

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Broomfield Rowhouse
Other names/site number DO09:0223-002

2. Location

Street & number 2502-2504 Lake Street Not for publication
City or town Omaha Vicinity
State Nebraska Code NE County Douglas Code 055 Zip code 68111

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Michael J. Beall
Signature of certifying official
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

Jan. 25, 2007
Date

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

4. National Park Service Certification

- I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 - entered in the National Register.
 - see continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 - see continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall 3.21.07

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Broomfield Rowhouse

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Brick

Walls Brick

Roof _____

Other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
- E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1913

Significant Dates

1913

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Clarence Wesley Wigington

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- Previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property Less than one acre

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	253064	4574013	3.			
2.				4.			
				[]	See continuation sheet		

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jill Dolberg and Grant Landreth
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date December 12, 2006
street & number 1420 P Street/Box 82554 telephone (402) 471-4773, 471-4788
city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68501-2554

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Ethel Mitchell
street & number 711 Harry S Truman Drive #207 telephone (301) 535-0381
city or town Upper Marlboro state MD zip code 20774

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Broomfield Rowhouse is located in North Omaha, long the heart of the African-American community in Omaha, Nebraska. It is located one block west of the nearby commercial core of North Omaha, centered on the intersection of 24th and Lake Streets. Lake Street was a streetcar line as early as 1897, and ran the length of the street from 20th Street to 30th Street.

This rowhouse is a rectangular shaped, two-story, brick structure with a flat roof. Built in a commercial form, Craftsman details have been applied to the building. A decorative cornice was applied to the parapet on the front of the building, with decorative brackets located underneath.

The building has a brick and Farrenwall foundation and brick veneer walls. The façade contains two central entrances symmetrically placed on a shared front porch. The one story partial width porch has Craftsman details with square piers, a low-pitched roof, and is divided by a substantial wall partition. Located on a corner, the most elaborately detailed windows are found on the elevations facing the cross streets, with more modest detail found on the less visible sides. Originally one of a pair of identical buildings, the modest windows of the west elevation would have been far less visible were its partner, the Crutchfield, still standing. Several of the wood windows have been replaced with aluminum, while others retain their Craftsman double-hung, three over one configuration. The windows have cast concrete sills and arched brick lintels, the larger examples having substantial keystones. Additionally, a colonnade of projecting decorative brick is found on the front of the building over the porch roof, and shelters two small windows.

The living spaces comprise half of each side of the building, each containing living rooms, kitchens and dining rooms on the first floor, and bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs. Upon entering either side, one enters a modest foyer containing a bench seat with storage and integrated vent directing heat from the boiler in the basement. The original wood stairs have Craftsman squared newel posts and balusters. The main elaboration throughout the building is the broad door and window trim that is typical of a residential Craftsman building.

A cornerstone lists the building's owner, architect and contractor.

J. H. Broomfield, Owner

C. W. Wigington, Architect

C. M. Jespersen, Contractor

The building is currently undergoing a renovation. Although photographs currently show the building with plywood over windows and doors, the original doors and glass are extant and will be returned to their original places and condition.

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The Broomfield Rowhouse is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria B and C. It is located at the intersection of 25th and Lake Streets in North Omaha. Since approximately 1920, North Omaha, particularly the area around 24th and Lake Streets, has been the center of the African-American community in Omaha.¹

Jack H. Broomfield

John H (Jack) Broomfield came to Omaha in 1887. Prior to coming to Omaha, Broomfield had been a Pullman porter until a train wreck resulted in the loss of his leg.² He worked in various jobs and later owned a saloon at 111 South 14th Street.³

Tom Dennison was Omaha's "boss" from 1900 to 1933. Although never elected to an office, Dennison controlled politics in the city of Omaha to further his purposes. He backed "Cowboy" Jim Dahlman, mayor of Omaha for almost 25 years, who was willing to support Dennison's interests. In an effort to maintain his authority, he made contacts within different immigrant groups and had lieutenants which acted as emissaries in each group. These lieutenants delivered the votes of their community at election time, and helped ensure that the interests of their community were represented as well. The secret of Dennison's success was in consistently selecting lieutenants who could deliver the votes he needed.

In 1901, Dennison's lieutenant to the African-American community ran afoul of his patron. Vic Walker had run the notorious Midway Saloon in the third ward and worked on Dennison's behalf.⁴ After they quarreled, Jack Broomfield was given the opportunity to take his place, both as lieutenant and as operator of the Midway Saloon, located at 1124 Capitol Avenue. Broomfield and his partner William (Billy) Crutchfield, ran the Midway until 1914, when Crutchfield opened his own establishment in the third ward. The Midway was known nationwide, catering mostly to African-Americans. They served alcohol and offered various games of chance, including faro, roulette, dice and cards. They put up a sign that read, "If you have a family that needs your money, don't gamble here."⁵ Broomfield ran the Midway until 1917, when Nebraska's prohibition of alcohol forced him to close his doors. By all accounts, he retired a wealthy man.

Even after the closing of the Midway, Broomfield continued to work for Dennison. Upon his death, Boss Tom Dennison said Jack Broomfield was "one of the old school of political workers and he could always be depended upon to take care of the colored vote and he never failed."⁶ Dennison was a pallbearer at Broomfield's funeral, and stated Jack "was true blue and always loyal."⁷

Easter Sunday Tornado in Omaha

On March 23, 1913, which was Easter Sunday, at 6:00 p.m. in the evening, Omaha was devastated by a tornado which ripped its way from southwest Omaha through four and a half miles of the city, inflicting its greatest damage in the area around 24th and Lake. One hundred and forty people were killed, and another 350 hurt. The tornado ruined 1,800 houses and left 2,500 people homeless.⁸ The Diamond Theater at 2410 Lake was destroyed, as was the Idlewild Pool Hall at 24th and Grant, resulting in the combined loss of life of almost thirty. Photographs of the area the day after the tornado show the extent of the devastation. In the response to this event, over five thousand men volunteered for two days to clean up Omaha, and try to erase any sign of the wreckage.⁹ Within a month of the tornado, houses that had been damaged were

¹ Omaha City Planning Department, *Patterns on the Landscape*, (1984); 3.

² Menard, Orville D., *Political Bossism in Mid-America: Tom Dennison's Omaha, 1900-193*, (Ladham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1989), 172.

³ *Patterns*, 43.

⁴ *Patterns*, 43.

⁵ *Political Bossism*, 172.

⁶ *Political Bossism*, 173.

⁷ *Political Bossism*, 173.

⁸ *Patterns*, 32.

⁹ *Omaha Bee*, "Wrecked in a Night, Rebuilt in a Day," 1913.

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largely reconstructed, their owners proud to rebuild and demonstrate their tenacity. Near the site of the greatest devastation from the storm, 25th and Lake, the Broomfield and Crutchfield Rowhouses were built later that same year.

Clarence Wesley Wigington

Clarence Wesley Wigington was born April 21, 1883 in Lawrence, Kansas. His parents moved the family to Omaha when Clarence was five months old. Although Wigington did not begin school until the age of ten, he compressed eight years of class work into five, and attended an evening art school from 1900 to 1904. Half of his tuition for art school was paid for by two of his elementary school teachers, who saw in him great artistic promise. He had won three first-place certificates at the 1899 Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha at the age of fifteen.¹⁰

Wigington's professional life began in the office of Omaha's nationally noted architect, Thomas R. Kimball, in 1902. There he learned the skills of a draftsman. After six years of working for Kimball, Wigington resigned to open his own office. In the 1914 Omaha City Directory, Wigington was listed as offering "Complete Blue Prints and Specifications for all Classes of Buildings, Bungalows and Residences a Specialty."¹¹ In a list of twenty-eight architects listed in the directory, he is the only one noted as African-American.

African American architects and draftsmen during Wigington's early career were very rare indeed. Wigington was one of only fifty-nine black architects, artists, and draftsmen who were listed in the federal census of 1910.¹² In fact, an architectural education at the university level was unheard of in America, regardless of race, until the founding of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's School of Architecture in 1868. Twenty-one years after its founding, twenty-four years after the American Civil War and passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, Robert R. Taylor entered MIT. Taylor "...is considered the country's first African-American graduate of a major architecture program."¹³ Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute, recruited Taylor to be the head of the Institute's Department of Mechanical Industries about ten years after its founding in 1881. Other than Tuskegee, African-American architects and draftsmen were generally not educated through formal university programs. Paul R. Williams and Wigington are the only prominent architects without such education.

Wigington's work in Omaha was mostly limited to single and multi-family houses, but also included the Zion Baptist Church and a remodel of St. John's A. M. E. Church, the first black church established in Nebraska. Of his first private commission, the *Enterprise* stated that the Bailey House, a cross-gabled two story house, was the first "that was ever built in Omaha from the plans of a colored architect and it is the opinion of every person that has seen it that his efforts have been very successful."¹⁴ Wigington's most prolific work in Omaha was done between 1912 and 1914, during which period he designed nine houses for some of the leaders of the African-American community. Among these commissions, he designed a bungalow for Dr. Leonard E. Britt, one of the organizers of the Omaha chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and a home for G. Wade Obee, an African-American undertaker at 2518 Lake Street.¹⁵ It was also during this period that the Broomfield and Crutchfield Rowhouses were constructed.

In 1914, Clarence W. Wigington may have felt that his practice was stagnating. Although he had seen a few relatively busy years in terms of commissions, he may have sensed that his future as an African-American architect in Omaha would always be difficult, despite his admirable work record and excellent professional contacts. He, along with a

¹⁰ *Cap Wigington*, 6.

¹¹ Omaha City Directory, 1914.

¹² *Cap Wigington*, viii

¹³ *Cap Wigington*, viii

¹⁴ *Patterns*, 40.

¹⁵ *Cap Wigington*, 14.

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multitude of other African-Americans, foresaw an opportunity for better employment and housing in Northern industrial cities.¹⁶ In November or December of 1914, Wigington packed up his family and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota.

St. Paul had recently adopted a commission form of city government, emphasizing efficiency and giving the taxpayers value for their tax dollars. Heir to a city with an aging infrastructure and extraordinary growth, a new city office was formed under the commission of Parks, Playgrounds, and Public Buildings, the Office of City Architect. Hiring was done on merit, based upon the scores of a civil service exam. Wigington became aware of a position in the City Architect's Office when his wife read an ad in the St. Paul newspaper. He scored the highest among his seven other peers on the exam with a score of 84.78.¹⁷ Still Wigington was not hired outright; he was given a temporary appointment as a draftsman, and his position became permanent August 23, 1915, three months later. Wigington became the country's first African American municipal architect.¹⁸

As a staff member for the City Architect's Office, Wigington and his colleagues were expected to draw all the plans for the city's public buildings, including schools, pavilions, libraries, and so on. The National Register of Historic Places has recognized Clarence Wigington's architectural prowess three times; the subjects of each nomination was constructed in St. Paul. These buildings include the Highland Park Tower (1928), the Harriet Island Pavilion (1941, later renamed Wigington Pavilion), and the Holman Field Administration Building (1941).¹⁹ In addition to his design of major public buildings, Wigington also had the opportunity to design fanciful ice palaces for the St. Paul Winter Carnival. In 1936, heavily reliant on WPA funds, the city of St. Paul celebrated winter with the construction of Wigington's first ice palace, described as "half Norman castle keep, half Art Moderne structure" which was located near the State Capitol.²⁰ Intermittently over the next decade, dependent on funding and cold weather, Wigington designed ice fortresses for various parks around St. Paul. Wigington's architectural merit was officially recognized in 1942 with a promotion created specifically for him, "architectural designer."²¹ Sadly, lack of funding during World War II would ensure that he never again got to design a major public building.

Architecture

In 1989, the Omaha City Planning Department undertook a study of multiple dwellings in Omaha, defined as rowhouses, double houses, duplexes, flats, or apartments. As a result of this study, 286 multiple dwellings were either listed or found to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Broomfield rowhouse was one of forty-two two-unit rowhouses in Omaha considered eligible for listing in the National Register. A rowhouse differs from a duplex or a double house in that it is more commercial in appearance, having a flat roof, and is simple enough in design that additional rowhouses could be added to the building at a later date.²² A duplex or a double house appear more like a house with two entrances, with a finished appearance and a completed hipped or pyramidal roofline that would make an addition more difficult. In this case, the Broomfield's flat roofline would not prevent an addition to the building that would add rental space, however, the lot size would have. The ornamentation on the main elevations facing streets is consistent with the trend of elaborating only that which could readily be seen, with far more simple window elaborations on the elevation that faced the Crutchfield, which is no longer extant.

Although the Broomfield and the Crutchfield rowhouses were constructed in 1913, Wigington created the drawings for their designs four years earlier as part of a competition for *Good Housekeeping* magazine. The design won first prize for the best two-family dwelling.²³ David Vassar Taylor described the rowhouses as follows:

¹⁶ *Cap Wigington*, 3.

¹⁷ *Cap Wigington*, 20.

¹⁸ *Cap Wigington*, 20.

¹⁹ National Park Service Website, viewed December 11, 2006.

²⁰ *Cap Wigington*, 43.

²¹ *Cap Wigington*, 43.

²² Multiple Dwelling Study, 1989, 2.

²³ *Cap Wigington*, 9.

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"At first glance simple rectangles in a Craftsman vein, they pierce the skyline with a succession of minutely scaled triangles and rectangles – a sort of Gothicism shorn of religious aspirations. Their one bit of surface contouring is a framing element setting off the pair of windows above the entry. The device is classical in detail – four pilasters rise from a broad pedestal – but pure Wigington in the eccentricity of its execution. His fondness for strong, central elaborations, regardless of their function, would be a hallmark of his designs for the City of St. Paul. One can always sense him looking for that one element of the building to put on center stage and wrap with scenic effects, whatever the dictates of stylistic propriety."²⁴

It is possible to surmise some of Thomas R. Kimball's influence on Clarence Wigington's design of the Broomfield rowhouse. During the time in which Wigington was a junior draftsman in Kimball's architectural firm, Kimball designed two buildings that subsequently have been designated as Omaha Landmarks: the Mary Rogers Kimball house, 1906, and the Webster Telephone Exchange, 1907. One could surmise that the "strong, central elaboration, regardless of function" could have been an elaboration he learned from Kimball, shown as executed on the Mary Rogers Kimball House.



Kimball House and detail, Broomfield Rowhouse detail

Furthermore, the decorative "succession of minutely scaled triangles and rectangles" along the cornice seem to be a muted version of an element of the 1907 Webster Telephone Exchange, shown below.



Webster Telephone Exchange building and detail, Broomfield rowhouse detail.

The Broomfield Rowhouse is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as the work of an early African-American master of architecture, Clarence (Cap) Wigington. He learned his skills from a prominent architect in Omaha, T. R. Kimball, but relentlessly pursued further skills in a career that spanned a period of great change in American history, from 1902 to 1963. The Broomfield Rowhouse demonstrates Wigington's skill as an architect and helps to illustrate the development of his architectural skills and techniques.

²⁴ Cap Wigington, 75.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Patrick Place, Lot 6, Block 3, LTS 5 & 90 X 110, Omaha, Nebraska.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the Broomfield Rowhouse is comprised of the land that is historically associated with the property.