

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Alabama</b>
COUNTY: <b>Montgomery</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Dexter Avenue Baptist Church**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**454 Dexter Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Montgomery**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE:  
**Alabama**

CODE

COUNTY:  
**Montgomery**

CODE

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Dexter Avenue Baptist Church Incorporated**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**454 Dexter Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Montgomery**

STATE:  
**Alabama**

CODE

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Montgomery Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**142 Washington Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Montgomery**

STATE:  
**Alabama**

CODE

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **Alabama**

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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The church was constructed during the nineteenth century, (1878) a period in history when architectural edifices were marked by the battle of European styles. i.e. Classic, Gothic, and Renaissance. Eclecticism, as the battle of styles came to be called, characterizes the style of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

The simple rectangular plan with the geometrically symmetrical openings, including doors and windows, bell tower and massive steps is indicative of the late English Renaissance. Contrary to the basic building form, the low gable roof with its decorative triangular pediment hung from the front edge of the roof line and extending across the front face of the building to its extremities is Classic in design. The use of keystones above the windows is another reflection of Classicism. Large narrow window openings, pointed arches and inlaid glass are typical Gothic characteristics.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)<br><u>Afro-American History</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |   | _____   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Dr. Martin Luther King is most easily remembered for his leadership of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and later, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The Dexter Avenue Baptist Church was closely involved with Dr. King's activities and those of the MIA.

Dr. King came to the capital city of Alabama in 1954. He had been "called" to the pastorate of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. The Dexter Congregation numbered about 600 members and it included most of the black intellectuals of the community--especially those associated with Alabama State College.

In December of 1955, Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger and move to the back of one of the Montgomery city buses. She was summarily arrested. The anger of the black community and their determination "not to let this pass" was so strong that an organization was formed to fight bus segregation. Black community leaders and hundreds of others crowded into the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church for an important meeting. E.D. Nixon, a labor leader, was most active in calling together the city's black civic leaders and initiating the subsequent bus boycott. Reverend Ralph David Abernathy named the organization the Montgomery Improvement Association and nominated Dr. King as its president.

As president of the MIA, Dr. King was responsible for organizing the black community in support of the boycott. He held mass meetings, many of them in the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, to encourage blacks to resist riding the buses and arranged voluntary motor pools that almost immediately became more efficient than the bus system of the city. Whites were outraged at this evidence of a unified black power force and reacted violently against it. The Montgomery Mayor and his subordinates publicly joined the White Citizens Council. Dr. King's home was bombed. Many black boycotters lost their jobs in reprisal for their stand.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

King, Martin Luther, Jr. Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story. New York: 1958.  
 Lewis, David L. King: A Critical Biography. New York: 1970.  
 Lincoln, C. Eric, ed. Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Profile. New York: 1970.  
 Masuoka, Jitsuichi and Preston Valien, eds. Race Relations: Problems and Theory. Chapel Hill: 1961.  
 Reddick, Lawrence D. Jr. Crusader Without Violence: A Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. New York: 1959.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA (Partial Listing)**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	0	'	"
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"	32	22	17
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"	86	18	24
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Marcia M. Greenlee, Historical Projects Director**  
 ORGANIZATION: **The Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation** DATE: July 1973  
 STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1420 N Street, N.W. Suite 101**  
 CITY OR TOWN: **Washington, D.C.** STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

**#8. SIGNIFICANCE**

Finally the frustrated local authorities found an old city ordinance of the 1920s that prohibited the boycotting of a business that resulted in diminishing or destroying that business' income. Despite Dr. King's arrest and continued harassment by whites, blacks continued their boycott for 381 days. The boycott ended December 21, 1956 with a Supreme Court decision that held bus segregation illegal.

It has often been said that Dr. King's success as a black leader in the south was the result of his ability to fuse with mass movements and direct confrontation of unjust authority, the link which had sustained the black man since slavery--the black church. Dexter Avenue Baptist Church provided one such link.