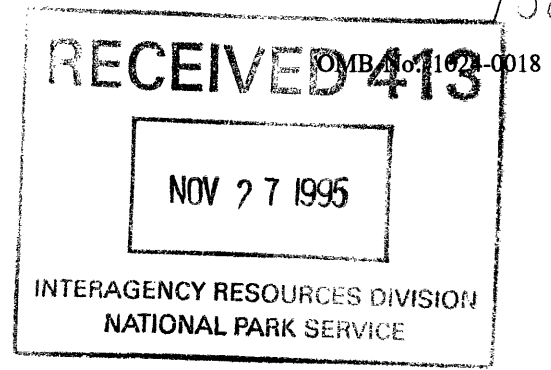


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**



1. Name of Property

historic name Littlepage Building

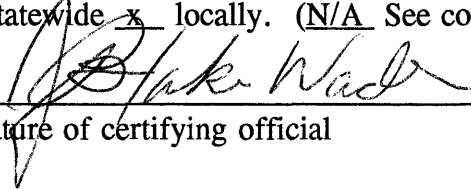
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 219 North Central Avenue not for publication N/A
city or town Oklahoma City vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Oklahoma code 109
zip code 73104

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide x locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



November 3, 1995

Signature of certifying official

Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or 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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

Entered in the
National Register

- 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): _____

1.11.96

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub:	<u>hotel</u>
	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>		<u>specialty store</u>
	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>		<u>restaurant</u>
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	<u>VACANT/NOT IN USE</u>	Sub:	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>BRICK</u>
roof	<u>ASPHALT</u>
walls	<u>BRICK</u>
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)

- 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

Period of Significance 1924-1945

Significant Dates 1924

8. Statement of Significance (continued)

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>635430</u>	<u>3925920</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<u>N/A</u>	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>					

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 Maryjo Meacham, Associate Planner, Kerri Robinett, Research Assistant, John R. Calhoun, Associate Planner, Planning Department

organization City of Oklahoma City date August 4, 1995

street & number 420 W. Main St. Suite 900 telephone (405) 297-2110

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73102

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.

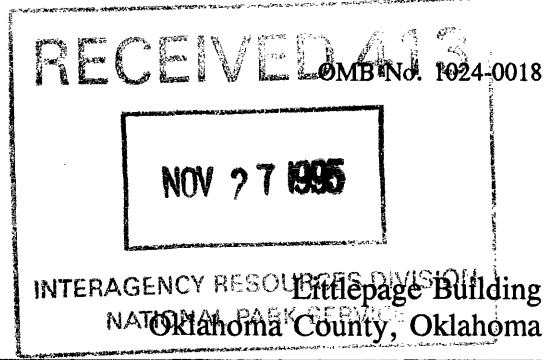
Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

United States Department of the Interior
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Summary

The Littlepage Building, built in 1924, is a large, two-story Commercial Style dark, red brick building. The upper floors were originally used as a hotel and the lower floors were used for retail and a restaurant. One of the last remaining commercial buildings in Oklahoma City's African-American commercial district, the Littlepage Building is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Central Avenue and 2nd Street at 219 North Central Avenue. The front (north) facade of the building is divided into three storefronts and there are five sets of paired, double-hung wood windows on the upper floor. The east facade is divided into five sections, which originally accommodated four storefronts and one entry which led to the second floor. The rear and the west side of the building are simply designed and articulated with single and paired, double-hung wood windows. In addition to the large two-story building, adjacent to the rear of the Littlepage Building is a smaller two-story brick building (noncontributing), which was built by the Littlepage family in 1947 as an apartment building. The Littlepage Building and the apartment building retain a high degree of architectural and historical integrity.

Description

Main Building

The Littlepage Building, built in 1924, is a large, two-story Commercial style building. Located on a corner, the building has three storefronts on the front (north) facade and four storefronts on the side (east) facade. The building is fifty feet wide and approximately seventy-five feet in length. The building is veneered with a dark red brick, and precast concrete is used for the window sills, the parapet trim, and the bottom of the pilasters. Precast concrete is also used for the nameplate. A flat roof is behind a parapet.

The north facade of the building is divided into three storefronts which are separated with brick pilasters. The building slopes down from west to east on the north side and slopes down from north to south on the east side, each of the storefronts slightly lower in elevation than the next. The storefront kickplates are covered with terra cotta-colored ceramic tile and have precast concrete window sills. Clerestory windows are located above each storefront; however, the clerestories and the storefronts are covered with plywood. The lintels of the windows are at the same elevation for the entire building, but the sills are stepped with the slope of the sidewalk. The entry to the corner storefront is set back and canted with a brick column supporting the corner of the building and several concrete steps leading to the doorway. All the doorways are covered with plywood.

The upper floor of the north facade has five sets of paired, wood double-hung windows with precast concrete sills. Above the windows is a narrow band of concrete with a precast concrete nameplate above. The nameplate is inscribed "J.S. & M.E. LITTLEPAGE." The stepped parapet is outlined with precast concrete on the north and east sides; the west side is topped with tile, below which is a painted sign "LITTLEPAGE HOTEL / 219 N. CENTRAL."

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Littlepage Building
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

The east side of the building, which faces Central Avenue, is divided into five bays. The two north bays form one storefront and the remaining three bays form three additional storefronts. The north storefront has an inset, canted entry. The remaining storefronts each have clerestory windows, which are covered with plywood. The display windows and entry doors are also covered with plywood. The kickplates are identical to those on the north facade and each are covered with terra cotta-colored ceramic tile with concrete sills. A single entryway, which is covered with plywood, is located between the north storefront and the additional three storefronts. There are three concrete steps to this door from the sidewalk.

The upper floor of the east facade has eight sets of paired, double-hung wood windows with precast concrete sills. A narrow band of precast concrete is used for decoration above the windows and between the parapet. The design of the east facade parapet is identical to the north facade and is stepped with a precast concrete cap. The rear of the building is brick and is connected to the two-story building next door with a wood corridor on the second floor.

The west side of the building forms an L shape. The north twenty-five feet of the building has windows on the second floor only, and there was originally a one-story residential property next door. The building then narrows to accommodate windows on the first and second floors, creating a small, one-sided passageway. Rows of paired, double-hung wood windows with precast concrete sills line the upper floor; the lower floor has tilting steel casement windows. The parapet is flat and capped with ceramic roof tiles, however, it is punctuated with chimney flues. An iron fire escape is also located in the passage way.

Apartment Building

Located directly south of the Littlepage Building is a two-story brick building which was built in 1947 as an apartment building by the Littlepage family. This building is connected to the upper floor of the Littlepage Building with a wooden corridor. The front facade of the apartment building is plain and veneered with the identical dark red brick used on the Littlepage Building. The ground floor has a centrally located single entry door which is inset and a wide, simply designed precast concrete surround. The entry door is covered with plywood. On either side of the entry door is one single-hung wood window and one paired, double-hung wood window, all with precast concrete sills. A belt course of concrete stretches from the precast concrete door surround between the bottom of the building and below the first floor window sills.

The second floor of the apartment building has four sets of paired, double-hung wood windows with precast concrete sills. Between the windows and the flat parapet is a broken band of concrete. The parapet has a precast concrete cap.

The south facade of the building has identical windows on the ground floor and two windows and one door on the second floor. An iron fire escape is located on the rear also. The rear facade also has paired, double-hung wood windows and wood doors, and the brick is of a lighter shade than on the east.

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Both the Littlepage Building and the apartment building retain a high degree of architectural and historical integrity. The apartment building is noncontributing due to age, but if it is retained in its present state or appropriately rehabilitated it will be contributing in 1997 with a revision of the period of significance for the Littlepage Building.

Alterations

The Littlepage Building and the apartment building remain unaltered except for boarded over windows and doors. The Littlepage Building retains its integrity of feeling and association, as well as design, material and workmanship.

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Littlepage Building
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Summary

The Littlepage Building, located at 219 North Central Avenue at the corner of Northeast 2nd Street, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its association with the ethnic/minority heritage of Oklahoma City. The Littlepage Building was built in 1924 by local entrepreneurs in the Littlepage family to serve as a hotel and a restaurant at a time when African-American commercial and cultural activity thrived on Northeast 2nd Street. The Littlepage Building, with the restaurant and retail spaces on the ground floor and the hotel on the second, and the two-story brick apartment building in the rear, is one of the last remaining testimonies to the economic growth of the African-American community in Oklahoma City during a time of segregation and discrimination.

Historical Overview

African-Americans have played a significant role in the history of Oklahoma City since before statehood. African-Americans first came to Oklahoma with displaced Native Americans, most but not all as slaves. Although the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 granted freedom to the slaves in the United States, members of the Five Tribes who sided with the Confederacy ignored the decree. It was not until after the Civil War that African-American slaves in Indian Territory received freedom and land allotments as a result of the national government's treaties with the tribes. By government mandate, the new "freedmen" in Indian Territory would receive allotments of land and in some cases be adopted into the tribes who formerly owned them. Most received forty to one hundred and sixty acres and an 1860 census estimated the number of blacks in Indian Territory to have numbered 7,369.¹

The desire of whites for more land, however, eventually led the government to open Indian Territory for settlement. One result was the famous Land Run of April 1889 that brought thousands of people to the borders of the territory in hopes of staking a claim. The group was diverse and African-Americans raced alongside white settlers for the chance to make a new start in the Unassigned Lands. A sense of opportunity and equality prevailed in the early frontier days when African-Americans as well as whites claimed land in the newly opened Oklahoma Territory, laying the foundation for a rapidly growing Oklahoma City. Soon, however, racial discrimination took hold and the African-American was economically, socially and legally segregated from the majority white population. Within these segregated communities, however, a distinct cultural, political, and economic landscape flourished, leaving a physical record of African-American contributions to the development of Oklahoma City.

The early territorial days were marked by an unusual sense of equality with African-Americans holding positions in the Territorial Legislature and other territorial offices. Although in Oklahoma City the African-

¹Franklin, Jimmie Lewis. Journey Toward Hope. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1982.

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American population was fairly dispersed throughout the community,² territorial policy did call for separate educational facilities and in 1891 Oklahoma City opened its first black school with J.D. Randolph as principal. By 1905 black commercial activity in Oklahoma City began to prosper and the promise of opportunity seemed to hold true. Some African-American leaders thought that Oklahoma was the promised land for African-Americans and envisioned it as a future all-black state. This sense of frontier hope, however, came to an abrupt end with the 1906 Constitutional Convention led by "Alfalfa Bill" Murray that included Jim Crow laws to segregate transportation and schools and to prohibit interracial marriage. Thus with statehood in 1907, Oklahoma was officially transformed into a segregationist society.

By 1910, African-Americans in Oklahoma City numbered over 6,700, accounting for approximately ten percent of the city's population.³ Several black neighborhoods appeared in the meander scars of the Canadian River and along the corridors of the Santa Fe and the Frisco railroads. While African-American commercial activity centered on an area along the western side of the Santa Fe tracks between Reno and Grand (now Sheridan Avenue) avenues, the "Near Northeast" side centered on Northeast 2nd Street began to emerge as the dominant African-American residential area with over half of the black population residing there.

Between 1910 and 1920, Oklahoma City's African-American population continued to grow - attributed more to natural increase than to immigration. The community began to focus internally on providing for its economic, social and cultural needs. Northeast 2nd Street joined the district along the Santa Fe tracks as a growing commercial hub serving the African-American population. Businesses were typically service-oriented and included restaurants, recreational facilities and professional establishments. The first edition of the Black Dispatch newspaper, serving as a voice for the African-American community, was printed in 1915 on 2nd Street.

In 1916 local residential zoning laws set Northeast 2nd Street as the northern limit for black development. Although only a year later such laws were found to be unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court, segregation continued in the form of restrictive covenants on plats and through agreements among white property owners and real estate operators.⁴ In this manner, the northern boundary for blocks containing a black majority was moved to Northeast Fourth Street in 1918. This along with an oppressive social atmosphere succeeded in limiting spatial expansion, but not the dynamics, of the African-American community in Oklahoma City.

The 1920's were a time of general economic prosperity throughout the country and for African-Americans it represented the time of the "Negro Renaissance." Despite continuing discrimination and increasingly tense race

²Edward J. Pugh. Spatial Consequences of Public Policy on the Evolution of the Black Community; a Case Study of Oklahoma City, 1889-1974. Unpublished thesis, University of Oklahoma: Norman, 1977.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

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relations, their segregated communities thrived both economically and culturally. In Oklahoma City this was no different and Northeast 2nd Street became the center for almost all commercial and social activity.

In the late twenties two nearly simultaneous events severely impacted life on and around Northeast 2nd Street. In 1928 oil was discovered in Oklahoma City in a field that ran directly underneath the Near Northeast community. Mineral rights were usually bought or leased from those living on top of this gold mine leaving them lower property values, danger from well fires, a scarred landscape, noxious and unpleasant odors, noise and increased insurance rates.⁵ At the same time, the Great Depression of 1929 brought economic hard times and migration to the city, creating an increasingly concentrated African-American population.

At a time when room to grow was needed most, Governor "Alfalfa Bill" Murray imposed his segregation line May 1, 1933. Only a year later, further racial zoning ordinances were passed. To nobody's surprise, such ordinances were found to be unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court in a decision that merely echoed that of U.S. Supreme Court nearly two decades prior.

By this time, the 300 block alone of Northeast 2nd Street was home to seven restaurants, two drugstores, three billiard parlors, two undertakers, five barber shops, three real estate offices, a cleaners, a theater, two taxi companies, two shoe repair shops, a shoe shine parlor, a lawyer's office, eight physicians, five dentists, two life insurance offices, a watchmaker, two tailors, a dance hall, a beauty parlor, two clothing stores, a grocer and a newsstand.⁶ Clearly, almost every need of the community was served on this one street. It became not only a place to shop, but a place to interact socially and politically.

In the face of adversity, the African-American community rallied for their rights and continued to improve their position in an oppressive society. In 1934 the Federal Housing Authority was established. Intending to serve all races, the FHA policies nonetheless upheld segregationist policies. With this as an impetus, newer subdivisions were established, offering African-Americans in Oklahoma City improved housing conditions. Areas also became available further northeast in older housing that was being abandoned by whites in favor of the newer suburbs. As more options became available, Northeast 2nd Street began to decline - its fate further sealed with the completion of the Centennial Highway in 1989. Not only was Northeast 2nd physically cut off from the community it once served, but much of the surrounding community itself was razed. Today only five buildings remain on the 300 block of Northeast 2nd Street.

The Littlepage Building

The Littlepage Building was constructed in 1924 to meet the growing need for hotel accommodations for African-Americans. It was built by Junius Singleton and Alfred Louis Littlepage, and their respective wives

⁵Ibid.

⁶Polk's Directory of Oklahoma City, 1932.

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Aner and Mobelia. (The inscription block "J.S. & M.E. LITTLEPAGE" refers to Junius and Mobelia.) Louis and Mobelia came to Oklahoma City in 1909; Louis was a barber and Mobelia a teacher. His brother Junius and Aner came in 1911; Aner was also a teacher, and Junius worked as a janitor and shipping clerk downtown. The youngest brother, Joseph M., moved to Oklahoma City in 1917 and completed high school; he left and returned in 1937 as a dentist.⁷

The Littlepages were involved in community affairs. Louis and Junius were trustees of Avery Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, at Northeast 1st at Geary; Mobelia was a choir soloist and Aner was a Sunday School teacher. Louis was one of two founding members of Trice Hill Cemetery, the first black cemetery in Oklahoma City. Joseph was on the board of management of the Eastside YMCA, was an early board member of the Urban League, and a co-founder of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity's local chapter. Joseph also served as president of the Medical, Dental & Pharmaceutical Association. Joseph's wife Ruth was a founder of the Oklahoma City chapter of Jack & Jill, an organization of African-American mothers for helping their children.⁸

The Littlepages also engaged in several small real estate interests and oil investments. In 1946 Jimmy Stewart, in his weekly column in The Black Dispatch, acknowledged Dr. Littlepage for making his apartments at 2nd at Geary "rent property decent for tenants to live in."⁹

In the early 1920's, the commercial growth of Northeast 2nd Street, coupled with its thriving social activities, brought many African-American visitors to Oklahoma City. State, regional and national conventions for teachers, physicians and fraternal organizations brought in thousands of people and prominent entertainers frequently came to Oklahoma City. Limited by segregation and with only one hotel located in the African-American community itself, many of these visitors stayed in private homes. The obvious need for hotel accommodations was partially met when, in November 1924, The Black Dispatch announced the opening of "Oklahoma City's New Hostelry," the M & M Hotel occupying the second floor of the Littlepage Building.¹⁰ With "twenty-five beautifully furnished, modern rooms," the manager promised to provide "the traveling public of the southwest the best service to be had west of the Mississippi River."¹¹ The M & M was originally managed by W.O. Miller, the operator of a local restaurant. The dining room on the ground floor was equipped with "the very latest sanitary enamel tables," set with real silver. The kitchen arrangement carried with it "the latest in sanitary ideas."¹² Later, Junius Littlepage managed the hotel; after 1935 Louis Littlepage

⁷Ruth Williams, "The Oklahoma Littlepages," Unpublished family history, 1987.

⁸Ruth Williams, Personal interview, July, 1995.

⁹The Black Dispatch, March 16, 1946.

¹⁰The Black Dispatch, November 13, 1924.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

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moved into the building and managed the hostelry. As the Littlepage Hotel, it housed such guests as Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Fats Domino, Jackie Robinson, Joe Louis, Roy Campanella, Billy Eckstine,¹³ Peg Leg Bates, Sarah Vaughn, and Illinois Jacquet.¹⁴

In addition to the restaurant, the ground floor of the Littlepage Building also contained several commercial storefronts. The Musicians Exchange Billiard Parlor served as the headquarters for the popular Blue Devil Orchestra.¹⁵ The Blue Devils played dances frequently in Oklahoma City as well as in neighboring states. After the band broke up in the early thirties, several of the members formed the famous Count Basie Orchestra. Other businesses originally located in the building included Louis Littlepage's barber shop, and a grocer. Later businesses included a cleaners and a branch of the Oklahoma City employment office. The last occupant left in October 1990; it was O. Wendell Henderson's tax preparation office.¹⁶ Mr. Henderson is the son-in-law of Junius and Aner Littlepage.

The Littlepage Building is significant for its role in the commercial and social life of Oklahoma City's African-American Community and as the last surviving hotel on Northeast 2nd Street.

¹³Ruth Williams, "The Oklahoma Littlepages."

¹⁴Ruth Williams, Personal interview, July, 1995.

¹⁵The Black Dispatch, January 7, 1926.

¹⁶Ruth Williams, Personal interview, July, 1995.

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Littlepage Building
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Bibliography

Abstract of title, Lots 1 & 2, Block 16, Military Addition, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma.

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The Black Dispatch. Oklahoma City, 1915-1947.

Franklin, Jimmie Lewis. The Blacks in Oklahoma. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980.

Franklin, Jimmie Lewis. Journey Toward Hope. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.

Polk's Directory of Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City, 1915-1947.

Pugh, Edward J. Spatial Consequences of Public Policy on the Evolution of the Black Community; a Case Study of Oklahoma City, 1889-1974. Unpublished thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1977.

Williams, Ruth. "The Oklahoma Littlepages." Unpublished family history, 1987.

Williams, Ruth. Personal interviews, January and July, 1995. Ms. Williams is the daughter of Dr. Joseph M. Littlepage.

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Littlepage Building
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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies Lots 1 and 2, Block 16, Military Addition, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, and is 52.5 feet by 140 feet in size.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire two city lots that have historically been associated with the property.