

**PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT**

**LANDMARK NAME:** The Cullen Clinic  
**OWNERS:** Poindexter Family Trust  
**APPLICANTS:** Zeb F. Poindexter III, DDS  
**LOCATION:** 7703 Cullen Blvd – Sunnyside

**AGENDA ITEM:** D.2  
**HPO FILE NO.:** 15PL122  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** Apr-07-2015  
**HAHC HEARING DATE:** Apr-23-2015

**SITE INFORMATION**

Lot 1, Block 24, East Sunnyside Court Section 2, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a one-story, brick veneer clinic building built in 1965 on the southeast corner of Cullen Boulevard and Edfield Street.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Protected Landmark Designation

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY**

The Cullen Clinic at 7703 Cullen Boulevard is a historic clinic building built in 1965 in the Sunnyside neighborhood south of downtown Houston. The clinic was constructed for Zeb F. Poindexter, Jr., DDS, (1929-2012), one of the first two African-American students admitted to the University of Texas School of Dentistry at Houston in 1952 and the school's first African-American graduate in 1956. The Cullen Clinic was later known as Poindexter Dental, Inc.

The clinic building was designed by John S. Chase (1925-2012), the first African-American student to enroll in the University of Texas School of Architecture in 1950 and the first licensed African-American architect in the state of Texas.

The 2,182-square-foot, one-story, flat-roofed building has a generally rectangular plan. The structure is sided in brick veneer and rests on a concrete slab. The building's most distinctive architectural feature is the roof on the central bay, which is capped by a connected series of seven peaked gables supported by square beams.

The clinic building is significant for its original owner, architect, and as a visible reminder of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the city and state.

The Cullen Clinic meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 for Protected Landmark designation of Section 33-224 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances.

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE***Zeb Ferdinand Poindexter, Jr., DDS*

According to *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Zeb Ferdinand Poindexter, Jr. was born to a single-parent home in Fort Worth on April 5, 1929. He attended Terrell High School and graduated in 1945. He then went to Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, where he graduated in 1949. He earned a degree in endocrinology from Texas Southern University in 1952 and also served as a second lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve, leaving active duty with the rank of captain.

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On September 11, 1952, Poindexter and Moritz V. Craven of Beaumont attracted the national attention by becoming the first two black students to register at the University of Texas School of Dentistry at Houston. They were able to enroll due to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Sweatt v. Painter* in 1950, which resulted in the desegregation of university graduate and professional degree programs. (Undergraduate degree programs would not be desegregated until the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.)

In 1956, Poindexter became the first African American to graduate from the UT School of Dentistry. That same year he opened a dental practice in the Chocolate Bayou neighborhood of southeast Houston. Around 1960, he moved his office to the Sunnyside neighborhood and served that community for fifty years before retiring in 2000.

Harris County Building Assessment records from 1965 indicate Dr. Poindexter and Dr. Cecil G. Harold, general surgeon, constructed a new office building called the Cullen Clinic at 7703 Cullen Boulevard in Sunnyside, later Poindexter Dental, Inc. John S. Chase (1925-2012) was commissioned to design the new facility. Chase had been the first black student at the University of Texas School of Architecture and was the first African American licensed to practice architecture in the state of Texas.

During his own distinguished career, Dr. Poindexter became the first black member of the Houston Texas District Dental Society and the first black faculty member at the University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston, where he held a faculty appointment as Associate Professor of Community Relations. He also founded the Zeb F. Poindexter, Jr., Chapter of the Student National Dental Association at the UT Dental Branch.

Dr. Poindexter was honored with the University of Texas Outstanding Alumnus Award in 1990, and was nominated for the Academy of General Dentistry Outstanding Dentist of the Year Award in 1991. He was awarded Professor Emeritus status at the UT School of Dentistry in 2012. Dr. Poindexter's other honors included becoming a Fellow in the International College of Dentists in 1992, earning membership into the Omicron Kappa Upsilon National Dental Honor Society, and serving as a delegate in the House of the Texas Dental Association.

Active in many organizations, Dr. Poindexter was a member of the American Fund for Dental Education, United Negro College Fund, YMCA, Gulf State Dental Association (where he served as president), Charles A. George Dental Society, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., National Urban League, and National Dental Association. He was a founder and trustee of Loyal Missionary Baptist Church and a member of St. John Baptist Church.

Zeb Ferdinand Poindexter, Jr., died in Houston on April 28, 2012. He was survived by Ruby Revis Poindexter, his wife of fifty-eight years; two daughters, Merlene Russell and Eleanor Dixon; and a son, Dr. Zeb F. Poindexter III. Zeb F. Poindexter, Jr., is interred in Houston National Cemetery.

Fifty years after it was constructed, the building at 7703 Cullen Boulevard remains the home of Poindexter Dental, Inc., where Dr. Poindexter's son, Zeb F. Poindexter III, DDS, continues to serve the Sunnyside neighborhood. Dr. Zeb Poindexter III also graduated from the University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston, making the Poindexters the first African-American father/son duo to complete their studies at the school.

*John Saunders Chase, FAIA*

According to *The Handbook of Texas Online* and the *AIA Houston Architectural Guide*, John Saunders Chase was the first African American licensed to practice architecture in the state of Texas. He was born in Annapolis, Maryland, on January 23, 1925, to John Saunders Chase, Sr., and Viola (Hall) Chase. His father was a school principal and his mother was a teacher. After receiving his early education in the public schools, the younger Chase graduated from Bates High School in Annapolis and served as a sergeant in the United States Army from 1944 to 1946. During World War II, he engaged in combat in the Philippines and received several military decorations for his service.

After the war, Chase earned a Bachelor of Science degree in architecture at Hampton Institute (later University) in Virginia. In 1950, after the Supreme Court's decision in *Sweatt v. Painter*, he became the first African- American student to enroll in the University of Texas School of Architecture. Chase graduated from UT with a Master's degree in architecture in 1952.

Unable to find a job with white firms and not wanting to return to his native Maryland, Chase moved to Houston in 1952 where he began his professional career. In that same year, he was appointed assistant professor of architectural drafting at Texas Southern University and established his own firm. Chase's early design projects included schools, homes, churches, professional buildings and small public buildings.

During his long and successful career, Chase recorded many achievements. In addition to being the first African American licensed to practice architecture in Texas, he was the first black member of the Texas Society of Architects and the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). In 1971, he co-founded the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA). Appointed by President Jimmy Carter in 1980, he became the first African American to serve on the United States Commission on Fine Arts. The commission reviews the design of buildings, parks and monuments constructed in the District of Columbia; Chase helped select Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington during his tenure.

Chase's best known individual buildings are probably Houston's Riverside National Bank Building (1963; now Unity National Bank), the first black-owned bank in Texas, and David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church (1959) and the Philips House (1964) within sight of each other on E. Martin Luther King Boulevard in Austin. At Texas Southern University, he designed the Martin Luther King Humanities Center (1969), Ernest S. Sterling Student Life Center (1976) and Thurgood Marshall School of Law (1976). His firm was part of the consortiums that designed Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center (1987) and renovations to the Astrodome (1988-89) that included increasing the historic stadium's capacity by 10,000 seats and constructing four ramp towers (now demolished). Chase's firm also served as associate architect for the Toyota Center (2003)

Chase received numerous honors for his work. In 1977, he was named to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects and was later presented the AIA Whitney M. Young, Jr. Award. He received the NOMA Design for Excellence Award for four consecutive years. An active civic leader, Chase was president of the Houston Club and the first black president of the University of Texas Exes. He served on the boards of the University of Texas Health Science Center, Hampton University and Hermann Hospital.

John Saunders Chase died in Houston on March 29, 2012. Funeral services were held at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church. He was survived by his wife, Drucie Rucker Chase, two sons, and one daughter. Chase is buried in Houston National Cemetery.

### *Cecil G. Harold, M.D.*

Cecil G. Harold was born on May 11, 1931, in Gregg, Texas. He graduated from the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston in 1957 and served as a general surgeon on the staff of Riverside General Hospital (formerly Houston Negro Hospital). In 1965, Dr. Harold and Zeb F. Poindexter, Jr., DDS, built the Cullen Clinic at 7703 Cullen Boulevard to house their respective practices. Around 1975, Dr. Harold left the Cullen Clinic to join the staff of the Cullen Women's Center, 7443 Cullen Boulevard, and the Cullen Clinic was eventually renamed Poindexter Dental, Inc.

In 1975, Governor Dolph Briscoe appointed Dr. Harold to the Texas Coordinating Commission for State Health & Welfare Services and reappointed him to the commission two years later. In an unusual turn of events, Dr. Harold became the physician and unpaid manager of legendary blues singer and guitarist Sam Lightnin' Hopkins (1911-1982) during the last decade of Hopkins' life. Dr. Harold is retired and continues to reside in Houston.

### *Sunnyside*

Sunnyside is located outside Loop 610 and inside Beltway 8 on the east side of Highway 288 approximately eight miles south of downtown Houston. The neighborhood is one of six African-American communities established outside of the city limits from just prior to World War I through the end of World War II. Along with Sunnyside, these neighborhoods include Acres Homes, Independence Heights, Houston Gardens, Settegast, and Clinton Park. The subdivisions resulted from legally enforced segregation and because African Americans were seeking independence and opportunity in areas where rural traditions were still strong.

Landowner H.H. Holmes platted his property in 1912 and named it Sunnyside, making it the oldest black community on the south side of Houston. Lots were sold for as little as \$10 down and \$10 a month. By the 1940s, residents had established a water district and a volunteer fire department. They also came together to pave roads and construct a community building for meetings and other gatherings.

The City of Houston annexed Sunnyside in 1956, but the neighborhood retains many of its rural characteristics, such as original frame houses and small wooden churches.

### **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY**

The Cullen Clinic sits on a 6,048-square-foot lot on the southeast corner of Cullen Boulevard at Edfield Street in the Sunnyside neighborhood outside Loop 610 south of downtown Houston. The 2,182-square-foot, one-story, flat-roofed building has a generally rectangular plan. The structure is sided in brick veneer and rests on a concrete slab.

The front facade is three bays wide and faces west on Cullen Boulevard. The north bay contains four tall, narrow, full-height, plate glass windows. There are hopper windows at the base of each plate glass window. The outermost windows are asymmetrically spaced on either side of a set of paired windows. A two-part fascia delineates the roofline of the north bay.

The projecting central bay contains the building's most distinctive architectural features. The roof on the central bay is capped by a connected series of seven peaked gables supported by square beams. Recessed entry porticoes at the north and south ends of the central bay are supported by square posts and contain single plate glass and metal doors. Five plate glass windows with sunscreens are centered in the bay beneath the peaked gables and above a brick veneer base.

The fenestration pattern from the north bay is repeated on the south bay, except that the southernmost window is shorter than the other windows on the front façade and has a brick sill rather than a hopper window. A two-part fascia delineates the roofline of the south bay.

The north end of the building facing Edfield Street is two bays wide. The west bay contains a plain brick veneer wall. The recessed east bay contains an offset, plain wooden door sheltered by a flat canopy. The rest of the east bay contains a plain, brick veneer wall. A two-part fascia tops the full length of the north end of the building.

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- (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;
- (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
- (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

**AND**

- (9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).

**OR**

- The property was constructed before 1905 (Sec. 33-229(a)(2));

**OR**

- The property is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a “contributing structure” in an historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Sec. 33-229(a)(3));

**OR**

- The property is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark (Sec. 33-229(a)(4)).

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation of the Cullen Clinic at 7703 Cullen Boulevard.

## **HAHC RECOMMENDATION**

The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommends to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Cullen Clinic at 7703 Cullen Boulevard.

**EXHIBIT A**  
**PHOTOS**  
THE CULLEN CLINIC  
7703 CULLEN BOULEVARD



The Cullen Clinic, later known as Poindexter Dental, Inc., 7703 Cullen Blvd., Houston  
Architect: John S. Chase, AIA Year built: 1965 View: Front facade looking southeast  
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**EXHIBIT A**  
**PHOTOS**  
THE CULLEN CLINIC  
7703 CULLEN BOULEVARD

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The Cullen Clinic, later known as Poindexter Dental, Inc.  
View: Looking east across Cullen Boulevard toward front facade  
Photos by David Bush, Preservation Houston Date: March 29, 2015

**EXHIBIT A**  
**PHOTOS**  
THE CULLEN CLINIC  
7703 CULLEN BOULEVARD



The Cullen Clinic, later known as Poindexter Dental, Inc.  
View: Edfield St., north side of building looking south

**EXHIBIT B**  
**SITE MAP**  
THE CULLEN CLINIC  
7703 CULLEN BOULEVARD



**EXHIBIT C**  
**HISTORIC PHOTO**  
THE CULLEN CLINIC  
7703 CULLEN BOULEVARD



The Cullen Clinic, 7703 Cullen Boulevard, Houston, Texas  
November 12, 1965 by Harris County Building Assessment  
Source: Harris County Archives

**EXHIBIT D**  
**NEWSPAPER ARTICLES**  
**THE CULLEN CLINIC**  
**7703 CULLEN BOULEVARD**

## 2 Negro Students Making History

HOUSTON, Sept. 11.—UP—Two Negro students have registered at the University of Texas School of Dentistry at Houston for the first time in its history.

A spokesman for the school said Zeb F. Poindexter of Fort Worth, a graduate of Wiley College and Texas Southern University, and Moritz V. Craven, 23, of Beaumont, son of a doctor and Texas Southern graduate, were being accepted "impartially, on the basis of competitive examinations." Both men already hold master's degrees.

*Baytown Sun*, Sept. 11, 1952

## First Negroes to Enter Texas Dental School

HOUSTON, Tex., Sept. 10 (INS) —Two Negroes, who have passed all examinations, will be admitted as students at the University of Texas dental school in Houston.

They are to register next Monday and will be the first of their race to do so.

The two are Moritz V. Cravens, 24, son of a physician, and Zeb F. Poindexter, 23, son of a widow school teacher in Fort Worth.

Both have two college degrees already, and have served in laboratories as technician or assistant.

*Albuquerque Journal*, Sept. 11, 1952

**NEGROES ATTEND TEXAS U.**  
 Houston, Tex., Sept. 10. (UP)—The first Negroes ever to register at the University of Texas school of dentistry here have been accepted, it was disclosed today. They were Zeb F. Poindexter, Fort Worth, Tex., and Moritz V. Craven, 23, Beaumont, Tex.

*Kansas City Times*, Sept. 11, 1952

## Two Negroes Qualify For UT Dental School

The University dental branch in Houston will admit its first two Negroes to the school this fall.

The two qualifying for the school are Moritz Virapo Craven, 24, of Houston and Zeb Ferdinand Poindexter, 23, of Fort Worth.

Since there is no comparable school for Negroes in Texas, they were admitted after passing competitive tests and the dental aptitude test established by the American Dental Association.

Both received master's degrees at Texas Southern University last spring.

*Daily Texan*, Austin, Sept. 16, 1952

EXHIBIT D
NEWSPAPER ARTICLES
THE CULLEN CLINIC
7703 CULLEN BOULEVARD

THE SUMMER TEXAN

VOLUME 51 AUSTIN, TEXAS, FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 1950 12 PAGES TODAY NO. 2

UT's First Negroes Meet Regular Classes

By JOHN ORENHART
John S. Chase and Herman L. South are the first Negro students to attend regular classes at the University. They were the first of the summer school students to meet Wednesday afternoon.

Two others were refused admission because the courses they wanted to take here are offered at state supported Negro schools, according to President T. S. Painter.

The applications are still being considered by the Registrar, with a probability that at least one will be accepted and the other two will be placed on a waiting list.

Chase, who is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, had made plans to attend the University under the contract with the state for the summer school.

South, who is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, had made plans to attend the University under the contract with the state for the summer school.

Chase, an present teaching at the University of Texas at Austin, had made plans to attend the University under the contract with the state for the summer school.

South, who is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, had made plans to attend the University under the contract with the state for the summer school.



JOHN CHASE, right, Austin graduate architecture student, is one of the first of registration with members by the University. South at left is administrator. Chase registered Wednesday afternoon.

Daily Texan (Austin), June 9, 1950

John Chase First Negro Student To Enter Texas

AUSTIN, June 7. Z.—John Saunders Chase of Austin today became the first Negro to enroll as a student in the hitherto all-white University of Texas.

His acceptance as a student seeking a master's degree in architecture follows the United States Supreme Court's decision ordering the university to admit Herman Marlon Sweatt of Houston as a law student.

Sweatt does not plan to enroll in the university until next fall.

Chase moved routinely in line with white students registering for the summer session at the university.

He filled out the necessary forms in the registrar's office and proceeded to Gregory Gymnasium where he actually was enrolled.

It was the same registrar's office where Sweatt appeared more than four years ago, setting in motion the litigation that led this week to breaking down the long-existing barriers that barred Negroes as students in Texas state schools.

"I'm very happy to be here," was Chase's only comment to reporters as he filled out his enrollment forms. His presence apparently attracted little attention from other students going through the same process.

Chase was accompanied by J. H. Morton and W. D. McClellan, both faculty members in Samuel Houston College for Negroes here, who said they also planned to enroll as graduate students next fall.

University officials yesterday said three Negroes have been recognized as eligible for non-segregated admission.

Big Spring Daily Herald, June 7, 1950

Brogan Sees Little Effect In Negro Entry

Dr. A. P. Brogan, dean of the Graduate School, said Thursday the entrance of two Negroes to the university should have little effect on the student population.

Students are not expected for at least a week at the University of Texas. The first of the summer school students will be few in number and of the usual level, they should be no different from the students of the previous year, he said.

The big decision, he said, should be made by the Legislature. The University of Texas is a state institution and its policies should be decided by the people's representatives.

He predicted relatively few Negro students would be admitted to the University at the University of Texas. Viewed from the University of Texas, the number of Negro students is small.

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LOYALTY to the Constitution is asserted by John Saunders Chase, registered architecture student at the University of Texas, Wednesday. He is shown about to sign the loyalty oath required of all students.

Chase, an present teaching at the University of Texas at Austin, had made plans to attend the University under the contract with the state for the summer school.

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