

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Pope's Museum

2. Location: 192 Pope's Store Road, vicinity of Ochlocknee, Grady County, Georgia

3a. Description: Pope's Museum is located in northeast Grady County, approximately six miles west of the city of Ochlocknee. A two-story wood frame house sheathed in Dutch lap siding, surrounded by a substantial, casually landscaped yard is situated on the west side of the parcel. Historically, this portion of the property contained over 200 pieces of statuary displayed in a garden setting. Remaining today are nine examples of this work. Most commanding in scope is the 100-foot sculpture wall that delineates the property's northwest boundary. Made of cement with marble elements, embellished with found objects such as sewing machine legs, adhered and embellished in places with cement and painted white, the wall is primarily a memorial to people and events of World War II, featuring life-sized busts of people in military and Georgia history. Also extant on the western portion of the property, largely in the immediate vicinity of the house, are the remains of *The Gold Star Mother*, a fountain; *Red Cross Nurse*, a life-sized nurse figure with a tablet honoring local men killed in World War I; a statue of a young boy; two bird baths; and three urns. All are hand-formed cement, and some are embellished with stone. The house on the property was constructed by 1894 as a one-story dwelling. The west half of the rear wing was added at an unknown date, likely in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A second story was added to the house between 1917 and 1940. The house's primary entrance is on the north façade and features a substantial integral porch with a two-story portico. This portico is also embellished on both levels with found objects, including Model-T wheels and sewing machine legs, adhered and embellished with cement and painted white, giving the appearance of lace-like screening. Hand-formed cement planters also form the knee wall delineating the porch and portico. Today, the first floor includes seven primary rooms divided by a central hall. A substantial stair in the primary living room, known as "Cupid's Room," accesses a landing and second floor composed of five primary rooms. The house's interior features various historic finish materials, including wood flooring, wainscoting, and beadboard ceilings on the second level. The "Cupid's Room" living area, stair landing, second-floor living area, and the office all feature portions of plank walls with murals painted by Laura Pope Forester. Some of these murals are framed in cement trim applied directly to the wall planks. Historically, the vast majority of the house's interior walls were covered in painted murals with cement, plaster-like embellishment. The property has suffered the destruction and removal of much of its former statuary and murals. Despite this loss, the property's current integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is sufficient to evidence the significance of Laura Pope Forester as an artist. A storage shed, chicken coop, hay storage shed, and guest house on the east half of the property are all non-historic, noncontributing resources.

3b. Period of Significance: 1917-1975

3c. Acreage: 5.97 acres

3d. Boundary Explanation: The boundary comprises the current legal boundary of the nominated property.

4a. National Register Criteria: A and B

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Art; Social History; Women's History

4c. Statement of Significance: Laura Cordelia Atkinson Pope Forester was born only miles away from the future location of her museum in 1873. She married her schoolteacher, Benjamin Hill Pope, in 1894, and began large-scale sculpting around 1900. In 1917, she created and installed the first statue at her home, an 11-foot-high monument of an American soldier honoring World War I soldiers. Pope's Museum served as the home and exhibition space of Laura Pope Forester (1873-1953), a significant self-taught artist in south Georgia. Pope Forester began creating art on this property in 1917, and first opened her home to the public, informally, in 1924. By 1933, the house and gardens were a well-known south Georgia tourist destination. As an artist, Pope Forester is notable not only for creating a large art environment of high artistic quality around and including her rural residence, but also as one of few documented female artists to do so in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her work has been cataloged by exhibits, books, articles, and collections throughout Georgia and the United States. Her work has been recognized by the Library of Congress, the Georgia Council on the Arts and Humanities, and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta for its contribution to the landscape of Georgia and southeastern folk art. Her statues, of realistic human form modeled from her own face and those of her neighbors, were indicative of her feminist and patriotic leanings. Noted for its quality and message, Pope Forester's work is also a statement of the impact of women in Georgia, American, and world history. Pope's Museum is significant under Criteria A and B. Under Criterion B, the property is significant in the area of Art as the home and singular art environment of self-taught artist Laura Pope Forester, who lived and created on the property for almost six decades. The property is also significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History, subcategory of Women's History. Pope's Museum is one of few Georgia art environments created by a woman, and much of Pope Forester's work showcased women in history. From the 1920s through her death in 1953, Pope Forester opened the property to public visitation, creating a renowned south Georgia art environment, noted in part for exposing visitors to women's history documented by a female artist. The museum continued to operate until 1975, and although not noted by the more formal art community until well after her death, the property is today recognized as among the oldest documented self-taught art environments in Georgia and the southeast, and is believed to rank among the oldest documented surviving such environments in the United States.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The property is being nominated at the state level of significance as the sole art environment created by Laura Pope Forester, and one of the oldest documented self-taught art environments in Georgia.

4e. National Register Status: The property received final certification from the Georgia Historic Preservation Division for the property tax abatement and the state tax credit programs on March 1, 2021, and final certification from the National Park Service for the federal tax credit program on June 23, 2021.

5. Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by property owners Michele and Daniel Dean, who also prepared the nomination materials.

Summary prepared August 2021/SCF