

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

I. T. Montgomery House

AND/OR COMMON

I. T. Montgomery House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

West Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Mound Bayou

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY

Bolivar

CODE

011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

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

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- BOTH
- 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 **Dormitory**

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Henry Chapman, Chief Grand Scribe

STREET & NUMBER

Knights & Daughters of Tabor, Post Office Drawer G

CITY, TOWN

Mound Bayou

VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Circuit Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Bolivar County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Cleveland

STATE

Mississippi

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None Known

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The house is a 1910 red brick structure of two stories over a full above-grade basement, irregular in plan, with hipped roof and gables over projections. The front has a spacious porch with square Doric columns resting on brick piers extending to grade, and is reached by a wide flight of masonry steps. The windows are single light double-hung wooden sash. The double front doors have a transom, full width of the opening. The cornice is of simple treatment consisting of frieze board and extended eaves board.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input 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 **1887** BUILDER/ARCHITECT **Not Known**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located in the Mississippi Delta region of Bolivar County, the town of Mound Bayou was one of a number of black settlements which was established during the post-Reconstruction period. It represents one of many important attempts by blacks of that era to establish independent communities in which they could exercise self-government.

The present town of Mound Bayou had its inception in a former settlement. Isaiah Thornton Montgomery and his cousin Benjamin Green were the slaves of the family of the Confederate President Jefferson Davis. As an alternative to the institution of slavery, it was Jefferson Davis' idea that blacks be isolated on their own settlements. At the conclusion of the Civil War, in 1865, an actual settlement was established on the former Jefferson plantation of Brierfield at Davis' Bend, twenty miles south of Vicksburg on the Mississippi River. The settlement survived for eighteen years. However, because of the problem of recurring floods of the Mississippi, the relatives and friends of Montgomery and Green, all of whom were former slaves of the Davis plantation, abandoned the small settlement and moved to Vicksburg where they awaited another opportunity to establish their own community.

The Louisville, New Orleans and Texas Railroad was granted a large tract of land in the state. This grant was made to encourage the development of agriculture, trade and commerce in the fertile delta along the Mississippi River from Memphis to Vicksburg. As a result, fruition was given to the establishment of Mound Bayou. It was the belief of railroad company officials that only members of the black race had the ability to adapt to life in a semi-tropical climate which was conducive to malaria. The assistance of Isaiah Montgomery was sought in soliciting black workers. He, realizing the possibilities that it offered for another attempt at black self-government, began an immediate investigation of its feasibility. He finally decided upon the site of the present town of Mound Bayou, named for a large Indian Mound, located at the site of the convergence of two bayous which drained the region.

Many of the settlers of the former colony came to Mound Bayou in July 1887, and began to carve a town out of the wilderness and swampland. It was the inspiration of Montgomery that caused other blacks from Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia to join the effort. These settlers had one common motivation: they wished to live free from the annoying and unnecessary restraints imposed by continued residence to basic concepts of universal equality.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Banks, Charles. Negro Town and Colony, Mound Bayou, Bolivar County, Mississippi: Opportunities Open to Negro Farmers and Settlers. Mound Bayou, Mississippi: Demonstrator Print.

The Founding of Mound Bayou, Bolivar County, Mississippi, Semi-Centennial Celebration, July 11-17, 1937. Cleveland: Cleveland Enterprise, 1937.
(PARTIAL LISTING)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	71,000,7,0	3,715,016,5,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The I. T. Montgomery House sits on a city lot in Mound Bayou, Mississippi. From the point of intersection of the south property line, the house faces east, and Main Street, proceed west along this line about 90', then proceed north, along a rear fenceline, a distance of about 60', then east to a point of intersection with West Main Street, then south to the point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Lynne Gomez Graves, Historical Projects Director

ORGANIZATION

Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation

DATE

30 October 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1420 N Street, Northwest

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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The prosperity Mound Bayou experienced, almost from its inception, was attributed to its location along the railroad. Communication was facilitated by trade with other regions of the country by the railroad. Its location in the fertile Mississippi Delta region allowed Mound Bayou to produce cotton on a scale greater than that of any other region in the state.

Under the leadership of Montgomery, Mound Bayou by the turn of the century had developed into one of the most prosperous and thriving communities in the state. In 1904, the Bank of Mound Bayou was founded by John Francis and Charles Banks. Its rapid growth necessitated the amendment of its original charter to increase its capital from \$10,000 to \$25,000. By 1907, the largest enterprise of its kind in the state, the Mound Bayou Oil Mill and Manufacturing Company was erected at an investment cost of \$100,000.

Finally, in 1912, Mound Bayou's petition to Mississippi Governor Earl Brewer for a town charter and status as a town was immediately accepted. The charter established an aldermanic form of government with a mayor, town marshal, and five aldermen as the elected officials. Throughout most of the town's history, these positions have been held by black men and women.

In the realm of education, teaching and learning played a significant role from the town's beginning. In 1892, the two co-founders, Isaiah Montgomery and Benjamin Green, recognizing the importance of schools, donated a tract of land for educational purposes. Montgomery's sister, Mary, a former student of Oberlin College, was the town's first teacher giving instruction in her home. The American Missionary Association joined with Montgomery and Green in their efforts and for twenty years the organization assisted them by sending money, supplies and teachers to what soon became known as the Mound Bayou Normal and Industrial Institute. Professor B. F. Ousley was the first principal, serving in that capacity for more than sixteen years.

Finally, in 1920, the school was enlarged into the Mound Bayou Consolidated Public School. It was the only school for black children in the county. Moving into a three-story, fireproof brick building with sixteen well-equipped classrooms, an auditorium, the school had an enrollment of 850 students. The school's first two principals, Professor J. M. Mosley and Professor John H. Powell, were graduates of Alcorn College in Lorman, Mississippi. In addition to the conventional diploma-granting curriculum, the high school soon offered vocational training in the industrial arts, agriculture, stenography, typing and bookkeeping.

By the turn of the century, Mound Bayou had begun massive improvements in its physical appearance. Numerous shops, stores, fraternal buildings, institutional buildings and private residences were constructed. It was likewise during this period, 1910, that the Isaiah T. Montgomery house was constructed. This house stands typical of the progress and the development of the town.

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE THREE

It was through the direct efforts of I. T. Montgomery, who was founder and first mayor of the town, which inspired and helped lead the town to its productive years. Montgomery possessed a diversified background with experience in accounting, real estate and civil engineering--not to include his effectiveness as a politician. Montgomery was most active in the Republican Party, and he represented Bolivar County in the Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1890. Having vested interests in real estate, Montgomery grew in this black community, to be one of the wealthiest men in this county, black or white. Isaiah T. Montgomery died in 1924 leaving a legacy of industrious leadership. Through his successful accomplishments during the post-Reconstruction era, he negated the accepted postulate that blacks were incapable of independent community development and self-government.

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Lee, G. A. "Mound Bayou, the Negro City of Mississippi," The Voice of the Negro.
January, 1906.

"Mound Bayou, Mississippi." Crisis, V. 36, June, 1929, p. 201.

Mound Bayou, Bolivar County, Mississippi. New York, Trio Press.