

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received FEB 7 1985

date entered MAR 7 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Hunter House

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 504 St. Francis Street NA not for publication

city, town Mobile NA vicinity of Congressional District 1

state Alabama code 01 county Mobile code 097

**3. Classification**

| Category  | Ownership                                   | Status   | Present Use                            |   |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input type="checkbox"/> public             | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied              | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture   | <input type="checkbox"/> museum                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial    | <input type="checkbox"/> park                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <input type="checkbox"/> both               | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress      | <input type="checkbox"/> educational   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                   | <b>Accessible</b>                              | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> religious                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <input type="checkbox"/> in process         | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted       | <input type="checkbox"/> government    | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific                   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered   | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted     | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation               |
|   | NA  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no         | <input type="checkbox"/> military      | <input type="checkbox"/> other:                       |

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mrs. Yolanda Reddick / Mrs. Consuelo N. Perkins and Mrs. Carrie N. Williams

street & number 1204 Partirdge St. /168 Grove Street, Montclair, NJ 07042

city, town Mobile NA vicinity of state Alabama 36605

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mobile County Probate Court

street & number 109 Government Street

city, town Mobile state Alabama

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1970-present  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Constructed in 1878, the Hunter House is sited on a small urban lot and placed close to the street. Although this area was originally residential in character, only a few residences remain with the rest of the land in the area having been given over to new commercial structures.

The two-story frame residence displays sensitive and elaborate decorative detailing which belongs to the Italianate vocabulary. It is essentially rectangular in plan with a one-story one-bay inset porch on the facade and a projecting 3 by 1 bay on the east elevation. A two-story rear porch originally extended along half the length of the west rear wing and wrapped around half of the rear section of the building.

The Hunter House has a complex roof line that consists of intersecting gables with a hip roof over the side porch and a shed roof over the front porch. Along the rake of each of the gables is a pierced fascia. At both ends and at the peak of each gable can be found moulded brackets.

The building has a side passage plan with left-hand entrance door. The elaborate door framing consists of double pilasters with a semi-circular arch springing from the pilasters which forms the transom. Surrounding the transom are moulded panels which follow the lines of the arch spandrels. A slightly pedimented lintel completes the door surround. Each of the double-leaf doors is glazed with semi-circular headed glass panel and moulded rectangular panels in the lower section.

Porch bays are defined by two-tiered chamfered posts and/or pilasters with moulded capitals. Arches spanning the bays are triangular with chamfered sloping members. These meet at mid-point of the bay at a tapering trapezoidal block with pendant. Infilling the bay spans is elaborately carved jigsaw work which is organic/naturalistic in inspiration. Columns and pilasters support an entablature which has curved brackets above each column and above the block and pendant. Raised panels are present between these brackets. Interconnecting the posts is a jigsaw cut balustrade with heavily moulded handrail and flat cut balusters.

Windows are plainly framed with 2/2 light double wood sash with only slightly projecting lintels and sills. Windows have moveable louvered shutters. Twin windows are present on the square projecting facade bay. These windows are adorned with cornices and brackets.

The Hunter House has remained largely unchanged on the exterior with the exception of the enclosure of the rear porch with horizontal siding. Several windows and doors have been installed in the enclosure. This enclosure is reversible, however, since the original two-story square posts and staircase have been retained and can be read on the exterior.

Interior spaces and detailing--medallions, window and door trim, pocket doors, mantels, baseboards, etc.--all remain in place. Changes have been effected in the kitchen where a fireplace has been altered and in the enclosed stairway area which has modern paneling and vinyl tile.

## 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/<br>humanitarian                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)<br>Black History |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> invention               |   |   |  |

**Specific dates** 1878 **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### Criterion C - Architecture

The Hunter House is significant as an exceptional example of 19th century residential architecture in the city of Mobile constructed as a black-owned residence. The two-story Italianate home matches in scale, character and architectural detail comparable white-owned residencies of the period in the city, and compares favorably with examples constructed in the Oakleigh Garden District (NRHP 1972).

#### Criterion B - Black History

The Hunter House is also significant for its associations with Bettie Hunter (1852-1879), an affluent 19th century black business woman. It is reputed that Hunter attained her wealth as a result of a successful hack and carriage business situated in downtown Mobile. Although City Business Directories of the period do not list the name or location of a business conducted by Hunter, this house and its contents, as well as a particularly flattering obituary published shortly after her death, reflect the acquirement of substantial wealth and influence exceptional to the means of blacks during the 19th century.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Records from Mobile County Probate Court; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; Pauli and Kreb's Bird's-eye-view maps; Tax assessment records; City directories; Oral History; Mobile Daily Register; Thomason, Micheal and Melton McLaurin. Mobile: American River City, 1975.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Mobile

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 6 | 3       | 9 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 0        | 3 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

B 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

G 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

H 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 10, Block 153, Price Tract, located on the north side of St. Francis Street, 58.5 ft. east of the northeast corner of Cedar and St. Francis Street; lot 55.8 ft. for the front by a depth of 94 ft.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| NA    |      |        |      |

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley Qualls, Historic Resource Coordinator

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date October 23, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama 36130

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

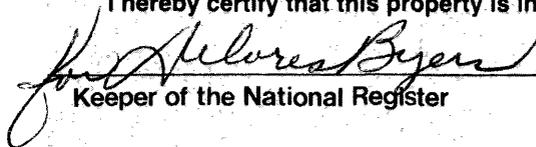
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

date January 29, 1985

title State Historic Preservation Officer

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

date 3-7-85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

### Hunter House

Constructed during the latter part of the 19th century, a period marked by considerable economic obstacles, the Hunter House survives as an exceptional black-owned construction in Mobile. Moreover, the Hunter House reflects a rare case of economic achievement by a 19th century ex-slave woman.

There is, perhaps, no decade in U. S. history that has been filled with tense and crucial moments as the ten years preceding the Civil War. The sectional truce brought about by the Compromise of 1850 which included the threat of stringent fugitive slave laws as protection for slaveholders was only compounded when Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin appeared in 1852 describing the abject suffering of Southern slaves. That same year, Bettie Hunter was born on a Cahaba, Dallas County plantation.

Cahaba, the state's first capitol, was noted for its air of prosperity due to the town's high concentration of statesmen, lawyers, doctors and wealthy planters with many slaves and large plantations located in the surrounding country areas. Unfortunately, the town had been laid off directly on the Alabama River at the mouth of the Cahaba. As a result, in seasons of high water the town was a flood target. An 1825 flood, one of the largest recorded in the state, caused the legislature to determine a new Capitol location. In 1865 the town suffered another disastrous flood which was soon followed by the close of the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves. By the late 1860s, Cahaba's prosperity had experienced a rapid decline, and was left empty and desolate.

Although there is nothing to indicate exactly when Bettie Hunter left Cahaba, accounts of the period reveal that with the emancipation of the slaves, efforts to provide temporary support and relief for the newly freed and to guide them to economic stability and independence developed slowly. However, understandably repulsed by plantation life and all other elements associated with slavery, considerable numbers of ex-slaves migrated to large urban cities.

It is reputed that Hunter attained wealth in Mobile where she and her brother Henry conducted a hack and carriage business in the downtown area. An important 19th century seaport town, Mobile propelled into a frantic economic boom in the early 1800s and by the 1860s, the new crop cotton had provided the city with an annual infusion of wealth. The fall of New Orleans (1862) during the Civil War made Mobile the South's major gulf port. Transportation of the city's goods depended on the teamsters and their horse or mule-drawn wagons. Additionally, a favorite past-time activity of the wealthy leisure class in Mobile up to the 1860s was riding in the "country" between the city and Spring Hill by carriage. Although city business directories of the period do not list the name or location of a business conducted by Hunter, it is known that blacks in Mobile cornered this part of the transportation traffic.

Somehow escaping the defeat of Mobile's economy, Hunter died of anemia at the age of 27, one year after the construction of this house. Having had no children, she willed her property to her mother, brothers and other family members. Her descendants have owned and maintained this house, which contains some original furnishings and many of her personal possessions, through the years. Shortly after her death, an obituary appeared in the Mobile Daily Register (1879) stating that "...after a long and painful illness..." Hunter "...departed this life, leaving behind...a large circle of

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Hunter House

Page 2

acquaintances..." The obituary continues with, "She bore her days of suffering with the satisfaction of...having faithfully done her duty to her fellow beings..." This tribute to Hunter, written by "A Friend," is of sufficient length to indicate a fair degree of influence and admiration in the community.