

PH 364827

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 13 1976

DATE ENTERED NOV 21 1976

# 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  
\* Municipal College (Simmons University) Campus

AND/OR COMMON

Mary B. Talbert School; William H. Steward Hall; gymnasium

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1018 South Seventh Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Louisville

VICINITY OF

3 and 4

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Kentucky

021

Jefferson

111

## 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
- OTHER: Community Center

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Jefferson County Board of Education

STREET & NUMBER

3332 Newburg Road

CITY, TOWN

Louisville

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Jefferson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Jefferson

CITY, TOWN

Louisville

STATE

Kentucky

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE

1971

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

# 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

Located several blocks southwest of the downtown area of Louisville, the Municipal College Campus, now known as Municipal Park, is bordered by Kentucky, Zane, Seventh, and Eighth Streets. It is still a grassy square, with handsome trees dotted about.

Although the area around the campus is of mixed use, there are many important individual structures and historic, if frequently deteriorated, residences nearby. A block west are the L & N railroad yards that extend south from Union Station (listed on the National Register December 30, 1974). Directly to the north of the campus across Kentucky Street is the first municipal housing complex in Louisville, a well-maintained group of attractive brick units, still inhabited mainly by blacks (see photo 2). A block east of the campus, at 6th and Kentucky Streets, is the historic Central Colored School Building ( now Hill Adult Training Laboratory; approved at the State level on October 21, 1975). Other important local educational institutions and churches have been located nearby on 4th and 5th Streets for generations.

The older of the two major surviving buildings (the date of the frame gymnasium building, photo 1, on the southwest corner of the campus is unknown) was built in 1909 and originally served as the "Girls' Dormitory-Domestic Science Building" (now the Mary B. Talbert School, photos 1 and 2). It faces east toward 7th Street, with several low additions to the rear. Believed to have been built and perhaps designed by Louisville's prolific Samuel Plato (see 8.), the structure has several features in common with public school buildings throughout the State in this period (see, for instance, the 1908 wing of the Bath Seminary and Normal College building in Owingsville, Bath County, approved at the State level on June 15, 1976). The use of a yellowish or buff "Roman" brick on the exterior, the treatment of the brick voussoirs of the second story--graduated so as to form horizontal grooves linking each opening--and the simple classical details are all typical of the period.

The structure has three stories over a high basement. There are two bays across the front, the central two linked by the projecting wall surface, a small pediment, and a one-story wooden Tuscan Doric entrance porch above a broad flight of stone steps. The horizontals are strongly emphasized between the stories, with a stone water table over the horizontally grooved foundations; several raised bands above the first story under the stone belt course that also serves as the second-story windows; the more elaborate treatment of radiating lintels mentioned above over the second story; more raised bands above the third story, with a dentillated and modillioned cornice above. There are also raised brick panels between the third-floor windows. The ends and rear of the low-roofed block are somewhat plainer than the east facade. The two-pane sash and other millwork is very plain throughout.

(continued)

# 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 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	Black History	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES Talbert School 1908; Steward Hall 1924; Gymnasium-unknown BUILDER/ARCHITECT Samuel Plato

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### SUMMARY

Municipal College for Negroes, Simmons University, State University, and Kentucky Normal and Theological Institute--although different in name, as institutions of higher learning for blacks, these institutions have two predominant historical qualities in common. In the first place, each has been housed at various times on the grassy square below Kentucky Street between Seventh and Eight Streets near downtown Louisville. Secondly, they represent significant reminders of the course of black higher education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. When either de jure or de facto barriers limited opportunities for the educational advancement of blacks, the collective effort of these schools provided a considerable proportion of such opportunities for blacks in Kentucky from Reconstruction to the legal repeal of school segregation in the 1950s. Although the oldest of the major buildings which have occupied the site is gone, the two that remain--designed by the State's best known black architect-builder, Samuel Plato--still evoke the institutions' humane origin and character. (For information on other institutions offering education to blacks in Kentucky in this period, see the National Register Nomination Forms on Lincoln Hall, Berea College, Madison County, designated a National Historic Landmark on December 2, 1974; Jackson Hall, Kentucky State University, Frankfort, Franklin County, listed on the National Register on April 11, 1973; and the Whitney Young Birthplace, southwest of Simpsonville on U.S. 60, Shelby County, listed on October 18, 1972.)

### HISTORY

The roots of this cultural center go back to a series of conventions held by the Commonwealth's black Baptists beginning in 1869, just four years after the end of the Civil War. In August of that year, a group met in Lexington to decide, among other affairs, the most practical means of training blacks for the ministry. At that meeting the Reverend Doctor Pratt "presented some valuable suggestions" concerning this matter and assured the General Association of Colored Baptists in Kentucky "that there are many friends to the cause in Kentucky." The minutes of this first general meeting reveal that Louisville almost did not become the site of the hoped-for institute:

After a lively discussion as to the proper locality to establish for the time being a proposed Literary and Theological School, Frankfort or Louisville, between several of the Messengers, finally a vote was taken resulting in 25

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Federal Writers Project. Centennial History of the University of Louisville. Works Progress Administration, 1939.

"Friends Helped Him Succeed Negro Contractor Here Declares." The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, July 28, 1941.

(continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

NW			NE				
D A	1,6	6,0,7,9,7,0	4,2,3,2,9,6,0	AB	1,6	6,0,8,1,1,0	4,2,3,2,9,5,0
ZONE EASTING			NORTHING				
SE B	1,6	6,0,8,1,0,0	4,2,3,2,8,3,0	CD	1,6	6,0,7,9,5,0	4,2,3,2,8,5,0
ZONE EASTING			NORTHING				

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

City District 8, Block 29-G. Lott 55. Jefferson County Deed Book 2775, p. 419. Beginning at a point on the southwest corner of W. Kentucky and S. Seventh Streets and extending south for 381' parallel to Seventh Street, thence extending west 468' parallel to Zane Street, thence extending north parallel to Eighth Street 375', thence extending east 424' parallel to W. Kentucky to the beginning point.

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

Douglas Stern

CPJ

ORGANIZATION

Louisville Landmarks Commission

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Louisville

STATE

Kentucky

# 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Charles W. Melton*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

7/22/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ACTING DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*

DATE

11/21/96

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11.16.26

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Municipal College  
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The other major building, built by Plato in 1924 as the boy's dormitory (now Steward Hall) extends east-west at the center of the east side of the campus beside 7th Street (photos 1 and 3). Although later and more complex than Talbert School, it is similar in overall proportions, three stories over raised basement, low hipped roof, and emphasis on the horizontals. It is less classical in detail, however, suggesting somewhat belated reference to the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts Movement. The yellow brick surface is varied by tile inserts. The eaves are very wide and overhanging, without classical cornices or brackets. Instead of a porch, the main entrance on the north side is just a flight of steps with plain stone parapets, leading to an arched entrance with balcony above. Rather than a pediment, there is a recessed parapet splitting the eaves at the roof-level, with the letter "S" inset in the brickwork. The end blocks project slightly. Their two double bays are widely spaced, while the nine bays between (including the triple windows over the entrance) are spaced very closely. The major visual interest of the facade is formed by the use of round-arched windows on the main story; these have glass-filled arches in the end blocks, ornamented brick lunettes on the main block.

Altogether, both main buildings are substantial and functional in character, with just enough variations in fenestration and detail to differentiate them effectively.

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Municipal College  
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

for Louisville and 24 Frankfort. Louisville gaining by a majority of one, after which on motion, Louisville was unanimously considered as the place.

With no specific spot in mind, the delegates then began to organize a fund-raising effort designed to supply them with ready capital when a parcel was found.

The Association's resolve, buoyed by both the spirit of reconciliation of the post-Civil War period and the promise sensed during that first meeting, remained steady throughout the next decade. Within that span of time efforts were concentrated almost entirely on the painstaking collection of money from nearly every black congregation in the Commonwealth. Though somewhat meager--the committee assigned to the task could only hand over \$230,60 after five years--the fund was growing and the commitment was unwavering. By 1875 the Association was considering the disposition of land held in Frankfort known as the "Hill Property," (conceivably the present site of Kentucky State University, long a black institution) so that proceeds from the sale might go toward developing a Louisville facility. This was accomplished by 1878 through the subdivision and auction of the Hill parcels. The minutes of that year's convention also reveal for the first time the Association's interest "in purchase of the Zane property at Louisville." (One of the square's bordering streets is named Zane, probably for Hampton Zane, a local entrepreneur and owner of considerable real estate in the nearby area known as Limerick in the 1870's.) Evidently the purchase was accomplished in 1879, for the minutes of the year report:

The Theological Seminary is a very handsome piece of property, lying high and dry. It is located on the south side of Kentucky Street, between Seventh and Eight. The lot is square back to Zane Street. The lot is shaded and ornamented with a very fine selection of fruit and shade trees; there are also places prepared for innocent amusement, and there are very pretty tanbark walks winding their way over the grounds in every direction.

The purchase price, although accumulated over more than ten difficult years, secured a decided bargain for the Colored Baptists. Along with the pretty winding walks, the Association inherited "a fine supply of water" and ready accommodations for their institute for \$1857.00. As the minutes put it "There is a very large and handsome brick house, in good condition standing in the center of the lot. There are two good rooms and a kitchen attached to the south end of the building." The house and grounds

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Municipal College

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

had been, according to the city's 1876 Atlas, the property of John S. Wilson and were flanked on the east and west by subdivided lots with a few frame buildings on them. With repairs to the building totaling \$245.05, the institute was ready to open. Characteristic of many Victorian institutions, a dual use was envisioned for the facility. In addition to serving its prime purpose of providing higher education opportunities for Negroes, it was also stated that "The colored people having no park in Louisville, they concluded that it could be used to advantage for that purpose."

Officially opened on May 25, 1879, the Normal and Theological Institute grew steadily over the next half-century graduating a class every year and maintaining a national base of support. Among its contributors during this early period were John D. Rockefeller, the American Home Baptist Mission Society, and the General Association of Baptists. The first president, Elmah P. Marrs (1840-1910), stayed for only one year (1879-1880). He left to organize the Beargrass Baptist Church in Guetige, Kentucky, and was succeeded by William J. Simmons (1849-1890).

Simmons, for whom the school would later be renamed, led an active and productive life. After serving with the 41st Colored Troops in the Civil War, he received a degree from Madison University in New York and a graduate degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C. As one of the staunchest supporters of the Baptist cause, he called for the organization of the Baptist Women's Educational Convention in 1883, was elected editor of the American Baptist Press, organized and was elected first president of the American National Baptist Convention in 1886, and organized the Eckstein-Norton Institute at Cane Spring, Kentucky. He served as president of the Louisville institution from 1880 to 1890 until just before his death and it was during his tenure of office that the original charter was amended to give it university status. In 1884, the building and grounds became known as State University.

Dr. Simmons' successor was the Reverend J. H. Garnet, whose tenure lasted for four years (1890-1894). Dr. Charles Lee Purce (1856-1905) served as president during the next period of development (1894-1905). Purce is said to have had the distinction of being the first black minister to be licensed in South Carolina. Upon his death the office was filled by the Chairman of the Trustees, William H. Steward, for a period of approximately one year (1905-1906). Steward (1847-1934) served the Institute and University in one capacity or another for over fifty years and was celebrated by black historian and writer Henry Clay Weeden as "the first colored man sworn in on the letter carrier's force." Dr. James Robert Lincoln Diggs (1867-1923) served as the next

(continued)

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Municipal College

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

president (1906-1908) and earned a reputation according to Simmons University Professor George A. Hampton as "a most scholarly Christian gentleman."

It was during the next two presidencies that the site witnesses its greatest period of growth. Thomas Amiger (b. 1870) served during the period 1908-1918. Before his arrival the location was still considered rather idyllic as referred to in the Institute's Catalogue for 1881-82: "While the institution is sufficiently retired from the noise and din of the city to make it quiet and country-like, it is still convenient to churches." But by February 1909, when the "Girls' Dormitory--Domestic Science Building" (now the Mary B. Talbert School) was dedicated, it was clear that the place had acquired a more urbane atmosphere. Costing \$20,000, the new facility was built largely through the efforts of Mrs. Mayme E. Steward, President of the Baptist Women's Educational Convention. After Amiger's departure the beneficial tenure of Dr. Charles H. Parrish, Sr., occurred (1918-1931).

Parrish (1859-1931) was born near Lexington, Kentucky, as a slave. He was honored as the first valedictorian of State University in 1886 and retained a prominent role in the affairs of the school for the rest of his life as professor and president. He also served as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church from 1885 to 1931. At his suggestion, State University was renamed in honor of the past president. His administration was distinguished by its considerable involvement in local, national, and international denominational affairs, and the completion of another building.

The erection in 1924 of the "Dormitory for Boys" (now named Steward Hall in honor of the former leader of the university) was an event of great importance. It marked the institution's climax as a cultural and educational center of attention. Enrollment stood at its peak. Parrish's administration was the most respected since Simmons' departure. The new building was erected midway through the only full decade of prosperity in the period between World War I and II (1919-1929). The circumstances of the building's design and erection were also of great importance. It was the product of the black architect and contractor Samuel Plato, a graduate of Simmons, who had taken a correspondence course in architecture and carpentry from the International Correspondence School while a student at Simmons. He was apparently one of the most successful local builders of the middle period of the twentieth century. In 1941 the Courier-Journal declared that Plato was "one of the few

(continued)



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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 5

Negroes in the United States to be awarded a defense housing contract and the only Negro contractor to receive a post office contract." Before Pearl Harbor, he had erected thirty-nine post offices throughout the country. Active in Louisville's urban building projects since 1919, Plato was credited with the banks at Sixth and Walnut Streets (now gone), the Virginia Avenue School, the Green Street Baptist Church, the Lampton Street Baptist Church, and the A.M.E. Zion Church at 13th and Broadway. The new dormitory was a noteworthy addition to his other accomplishments because its cost, \$82,760, was rather high even in those inflationary times. It was the last structure built for Simmons University on the site.

By 1930 the school's golden age had ended. Deep in financial arrears, the university sold its holdings to the University of Louisville. Simmons purchased its present site at 18th and Dumesnil Streets in 1935. The Kentucky Street properties then became the home of the University of Louisville's Municipal College for Negroes. The success of the University of Louisville's first million-dollar bond issue and its admitted obligation to the black community for its passage helped to convince the University of Louisville of the demand for continuation of the program for blacks. Repeal of the notorious Day Law in 1951 ended the University of Louisville's **required** separation of the schools by race.

For almost seventy-five years, from 1879 to <sup>9</sup>1951, the site of the old Simmons University admirably served the purpose of higher education for blacks in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. As such, it is inextricably linked to the heritage and development of the black people in Kentucky. Since that time, this site, under the ownership of the local school board, has afforded an essential community focus as a place for neighborhood meetings, schooling, and recreation.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED	
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Municipal College

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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\_\_\_\_\_. Minutes of the Fifth Annual Session of the General Association of Colored Baptists in Kentucky. Louisville: Sherril, Wilson and Company, 1837.

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