

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Thomas Hart Benton Home and Studio

and/or common Benton Home and Studio

2. Location

street & number 3616 Bellevue

not for publication

city, town Kansas City vicinity of congressional district #5 - Hon. Richard Bolli

state Missouri code 29 county Jackson code 095

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Department of Natural Resources - State of Missouri

street & number P.O. Box 176

city, town Jefferson City vicinity of state Missouri 65102

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jackson County Courthouse

street & number 415 E. 12th Street

city, town Kansas City state Missouri 64106

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title 1. Kansas City: A Place in Time has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1977 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri

Kansas City

state Missouri 64106

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

THOMAS HART BENTON HOME AND STUDIO

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 6

Page 1

2. Missouri State Historical Survey

1980

state

Department of Natural Resources

P.O. Box 176

Jefferson City

Missouri 65102

Item number 9

Page 1

Benton, Thomas Hart. An Artist in America. New York: McBride & Co., 1937.

Item number 10

Page 1

recorded plat thereof, described as follows: Beginning at the Southeast corner of said Lot D, being also the Northeast corner of Lot 56 in Block 7, ROANOKE: thence Northerly along the Easterly line of said Lot D, a distance of 14 feet to a point in the Easterly line and 207.34 feet Southerly of, measured along the Easterly line, the Northeast corner of said Lot D; thence Southwesterly a distance of 70.11 feet to a point in the Southerly line of Lot D, which point is the Northwest corner of Lot 56, Block 7, ROANOKE: thence East along the South line of said Lot D and the North line of said Lot 56 to the point of beginning.

Item number 11

Page 1

2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Nominations-Survey

and State Contact Person

Department of Natural Resources

Historic Preservation Program

P.O. Box 176

Jefferson City

July 3, 1980

314/751-4096

Missouri 65102

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent

☒ good

☐ fair

☐ deteriorated

☐ ruins

☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered

☐ altered

Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Thomas Hart Benton Home and Studio is located in the midst of the Roanoke Park neighborhood of Kansas City, Missouri. This neighborhood, one of the oldest in the city, is noted for its large turn-of-the-century homes of varying architectural styles. The Benton residence in particular is almost a "pocket park", with thirty trees and a patio-garden area on the small property lot.

The Thomas Hart Benton Home is a 2 1/2 story house with full attic and basement. A two-story carriage house converted into an artist's studio is situated thirty feet southwest of the house. Both structures are constructed in an eclectic Late Victorian manner with some elements of Richardson Romanesque evident in detailing. Both are constructed of rock-faced random ashlar limestone blocks, and gray-painted shingles. Although not a gigantic house, the slight elevation from the street, and the massive rock-faced random ashlar masonry lend a fortress-like air to the residence.

Important design features

EXTERIOR-HOUSE

The major facade of the residence faces east, protected from the street by a four-foot high wooden fence. The design elements of the massive walled stair approach from the sidewalk are repeated at the entryway of the house - a curved projecting stone stoop or porch overhung by a gable. The entry bay door and two side windows contain bevelled glass. Two porch windows flanking the entry bay are of leaded glass. North of the porch, the house is accented by a three-story, stone, battlement-topped projection. South of the porch, the fireplace wall juts out from the facade, and on the third or attic story a shed-shaped dormer adjoins the chimney. A small screened-in porch is located on the southeast corner of the second floor with a second story bay window situated above the porch gable.

On the south side a screened-in porch runs the length of the first story. This porch has a rock-faced random ashlar lower-half, and an uncovered stone entryway in the center. On the second story, a bay window flanked by railing is overhung slightly by the projection of the attic story. The attic story has a Palladian window centered in it.

On the west, a dismantled wooden porch (to be replaced) once opened over a stairwell to the basement level. The northwest portion of the south side projects outward approximately eight feet. The northwest corner of this projection contains another porch area with casement-type windows. A gabled dormer is centered in the third story.

The first floor level of the north side is distinguished by twin bay windows, with a tiled-roof overhang. The attic story has a Palladian window centered in it as on the south side. On this side of the residence, the basement level is evident with four of its windows visible. This is due to a slight grade on this side of the house which descends from the south to the north.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

THOMAS HART BENTON HOME AND STUDIO

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

A stone wall interrupted by an iron gate runs from the southwest corner of the house for approximately forty feet to a wooden fence, which marks the southern boundary of the property. Situated west of this stone wall is the carriage house which served as Benton's art studio.

A driveway of pink granite blocks runs along the north side of the house around to the west side into the studio area.

INTERIOR-HOUSE

The interior of the residence retains the atmosphere of the period of the Benton family occupation, 1939-1975. A two-story fireplace dominates the entrance foyer; a curved stairway rises behind it, leading to the second floor library. Four fireplaces remain; one of these with lion-headed mantel supports commands the living room. A built-in china hutch with leaded-glass panes spans one end of the dining room. The woodwork is generally of a simple design, although almost all of it has been painted. The wood flooring is retained throughout, including part of the basement level. A great deal of the Benton family furniture remains in the house and in the studio.

ALTERATIONS-HOUSE

In the 1970's, a storage room, or vault, with wooden compartments, was constructed in the basement level on the west side between the laundry and furnace rooms. At an unknown date, a half-bath was installed on the first floor in the area underneath the staircase.

EXTERIOR-CARRIAGE HOUSE

The carriage house has a dual orientation. The garage half is entered from the north, being the terminus of the granite-block drive. The studio half is entered from the east. The two halves have no interior connecting door. The northeast corner of the carriage house is accented by a two-story, stone, battlement-topped projection which is repeated on the northeast corner of the residence by a similar construction. Two large wooden folding doors give access to the garage. One regular house-type door opens into the studio.

INTERIOR-CARRIAGE HOUSE

The interior studio half of the carriage house is distinguished by the retention of many of the artist's tools, equipment, paints, and miscellany distributed throughout the space - much of which remains in situ from the time of his death. There is one fireplace in the studio, against the west wall which separates the studio from the garage area.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

THOMAS HART BENTON HOME AND STUDIO

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

ALTERATIONS-CARRIAGE HOUSE

At an unknown date, the west half of the carriage house was converted into a garage. Also, Benton had a large window installed in the north central side of the carriage house in the 1940's to provide increased lighting for his artistic work.

CONDITION AND STATUS

The Thomas Hart Benton Home and Studio remain in good condition. Certain repairs are needed, such as replastering and repainting several areas in the interior, as well as the installation of new electrical wiring. Exterior trim, roof, and rear porch areas need some repair. The attic floor is to be converted into an apartment for the live-in historic site administrator by the State of Missouri which is proceeding with repairs and restoration. The State plans to open the site to public interpretive tours in the near future, as part of its statewide historic sites system administered by the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Historic Preservation.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Const. 1904-4
Benton Resid. 1939-75 Builder/Architect George A. Matthews

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Thomas Hart Benton Home and Studio at 3616 Bellevue, Kansas City, Missouri is an important and well-preserved example of a working studio and home-life environment of one of the most noted artists in Missouri and in the nation.

Thomas Hart Benton was born in Neosho, Missouri on April 15, 1889. He was grandnephew and namesake of Missouri's second senator; and son of Maecenas E. Benton, a United States Representative who served four terms.¹ Young Benton grew up loving the values and folkways of his native countrymen and was well-immersed in American folklore and traditions.

His formative years were spent in developing his philosophy, skill, and direction in Chicago, Paris, and New York. Benton returned to Missouri in 1935. Upon being awarded the murals commission for the Missouri State Capitol at Jefferson City, and subsequently receiving the appointment of Director of Painting at the Kansas City Art Institute, Benton chose to settle down in Kansas City.² In 1937, one year after completing his murals at the state capitol, his first book, An Artist in America, was published.³

In 1939, Benton moved to the Bellevue residence where he made his home until his death in 1975. Benton established a studio in the converted carriage house where he worked at painting from sunup to sundown.⁴ During the 1939-75 period Benton produced a great number of easel paintings and many major murals. He even found time to write another book, An American in Art.⁵ It was during this period, that Benton brought to its fullest development his philosophy of art -- that the art of a nation should reflect the values and attitudes of that nation. Benton believed that foreign artistic trends could best find their value in their own national context. It was meaningless, in Benton's opinion, to adopt them as a means for expressing and interpreting the American cultural and historical experience.⁶

The Home also served as an art gallery where Benton's works were exhibited and sold by his wife, Rita, who took care of Tom's financial affairs. It was also a meeting place of some of the most influential and educated minds of contemporary America. Buckminster Fuller, Carl Sandburg, Harry Truman, et.al. were visitors and guests of Tom Benton and his wife.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

THOMAS HART BENTON HOME AND STUDIO

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Benton was the recipient of many honors and awards, most of which are still in the home. For example:

- 1933 Awarded gold medal for decorative painting by the Architectural League of New York.
- 1945 Named honorary member of Argentina's Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes.
- 1948 Received honorary degree of Doctor of Arts from the University of Missouri, Columbia
- 1949 Named honorary member of L'Academia Fiorentina delle Arti del Disegno in Florence, and of the Academia Senese degli Intronati in Siena.
- 1949 Made member of Phi Beta Kappa.
- 1956 Named as an Academician to the National Academy of Design.
- 1957 Received honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri.
- 1960 Awarded the Fine Arts Medal from the American Institute of Architects.
- 1962 Elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, New York.
- 1969 Awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the State Historical Society of Missouri.
- 1974 Awarded the Diamond Jubilee Gold Medal by the National Arts Club, New York.

While Tom Benton wrote, sculpted, and made many easel paintings, lithographs, and drawings, he is best known to the American public through his large scale mural paintings dealing with American historical events. Scattered throughout America, they have extended his influence far beyond the confines of his native state. Some of them are: "The Sources of Country Music" in the Country Music Hall of Fame, Nashville, Tenn.; "Independence and the Opening of the West" in the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; "Father Hennepin at Niagara Falls" in the Power Authority of the State of New York, at Niagara Falls; "Social History of the State of Indiana" now at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana; "America Today" in the New School for Social Research, New York; and "A Social History of the State of Missouri" in the Missouri State Capitol, Jefferson City, Missouri.

In later years, Benton was slowed somewhat by a heart condition but still remained a vigorous individual. He finished the Truman Library mural at Independence, Missouri at the age of 73, and a mural for the Municipal Building of Joplin, Missouri at the age of 83. He died in his studio on January 19, 1975 while finishing yet another work, "The Sources of Country Music," for the Country Music Hall of Fame, at Nashville, Tenn. His wife followed him in death only three months later.

FOOTNOTES

1. Matthew Baigell, Thomas Hart Benton. (New York: Abrams, 1973). p. 263.
2. Ibid., p. 265.
3. Thomas Hart Benton, An Artist in America. (New York: McBride & Co., 1937).

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

THOMAS HART BENTON HOME AND STUDIO

For HCERS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

4. Some of the many available pictures and stories concerning Benton at his work in his studio are: Cosmopolitan, (Feb., 1959), "Artists at Work", p. 40.; Friends (March, 1958), "Thomas Hart Benton-He Puts His Country on Canvas", pp. 6-7; Kansas City Star, (May 6, 1955), "Visitor Easily Feels at Home on Call to Thomas Hart Benton", p. 8; Liberty, (Feb. 15, 1947), "He-Man Artist", p. 83; New York Post, (Jan. 29, 1956), "In an Old Horse Barn...", by Earl Wilson; Time, (Feb. 23, 1959), "Rebel Against Rebellion", p. 821; Town-Pictorial Kansas City, (Jan. 30, 1948), "Thomas Hart Benton--American Artist", p. 4; Tulsa World, (Sunday Supplement March 15, 1970), "The Elders: Thomas Hart Benton", p. 9.
5. Thomas Hart Benton, An American in Art. (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1969).
6. An Artist in American & An American in Art. passim.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Baigell, Matthew. Thomas Hart Benton. New York: Abrams, 1973.

Benton, Thomas Hart. An American in Art. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1969.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property one acre

Quadrangle name "Kansas City, Mo."

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 1 5 3 6 1 7 8 0 4 3 2 4 4 0 0
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification From Executor's Deed: Lots 55 and 56, Block 7, ROANOKE, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof, and all that part of Lot D, PLAT OF LOTS "A" to "G" inclusive, ROANOKE, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, according to the

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 1. Dudley J. McGovern, Site Administrator

Thomas Hart Benton Home

organization State Historic Site

date March 1, 1980

street & number 3616 Belleview

telephone 816/931-5722

city or town Kansas City

state Missouri 64111

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

X 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Director, Department of Natural Resources and

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

For NHD only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Benton, Thomas Hart, Home and Studio**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Dudley McGovern**

Date

Photographed: **May 1979**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 8. E façade, Benton home.
- 2 of 8. N façade, Benton home.
- 3 of 8. S façade, Benton home.
- 4 of 8. View to NE of rear (W) side, Benton home.
- 5 of 8. SW corner, Benton home.
- 6 of 8. N façade, Benton home.
- 7 of 8. E façade, Benton studio.
- 8 of 8. View to W of rear (S) side, Benton studio.















