

**Zion Hill Historic District
National Register Nomination
and
Preservation Strategy**



submitted to
Nacogdoches Historic Landmark Preservation Committee
July 31, 1992

**ZION HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION
and
PRESERVATION STRATEGY**

**ArchiTexas
Dr. Mamie McKnight
Urban Prospects/Ron Emrich**

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Introduction

Introduction

A Multiple Property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in Nacogdoches, Texas submitted to the Texas Historical Commission in 1990 included a historic district nomination for Zion Hill, an important African-American residential neighborhood. The approximately eight square block area is composed primarily of one story frame dwellings dating from the early 20th century, as well as a historically important African-American cemetery and historically and architecturally significant black Baptist church.

The City of Nacogdoches, having had the nomination for the Zion Hill District returned for additional documentation by the Commission, selected the consultant team of ArchiTexas, Dr. Mamie McKnight and Urban Prospects/Ron Emrich to develop additional information that would expand the description of significance for the neighborhood, based upon the already prepared historic context "Community Planning and Development in Nacogdoches: 1830 - 1940," and compare the history and development of the Zion Hill neighborhood to similar types of communities in other East Texas cities.

In addition, the City of Nacogdoches asked for preparation of a preservation strategy for this important area, that included a conditions analysis of existing buildings, streetscapes and other important neighborhood features, as well as preservation, rehabilitation and restoration strategies for the structures and public improvements in the district.

The consultant team focused on a number of elements as this final report was prepared:

- Creation and implementation of an oral history documentation program which collected information about development of the historically African-American neighborhood(s) in Nacogdoches in the context of other similar communities in cities such as Marshall and Dallas, smaller towns in Nacogdoches County and other East Texas towns with comparable black cultural and developmental histories.
- Incorporation of both the collected oral history information and the results of documentary research into a completed National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Zion Hill Historic District, which will become part of the Multiple Property Nomination of the City of Nacogdoches.
- A field inventory of building conditions in the historic district and compilation of the overall building and streetscape conditions in a summary report.
- Development of a preservation strategies report, identifying preservation, rehabilitation and restoration recommendations based upon the conditions assessment report.

The team first visited Nacogdoches on May 3, 1992, meeting with a group of African-American students at Stephen F. Austin University to orient them to the mission of the project and to identify potential participants in the oral history collection process. After completion of the consultant's contract with the City of Nacogdoches and approval to proceed, a subsequent meeting and work session was held on October 5, 1992 at SFAU with students and advisors to begin the oral history collection. In addition, a community

forum was hosted by Rev. Larry Wade at the original Zion Hill Baptist Church in the district on October 5 to introduce members of the community and the Historic Landmark Committee to the project and to solicit participants' suggestions of possible oral history interviewees.

Student interviewers, along with the Dr. Mamie McKnight, the Oral History Coordinator, conducted a total of 15 formal interviews during the course of the project. Unfortunately, a surprising number of additional potential interviewees declined to participate. The Appendix to this report includes copies of Materials Prepared for Community and Interviewers meetings and training/orientation sessions.

Additional documentary research was conducted by the consultant team, which elicited significant historic and demographic information critical to completion of the National Register nomination. Ron Emrich/Urban Prospects prepared the nomination and edited the final text.

Meanwhile, the ArchiTexas staff, consisting of Craig Melde, Gary Skotnicki and Stan Solamillo, developed a historic building conditions field survey form which was used to record physical conditions of the exterior of each of the properties within the historic district. The form was created in order to objectively measure, compare and evaluate the physical condition of numerous specific building and site elements. A copy of the survey form is included in the Appendix. Craig Melde performed the conditions survey. Gary Skotnicki prepared the neighborhood plans and comments on infrastructure conditions. Stan Solamillo prepared the district typology and wrote the text. The district design concept was developed with the assistance of Chris Hunter, an African-American architect in Dallas, Texas.

Data collection was completed by the team in June of 1992, with final field checking in the district conducted as late as July 31, 1992. Significant and ongoing changes are occurring in Zion Hill -- at least nine houses, most of them contributing buildings, have been demolished between May 1 and July 31, 1992. Therefore, the report's conditions section, as well as the National Register nomination, reflect circumstance found in the district as of July 31, 1992.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

The consultants wish to thank many persons in both the City of Nacogdoches and Nacogdoches County for their assistance and support during the preparation of this report. Chairperson Pam Thortenson and members of the Historic Landmark Committee provided vital historical information and perspective, and several participated in the community meeting held at the original Zion Hill Baptist Church at the start of the project. Nacogdoches City Planner and Landmark Committee staff person Scott Ingalls assisted with technical information and advice, maps and other materials crucial for a more complete understanding of the Zion Hill area.

The survey team gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following persons during the research period, particularly the collection of oral histories.

Mrs. Winfred Adams, Student Advisor & Coordinator
Shanya Baysinger, Student Coordinator, President of SFAU Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
Mrs. Ella Mae Sleet Sheffield, Owner, The Sheffield Museum
Mrs. Willie Mae Glass, Tyler, Texas - Information about the E. J. Campbell Family
Dr. Thomas Cleaver, San Antonio, Texas - Information about the Cleaver Family

Student Interviewers

Shanya Baysinger, Coordinator
Blanca Burciago
Regina Florence
Tatia C. Love
Monica Mack
Keith Nobles
Jerri Williams

Interviewees

Mrs. Winfred Adams
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Burrell
Dr. Thomas Cleaver
Mrs. Willie Mae Glass
Mr. & Mrs. Clarence McMichael
Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Reed
Mrs. Vastie Hyde Roberts
Mrs. Ella M. Sheffield
Mrs. Vivian Shepherd
Mr. George Skillern
Mrs. Dorothy Tigner
Mrs. Era Williams

Special Assistance

Mrs. Mable Hall
Tanya Solis
Rev. Larry Wade, Pastor, Zion Hill Baptist Church
Dr. Dan Wallace, Dean, SFAU

**National Register
of
Historic Places Nomination**

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

Other Name/Site Number:

2. *Location*

Street & Number: Roughly bounded by Park Street, Lanana Creek, Oak
Grove Cemetery and N. Lanana Street

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Nacogdoches

State: TX County: Nacogdoches Code: 347 Zip Code: 75961

3. *Classification*

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: District

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
69	9 buildings
1	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
70	9 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Resources of Nacogdoches, Texas

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

- Historic: Domestic Religious Sub: Single dwelling Religious structure
Current: Domestic Religious Sub: Single dwelling Religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Bungalow
Other: Two Room
Other: Center-passage

Other Description:

Materials: foundation Brick
 walls Wood
 roof Asphalt; Wood
 other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

 X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: _____

Applicable National Register Criteria: A & C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) :

Areas of Significance: Architecture
 Social History

Period(s) of Significance: 1890-1940

Significant Dates: Not Applicable

Significant Person(s): Not Applicable

Cultural Affiliation: Not Applicable

Architect/Builder: Not Applicable

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other - Specify Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: _____

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	_____	_____	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification:

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Ron Emrich, Stan Solamillo

Organization: Urban Prospects/ArchiTexas Date: July 1992

Street & Number: 1908 Canton

Telephone: 214/748-4561

City or Town: Dallas

State: TX Zip: 75201

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

The Zion Hill Historic District includes a cohesive grouping of modestly detailed domestic buildings that date to the early 20th century. The vast majority of its structures are 1-story frame dwellings with bungalow, two-room and center-passage plans. They are congregated within a small and remarkably intact neighborhood just north of Oak Grove Cemetery in old Nacogdoches. The buildings, with few exceptions, display little or no stylistic ornamentation; consequently, no architectural style defines the district's physical character. The focal point of the district is Zion Hill Baptist Church, a monumental institutional building with Gothic Revival stylistic features. Erected in 1914, it was the impetus for the neighborhood's development. Although the church is a prominent architectural landmark, the district is distinguished by its overall cohesiveness, denseness of development, and its ability to convey a sense of time and place. The district includes seventy-nine buildings with nine classified as Noncontributing.

Despite the connotations of its name, the Zion Hill Historic District is in a low-lying area near Lanana Creek. The land slopes sharply to the east from Lanana Street to the small waterway. Few landscaping features are evident in the district, and in fact, some of the streets (or alleys as they are called locally) are unpaved, including Ernest, Gene and Ola alleys. The streets and alleys generally follow a grid pattern, and lot sizes typically are quite small. Most of the houses, especially those east of Richardson Street, are only a few feet apart. The majority of the structures in the district face north or south, except for those that front onto Richardson and Lanana streets which are oriented to the east and west.

All of the buildings in the district are of wood-frame or board-and-batten construction, and have walls that originally were of wood. Many houses have had their original exteriors covered with asbestos or asphalt shingles. Although the application of these materials detracts from the integrity of individual dwellings, such alterations do not overly diminish the area's historic character. Only one post-1941 structure is in the district, and few other physical changes have occurred or have been implemented. There are no substantial outbuildings within the district, only small sheds and garages that have little impact on the district's historic character.

Two-room houses are quite prevalent and have side-gable roofs and three- or four-bay facades. Small shed-roof porches typically extend from the front and have simple wood posts that are used for support. The windows are double hung with wood sashes and 2/2 or 4/4 lights.