

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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DATE ENTERED	

**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

Martin Luther King, Jr., Historic District (Landmark)

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Auburn Street bet. Jackson and Howell Sts.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5th

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Fulton

CODE

121

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

(See continuation sheet.)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds; Fulton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

160 Pryor Street

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

National Register of Historic Places

DATE

May 2, 1974

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Auburn Avenue, the main street running east-west through the district was originally called Wheat Street. It acquired its name prior to the Civil War and was so called in honor of Augustus W. Wheat, one of Atlanta's early merchants. The name was changed to Auburn Avenue by the City Council on April 17, 1893. The area is composed of the following structures, many of which retain most of their original appearances. Together they comprise an identifiable and definable historic district.

Ebenezer Baptist Church: At the corner of Auburn Avenue and Jackson Street is the Ebenezer Baptist Church. It was begun in 1914 and completed in 1922, during the pastorship of Rev. Adam D. Williams. It is a three-story, red brick structure detailed in stone and has several groupings of stained-glass windows. There has been an addition of a two-story educational building attached to the east corner designed to match the original architectural style of Paul Muldawer, AIA, a well-known figure in modern additions to historic districts.

Grave Site: The gravesite of Martin Luther King, Jr. occupies most of the cleared lot east of the Ebenezer Baptist Church to Boulevard Street. In 1976 a memorial park, was installed around the marble crypt. The park consists primarily of a brick and concrete plaza with arch-covered walkway and chapel partially surrounding a reflecting pool. In the center of the pool, on a raised pedestal rests the King crypt. On it is engraved the inscription: Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929-1968, "Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, I'm free at last.

Birthplace and Boyhood Home: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthplace, located at 501 Auburn Avenue, is a two-story frame Queen Anne style house built in 1895. There is a one-story partial front and side porch with scroll cut woodwork trim, two "porthole" windows, a shingled gabled end, and a side facade bay - all details of the Queen Anne style. Other windows of the house are doubled hung one-over-one single light sashes. Those of the Auburn Avenue facade are adorned with shutters. Four steps, with balustrade which continues to encircle the porch, rise to the porch landing. The porch sits on an enclosed brick foundation; these bricks laid in common bond.

A long straight stair with short returns at the lowest point ascend on the west side, above a lift-door to the partial cellar space. Also, leading from this middle hall space is a small bedroom with a bath directly behind it. Upstairs three (3) bedrooms are located to the west with a smaller bedroom and bath on the west side above comparable first floor rooms. Fireplaces with late Victorian wooden frames and mantels, and ceramic tile inserts remain in the large eastern rooms on each floor.

The Birth Home has been restored, with exacting specifications, to a close resemblance of the house as when Dr. King, Jr. knew it. Paint for the exterior surfaces were remembered by Mrs. King, Sr., then checked with those obtained from analysis of the house's old paint chips. Exterior hardware, i.e., lights, fixtures, etc., were replaced in accordance with old photographs.

# 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input 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 (1929-1968)  
(1929-1940) BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

There are few figures of any race, nationality, or creed who have risen in so short a life span to a position of international prominence, especially for espousing the cause of peace and brotherhood, as has the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. Born in his grandfather's house at 501 Auburn Avenue, raised in that community, educated at Moorhouse College, Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University, Dr. King, through an occurrence of fate, became the symbol of the Afro-American's quest for equal rights and a beacon of love to all peoples. Dr. King, as leader of the MIA, SCLC and as pastor of the Dexter Avenue and Ebenezer Baptist Churches, stood in the forefront of the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s. He was an outspoken proponent of international peace and was one of the first Americans to speak out against the Vietnam War. He was the organizer of the greatest marches in the history of the Nation, unifying persons of every background. He was the organizer of many activities of the civil rights protest and at all times the exponent of non-violence. Of his many awards and achievements, he was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize of 1964. He at many times, with his wife, Coretta, at his side, placed himself in mortal danger to stand undaunted for the cause to which he had dedicated his life. Dr. King was slain by an assassin in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

BIOGRAPHY

For years Atlanta had been the scene of an industrious black community- a center of racial pride and economic prowess. In particular, the corridor along Auburn Avenue on Atlanta's east side was, at the turn of the century, a focal point to which many blacks throughout the Nation could look for inspiration. It was these benefits that caused Martin Luther King, Sr. to make this his home, after leaving his father's, John Albert King, sharecroppers farm. After many years of hard struggle, earning his high school diploma and attending Moorhouse College, M. L. King, Sr. met, court, and married Alberta Williams, daughter of Rev. A.D. Williams, pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

At the time of their wedding on Thanksgiving Day, 1925, the young man moved in with his in-laws at 501 Auburn Avenue. Rev. King, Sr. was then the pastor of Traveler's Rest Baptist Church. Rev. King, Sr. was made assistant pastor of Ebenezer at the request of his father-in-law. The continued pasturage of Ebenezer was thereby placed in family hands. The temporary living arrangement of the two families worked so well that the relationship was continued throughout

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Adams, Russell L. Great Negroes: Past and Present. Chicago: 1969.  
 Bennet, Lerone. What Manner of Man. Chicago: 1968.  
 Clayton, Ed. Martin Luther King: The Peaceful Warrior. New York: 1969.  
 King, Martin Luther, Jr. Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story.  
 New York: 1958.

Lewis, David L. King: A Critical Biography. New York: 1970 (continued)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	7	4	3	4	5	0	3	7	3	7	9	4	0	B										
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE		EASTING		NORTHING													
C														D											

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point on the south side of Auburn Avenue, N.E. 253 feet east of Boulevard N.E., running thence east along the south side of Auburn Avenue 40 feet; thence south 188 feet; thence west 40 feet; thence north 188 feet to the point of beginning.

501 Auburn Avenue- Land Lot 46, 14th District, Fulton County

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

Joseph Scott Mendinghall, Assistant to the Director, Historic Projects

ORGANIZATION

The Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

1420 N Street, NW

TELEPHONE

(202) 462-2519

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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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE 1

Owner of Property

Archdiocese of Atlanta  
The Most Reverend Thomas A. Donnellan  
756 West Peachtree Street  
Atlanta, Georgia 30313

City of Atlanta  
Mayor Maynard Jackson  
City Hall  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Ebenezer Baptist Church  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
413 Auburn Avenue  
Atlanta, Georgia 30312

Martin Luther King, Jr. Center  
for Social Change  
Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., President  
P. O. Box 92326  
Atlanta, Georgia 30314

Multiple Private Owners

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On the interior of the house wall papers were chosen by Mrs. King, Sr. of those available patterns which most closely resemble those that she remembered. Many interior features remained unchanged. The built-in cupboard in the dining room, the tile of the fireplaces and the mantels are all original as are the lights in the ceilings with pull chains. On the other hand, fireplace grates, heatrola or circular heaters, used before central heating are being researched in an attempt to replace them. Floor coverings were also chosen by Mrs. King, Sr. as similar to ones used when Dr. King, Jr. resided here. Many of the interior furnishings date from the period of the Williams' occupancy and others are of King family provenience.

Shotgun-Row Houses: On the northeast corner of Auburn Avenue and Boulevard are houses typical of rental property for Blacks in 1920. The double-shotgun houses are two-family dwellings with two separate hip roofs. They have frame porches with turned posts. Each section of the duplexes has one simple frame door and two windows. The houses are raised slightly on blocks and built of weatherboard sidings.

Victorian Houses: The houses across the street and adjoining the King Birthplace were originally built as two-story single family dwellings in the 1880's in a simple Victorian style. Interesting features of these houses include bay windows, shingled gables, round and diamond shaped windows near the entrances, as well as one-story porches with turned posts and well designed wood brackets. The exterior character of these houses has been well preserved even though they have been converted into multi-family residences.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church Mission: Built in 1912, this building is a three-story brick structure, 52 x 82 feet, originally with a one-story temple form entrance. The front facade also featured two groups of windows on the second and third floors and two windows on either side of the first floor entrance. The side facades are five bay with groupings of three windows each. A simple brick cornice completes the building's original description. Although still used as a church, the temple form entrance has been removed. Otherwise, this building's exterior remains much the same as when built.

Fire Station Number 6: The two-story brick structure is Romanesque Revival in design. The front facade can be described in three sections: the lower section features doorways and an arched fire truck entrance; the second story has a series of five Italianate arched windows framed in a square of brick detailing; raised above this area is a delicate, diamond design in brick with another row of smaller brick arches above. The year of the building's construction, 1894, is inscribed on the building's facade.

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In 1909, Rev. Adam D. Williams, the grandfather of Dr. King, Jr., was probably the first Black to purchase a house along that section of Auburn Avenue. Dr. King, living with his mother, Alberta Williams King, and his father, Martin Luther King, Sr., undoubtedly was influenced by the activities within this area. The surrounding historical sites represent some of those influences of his early development.

Ebenezer Baptist Church was founded in 1886 by Rev. John Parker who served as pastor until his death in 1894. Rev. Adam D. Williams succeeded and it was under his pastorship that the present structure was completed in 1922. Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr., Williams' son-in-law, assumed the duties of pastor in 1932 and still serves. In 1960 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. became co-pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church and served in that capacity until his death in 1968.

The grave site of Dr. King, Jr., is located on property adjacent to the Church. With its now familiar inscription, "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I'm free at last" the crypt is a popular site for city visitors and followers of the Civil Rights movement.

The birthplace of Dr. King was built in 1895 in the Queen Anne style. The original occupant and probable owner was a white family named Holbrook. The first Black owner and occupant was the Rev. Adam D. Williams, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church. Williams acquired the property by purchase in 1909. Dr. King was born in an upstairs middle room January 15, 1929, and lived there until 1941. The birthplace will be restored by the Martin Luther King Center and opened as a house museum.

Row houses two-family dwellings built in 1920 are typical of property rented by Blacks during this period. They are located across the street from the birthplace. Others across the street from the birthplace were originally built as two-story single family dwellings in the 1880's in a simple Victorian style the same as King's birthplace.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Colored Mission was constructed in 1912 as a three-story combination church, school and Catholic Hall. It was named the Archbishop Ryan Memorial and was the second such mission for Black Catholics in Georgia and the first Black mission in Atlanta. The founder and first pastor was Reverend Father I. Lissner. The backyard of the Mission is adjacent to the King birthplace.

Fire Station Number 6 was constructed May 31, 1894. It was one of the original eight fire houses in Atlanta and was situated to protect the eastern section of the city. It is located on the corner, two doors from where Martin Luther King, Jr., grew up as a child. The Fire Station still operates as such.

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Soon after his death, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change was created as a tribute to Dr. King's work and more importantly as a living, permanent program to continue the causes of civil rights and social justice. The location of the center was purposely selected within the neighborhood where King lived, worked and is now buried in order to provide an impetus for the preservation of those places associated with his life and work and to provide an appropriate environment for the ongoing implementation of King's philosophies. The center, founded and directed by Dr. King's family and close advisors, and the City of Atlanta are cooperating in the revitalization of the neighborhood. Offices for the center will be built adjacent to King's burial site and will be designed in keeping with the surrounding architecture and environment. Restoration of the birthplace has recently been completed. It is furnished as a house museum typical of the period when King lived here as a child. Across from the Church and Burial Site, property which is included within this nomination are a memorial park and community center, in keeping with the social thrust of the community's development.

Biography

For years Atlanta had been the scene of an industrious black community--a center of racial pride and economic prowess. In particular, the corridor along Auburn Avenue on Atlanta's east side was, at the turn of the century, a focal point to which many blacks throughout the Nation could look for inspiration. It was these benefits that caused Martin Luther King, Sr. to make this his home, after leaving his father's, John Albert King, sharecroppers farm. After many years of hard struggle, earning his high school diploma and attending Morehouse College, Martin Luther King, Sr. met, court, and married Alberta Williams, daughter of Rev. Adam D. Williams, pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

At the time of their wedding on Thanksgiving Day, 1925, the young man moved in with his in-laws at 501 Auburn Avenue. Rev. King, Sr. was then the pastor of Traveler's Rest Baptist Church. Rev. King, Sr. was made assistant pastor of Ebenezer at the request of his father-in-law. The continued pasturage of Ebenezer was thereby placed in family hands. The temporary living arrangement of the two families worked so well that the relationship was continued throughout the Williams' lifetime. When Rev. Williams died in 1931, the young Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr. was made pastor of the church.

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The Kings had three children, the first, Christine, the middle child, Martin Luther, Jr., and the third, Alfred Daniel (A.D.). Martin Luther born in his grandparent's house at 501 Auburn Avenue, lived here the first eleven (11) years of his life. These formative years had a great impression on the young man. Martin was taught his family background and an appreciation and pride for his race. Moreover, all of his young and adolescent life was spent in very close proximity to his Auburn Avenue home. It was not until 1943 that the young nineteen year old was to leave Atlanta.

Early in life Mrs. King, a public school teacher, had noticed the academic potentials in her son and at age four (4) had enrolled him in grade school with his older sister. Martin's stay in elementary school that year was short-lived as the teacher overheard him explaining to his classmates about his fifth birthday. He was, however, enrolled again the subsequent year and advanced a grade so that he again was in the same grade as his older sister, Christine. He proceeded to Booker T. Washington High School, the first and at one time only high school for blacks in Atlanta. Here Martin was advanced two (2) years, graduating in his early teens. Martin then chose to remain in Atlanta at home to attend the alma mater of his grandfather and father, Morehouse College. It was here that Martin met the reknowned Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president of the college. Dr. Mays had a tremendous influence on the young scholar and this friendship lasted throughout Dr. King's life. For years conflict had reigned inside the young man. Martin's father had wanted him to become a minister, but he had found the "'emotionalism' of the Negro church not to his taste." It was Rev. Dr. Mays who inspired Martin to enter the ministry. While at Morehouse, Martin was ordained and upon graduation elected to co-pastor with his father at Ebenezer.

This same year Martin entered Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. One of six (6) blacks of the one-hundred student enrollment, he excelled in his studies. He was graduated with honors, the Pearl Plafkner Prize for scholarship and full scholarship to the university of his choice. Martin proceeded to Boston University where he was graduated in 1955 with the Ph.D. degree. It was also in Boston that he met Coretta Scott, a graduate student in voice at the New England Conservatory of Music. Shortly after they had first met, Martin knew that this was the lady he should like to marry. They were married on June 18, 1953 by Martin's father on her father's lawn in Heiberger, Alabama. To this union were to be born four (4) children.

Dr. King having completed the requirements for his Ph.D. accepted a position as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. This seemingly minor event in the life of one industrious, bright young man was to greatly affect the course of American history and alter the consciousness of the entire world.

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Mrs. Rosa Parks, tired after a hard day's work, refused to give her seat to a white man. Mrs. Parks was jailed and the black community enraged. Under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Montgomery Improvement Association was founded. After 381 days of boycott--busses in Montgomery were desegregated. However, the hardest tasks lay ahead.

From this effort Dr. King became internationally known at the early age of twenty-seven (27). In organizing the annual Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) meeting, Dr. King conceived of an umbrella organization which would provide leadership for the entire South. To this conference, held in Atlanta at Ebenezer Baptist Church, civic leaders gathered from all over the South. Dr. King was elected its first president.

The period between 1957 and 1960 were most active for Dr. King though they were not years of impressive gains for blacks. During this period also, the MIA lost much of its fervent following. But with the opening of the decade of the 60's came a resurgence of activism on the part of the black masses. Dr. King also made a move to emphasize that an active "full scale assault...be made upon discrimination and segregation in all forms." This active assault came on February 1, 1960 at 4:45 p.m. when four (4) black students of A & T College (now State University) sat at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina and gave impetus to a surge of sit-ins all over the South. This sit-in tactic spread and soon there were stand-ins, kneel-ins, pray-ins, mass meetings and marches on every scene in segregated areas. Although these protests were often met by violence and brutality, the philosophy of Dr. King's non-violent movement remained at the center of black protest.

Much of the civil rights success of the 1960s came because of the sympathetic attitude of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. The campaign of 1960 saw majority support of blacks for John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr. was one of the first to endorse the young senator's candidacy. This support did play some valid part in the attitude of the government towards blacks and it was Martin Luther King, Jr. who successfully became the mediator, rallying both black and white support for the civil rights movement.

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Dr. King became the symbol of the struggles of all people for the equality of man. As a result of the constant efforts of blacks in the opening years of the 1960's, and in particular through the role that he played in the organization and implementation of the March on Washington of 1963, Dr. King greatly affected the thinking of the Nation and specifically of its Congress. The Civil Rights Act of 1963 and the Voting Rights Act of 1964 can be traced directly to these activities. Dr. King at all times stood in the vanguard of the struggle. He met with dignitaries, presidents, kings and queens on the one hand, but rallied with and was a part of the masses on the other. Through all of this he maintained his philosophy of non-violence.

In 1964, he was recognized for his efforts with the Nobel Peace Prize. Numerous awards were bestowed upon him, but his dream was unchanged and his person untainted by personal glory. Because of his firm commitment to the cause of peace, Dr. King was one of the first to speak against American involvement in the Vietnam War. This outspokenness led to much criticism and brought him to the center of a much larger controversy. Suspicion, scandal, investigation and intimidation were the tools used by those in opposition to his position. But, he continued his campaign for better jobs, housing, medical care for the poor, and food for those in need.

In 1968, he planned a second March on Washington. This time the cause was not basic rights guaranteed by law, but a cause, though less concrete, that was and is just as essential, the right to a decent life. The Poor People's Campaign March on Washington of 1968 was seen as a massive tool to bring to the attention of the Nation the plight of the poor in America. Even more, it was a means of uniting all people, black, white, red, yellow and brown, letting them speak in unison to the conscious of the Congress and Nation. However, fate was to play its decisive role.

Memphis had been the scene of bargaining between local sanitation workers and the city government. When mediation could not resolve the conflict, garbage workers went on strike. No cause of right too small, Dr. King went to Memphis to lend his support to their cause. On April 4, 1968, a sniper's bullet put an end to such an impressive life. The dreams of Martin Luther King, Jr. remain ever active through the many that his life has touched, however briefly. Moreover, his wife, Coretta Scott King, continues the struggle and in his memory the Center for Social Change, located opposite his resting place and a short distance from his birth home, remains an active force for human decency and brotherly love--his lifelong goal.

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Beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of Auburn Avenue and Jackson Street proceed south along the eastern curb of Jackson Street to a point of intersection of said curb and the line of the rear property line of the Ebenezer Baptist Church extended west; thence east along said rear property line and the rear property line of the memorial gravesite and property of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change (this is also the northern edge of Jackson Place) extended to its intersection with the west curb of Boulevard Street; thence north along said curb about 75 feet to a point of intersection with the south boundary of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Colored Mission extended west; thence east along said Mission boundary as extended, continuing east along the rear property lines of the houses fronting on Auburn Avenue to the southwest corner of the lot previously owned by the Atlanta Baptist Preparatory Institute; thence north along this said lot line extended across Auburn Avenue to its north curb; thence east along said curb to its intersection with the west curb of Howell Street; thence north along said curb to its intersection with the south edge of Old Wheat Street; thence west along said south edge to its intersection with the east curb of Boulevard Street; thence south along said curb extended across Auburn Avenue to the south curb of Auburn Avenue; thence west along said south curb to the beginning point.

The boundary encompasses the immediate area associated with the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. The gravesite memorial, while a modern feature, is supported by the very significant Ebenezer Baptist Church on its west edge, and the neighborhood which King knew as a child and a grown man which contains his early home to the east. The neighborhood of Auburn Avenue, including the fire station, around the boyhood home, maintain the ambience associated with King's childhood and his adult leadership when he was co-pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church during the last years of his life.

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Martin Luther King, Jr., Historic District

Map References

1. Ebenezer Baptist Church
2. Martin Luther King Grave Site
3. Martin Luther King Birthplace
4. Shotgun-Row Houses
5. Victorian Houses
6. Alexander Hamilton House
7. Atlanta Baptist Preparatory Institute Site
8. Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Colored Mission
9. Fire Station #6
10. Triangle Building

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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

Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home

AND/OR COMMON

Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

501 Auburn Avenue

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Atlanta

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Georgia

13

Fulton

121

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

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

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- 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:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change

STREET & NUMBER

671 Beckwith Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Atlanta

\_\_ VICINITY OF

Georgia

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds; Fulton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

160 Pryor Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Atlanta

Georgia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

National Register of Historic Places

DATE

1975

- FEDERAL
- STATE
- COUNTY
- LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

1100 L Street, NW

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Washington

D. C.

# 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 Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home is a two-storey frame modified Queen Anne style house built c. 1895. There is a one-storey partial front and side porch with hipped roof and A-line gable projected toward the street with scroll cut woodwork trim, two "porthole" windows, a shingled gabled end and a side facade bay - all details of the Queen Anne style. Other windows of the house are doubled hung one-over-one single light sashes. Those of the Auburn Avenue facade are adorned with shutters. Four steps, with balustrade which continues to encircle the porch, rise to the porch landing. The porch sits on an enclosed brick foundation; these bricks laid in common bond.

A long straight stair with short returns at the lowest point ascend on the west side, above a lift-door to the partial cellar space. Also, leading from this middle hall space is a small bedroom with a bath directly behind it. Upstairs three (3) bedrooms are located to the west with a smaller bedroom and bath on the west side above comparable first floor rooms. Fireplaces with late Victorian wooden frames and mantels, and ceramic tile inserts remain in the large eastern rooms on each floor.

The Birth Home has been greatly restored, with exacting specifications, to a close resemblance of the house as when Dr. King, Jr. knew it. Paint for the exterior surfaces were remembered by Mrs. King, Sr., then checked with those obtained from analysis of the house's old paint chips. Exterior hardware, i.e., lights, fixtures, etc., were replaced in accordance with old photographs.

On the interior of the house wall papers were chosen by Mrs. King, Sr. of those available patterns which most closely resembles those that she remembered. Many interior features remained unchanged. The built-in cupboard in the dining room, the tile of the fireplaces and the mantels are all original as are the lights in the ceilings with pull chains. On the other hand, fireplace grates, heatrola or circular heaters, used before central heating are being researched in an attempt to replace them. Floor coverings were also chosen by Mrs. King, Sr. as similar to ones used when Dr. King, Jr. resided here. In the living room, a rug has been replaced and vinyl rugs have been placed throughout the house where linoleum rugs were located. Plans call for the substitution of linoleum coverings when they are located. Many of the interior furnishings date from the period of the Williams' occupancy and others are of King family provenience.



# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Within the space of several blocks around Atlanta's Auburn Avenue may be seen the birthplace, church and grave site of one of the century's most influential ministers and leaders of men, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In this neighborhood, Dr. King was born, grew to the age of 12, served as minister, and after his assassination was memorialized and buried. Taken together with other physical survivors of the days associated with Dr. King and with Atlanta's Black history, these sites comprise an identifiable and definable district which is presently the object of much preservation interest throughout the city.

Martin Luther King, Jr., born on Auburn Avenue in 1929, was a national leader in the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's. Receiving his bachelor degree at Morehouse College in Atlanta and higher degrees in the Northeast, King returned to the South to lead the movement for civil rights and social justice. He was founder and first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1964, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his endeavors in the civil rights movement. He was the youngest person to receive the prize and the second American Black so honored. In April 1968 while conducting one of his crusades in Memphis, Tennessee, he was assassinated.

The Upper Auburn Avenue area is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Atlanta. Originally called Wheat Street, in honor of one of Atlanta's pre-Civil War merchants, the name was changed by the City Council on April 17, 1893. It was thought that the name Auburn Avenue was more stylish. As early as the 1880's, residences along Wheat Street were Black occupied. At the turn of the century, this street and certain other blocks in the community could be classified as predominately black or white, but no precise pattern of segregation existed. Following the Race Riot of 1906 and by about 1910, this pattern changed and Auburn Avenue became the center of Atlanta's Black business and professional community. The residential stretch, part of which is included within the Historical District, began to be settled by unskilled laborers and middle class Blacks; it was not a ghetto.

In 1917 a disastrous fire north of Auburn Avenue contributed to the growing migration of Blacks to West Atlanta, where land was more available and where a Black college community had been established. The Auburn Avenue business and residential area continued as one center of Black life in Atlanta. Today it is a mixed residential, institutional and commercial area immediately east of Atlanta's central business district. The Martin Luther King, Jr., Historical District, is part of this area.

(Continued)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Data drawn primarily from National Register inventory form.  
(See continuation sheet.)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 15.4

UTM REFERENCES

A	16	743600	3737980	B	16	743600	3737860
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	16	743200	3737840	D	16	743200	3737970

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See continuation sheet.)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian (Based on work of Elizabeth Z. Macgregor and Carole A. Summers, Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources, State of Ga., and Joseph S. Mendinghall, (ABC)

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service	1/5/76
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
1100 L Street, N. W.	202/523/5464
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Washington,	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	DATE
ATTEST:	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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CONTINUATION SHEET Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

the Williams' lifetime. When Rev. Williams died in 1931, the young Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr. was made pastor of the church.

The Kings had three children, the first, Christine, the middle child, Martin Luther, Jr., and the third, Alfred Daniel (AD). Martin Luther, Jr. born in his grandparents' house at 501 Auburn Avenue, lived here the first eleven (11) years of his life. These formative years had a great impression on the young man. Martin was taught his family background and an appreciation and pride for his race. Moreover, all of his young and adolescent life was spent in very close proximity to his Auburn Avenue home. It was not until 1948 that the young nineteen year old was to leave Atlanta.

Early in life Mrs. King, a public school teacher, had noticed the academic potentials in her son and at age four (4) had enrolled him in grade school with his older sister. Martin's stay in elementary school that year was short-lived as the teacher overheard him explaining to his classmates about his fifth birthday. He was, however, enrolled again the subsequent year and advanced a grade so that he again was in the same grade as his older sister, Christine. He proceeded to Booker T. Washington High School, the first and at one time only high school for blacks in Atlanta. Here Martin was advanced two (2) years, graduating in his early teens. Martin then chose to remain in Atlanta at home to attend the alma mater of his grandfather and father, Moorhouse College. It was here that Martin met the reknowned Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president of the college. Dr. Mays had a tremendous influence on the young scholar and this friendship lasted throughout Dr. King's life. For years conflict had reigned inside the young man. Martin's father had wanted him to become a minister, but he had found the "emotionalism" of the Negro church not to his taste." It was Rev. Dr. Mays who inspired Martin to enter the ministry. While at Moorhouse, Martin was ordained and upon graduation elected to co-pastor with his father at Ebenezer.

This same year Martin entered Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. One of six (6) blacks of the one-hundred student enrollment, he excelled in his studies. He was graduated with honors, the Pearl Plafkner Prize for scholarship and a full scholarship to the university of his choice. Martin proceeded to Boston University where he was graduated in 1955 with the Ph. D. degree. It was also in Boston that he met Coretta Scott, a graduate student in voice at the New England Conservatory of Music. Shortly after they had first met, Martin had resigned that this was the lady he should like to marry. They were married on June 18, 1953 by Martin's father on her father's lawn in Heiberger, Alabama. To this union were to be born four (4) children.

Dr. King having completed the requirements for his Ph. D. accepted a position as pastor of the Dexter Ave. Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama. This seemingly

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CONTINUATION SHEET Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

minor event in the life of one industrious, bright young man was to greatly affect the course of American History and alter the consciousness of the entire world.

Mrs. Rosa Parks, tired after a hard day's work, refused to render her seat to a white man. Mrs. Parks was jailed and the black community enraged. Under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Montgomery Improvement Association was founded. After 381 days of boycott-busses in Montgomery were desegregated. However, the hardest tasks lay ahead.

From this effort Dr. King became internationally known at the early age of twenty-seven (27). In organizing the annual Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) meeting, Dr. King conceived of an umbrella organization which would provide leadership for the entire south. To this conference, held in Atlanta at Ebenezer Baptist Church, civic leaders gathered from all over the south. The fruits of this meeting was the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Dr. King was elected its first president.

The period between 1957 and 1960 were most active for Dr. King though they were not years of impressive gains for blacks. The last years of the Republican administration of Eisenhower/Nixon were open to comment and proposal, but seldom to any real action. During this period also, the MIA lost much of its fervent following. But with the opening of the decade of the 60s came a resurgence of activism on the part of the black masses. Dr. King also made a move to emphasize that an active "full scale assault... be made upon discrimination and segregation in all forms." This active assault came on February 1, 1960 at 4:45 p.m. when four (4) black students of A & T College (now State University) sat at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina and gave impetus to a surge of sit-ins all over the south. This sit-in tactic spread and soon there were stand-ins, kneel-ins, pray-ins, mass meetings and marches on every scene in segregated areas. But, the most important aspect of each was though met with the most barbaric and brutal forces of violence: the philosophy of Dr. King's non-violent movement remained at the center of black protest.

Much of the success of this early period came because of the sympathetic attitude of the newly elected Democratic President. The campaign of 1960 saw majority support of blacks for John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr. was one of the first to endorse the young senator's candidacy. This support did play some valid part in the attitude of the government towards blacks and it was Martin Luther King, Jr. who successfully became the mediator, rallying both black and white support for the civil rights movement.

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Dr. King became the symbol of the struggles of all people for the equality of man. As a result of the constant efforts of blacks in the opening years of the 1960s, and in particular through the role that he played in the organization and implementation of the March on Washington of 1963, Dr. King greatly affected the thinking of the Nation and specifically of its Congress. The Civil Rights Act of 1963 and the Voting Rights Act of 1964 can be traced directly to these activities. Dr. King at all times stood in the vanguard of the struggle. He met with dignitaries, presidents, kings and queens on the one hand, but rallied with and was a part of the masses on the other. Through all of this he maintained his philosophy of non-violence.

In 1964, he was recognized for his efforts with the Nobel Peace Prize. Numerous awards were bestowed upon him, but his dream was unchanged and his person untainted by personal glory. Because of his firm commitment to the cause of peace, Dr. King was one of the first to speak against American involvement in the Vietnam War. This outspokenness led to much criticism and brought him to the center of a much larger controversy. Suspicion, scandal, investigation and intimidation were the tools used by those in opposition to his position. But, he continued his campaign for better jobs, housing, medical care for the poor, and food for those in need.

In 1968, he planned a second March on Washington. This time the cause was not basic rights guaranteed by law, but a cause, though less concrete, ~~that was~~ and is just as essential, the right to a decent life. The Poor People's Campaign March on Washington of 1968 was seen as a massive tool to bring to the attention of the Nation the plight of the poor in America. Even more, it was a means of uniting all people, black, white, red, yellow and brown, letting them speak in unison to the conscious of the Congress and Nation. However, fate was to play its decisive role.

Memphis had been the scene of bargaining between local sanitation workers and the city government. When mediation could not resolve the conflict, garbage workers went on strike. No cause of right too small, Dr. King went to Memphis to lend his support to their cause. On April 4, 1968, a sniper's bullet put an end to such an impressive life. The dreams of Martin Luther King Jr. remain ever active through the many that his life has touched, however briefly. Moreover his wife, Coretta Scott King, continues the struggle and in his memory the Center for Social Change, located opposite his resting place and a short distance from his birth home, remains an active force for human decency and brotherly love-his lifelong goal.

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