

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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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
John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson Residence

AND/OR COMMON
John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson Residence

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
5224 Tilden Street

CITY, TOWN
Brooklyn

STATE
New York

VICINITY OF
CODE
36

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
16th
COUNTY
Kings
CODE
047

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input 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
Christopher and Elenore Palen (212) HY8-0223

STREET & NUMBER
5224 Tilden Street

CITY, TOWN
Brooklyn

VICINITY OF

STATE
New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Registry of Deeds (212) 649-4110

STREET & NUMBER
Municipal Building

CITY, TOWN

Brooklyn

STATE
New York 11201

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
None Known

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

- EXCELLENT
- DETERIORATED
- GOOD
- RUINS
- FAIR
- UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

- UNALTERED
- ALTERED

CHECK ONE

- ORIGINAL SITE
- MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson Residence at 5224 Tilden Avenue is a two-family, semi-detached tapestry brick dwelling. The structure was constructed between 1912 and 1916. It is an English Medieval building with Wenham hall type roof line and has colonial type double hung windows.

A terrace hangs over the front entrance on the second floor with a 2 feet 6 inches by 6 feet 8 inches door situated from the living room to the terrace over the first floor front entrance with canvas awnings. A patio sits on the first floor side entrance and is 20 feet by 30 feet in dimension. The structure has three entrances allowing entrance into the second story level by the front entrance only. A rod iron fence painted white surrounds the front and 153rd Street sides of the house. The interior consists of five rooms with corrugated plaster walls.

The building has been only slightly altered by the removal of two of the four concrete circular planters which sit on the left and right front step stairwell.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)

John Roosevelt

Sports
Afro-American History

SPECIFIC DATES	"Jackie" Robinson (1919-1972) Residency (1947-1950)	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Not Known
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The years 1945-1947 were milestones in the history of Afro-American participation in American sports. John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson was afforded the opportunity to be the man instrumental in "breaking through the color barrier" in Major League Baseball when the Brooklyn Dodgers signed him to their minor league team, the Montreal Royals in 1945, and then to the major league Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. It was not a question of the athletic skills of Afro-Americans, but that prior to 1945 the talents of blacks in American sports had been hidden or ignored. With the careful guidance and determined path set by Branch Rickey, president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Jackie Robinson became the "first Negro ever to play organized baseball in modern times."

BIOGRAPHY

John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson was born on a plantation near Cairo, Georgia on January 31, 1919. He was the youngest of Jerry and Mallie Robinson's five children. In May of 1920, after the Robinson's separated, Mrs. Robinson took her five children (Edgar, Frank, Matthew, Willa Mae and Jackie) and moved to Pasadena, California.

Jackie Robinson attended John Muir Technical High School and was a four-sports star in baseball, basketball, football and track. He graduated in 1937 and entered Pasadena Junior College. That same year, he set a new mark of 25 feet and 6-1/2 inches in the broad jump. Robinson continued to exhibit his versatility by receiving "letters" in four sports as he had done in high school. He was voted the most valuable junior college player in Southern California.

When Jackie Robinson entered the University of California at Los Angeles in 1939, he was the most publicized athlete in California and attracted national attention. It was during this period at UCLA that Robinson met Rachel Isum and they were later married on February 10, 1946.

During the 1939-1940 college football season Robinson led the nation in an average-per-yards rushing (12.2 for 519 yards); and with All-American Kenny Washington, UCLA had the only major college football team in the nation with two, black backfield stars. By 1940 Jackie Robinson ranked second in the Pacific Coast Conference in total offense with 875 yards (he had 440 rushing and 435 passing), however, he left UCLA in 1941 without graduating.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chalk, Ocania. Black College Sport. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975.

New York Times. "Sports of the Times." April 15, 1947.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1 | 8 | | 5 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 0 | | 4 | 5 | 1 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 |

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

B

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

C

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

D

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson residence is located on the corner of Tilden Street and 153rd Street. The house is on the northwest corner and is attached on the east side. The boundary of the property is its wall on the east side, the curb of Tilden Street on the south, 153rd Street on the west and in the rear the property line of the lot.

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

Lynne Gomez Graves, Historical Projects Director

ORGANIZATION

Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation

DATE

3 February 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1420 N Street, N.W., Suite 103

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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John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson

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Robinson's first job after leaving college was as an assistant athletic director in Northern California, under the National Youth Administration (NYA), but looming war clouds in 1941 closed the NYA camp. He then decided to utilize his athletic abilities by playing professional football. Since blacks were barred from the National Football League in 1941 Jackie Robinson went on a 12 game tour with the Los Angeles Bulldogs and later joined the Honolulu Bears, two minor league football teams.

In 1942 Jackie Robinson enlisted in the United States Army and was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. By 1943 he had earned his second lieutenant bars after completing Officer Candidate School. It was during his military service that Robinson received his first lessons "about the fate of a black man," in what he termed, "a Jim Crow Army." He was made morale officer of his battalion and immediately began a campaign for better conditions for the men in his unit. He supported and arranged for integrated seating facilities within the post exchange and also opened lines of communication between enlisted personnel and higher ranking officials. With time and patience, Robinson learned that "when people in authority take a stand, good can come out of it."² This was a lesson which Robinson would find applicable in his later experiences.

Robinson met his first major conflict with racial discrimination by facing an unjust court-martial following an incident on a public bus when he refused to take a seat in the rear of the vehicle. Robinson contested the accusation that his conduct was unbecoming an officer in the United States Army. He was acquitted of all charges and given an honorable military discharge only after he had by-passed all standard procedures of going through the proper channels. Robinson had sent a letter stating his case directly to The Adjutant General's office in Washington, D.C.

After his release from military service, Robinson secured a job as athletic coach at a small college in Texas and later played professional baseball with the Kansas City Monarchs, an all-black baseball team, in 1945. Prior to 1945, Afro-American participation in professional major league baseball (without passing) was rare with the exception of two brothers, Moses Fleetwood Walker and Welday Wilberforce Walker (c. 1884 with the Toledo Mudhens).

In 1945, Branch Rickey, president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, decided it was time that the major leagues of baseball be opened to include blacks. He quietly directed two of his staff to scout for a black baseball player with a college background, sound temperament and good

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skills for what was later described as "Rickey's noble experiment."³ On August 29, 1945, Branch Rickey sent for Jackie Robinson to explain what would be the most difficult challenge of their lives. The announcement was made publically on October 23, 1945, that the Brooklyn Dodgers had purchased the contract of Jack R. Robinson from the Kansas City Monarchs and that he was assigned to play with the minor league Montreal Royals in 1946.

During this time the news media exhibited skepticism toward this "ebony-skinned attraction." The 1946 opening game of the International League's season in Jersey City, New Jersey provided Robinson with the opportunity to demonstrate his ability and he delivered his first home run in organized baseball. Robinson proved to be a major contributor in three victorious games for the Montreal Royals. A summation of that first day was best explained by Joe Bostic of the New York Amsterdam News:

The most significant sports story of the century was written into the record books today as baseball took up the cudgel for democracy and an unassuming but superlative Negro boy ascended the heights of excellence to prove the rightness of the experiment. And produced it in the only correct crucible for such an experiment--the crucible of white-hot competition.⁴

It was in Baltimore that Jackie Robinson experienced his first conflict with racism in baseball, however, his talent as a player was not tarnished. Jim Coleman wrote his story for the Toronto's Globe and Mail:

With all due respect to the boys in the back room (I just saw a baseball player), who is too good for the International League ... when he first appeared rival players and southern scribes predicted that he wouldn't last through one complete trip around the league. Well, he has fooled them, and it looks as if his next step is into a big league uniform.⁵

Near the end of that season, a sports columnist for the Newark Evening Telegram wrote:

... Ted Williams, Bob Feller, Dixie Walker and Hall Newhouser might be named players of the year, but "the greatest performance being put on anywhere in sport ... is being supplied by ... Jackie Robinson of Montreal who is playing great baseball under pressures that would have crushed a less courageous man."⁶

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This was just the beginning for John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson. The nine years ahead were to be more trying and challenging. In 1947 the general press was beginning to re-evaluate its previous view concerning Robinson when the Brooklyn Dodgers purchased his contract from the Montreal Royals on April 9.

Robinson's lack of total acceptance by his teammates and participating league teams was difficult enough, however, he and his wife Rachel also found housing discrimination even more troublesome. After living in Montreal, Canada where he was warmly received by his neighbors, Jackie Robinson had forgotten the racial restrictions which blacks experienced in the United States. It was not until 1947 that the Robinsons, through the aid of their trusted friends, Reverend and Mrs. Christopher Covington, secured an apartment on the second floor of a duplex house in the all-white section of Flatbush Brooklyn at 5224 Tilden Street. Settling his family in a new home, Robinson found it a little easier to contend with his position as the first black player in major league baseball.

At the end of the 1947 season, even the "doubting Thomas" of the news media began to change their pessimistic outlook concerning the success of an Afro-American in major league sports:

... the influential Sporting News had declared that a black man would find it almost impossible to succeed in organized baseball. At the end of the season, when they selected me (Robinson) as "Rookie of the Year," that same publication said: ... the socio-logical experiment that Robinson represented, the trail-blazing that he did, the barriers he broke down, did not enter into the decision. He was rated and examined solely as a freshman player in the big leagues--on the basis of his hitting, his running, his defensive play and his team value.⁷

Robinson had broken the color barrier in this major league sport and was acknowledged as a player of exceptional worth. His entry into the major leagues paved the way for other blacks to follow.

Jackie Robinson led the Brooklyn Dodgers to pennants in 1947, 1949, 1952, 1953 and finally on to a world championship in 1955. He opened the doors for baseball's later greats: Roy Campanella, Joe Black, Monte Irvin, Frank Robinson, Henry "Hank" Aaron, and others. In 1957 Jackie Robinson retired from baseball.

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Robinson's awards and achievements did not end with his career in baseball. He went on to become one of the vice presidents of Chock Full O'Nuts, a lunch counter chain; Chairman of the Board of the Freedom National Bank in Harlem; and was elected to baseball's Hall of Fame in the first year of his eligibility on July 23, 1962. He was appointed to the New York State Athletic Commission, and on December 6, 1971, Sports magazine honored him as its "Man of 25 Years"; not as the most outstanding performer of the past 25 years, but as its most significant. The most recent honor bestowed upon Jackie Robinson by the media is the recognition given to him by Life magazine in their "Special Report, 1975 Bicentennial Issue," where his fame was noted for the year 1947.

On October 24, 1972, at the age of 53, Jackie Robinson died of a heart attack. His death occurred twenty-seven years and one day after being the catalyst for ending exclusionary hiring practices in the major leagues. The Jackie Robinson "experiment" was not only responsible for opening baseball's doors to blacks, but also led to the acceptance of other non-white minority athletes into professional sports.

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John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson

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2. Robinson, Jackie as told to Alfred Ducket, I Never Had It Made (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York), p. 27.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
4. Rowan, Carl T. and Jackie Robinson, ... Wait Til Next Year (Random House, New York), p. 154.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
7. Robinson, Jackie as told to Alfred Ducket, I Never Had It Made (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York), p. 81.

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John Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson

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