United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Zion Hill Historic District (amendment to change status of the house at 720 Bois d'Arc)
Other name/site number: Clay House, Popp Place
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 720 Bois D'arc
City or town: Nacogdoches
State: Texas
County: Nacogdoches
Not for publication: ☐
Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this property (☐ meets ☐ does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
☐ national ☐ statewide ☐ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official in title
Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

Date
8/19/22

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official
Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, explain:

Signature of the Keeper
Date of Action
Zion Hill Historic District (amendment to change status of the house at 720 Bois d'Arc)  
Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building (within listed district)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Domestic: Single Dwelling

Current Functions: Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th Century / Modified L-Plan

Principal Exterior Materials: Wood

Narrative Description
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C (same as district as a whole)

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Architecture; Ethnic Heritage/African American (same as district as a whole)

Period of Significance: c.1890-1940 (same as original nomination)

Significant Dates: c.1890

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: J.P. Popp (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on (date)
___ 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, Austin)
___ Other state agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA
**10. Geographical Data**

N/A

**11. Form Prepared By**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/title: Richard Orton</th>
<th>Organization: African American Heritage Project</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street &amp; number: 2320 Tanglewood Circle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City or Town: Nacogdoches</td>
<td>State: TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:rorton.mac@mac.com">rorton.mac@mac.com</a></td>
<td>Zip Code: 75961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 936-564-3291</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date: August 2022</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Documentation**

- **Maps**  
  (see continuation sheets 9-11)

- **Additional items**  
  (see continuation sheets 12-13)

- **Photographs**  
  (see continuation sheets 14-22)
Zion Hill Historic District (amendment to change status of the house at 720 Bois d’Arc)
Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches County, Texas

Photograph Log

1. North elevation from Bois d’Arc Street (August 2022, showing new roof). The new window on the far left replaced a door installed in early 20th century after the orientation of the house changed when Richardson Street was no long a main thoroughfare due the extension of the Oak Grove Cemetery. Part of the porch still remains under the window, but it will be removed.

2. West elevation (showing in-kind replacement of deteriorated siding, August 2022).

Photos 3-9 were taken February 2022

3. Photo from the southwest with view of the back porch. The brown tarp covers where a bathroom was built (not part of the original house) and that we have taken out.

4. South elevation, facing back of the house.

5. East facade. The original front door has been closed in since the large porch covering most of side fell down, probably in the 60s or 70s.

6. Dining room from kitchen doorway into fireplace room, facing east.

7. Fireplace room from fireplace through hallway into parlor, facing south.

8. Parlor looking east through hall into fireplace room, facing north.


Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
The Zion Hill Historic District was listed in the National Register in 1993 as “an intact collection of modest domestic buildings that date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries and that best represents the nearly self-contained communities of African-Americans that developed in Nacogdoches around the turn of the century.” Most of the buildings are modest frame residences brick 1- and 2-part commercial buildings typical in material and form to those found in other Texas communities of the period. The purpose of this nomination amendment is to reclassify one building in the Zion Hill Historic District from noncontributing to contributing. This amendment is limited in scope to address only the status of this building.

The house at 720 Bois D’Arc was originally classified in the nomination as noncontributing, despite it having been built c.1910, during the stated period of significance (c.1890-1940). The nomination described the building as follows:

1-story L-plan wood frame house with composition shingled gabled roof, horizontal clapboard siding, 1/1 wooden double-hung windows with corbeled hood molds, brick fireplace on projecting bay on north wall; gable over door beside fireplace; shed roof addition on west wall.

The nomination noted that noncontributing properties as:

those that detract from the district's historic character. The majority are less than 50 years and have little or no architectural or historic significance. An example includes the residence at 405 N. Lanana. Noncontributing buildings also include pre-1940 structures that have been so severely altered that little, if any, of their original or historic fabric is recognizable. Other examples include 400 Richardson and 421 N. Lanana.

The nomination preparers and the SHPO likely determined that the building at 720 Bois D’Arc should be classified as noncontributing due to window alterations, removal of the porch, removal of the door on the east elevation, and placement of a door to the east of the chimney on the south elevation. At the time the building nevertheless retained its original massing, most of its original wood siding, and roof configuration. The Texas Historical Commission would consider the building in this condition as a contributing property if nominated today.

Additional Documentation of the Building’s History

1

Named the Clay House for its longest-running occupant, Charlie Clay, the house at 720 Bois d’Arc was originally the “Popp Place,” for its builder J. P. Popp. Sale and deed records for the Clay House establishes a likely build date of 1900. Though the house shows minimal overt style elements to place it in time, the apparent original siting and plan suggest the earlier date. 1900 as its date places it at the end of the early period of semi-rural building, but before the rapid construction of a more urban neighborhood. Mr. Popp’s house was built beyond the cemetery in an open area, and he sold the land for a good profit only a year after purchase. Despite his short tenure, it remained the “Popp Place” for twenty years.

Available sources about the age of Zion Hill houses indicate that none of the currently or recently extant houses were there before about 1890. A few were built in the 1890-1900 decade. The main rush of construction was in the 1920s, and changed the character of the area dramatically, making it a neighborhood rather than a semi-rural area of limited settlement. The Clay House’s center hall does not face the street, although the tradition in rural or semi-rural locations was to face the main road. Mr. Popp may have oriented the house to the east to face Richardson Street, which now dead-ends into the cemetery, which continued to grow after the house’s construction. By 1910 the house at 724 Bois d’Arc was built right in the view from the Clay House porch, followed by the house at 728 Bois d’Arc.

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The plan of the house consists of a front section and rear wing. The front section has two rooms with an entry hall between them, a center-hall form. The rear wing off of the less heavily decorated of these front chambers contains two rooms, the rear one being the kitchen. Examination of the structure visible in the attic reveals that both sections were built before the exterior cladding of the house was applied, but also suggests that the original plan might have been to only build the front section, with the rear added after construction began. Cost of materials could have been a factor in favor of small size, perhaps overcome by a desire to have a more comfortable and convenient house.

The front section of the house expresses an awareness of proper refined living. The left front room was given decorative details associated with the Victorian Era parlor, a place for formal entertainment. The height of the windows, and their symmetrical placement in both front rooms, is part of this effort. The carved woodwork in the parlor was a key feature. As a carpenter, Popp may have been able to make this himself, but such decorations produced by industrial mills were increasingly available and affordable. The other front room may have been intended to serve as a best bedroom, family sitting room, location for less formal gatherings, or all three. Less fancy than the parlor, it was given the same shape, size and original window configuration, and was clearly part of the “public” portion of the house.

The rear wing of the Clay house is informal. The room now called the dining room may or may not have been originally intended for that purpose. The double doors to the room suggest it was seen as an extension of the front uses, but it is a bit smaller and the door layout is not very elegant. It is distinct from the front rooms in the casual feature of three grouped windows. The kitchen opens directly to the rear porch, a convenient feature for kitchens of the time, particularly in less urban areas where there was room to produce food by gardening, raising chickens or keeping a cow, all quite possible in the early years of the neighborhood. The porch was a shady, breezy alternative workspace, particularly for messy or hot work like laundry day. The shed room at the very back was a utilitarian addition, probably for tools or supplies, and its construction date is not known. It appears on the 1922 Sanborn map, as does a small shed near it, at the edge of the street.

The kitchen retains what appear to be its original cabinets, quite modern in the early years of the house as older kitchens were furnished with movable storage. The one near the porch door includes two large flour bins, probably for white flour and cornmeal, purchased in bulk because baking was an everyday task. The original stove was on the wall by the dining room. Physical evidence reveals where the first gas service entered the house. This room is also where the first indoor water supply entered. The sink cabinet may have originally held a sink served by a hand pump from a well, or water may have been hand carried.

**Rehabilitation Project Summary**

The African American Heritage Project (AAHP) began in 2009, and the organization acquired the Clay House from the City of Nacogdoches in April 2010. The task of the organization is to preserve African American history in Nacogdoches and do educational programs that featuring that history. Within months AAHP put a temporary roof on the house to stop the numerous leaks. A grant from the Summerlee Foundation which funded Robert Siebler, Inc. to complete an Abbreviated Historical Structures Report in 2020, providing an outline of a plan for completing the project. The rehabilitation project has leveled and stabilized the foundation, installed a new roof, replaced deteriorated siding in-kind, repaired floors, and built, installed, and painted 14 wood sash windows modeled after the originals. Preservation architect Donna Carter of Austin is overseeing current work. The owners are seeking funding to complete most of the major structural and systems work on the house, including plumbing (with ADA interior bathrooms), electrical, HVAC, and the rebuilding of the porch on the original front of the house (the sunroom). The external repairs to the house could be completed by the end of 2022 with normal fundraising. Much work still remains, including ADA compliant bathrooms, plumbing, electricity, and HVAC. None of the proposed work will have an effect on the overall integrity of the building, which retains sufficient integrity to be identified as a contributing building in the district at this time.
Google Earth Map (accessed August 18, 2022).

720 Bois D'Arc, Nacogdoches
31.605013° -94.648159°
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Map from original nomination
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Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches County, Texas


2013 at time of acquisition by current owner
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Nacogdoches, April 1922 (Sheet 6 detail)

Detail
Zion Hill Historic District (amendment to change status of the house at 720 Bois d'Arc)
Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches County, Texas

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Nacogdoches Feb. 1929 (Sheet 8 detail)

Nacogdoches Feb. 1929-Aug. 1946 (Sheet 8 detail)
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Floorplan showing room configuration and original porch
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1992 Survey Photo.

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