

RECEIVED

RECEIVED OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NOV 2 1993

REGISTERED

MAY 6 1993 DEC 14 1993

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

SEP 01 1993

NATIONAL REGISTER

Ala. Historical Commission

NATIONAL REGISTER

Ala. Historical Commission

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 Miles Memorial College Historic District

other names/site number Miles College Historic District

2. Location

street & number 5501 Myron Massey Boulevard not for publication N/A

city or town Fairfield vicinity N/A

state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35064

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.)

Lawrence C. ... 8-31-93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- 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:)

Mag ...

11/3/94

Miles Memorial College Historic District
Name of Property

Jefferson, Alabama
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	
3	2	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
4	2	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)

EDUCATION: College

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: College

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS: Craftsman

LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY REVIVALS:
Beaux Arts Classicism

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other LIMESTONE
CONCRETE

Narrative Description

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

Miles Memorial College Historic District
Name of Property

Jefferson, Alabama
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): N/A
- 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)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African-American

Period of Significance

1907-c. 1943

Significant Dates

1907, 1920, 1927, 1943

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/BUILDER

Gilreath Construction, builder (Williams)

Tisdale, Stone & Patton, architects (Brown)
E.G. Holladay, contractor (Brown)

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Miles College Library

Miles Memorial College Historic District
Name of Property

Jefferson, Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 36 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 16 | 508510 | 37046100 |
Zone Easting Northing
2 | 16 | 508640 | 3704560 |
5 1 6 5 0 8 5 2 0 3 7 0 4 4 5 0

3 | 16 | 508640 | 3704350 |
Zone Easting Northing
4 | 16 | 508560 | 3704360 |
 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 Linda Nelson /Historic Preservationist; Melanie Betz/AHC Reviewer

organization FuturePast date May 1, 1993

street & number 4700 Seventh Court South telephone (205) 592-6610

city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35222

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 Miles Memorial College

street & number 5501 Myron Massey Boulevard telephone (205) 923-2771

city or town Fairfield state Alabama zip code 35064

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 7 Page 1Description of Physical Appearance

The proposed district encompasses that part of the Miles College campus largely predating the end of the Second World War, including the quadrangle, four buildings, and two structures. Although the campus has not grown much in terms of acreage over the years since its founding, being about 30 acres originally and something over 36 acres today, there are many buildings dating from more recent years that are concentrated to the rear (or west) of the historic grouping; therefore it seems sensible to draw the district around the earliest-developed part of the campus. Within the boundaries, only the W.S. Bell Library is of more recent vintage, having been constructed in 1961. Specifically, buildings and structures are as follows:

1. Williams Hall (1907-08). The original building, serving as administration, girls' dormitory and commissary.
2. Brown Hall (1927). The present administration building.
3. Erskine Ramsey Library (1920; 1943). Originally a practice teaching building, converted to a library by a gift from Mr. Ramsey.
4. W.A. Bell Library (1961). Housing the library until 1981 and now used for other academic purposes.
5. Fraternity Chimes (1920s). A low brick tower on the quadrangle.
6. Guard Station (1992). Replacing an earlier structure housing the security officers at the driveway entrance to the campus.

The campus boundaries encompass a rectangle, with the entrance along the east side at the high point of the ridge running generally north to south along what is now Myron Massey Boulevard in Fairfield. Although the earlier section of the campus contains a quadrangle, the first administration building does not face it but faces the street, having been situated on the highest elevation available while the quad is below street level. Likewise, Brown Hall faces the street, with its deeper side facing the quad. Later and smaller additions to the built campus more generally focus on the quadrangle, but the atmosphere on the crosswalks is one more of open than enclosed space.

Recently, the original low rubblestone border walls have been covered with red brick, and the campus wall along the Boulevard is of red brick as well.

Williams Hall was begun in 1907 and finished almost in time for the opening of Miles Memorial College in its new location in January, 1908 (see History and Significance, below). At the present time the architect is

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 2

unknown; the builder is believed to have been Belton Gilreath of Birmingham. The building was named in honor of Bishop R.S. Williams of the C.M.E. Church in Augusta, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the College and very influential in bringing Miles Memorial College to fruition.

Originally the building was an imposing 2 1/2 storeys in red brick elevated on a full-basement brick base, with a hip roof and dormer surmounting the projecting central block. There were chateausque steeply-pitched roof pinnacles surmounting the end bays and over the central bell lantern. The main roof was of the Second Empire double-pitch type, and the half-storey dormers were hipped. Original windows were one-over-one wood sash.

Lightning struck the building in about 1937, resulting in the loss of the upper half-storey, roof and lantern; now the building has a flat roof and replacement metal jalousied windows. It is otherwise distinguished by recessed coursework defining the slightly projecting central and end bays, and by an attached central flat-roofed porch supported by four brick piers of recessed coursework with pilasters at the rear where it joins the face of the building. The singly-set straight-head windows have stone heads and sills; the original cornice between the second and the half-storey is gone.

Inside, the walls and ceilings are plaster, the basement floor concrete, the other floors wood with linoleum laid over them. The original stairs, newel posts and balusters are intact.

The oldest building on campus and the most altered, both by natural disaster and random alterations, Williams retains a good amount of original material and is a primary candidate for appropriate rehabilitation as funds become available.

Brown Hall is the centerpiece of the campus, built in 1927 and serving as the Administration building at the present time. When it was built it was not only the administration building but housed the library, science laboratories and auditorium (the latter still in use). Tisdale, Stone & Pinson were the architects; E.G. Holladay was the contractor. Brown Hall is named in honor of founder and Trustee Robert T. Brown, who was also President of the College from 1918-22.

The building is constructed in a restrained academic Classical style, of red brick with limestone trim, two storeys and half-basement on the front but deepening as the landscape drops down behind it to make it a full three floors. It is T-shaped, the base of the T being at the rear. Its primary ornament decorates the slightly projecting central bay, with four massive two-storey Ionic columns set *in antis* and defining the three round-arched double entry doors. Above the entablature is a cartouche, and above that a simple, final stone cornice. Bays are defined by limestone-capped pilasters that support a minor cornice or course; the one window per bay is metal-frame, multi-pane with opening hopper sections. The windowless end bays contain

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 3

blind marble panels surmounted by segmental-arched entablatures. Plain stone inset panels decorate the spandrels between the upper and lower windows. The base of the T houses the auditorium, which has high two-storey windows matching the others in the building with the addition of round-arched heads.

Inside, ceilings and walls are plaster, and floors are terrazzo. The auditorium is placed directly off the central foyer, with a hallway to one side and the President's office suite to the other. Above are other administrative office suites with access through multi-pane double doors. Primary stairs are at the ends of the T's crossing.

Erskine Ramsey Hall has two construction dates attached to it in the records: 1920 and 1931. It seems most likely that the 1920 date is correct, both because of its appearance on the 1928 Sanborn insurance map and the fact that no building was likely to be taking place in the early and severe stages of the Depression. In any case, the original building was used for practice teaching classrooms. It sits somewhat to itself across the quadrangle to the north of the main buildings.

It is a one-storey red brick structure on a half-basement, basically U-shaped with its entrance at the center of the base of the U. The entry door, a modern replacement, is at the back of a porch formed by projecting attached brick piers under a pilastered parapet. Windows are set in panels of trios on either side of the entrance; on the sides trios alternate with singly set windows. No windows appear on the ends of the arms of the U that face the front. All windows are nine-over-six sash, apparently metal-frame and not the originals.

A gift from Birmingham mining engineer, executive and philanthropist Erskine Ramsey allowed the College to renovate and somewhat enlarge this building in 1943 to serve as the library. After the completion of the Bell Library in 1961, Ramsey housed the Art Department for some years. It is presently being renovated for other uses.

W.A. Bell Library is a concrete and steel-frame, L-shaped brick-veneer building in the northeast corner of the campus, one section of two storeys and the rest of one storey, with large steel-frame windows and ceramic tile decorating portions of the exterior. (noncontributing)

The fraternity chimes tower is a square brick structure adjacent to a quadrangle crosswalk, its low second storey marked by a concrete belt course. It is windowless with a single door in its base and a low-pitched pyramidal roof. A square plywood construction has been mounted on the roof recently. Now painted black and decorated with fraternity letters and symbols, plans are to restore it to a more original condition.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

The **Security Officers' Station** is a small, gable-roofed brick structure near the entrance to the campus, where all incoming traffic is required to stop and be identified. It is located slightly further north than its predecessor, which was an octagonal frame structure sided with novelty board; this earlier station, probably dating from the 1940s, was replaced in 1992. (noncontributing)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 5**Statement of Significance**

The old Miles College campus is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion A, based on its significance in the areas of Education and African-American heritage.

The importance of education to America's African-American population--so recently liberated from enforced ignorance--was recognized by prominent leaders of the race. Knowing that only education could provide the means to transcend the low estate forced on Blacks by a largely indifferent, or even hostile, white society, the African-American churches in particular fostered a respect for education and often provided the means to attain it. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church sponsored schools and colleges throughout the South, and the Alabama Conference (see below) was responsible for many such institutions in the State of Alabama.

Miles College (it dropped "Memorial" in 1941) is one of seven private black colleges in Alabama, one of the latest-founded but also one of the most prominent. For the first half of this century it was the only institution of higher learning accessible to black students in the Birmingham area. It therefore represents a movement in black society necessitated by social conditions in Alabama and the South after the Civil War and before the Civil Rights era, when access to the goods and titles of mainstream, i.e., white, society had to be provided for themselves by black organizations, primarily religious. Miles represented then the realization of aspiration to a better life for black people; it represents now a commitment to maintaining excellent institutions in a time when alternate choices are open to students and competition is critical.

Historical Summary

The school that became Miles Memorial College was actually founded in 1898 when the two Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (hereafter referred to as CME Church; the C now stands for "Christian") Conferences in the state voted to establish a learning institution of collegiate rank for black students. Since late in the previous decade there had been a graded school in Thomasville, Alabama under the aegis of the Alabama Conference; when the decision was made to create a college, both the Alabama and the North Alabama Conferences elected trustees and voted to establish the school in or near Birmingham and to name it in honor of former slave and first elected CME Bishop William Henry Miles. Differences of opinion developed between the Conferences, however, as to the absorption of Thomasville High School into the new institution. Thomasville, therefore, continued to function on its own, and a second school, alternately called in old church records "Booker City High School," "Miles Normal School," and "Miles College," was established in 1902 in Booker City. This was a small settlement of black people about 12 miles from Birmingham on the Frisco Railroad, now known as Docena. It was here that Miles College began its life, although it was not yet a real college but still functioning as a graded or normal school.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SEP 1988

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

The year 1907 saw many changes for Miles College, and one history of the CME Church¹ ascribes these changes to the Presidency of James A. Bray, who became President in the fall of that year. Already that year a land exchange with the Tennessee Coal & Iron Co. had been effected whereby the school's property in Booker City was traded to TCI for "an equal but much more valuable plot"² near Vinesville Station in Birmingham. One history of the College reports that coal deposits were found in Booker City, making that location valuable to TCI; other histories refer to the "difficulty of access" to Booker City and the much more convenient location on the North Bessemer car line. In any case, the transfer was made, construction was begun on several frame buildings and one imposing brick one, and Miles was chartered as Miles Memorial College in 1908, becoming an official college for the first time. Dr. Bray was able to solicit financial support from the Board of Education of the State of New York, and the Southern Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church also lent support to the new institution. By 1910 there were 250 students at Miles, of whom about 60 were enrolled in the College.

In 1910 G.W. Stewart became CME Bishop of Alabama; for some reason dissatisfied with President Bray, he dismissed him from leadership of the College. This action is regarded by the CME Church historian as unfortunately critical to the development of Miles in the next years (it may or may not be significant that the boys' dormitory, Stewart Hall, burned down in 1914 and was never rebuilt). In 1922 G.W. Word became President and led the College to higher levels of academic viability;³ in 1927 a faculty member, Professor of Science M.P. Burley, was named President, and under his leadership the present administration building was completed and named in honor of Bishop Brown, who had been President from 1918-22. On Burley's watch Miles began to be known as one of the nation's best colleges for black students.⁴

In 1940 Miles had 350 students; today enrollment is about 600.⁵ The built campus has increased to 27 buildings, and several small parcels of land have been added to the original 30 acres. Much of the building activity occurred in the late 1950s and 1960s, when dorms as well as academic buildings were erected, as well as a student union building and a residence for the President. Declining enrollments and financial difficulties brought the College to a critical point in the late 1980s, but the advent to the Presidency of Dr. Albert J.H. Sloan and the fundraising commitment of alumni and community have helped Miles solve some of its problems and continue its mission.

Justification of Period of Significance

The period of significance for the Miles College Historic District extends from the date of the earliest building, 1907, until c. 1943, an arbitrary date reflecting the 50-year requirement of the National Register.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 7

Bibliographic Information

Much of the material on which this nomination is based was provided by Regina Cates of Miles College, who had already done research to put the campus on the Jefferson County Register. Other materials belonging to the College were provided by Ms. Mattie Jackson of the Learning Resources Center.

Other miscellaneous information is from the newspaper files of the Tutwiler Collection of the Birmingham Public Library. Of particular interest was the article noting the opening of the Vinesville campus, from which came the hint about the builder: Belton Gilreath was an honored guest at the ceremony.

Notes

¹Lokey, History of the CME Church (need complete reference), p. 461.

²1909-10 Miles Memorial College Catalogue

³Lokey, *op.cit.*, p. 462.

⁴"Scholar and Educator," in True Tales of Birmingham series, Birmingham Historical Society, 1991.

⁵Figure from Birmingham News/Post-Herald, March 21, 1992.

⁶Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton, Alabama: A History. New York: W.W. Norton, 1977, p. 82.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SEP 3 1998

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 10 Page 8

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the historic district was drawn around the front of the campus along Myron Massey Boulevard, going west to the rear of Williams and Brown Halls, then north to encompass the quadrangle and fraternity tower, then east along the rear of Erskine Ramsey Hall up to the front wall again, which space also includes the later W.A. Bell Library.

The legal description of the entire campus, as recorded in the Jefferson County Courthouse, is as follows:

TH W 1/2 OF SW4 OF SE4 SEC 12 TP 18S R 4W EXC TH E 150 FT OF N 150
FT OF SD W 1/2 OF SD 1/4 1/4 ON TH W R/W OF AVE G TH S 1325 FT
ALONG AVE G TO A PT ON THE S LINE OF THE SE 1/4 TH W 650 FT ALONG
THE S LINE OF THE SE 1/4 TO P O B

Boundary Justification

This line encloses all the historic buildings and the part of the campus earliest developed. For more information see Narrative, Section 7.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

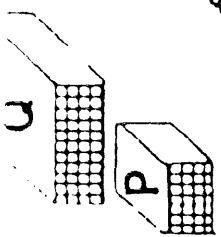
photo-
Section number graphs Page 9

Miles Memorial College Historic District, Jefferson County, AL - Fairfield
Description of Photographs:

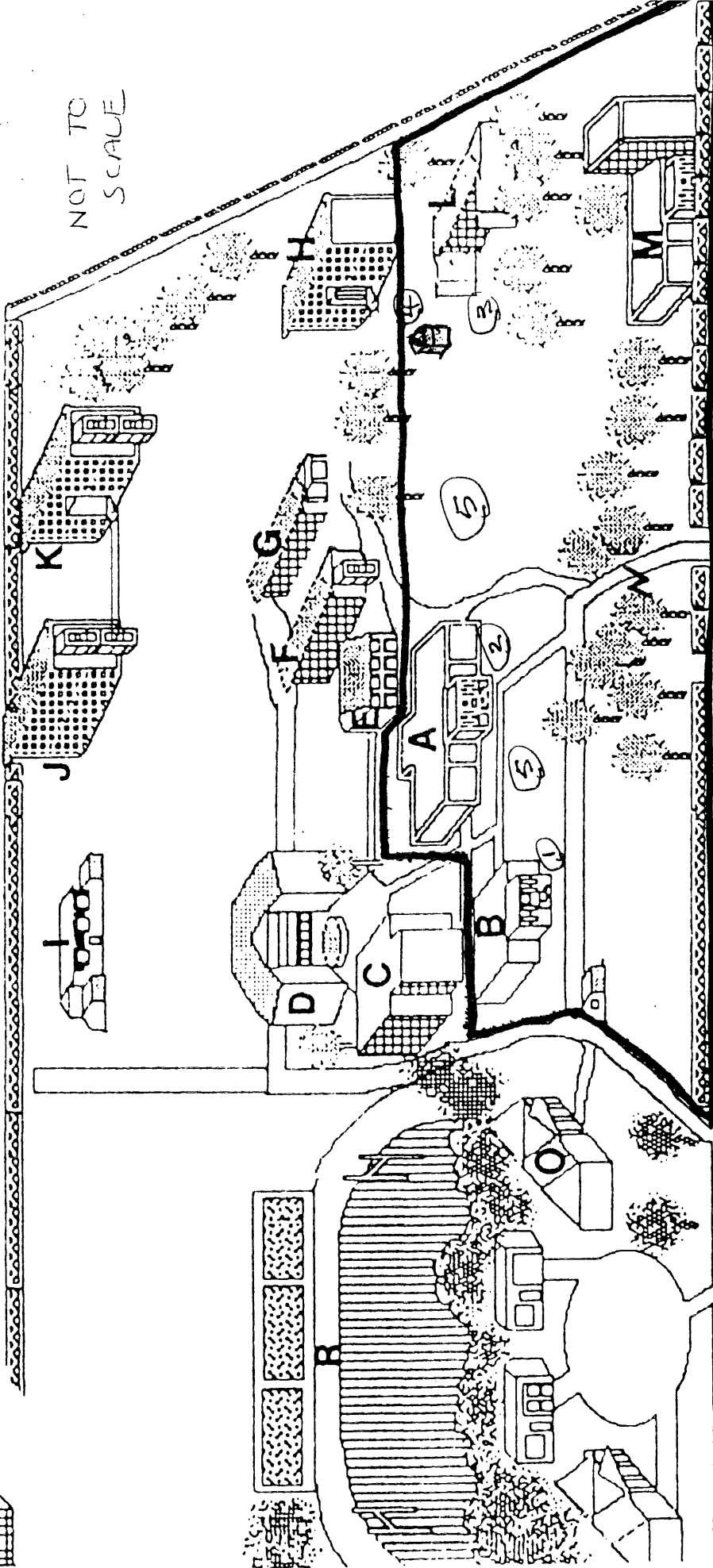
1. Williams Hall, facade and south side, from SE.
2. Williams Hall, facade detail, from E.
3. Williams Hall, front, looking along porch, from S.
4. Williams Hall, ground-floor interior corridor and stair.
5. Williams Hall, stair detail.
6. Brown Hall, facade, from ESE.
7. Brown Hall, entry detail, from E.
8. Brown Hall, north side, from N.
9. Brown Hall, vestibule.
10. Brown Hall, interior, second-floor corridor.
11. Ramsay Hall, front, from S.
12. Ramsay Hall, west side, from SW.
13. Fraternity Tower, from SW (Ramsay in background).
14. Main quadrangle, from N.

All photographs May-June, 1992; Linda Nelson.

MILES MEMORIAL COLLEGE HISTORIC DISTRICT
Fairfield - Jefferson County, Alabama



NOT TO SCALE



Myron Massey Boulevard

MILES COLLEGE

LEGEND

- (A) Brown Hall - 1937
- (B) Williams' Hall - 1907
- C Taggart Science Building - 1965
- D Learning Resource Center - 1980
- E Social Science Building - 1959
- F McKenzie Hall - Betzee Alabama
- G Alabama Hall - 1957
- H Student Union Building - 1964
- I Faculty/Staff Apartments - 1962
- J L. H. Pitts Hall - 1969
- K Murchinson Hall - 1969
- L Erskine Ramsey Hall - 1920

- M Bell Building - 1961
- N Security - 1991
- O Presidential Residence - 1962
- (P) Environmental Services - 1940
- Q Knox-Windham Gym - 1960
- R Alumni Stadium -

Miles College, Fairfield
 Source: Jefferson County Tax Map
 30-12-4 and 30-13-1
 Enlarged: Drawing not to scale

