 18 feet square, with a wide hallway in between. The 18-by-9-foot hallway has both east and west exits. A living room occupies the northern end of this section. The bedroom, which sits in the southern part of Section C, has an additional doorway exiting west into the portico. Both rooms have fireplaces with mantels; the elaborate mantels feature curvilinear shelves, pilasters and geometric detailing. The rooms and hallway feature tongue-and-groove flooring and high ceilings of bead board. The flooring dimension is narrower than in the other sections, and the baseboards and trim are more elaborate. Each room features a panel door with transom leading to the hallway.

Section C: Modifications Since 1884

By the time of Julia Ogden Faison's death in 1961, some changes had been made to the house, including the installation of electric wiring. However, the house never has had a bathtub, air conditioning, or heating, except for the fireplaces or wood stoves. In 1961, the Garden Club of La Grange purchased the home from the Faison estate and painted the exterior, but the club did not make any other modifications to the house.

Non-contributing outbuilding

What appears to be a garden house stands in the southwest corner of the lot. This non-contributing 11-by-13-foot structure is made of wood and brick, with its sole entry facing east. The distance from the apex of the roof to the ground is approximately 7-feet and 4-inches. The south side appears to have a number of shutters on hinges that swing upward. The lone north window is a 6-by-6 pane on hinges that also opens upward. Inside, the current floor is wood plank and lies at grade. The date of this outbuilding's construction is unknown, but judging by the photographs accompanying the October 25, 1931 article in the *Houston Chronicle*, the Faisons were avid gardeners.

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Conclusion

The three sections of the Faison House form a cohesive home, yet upon close examination they are distinct volumes with differences in design elements and construction. Fayette County tax records, deeds, and an 1884 article in the *La Grange Journal* suggest that Section C, the central and last portion of the house, was completed in 1884, while the earliest section of the house may date to 1848.⁷ The Nathaniel W. Faison House possesses a high degree of integrity and remains an important local landmark in La Grange, having been maintained by the La Grange Garden Club since its 1961 acquisition of the property from the Faison family. The conjoined sections clearly demonstrate the growing prosperity and changes in tastes of Faison family members, and the property serves as a tangible reminder of life in central Texas during the last half of the 19th century. The Faison House is therefore nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, at the local level of significance, under Criterion C, as an excellent example of vernacular domestic architecture; and at the state level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History.

⁷ *La Grange Journal*, January 31, 1884: "Mr. P.B. Faison is having his residence added to and otherwise materially improved. Mr. P.F. Doyle, contractor [*sic*] and builder has the contract." The date of construction of Section C is further established by the increase in property valuation documented on the tax rolls as having occurred in 1884. Block O was valued at \$2000 in 1885, after having been valued at only \$1500 every year between 1876 and 1884. See Fayette County Tax Assessment Roll of Property, 1876 through 1885.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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.
- 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 VALUES, 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: Architecture; Social History

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1866–1920

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1870

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Alford, J.C. (Section A); unknown (Section B); Doyle, P.F. (Section C)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-12 through 8-20).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-21 through 9-24).

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:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The house at 822 South Jefferson Street, La Grange, Fayette County, Texas, has long been celebrated for its ties to Nathaniel W. Faison, whose role defending the young Texas Republic gave him a mythos that has made the property an important local landmark, even though his brief ownership occurred late in his life. The building's significance has been tied predominantly to Faison's participation in the Dawson Expedition against Mexico, and little emphasis historically has been placed on subsequent owners. Recent research has uncovered more information on the later owners, including Louisiana Brown, a freedwoman who worked for Faison; and Faison's brother Peter, who lived in the house with his family and filled it with the fine furnishings that remain there today. The La Grange Garden Club purchased the property from the Faison estate in 1961, and the organization continues to maintain it as a historic house museum. The club's contributions to the documented history of the house and its preservation reflect the evolution of the historic preservation movement in the United States, as its initial focus on military deeds and significance has been expanded to include more interpretation of post-Civil War race relations and local domestic history into the early 20th century. The Faison House retains a high degree of integrity, with only minimal changes since the late 19th century, and the property remains an important local landmark.

General History

Nathaniel W. Faison, who occupied the house from 1866 to 1870, is celebrated as one of the larger-than-life individuals who came to Texas, fought for the Republic, and made his fortune in land, cotton, and merchandising. Faison was part of one of the most lamented chapters in Texas' conflict with Mexico—the Dawson Expedition—and from late 1842 to March 1844, he was a prisoner of war in Mexico. In the late 1840s and into the 1850s, Faison worked as a liquor merchant and served as Fayette County clerk. During these years, he also began a career as a land speculator, and by 1866—when he purchased the property now known as the Faison House—he was considered one of the wealthiest landowners in the county. At the time of his death in 1870, Faison owned 35,000 acres of land and possessed \$4,700 in gold.⁸

The history of the house's residents demonstrates the complicated relationships between blacks and whites in post-Civil War Texas. Faison, who had been a slave-owner like his family in Tennessee, became a benefactor to the area's African American community after the Civil War and was known to loan money to freedmen. Just before his death, he deeded his house and its contents to his housekeeper, Louisiana Brown, and in his will he left \$2,000 in gold to her. Based on current research, Louisiana Brown is one of the earliest known African American women to own property in Texas; the house is the only known extant residence connected to early freedwoman ownership.⁹ Moreover, Payton Faison, formerly enslaved by Nathaniel Faison's father in Tennessee, came to Texas after emancipation, and his descendants still live in La Grange.¹⁰

⁸ Data from the 1870 census and Faison's will indicate he was one of the wealthiest men in Fayette County at the time of his death.

⁹ Based on a request by the Texas State Board of Review, the applicant interviewed several scholars and additional materials, and no earlier examples of female African American property ownership are currently known. See Louisiana Brown annotated bibliography.

¹⁰ Dallas resident Stacy Bennett Dwyer is a descendent of Payton Faison and has conducted extensive genealogical research. In a personal interview with Janelle Dupont, Dwyer identified Tommy and Eva Faison of La Grange as her cousins, also descendants of Payton Faison; Tommy L. Faison is listed in the current La Grange telephone directory.

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The Faison House also provides a glimpse into the life of central Texas's wealthiest residents during the last decades of the 19th century. Peter Faison, Nathaniel's brother, purchased the house from Louisiana Brown in 1872, and his descendants inhabited it until 1961. Peter Faison successfully managed his late brother's land holdings and business ventures, and provided his family with luxury items from the Northeast, such as a Knabe piano, clothes from Lord & Taylor, and jewelry from Tiffany & Company.

La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

In 1823, the government of Mexico allowed Stephen F. Austin to begin settling the area that would become Fayette County with U.S. citizens, and he gave property there to seven colonists. Prior to this time, the land had been the home of indigenous people, including Lipan Apaches and Tonkawas, and because of a low water crossing there on the Colorado River, the area served as a trading center. The earliest permanent Anglo settler in La Grange, John Henry Moore, built a twin blockhouse in 1826, and a small community grew around it. La Grange area residents played an instrumental part in the founding of Texas, fighting in many revolutionary battles including San Jacinto, which ended the war. The town was not platted until 1837, a year after Texas gained its independence from Mexico. In 1838 the Texas Congress voted to place the capital of the Republic of Texas on a site contiguous with La Grange, on part of the John Eblin League, but the government instead chose Waterloo, now Austin, as the young country's capital.¹¹

Texas became part of the United States in 1846. By this time, La Grange residents had established a newspaper, schools, and churches. In the 1840s and 1850s, a large number of Czech and German immigrants moved into the area and greatly influenced local culture and customs. The area continued to grow as a trade center for the county's expanding plantation economy. Just prior to the U.S. Civil War, Fayette County was one of the most developed areas in the state, with nearly 1,000 farms containing 75,463 improved acres. The county was also one of the state's leaders in both corn and cotton production. Enslaved persons made up approximately one-third of the county's population in 1860. Despite its heavy dependence on slave labor, the county narrowly voted against secession because of its numerous German and Bohemian-heritage residents, who generally spoke out against the movement. Nevertheless, the county supplied three volunteer companies to support the Confederacy.

Faison House Ownership History

Today the building known locally as the Faison House consists of three separate volumes constructed at different times and joined together by the mid-1880s. Evidence of an large increase in the tax valuation of the property in 1885 and an 1884 article in the *La Grange Journal* suggest that the front and final portion of the house, Section C, was almost certainly constructed in 1884.

The deed history of the property begins in 1847, when John Eblin sold land to a local real estate consortium consisting of J.S. Lester, S. Reynolds, G.W. Sinks, and Musgrove and Charlotte Evans. On February 24, 1855, this group then sold Block O, Lots 1 and 2—the land on which the Faison House now sits—to S.S. Munger, who later would become a member of the La Grange city council. A mechanic's lien shows that in March 1855, Munger contracted to build a house

¹¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Fayette County," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/hcf3.html>; and s.v. "La Grange, Texas," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/LL/hgl2.html> (both accessed January 27, 2010).

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with two front rooms with an upper half story and two small rooms in the back with a “piazza” between the back rooms.¹² This description matches closely the left rear wing of the current building configuration (see Figure 2).

On February 24, 1859, Munger sold the house and lots 1 and 2 to Samuel Harrington; Munger then bought them back, plus additional lots 3 through 8, from Harrington on April 30, 1863. Munger then sold all eight lots of Block O and related improvements in 1864 to Mary A. Herron, who sold the property to Nathaniel W. Faison in 1866. On April 2, 1870, Faison deeded the property, for the sum of five dollars, to Louisiana Brown, a freedwoman who had been his servant since 1865. The deed conferred to her “all the improvements, household, and kitchen furniture, one buggy, one horse, one pony, and all other stock and personal property of any kind and every kind now on said premises.”¹³

In November 1872, Brown sold the property to Peter Faison, Nathaniel’s brother, who then brought his wife Susan and their three children from Tennessee to reside there.¹⁴ Upon the deaths of Peter in 1918 and Susan in 1920, the house passed to their youngest heir, James, who lived there until his death in 1943. The widow of James Faison, Julia Ogden Faison, continued to live there until her death in 1961; the property’s current owner, the La Grange Garden Club, bought the house and all contents from her estate on June 2 of that year.¹⁵

Nathaniel W. Faison (1817–1870)

According to the inscription on his gravestone, Nathaniel W. Faison was born April 24, 1817, in Sampson County, North Carolina; he later moved to Tennessee with his family.¹⁶ Tax records show that he worked there as “surveyor and seller of land and witness of sales.”¹⁷ He arrived in Texas in 1839 and eventually was granted 320 acres in Fayette County as a single man in the third class of land grants—grants made to men who immigrated after October 1, 1837 and before January 1, 1842.¹⁸ By 1840 Nathaniel Faison owned one town lot, one silver watch, and one saddle horse.¹⁹

Military Service for the Republic of Texas

On October 24, 1840, Faison fought under Colonel John H. Moore in the last major expedition by Texas troops against Comanches, ultimately pushing them north of the Red River.²⁰ In September 1842 Faison and a few dozen other volunteers from the area went with Captain Nicholas Dawson to San Antonio, which had fallen to Mexico’s General Adrian Woll and a reported 1,000 Mexican troops ordered to invade Texas. On September 18 Woll sent troops out to

¹² Records of the Fayette County Clerk’s Office: Eblin to Lester, Sinks, Evans, and Reynolds, vol. E, 46; Evans, Lester, Reynolds, and Sinks to Munger, vol. K, 209; and Mechanic’s lien, vol. K, 195.

¹³ Records of the Fayette County Clerk’s Office: Munger to Harrington, vol. N, 284; Harrington to Munger, vol. R, 269; Munger to Herron, vol. R, 387; Herron to N. W. Faison, vol. S, 228; and N. W. Faison to Brown, vol. X, 28.

¹⁴ Records of the Fayette County Clerk’s Office: Brown to P.B. Faison, vol. Y, 719.

¹⁵ Records of the Fayette County Clerk’s Office: J. Faison to La Grange Garden Club, vol. 328, 557.

¹⁶ Inscription on N.W. Faison headstone, Old La Grange Cemetery, La Grange, Texas.

¹⁷ Hardeman County (Tennessee) tax records 1836/1837.

¹⁸ Texas General Land Office. Retrieved February 20, 2007 at <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/archives/lgrants.html>

¹⁹ Census of the Republic of Texas, 1840, Fayette Public Library, La Grange, Texas

²⁰ Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Republic Claims, retrieved at: <http://www2.tsl.state.tx.us/trail/RepublicResults.jsp> on 1 March 2007; Julia Sinks Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. “Comanche Indians,” <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/CC/bmc72.html> (accessed June 8, 2009).

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engage Dawson's men, and when the battle ended, thirty-six Texans were dead and buried in shallow graves at the site; Faison was among the seventeen survivors, two of whom escaped.²¹ The remaining fifteen were marched to Perote Prison in Mexico, arriving there on December 22, 1842.²² Through the efforts of General Waddy Thompson, former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Faison was released from Perote in March 1844.²³ He and fellow prisoner Edward T. Manton retrieved the bones of their deceased compatriots from the battlefield and buried them on the bluff overlooking the Colorado River, alongside the remains of those killed in the Santa Fe and Mier expeditions and during Woll's invasion of San Antonio. Today, the tomb is part of the Monument Hill and Kreishe Brewery State Historic Site, and it overlooks the area of La Grange where the Faison House is located.²⁴

Business Ventures

Faison purchased a retail wines and spirits license in 1841.²⁵ On September 8, 1842, the Clerk of the County Court appointed him deputy "to perform all duties of clerk of County Court."²⁶ While acting as county clerk, Faison continued to hold licenses to sell liquor by the drink and to work as a surveyor. In 1845, he was elected Clerk of County Court and held this office until 1854.²⁷ In the years before the Civil War, he also had worked as a land agent;²⁸ on the 1860 U.S. census, he listed his occupation as "gentleman" and had amassed a fortune (\$20,000 in real estate and \$8,000 personal). Tax records for 1860 show he owned nearly 8,000 acres of land, fifteen to twenty town lots, and one slave.²⁹

From 1860 to 1865 Faison, who did not serve in the U.S. Civil War, added to his land holdings. In the year after the war's end, he advertised himself as a land and general agent: "Will sell lands in any county West of the Brazos River, and pays taxes on any land in this State. Large tracts of land sub-divided and sold in tracts to suit purchasers. Strict attention given to the collection of claims against parties residing in Fayette County."³⁰ The advertisement gives references in Houston, Galveston, New York City, and New Orleans. Faison also worked as a factor for many individuals, collecting land grants and reparations for service to the Republic.³¹ According to a business ledger found in the Faison House, he also dealt in sales of merchandise and sundries, possibly on the wholesale level, although the nature of these goods is not described. The ledger does list payments for freight on a number of cotton shipments.³²

²¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Dawson Massacre," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/DD/qfd1.html> (accessed June 8, 2009).

²² Docent manual, Monument Hill and Kreishe Brewery State Historical Parks, La Grange, Texas (Austin.: Texas Park and Wildlife Commission, 1999), 24-25; "Dawson Expedition." *Handbook of Texas Online*. Retrieved March 21, 2007 at: http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/DD/qfd1_print.html.

²³ Wade and Weyland, pp.175-176.

²⁴ Docent manual, Monument Hill and Kreishe Brewery State Historical Parks, Chapter XIV, 33, 47.

²⁵ Occupational License Records, Fayette County, 1841. Fayette County Library and Archives.

²⁶ Fayette County Clerk office, Deed Record Book C, 192.

²⁷ Fayette County Clerk office, Record Book D, 179.

²⁸ *Texas Monument* newspaper, March 9, 1853.

²⁹ U.S. Census 1860, Fayette Public Library, La Grange, Texas; County tax records, 1860, Fayette Public Library.

³⁰ *States Rights Democrat*, La Grange, Texas, August 24, 1866. Fayette Public Library, La Grange, Texas.

³¹ Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Republic Claims

³² Business ledger of N.W. Faison, 1867-70, from Faison Home, Garden Club of La Grange, Texas.

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Nathaniel W. Faison died June 29, 1870, at the age of 52, and was buried in the La Grange City Cemetery. The 1870 census, completed just prior to his death, recorded that Faison owned \$40,000 in land and \$5,000 in personal wealth.³³ Fayette County Probate Records state that, at the time of his death, Faison owned 35,000 acres of land, possessed \$4,700 in gold, and was owed money by more than 30 debtors.³⁴

La Grange During Reconstruction

While Nathaniel Faison was adding to his fortune, the area around La Grange suffered from the effects of war and Reconstruction. The local economy entered a precipitous decline during and after the Civil War. Cotton plantations suffered from the loss of slave labor. The price of land in Fayette County dropped from \$6.15 per acre in 1860 to \$4.50 in 1866. Consumer prices nationwide—for bread, pork, beef, butter, rice, salt, coffee, tea, coal, cotton goods—were 90 percent higher than before the war, but wages did not keep up, advancing nearly 60 percent.³⁵

In 1868, James A. Peden, a distant relative of Faison who lived in an adjoining county, wrote to his sister, "It is the hardest times in this county...that ever was seen. No crops, no business. Merchants failing every day and worst of all no money. I have owing to me three hundred dollars. And I would this night take twenty-five dollars for the whole."³⁶ Newly freed African Americans had it no better; most ended up working on the land on shares, receiving one-third to one-half of the crop for their efforts.³⁷ Adding to the county's woes, a yellow fever epidemic in 1867 crippled La Grange, killing 240 of its citizens; and in 1869 and 1870, the Colorado River overflowed, ruining crops.³⁸

The local government was in disarray. Governmental activities were overseen by the Fifth Military District, and county officers were often deposed by military orders, causing county officials to change routinely. This very unstable condition brought corrupt political conditions.³⁹ Lawlessness was rife in La Grange. A local woman wrote in her diary on May 15, 1865: "Soldiers, masked and with guns, entered the store of a German a few miles from here and took sixty to eighty dollars worth of goods. They threw down confederate bills for it, remarking that they were compelled to take dollar for dollar and he must." James Peden wrote that "things are worse now than before the war. Bands of robbers infest the county. There is no law here nor at all. And advise all who think of coming to Texas to stay away..."⁴⁰

³³ U.S. Census, 1870, Fayette County.

³⁴ Probation of will of N.W. Faison, November 29, 1870, Fayette County Probate Records, Book D2, 623.

³⁵ *States Rights Democrat*, La Grange, Texas, March 29, 1867.

³⁶ Letter, James A. Peden, Navasota, Texas, to Bettie Peden, February 10, 1868, William L. Faison Papers (M-2247), University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C.

³⁷ "Fayette County." Handbook of Texas Online.

³⁸ F. Lotto, *Fayette County, Her History and Her People* (Schulenburg, Texas: Sticker Steam Press, 1902).

³⁹ Lotto, 139.

⁴⁰ Diary of Miss Phelps in Wade and Weyland, 264; Letter, James Peden to Bettie Peden, February 10, 1868.

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Race Relations During Reconstruction

After Emancipation, African Americans struggled to reunite families, set up households, start their own churches and schools, and establish their own rural communities. While newspaper editorials railed against African Americans in general—vigorously opposing their suffrage, military protection, and any other type of advancement—the attitudes toward particular local blacks was milder, even supportive. The La Grange newspaper, for example, called for white residents to financially support a group of African Americans trying to start a church; it commended black residents for coming to the aid of a white man whose barn was on fire; and it gave favorable publicity to a convention of freedmen in nearby Bastrop.⁴¹ Yet tension between blacks and whites generally remained strong; Faison's cousin James Peden reflected a disparaging attitude toward black residents in a letter: "Lynch law is carried on all over the state and the Negroes try to run rough shod over the Whites. Oh! Would to God another war would break out. I would not be in the Commissary Dept. I would make a heavy mark or die in the attempt."⁴²

During these turbulent years, Nathaniel Faison began to donate land to local freedmen. On March 28, 1867, he deeded two town lots to trustees of a Baptist church and a Methodist Episcopal church to provide a school and worship for black members; and on May 30, 1867, he and W.W. Ligon deeded, for the sum of thirty dollars, a town lot to trustees of Freedman's School Association of La Grange.⁴³ In February 1870, Faison and Ligon sold another lot for thirty dollars to the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church: "Said premise shall be used, kept, maintained and disposed of as a place of divine worship and for school purposes subject to the discipline, usage and ministerial appointments of the Methodist Episcopal Church."⁴⁴ Sometime in 1870 or earlier, Faison verbally offered to donate two acres about nine miles west of the La Grange for school purposes. Louis Luck, August Hahn and A. Keisling formed a board of trustees to take charge of erecting a schoolhouse and employing teachers. The land was formally deeded after Faison's death in May 1871 for the sum of one dollar.⁴⁵ In 1874, another tract promised by Faison was deeded by his estate to trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in rural Fayette County.⁴⁶

Both Nathaniel and Peter Faison seemed to have had a complex relationship with African Americans. Their father, William Wright Faison, owned 27 slaves at the time of his death in 1859. After Emancipation, Peter assisted in making the bond for the marriage of two former slaves, Smith Woodson and Lucy Faison on August 9, 1866.⁴⁷ Payton Faison, a former slave of William Wright Faison, moved to Fayette County sometime before 1873, and his descendents still reside in La Grange today. Payton Faison's son Tom may have borrowed money from Peter Faison; notes with documentary stamps were found in the Faison House, showing that in 1899, Tom Faison owed H.C. Heilig & Company, a local bank, small amounts of money on several occasions.⁴⁸

⁴¹ *States Rights Democrat*, 1866.

⁴² Letter, James Peden to Bettie Peden, February 10, 1868.

⁴³ Fayette County Deed Record Book T, 181, 245.

⁴⁴ Fayette County Deed Record Book V, 722.

⁴⁵ Fayette County Deed Record Book W, 610.

⁴⁶ Fayette County Deed Record Book 3, 209.

⁴⁷ Will of William Wright Faison; marriage records, Hardeman County, Tennessee, 1866.

⁴⁸ United States Census, Fayette County, 1880; conversation with Faison family members, La Grange; papers from Faison House, Garden Club of La Grange.

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Louisiana Brown ("Lou Faison")

The 1870 census shows that Nathaniel Faison, who never married, had a live-in housekeeper, a former slave named Louisiana Brown, age 49. Two children—Willie Blair, "mulatto," age 16, and Lizzie Blair, "black," age 19—also lived in the house.⁴⁹ The children's relationship to Louisiana Brown and Nathaniel Faison is unknown. On April 2, 1870, Faison deeded his house and contents to Brown, "in consideration of the services to me rendered during the past five years... in the capacity of housekeeper for which I am at present indebted to her..."⁵⁰ The next day he wrote his will and left Brown \$3,000 in gold coin. A June 14, 1870, codicil to the will reduced that amount to \$2,000 and left \$1,000 in gold to Peter Faison, Nathaniel's brother.⁵¹

Louisiana Brown was the sole owner of the Faison House, which presumably she occupied from June 1870 until November 1872, when she sold the home to Peter Faison for \$3,000 and purchased another home in the center of town for \$1,800, on Block 34 just off the courthouse square.⁵² In the 1880 census, she gave her name as "Lou Faison," and the young woman Lizzie Blair still lived with her.⁵³ In 1890, Brown sold that property to a local attorney and bought a much more modest home for \$600, approximately eight blocks from the courthouse square, at the intersection of Pearl and Jackson streets.⁵⁴

Louisiana Brown appears in the 1900 census, still using the Faison last name, and living with two young children believed to be the grandchildren of Tom Faison, a descendent of Payton Faison, a former slave of the Faison family in Tennessee.⁵⁵ A memorial obelisk located in the city cemetery is inscribed with the name "Lou Faison." No death date is inscribed and no records of her burial there have been found.⁵⁶

Peter Faison Family

Peter Faison, born in 1833 in Grand Junction, Tennessee, graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1858.⁵⁷ His father, Wright Faison, died in 1859 leaving a large farm and extensive property, including 27 slaves, but the family later suffered great losses during the Civil War.⁵⁸ In 1872, Peter filed a petition in Hardeman County, Tennessee, for reparations for possessions and crops taken from him by the Union Army during the Civil War. In this petition, he swore he did not voluntarily serve in the Confederate Army nor voluntarily furnish any stores, supplies or other material to aid the Confederacy. His claim was denied, however, presumably because of his Confederate sympathies.

⁴⁹ United States Census, Fayette County, Texas, 1870.

⁵⁰ Fayette County Deed Record Book X, 28.

⁵¹ Probation of will of N.W. Faison, Fayette County Probate Records, Book D2, 623, November 29, 1870.

⁵² Fayette County Clerk's Office, Deed Record Book Y, 714, W.W. Little to Brown; and Book Y, 719, Brown to P.B. Faison.

⁵³ United States Census, Fayette County, Texas, 1880.

⁵⁴ This parcel is Farm Block 29 of Moore's League.

⁵⁵ United States Census, Fayette County, Texas, 1900.

⁵⁶ Inscription on obelisk, Old La Grange Cemetery, La Grange, Texas. The obelisk also features the name "Caroline Price," who died in 1867 during a yellow fever epidemic.

⁵⁷ Catalogue of Members of the Dialectic Society Instituted with the University of North Carolina, June 3, 1895. University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill archives. Retrieved December 11, 2006 at: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/true/dialectic/dialectic.html>.

⁵⁸ Will of William Wright Faison, Ivey, Tennessee, 1859.

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When his brother Nathaniel died in Texas, Peter Faison was named one of three executors. He inherited \$1,000 in gold and one-fifth of Nathaniel's estate, shared with his four other surviving siblings; the inheritance did not include Nathaniel Faison's house. Peter Faison purchased additional property in the La Grange area and in November 1872 bought the house from Louisiana Brown for the sum of \$3,000. He took over his brother's land and, presumably, his wholesale cotton and merchandising business, and he evidently enjoyed great financial success. There is evidence that Peter Faison also was a collection agent, receiving payments on debt for a percentage.⁵⁹

The front portion of the Faison House, Section C, was built in 1884 and featured two new large rooms, a grand hallway entrance, and a wide front portico.⁶⁰ Over the years it was furnished lavishly with a four-poster bed, chandeliers, original artwork, and a piano manufactured by Wm. Knabe & Co. of Baltimore. The family ordered clothes from several New York companies including Lord & Taylor and possessed items made by Tiffany & Co. These purchases indicate that the Peter Faison family enjoyed a comfortable, if not luxurious, existence in central Texas. Their daughter Maria was sent to an exclusive girls' school in Virginia, headed by the widow of Confederate hero J.E.B. Stuart. Their son Percy attended the law school of the University of Virginia.⁶¹

Peter Faison died on December 14, 1918. After his widow Susan's death in 1920, their youngest son James inherited the bulk of the estate, including the house. By the time of Peter's death, other Faison family members in North Carolina and Texas were collecting oil royalties on some of the property they had inherited from Nathaniel W. Faison. Peter and Susan's only daughter, Maria, died at the age of 25 in 1888; their oldest son Percy served briefly as Fayette County attorney before he married and moved to San Antonio. Neither Percy nor James had any children. James Faison lived his entire life in the Faison House; after his death in 1943, James's widow Julia Ogden Faison remained in the home until her death in 1961. The Faisons left no direct descendants in La Grange; only the descendants of the former slave Payton Faison still remain in the area.

La Grange Garden Club

When the La Grange Garden Club purchased the Faison House and all its contents on June 2, 1961, Texas was in the midst of its Civil War Centennial commemoration, and the new state historical marker program set an unprecedented push to place 5,000 markers throughout the state within a few years. The women of the club sought recognition for the home's place in La Grange history, its tie to Nathaniel Faison and his Republic of Texas service. As was common in the early historic preservation movement, the initial focus was on one aspect of the building's history, with less information on subsequent owners or completion of substantial research. The women celebrated the early Texas house with a Lone Star planter bed in the courtyard. Although their focus was on gardening, the club members preserved as much as they could of the Faison family belongings. Over the years, they have made the house and its contents available to groups and individuals interested in local history.

⁵⁹ Will of N.W. Faison; J.C. Brown papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁶⁰ *La Grange Journal*, January 31, 1884: "Mr. P.B. Faison is having his residence added to and otherwise materially improved. Mr. P.F. Doyle, contractor [*sic*] and builder has the contract." The date of construction of Section C is further established by the increase in property valuation documented on the tax rolls as having occurred in 1884. Block O was valued at \$2000 in 1885, after having been valued at only \$1500 every year between 1876 and 1884. See Fayette County Tax Assessment Roll of Property, 1876 through 1885.

⁶¹ Correspondence of Peter B. Faison, 1870-1910, Faison House, La Grange, Texas.

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Summary

The Faison House is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, for its ability to show the evolution of dwelling construction methods and styles in central Texas during the second half of the 19th century. The house retains a high level of integrity, largely unchanged from its late 19th-century form.

The Faison House also is nominated at the state level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History for its association with Nathaniel W. Faison, an early Texas settler who fought for the Republic and found success in land, cotton, and merchandising; however, it is the home's connection to freedwoman Louisiana "Lou Faison" Brown that is uniquely significant. Although it is possible that other freedwomen in Texas owned homes as early as or earlier than Brown, no other examples are known as of this writing. The Faison House therefore signifies the complexity of race relations in Texas after Emancipation. Lastly, the Faison House illustrates the manner in which some wealthy residents of central Texas lived during the second half of the 19th century, with luxury items purchased from major Northeast retailers and access to out-of-state educational institutions.

Although two sections of the home were constructed prior to ownership by the Faison family, the period of significance begins with the purchase of the property by Nathaniel W. Faison in 1866 and ends with the 1920 death of Susan Faison, widow of Peter Faison, whose family constructed the central and last section of the home in 1884 and filled it with the fine furnishings that remain there today. A significant date is 1870, the year in which Louisiana Brown became the owner of the residence.

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Jones, Howard. *The Red Diary: A Chronological History of Black Americans in Houston and Some Neighboring Harris County Communities - 122 Years Later*. Austin: Nortex Press, 1991. In 1860, there were only eight free blacks in Houston. Jones's first reference to a freedwoman owning property in Houston after 1865 was in 1871, one year after Louisiana Brown's acquisition of the Faison House.

Maxwell, Louise P. "Freedmantown: The Origins of a Black Neighborhood in Houston, 1865-1880," in *Bricks without Straw: A Comprehensive History of African Americans in Texas*, by David A. Williams; Waco: Eakin Press, 1997. There is no reference to property ownership by a freewoman prior to April 2, 1870, the date Louisiana Brown received the deed to the Faison House.

Scott, Janelle Dupont. "Married Women at Work: Dallas, Texas 1880-1900." Master's thesis, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1979. This study of the occupations of married women in Dallas 1880-1900 indicates that few African American women lived in Dallas prior to the coming of the railroad in 1872. One story is related about a former slave woman who owned property in downtown Dallas until she sold it in 1880 (page 35). However, it is unclear when she purchased the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 24

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

Sitton, Thad and James H. Conrad. *Freedom Colonies: Independent Black Texans at the Time of Jim Crow*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. In the introduction, the authors note that in 1870, only 1.8 percent of all African American farmers, men and women, owned land (page 2).

Williams, David A. *Bricks without Straw: A Comprehensive History of African Americans in Texas*, Waco: Eakin Press, 1997. There is no reference to home ownership by former slave women in Texas.

Winegarten, Ruthe. *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. Ruthe Winegarten was widely regarded as a leading scholar of African American Texas women's history. In her exhaustively researched book, she found only a few isolated examples of freedwomen who owned property prior to the Civil War. Winegarten documented only five cases of former slave women who inherited property from their former owners after emancipation, although not necessarily as sole owners.

Interviews (conducted 2007; transcripts on file with applicant)

Boswell, Angela, Professor of History, Henderson State University, Arkansas—Dr. Boswell cautioned against saying Louisiana Brown was the first freedwoman to own land after emancipation, because she was aware of at least two other cases, one in Houston and one in Colorado County of women owning either a house or land.

Ingram, Marybelle, Matagorda County Historical Society, Bay City, Texas—Black families bought property beginning in the 1870s in Matagorda County, but Ingram did not recall record of any single black woman owning property on her own.

Mears, Michelle, Librarian, University of North Texas, Denton; author of forthcoming book on early African American settlements in Austin—Freedwomen, and freedmen, buying houses, would have been very difficult and so was probably unusual. A freedman had to get a white man to co-sign if he wanted to buy anything, so the chances of a freedwoman purchasing anything were probably fairly low. Mears is aware of a former slave woman in Austin, the mistress of a white farm owner, being given a house on the farm after emancipation. At least, she was allowed to continue living there after she was no longer a slave. Mears has not seen any evidence of a deed officially granting her ownership.

Norkunas, Martha, Professor of Anthropology, University of Texas, Austin—Dr. Norkunas has done extensive research into the African American community in Austin. She was unable to report any findings regarding women owning property as early as 1870.

Sitton, Thad, historian, author, Austin—Sitton believes it is possible that the Faison House was the first in-town house owned by a freedwoman; however, his research has been more focused on rural land ownership by African Americans. It was very difficult for any African American, man or woman, to acquire land.

Turner, Elizabeth, Professor of History, University of North Texas, Denton—Dr. Turner does not know whether this would be the first case of ownership by a former slave woman. She suggested that Norris Wright Cuney's mother, a former slave woman, may have owned a home.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	14	705430	3309310

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Lots 1 and 2, Block O, La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: Nomination includes all property historically associated with the building

11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Texas Historical Commission staff)

NAME/TITLE: Marie W. Watts

ORGANIZATION: La Grange Garden Club

DATE: March 21, 2007 (rev. January 27, 2010)

STREET & NUMBER: 2905 Boulton Creek Road

TELEPHONE: (713) 628-9065

CITY OR TOWN: Muldoon **STATE:** Texas

ZIP CODE: 78949

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-25)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-28 through Photo-32)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-26 through Figure-27)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: La Grange Garden Club (Norman Hubbard, President)

STREET & NUMBER: 7630 Hardcastle Lane

TELEPHONE: (979) 249-5114

CITY OR TOWN: La Grange **STATE:** Texas

ZIP CODE: 78945

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

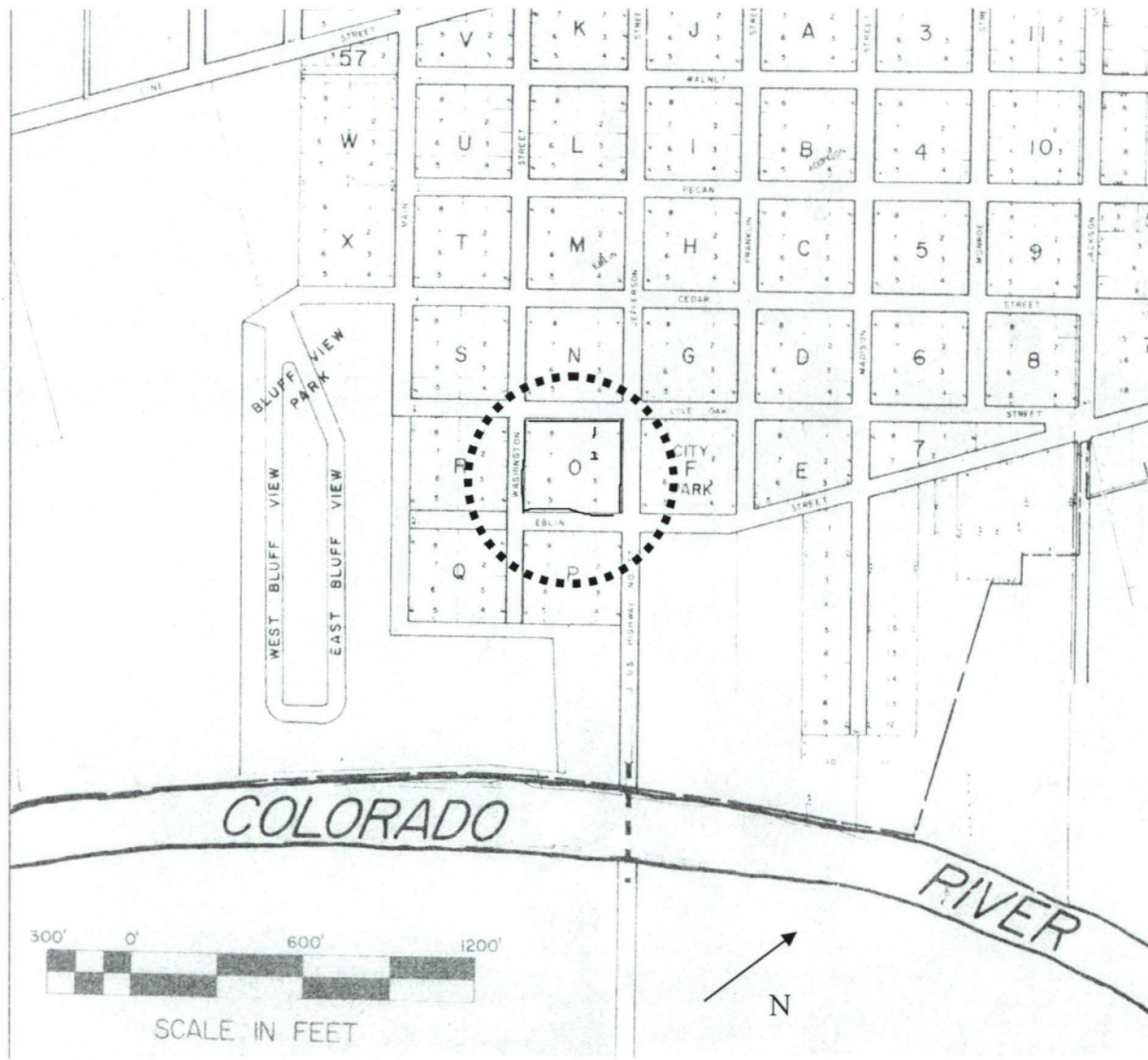
Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

Section MAP Page 25

Plat of City of La Grange (undated)

Faison House sits in Block O, Lots 1 and 2

Source: Fayette Public Library, La Grange, Texas



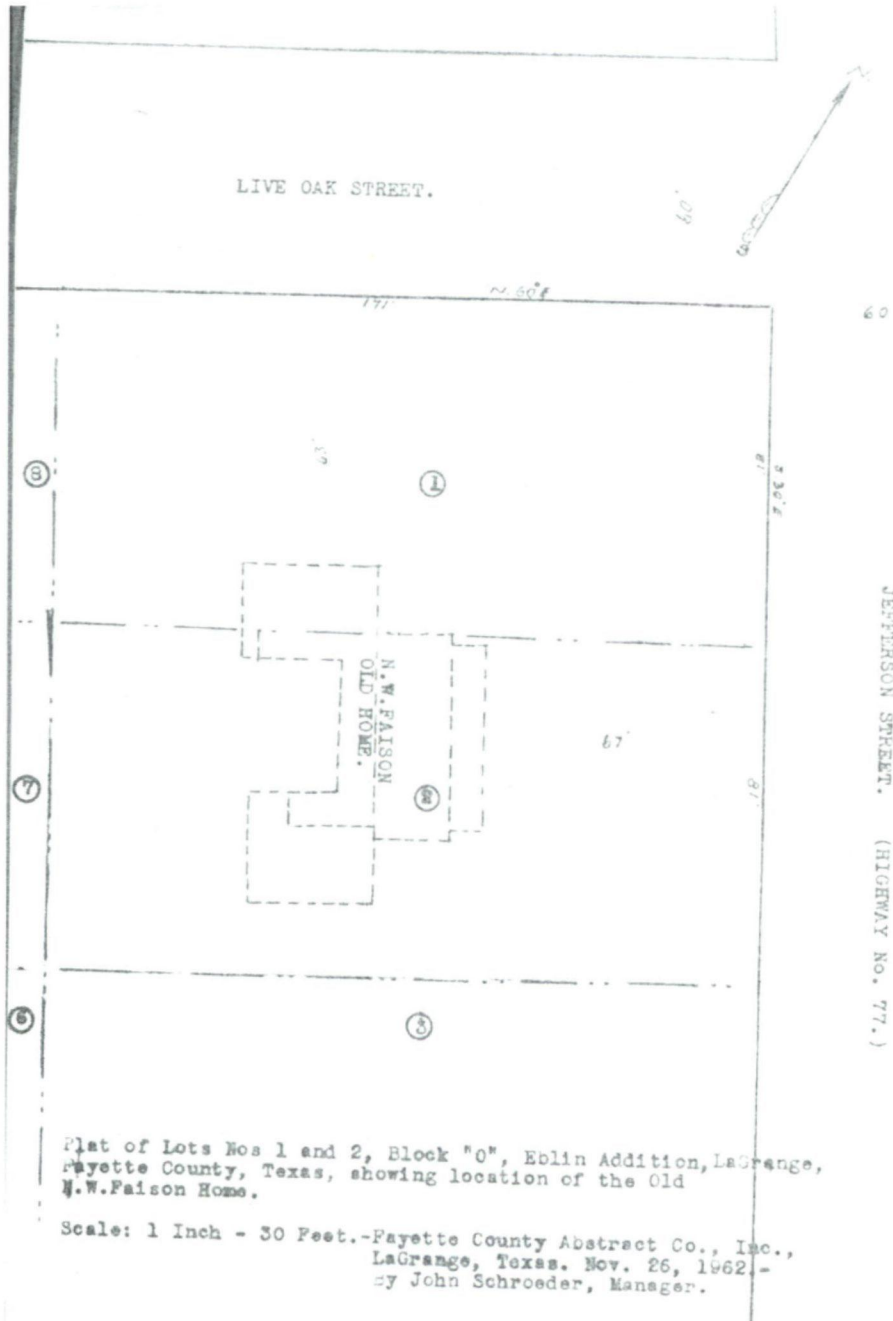
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 26

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

Figure 1: Site plan, not to scale



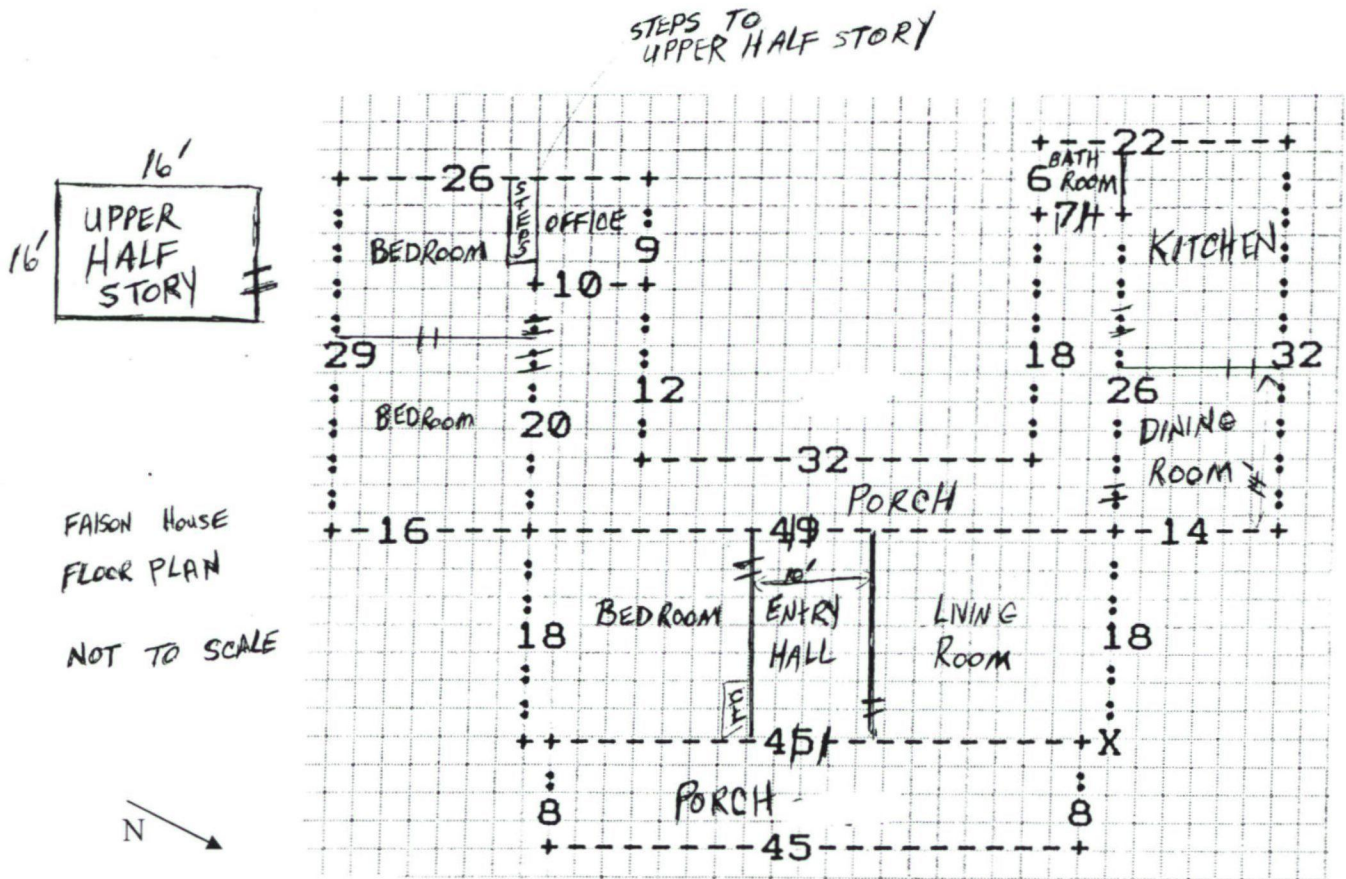
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

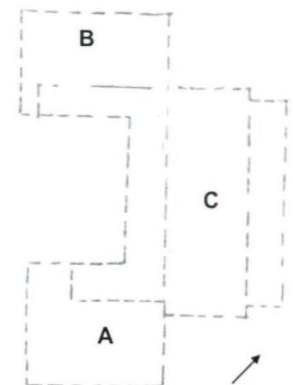
Section FIGURE Page 27

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

Figure 2: Floor plans, not to scale



Faison House composed of three separate volumes, A, B, and C, connected only through back porch.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section PHOTO Page 28

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas



Nathaniel W. Faison, date unknown

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 29

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas



Peter Faison, date unknown

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 30

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas



Percy, Peter, Susan, and James Faison on the front porch of the Faison House.

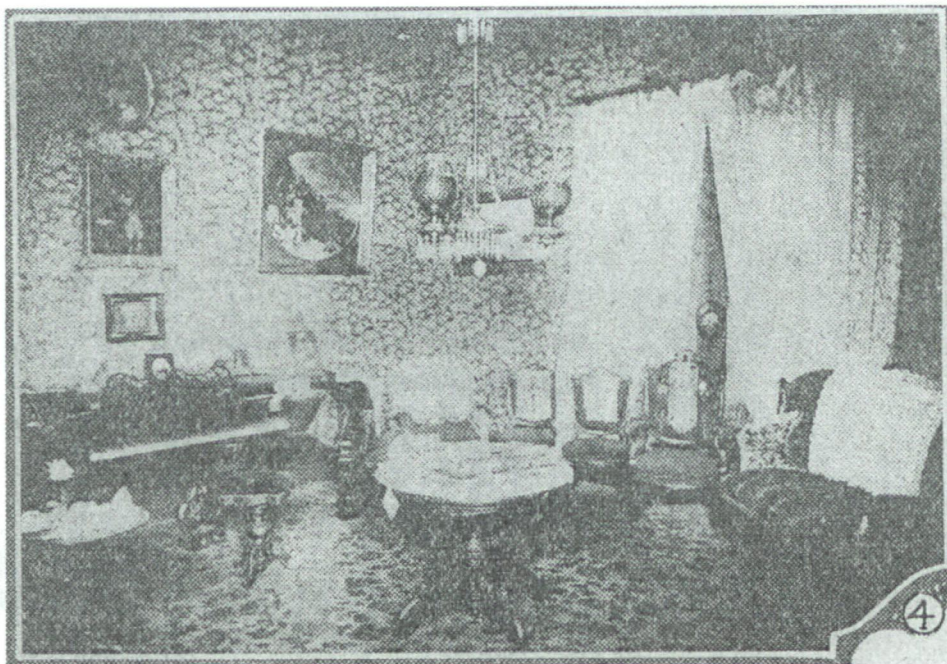
Date unknown, thought to be after the death of daughter Maria in 1888.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 31

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas



Interior, parlor view (top); and exterior, rear courtyard (bottom).

Historic photographs published Sunday, October 25, 1931, *Houston Chronicle*.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 32

Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Faison House
822 South Jefferson Street
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas
Photographed by Aparna Surte
April 2004
Negatives on file with the Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Photo 1
East (front) elevation
Photographer facing northwest

Photo 2
Front door
Photographer facing northwest

Photo 3
Southeast oblique
Photographer facing west

Photo 4
Southwest oblique
Photographer facing north

Photo 5
Southeast corner back porch
Photographer facing east

Photo 6
Northwest oblique
Photographer facing east

Photo 7
Northeast oblique
Photographer facing south

Photo 8
Interior, front door
Photographer facing northeast

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Faison, Nathaniel W., House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Fayette

DATE RECEIVED: 5/07/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/23/08
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/07/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/20/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 08000538

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

 ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Nomination is being returned for clarification and a number of items including historic name, typographical corrections, architectural classification, justification of 1888 date of construction, and discussion of integrity.

How does property reflect the early history of house in the 1850s - 1880? Section A has been altered when sect. C built.

RECOM./CRITERIA Return

REVIEWER L McClelland

DISCIPLINE

TELEPHONE 202-354-7258

DATE 6/20/08

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments (Y)N see attached SLR (Y/N)

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

**Faison, Nathaniel W., House
Fayette County, Texas**

**National Register Comments
Return for Additional Documentation**

This property has an interesting history and evolution. It is being nominated for significance in social history, exploration/settlement, and architecture. Although a great deal of research has gone into the history and associations of the earliest dwelling (built in 1855) on the property, it was substantially altered when it became a side wing of the larger, existing house. In contrast, little is known (including the date of construction) about the predominant central section of the existing dwelling, which was built sometime "before 1888." The nomination classifies the dwelling as Late Victorian/Eastlake and describes it in a variety of ways that seem at times inconsistent and contrary to the historical facts or obvious physical characteristics, for example, in one place it is described as mid-19th century, another as Late Victorian, and yet another as "typically Texas Victorian." The building does in fact seem to be a hybrid and therefore warrants a stronger analysis of period domestic design in this area of the State and further explanation of statements such as a "rare example of the development of residential construction in the history of the state," and a "representation of a vernacular Late Victorian home and the evolution of early residential types in Texas" on page 7.5.

General: Please check the text for typographical errors and correct them (for example, "nine-over-size," on page 7.6, and) before resubmitting the nomination to the Keeper.

Section 1: Name of the Property

Due to the importance of this property in social history, we suggest that the name of the property be changed to "Faison-Brown House" to recognize the property's early association with the two Faison brothers and Louisiana Brown, who owned it between Nathaniel Faison's death in 1870 and her sale to his brother, Peter, in 1872.

Section 7. Description

Please provide a more complete description and integrity assessment of the original Faison house that is now one of the rear wings of the property. It's hard to envision the house's original appearance, including the character of the "portico"—would the portico have been a simple shed-roofed appendage or something more elaborate with classical columns in keeping with the "subtle" Greek Revival styling? Please describe its original condition and the alterations that occurred at the time it was connected to the new (front) house. Please explain how its orientation to street and yard has been affected by the later changes and explain in what ways it still resembles the home owned by Nathaniel Faison until his death and then by Louisiana Brown? What remains of the interior floor plan? Please describe the character of the original finishes (mantelpiece, moldings, walls, and woodwork) remaining from the early period? Please explain in what ways these features

are reflective of domestic architecture of Texas's settlement period. Are their similarly designed homes in LaGrange or in nearby communities that have buildings of this period? If so, how do they compare in character, integrity, or local importance? How does the wing today reflect its origins and the historic associations that make the property significant in social history? What is rare and what is commonplace in the building's various methods and materials of construction?

Please expand the description of the second wing and provide an approximate date for its move to the present location. Did this building originally function as a summer kitchen? How does it compare with homes or detached kitchens of the same period locally?

Please provide a more accurate date for the central portion of the house? Please explain in the introductory paragraph that the property reflects an unusual combination of Greek Revival features and Victorian details. What are the historic patterns and dates associated with the expression of the Greek Revival style in this part of Texas? Is it possible that some of the late Victorian features (round-headed glazing in the door, paired double windows, and porch detailing) were due to remodeling the earlier Greek Revival house? While the Eastlake-inspired porch certainly dates to the later Victorian era, isn't it possible that the Greek Revival core of the house with its characteristic entrance way (transom and sidelights and classical architrave), end gables with returns and oculus, and the wide entablature across the front was built earlier than the 1880s? How do the interior details (mantelpieces, moldings, walls, and woodwork) carry on or depart from the Greek Revival detailing of this house? Was this the sole property owned by Nathaniel Faison and his family in the years prior to 1880? Is it believed that he lived during this time in the original 1855 house? Please describe and if possible identify the source of the decorative glazing that fills the side and transom lights?

On page 7.9, mention is made of remarks James Faison made in 1931 saying that at that time N. W. Faison's house stood almost as it did in 1870; this makes little sense and needs further explanation given the fact that the main house (section C) and the other wing (section B) did not exist then and that the original house had been altered.

Section 8: Significance

The statement of significance describes it (page 8.10) as "a good example of the evolution of 19th century vernacular residential architecture" There are several inconsistencies concerning period and style in the nomination and one is left wondering what the building's very complex evolution really represents. Please provide a more authoritative assessment of the significant architectural character of this building. Please carefully edit the text of the nomination to make sure stylistic labels are logical and consistent.

Summary mentions the building's representation as an evolving folk Victorian house. This does not appear accurate, since this house appears to be a stylistically pretentious house, it likely didn't derive from a "folk tradition" but more widely disseminated builder's guides or pattern books. What makes this house "typically Texas Victorian" as

noted on page 8.15? Please explain, if possible, the unusual character of the existing house's U-shaped plan with a rear courtyard flanked by a loggia-like porch. Was there a precedent for this in central Texas in this period? Is this possibly an adaptation from Mexican domestic design (hacienda) or ranch? What evidence exists that this was carried out during Peter Faison's family tenure? Is it possible that it was an early 20th century alteration in response perhaps to growing interest in the nation's "colonial" and territorial past?

Mention is made of the Faison family's life during the Gilded Age, yet the period of significance is cut off at the estimated date of construction, 1888. Should the period of significance be expanded to reflect the rising prosperity, success, and associated lifestyle of the family into the 1890s and 20th century? Does James Faison's pride in the home's early history and interest in the preservation of the pioneer era house, and perhaps, the courtyard gardening reflect the emerging Colonial Revival movement? Could this be an additional layer of importance that might enrich the social history reflected by the house? The significance of the gardens, possibly as "courtyard gardens," "Southern heirloom gardens" or "old-fashioned gardens," which were growing in popularity from 1900 to the 1920s might also be considered.

Please let me know if you have any questions concerning these comments.

Linda McClelland
202-354-2258

Historian
National Register of Historic Places

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Faison, Nathaniel W., House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Fayette

DATE RECEIVED: 2/19/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/05/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 08000538

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Many of the questions raised in the initial review have been resolved and additional research about the Faison family, the house's evolution (including the construction of Section C in 1884) and significance in social history has clarified the property's significance for its associations with Faison family (1866 to 1920) in social history and its unique ownership in 1870 to 1872 by grandmother Louisiana Brown, who had been willed the property by Nathaniel Faison for whom she worked as a ~~servant~~ housekeeper. Home took on its predominant late Victorian character in 1884 when central part of home was constructed.

RECOM./CRITERIA

REVIEWER

DISCIPLINE

TELEPHONE

DATE

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

Integrity of N. Faison's early home (1866-1870) remains intact off country road at rear. Architectural form.



PHOTO 1

N.W. FAISON HOUSE

LA GRANGE, FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

HOLLAND !! 81 137 0731 N N N 22



PHOTO 2

N.W. FAISON HOUSE

LA GRANGE, FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

HOLLAND !!! 83 137 0731 N N W 322



PHOTO 3

N.W. FAISON HOUSE

LA GRANGE, FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

HOLLAND !! 82 137 0731 N N V 12



PHOTO 4

N.W. FAISON HOUSE

LA GRANGE, FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

HOLLAND !!! 87 137 0731 N N N 32



PHOTO 5

N.W. FAISON HOUSE

LA GRANGE, FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

HOLLAND !! 88 137 0731 N N 42



PHOTO 6

N.W. FAISON HOUSE

LA GRANGE, FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

HOLLAND !!! 85 137 0731 N N N 32



PHOTO 7

N.W. FAISON HOUSE

LA GRANGE, FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

HOLLAND !!! 84 137 0731 N.W. 32

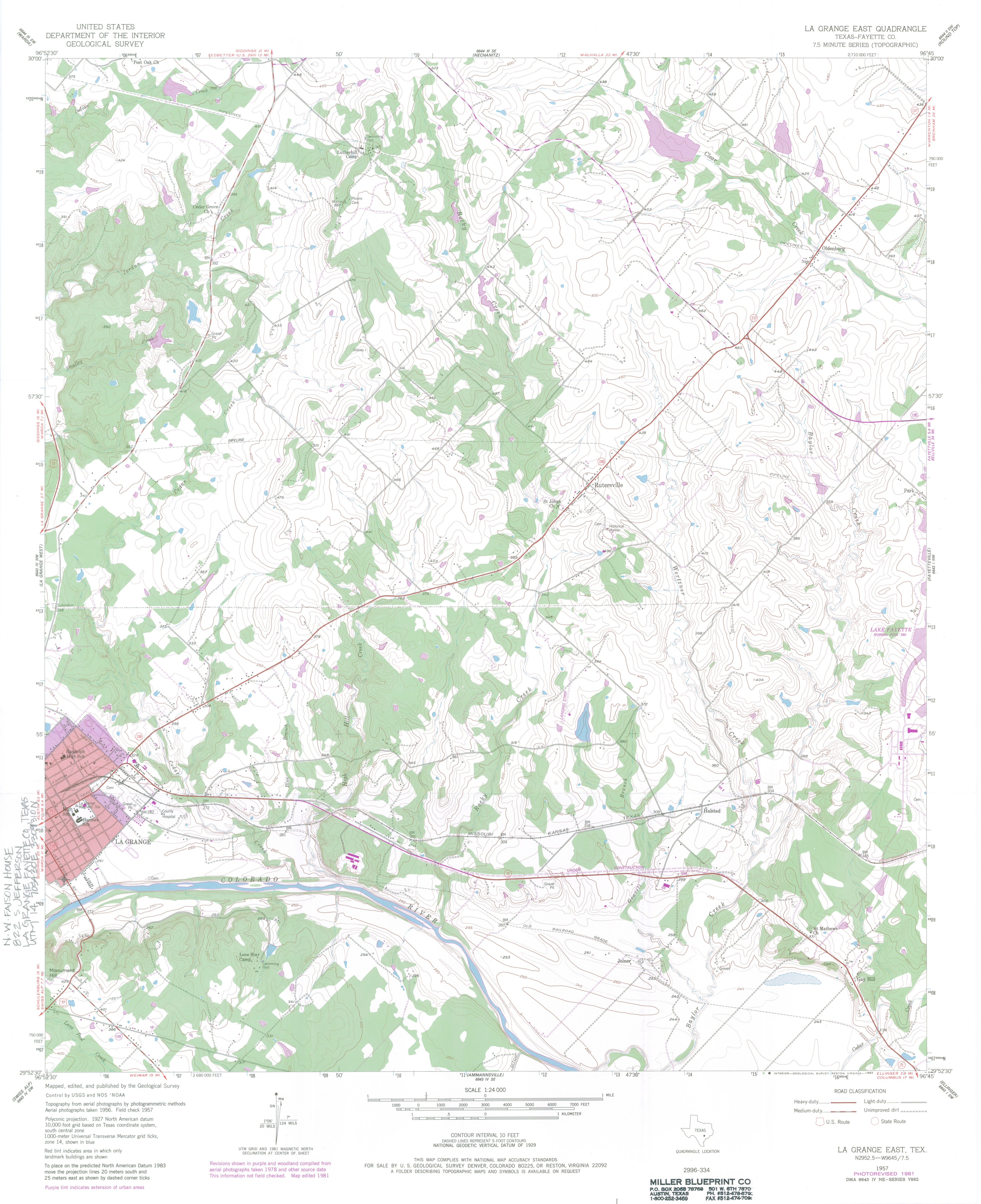


PHOTO 8

N.W. FAISON HOUSE

LA GRANGE, FAYETTE COUNTY, TEXAS

HOLLAND !!! 89 137 0731 N 1/2



N.W. FAISON HOUSE
822 S JEFFERSON
LA GRANGE, FAYETTE CO. TEXAS
UTM 14 705 500 300 000

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
Aerial photographs taken 1956. Field check 1957

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system,
south central zone

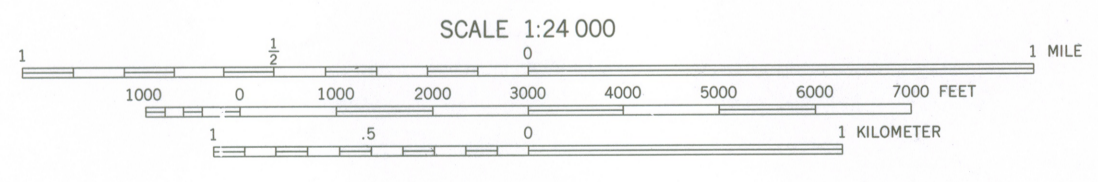
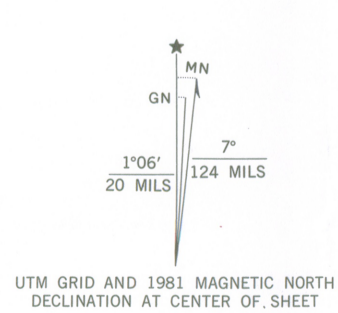
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 14, shown in blue

Red tint indicates area in which only
landmark buildings are shown

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 20 meters south and
25 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from
aerial photographs taken 1978 and other source data.
This information not field checked. Map edited 1981



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DASHED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route

LA GRANGE EAST, TEX.
N2952.5—W9645/7.5

1957
PHOTOREVISED 1981
DMA 6643 IV NE—SERIES V882

2996-334
MILLER BLUEPRINT CO
P.O. BOX 2058 78768 501 W. 6TH 7870
AUSTIN, TEXAS PH. #512-478-8792
1-800-252-3469 FAX #512-474-7098

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

real places telling real stories

February 3, 2010

Carol Shull
Interim Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240



RE: Resubmittal, Nathaniel W. Faison House, La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

Dear Ms. Shull:

After several months of additional research, National Register program staff of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the property owners have completed the requested changes to the nomination of the Nathaniel W. Faison House, and the THC is now resubmitting the nomination for your review.

The property is nominated at the **local** level of significance under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, for its ability to show the evolution of dwelling construction methods and styles in central Texas during the second half of the 19th century. The house retains a high level of integrity, largely unchanged from its late 19th-century form. The architectural classification has been listed as Greek Revival, Eastlake, and Folk

The Faison House also is nominated at the **state** level of significance under Criterion A, in the area of Social History, for its association with Nathaniel W. Faison, an early settler to Texas who fought for the Republic and later achieved great financial success. It is the home's connection to freedwoman Louisiana Brown (also known as Lou Faison), however, that is uniquely significant; although it is possible that other freedwomen in Texas owned homes as early as Brown, no other examples are known as of this writing. The Faison House therefore signifies the complexity of race relations in Texas after Emancipation. Lastly, the Faison House illustrates the manner in which some wealthy residents of central Texas lived during the second half of the 19th century.

Although two sections of the home were constructed prior to ownership by the Faison family, the period of significance begins with the purchase of the property by Nathaniel W. Faison in 1866 and ends with the 1920 death of Susan Faison, widow of Peter Faison, whose family constructed the central and last section of the home in 1884 and filled it with the fine furnishings that remain there today. A significant date is 1870, the year in which Louisiana Brown became the owner of the residence; she sold the property to Peter Faison two years later.

Included with this resubmission are the photographs and USGS map that accompanied the original nomination. Please review this resubmission and address any questions to Gregory Smith, National Register Coordinator, at greg.smith@thc.state.tx.us, or by telephone at (512) 463-6013. Many thanks for your careful attention to this nomination.

Sincerely,

Mark Wolfe
Executive Director



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories



MEMORANDUM

TO: Carol Shull, Interim Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Rachel Leibowitz, Historian
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Nathaniel W. Faison House
La Grange, Fayette County, Texas

DATE: February 3, 2010

The following materials are submitted regarding [address]:

	Original National Register of Historic Places form
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resubmitted nomination
	Multiple Property nomination form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS maps
	Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other: cover letter from Mark Wolfe, Executive Director and SHPO

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review
- The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

