

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable Homesite

AND/OR COMMON

Pioneer Court

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

401 North Michigan Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

CODE

17

COUNTY

Cook

CODE

031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Equitable Life Insurance Company & The Chicago Tribune Company
Contact: Willard N. Nelson, Assistant Building Manager, Equitable Life Insurance

STREET & NUMBER

401-435 North Michigan Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Cook County Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

County Building, Clark & Washington Streets

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None Known

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site of Du Sable's house is now partially occupied by the Pioneer Court Plaza. Pioneer Court Plaza, dedicated June 23, 1965, is a 100,000 square foot public open space developed jointly by the Equitable Life Insurance Company and the Chicago Tribune Company, both of whom own sections of the property utilized for the court. The area is a flat mall surfaced with red paving brick, incorporating a large fountain inscribed with the names of pioneers (including Du Sable) and civic leaders of Chicago. The Court, with its numerous planters filled with trees and other foliage, is the largest private landscaped area in Chicago.

The Court is situated on the east side of Michigan Avenue and runs from the Tribune Building on the north to the Chicago River on the south. At the river's edge is a small landscaped park area with benches. A long curved stairway winds upward from the park to the sidewalk along Michigan Avenue. The Court is contiguous with the sidewalk on the west and continues east around the sides of the Equitable Building. A glassed enclosure on the Court contains a stairway to the lower level of the area containing a restaurant. Just outside of the glassed area on the Court level is a marble block containing four bronze plaques inscribed with the history of the site. It includes the names of Du Sable (spelled "de Saible" on the plaque), Lalime (also "LeMai") and Kinzie, the latter being the last resident of the log home built on the site by Du Sable.

The Kinzie plaque struck by Chicago's Charter Jubilee in 1937 and authenticated by the Chicago Historical Society, has the following inscription:

KINZIE MANSION

Near this site stood Kinzie Mansion,
1784-1832, home of Pointe Du Saible,
Le Mai, and John Kinzie, Chicago's
"first civilian," here was born in 1805,
the city's first white child Ellen Marion
Kinzie.

(The first non-Indian child born, however, was Eulalie Pelletier, born in 1796 and Du Sable's granddaughter.)

Legal description: Parts of blocks 7 & 9, Kinzie's Addition to Chicago, being a subdivision of the north fraction of Sec. 10, 39, 14. (W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{2}$ Sec. 10, 39, 14)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

Afro-American History

SPECIFIC DATES **c. 1779 (Establishment of Du Sable trading post)** BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable is of national historical importance as one of the most prominent pioneers, fur traders, and independent entrepreneurs of the colonial and revolutionary eras. By building his trading post at the important portage between the Chicago and the Des Plaines rivers, he laid the foundation for the future development of Chicago--America's second largest city. Du Sable is representative of contributions of Afro-Americans in the initial economic and developmental stages of the nation's growth.

Pionner Court is the site of the Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable trading post which later became the site of the city of Chicago. The original Du Sable estate, now recorded as the Kinzie Addition, included not only the Pioneer Court area but also the rich real estate extending from the bank of the Chicago River north to Chicago Avenue and from State Street east to Lake Michigan. Pioneer Court is the largest private landscaped area in Chicago. The Court, which bears plaques marking the historic past of the site and the city and mentions Du Sable among many other Chicagoans, extends along the east side of North Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to Tribune Tower and fronts on the Equitable Life Insurance Company building. Pionner Court is jointly owned by the Equitable Life Insurance Company and the Chicago Tribune Company and is readily accessible to public use.

Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable, also spelled "Pointe de Sable," "au Sable," and "de Saible," was a pioneer farmer and trader who was widely known in the American West during the colonial era both for his skills as a fur trapper and his ease in getting along with Indians. But his place in history is based upon his establishment in the 1770s of a trading post at the mouth of the Chicago River which became the site of the city of Chicago. Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable was the first permanent non-Indian settler and founder of what became America's second largest city--Chicago.

Du Sable was born in 1745 in Haiti to a French mariner father and a Negro mother. As a young man he migrated to Louisiana and later to the Northwest where he became a fur trapper. There he and his friend Jacques Clamorgan settled near the land of the Peorias on the left bank of the Mississippi River near Spanish-ruled St. Louis. Clamorgan remained in St. Louis and received large land grants from the Spanish government. Du Sable, however, apparently much in sympathy with the French, moved among the Pottawatomies of Chicago. In 1771 he married a Pottawatomie woman named Catherine in an Indian ceremony. The couple had a son, Jean, and a daughter, Suzanne, and were later married again in a Catholic ceremony officiated by a priest at Cahokia, Illinois, in 1778.

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Land records show that Du Sable settled in Peoria and Old Peoria, Illinois, as early as 1773 where he cultivated land and built a house between the old fort, above the present Mary Street, and the new settlement, below the present Liberty Street. In 1778 he proved to the land commissioners that he had cultivated a thirty-acre plot in the New Village while also farming in the Old Village. The Du Sable family made their home and maintained the two farms in Peoria for about a decade, off and on, while he also ran trading posts elsewhere in the region.

Some time prior to 1779, Du Sable set up a trading post at the important portage between the Chicago and Des Plaines rivers, which linked the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. As early as September 1673, however, there had been Frenchmen in the area. These Frenchmen, returning to Mackinac after exploring the Mississippi as a possible route to the Pacific, had ascended the Illinois and Des Plaines rivers, portaged across a short swampy tract in the southwest section of the present city of Chicago, and paddled down the South Branch and the Chicago River into Lake Michigan. They had failed in their original quest, but they had discovered something quite as important - the Chicago portage, a principal key to the continent.

No Indian settlement appears to have been made in this region until the arrival of the Miami, about 1696. The stream was known to them as the Checagou, signifying something big, strong, or powerful. But as the river was ever a small and sluggish stream, the "strong" probably referred to the pungent wild garlic that grew in profusion along its banks.

Ambitious French schemes to colonize the Illinois Valley failed as hostile Indians closed the Chicago portage for long periods of time. When possession of the entire region passed to the British in 1763, there remained in Chicago no permanent marks of the ninety years of French rule.

Chicago had been British soil fourteen years before there is any record of a person "curious" enough to penetrate the country north of the Illinois and make a home on the shore of Lake Michigan. It was Du Sable who settled there and made the marshy, unpromising spot in the wilderness a frontier commercial center. The home he built at this new trading post was no mere log cabin, although it was made of logs. It measured twenty-two feet by forty feet and was filled with paintings and fine furniture. During his early years on the site he added two barns, a horse mill, a bakehouse, a workshop, a dairy, a poultry house, and a smokehouse. He built a thriving establishment around which white traders and Indians settled. Besides trading in furs, Du Sable was a miller, a cooper, a husbandman, and whatever else that was needed around the settlement.

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The energetic Du Sable continued to operate his two farms in Peoria and established and managed other trading posts at Michigan City and near Port Huron, Michigan, after settling at Chicago. However it was to the Chicago post that he moved his family and after 1784 he concentrated his efforts there. In 1790 his daughter married a man named Pelletier. Their child, Eulalie, was born at Chicago in 1796, the first non-Indian birth on record there. While living in Chicago Du Sable was closely aligned with the Indians of the region and once tried unsuccessfully to run for election as chief of the neighboring tribes.

The first historical reference to Du Sable's settlement in Chicago appeared in the journal of the British commandant at Michilimackinac (Mackinaw), Colonel Arent Schuyler de Peyster. On July 4, 1779, Colonel de Peyster recorded, "Baptiste Point De Saible, a handsome negro, well educated and settled at Eschikagou; but much in the French interest." De Peyster's suspicion of Du Sable's "French interest" led to his arrest for "treasonable intercourse with the enemy." Du Sable, however, apparently had little interest in the issues of the war between the British and the French and so convinced the British that he was no threat to them. Still, capitalizing on Du Sable's position of respect and honor throughout the area, de Peyster threatened a council of "Great Chiefs" in a "Speech to the Western Indians." In it he warned they must become allies of the British

Or, he will send them "tout au diable,"
As he did Baptist "Poin de Saible."

In September 1779 Du Sable was released, the official record stating: ". . .the Negro Baptiste point au Sable brought prisoner from the River Du Chemin . . .has in every respect behaved with a manner becoming a man in his situation, has many friends, who give him a good character." Later, at the request of some Indians in the British settlement on the St. Clair River south of Port Huron, Du Sable was named overseer of the area, replacing the French overseer.

A later reference to Du Sable's settlement in Chicago is found in the "Recollections" of Augustin Grignon, a grandchild of Sieur Charles De Landlade, the first permanent white settler of Wisconsin.

At a very early period there was a negro lived there (Chicago) named Baptiste Point De Saible. My brother, Perish Grignon, visited Chicago about 1794, and told me that Point De Saible was a large man; that he had a commission for some office, but for what particular office or from what Government, I cannot now recollect. He was a trader, pretty wealthy, and drank freely. I know not what became of him.

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(The "commission" referred to by Mr. Grignon may have been Du Sable's appointment as overseer of a British Indian Settlement on the St. Clair River which he received in 1780.)

In 1800, he sold his post to Jean Lalime for twelve hundred dollars. By then, it consisted of then buildings, more than one hundred livestock, and elaborate furnishings as described on the deed inventory recorded in Detroit.

It is believed that Du Sable rejoined his friend Jacques Clamorgan for a period after leaving Chicago. In 1805, however, he purchased some land in St. Charles County, Missouri, from a black man named Rondin. The records show, from this time on until June 1813, several transfers of property in the city and county of St. Charles were made jointly by Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable and "Baptiste Pointsable," as the names were usually written to distinguish father and son.

In June 1813, Du Sable conveyed a lot and house in the city of St. Charles, together with all of his other property of various kinds to Eulalia Barada, wife of Michael Derais. He was probably ill at the time, as the consideration mentioned was her promise to care for him in his illness and to bury him in the Catholic Cemetery at St. Charles.

Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable died August 28, 1818. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Charles Borromeo Church, St. Charles, Missouri.

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CONTINUATION SHEET RESEARCHERS

ITEM NUMBER #11

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Mr. Thomas G. Yanul
Field Surveyor
Illinois Historic Structures Survey
1736 West 104th Place
Chicago, Illinois