

Theme 5b3
Theme 4d5

Theme 5e1
Theme 8a1c

Theme 8c3

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Ohio
COUNTY: Lorain
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
John Mercer Langston House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
John Mercer Langston House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
207 East College Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Oberlin

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
13th

STATE: Ohio CODE: 39 COUNTY: Lorain CODE: 093

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Earl L. Bliss

STREET AND NUMBER:
207 East College Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Oberlin

STATE: Ohio CODE: 39

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Recorder of Deeds, City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
South Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Elyria

STATE: Ohio CODE: 39

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
None known

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Completed in 1855 this simple clapboard structure was the home of John Mercer Langston while he was living in Oberlin from 1856-1867. Originally consisting of two large wings, a front living area and a rear part, the structure has had the recent additions of a small brick shed and a screened porch on the rear and a small two-story bathroom wing on the west side of the house.

Although it is of the vernacular tradition with no historical style dominating, the structure has a front door with an elaborate quatrefoil carving in the Gothic revival character. A 1929 photograph shows that, at that time, the porch roof and columns were also of the Gothic revival character. However, this roof and columns have been replaced with new ones.

Entry to the house is through a central hall that contains a stairway. A recently constructed chimney near the front door gives the hall a somewhat cramped character.

The front sitting rooms flanking the hall, however, are quite spacious, having large elegant French windows. In these rooms are the original baseboards, chair rails, door and window trim. The sitting room on the west appears to have its original plaster ceiling with a beaded motif. In all, this is a simple although very pleasant house.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1829-1897

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	<u>Afro-Am. History</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

John Mercer Langston, the first black elected official in the United States and the first black Congressman from Virginia, was born in Louisa County, Virginia on December 14, 1829. He was the son of Ralph Quarles, a white plantation owner, and Lucy Langston, a slave of African and Indian ancestry. When both his parents died in 1843, John in accordance with his father's wishes, was sent to Ohio under the guardianship of a family friend, Colonel William D. Gooch of Chillicothe, Ohio. Living as a member of the Gooch family, John remained with them until the age of ten when they decided to move to Missouri, a slave state. Although Gooch's decision was apparently well-intentioned, the young black boy's future in such a state would have been extremely precarious. Thus, while the family was enroute to its new home, John's half brother, William, a carpenter and joiner in Chillicothe, overtook the Gooches declaring that they had no right to remove the boy from the jurisdiction of the court that supervised his guardianship. Formal court proceedings later upheld that contention, and John was placed in the care of Richard Long, the abolitionist minister of a Presbyterian Church in Chillicothe. After remaining with Long for three years, John was sent to Cincinnati to a private school where he stayed for two years. In 1844 Langston entered the preparatory department at Oberlin. He graduated in 1849 and continued at Oberlin, taking the theological course. However, his real interest was in law and rejection from law schools because of his race made him determined to pursue that field by reading the law privately with Philemon Bliss of Elyria, Ohio. In September 1854 he passed the bar and was admitted to practice. The following month he married Carolina Wall in Oberlin, and they lived on the farm Langston had bought in Brownhelm.

Langston continued to build up a successful law practice in Brownhelm that was largely composed of white Democrats. When he had established his voting residence there in March of 1855, he ran for the local office of township clerk on the Liberty ticket. He was elected to that office in April, thereby becoming the first known black elected to an office in the United States. Such unprecedented public endorsement of a black man at that time was an unusual acknowledgement of not only his ability but also his capability as a man.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Blodgett, Geoffrey. "John Mercer Langston and the Case of Edmonia Lewis: Oberlin, 1862." The Journal of Negro History, July, 1968, pp. 201-218.

Brawley, Benjamin. Negro Builders and Heroes. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937.

Cheek, William F. "John Mercer Langston: Black Protest Leader and Abolitionist." Civil War History, XVI (June, 1970), pp. 101-120.

. "A Negro Runs for Congress: John Mercer Langston and the Virginia Campaign of 1888." The Journal of Negro History, LII (January, 1967), pp. 14-34.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		Degi	ids	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds				
NW	° ' "	° ' "	UTM: 17.398690.4571620			
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Marcia M. Greenlee, Historical Projects Director

ORGANIZATION: **Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation** DATE: **27 Sept. 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:
1420 N Street, Northwest Suite 101

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **11**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____ Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____ Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date _____</p>
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(Number all entries) Significance #8

Langston remained in Brownhelm until the spring of 1856 when he decided to move to Oberlin, a town he believed offered him greater opportunities for the advancement of his law practice. His law practice, still composed primarily of whites, continued to be successful. He was nominated and elected clerk of Russia township and, in 1857 he was elected to the City Council serving on that board until 1860 when he was elected to the Board of Education. While on the Board of Education he also served as a recruiter of black troops of the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments.

In 1868, Langston left Oberlin and went to Washington, D.C. to fulfill an appointment as Inspector General of Education and Abandoned Lands for the Freedmen's Bureau. He did not remain in that capacity for very long because after meeting General O. O. Howard, Langston was soon asked to organize the Law Department of The Howard University. The department was established in January 1869 with Langston as its dean. When General Howard resigned from his position as President of Howard in 1873, Langston was appointed vice-president of that institution and assumed the duties of acting president until 1875 when he left Howard.

Langston's activities in Washington were not limited to Howard University. In 1871 he was appointed by President Grant to the District's Board of Health and served as legal counsel to that group. Then in 1877 President Hayes appointed him resident minister to Haiti and charge d' affaires to Santo Domingo. He remained in diplomatic service until 1885 when the Democratic Party came into power. Although President Cleveland asked him to continue in his foreign service positions, Langston could not agree because he could not conscientiously support a Democratic administration.

Upon his return to the United States, Langston became president of the recently organized Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (now Virginia State College) in Petersburg, Virginia. Although he worked tirelessly to organize that school, his broader political interests necessitated his departure from Virginia State College so that he could run on the Republican ticket as Congressman from his district. The campaign was very difficult and Langston's subsequent victory was so bitterly opposed that he was unable, until September 1890, to assume his seat in Washington. Then he was only able to serve until March 1891 when his attempted re-election proved unsuccessful. He retired to his home in Washington and worked on his autobiography From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capital. On November 15, 1897 John Mercer Langston died at his home in Washington, D.C.

John Mercer Langston is of national historical importance because in 1855 he was the first black man to win an elective office in the United States; in 1868 he organized the Law School of The Howard University and the following year, served as its first dean; in 1885 he served as the first president of the newly organized Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute in Petersburg, Virginia; and, in 1888 he was the first black United States congressman elected from the State of Virginia. Langston was also a recruiter for the 54th

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and 55th Massachusetts Regiment during the Civil War; Inspector General of Education and Abandoned Lands for the Freedmen's Bureau; acting Vice-President of The Howard University from 1873 to 1875; legal counsel to the District of Columbia Board of Health; and, resident minister to Haiti and charge d' affaires to Santo Domingo.

The John Mercer Langston house in Oberlin is being nominated to commemorate the man because it is the only remaining extant residence connected with him. It has been kept in good condition on its original site and it is the home he lived in for twelve years, the period he was in Oberlin, being active in local politics and developing a highly respected reputation as an attorney.

#9 Major Bibliographical References

Langston, John Mercer. From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol. Hartford, Connecticut: American Publishing Company, 1894.

(Partial Listing)