

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 an 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 Ransom Place Historic District

other names/site number 098-296-12000

2. Location

street & number See Continuation Sheet N/ not for publication

city or town Indianapolis N/ vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Marion code 097 zip code 46202

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Patrick R. Roberts

10-20-92

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patrick Andrews

12/10/92

Ransom Place H.D.
Name of Property

Marion Co., IN
County and State

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	
74	9	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
74	9	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

RELIGION: religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

OTHER: L-Plan Cottage

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: weatherboard

METAL: aluminum

roof ASPHALT

other BRICK

OTHER: insulbrick

Narrative Description

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

Ransom Place H. D.
Name of Property

Marion Co., IN
County and State

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 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.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: black

Period of Significance

c.1880 - 1942

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

Ransom Place H.D.
Name of Property

Marion County, IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 6

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
2 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 |

3 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
4 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 0 |

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 Suzanne T. Rollins, Preservation Historian

organization Historic Landmarks Foundation of IN date April 9, 1992

street & number 1028 N. Delaware Street telephone 317/638-5264

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46202

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name List available from DHPA

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine 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 (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 2 **Page** 1 Ransom Place H.D.

Location (continued)

Roughly bounded by 10th Street, St. Clair Street, West Street, and the west side of Camp Street.

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RANSOM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Section number 7 Page 1*7/20/12* *1/11/12*

The Ransom Place Historic District is bounded by Tenth Street on the north, West Street on the east, Camp Street on the west, and St. Clair Street on the south. The houses are sited on narrow, grid-patterned streets oriented to the diagonal Indiana Avenue, with sidewalks and shallow setbacks. Houses are of modest vernacular styles typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The area is easily distinguished from its surroundings. The roughly six block residential district exists as an island in the midst of vacant lots and commercial buildings. Photo #1 shows Paca Street from Tenth to St. Clair streets. The west side of the street is completely vacant; only two buildings remain on the east side significantly compromising the integrity of the street.

Photo #2 shows the eastern boundary along West Street. This major thoroughfare consists of four lanes leading to an interstate access ramp and a two-lane frontage road which provides access to the houses along West Street. The south side of St. Clair Street consists of vacant lots and a contemporary apartment building for senior citizens.

Tenth Street is the northern boundary. This is an eastbound, one-way street. North of Tenth Street is a strip mall, fast food restaurant, and large surface parking lot (Photo #3). Surrounding the district is the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) campus, the Indiana University Medical Center, Wishard Hospital, and several apartment complexes including Lockefield Garden Apartments.

The district experienced the majority of its growth in the 1880s to 1900s. Houses built during this period are primarily frame one-story dwellings. While many of these buildings have undergone alterations (primarily replacement siding), they still retain their original plan and frequently their original trim and decoration. Several

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examples such as 815 (Photo #4) and 847 California, and 849 Camp Street (Photo #5) display the typical cottage characteristics of the area, and retain much of their original ornamentation.

815 California Street is a one-story frame cottage constructed c.1895. The simple construction of the house is ornamented by Stick Style window trim and patterned shingles on the front gable. This styling is characteristic of much of the construction seen in the district.

847 California Street is another one-story frame cottage. Although the brick piers replace the original porch supports, the original two-over-two and one-over-one double-hung sash windows, decorative shingles, and gingerbread trim remain. Constructed c.1890, this building is typical of the smaller scale houses in the district.

849 Camp Street closely resembles 847 California Street. 849 Camp Street has cut-away corners on the front gable which form a three-sided bay window. The corners are decorated with patterned woodwork and carved brackets. The original lines of the porch emphasize the cut-away corners.

Though not abundant in the district, Camp Street does possess a small collection of shotgun houses. 919, 921, 943, and 945 Camp Street (Photos #6 - 7) reflect this style. Each of the shotguns appears to date to c.1875. 943 and 945 Camp Street are the most intact. Both maintain their original attic vents, brackets, window trim, and transoms. Their simplicity in style and scale speak to the humble beginnings of the area.

Several larger scale houses are interspersed between the one-story dwellings previously mentioned. Among these, 833-835 (Photo #8) and 947-945 Camp Street (Photo #9), and 912-914 California Street (Photo #10) represent the two-story homes constructed during the late nineteenth century.

833-835 Camp Street (Photo #8) was constructed c.1894. This two-story vernacular design with projecting gable and gable-on-hip roof is repeated elsewhere in the district.

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912-914 California Street (Photo #10) has the same roofline as 833-835 Camp Street, but with a reversed floor plan. The original one-story duplex existed on the lot as early as 1874. The second floor was added c.1894, probably coinciding with the construction of 833-835 Camp Street. Both houses have full-width porches and one-over-one double-hung sash windows with flat surrounds. 912-914 California Street is sheathed in aluminum siding; 833-835 Camp Street has asbestos shingles.

The only historic non-residential structures in the district are churches. Of the two, only 702 West 9th Street (Photo #11) is contributing. Constructed in 1910, the building originally housed the Second Christian Church. The congregation remained at this location until moving to 29th Street and Kenwood Avenue in 1948. Today the church, now known as Light of the World Christian Church, is located at 5640 East 38th Street. The 9th Street church building exhibits typical Craftsman architectural details such as an overhanging roof with exposed rafters and purlins.

The majority of non-contributing houses in the district are infill buildings (Photos #12 - 13) built from 1989-1991. These six new houses, located on Camp and California Streets are compatible to existing construction in scale and style. The low- to moderate-income houses are a joint project sponsored by the City of Indianapolis, BOS Community Development Corporation, the Indianapolis Housing Partnership, and Midtown Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (MEDIC). BOS is also responsible for the construction of a triplex, one single family house, and the rehabilitation of two properties. These new houses have spurred a renewed interest in the area and are in turn helping to provide housing for low-income residents.

Renovation efforts and recognition of the ethnic significance of the district are reversing the deterioration experiences in recent years. The goal of neighborhood residents is to provide a higher quality of housing for people of all income levels, decrease the number of absentee landlords, and promote the district's cultural heritage.

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RANSOM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Section number 8 Page 1

The small pocket of modest vernacular houses located west of downtown Indianapolis represents an early, intact neighborhood associated with the city's prominent and well-established African-American population, and as such it is significant under National Register criterion A. Since the early history of Indianapolis, the near-westside provided housing for a substantial portion of the black community. Today, due to the industrial and commercial expansion of the city, the two block area bordered by Tenth, West, St. Clair, and Camp streets remains as a reminder of an area once considered a prestigious address by the African-American community.

Although there is no federal census for Indiana prior to 1840, early statistical information indicates "free colored" residents in Indianapolis.¹ Historian Earline Rae Ferguson wrote, "By 1836 Indianapolis blacks were clustered on the banks of the canal in an area called 'Colored Town'."² The poor quality of the land and its marshy tendencies created an availability of inexpensive land which attracted low income ethnic groups. Also referred to as "Bucktown," this area located southeast of the City Hospital (now Wishard Hospital), is thought to be the site of the oldest black neighborhood in Indianapolis.³ This area had become a slum by the 1920s and was later eliminated by the expansion of the Indiana University Medical Center.

Throughout the late nineteenth century the area south of Washington Street (Ward 5) contained the largest ethnic population in the county. Both foreign-born and blacks resided in this ward. Black residents also reached into the area north of Washington Street and west of Mississippi Street (Senate Avenue). The establishment of black churches helped define the ethnicity of these areas.

In 1849 the Second Baptist Church established itself on Missouri Street (Ward 5) between Ohio and New York streets. The African Methodist Church settled south

¹Divita, Dr. James, *Ethnic Settlement Patterns in Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: Marian College, 1988), p.11.

²Ferguson, Earline Rae, *Black History News and Notes, May 1988*.

³Weathers, Nelda A., *How the Negro Lives in Indianapolis*, M.A. Thesis 1924 (Indiana University), p. 7.

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RANSOM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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of Washington Street on Georgia Street just east of the Central Canal to serve the residents of Ward 5.⁴

In response to the steady increase of black residents from the 1850s through the 1880s, numerous black institutions organized in the 1890s. The increasing dominance of blacks on the westside contributed to the growing rivalries between ethnic groups settled along the canal. Dr. James Divita points to the clashes between ethnic groups and the census figures which support the increasing separation of blacks and foreign-born residents. "By 1890, of the five wards with the least blacks (less than two percent), three of them (Wards 24, 22, and 23) had the most foreign-born residents. Of the five wards with the least foreign-born (9.1 percent-5.8 percent), two of them (Wards 4 and 3) were heavily black."⁵

The Indiana Avenue Neighborhood House opened in 1897 to meet the needs of both black and white residents of the near-westside. Established by the Charity Organization Society (COS), the neighborhood house focused its efforts "...in a district whose population was rapidly changing from white to predominantly Negro."⁶

A decision to separate black and white children attending the Indiana Avenue Neighborhood House led to the establishment of Flanner House. Frank Flanner, a white businessman, donated a cottage in 1898 to house the new group. Though

⁴Divita, p.14.

⁵*Ibid.*, p.27.

⁶Crocker, Ruth Catherine, *Social Settlements in Indianapolis, Indiana 1890-1930*, M.A. Thesis 1975 (Purdue University), p.45.

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established strictly for blacks, Flanner House was run by a bi-racial organization. Over the years the settlement house emphasized training and moral improvement. Vocational training and self-help programs encouraged blacks to better their situations. In 1918 Flanner House moved from a location near the present site of Lockefield Garden Apartments (900 Indiana Avenue) to 802 North West Street—closer to the center of the black neighborhood.

Construction of homes in the district flourished during the 1880s and 1890s. A comparison of property owners, City Directory listings and census records indicate many of the houses were owner-occupied. This may account for the higher quality of construction and stability of this neighborhood in comparison to other ethnic neighborhoods in proximity.

Occupations of early residents represent a variety of work which further acknowledges the stability and financial security of the district's residents. Several leaders of the black community and leading businessmen lived in the Ransom Place Historic District. Among the most prominent African-American residents of Ransom Place were :

- Dr. J. Ward (941 California): Early black physician
- John Puryear (854 Camp-demolished): City Councilman
- Henry Richardson (941 California-demolished): Attorney and Democratic candidate for state representative in 1932
- James Lott (808 California-demolished): Attorney and civic leader
- Willard Ransom (824 California and 828 California) Attorney and son of Freeman Ransom
- Freeman Ransom (828 California) Attorney and Manager of the Madam C. J. Walker Company. The district receives its name from this family which is perhaps the most widely-recognized name associated with the neighborhood.
- Oscar W. Langston (835 California) Dentist
- Rev. William D. Speight (835 California) Minister, AME Zion Church
- George Hayes (819 California) Public School Principal
- Henry L. Hummons (840 California) Medical Doctor

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During the early twentieth century the neighborhood was integrated. Census records show both blacks and whites interspersed. Former district resident, Frances Stout, whose grandparents lived at 813 California Street and who owned a stand at the City Market, said the 800 block of California Street was known as the "Negro Meridian Street."⁷ This refers to the city's premier white residential street, North Meridian (National Register 9-22-86).

Following World War I the district became more segregated. The rise of the Indiana Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s further emphasized the lines between blacks and whites in Indianapolis. In March 1926 the City-Council passed an ordinance upholding residential segregation. Ordinance Number 15 stated it is "...advisable to foster the separation of white and Negro residential communities."⁸ The ordinance remained in place until ruled unconstitutional in November of 1926.

The need for the black community to meet its own needs created a more vibrant and active Indiana Avenue. The establishment of the Walker Theater in 1927 provided a "social, cultural, educational, and business center for the black community."⁹ Further entertainment establishments joined the service-oriented businesses along the Avenue.

In contrast to the district, other black neighborhoods suffered during the same period. In the area near the City Hospital, slums formed. From circa 1918 to 1921 rents doubled on properties squeezed together on narrow, unpaved, sewerless streets. The cheaply constructed houses fell into disrepair.¹⁰ The Depression took its toll on all parts of the black community. The 1930s began an increase of absentee landlords that would not reverse itself. Many homes in the district experienced decline and deterioration.

The 1930 census indicates Tract 22, which includes Ransom Place, contained the largest number of black residents in Indianapolis. This tract also included Flanner House and the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, organized specifically for black women.

⁷Personal Interview with Frances Stout, 28 February 1992.

⁸*Indianapolis Recorder*, 6 March 1926, p. 1

⁹*Black History News and Notes*, No. 35 (February 1989), p.

¹⁰Weathers, p.10.

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The construction of Lockefield Garden Apartments in 1937 (NR 2-28-83), responded to the deplorable housing conditions of low-income black citizens. The land was cleared of deteriorated housing and replaced with modern, well-designed apartment units.

To further combat the problem of slum housing, the city formed the Indianapolis Redevelopment Commission in 1945. The Commission originally selected an area bounded by 16th, 10th, West, and Milburn streets and Stadium Drive. This area became the site of the Flanner House Homes self-help program. This program used land cleared by the Redevelopment Commission for houses constructed by qualified residents. The homeowners completed approximately 80 percent of the work.¹¹

Other neighborhoods in the redevelopment area included the following:

- eight acres south of Washington Street immediately west of White River
- four acres bounded by 15th, Missouri, and 10th streets, and Northwestern Avenue
- 18 acres adjacent to the I. U. Medical Center bounded by Michigan, Agnes, Locke, Coe, and Hiawatha streets
- 164 acres bounded by Douglas Park, 30th Street, Keystone Avenue, and 25th Street
- 19 acres immediately south of the I. U. School of Dentistry¹²

In addition to containing quality architecture and providing housing to well-established residents, the designation of Ransom Place as a rehabilitation area is perhaps a major element in the continued existence of the neighborhood. In the numerous "slum areas" the land bounded by 9th, 10th, West, and St. Clair streets was designated the first rehabilitation project by the Redevelopment Commission. The Commission wrote: "The program is designed to aid those who live in deteriorated neighborhoods in the rehabilitation of their homes and other buildings,

¹¹Indianapolis Redevelopment Commission, *Annual Report 1955* (Indianapolis, 1955), p. 11.

¹²*Ibid.*, p.7.

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RANSOM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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and otherwise correct conditions which would soon lead to the declaration of the area as a slum."¹³

The growth of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (I. U. P. U. I.) is responsible for the clearance of the majority of houses on the near-westside. A 1968 map of the area entitled, "University Quartered District Zoning" includes Ransom Place within its boundaries. Its distance from the main campus buildings is a contributing factor to the continued existence of the district.

In 1971 a group of businessmen formed the Midtown Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (MEDIC) to promote revitalization of the area. Through working with the City, MEDIC promoted the urban renewal of the Indiana Avenue and adjacent neighborhoods.

Today the district is experiencing revitalization. In addition to the rehabilitation of several historic homes, new infill houses have been constructed. A joint project of the City, BOS Community Development Corporation, the Indianapolis Housing Partnership, and MEDIC, has created six infill houses compatible with their historic neighbors. Additionally, BOS has constructed one single family house, one triplex, and rehabilitated two houses on their own.

Revitalization efforts continue to improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents. A recognition ¹⁴of the contributions of early residents and their significance to the African-American community of Indianapolis would focus further attention on the importance of this small neighborhood.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁴

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RANSOM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the southwest corner of 10th and West Streets, proceed south along the western curb of West Street. Turn west at St. Clair Street and proceed along the northern curb of St. Clair. Turn north at the alley west of Camp Street and proceed north, following the rear property lines of Camp Street. Turn east at 10th Street and proceed along the southern curb until reaching the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Boundaries for the Ransom Place Historic District were selected based upon historical significance and physical properties. While this neighborhood once extended on both the east and west sides, new development has virtually isolated it. To the south is an apartment complex, to the north a strip mall, to the east a four-lane roadway, and to the west demolitions have removed all but two buildings, significantly affecting the integrity. Research revealed the remaining houses to have been the home of many of the city's leading African-American citizens during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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RANSOM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Section number PHOTOS Page 1

PHOTOGRAPH INFORMATION

The following information is identical for all photographs:

Ransom Place Historic District
Indianapolis, Indiana
Suzanne T. Rollins
April 3, 1992
Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, Indianapolis Office

- #1 Paca Street looking north from St. Clair Street
- #2 West Street looking south
- #3 Camp Street looking north from 9th Street
- #4 815 California Street, camera facing east
- #5 849 Camp Street, camera facing east
- #6 943 & 945 Camp Street, camera facing east
- #7 945 Camp Street, camera facing east
- #8 833-35 Camp Street, camera facing east
- #9 947-949 Camp Street, camera facing east
- #10 912-914 California Street, camera facing west
- #11 702 W. 9th Street, Tried Stone Baptist Church, camera facing west
- #12 811 California Street, camera facing east
- #13 837-841 California Street, camera facing east

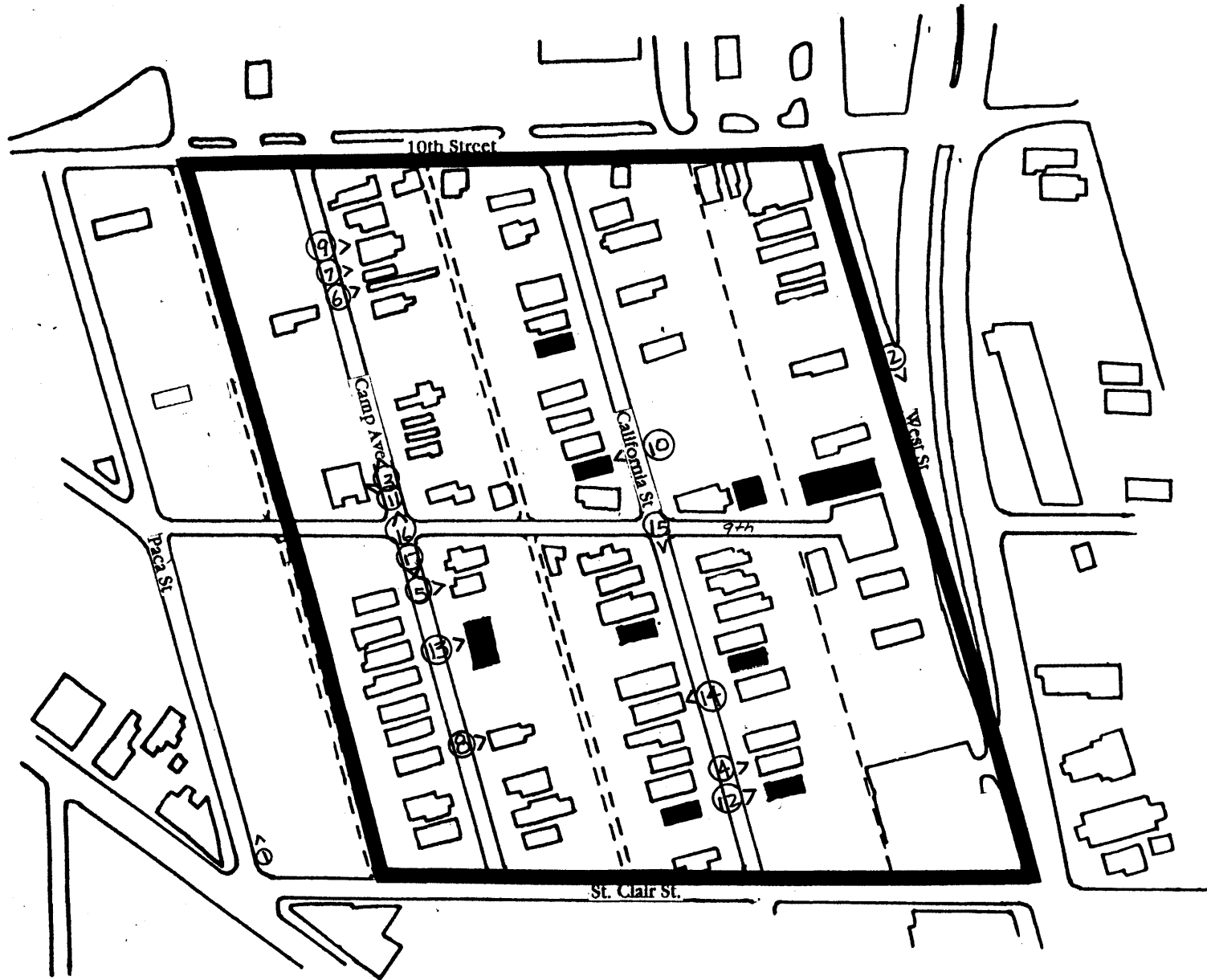
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RANSOM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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- #14 828 California Street, Ransom House, camera facing west
- #15 California Street looking south from 9th Street
- #16 Camp Street looking north from 9th Street
- #17 Camp Street looking south from 9th Street

RANSOM PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT



 Indicates Non-Contributing Building