



8/27

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name: Benton, Thomas and Melinda, House
other names/site number:

2. Location

street & number: 14115 Rippy Road
city or town: Gulfport vicinity: _____
state: Mississippi code: MS county: Harrison code: 047 zip code: 39503

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth H. P. Paul

JUNE 20, 2002

Signature of certifying official

Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
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:
 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 8/9/02

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:

Private

Number of Resources within Property:

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Category of Property:

Building

Contributing

2

Noncontributing

1

buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total

2

1

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions:

Domestic: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification(s):

other

Materials:

foundation: other – cinder block piers

roof: tin

walls: wood

other

Narrative Description:

See Continuation Sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- X **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- 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.

Areas of Significance

Ethnic heritage: Black
Exploration and settlement

Period of Significance

circa 1870 to 1938

Significant Dates

circa 1870

Criteria Considerations:

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person(s)

Cultural Affiliation(s)

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance: See continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography 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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 4 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A	16	300980	3367420	C	
	B				D	

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:	Merlon M. Hines (revised by Richard J. Cawthon, MDAH)	date:	April 2002
organization:	owner	telephone:	(228) 865-0077
street & number:	14115 Rippy Road	zip code:	39503
city or town:	Gulfport	state:	MS

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner(s)

name:	Merlon M. Hines	telephone:	(228) 865-0077
street & number:	14115 Rippy Road	zip code:	39503
city or town:	Gulfport	state:	MS

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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Benton House
Gulfport, Harrison County, MS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Thomas and Melinda Benton House is located in Gulfport, MS, in the Turkey Creek Community, which is one of the oldest communities in the Gulfport area. The house is a post-Civil War vernacular Gulf Coast cottage, basically rectangular in shape with a rear wing. It is of wood-frame construction, with a pyramidal roof, and it rests upon cinder-block piers. The house is located at the front, northwest corner of a four acre parcel. The property also includes a contributing privy and a more recent, non-contributing garage.

A porch, recessed under the roofline of the house, extends along the full width of the front façade. The roof over the porch is supported by four square wooden posts, ornamented by angular spindlework brackets and resting upon brick piers. The floor of the porch is very old concrete which remains in excellent condition.

The front façade of the house, sheltered by the porch, contains a centrally-placed single-leaf door (without sidelights or transom), enframed by a broad, flat surround. On either side of the door is a set of paired three-over-one windows with broad, flat surrounds. The façade is clad in horizontal lapped wood siding, but the siding on the other exterior walls has been replaced.

The house is covered by a seamed metal roof, beneath which are surviving early wood shingles. The pyramidal roof rises to a central brick chimney at the peak.

The plan of the house contains two main front rooms flanking a central chimney. Each of these front rooms retains an original wooden mantel. Behind these two front rooms are smaller rooms arrayed along a central passage that now serves as a den, though this appears to have originally been an open breezeway. The interior of the house has a moderately high degree of integrity, retaining many of the original wall and ceiling surfaces, particularly in the middle room (a bedroom), which has varnished plank walls and floors. The house retains several original heavy plank doors with early box locks and doorknobs.

The Benton House is the earliest and most intact of the older houses of the Turkey Creek community. Despite some alterations through the years, it retains sufficient integrity throughout to convey its historic character and its identity as one of the oldest African American houses in the Gulfport area.

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

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Benton House
Gulfport, Harrison County, MS

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benton House is locally significant to the Gulfport area because it is one of the oldest and most intact early buildings within the Turkey Creek Community, a historic African American settlement that predated the founding of the City of Gulfport, and because it was the home of two of the founders and earliest settlers of the community, Thomas and Melinda Benton. The period of significance extends from circa 1870, about the time the house was originally built, to 1938, the year of the death of Melinda Benton.

Thomas Benton (1835-1892) and Melinda Benton (1837-1938), freed slaves from "up North", came to Harrison County in search of a place to set up a home for their family. Though records do not indicate where the funds came from, Mrs. Benton was fortunate enough to be able to purchase many acres of land, which comprise approximately 50% of the Turkey Creek Community. The Bentons were quite generous in sharing and selling land to interested parties. For instance, the old Gulfport Creosote Plant, currently occupied by Cavenham Forest Industries, purchased their land from them for \$1 per acre, legend has it. There was, however, one stipulation: the entire community would have access to well water, free of charge, for the lifetime of the community. The current residents did not know what a "water bill" was until the City of Gulfport brought water and sewer into the community in 1986. The area was not annexed by Gulfport until 1994. The City only recently celebrated its 100 year anniversary, so Turkey Creek was well established prior to the incorporation of Gulfport.

Verbal history indicated that Melinda Benton broke one of her legs at an older age, which resulted in poor health, eventually causing her death. She was 101 years old when she died in 1938. Thomas Benton, who died much earlier in 1892, was said to have gotten some type of respiratory disease (pneumonia, the whooping cough or something called "croup"). He apparently got caught in a storm in a boat and was there all night. He died at the age of 57.

Melinda Benton's daughter, Julia Benton Simms, resided at the home also. The home was later occupied by Julia's daughter, Lettie Simms, who remained in the house probably until her death about 1970. The home remained vacant for about 15 years until 1985 when Merlon Hines purchased it and he and his father began renovation efforts. The home was placed in a livable condition and reoccupied by the end of 1986.

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

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Benton House
Gulfport, Harrison County, MS

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is described, as stated from the Warranty Deed recorded in the Harrison County Courthouse, Gulfport, MS as follows:

"All that portion of Lot 5 of the Thomas Benton Estate in the East 1/2 of the NE 1/2 of Section 22, Township 7 South, Range 11 West, Harrison County, Mississippi, less that portion lying North of the public road, all as is shown by a plat of said lot on file and of record in the office of the Chancery Clerk of Harrison County, Mississippi, together with all improvements situated thereon and all appurtenances in anywise appertaining thereto."

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This is the four acre lot which is historically associated with the Benton House.