

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 17 1975

DATE ENTERED MAY 2 1975

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

Odd Fellows Building and Auditorium

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

228-250 Auburn Avenue, N. E.

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

— VICINITY OF

5th - Andrew Young

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Fulton

CODE

121

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

New Era Missionary Baptist Convention (Office Building)  
Auburn Avenue Investment, Inc. (Auditorium Building)

STREET & NUMBER

(New Era) c/o Dr. Melvin D. Watson--725 Aline Drive, N.W.  
(Auburn Avenue) C. R. Yates, Pres. -- 228 Auburn Avenue, N. E.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

— VICINITY OF

Georgia

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fulton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

160 Pryor Street, S.W.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Structures, Sites and Districts  
(Category I), Atlanta Urban Design Commission

DATE

1973

—FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Atlanta Urban Design Commission  
Committee Room #4, Atlanta City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

ODD FELLOWS BUILDING

The Odd Fellows Building complex includes a six-story office building at the northwest corner of Auburn and Bell Street, and the adjacent two-story auditorium and store building on the northeast corner of Auburn Avenue and Butler Street. The dark red-brick curtain walls of these steel frame structures were designed in a modified Jacobethan mode common to early twentieth century Atlanta business buildings. Light stone and terracotta details which provide articulation of the facades include crenellations along the auditorium roof line, and window spandrels, low segmental arches over the fifth-story windows, and parapets in the end bays of the office building. These bays produce tower-like accents at the corners of the building. The office building elements are organized a tri-partite division of base, shaft and capital sections that was characteristic of skyscraper-type structures of the period. The rectangular form of this structure with the third story set off by a boldly projecting horizontal string course, the shaft articulated by uninterrupted vertical piers with set-back spandrels and the accenting of the base by the use of a contrasting material, reflects the Sullivan-esque skyscraper form. Terra cotta strap and ornamental spandrels accentuate the end bays, while diamond-shaped panels enrich the window spandrels of the central bays. Narrow piers and segmental arched moldings which enclose a panel of stone lettering, frame the entrance doorways of both street facades. The most notable features of the office building are the stone heads framing the entrances and the terra cotta figures in the upper portions of the building with their clearly negroid features.

Entrances in the Auburn Avenue and Bell Street facades of the office building lead into wide hallways wainscoted in marble. On the west side of the junction of the hallways which form an L-shaped plan is a small elevator lobby. Solid iron doors decorated with a raised swag pattern front the two elevators.

Six stores, forty-two offices, six lodge rooms and a roof garden entertainment area were included in the original office building. The roof garden area was destroyed by fire in 1934 without seriously damaging floors below. The Auditorium Building contains a Theater section in the northern portion of the structure which was entered from Auburn Avenue between stores that line this facade. A subsidiary entrance leads in from Butler Street.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input 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 checked="" 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) Urban History	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	1912, 1913	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ODD FELLOWS BUILDING

The Odd Fellows Building-Auditorium complex is one of Atlanta's most significant and interesting landmarks. Standing in the heart of the City's historic black business community on Auburn Avenue, it is an effective symbol of the achievements of that community. From plans drawn by a white architect, the structures were built by a prominent black contractor with funds raised from the black communities of Georgia. The commercial style buildings with Jacobethan Revival details give scale and dignity to the Auburn Avenue business district that has long been known as "Sweet Auburn". The most distinguishing and highly dramatic features of the complex are a group of terra cotta and stone heads on the facades of the office building. With their clearly negroid features these faces effectively proclaim black pride and awareness at an early and significant date in the history of Atlanta's black community.

Construction on the Odd Fellows office building was begun in 1911 and the building opened in 1912, just six years after a disastrous Atlanta race riot had broken up and demoralized various black settlements within the metropolitan area. At the time of its construction black business enterprise was in the process of moving from the central business district of the city, where numerous businesses had been located since the end of the Civil War, to a concentrated area five to seven blocks long which extended along Auburn Avenue a few blocks to the east of the central area. The building of a six-story skyscraper-type office building there undoubtedly played a role in the development of this business migration and concentration.

The Odd Fellows Building was constructed for the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, one of several fraternal organizations which served the community by providing endowments to the seriously ill and death benefits to widows. In a remarkable fund-raising effort during 1910 and 1911, construction monies were obtained through contributions from Odd Fellows organizations throughout Georgia. Once the building was opened it provided revenue proceeds of about \$10,000 a year to the Odd Fellows Endowment Fund.

William A. Edwards, the architect who drew the plans for this building, was just beginning practice in Atlanta at the time. He had moved to Atlanta from South Carolina in 1908 and eventually his firm, Edwards and Sayward attained prominence throughout the South. They were especially known for numerous school

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Porter, Michael L. - "Black Atlanta: an Interdisciplinary Study of Blacks on the East Side of Atlanta, 1890-1930, Emory University, 1974.  
 Atlanta Independent, 1910-1915  
 Building records and deeds, Atlanta City Hall and Fulton County Courthouse  
 Richardson, Clement, ed. - The National Encyclopedia of the Colored Race (Montgomery, 1919).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .11 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	16	742720	3737950	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Nominated property is bounded on the west by Butler Street, on the south by Auburn Avenue, on the east by Bell Street and on the north by the Odd Fellows Building Complex rear property line.

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

Dr. Elizabeth A. Lyon, Advisory Committee on Historic Structures, Sites and Districts

ORGANIZATION

Atlanta Urban Design Commission

DATE

April 1, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

Atlanta City Hall, Comm. Room 4, Mitchell Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

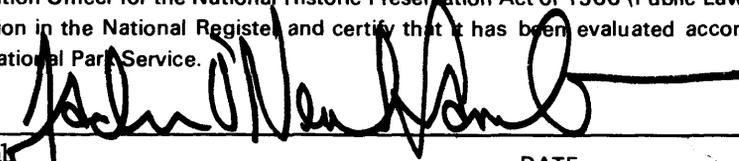
NATIONAL X

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

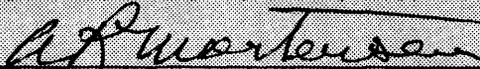
Jackson O'Neal Lamb  
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

DATE

April 9, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER



DATE

5/2/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:



DATE

5.1.75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



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and college buildings. Robert A. Pharrow, whose company built the structures, was the founder and president of a large and important black contracting firm. A variety of commercial, public and residential architecture in Atlanta was designed and built by this company during the years 1890 to 1930.

Possibly the most significant individual in the Odd Fellows Building story was Benjamin Jefferson Davis, editor of the Atlanta Independent, a black newspaper of the early twentieth century, and a prominent leader in the Odd Fellows organization. Through his newspaper and his community activities, Davis promoted the image of the "industrious and thrifty" Auburn Avenue negro which he wished to develop as a counter to current white Atlanta's image of the "ignorant and irresponsible" Decatur Street negro. On Decatur Street, two blocks to the south of Auburn Avenue, was a concentration of saloons and entertainment spots which, despite the fact that noted blues singers such as Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey sang there, produced an unsavory image for Atlanta's black citizens. The pages of Davis Independent for the years before and after the Odd Fellows Building construction contain information and praise for numerous successful black businesses and institutions and their leaders, as well as news on the progress of the Grand Order of United Odd Fellows in Atlanta. Davis' promotion and determination helped to accomplish the construction of the Odd Fellows buildings, and the terra cotta and stone heads on the office building clearly symbolize the proud image and achievement of his race which he worked so hard to develop.

The year following the opening of the Odd Fellows Office Building, Robert Pharrow began construction of a two-story addition containing an auditorium, stores and offices. This Auditorium Building was intended to provide for the black community meeting facilities, such as were already available to the white community, which could support national conventions and local functions. The auditorium space later housed a movie theater. The facades of this building were detailed in brick and terra cotta to complement the style of the adjacent office building. The drug store which first occupied the Butler Street corner of the building was one of the oldest and most significant of Atlanta's black businesses. Founded in the late nineteenth century as the Gate City Drug Store by Moses Amos, who learned his trade as an apprentice to a sympathetic white pharmacist, the business operated in cooperation with a group of prominent blacks which included Drs. Thomas H. Slaker, Hr. R. Butler, and W. J. Madison. Terrazzo signs in the sidewalk along the Butler and Auburn Avenue facades commemorate this early business, as well as mark a long-time gathering place of the community. In the mid-twenties the business was purchased by C. B. Yates and banker L. D. Milton who developed Yates and Milton Drugs into a large and successful business, subsequently establishing several branch stores, both Yates and Milton became important business and civic leaders.

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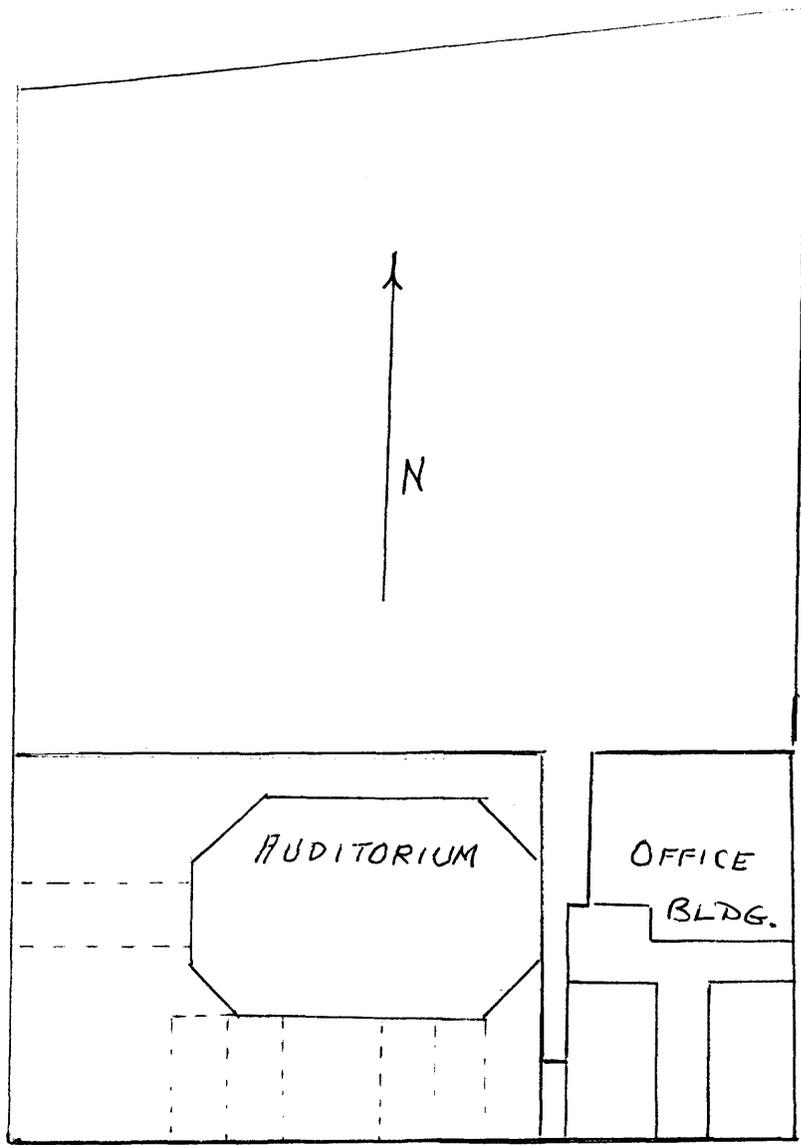
The Odd Fellows Building and Auditorium complex is not only a visually interesting and effective architectural form in the urban environment, but has been a center of black entrepreneurial activity in an historic area of the city. The structure represents the achievements and pride of this community. The preservation and renovation of these buildings can play a significant role in current efforts to revive this business community that is called "Sweet Auburn". The form of the office building, which seemed to contemporaries to tower majestically above the Avenue, is enlivened by the terra cotta and stone faces which speak eloquently, even today, of the black experience of pride and frustration. Some of this expression has been caught in an excerpt from a long poem written about the building in 1914 by black Atlanta writer and poet, Well-born Victor Jenkins, in the Atlanta Independent. His words suggest not only the effect which this structure had on black consciousness at the time, but also a hope for the future:

At length this dream of strength and beauty stood  
An answer, argument and challenge bold--  
A landmark and a milestone for the race,  
To which posterity shall point with pride.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES, Item 9, page 2

- Davis, Benjamin J. - Communist Councilman from Harlem (New York, 1969).  
Withey, Henry and Elsie, - Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, Deceased (California, 1956).  
Personal inspection by Michael L. Porter and Elizabeth A. Lyon, August 1974, March 1975.  
Porter, Michael L. - Preliminary National Register Nomination Form, August 1974.

BUTLER



BELL

AUBURN

AVE.