

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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**1. Name of Property**

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historic name: Naff House

other name/site number: N/A

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**2. Location**

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street & number: Northwest corner; intersection of 3rd Ave. & Fir St.

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Portland

vicinity: N/A

state: AR

county: Ashley

code: AR 003

zip code: 71663

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**3. Classification**

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**  
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.   See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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

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**5. National Park Service Certification**  
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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):



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**7. Description**  
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Architectural Classification:

Prairie School

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Slate  
walls Brick other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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**8. Statement of Significance**  
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1919

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Russell Gard  
W. H. Gard

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



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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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X 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:

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property: Approximately one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>639490</u>	<u>3678520</u>	B
C	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	D

     See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:      See continuation sheet.

Lot Number 1 of Block Number 4 of the East McCombs Addition to the Town of Portland.

Boundary Justification:      See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title: Ken Story, National Register Coordinator

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 6/23/92

Street & Number: 225 E. Markham, Suite 300 Telephone: (501) 324-9346

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

## Summary

The Naff House is a two-and-one-half story, brick masonry residence designed in the Prairie style. Its irregular plan is formed by the single story section that projects from the front elevation and that includes a several rooms and a recessed porch. Two tall brick chimneys rise from the interior of the structure, and another stone chimney abuts the exterior wall at the eastern end of the structure. The intersecting gable roof is covered with the original slate shingles, the walls are brick, and a continuous concrete foundation supports the structure.

## Elaboration

The Naff House is a two-and-one-half story, brick masonry residence designed in the Prairie style. Its irregular plan is formed by the single story section that projects from the front elevation and that includes a several rooms and a recessed porch. Two tall brick chimneys rise from the interior of the structure, and another stone chimney abuts the exterior wall at the eastern end of the structure. The intersecting gable roof is covered with the original slate shingles, the walls are brick, and a continuous concrete foundation supports the structure.

The southern or front elevation is composed of the shed roof porch extending between the two gabled sections (the eastern of which has been enclosed, however sympathetically) and the gabled two-and-one-half story section rising behind. The western porch gable is open and supported upon a total of four rectangular brick columns. A series of tiled steps rises to the tiled porch deck and entrance. The entrance is composed of a single-leaf entrance flanked by a pair of wood half-sidelights. To the east, a large fixed window is placed between two narrower windows with geometrical, Prairie-style muntin configurations, all of which light the large living room behind. The enclosed section of the porch at the eastern end is accessed via a pair of doors from the porch deck, and the southern elevation beneath the gable roof is lighted with two pair of four-pane casement windows in each of the two bays, with each pair of windows being surmounted by a pair of fixed transoms, each containing more of the Prairie-style decorative muntins. The two gables in the second story section are each fenestrated with a grouping of five fixed windows, each of which is surmounted with a fixed transom window. The wall space between the gables is punctuated with a tri-partite window configuration identical to that in the wall below, beneath the porch roof. Above this central section is a shed roof dormer, which in turn is lighted with a single, horizontal window.

The western, eastern and northern elevations are simpler in terms of detail, though they are more asymmetrical in overall composition and massing. The western elevation is composed of the large gable end to the north of the southern porch and the side of the rear gable extending to the north. The gable end features a number of different window types on all three levels: paired casements, single one-over-one wood sash windows of varying sizes, and grouped one-over-one windows with a large central window flanked by two smaller windows. A single exterior chimney projects from the wall to the south. The side of the gable extending to the north is lighted with two smaller

one-over-one wood sash windows in the second story and a larger pair of one-over-one wood sash windows in the first story below. The eastern elevation opposite is more complicated, for though it retains the same gable end and side gable wall seen on the elevation opposite, it also features a shed roof room and porch, a projecting gable roof section that shelters a bedroom, and the gable roof of the single-story porch below. This elevation also features the same variety of window types seen on the elevation opposite, including the banks of five tall, fixed windows with transoms on the northern and eastern sides of the bedroom gable. A single-leaf entrance accesses the wall directly beneath the northern side gable wall of the projecting gabled section, and the shed roof over the projecting, single-story room extends out over and shelters this entrance. The single-story, gable end of the southern porch has been enclosed on this end with two large panes of glass flanking a later, added stone chimney. Another shed roof projects from the northern elevation to shelter the walkway from the house to the carport.

The northern elevation is similar to the eastern and western elevations in that it is composed of a variety of different window types. A single-leaf entrance accesses the wall of the gable end to the east, and a shed roof projects from above it to the carport to the north.

Significant exterior details include the spreading eaves, the monolithic brick porch columns with their decorative concrete inserts placed just beneath the junction with the carrying beams above -- each of which is ornamented with a small "n", standing for the family's name -- and the banks of combination vertical/transom windows that light the brick walls throughout the structure.

The interior retains virtually all of its original detail. Most remarkable are the square wooden columns with their attached wooden bookshelves that form half-dividers between the dining room and the living room. The columns are capped with square capitals with convex cushions that give an organic appearance to the capitals, like the limbs of a tree. The four sides of each column are ornamented with a single, central bracket, below which is an applied wooden cross decoration. The curved wooden shelves on top of the bookcases are also supported by a single central bracket. The shelves are accessed via a single wood frame door, filled with glass panes and wooden muntins. The living room and dining room feature box wood ceiling beams, and the fireplace in the western end of the living room is decorated with a wooden mantelpiece that is of the same restrained, elegant vocabulary as the other interior wood detail. The interior wood trim around the windows and doors is also of this same form and color, and virtually all of it is intact. Also intact are the original solid wood doors that access virtually all of the upstairs rooms. Even the windows and doors in the basement are intact and original.

Also included in the nomination is a single-story, gable roof garage constructed at the same time as the house. Though it has since been converted into a separate apartment, it retains its original shed dormer, asymmetrical fenestration and overall geometric composition that characterize it also as a Prairie-style design.

## **Summary**

The Naff House, constructed c. 1919, is locally significant under Criterion C as the finest example - and one of the few - of the Prairie style of architecture in Ashley County. The picturesque elevations - formed primarily by the intersecting roof and wall dormer gables, and by the banks of casement and transom windows - combine with other more decorative details to establish this as a relatively high-style example of an architectural style that is among the most rare in Arkansas.

## **Elaboration**

The sandy loam on either side of Bayou Bartholomew furnished excellent soil for the growing of cotton, which in 1856 was selling at over 30 cents a pound on the New York exchange, thereby providing the impetus for the original settlement of the area. The present-day town of Portland (formerly Holly Point) was officially founded as of August 10, 1857, when a post office was established on the eastern bank of the Bayou, located approximately five miles west of the current town site. The center of town moved to its present location (and acquired its present

name) in 1892-93 when the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad constructed its line between McGehee, Arkansas and Alexandria, Louisiana. The character of Portland changed somewhat thereafter, becoming a timber shipping center as well as a prosperous farming community. The resulting wealth accrued by a number of Portland's farmers and businessmen combined with the greater awareness of popular national architectural styles brought by the railroad in particular to create an atmosphere particularly favorable to the design and construction of ambitious, "modern" homes.

Mr. Henry Huffman Naff, of Swiss/German descent, was a prominent banker and landowner in southeast Arkansas and northeastern Louisiana; his wife, Dean Bain Naff, also owned significant amounts of property in southeastern Arkansas. In fact, it was a parcel of her property that furnished the site for the first local air strip that provided airmail service to Portland. She also owned a pecan grove on the southern edge of town, and Mr. Naff proved also to be an innovative farmer, as he was the first farmer locally to use anhydrous ammonia for fertilizer; he also planted clover to improve the nitrogen content of his farmland generally.

The Naff House was constructed circa 1919, and was both designed and built by the brothers Russell and W.H. Gard, two builders who constructed a number of residences in the Portland area (but only a few of which survive, and none in the Prairie style). Interviews with surviving descendants have revealed that at least one of the Gard brothers served in Europe during the first World War, and that it was there that he was inspired to become a builder by the wealth of impressive and historic architecture he saw in both England and France. The oral tradition maintains that the Gard brothers served as both architects and builders, even laying the bricks themselves when their laborers went on strike for a time.

The Naff House is a relatively restrained version of the Prairie style, though it features such high-style features as the massive square masonry piers that support the porch roof, broad, overhanging eaves, and the use of both banks of windows and transoms to emphasize the overall horizontality of the composition in spite of the two-and-one-half story height. It is the only known Prairie-style design in all of Ashley County, and thus is eligible under Criterion C with local significance.

## **Bibliography**

Etheridge, Y.W., *History of Ashley County, Arkansas*, (Van Buren, Arkansas, 1959).

Interview with Shirley Gard Marks; May, 1991.

Interview with Mary Dean Naff; May, 1991.